What Peace?
Grasping the Empirical Realities of Peace(s) in Post-war Mitrovica

Sandra Segall
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Abstract
Urban peacebuilding has proved particularly challenging in cities contested on grounds of state legitimacy where group identities are salient. Ever since the end of the Kosovo War in 1999, the city of Mitrovica has remained divided and been further polarized by outbreaks of violence, post-war politics, and strained inter-group relations. This single case study describes and conceptualizes the empirical realities of peace in the post-war city by applying the Peace Triangle as an analytical tool for understanding the quality and characteristics of the peace that prevails beyond the cessation of large-scale violence. The author builds on the conceptual model by arguing that a more multifaceted and peace-grounded analysis of peace is necessary. The research paper concludes by suggesting an altered analytical model that may yield a more nuanced understanding of peace(s) by encompassing aspects grounded in peace-conducive activities.

Keywords: urban peacebuilding, post-war cities, the Peace Triangle, Mitrovica, everyday peace, Kosovo, geographies of peace
Abbreviations
CSO - Civil Society Organisation
EU - European Union
EULEX - European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EOM - Election Observation Mission
FRY - Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GI - Građanska Inicijativa, Citizens’ Initiative Party
IDP - Internally Displaced Person
KFOR - Kosovo Force
KLA - Kosovo Liberation Army (Alb. UÇK)
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO - Non-governmental organisation
OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SFRY - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SRSG - Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UN - United Nations
UNMIK - United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNSC - United Nations Security Council
UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution
UÇK - Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, see KLA
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Field and Problem Statement

Deeply divided cities where ‘ethno-nationalist’ contest prevails have proved resilient to traditional peacebuilding efforts in societies traumatized by war and violent conflict (Björkdahl 2013:207). Urban settlements polarized by conflicting sovereignty claims, where group-identities often are salient, have proved particularly resistant to such endeavours. Moreover, divided cities are commonly at the core of violent struggles over state sovereignty and national identity (Calame and Charlesworth 2011). Belfast, Nicosia, and Jerusalem are all examples of cities that are contested on grounds of state legitimacy, where peacebuilding efforts have had a limited transformative impact on urban inter-group divisions. As a response to this challenge – and as part of the local and critical turn in peace studies – urban peacebuilding has surged as a theoretical discourse and research field, encapsulating the city’s transformative potential in post-war societies and the particularities of peace in the urban domain. Björkdahl argues that practical urban peacebuilding means: “transforming urban space, and realising the peace and the peace dividend by, for example, transforming values and attitudes of urban dwellers, mediating conflicting territorial claims to urban space, addressing the grass-root issues” (2013:217). Bollens, on the other hand, approaches urban peacebuilding from a planning perspective, stressing the potential of urban planning and policy in contributing to urban peace: “The city is important in peace building because it is in the streets and neighborhoods of urban agglomerations that there is the negotiation over, and clarification of, abstract concepts such as democracy, fairness, and tolerance” (Bollens 2007:1).

Previous research on peacebuilding in urban environments has addressed issues of governance in divided cities (see Björkdahl and Strömbom 2015), the role of urban planning in cities polarized by war and violent conflict (see Calame and Charlesworth 2011, Gaffikin and Morrissey 2006 & 2011, Bollens 2007 & 2013), the symbolic construction of the nation-state and national identities through interventions in the post-war cityscape (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017), and how continuities of war in times of ‘peace’ are reinforced (Gusic 2017). In previous research, the focus has frequently tended to lean towards places of symbolic significance, like the central bridge in Mostar (and Mitrovica), the peace walls in Belfast, the formation of so-called ‘ethnic’ and ‘neutral’ space, as well as interfaces between ‘ethnic’ spaces. In the case of Mitrovica, previous studies have been centred on the partitioning of the city (Lemay-Hebert 2012), boundaries and divisions in the cityscape (Pinos 2016), governmentality and urban conflicts over
peace(s) (Gusic 2017), statehood and place-making (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017), and frictional peacebuilding (Björkdahl and Gusic 2013).

