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Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-conflict Croatia --Manuscript Draft--

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Response to Reviewers:	

Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-conflict Croatia

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Abstract: Reporting on ongoing research, this paper reviews stories, drawn from recent literature as well as gathered through ethnographic research, that people tell about records and recordkeeping during and since the Yugoslav Wars. It focuses on what these stories reveal of the agency and affect of recordkeeping in individual and community lives, particularly in Croatia. The paper concludes with a contemplation of what might be learned from such an approach for the development of recordkeeping infrastructures that can anticipate, avert or alleviate some of the ways in which records and recordkeeping continue to traumatize or target the vulnerable, and frustrate and prevent the human and societal need to “move forward,” if not “move past.”

Keywords: Affect; Croatia; post-conflict recovery; recordkeeping and human rights; Yugoslav Wars

Introduction

In Croatian American author Josip Novakovich’s short story “Ribs,” Mira, whose husband had already been lost in the war in Bosnia, waits every morning in her flat in Zagreb to intercept the letter that will inform her only son that he has been drafted:

‘On Saturdays the mail usually came around eleven in the morning. Starting at nine, Mira waited for it, drinking Turkish coffee and washing the dishes from the previous week; if it weren’t for the mail, she wasn’t sure her garret apartment would ever be clean. During the week, she taught high school history, which, with the new Croatian regime, she had had to relearn.

At quarter to eleven she walked down the dusty stairs, which were worn and indented in the middle even though they were made of thick oak boards. The lightbulb in the windowless stairway had burnt out and no tenants had bothered to replace it; nobody in the building seemed to know who the landlord was. The state had owned the building, but probably someone in the government had ‘privatized’ it, not to look after it but to collect rent’ (2005, pp. 213-214).

Eventually the inevitable letter arrives, and Mira knows what she has to do:

‘No, she was not going to join Mothers Against War again. She took a tram to the recruitment center and asked to speak to the director. He was too busy to see her. She waited till the end of the shift and followed him out to his black BMW. He went alone, unescorted—pretty remarkable, she thought.

Excuse me sir, could I talk with you for a second about my son, Pero Ivicic?

Why, everybody wants to talk with me about sons!

But he has high blood pressure, couldn’t you let him stay home?

That is not my job. If the recruiters said he must go, he must go.

How much money should I give you to change that?
You want me to go through the records stealthily, to take his out? That's awkward. I am not bribable.
Are you serious? I thought everybody took bribes.
How much are we talking here? He asked while he unlocked the door with a beeper remote.
Eight hundred marks.
He scoffed. At this rate, you may indeed arouse my sympathy.
I don't have any more money. My son is all I have. My husband hasn't come back from central Bosnia. Perhaps you could find out about him?
That's not my job.
What is your job?' (2005, p. 218)

Mira's impulse to protect her son is a fundamentally human one. She knows that the state's record about him is the key to doing so and she is prepared to bribe or even sleep with the director of the draft office if it will persuade him to alter the record or make it disappear. Her story also highlights several other issues relating to recordkeeping and history in the newly independent Croatia. In 1991, when Croatia, following a popular referendum, seceded from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and was plunged into war, it had already begun the transition toward a new political structure and a privatized economy. Mira's apartment had been nationalized under Communism, but now it was privatized, resulting in total confusion. Who owned it now? What happened to the rent she paid? The political system might have changed, but she knows that corruption remains rampant and that bribery is the way to get bureaucracy to work in her favor. Nor is Mira's livelihood immune to the changes. The government is rewriting Croatian history, actively creating a new national narrative that Mira now has to teach.

Susan Sontag once observed that:

'Serious fiction writers think about moral problems practically. They tell stories. They narrate. They evoke our common humanity in narratives with which we can identify, even though the lives may be remote from our own. They stimulate our imagination. The stories they tell enlarge and complicate—and, therefore, improve—our sympathies. They educate our capacity for moral judgment' (2004).

Contemporary literature by authors such as Novakovich who come from the former Yugoslavia frequently features the instrumentalism and affect of records and of politicized or corrupt recordkeeping in the everyday lives of individuals, families and communities in the region and in diaspora, during and since the Yugoslav Wars. Some of the authors live in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and some now live elsewhere, and they speak of diverse ethnic backgrounds and different personal and community experiences. While one cannot say that the sentiments and actions depicted in this literature are representative, they are suggestive that there are more and more affective dimensions to the creating, holding, reading, experiencing and accessing of records than archivists traditionally take into account. Fiction can also illustrate, through the intricacies of narrative, not only the complexities of individual identities and emotions

but also that there are rarely simple binaries in such situations. Individuals may have mixed motives, shifting stances, and various degrees of agency and power at different moments. Collectively these writings parallel the growing body of archival literature addressing how records, recordkeeping processes and archives are implicated and instrumental in both the abuse of human rights and the ‘pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation’ (Adami 2009, p. 15) within nations (e.g., Harris 2007; McKemmish et al. 2011; Peterson 2012), nation-to-nation, and at a larger international level following conflict and genocide (e.g., Ketelaar 2012; ICTY 2013). Nevertheless, there has been scant recognition to date within the archival community of how fiction might inform or augment its thinking about the agency and affect of records and recordkeeping processes.

Records and recordkeeping processes are not glamorous. They are, however, powerful and have consequences in both their presence and their absence. For nations recovering from devastating conflicts, records don’t just document those conflicts, they reflect and project the history and conditions to which the conflicts were responding, as well as the programmatic aspects and human dimensions of how those conflicts were conducted. Records also have direct implications for and impact upon individual lives, and at various moments in those lives, therefore, every individual must interact with the archive. This challenges the archival community to figure out not only how to anticipate and meet immediate needs for records, but also to do this in a way that can take into account individual circumstances, motivations and emotions. The research discussed in this paper addresses the agency and affect of recordkeeping¹ on individual lives in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars, and in particular within Croatia where much of my research has been based in recent years. This research has several aims: to acknowledge and identify structural and emotional confrontations and violence perpetrated and perpetuated by recordkeeping; to elucidate the different official, bureaucratic and personal realities that are in play; to identify and understand the dimensions of “workarounds” that are being or might be used when records are difficult to obtain, missing, destroyed, or were simply never created; and ultimately to promote recovery through the provision of services, systems and education in support of immediate and evolving personal and community needs for records.

Specifically, the research is divided into two phases. The first phase probes personal, professional and literary attitudes towards, and experiences with recordkeeping. The second phase seeks to apply the insights gained through the first phase to enhance how recordkeeping systems, processes, metadata, interfaces and end user services might better protect individuals who continue to be vulnerable because of how records or metadata have been created, kept, destroyed, manipulated or shared; to facilitate how individuals need to locate and use [particular] records in support of their daily lives and well-being; to help individuals to identify other sources of evidence and build cases when records have been destroyed or damaged, or are not trustworthy; and to acknowledge and mitigate damaging affective aspects of records and recordkeeping.

¹ I am using this term here as shorthand to refer to the bureaucratic imperatives, rationales, functions and actions that generate records, as well as associated systems, services and procedures, and archives where such records may eventually reside or that share in the creation and ongoing management of the records.

This paper focuses on just one component of the first phase—the stories that people tell about records and recordkeeping. Its title, “Moving Past,” alludes to the malleability of how the past is perceived, represented, and constantly invoked, personally and officially, in the aftermath of major political change and ensuing ethnically-based war and genocide in the former Yugoslavia. As Novakovich writes in his autobiographical essays in *Shopping for a Better Country*:

Of course, Serbs don't forget, as the graffiti goes, the atrocities that the Croatian *ustashas* committed against them in World War II. That was repeated in school over and over by history teachers when I was a pupil in Croatia. Many Croats don't forget the slaughters that the Serb nationalist *chetniks* committed on the Croatian rural population, although that was passed over in silence in our history lessons ... Which is better, to forget or to remember? Of course, to remember, but not to abuse the memories as Serbian leaders have done to spur their armies into aggression against Croats and Muslims.

Croats will remember Vukovar. Muslims will remember Srebrenica. And what is the lesson? Not to trust thy neighbor? But that's perhaps where the trouble began and will resume (2012, p. 174).

But it is not just the past that is in motion. It is also the affect associated with the referencing and recalling of the past in the present.

The title also alludes to the role that recordkeeping plays in facilitating or impeding the very real and often crucial need for those who survived these events and their families and communities to be able to move forward with their lives (Blitz and Lynch 2009), even while accepting truly moving past may never be possible. In drawing attention to this role, implicitly and maybe explicitly, this research addresses the resignation or hopelessness at not being able to move past that frequently surfaces in these situations at a personal and even at a national level. This sentiment of hopelessness can be exacerbated by the trope often dismissively leveled by outsiders but also often believed internally, that certain regions, such as the Balkans, exist within an inevitable cycle of conflict that is in various ways related to their geopolitical location, ethnic and religious makeup, as well as innate cultural tendencies to mythologize and reperform their own histories. In fact, a quick search of the web using the terms “Balkans” and “inevitable” reveals a shockingly persistent coupling of those terms across the popular media, scholarship and official reports at least since the beginning of the twentieth century.

While breakdowns in infrastructure and the structural violence that is encoded into official bureaucracies are frequently implicated in nurturing the conditions that lead to conflict, from a human rights perspective simply asserting the inevitability of recurring conflicts and failing to act is unacceptable. This research is framed, therefore, by an assumption that investment has to be made in understanding these conditions in order to support individual as well as organizational agency in imagining, and rebuilding or creating infrastructure (including recordkeeping infrastructure) that is grounded in human rights perspectives as well as responsive to the evolving political and economic systems within the countries of the former Yugoslavia. But this is no easy task. Such an

infrastructure will have to grapple with a complex past that will always be in some kind of dynamic dialog with the present, even as it supports individuals, communities and nations in growing and move forward.

The paper first reflects on the methods being employed and the role and stance of the researcher. It then lays out some of the themes that have emerged to date from stories told about records to the researcher and intersperses these with how they have been presented in contemporary literature, focusing on two types of records as examples--passports and travel documents, and land and other property records. The paper concludes with a contemplation of what might be learned from this approach for the development of recordkeeping infrastructures that are responsive to individual need and affect and promote individual agency “moving forward” if not “moving past.”

A Note About Method

In this ongoing research I have employed ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches, including both opportunistic and purposive observations of how people undertook records-related activities; conversations and reciprocal storytelling; interviews with key informants; photography and personal journaling. These have been coupled with visits to archives and other records offices and repositories, as well as to cemeteries, memorials, and other sites of important events; and the analysis of certain kinds of records and recordkeeping metadata. As already mentioned, I have also used literary analysis to identify and characterize allusions to recordkeeping in relevant contemporary writings. While ethnography allows themes and tropes to emerge organically and sometimes incidentally from observation, conversation and interviews conducted in the moment, the inclusion in a fictional narrative about something as specific as a type of record or an action taken regarding a record more likely is a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to depict the significance of the record or action in terms of its agency, affect or moral import. One could, therefore, expect that that agency, affect or moral import might be closely and consciously depicted. When taken together, the data gathered through these various approaches support the development of rich descriptions of the past and current recordkeeping landscape and the role it has played and plays today in individual lives and social imaginaries.

Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, in his classic novel *Bridge on the Drina* wrote that, ‘All the children knew the stories about the history of the bridge – fact, myth and inevitability blended – each with their own community’s beliefs’ (1945, p. 18). In the novel, he portrays the diversity in the people in that region through close sketches of their physical appearances, manners and behaviors, and stories. As the chapters progress, he also introduces different layers of stories, myth-making, and what might be considered factual information, speaking to the ontologies that people develop and apply in their lives, and the meanings they invest in them. Such ontologies play important roles in terms of how meanings are invested in records. Official ontologies and recordkeeping rationales are intentionally encoded in the design of a record. Personal ontologies and insider knowledge are exercised in the reading of that record, however. Some readings are fairly obvious. Personal names frequently reflect religious affiliation such as Catholic,

Orthodox, Muslim or Jewish, and the association of those religions with particular ethnic identities. Sometimes people have changed their names, but that can be exposed bureaucratically also. For example, a Croatian form that must be completed to obtain a personal identification number or OIB (Osobni identifikacijski broj) asks for the current and birth names, not only of an individual, but also of both parents of that individual. It also asks for date and place of birth. The resulting record, therefore, contains many cues to a person's background that might be understood by someone familiar with the locations of historical or contemporary ethnic enclaves. There are other less obvious ways in which records can be read. Bosnian-Australian anthropologist Hariz Halilovich, for example, devotes an entire chapter of his book to how the gendered nature of recordkeeping continues to affect displaced Bosnian women, often causing them to "disappear" in official records and statistics (p. 155-199). One can also read into anomalies in the record. For example, a childhood as a displaced person, moving several times, sometimes through several countries, will be reflected in a university application or curriculum vitae whether or not it is disclosed by that person.

My thinking about the agency of and realities projected by and upon recordkeeping in states coping with and recovering from ethnic or religious conflict has been influenced by work in an area of anthropology that has been looking at the social impact of bureaucracy. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock assert in their introduction to the edited collection of essays *Social Suffering* that 'bureaucratic responses to social violence intensify suffering' (1997, p. x). In the same volume, Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman propose that in order to understand where and when to intervene to address such suffering:

'humanizing the level at which human interventions are organized means focusing planning and evaluation on the interpersonal space of suffering, the local, ethnographic context of action ... To do so requires a reformulation of the indexes and instruments of policy. Those analytic tools need to organize deeper depictions of the local ... and those methodologies of policy must engage the existential side of social life' (1997, pp. 18-19).