While all the aforementioned research incorporates diverse aspects of peacebuilding to a varying degree, the field of urban peace studies has still not extensively explored and examined the varieties of peace found in cities divided by war and armed conflict. On the other hand, the past decade has seen an emerging group of scholars calling for advancing and rethinking our understanding of the peace concept, what peace entails and who it is for (Richmond 2008, McConnell et al 2014, Koopman 2011), as well as a novel emphasis on the empirical realities of peace in post-settlement societies (see Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010, Suhrke and Berdal 2012, Jarstad et al 2017). The varieties of peace in post-war societies have received surprisingly little attention in peace studies. Surely, in addition to the lack of conceptualization of peace: “the empirical reality of peace beyond the absence of war in most postsettlement societies remains largely uncharted academic territory” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:389). Against this backdrop, the present research paper sets out to capture, describe, and understand the empirical realities of peace in the post-war city of Mitrovica. In this sense, the study places itself among the recent scholarly efforts that strive to deepen our understanding of the types of peace that prevail in the aftermath of civil war and the characteristics of those peace(s). In order to yield such a multifaceted understanding of peace(s), this study applies a rather novel analytical tool called the Peace Triangle as developed by Kristine Höglund and Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs (2010). The analytical model is based on Johan Galtung’s Conflict Triangle for studying the complexities of armed conflict (Höglund et al 2016) and is designed to facilitate “a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the complex and diverse realities of peace, that also takes into account the incompatibilities at stake” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:373). The Peace Triangle allows us to move beyond the binary understanding of post-war societies as either failed or successful peace(s) (Höglund et al 2016:10). Moreover, this paper builds on the analytical model by complementing its focus on the remnants of war with an element intended to grasp peace-conducive activities in a post-war context.

Departing from this theoretical underpinning, this study examines the empirical realities of peace(s) in the post-war city of Mitrovica. Located in the Western Balkans, Mitrovica was socially, spatially, and politically divided during and after the Kosovo War in the late 1990s. When the war ended in June 1999, Kosovo became an international protectorate under UN auspices through the approval of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244. However, the resolution postponed the settlement of Kosovo’s legal status; an unresolved issue which is still at the core of the dispute between Belgrade and Pristina. In February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence – an action that remains contested by Serbia. Despite the long-standing
presence of the international community, externally initiated peacebuilding efforts have had limited results: “what has come out of elite statebuilding and divergent peace agendas is an ungovernable peace in Kosovo, whereby existing political elite structures (...) are not capable of transforming the conflict and contributing to a positive, sustainable peace” (Visoka 2017:16). In this context, Mitrovica has been described as the “undisputed epicentre of Kosovo’s postwar tensions” (Gusic 2017:182). As such, the city may be understood as a fault line in the wider Serbia-Kosovo conflict. More than 18 years after the end of the war, the city still remains largely residentially segregated. The southern part of the city is inhabited primarily by members of the Kosovo-Albanian community and on the northern side the majority of the residents are Kosovo-Serbs. The city’s institutional landscape is characterized by duplication of public service provision where both Serbian and Kosovo institutions provide services through separate systems (Mijacic et al 2017). In the Kosovo system, Mitrovica has been administratively partitioned into two municipalities – Mitrovica North and Mitrovica South – where the city’s municipal boundaries principally run along the river Ibar, however not entirely and not without contestation, as will be discussed in the empirical chapter of this paper. In the northern part of the city, the municipal structure in the Serbian system is also operational. In a study of how this post-war city has been shaped by its divisions, Pinos has argued that: “segregation is deeply embedded in Mitrovica to the extent that (...) it dominates every sphere and social practice in the city” (2016:128). This is a statement that will be challenged in this essay. The main research problem is thus that the study of divided cities and the quality of post-war peace is often too narrow and call for a more nuanced understanding beyond the binary conceptualizations which often guide scholarly readings of these phenomena. In order to understand urban peacebuilding in divided cities, we must strive to better grasp what type of peace prevails in such divided urban contexts. As will be argued throughout this paper, such a nuanced understanding of peace(s) is not possible without challenging the predominant focus on remnants of war in times of ‘peace’.

1.2. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the conceptualization of peace by examining the empirical realities of peace in the post-war city of Mitrovica. In this sense, the purpose of the study is twofold as it aims to 1) generate empirical insight into the realities of peace in the Mitrovica case and; 2) contribute to the conceptual advancement of the Peace Triangle by developing my own model with peace-grounded indicators to complement the analytical model’s conflict-grounded approach for the study of peace(s). Thus, the purpose of the study is to contribute to the rather pristine theoretical discourses on the conceptualization of peace(s) in post-war societies and urban peace studies. It aims to do so by examining the case of post-war Mitrovica, departing from the conceptual model of the Peace Triangle as proposed by Höglund
and Söderberg Kovacs (2010, 2015). In this sense, the author aspires to provide both empirical insights into the realities of peace in the post-war city and make a theoretical contribution to the above-mentioned fields. In order to attain these objectives, the research paper poses the following overarching research question: *What characterizes peace(s) in Mitrovica and how can the empirical realities of peace in this post-war city be described and understood?*

This principal research inquiry will be addressed by answering the following working questions:

- What are the conflict incompatibilities, attitudes and behaviours that prevail in Mitrovica? How do these dimensions vary across space in the city?
- What instances of peace-conducive activities take place in Mitrovica? How is peace reproduced across spaces in the city?
- What type of peace(s) prevail in the case of post-war Mitrovica?
Chapter 2. Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework of this paper. The first section provides a brief background and an overview of the analytical model, key dimensions and indicators, as well as its associated typology of peace(s). Secondly, the applicability of the original model is discussed, suggestions for adapting its scale, developing the spatial component, and broadening its scope through a more peace-grounded approach are made. Finally, a brief theoretical account of divided cities as contested space is presented.