More recently, Matthew Hull has argued in his study of the bureaucracy of the city of Islamabad that it is possible to use ethnographic methods to confront the often dichotomously-treated epistemological and ontological problems of whether records, as bureaucrats claim, 'represent, engage with, or constitute realities 'in the world' independent from the processes that produce documents' or instead, as scholars have demonstrated, that 'bureaucratic texts are produced, used, and experienced through procedures, techniques, aesthetics, ideologies, cooperation, negotiation, and contestation' (2012, p. 5). I would argue that ethnography can also "break the fourth wall" to surface how those affected by or interacting with records and recordkeeping experience and imagine those phenomena (for example, Blitz and Lynch describe how obtaining a residency permit in Slovenia in turn allows access to education, healthcare and social services, but may also decrease a sense of vulnerability to harassment and deportation and permit political engagement, all providing the recipient with the sense that things are changing for the better) (2009, p. 60). Hull also argues that recordkeeping infrastructure

often plays an unexpected role in change because bureaucrats and bureaucracies, rather than remaining stable, respond dynamically to events (2012, p. xiii). How this might occur, and the extent to which it might also be responsive dynamically to shifting views of the past (for example, the re-writing of Croatian history or politicians seeking to use records to expose or cover up personal histories) or taking on personal initiative to work around or subvert an intractable bureaucracy is an important consideration when contemplating “moving past.”

Reporting on his extensive ethnographic research within the offices of state officials in Uttar Pradesh, Akhil Gupta makes an argument about the role of bureaucracy in structural violence. In the context of relations between the poor and the state, he writes:

‘Violence occurs in any situation in which some people are unable to achieve their capacities or capabilities to their full potential, and almost certainly if they are unable to do so to the same extent as others’ (2012, p. 20).

He continues:

The reason such violence is considered to be structural is that it is impossible to identify a single actor who commits the violence. Instead the violence is impersonal, built into the structure of power (p 20).

In other words, structural violence is intimately tied up with notions of power and powerlessness. It is not limited to the context of poverty and the state, but to all situations where certain populations are inequitably or unevenly situated or treated by and within the state, or are disempowered or oppressed by bureaucratic processes. As such, structural violence can be an important motivator and target for civil and human rights and justice/social justice movements. Such a reading implicates recordkeeping in terms of its agency as a bureaucratic mechanism for accounting, regulating, processing, inventorying, classifying, and withholding. All such bureaucratic acts result in recorded evidence of systematic or deliberate wielding of power or disempowerment, as well as of how official identities are constructed, cultural, racial or ethnic differences produced, and identity-based policies carried out. Gupta, however, also introduces the idea of arbitrariness and randomness in bureaucracy, proposing that the degree of personal or situational discretion and workarounds exercised by individual bureaucrats is also an important contributor to this kind of structural violence. This suggests a need to describe and then to deconstruct how randomness and arbitrariness, as well as purposiveness and deliberateness, occur in recordkeeping, and their consequences or effects in terms of human rights and post-conflict recovery.

An emerging application of ethnography is trace ethnography, which exploits various digital traces such as transaction logs, record metadata, and institutional records. According to R. Stuart Geiger and David Ribes:

‘Once decoded, sets of such documentary traces can then be assembled into rich narratives of interaction, allowing researchers to carefully follow coordination

practices, information flows, situated routines, and other social and organizational phenomena across a variety of scales. Trace ethnography is a powerful and flexible methodology, able to turn thin documentary traces into “thick descriptions” of actors and events that are often invisible in today's distributed, networked environments’ (2011, p. 1).

In many ways such an approach is a parallel, if not a logical extension of the ethnographies of recordkeeping discussed above, just positioned in the digital rather than the paper world. It helps to render visible what is otherwise not easily discernible in terms of networks and documentary relationships. It is an approach that could be used, for example, to expose a web of communication and command that might remove plausible deniability of knowledge or culpability for war crimes when used in the context of a tribunal. It is also an approach that could be used to knit together the traces of personal lives in diaspora that might be spread across the records systems of many different agencies and institutions in multiple countries. In the case of the research in hand, I have been interested in how it can help in locating, constructing or reconstructing records, ascertaining their probative and dispositive capabilities in and over time, and developing a narrative about the web of actions in which they participated.

Finally, it is important to situate this research and the approaches it is employing in relation to current work and existing mandates within the archival field. As other articles in this special issue so eloquently document, there has been extensive and vital work on the ground, in tribunals, and in published scholarship invoking archives and recordkeeping issues in the aftermath of wars and other violent conflicts, often in the quest for documentary evidence. These may take the form of seeking out hidden or opening up secret police or military records; gathering and capturing tribunal evidence and proceedings in purpose-designed archives; or undertaking post-conflict oral history and photographic documentation projects in many countries and communities that are chronicling how people are coping with the past, examining different interpretations of that past, and trying to establish facts about what actually happened. Moreover, the grueling and emotional continuing quests of families and official agencies to identify the fate of those who remain missing or unaccounted for are the literal embodiment of recordkeeping in the form of personal DNA recording and matching.

This research, however, draws attention to another area crying out for more archival engagement, that is, identifying how bureaucratic requirements, the associated records and recordkeeping processes, and archives in regions dominated by or recovering from ethnically and religiously oriented conflict, might aid or impede individual and community as well as national recovery and equitable coexistence if not reconciliation. The requirement for ready and equitable access to records is enshrined in several key archival statements published since the mid-1990s. Principle 6 of the International Council on Archives (ICA) *Code of Ethics* states that, ‘Archivists should promote the widest possible access to archival materials and provide an impartial service to all users’ (ICA 1996). The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Archives recognized the ‘the vital necessity of archives for supporting business efficiency, accountability and transparency, for protecting citizens rights, for establishing individual and collective memory, for

understanding the past, and for documenting the present to guide future actions' (2011). In August 2012, ICA adopted the following *Principles of Access to Archives*:

1. The public has the right of access to archives of public bodies. Both public and private entities should open their archives to the greatest extent possible.
2. Institutions holding archives make known the existence of the archives, including the existence of closed materials, and disclose the existence of restrictions that affect access to the archives.
3. Institutions holding archives adopt a pro-active approach to access.
4. Institutions holding archives ensure that restrictions on access are clear and of stated duration, are based on pertinent legislation, acknowledge the right of privacy and respect the rights of owners of private materials.
5. Archives are made available on equal and fair terms.
6. Institutions holding archives ensure that victims of serious crimes under international law have access to archives that provide evidence needed to assert their human rights and to document violations of them, even if those archives are closed to the general public.
7. Users have the right to appeal a denial of access.
8. Institutions holding archives ensure that operational constraints do not prevent access to archives.
9. Archivists have access to all closed archives and perform necessary archival work on them.
10. Archivists participate in the decision-making process on access (ICA 2012).

Such statements as well as those of archivists such as Paul Dudman (n.d.) who perform a public intellectual role through blogs and other media commentaries underscore the need for archival work that is specifically directed toward understanding and mitigating the impact of conflicts and human rights violations on the immediate lives of affected individuals in terms of their needs for or utilization of records. Tom Adami, referencing his own work in the Sudan, throws this need for engagement into relief when he asks, starkly, "What can archives do for the distressed and humiliated multitudes in the world's camps for refugees and internally displaced persons? What can keeping records do for all the world's starving women and their dying children? What can I as an archivist do for any of the oppressed and tortured people in gaols around the world?" (2009, p. 3). In this special journal issue, Verne Harris (2014) expresses an epistemological longing to break out of the tropes and methods of the transitional justice framework and to do something different--not only to understand how archivists might act more effectively in the immediate aftermath of conflict, but also to acknowledge affect and how complicated stories actually can be. At the same time, he is eloquently expressing another source of affect—that of archivists such as himself and Adami who are feeling, among other things, frustration, weariness, "stuckness," and disillusionment. My research attempts to respond to this need and to calls for enhanced agency on the part of affected individuals and archival institutions to make these principles a reality, by surfacing the various experiences, structures and affects that need to be taken into account.

Situating Myself

The primary frame for this research is ethnographic not only because of the insights and nuances into individual as well as official perspectives and situations that such an approach affords, but also because of the reflexivity that it demands of the researcher. The latter has been particularly important as well as challenging for me in that what has drawn me to this work in part is the very element that might easily cause me to “see” or at the very least to “read” something through my own experiential and epistemological lens that was not actually the case. I was born and raised in the small city of Derry in the midst of the Northern Irish “Troubles.” Beyond the long-term effects on the lives of an entire population of decades of inter-community violence and British military presence, sectarian politics were historically embedded in every facet of daily life, including bureaucracies, commerce, the police force, and education. Personal names marked individuals and their families out in terms of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, as frequently did where they lived, went to school, or worked. “Community” loyalties were displayed ubiquitously in wallpaintings, graffiti, painted kerbstones, and flags and banners, as well as through street signs and place names using the Irish language or Ulster Scots dialects in addition to or instead of English. The laborious and tense negotiation of ubiquitous army checkpoints and border crossings, and the production and challenging of identity documents was a daily reality for every man, woman and child. Like everyone else, I have had to negotiate my official and personal identities by means of the various kinds of documents available to me, most notably in the form of passports for the two different states that claimed jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. These documents have continued to define me as I, like so many other, left my home to live in another country and cumulated various other forms of documentation of my identity that nevertheless at base remained linked to those passports.

It would be both epistemologically and ethically inappropriate for me not to acknowledge and to attempt to account for the personal context that I bring to this research. Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić, whose anti-war and anti-nationalistic stance has been controversial within Croatia, describes the outbreak of the war in Croatia in terms that would resonate with many who lived through the Troubles:

‘...the year when the names of the streets changed, when the language and the country and the flags and the symbols all changed; when the wrong side became right, and the right side was suddenly wrong; when some people were afraid of their own names, when others, apparently, for the first time weren’t afraid of theirs; when people were butchering each other, when some were butchering others; when armies with different insignia sprang up on all sides...’ (1999, p. 22)

When I first visited Croatia, about ten years after the end of the Croatian and Bosnian Wars and also the start of Northern Irish Peace Process, some of the external manifestations of a country recovering from major ethnic conflict felt very familiar to me. Indeed, there have been a number of research studies in other fields such as foreign policy, psychology, and peace studies that have compared the experiences and long-term effects of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Power 1992; Muldoon 2004; Kosic and Senehi 2009). Some of these have directly

addressed the role played by history and memory in recovery. Sociologist Máire Braniff and political scientist Cillian McGrattan have argued for example, in the context of holding perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses in both post-conflict Northern Ireland and the countries of the former Yugoslavia to account for their actions, that:

‘Unless the past is articulated in such a way in which the connection of events and experiences are integrated in a real and meaningful way, the ‘truths’ which drove conflict will continue to be reproduced ... in conjunction with judicial procedures, post-conflict societies might best foster fragile settlement processes by fencing-in or framing historical narratives about the past’ (2012).

Nevertheless, the duration, scope and many other variables were vastly different in the two conflicts. As a cultural outsider in Croatia with perhaps a measure of intuitive connection and only slight command of the language, what am I projecting onto a situation or a story that I encounter? What am I missing? When am I pushing too hard? Am I drawing inappropriate parallels? What is it truly possible for me to understand? Moreover, as an academic I am bringing a whole other context to this work that also requires reflection. What role can I usefully play in elucidating issues of such complexity? In making a situation better on the ground? What role can research and theorizing effectively play in the face of such immediate needs? Autoethnography requires me to ask such questions. It also requires me to chronicle and reflect on my subjective reactions and tendencies to connect what I am observing and hearing to my own past experiences and cultural context. Sometimes this challenges my sense of my own identity. Sometimes these can take the form of triggered memories, or a wash of my own associations, some previously deeply buried, some of them profoundly disturbing or not fully understood, and all requiring unpacking. In this, they echo the affect that Kathryn Church discusses when she writes of how her own research with mental health patients “cracked her open” as a person: ‘In seeking to understand survivor pain and politics, I plunged headlong into my own’ (1995, p.2).

A small story of my own explains how I became involved in this work. Around 2005, while I was serving as department chair, I was approached about formalizing a cooperative agreement between our department and the Department of Information Sciences at the University of Zadar in Croatia and in particular providing advice about developing a graduate program in archival studies. Other UCLA colleagues had had collegial relationships with the department in Zadar from when it was opened in 2003 and so I decided to travel to Zadar to understand better what kind of assistance we might be able usefully and appropriately to give. I was picked up at Zagreb Airport by two library science colleagues who I was meeting for the first time. We drove to Zadar, an ancient, picturesque small city on the Adriatic coast. It is the historical center of Dalmatia and has been subject to many different national and political administrations in the course of its history. During the Croatian War of Independence (commonly referred to in Croatian as *Domovinski rat* or Homeland War), when Serb militias backed by the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) were attempting to take control of Northern Dalmatia, Zadar and other coastal towns were shelled. Nearby Croat and Serb villages were the sites of mass

killings, most notoriously the 1991 Škabrnja and Nadin massacre, ethnic cleansing of both Croat and Serb villages, occupation or destruction. In 1991, Zadar was cut off from mainland Croatia by Serb forces and many of the city's residents retreated to the islands off the coast. The city remained under siege until January 1993 when the Croatians again regained control over the surrounding area. Attacks continued, however, until 1995 and the city still bears many of the scars of shelling and automatic gunfire.

It was a scorching hot July day. Driving over the windswept karst of Velabit, the mountain mass that divides the Dalmatian coast from Northern Croatia, the tunnels were closed. It was a public holiday and the road was backed up with cars full of holidaymakers trying to get to the coast. It took us about 7 hours rather than the usual 3.5 hours before we reached the outskirts of Zadar. Sleepily looking out the car window, I spotted landmine warnings posted just back from the edge of the road. When I remarked on them, to my jetlagged astonishment, one of my colleagues turned sharply in the car seat: "Yes, there are still landmines! They are all through the farmers' fields here. The farmers roughly know where they are and farm around them, but as people die or move away, that knowledge is lost. If you archivists had been doing your business properly, you would have been there during the peace negotiations, demanding that the maps of the locations of the landmines be handed over."