2.1. What is Peace? Defining Peace(s) in Peace Studies

Peace is an elusive and contested term (McConnell et al 2014:6, Richmond 2005). When undertaking research in peace studies, defining peace is paramount since: “different definitions of peace reflect different understandings of how the world works and inform different interventions in how policy should be made” (McConnell et al 2014:5). In the same vein, Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs argue that “Identifying the character of peace in a post-war society is also critical for deciding which policy strategies are the most appropriate when prioritising between multiple peacebuilding tasks, methods and goals” (2010:390). Nevertheless, peace, in comparison to phenomena such as conflict, violence and war, has remained largely under-conceptualised in peace and conflict research, international relations, and geographical studies of war and peace (see Jarstad et al 2017, Richmond 2005, McConnell et al 2014).

Studies of peace and violent conflict have frequently relied on Galtung’s distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ peace as a starting point. Accordingly, negative peace is understood as the absence of war or cessation of ‘direct violence’, and positive peace is framed as a state in which society enjoys the absence of both cultural and structural violence (Ramsbotham et al 2011:11). Hence, positive peace is often understood as entailing more profound changes in society, something that Galtung has described as the “integration of human society” (1964:2). While the positive and negative peace pair is the most commonly used conceptualisation of peace (Richmond 2008:11), negative peace has been the principal object of attention (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:370) and academic literature has been dominated by studies on cessation of large-scale violence and war termination. The issue is well put by Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs as they contend that these studies often “deal with the resolution or settlement of a violent conflict rather than the peace that is meant to follow” (2010:370-371). On the other hand, studies of positive peace have often been seen as too idealist, since the concept entails profound changes related to justice and reconciliation in post-war societies.
As a response to the tradition of merely focusing on the absence of war or on more ‘ambitious’ peace concepts such as positive peace, liberal peace, and conflict transformation, Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010, 2015) suggest a novel way of conceptualising peace in societies affected by civil war. The authors argue for a conceptual framework that allows for a finer tuned description of the diversity of peace(s) in post-war societies. In their view, this understanding of peace retains “a more narrow, short-termed, and conflict grounded focus on peace that falls short of the notion of positive peace in its most ideal form” (2010:368). The analytical model is based on Galtung’s Conflict Triangle which includes three central elements of social conflict: contradiction (C), attitude (A), and behaviour (B) (see Ramsbotham et al 2011:10-11). These very same key elements are used in what Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs call the ‘Peace Triangle’.

2.2. The Peace Triangle: Dimensions and Types of Peace

This section outlines the three key dimensions of the Peace Triangle (Appendix No. 3, Fig. 1) and the peace categories as developed by Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010). First of all, the ‘C’ – contradiction – represents the conflict issues. These contested issues can be understood as the “issues at stake or the incompatibility in question” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:374). Naturally, a crucial aspect of this element is the actors’ readiness to articulate or pursue their goals, in order for the conflict issues to become manifest (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:374, Kriesberg and Dayton 2016:2). The contradiction component assesses the “relative presence or absence of remaining conflict issues in society” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:376).

Secondly, the attitude element of the triangle is concerned with the conflict attitudes of the actors and refers to the “psychological states or conditions – attitudes, emotions and perceptions – that develop between the parties in a conflict” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:375). Attitudes include “emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (desire, will) elements” (Ramsbotham et al 2011) and can be prejudices and stereotypes, as well as feelings of distrust and fear that stem from the conflict itself, while simultaneously serving to reinforce it (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:375).

The third component is conflict behaviour and encompasses the means by which the parties “pursue the incompatibility, including physical violence, intimidation, boycotts and sanctions” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2015:3). These actions are taken by the actors “with the intention to force the opponent to abandon or modify its goals” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:375). In other words, this can be said to be the way the conflict issues are contested, the manner in which the contestation becomes manifest and how the conflict parties pursue their incompatible goals. This component also includes a spatial dimension by examining regional variance in post-war societies. It refers to the “relative presence or absence of violence and insecurity” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:379) in a particular post-settlement context.
Consequently, conflict issues, behaviour and attitudes are applied as the ‘key indicators of peace’ in examining what peace(s) prevail in post-settlement societies (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:375). The three dimensions interact with each other and the conflict dynamics reinforce themselves as one affects the other (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:385).

2.2.1. **Categorizing Peace Beyond the Absence of War: A Typology of Peace(s)**

Based on these three main indicators, the authors have distilled a set of categories for analysing what peace(s) prevail in post-settlement settings (see Appendix No. 3, Fig. 1). Grounding their formulation in the first component of the Peace Triangle – contested issues – the authors have mapped three types of peace related to this dimension: (1) unresolved; (2) restored; and (3) contested peace. *Unresolved peace* refers to a post-war society where major contested issues remain unsettled. Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010) exemplify with the cases of post-war Kosovo and the Israel-Palestine conflict; two disputes that continue to revolve around issues of statehood and territory. The *restored peace* is a post-war state which is largely similar to the pre-war situation; where society presents similar characteristics to when the violence first broke out. The *contested peace* category refers to situations where the peace agreement or settlement conditions in themselves provide the ground for renewed conflict resulting in new incompatibilities.

Secondly, based on the conflict behaviour component, the authors have categorised peace(s) in post-war societies as (1) partial; (2) regional; and (3) insecure. The *partial peace* refers to a state where some actors continue their armed struggle but the hostilities don’t involve all of the warring parties. The *regional peace* category indicates the regional occurrence of continued armed struggle between two or more actors. The third category of this component is *insecure peace* where society has seen increased crime rates and widespread violent crime (not regarded as political violence) in the aftermath of armed conflict.

Thirdly, and departing from the concept of conflict attitudes, Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010) have distinguished three categories of peace(s): (1) polarised; (2) unjust; and (3) fearful peace. The first category, *polarised peace*, denotes cases where conflict attitudes largely remain along the main conflict divides and sometimes become even more extreme in the post-settlement period. The *unjust peace* category relates to transitional justice (encompassing e.g. amnesty laws and truth-seeking) and how these processes are perceived and influence conflict attitudes. The authors exemplify with post-settlement Guatemala, where reforms stipulated in the accords had still not been implemented several years after the peace agreements were reached (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:383-384). The third category of this component is *fearful peace*. The authors describe this type of peace as one where acts of intimidation instil fear of violence and persecution, such as a ‘warlord’s peace’ (2010:384).
Finally, these categories of peace(s) are not mutually exclusive. The authors point out that post-war societies can present features of various types of peace at the same time. While each post-war society transforms “so does the type(s) of peace that characterises it” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:385). Hence, several categories can apply to the same case and shift over time. This ever-changing pattern is mirrored by what Gaffikin and Morrissey term ‘fluidity’ of conflicts in urban contested space: “the very volatility of the conflict means it can change gear over time, and thus a textured appreciation of its dynamics can identify nuances and shifts even when the big picture appears immutable” (2006:876).

It may be argued that the proposed model is a simplified way of perceiving both peace and conflict, and in a sense, this is perhaps true. However, this conceptual framework isn’t designed to capture all aspects of the post-war situation at hand, but rather to provide “a diagnostic tool for identifying the type of peace that characterises a particular post-war state” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:384). In the same manner it seems valid to address the fact that the authors make “no claim that these three broad aspects can accommodate all the factors necessary for analysing all the conceivable factors” and that the analysis omits “a number of structural factors likely to be of relevance to many post-war societies (…) for the sake of conceptual clarity” (2010:375). In other words, despite the fact that the Peace Triangle draws on conflict analysis for its application, the model should not be seen as an all-encompassing tool for explaining a complete set of root and primary causes of a particular armed conflict or its post-settlement outcome. Rather, it should be conceived as a “heuristic device that contributes to a richer appreciation of the empirical varieties of peace after war” (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:376). In this sense, the model allows us to explore the remainders of contested issues, as well as new ones which may surface in a post-settlement environment. Also, it lets us hone in on other challenges that may be relevant for post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding, such as polarisation, renewed social conflicts, and post-war political violence.

2.3. ‘Localising’ the Peace Triangle: Scale and Space

In order to apply this model in the present study, I argue that the aspects of scale and level of analysis need to be addressed. The conceptual model in its present form appears to be intended for the study of post-settlement societies on a macro-level. In other words, it focuses on the realities of peace in post-war states or countries in the aftermath of civil war (see Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:369, 384-385). However, defining the case along state-boundaries would imply that the researcher takes a political stance with regards to the object of study when analysing post-war environments where secessionist aspirations are at the heart of contradiction. Moreover, this classification of a ‘post-war state’ seems too narrow as it may fail to grasp important aspects that could characterise peace(s) in post-war societies, such as transnational
features or dynamics that only become manifest on a micro-level. In other words, the application of this framework begs the question: what is our unit of analysis when categorizing peace(s) in post-war societies? The dilemma is similar to what one confronts when determining the outer limits of a case study; how do we define the case – where do we draw the line between phenomena and context?