Clearing the remaining tens of thousands of landmines continues to be an ongoing and dangerous endeavor in Croatia and neighboring Bosnia that is frustrated by out-of-date maps and insufficient and inaccurate data (CROMAC n.d.). The ability to settle elsewhere or return to homes after ethnic cleansing or flight from war (approximately half a million persons were displaced or became refugees during the Croatian War; one million persons became refugees and a further almost one million were internally displaced as a result of the Bosnian War) (Clark 2013), to reestablish communities, to (re)integrate different ethnic communities, or to farm land and grow food, graze cattle and hunt in safety are all jeopardized by the continuing presence of landmines. I later came to understand that at the beginning of the war, for quickly formed local militias laying landmines was one of the cheapest and quickest immediate strategies of defence and that maps of the mines were unlikely to have been created at that time. However, my colleague's comment hit home. What could or should the archival community be doing to support post-conflict recovery and reconstruction? Is it possible to identify record or documentation problems and then implement solutions sufficiently quickly? If so, what, if any of this work done in one place might be transferrable to other post-conflict contexts?

Collecting Stories About Records and Recordkeeping

Perhaps it might seem strange that it is stories, and not records, that have been the starting point for this research. I have been struck in many of the recent discussions about human rights and archives by how much "stories" rather than, or as well as "records" have been featured. Twenty years ago, maybe even ten in archival circles, with the exception of oral history archives, collecting or telling "stories" would not have been considered by many to be the business that archivists were in. Steven High discusses important differences

between the approaches of ethnographers, who are interested in ‘what is’ and oral historians who are ‘interested in the relationship between what is and what was’: ‘Ethnographic informants go largely nameless in the published work of anthropologists, not so in the writings of oral historians. Oral historians also seem more interested in individual subjectivities than ethnographers. Ethnographers are more interested in observed behavior’ (2014, pp. xvii-xviii). The focus on stories reminds us that much of what is absent from records is filled in social contexts through personal narrative; and that the ritualistic and instrumental dimensions of records often mean that they are associated with performances and consequences in people’s lives that are sufficiently significant or troublesome that people re-tell them in the form of stories. It is also one indicator of how much of the “human rights record” is constructed upon evidence, including also personal testimonies, digital traces, and “found” records, that is ephemeral or embodied, or that was meant to have been destroyed or transitory but that accidentally or incidentally survived. Such evidence would likely not withstand the kinds of tests of reliability and authenticity to which official records are subjected by archivists, but has been relied upon even by legal proceedings such as war crimes tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions.

When I am asked about what I am doing, or I ask if I may interview them, I tell people that I am interested in records and recordkeeping and a bored or confused look passes over their faces. They usually say something to the effect of, “Records, I don’t know anything about records.” And yet within a few minutes, regardless of their background, age or experiences, inevitably they are telling me a story about records. These stories, sometimes just brief expressions of exasperation or frustration, sometimes more extensive anecdotes, and sometimes an opening up so unexpected that it takes both of us by surprise, provide telling glimpses into the agency and affect of those records in everyday life, during and after the Yugoslav Wars. Over time and many conversations with different people, those stories accumulate into a composite picture that repeatedly invokes the same kinds of records and recordkeeping dilemmas or paradoxes. In various ways they also evoke the complex, intertwined and sometimes very personal or difficult histories and lineages of or dissensions between families and communities going back across multiple generations. While the stories and indeed the storytelling itself and the emotions they can bring to the surface can all be informative, for various reasons therefore, the details may not always be retold in an academic forum such as this.²

The types of records sought or needed tend to center, not surprisingly, around concerns of identity, rights, and basic human functions. Prominent archival rationales such as accountability, preservation of evidence, and support for historical research, while important for legal proceedings such as tribunals, for understanding how events transpired, and for memory purposes, do not feature with the same immediacy. Some of the most common record types relate to establishing or obtaining residency or citizenship (particularly in the case of Croat settlers who have been displaced from other Balkan countries such as Bosnia and Kosovo); proving, reclaiming, transferring or ascertaining ownership of land, homes or other property (including the needs of Serb returnees who were displaced or fled homes in Croatia); obtaining work permits, pensions or veterans’

² Identities of speakers have also purposively not been disclosed.

benefits; proving the right to vote or to run for office within a particular jurisdiction; and producing evidence of particular credentials or qualifications such as having completed high school or obtained a medical degree when those records have been destroyed.

Others speak of the associated processes and challenges involved with obtaining records. Some examples include having to travel back to where one was born to obtain a copy of a required document, sometimes every few months, even when that place might now be populated or controlled by the people who had displaced them and regardless of one's age or physical or economic ability to travel; having to produce a passport, identification card or certificate of citizenship (*domovnica*) together with a death certificate certified with an internationally-recognized Apostille seal and sometimes additional forms issued by the jurisdiction of the intended burial place authorizing the return of a deceased person for burial from outside the country; finding a witness who will corroborate one's credentials; or dealing with corrupt officials or with gatekeepers who remain themselves so traumatized by their wartime experiences that they find it difficult to help those who they view as coming from the perpetrating community. This can be particularly difficult for women. The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) believes that 'the Responsibility to Protect requires the international community to recognize that conflict affects women and men differently. This is an essential first step in developing gendered responses to conflict, empowering women in the prevention and ending of conflicts, and the rebuilding of communities after conflict' (n.d.). For example, Halilovich provides a detailed example of the processes Bosnian war widows must go through to obtain and maintain some sort of pension:

'Every six months the government bureaucracy conducts regular revisions (*revizije*), demanding from the war widows that their status has not changed in the meantime. The revisions primarily relate to the women's living arrangements that may include a marriage – or marriage-like relationships. The women are required to provide up-to-date birth certificates proving their unchanged marital status as widows. This is not only an unnecessary humiliation of the women, but takes time, money and a lot of psychological strength to cope with the stress ... For many displaced women from the ethnically cleansed parts of the country that have now become part of Republika Srpska, this eventually means dealing with the administration that caused their sufferings in the first place' (2013, pp. 162-163).

There are older stories too, of individuals or families changing names or religion at different moments of religious oppression, inter-ethnic tension, or assimilation in Balkan history. For example, when Croats lived in Serb areas, some might give their children Serb names, not only to help them pass or for the family to be better received by their neighbors, but because sometimes they felt it took a bit of the spiritual power from the Serbs and put it onto them in some way. As one person put it to me, "Living with people next door with colonial ambitions is not easy." The following discussion focuses on just two examples of types of records where some of these themes are evidenced.

Passports and travel documents

International attempts to curtail terrorism, especially in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, as well as attempts to slow down the movement of undocumented immigrants have involved intensified national and international efforts to crack down on ways in which visas, passports and other travel documents, authentic or forged, might be used to facilitate the movements of terrorists and war criminals. Official scrutiny of travel documents and also the power that officials can wield by withholding or removing such documents is not anything new. For example, Manan Ahmad Asif speaks to some of the affect of this power when he encounters two confiscated passports of two individuals detained in 1946 in a police evidence room in Ahmedpur, Pakistan together with the brief note 'Suspicion of spying. Interrogate' (2014, p.8). However, while the power dimensions of such situations are readily apprehensible, the emotions experienced by refugees and displaced persons in desperate need to obtain documents that can help them to survive or settle and the lengths to which they will go are also important to understand.

A colleague of mine, a daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, knowing I could potentially hold three different citizenships, once asked me how many passports I held. When I said I had two, she chided me, 'Every Jew knows that one should get as many different passports as possible, to keep all one's options open when things go wrong.' A passport is a document that allows one to make transitions between places, between "home" and "away-from-home," and through and out of liminal spaces such as borders and refugee camps. It also allows one to "shop" national identities and seek protection when a country implodes or persecutes or seeks to eliminate its own citizens. Because of Josip Broz Tito's non-alignment strategy, Yugoslav citizens, unlike those of the Soviet bloc countries, were able to travel freely and without visas before the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars. Shortly after declaring their independence in 1991, Slovenia and Croatia gained the ability for their citizens to travel to Western Europe visa-free travel. That was not the case for the other republics, however. For Croatians who found themselves outside the country and trying to return home without yet having a new Croatian passport, their Yugoslav passport might still be honored, but now they required visas for other countries. More fundamentally, for Croats, Muslims and others who remained inside the other republics but who were desperate to leave, or who had been internally displaced or were refugees in Croatia or elsewhere in the region, obtaining travel documents that would be accepted elsewhere was often a matter of survival. Many Yugoslavs did not previously hold passports and the costs and time involved in procuring one, for many impossible at that point, could be prohibitive. Some countries honored the old passports or accepted those of the new nations for a while, until the numbers of those arriving within their borders began to escalate. In the 1998-1999 Kosovo War, Serb forces implemented the euphemistic practice of "identity cleansing," stripping ethnic Albanians of identity documents and other papers they were carrying, both parties well aware that they would need the documents to return home at any future point. Yet more documents were required by the countries to which people moved, to obtain refugee status and be able to remain in a country, to establish residency or a right to citizenship and thus to earn money, begin a new life, or contemplate how to return to the previous one.

In *The Ministry of Pain*, Ugrešić's protagonist Tanja Lucić, a Croat exile who has managed to secure a position as a lecturer in Serbo-Croatian literature at the University of Amsterdam, describes the chaos and fear that swirled around travel documents during the wars:

'In the general confusion many used rumors as their sole compass, rumors about where you could go without papers and where you could not, where life was better and where life was worse, where they were welcome and where they were not. Some found themselves in countries they would otherwise never have seen. Passports from the first two breakaway countries of Slovenia and Croatia quickly soared in value. A Croatian passport could get you to Great Britain for a while—until the Brits caught on and shut the gate ... Some acquired three passports—Croatian, Bosnian, and 'Yugoslav'—in the hope of hitting the jackpot with at least one...' (2006, p. 16).

In a non-fictional published account, Merina Nosić, a woman from Sarajevo in her early thirties recalled:

'Winter came and there was not much work [in Sremska Mitrovica]. I could not allow others to pay for my needs, so I decided to go. But where? I decided to return to Bosnia. The destination was Fojnica, the house of my friends' parents. But for that journey I needed a passport, because I had to travel through Hungary and Croatia. My Bosnian passport lay in my bag, valid until 1990, and this was 1992. How could I extend the validity when I had no money and did not want to borrow it from others? I decided to sell my husband's wedding ring, the one he had given me when we had parted. The passport pictures cost nine German marks and I could sell the ring for eight marks' (Mertus et al 1997, p. 59).

With so much at stake, individuals found other ways to travel with documents. They borrowed other people's passports, and then found various ways to return them to the rightful holder. Jakob Finci, a leading Bosnian Jew renowned for his non-sectarian humanitarian work during the siege of Sarajevo similarly tells of an elderly Muslim couple who approached him for help in getting out of the city:

'My own parents had died years before, but their ages were about the same. So I dug out some old documents to give to the couple—now the records show that my mother and father left Sarajevo during the siege' (Lattimer 2010, n.p.).

They also tampered with passports—their own or those of others in order to change identities or conceal stamps from countries that had been visited or the absence of stamps of countries entered without passing through official border controls. At the same time, sympathetic or simply lazy border officials sometimes turned a blind eye, allowing the anxious holder to pass on. After the war and still today, the validity of such documents might be much more scrutinized at borders by border personnel on the alert for persons accused of war crimes traveling under false identities, especially between the different countries of the former Yugoslavia. In *The Lazarus Project*, Bosnian American author

Alexander Hemon's protagonist Vladimir Brik grew up in Sarajevo but settled in Chicago after being stuck there when the war broke out. A writer, Brik becomes intrigued with the case of Lazarus Averbuch, a young Jew who escaped the 1903 Kishinev pogrom in what is now Moldova and came to Chicago, only to be killed by Chicago police in 1908, suspected of an anarchist bombing. Retracing Lazarus' journey, Brik describes crossing the no-man's land that constitutes the border between Ukraine and Moldova. He is traveling with an old friend from Sarajevo, Rora:

'It took us forever to cross the Ukrainian-Moldovan border. First, we had to get out of Ukraine, which was not all that easy. We had to step out of the bus and give our papers to Ukrainian border guards. After they cursorily checked everyone else's local IDs, they devoted all their attention to our passports. It must have been a while since any Americans crossed this border—neither of us cared to brandish our patriotic but useless Bosnian passports. Rora's weary American passport was an absolute page-turner: the border guards passed it from one to the other, reverently, paying particular attention to the smudged stamps. They pointed at a couple of pages with runny smears and I translated Rora's answer: he had once been caught in the rain. Even I knew it was an old trick: washing your passport to cover up for the missing entry stamps. But the Ukrainians were happy enough with it to let us leave and become a Moldovan problem' (Hemon 2008, p. 180).

Ugrešić's Lucić draws attention to how those not in the same position may not comprehend either the exigency (whether real or imagined) and the accompanying anxiety of having to produce the requisite papers; and also how often officials do not wish to know the ramifications of their bureaucratic actions. She narrates her desperation over needing a work visa (even though she had a passport) upon being informed by her department head that there is no money to hire her back to teach at the end of the summer:

'Of course he didn't broach the question of where I would be going after Amsterdam—cautious people don't ask questions whose answers might bind them to something—but the whole time he held forth I had only one thought in my mind.

"Cees," I broke in, panic-stricken, "my visa is running out."

"I don't see how I can be of any help."

"You can write a letter stating that as head of the Department you confirm that I will be teaching here next year."

"But that would be unscrupulous. I couldn't risk it."

"The authorities don't care about the truth; they care about documents. There's no risk whatever."

"I don't know ..."

"I'll come for the letter tomorrow," I said in a voice I barely recognized.

"You leave it with Anneke."

I left the office secure in the belief that the letter, department stamp and all, would be waiting for me the next day. Then I sailed down the stairs and into the

café across the street. I reached the toilet just in time. Never in my life had I vomited with such vehemence.