McConnell and Williams call for scholars to deconstruct and resituate the concept of peace: “We should be questioning what is meant by peace, how is it understood within different contexts, who is peace for, and in whose image is it (re)produced?” (2011:929). In a similar manner, Richmond prompts the researcher to ask whose peace?, peace for whom?, and what is peace? (2008:16). These questions call for a clarification of scale when analysing peace based on the three key indicators. A clear distinction of the level of analysis also becomes important since what may be contested issues on a central government level (i.e. Belgrade and Pristina) might not be contested issues on a regional or local level (Barbero et al 2004), although they may have local or regional implications. This becomes even more complex when considering the post-war context of deeply divided cities as they often “provide a battle zone for larger proxy wars initiated and orchestrated by agents whose interests extend beyond the municipal boundaries” (Calame and Charlesworth 2011:11-12). Moreover, state-level indicators may fail to grasp local variations in peace, its reproduction, and the prevalence of conflict. Mac Ginty argues that “Local level variance is a key part of conflict-affected societies, yet it is often masked by aggregated data” (2013:62) and that nation-wide indicators run the risk of “subsuming particularised experiences into a generalised whole” (2013:59). In other words, local disparities are a central and a commonly obscured characteristic of societies that have endured violent conflict and are in the process of consolidating peace. In line with the above reasoning, the Peace Triangle is adapted to the case’s scale for the purpose of this study, namely, the micro-level. A focus on the micro-level harmonizes with the call put forward by McConnell et al who advocate for geographical studies of peace which attend to “scales not usually associated with peacekeeping or peacebuilding, in order to examine how peace is differentially constructed, materialized and interpreted” (2014:11). This can be seen as challenging the predominant way of viewing peace as an agreement between states and other armed actors, rather than a process that takes place between people.

2.3.1. The ‘Local’ and the Everyday Peace

The self-sustainable peace must be “home-grown, bottom-up and context-specific” (de Coning 2013:6). Centring on the micro-level is thus also underpinned by the importance of so-called ‘local’ actors as they are the long-term stakeholders who essentially construct and sustain peace. However, the ‘local’ in peace studies is not an uncontested concept, but an ambiguously used term that often remains undefined (Bräuchler and Naucke 2017). Sabaratnam (2013) points to the problematic
conception of the ‘local’ in both the liberal strand of peacebuilding studies, as well as its critical turn. She argues that even critical studies that reject essentialism struggle with an ‘ontology of otherness’ as they commonly place “substantial analytic weight on fundamental cultural differences” between the so-called ‘liberal’ and ‘local’ (Sabaratnam 2013:267-268). In a similar way, Bräuchler and Naucke take a critical stance towards the local turn and argue for a “better understanding of how the local can become an important reference point (...) without essentialising” (2017:422). The authors argue for a deconstruction of the binary and categorical prisms through which the ‘local’ is often understood, reiterating arguments put forward by scholars such as Paffenholz, who maintain that the concepts of ‘local’ and ‘international’ must be understood in their complexity, beyond the ‘local-international’ dichotomy (Paffenholz 2015:868). Relatedly, Hirblinger and Simons outline how the ‘local’ is troubled with issues of representation: “telling about the true, the good, and the bad local, empowering some and disempowering other actors, institutions, and practices” (2015:422). This implies an understanding of the ‘local’ as either resisting liberal peacebuilding, or as part of a hybrid peace, or frictional peacebuilding (Hirblinger and Simons 2015:424). In this vein, Bräuchler and Naucke argue that the local turn in contemporary peace and conflict studies has principally meant: “a half-hearted opening up towards local culture through a selective glorification, adoption and decontextualisation of specific elements and traditions, which can turn ‘the local’ into a stereotypically idealised and homogenised construction” (2017:432). In such a reading there is no place for micro-level conflicts over political power, local inequities, dominance, and exclusion (Bräuchler & Naucke 2017:432).