Later I asked myself what I'd meant to accomplish with the letter and why I had humiliated myself so to get it. What good was an extension when there was no job to go with it? I'd seem émigré fever symptoms in others ... but I thought I was immune to them. All that talk about "papers," the willingness to go to any lengths for the proper "papers." And then what? "Then we'll see." I'd watched faces change expressions in quick succession or combine cunning, condescension, and fear; I'd watched the tense, sad, half-criminal look that goes with the scramble for the last mouse hole' (Ugrešić 2005, pp. 188-189).

This reality—that in crisis or desperation, people will act upon documentation expeditiously or emotionally, whether or not that documentation can be proved to be "truthful" or "reliable"—de-stabilizes and de-privileges classic archival understandings of trustworthiness. In its place, it insists that an expanded contextual understanding of the act itself with which the record is associated be brought to bear in any archival value judgment or prioritization; and serves as a visceral reminder that a record that has been tampered with or used for a purpose other than that for which it was created is nevertheless authentic in relation to the purpose for which it was used to achieve.

Land and property records

Trudy Peterson writes that:

'It appears that few national archives are involved in [digitization] projects on land records, some of the most important records in the government. Often the land records seem to stay indefinitely in the custody of the relevant ministry. Archivists need to become involved in the preservation of these records, including the digitized materials, whether or not they are transferred to archival custody' (2012, p. 123).

Both Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 12 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantee the "right of return"—the right of any person to return to his or her country (United Nations 1948; United Nations 1966). For those among the millions of people who became refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) during the Yugoslav Wars who wished to return home, this has been a guarantee fenced in by political, economic, social, legal, and security-related obstacles. A 1997 report by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), which looked at progress on the return process for Bosnians that was a centerpiece of the 1995 Dayton Agreement lamented how a lack of bureaucratic cooperation and communication among local parties, implementation of policies, and proactivity and initiative on the part of local officials were impeding successful returns and the work of relief agencies (Van Metre and Akan 1997). The contentious Belgrade-Pristina Technical Dialog begun in 2011 between Serbia and Kosovo included a desire expressed by Serbia for a process to resolve property claims. The Dialog identified some of the areas where

bureaucracy, and in particular records were integral to normalizing the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo:

‘Understandings have so far been reached on the return of civil registries and cadastre records, on the freedom of movement of persons and cars, on the mutual recognition of diplomas, on customs stamps...’ (Lehne 2012)

Land and other property records are often among the oldest types of records held in archives and land registry offices. The prior history of recordkeeping in the region complicates how these records might support the return of persons and restitution for property destroyed or from which people were displaced is. An anecdote that is frequently repeated in conversations is that someone’s grandparent who lived in [six/seven/eight] different countries but never moved from the same house. Various parts of the region had been under Hungarian or Byzantine rule in the Middle Ages, and then became territories of first the Ottoman and then the Austro Hungarian empires. After World War I, the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Montenegro merged with the provisional State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It was renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, and then again by the Partisan resistance to the Axis powers in 1943 as Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. Croatia’s Dalmatian coast at the time was controlled by Italy, although in 1941 the Ustaše had also formed the Independent State of Croatia, widely regarded as a puppet fascist state of the Axis powers. In 1946, the Communists came to power and the Italian territories were incorporated into the new Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1963, the country was again renamed as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The SFRY began to break apart in 1991 with the declarations of independence of Slovenia and then Croatia. Serbia and Montenegro formed a new federation, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, only to break apart and become independent states in 2006. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

As a result of this complicated genealogy, records were kept in many different locations, including Graz and Vienna in Austria, Istanbul in Turkey, Venice and Rome in Italy and in state archives, registries and cadastres around the former Yugoslavia (now separate national archives systems). Some records relating to the Serb population were moved from Vienna to Berlin after World War II as the Germans searched for evidence of Serbian conspiracy in the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo that precipitated the First World War. Records were also kept according to differing recordkeeping regimes, in a multitude of languages (e.g., Albanian, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Turkish) and scripts (e.g., Cyrillic, Glagolitic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin), and with variant forms of place and personal names. This necessitates a high degree of collaboration and mutual support between archivists at these different locations. For example, the Styrian Provincial Archive, containing many of the records (in German, not Slovenian) of what today is Slovenia, was located in Graz but was restituted to the state archives in Maribor in 1997, and there is also ongoing digitization and description in Slovenian of records held in the Graz archives by Maribor archivists. The land registry records held in Austria are in impeccable shape, with the same registration scheme having been in place for hundreds of years. In Maribor, there is

a notable initiative to develop name authority files that address the complexities of these records.

The keeping of land and property records was sporadic or simply did not occur after 1947 in Communist Yugoslavia. When property, including private homes, was nationalized, records were not updated to reflect this, making the transition back to private ownership after the end of Communism difficult. This is not, of course, unique to Yugoslavia and the effects of the wars. Archives in many former Eastern Bloc countries experiencing huge demands for land records after the end of Communism. The Lithuanian State Archives, for example, in a country with a population today of approximately three million people, received over two million written requests for land records and the Albanian National Archives continues to receive many such requests a week.

In rural communities in the former Yugoslavia, transfers in ownership that occurred with deaths were often not registered with the state and families relied on memory and oral tradition to keep track of who in an extended family was the current official owner of a piece of land. This memory structure was ruptured, however, with the massive population displacement and loss of life, especially of males, that occurred during the wars, significantly impeding the ability for displaced persons, refugees and heirs to return and claim their land. State and city archives buildings and records offices holding such records were also deliberately targeted and possibly continue to be. Suspicions have circulated that the National Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina was set on fire during civil unrest in Sarajevo in February 2014 in a deliberate attempt to destroy the land records. There are many other stories of records that were lost through shelling or as collateral damage, or were selectively eliminated or hidden during the war. Some remain hidden today (although there are also powerful stories of archivists and librarians who helped to pack up and rescue records and manuscripts, or who protected records that were not their own and who gave them back after the end of the wars). This loss or disappearance of records further complicates the search for land and property records. As Ann Cvetkovich has noted, absences of and in records are, therefore, not just a theoretical conundrum but also a practical reality that has to be addressed both by archivists and by individuals needing those records (2014).

Of course, not all needs for these records are about recovering from the Yugoslav Wars. Some of them are about what transpired with property prior to and after the end of socialist Yugoslavia. In Croatia, a law that came into effect in summer 2013 mandates that the owners of all structures built or modified since 1947 have to produce the relevant permits or face the possibility of having their buildings torn down. However, obtaining permits at the time could be prohibitively expensive and slow, and often people simply never filed, or the local authorities never issued the permits. Some people told me that they were convinced that the government wouldn't actually follow through and so had done nothing. Others told me of hunting through archives and indeed, in the reading room of the Zagreb City Archives the desks were piled high with registers being used by panicked homeowners who were trying to locate permits. In the absence of permits, the archivists were trying to help them to find any other documentary evidence, for example in court records, that might indicate that permission had been granted to build or modify a

building. Another story I have been told often is of individuals or a family who, since Croatia became independent, had been making regular payments under an oral agreement to an owner for a flat inside a house in which they had been living. Their understanding was that their payments were being put towards owning, rather than renting the flat, only to be told by the owner that there was no record of the payments and thus there was no sale.

Moving Forward

Arguing that good recordkeeping, information management and archives are essential to capacity-building in post-conflict situations, as well as to peacekeeping, Adami answers his own questions (posed at the outset of this paper) about the agency of archivists:

‘I can do very little as an individual archivist, but ultimately the concepts of transparency, good governance, access to information as a human right, rule of law and respect for human dignity will all be aided by the creation, preservation of and access to information by all’ (2009, p. 4).

However, he goes on to qualify that statement:

‘As it is with international interventions on humanitarian grounds, so it is with archival endeavours in the promotion of human rights (justice). Human rights do not automatically proceed from the application of best practices in information management. The profession needs to take a position and then to act on it. We should not assume that someone else will come forward and take responsibility. We should each start with ourselves as individuals, and then in time ‘we’ can collectively make a difference’ (Adami, 2009, p. 4).

While this is an important statement for the international archives community to take to heart, it is just as important to be sensitive to and reflexive about the different professional, institutional and particularly individual and intensely personal perspectives and experiences that archivists bring to bear. Archivists in the countries of the former Yugoslavia have to operate within the realities of their own infrastructures and records laws, some of which are a legacy from socialist Yugoslavia and some of which reflect the shifting political and economic structures and aspirations of the countries that emerged out of Yugoslavia. Archives remain chronically underfunded and although a new generation of professionally trained and visionary archivists are gradually assuming leadership positions, this movement is impeded by the fact that archival positions are still too frequently treated as sinecures bestowed for political reasons upon certain individuals or their family members. Laws in some countries that give records creators and archives up to thirty years to transfer records to the archives tend to limit archivists’ ability to become involved with active recordkeeping and to help in brokering public access to more recent records (although this is changing as the countries of the former Yugoslavia re-write their legislation to bring it in line with new European Union requirements). Archival infrastructures have developed according to different trajectories in different countries even while there is a need for collaboration because of the number of shared

records and ongoing population movement. Some state archives systems, such as those of Slovenia and Croatia, have adopted or adapted international descriptive standards and have made impressive steps toward putting detailed descriptions of the holdings of their nations' repositories online, while others have not. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the operations of heritage institutions of all types are confounded by continuing political divisions along ethnic lines that are a structural effect of the system of government established through the Dayton Agreement. Across the former Yugoslavia, many records remain unindexed and few are in any kind of digital form—a continuing liability if the physical records were to be subject to further destruction or deterioration. In fact, archivists are still working to arrange and index key record series from World War II, such as household applications for rations in Zagreb, secret police files in Belgrade, and national railway records, that might provide evidence in support of human rights actions from that era, especially reparations claims by survivors of the notorious concentration camps in Yugoslavia, and identification of persons still missing.

Archives are also vulnerable to political maneuvering and civil unrest. Professional colleagues tell of the effects of politicians today becoming aware of the state and also newspaper archives and using them to dig up dirt on opponents while at the same time attempting to eliminate or remove from public view material that might reflect unfavorably upon themselves, especially from their careers before or during the war period. In 2011, Slovenia even held a controversial national referendum relating to opening up socialist era secret police records that had been transferred prematurely to the archives. The referendum cost three million euros, 'the same amount of money,' one archivist remarked 'as it had cost the Czech Republic to build a whole new archives.' And because of the political climate at the time, the public voted to open everything after only twenty years, which had the unanticipated consequences of exposing individuals who were still doing intelligence work or were in senior government positions in Slovenia (Mekina 2014).

It also cannot be ignored that archivists in the countries of the former Yugoslavia also lived through the wars as government employees, as professionals, as partners, as parents, and as individuals. They were responsible for protecting the records of their own and other communities while they and their own loved ones could have been at risk. Certainly in some cases, just as in the stories told in the literature, there are stories of how archivists exerted their own agency in ensuring that protection. In moving forward and addressing the needs of their public, those who remain today in archival positions have had to negotiate their own "moving past" and the ways in which the affects brought on by their own memories, complicated identities and allegiances might move them to act. One Croatian colleague, speaking of the need for archivists from all the countries to collaborate with Serbian archivists regarding the records of the SFRY that are held in Belgrade, told me of how much she welcomed the growth in professional archival education because 'now we can relate to each other as professionals, rather than according to our various ethnicities.' A Slovenian archivist recounted how deeply emotional it was when the archivists of the former Yugoslavia came together for their first conference after the Croatian and Bosnian wars. Yet another colleague told me, after I had given a presentation in which I shared some stories of my own experiences in

Northern Ireland, how relieved to hear that they were not alone in Europe in their struggles with identity and memory. She said that she had felt so ashamed of what had transpired in the former Yugoslavia that it almost paralyzed the impetus to act.

Moving forward is not the same thing as moving past. While it may never be possible to leave the past in the past because it continues to intrude into and be invoked by the present, there is a human need to move forward and this in turn creates the imperative for archivists to do what they can to facilitate that. If we view the archival and recordkeeping field as one not only engaged with the preservation of old records, but also actively engaged with human rights concerns across the material and social life of records, then we need to commit to developing recordkeeping infrastructures that can anticipate, avert or alleviate some of the ways in which records and recordkeeping continue to traumatize or target the vulnerable, and frustrate and prevent the human and societal need to move past. ICRtoP, a coalition of NGOs that formed around the ‘the Responsibility to Protect as a new international security and human rights norm to address the international community’s failure to prevent and stop genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity,’ supports a full spectrum of responsibility, including to prevent, to react, and to rebuild (ICRtoP, n.d.). It is from these words, perhaps, that archivists can take their cue—analyzing, exposing and refusing to participate in oppressive or secretive public recordkeeping systems and processes; reacting in an informed way to human exigencies around the immediate need for records; and ensuring that the principles for access and equity laid out by the International Council on Archives are implemented through new and reconceptualized descriptive systems and access procedures. In each of these acts, however, research is needed to identify the ways in which structural violence is embedded into records and recordkeeping processes as well as the ways in which this might be disrupted or overcome; and to promote understanding about individual needs, circumstances and affects of all the parties involved are essential. The collection and analysis of stories as discussed in this paper is one mechanism for so doing.

Stories such as those recounted here remind us that bureaucratic records and indeed archives do not exist in isolation. They are part of a diaspora of documentation that mirrors the layered history of the region and the internal and external diaspora of its communities. They are also part of a web, not only of activities and of the documentation generated thereby, but of differently constructed, and perhaps more importantly, differently experienced recordkeeping realities that all need to be taken into account. To identify these experiences, their affect, and the meaning placed upon them, it is necessary to turn to what individuals say – spontaneously as well as with the reflexivity of a formal interview or the deliberateness of a published account. Why should we in the archival community care about the affects and workarounds that these stories capture? We should care because they speak to the human dimensions of records and recordkeeping—not just the agency of records and recordkeeping in lives, but the need to balance that with agency that individuals may or need to have over the records (including subverting recordkeeping processes or tampering with records for personal survival purposes).

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