Rather than comprising a particular geographical area, the ‘local’ can be seen as the everyday acts undertaken by a multiplicity of individuals and groups “that go beyond elites and civil society normally associated with liberal peacebuilding” (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015:833). This notion of the ‘everyday’ in post-conflict environments is commonly understood as the ways in which people cope with the situation at hand through whatever means they have to make “their lives the best they can” (Roberts 2012:369). In line with this, Mac Ginty has suggested that everyday reproduction of peace is undertaken through a set of social practices aimed at distancing and avoiding potential risks and conflict triggers (2014:555). In contrast, Naucke (2017) has criticized the concept of everyday peace for carrying inherent notions of the local as an object, rather than a self-sustained protagonist in peacebuilding. This, given the alleged inability of everyday peace to address the armed conflict’s structural aspects (Mac Ginty 2014:558) whereby local actors and communities: “remain recipients of peace measures, now with some agency or opportunities to minimise the impact of conflict but still (...) without the autonomous potential to construct peace” (Naucke 2017:455-456).

However, the concept of everyday peace leaves room for debate since it fundamentally relies on the definition of peace itself. If peace is a continuous socio-spatial process that is
political and (re)producible on a variety of scales rather than a fixed indivisible endpoint, then everyday peace isn’t limited by such suppositions. In other words, everyday peace is then not necessarily conditioned by its alleged inability to transform structural aspects of violent conflict. McConnell et al maintain that everyday peace may be understood as: “a fragile and contingent process that is constituted through everyday relations and embodiments, which are also inextricably linked to geopolitical processes” (2014:11). In this understanding of everyday peace, the concept is more closely related to the everyday actions and practices of individuals, groups, institutions, and other actors in (re)producing peace, rather than the limits of those actions in fostering large-scale social transformation. Relatedly, Williams point to the advantages of using everyday peace as a theoretical point of departure as it: “offers an analytical framing for understanding how peace as a sociospatial relation, is reproduced through and against different sites and scales” (Williams 2015:190). This understanding of peace also builds on the analytical model by addressing peace and its reproduction on scales less often attended to and through capturing the ‘micropolitics of everyday peace’ (Williams 2015:178). A key presupposition in this view of peace is that it is an inherently political process, it is the creation of both dissimilarities and connections as well as “assembled and negotiated through different techniques of power” (Williams 2015:178).

2.3.2. Situated Peace? Peace(s) as Socio-Spatial Processes

The spatial dimension of peace and conflict is partly reflected in Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs’ model, as two of the peace(s) pertinent to the Peace Triangle’s behavioural component (partial peace and regional peace) are concerned with emplaced continuities of violence. Both these categories, partial and regional peace(s), call for a component that encompasses a spatial analysis of peace and its reproduction in the city. Björkdahl has argued that the urban peace is an emplaced peace that involves “everyday practices that may transcend negative peace and that speaks to the ideal of the positive peace” (2013:216). Nevertheless, Björkdahl also notes that some scholars might object to this emplacement of peace since the concept is often understood as “comprehensive and undividable, and to confine peace spatially is thus not constructive” (2013:217). While drawing on Foucault’s notion that peace exists inside war, Sara Koopman (2017) describes peace as a process that is essentially spatial and diverse:

In her study of spatial governmentality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stavrevska makes a convincing case for including a spatial dimension in the study of post-war environments: “a
spatial perspective adds a valuable component to the analysis of post-conflict societies by focusing on the spaces that people produce, occupy and interpret, rather than on the groups with which they self-identify” (2016:143). Places have distinct symbolic meaning in deeply divided societies where identities compete (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). In such a context, places become severely politicised and wherever those places “reflect themselves in violent conflict, their formulation and re-configuration become entrapped in strategies of protection and survival” (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011:97-98). In contested urban space, rival spatial narratives are often applied in ‘imitative ways’ through flag display, or territorializing memory and historical narratives which serve to demarcate belonging (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2006:874-875). The above notions of everyday peace and the study of situated peace(s) harmonize with the overarching conceptual framework in the sense that they recognize the varieties of peace(s) across and within post-war societies.

2.4. Studying Pieces of Peace or Traces of War?

Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs open up for further theoretical development of their conceptual model by noting that: “it is imperative that scholars involved in peace and conflict research remain reflective about the concepts underpinning empirical peace studies – to make sure that the classifications we use do not obscure important realities about peace” (2010:390). The purpose of the Peace Triangle is to enhance our understanding of peace as a theoretical concept, as well as the variations of empirical realities in post-war societies beyond the cessation of large-scale violence. In Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs’ words, the tool “enables us to illustrate the great diversity of peace beyond the absence of large-scale warfare in contemporary post-settlement societies” (2010:384). Yet, while this analytical tool righteously strives to shift focus from the study of war to a reconceptualization of peace, the model itself is still centred on examining the remnants of conflicts and violence, focusing explicitly on the remainders of contested issues (or newly arisen ones), as well as the persistence of conflict behaviour and attitudes. While one should keep in mind that the Peace Triangle is intended to be ‘conflict-grounded’, it seems important to point out that the model facilitates a continued emphasis on social conflict and the perseverance of violence in post-war societies. This, without balancing the focus on such continuities of war with counterweights of peace. In this sense, by stressing the existence or non-existence of conflict issues, attitudes, and behaviour (and violence) in post-war societies, the tool fails to effectively examine the reproduction of peace and peace-conducive activities in the very same context. I suggest that there is potential for exploring the peace-grounded aspects of post-war societies without losing theoretical lucidity. Following the above outlined reasoning, I argue that in order to understand the diversity of peace(s), it is not sufficient to merely study the traces and remnants of a violent past, but we must also direct our
attention to instances of peace and its formation. Subsequently, I propose that aspects which can be seen as conducive to peace should be included in the analysis.

2.4.1. Peace-grounded Indicators: Behaviour, Attitudes and Issues

In this section, I will outline a set of possible indicators of peace-conducive aspects of the model’s three key dimensions. First, considering the analytical model’s behaviour component and its indicators, peace-grounded equivalents of this dimension could be instances of inter-group cooperation, having and nurturing mutually beneficial and amicable relations that transcend group-based identities, communication and dialogue, as well as acts of solidarity. Moreover, I suggest that ‘islands’ or ‘zones’ of peaceful co-existence are the peace-grounded equivalents of regional peace(s). This aspect is not understood merely in geographical terms, but rather, it’s intrinsically connected to human practices and actions that produce and reproduce space (Massey 2005:9-10). In his article on how a Colombian community employs strategies conducive to ‘emancipatory peace transformation’, Naucke describes how the community vernacularizes measures stipulated in international treaties (2017:461-462), such as the Safety Zones described in the Geneva Convention. The community’s practices go far beyond safeguarding the immediate survival of the civilian population and provide “the basis for a process of peace transformation that is taking place without the engagement of the state” (Naucke 2017:462). In the case of Varanasi, an Indian city described as a ‘sensitive site’ with regards to Hindu–Muslim relations, Williams highlights the reproduction of peace without the interference of the state-level actors: “The persistence of peace was (...) not contingent on the application of force and top-down interventions by state actors. Rather, the possibility for everyday peace resided in a local capacity to create real and imagined spaces of connection, tolerance and civility” (Williams 2015:181). This understanding of peace alludes to the ‘ideal’ of positive peace, as compared to the understanding of everyday peace proposed by Mac Ginty in which social practices that constitute ‘everyday peace’ require inter-group contact but are reduced to strategies of avoidance, distancing (avoiding certain topics of conversation, sites, people, and display of social markers) and other micro-level techniques for navigating the everyday in deeply divided societies, such as intentionally presenting oneself in an ambiguous way (2014:556).

On a micro-level, peaceful co-existence is understood as residing in and using shared space without pursuing contested issues through conflict behaviour strategies. Gaffikin and Morrissey point out that, in the context of contested space, dealing with animosities between ‘intimate enemies’ (Benvenisti 1995) is seldom reducible to increased inter-community contact and interaction (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2006). However, for many of the aforementioned aspects, inter-group contact is a prerequisite. Moreover, inter-group contact is likely to reduce prejudice and enhance future engagement in direct contact with the other group (Gaunt 2011). Simonsen
clearly points out that even the smallest steps in inter-group communication should be treasured: “Already, conflict transformation is taking place when inter-ethnic contacts are developing, with the minimum of trust that requires” (2005:306). Moreover, indifference is also key in maintaining ‘urban peace’ as remaining indifferent to others in the city allows us to co-exist in urban space (Tonkiss 2003:301)

Referring to Williams’ fieldwork in Varanasi, McConnell and Williams describe instances of ‘everyday peace’ as: “everyday moments of cooperation and coexistence, exchange and encounter across difference in public settings” (2011:928) where “moments of tension were actively assuaged and peace was continually reproduced through processes of negotiation and consultation, as well as patterns of distancing and indifference” (2011:928). In the Varanasi context, the networks and links between the majority and minority community were key in explaining how communal peace was upheld (Williams 2007:173). Similarly, examples of attitudes that are evidence of or conducive to respectful coexistence could be trust, acceptance, recognition of common goals or acknowledging shared concerns. Shared interests are usually already there, the strenuous task is to make individuals aware of their existence and over-arch divisions through those common interests (Simonsen 2005). Some scholars would be cautious in advancing this argument as emphasizing commonalities may inadvertently highlight marginal differences as adversaries may “feel more compelled to amplify those aspects which most place them apart” (Gaffikin and Morrisssey 2011:258-259). Moreover, an important attitude aspect would be to recognize that, in a political sense, one does not share the same interest of every member in one’s own group: “a first step is recognizing that there may be conflicting interests within one’s ethnic group, and a second step is recognizing that one’s own interests may be shared by someone of a different ethnicity” (Simonsen 2005:306). Finally, the peace-grounded counterpart of conflict issues – beyond the absence of conflict incompatibilities – would be those shared interests which we could call common grounds and commonalities.

In essence, the conflict-grounded and peace-grounded indicators are intended to provide an even finer-tuned image of what type(s) of peace(s) prevail in post-war societies. The peace-grounded indicators are an extension of the ‘relative presence or absence’ (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:376) of conflict issues, attitudes, and behaviours. The indicators speak to the ideal of positive peace’ (Björkdahl 2013:216) while they do not condition everyday peace on its capacity to transform structural aspects beyond the scale on which it occurs. They also suggest a reconceptualization of everyday peace, where this term doesn’t merely signify strategies of avoidance, ambiguity, and distancing (see Mac Ginty 2014), but rather, where everyday peace is also understood as instances when divisions are transcended beyond such coping strategies.
2.5. A Note on the Divided City as Contested Space

While all cities can be considered divided in some sense (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011), the division that some post-war cities experience is often characterized by hyper-segregation, polarization, and an acute lack of social cohesion. Gaffikin and Morrissey distinguish between two forms of contested cities based on the cause of their contest: plurality and sovereignty (2011:3-4). These two poles should be seen as the ends of a spectrum rather than clearly defined types of cities. The pluralist form of urban contested space is centred on “disputes about imbalances in power, welfare and status between the distinctive rival groups” (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011:3). On the other hand, cities contested on grounds of state legitimacy and sovereignty entail similar pluralist issues, socio-spatial fragmentations related to resources and power in the city, but the contestation is one of the “the legitimacy of the state itself” (2011:3). Mitrovica places itself close to the ‘sovereignty’ pole on the spectrum. This contested city has persisted as a flashpoint in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict (Boyle 2014:183) a dispute which revolves around the question of Kosovo’s legal status. Some scholars argue that Mitrovica North – along with the other three northern Serb-majority municipalities – is Kosovo’s last obstacle to stability (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017:52). In this sense, Mitrovica can be understood as a ‘crucial geopolitical site’ (see Bollens 2013:189) in the wider Pristina-Belgrade dispute. Importantly, in cities contested on the basis of statehood and sovereignty, conflicts over ‘pluralist’ issues such as equality and resource allocation tend to become intertwined with the broader struggle over state ownership: “The question of ‘whose city’ is inextricably part of a bigger quarrel about ‘whose country’” (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011:3-4). In such a context, emphasizing shared civic identities or citizenship proves problematic as the state is the very foundation of this civic identity as “the fundamental contest is not over the nature of the state, but rather over its very existence” (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011:259-260).
Chapter 3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological approach of the paper is charted. First, the research design is described and an argument for case selection is made. Secondly, the method of data analysis is explained. Thirdly, the data collection methods, interviewee sampling techniques, and pertinent triangulation are outlined. Lastly, ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1. Case Study Research Design

This is a descriptive single-case study that examines the empirical realities and types of peace that can be observed in the case of Mitrovica. The case study design is suitable when examining “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003:13). There are several distinct advantages to this approach in the study of social phenomena in the urban domain: the design is flexible, it allows the researcher to apply multiple research methods, it entails a spatial focus while placing emphasis on context, and it enables the researcher to integrate ‘multiple perspectives’ on the case at hand (Muir 2008:105-108). This flexibility is valuable since the researcher must be able to adapt to changing conditions and seize unforeseen opportunities for data collection (Muir 2008). In the study of the empirical realities of post-war societies, the approach is suitable as it allows the researcher to get close to realities (Flyvbjerg 2006) and to the ‘lived experiences of individuals’ (Bond and Thomson-Fawcett 2008).

3.1.1. Case Selection

Case selection is an essential part of designing a research project (Merriam 2009:81-82). The case selection was done purposefully as the case should mirror the research objectives (Bleijenbergh 2010) and be clearly anchored theoretically in order to avoid case selection bias (Höglund 2011). The reason for undertaking a single-case study is one of in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied, as well as the researcher’s interest in the case’s inherent “uniqueness and their commonality with other case” (Paterson 2010). The case selection was based on my expectation that it would yield rich information on the particular characteristics of the social phenomenon in question (Bleijenbergh 2010). The case was selected according to the following criteria: a) a society that has undergone civil war or an internal armed conflict; b) an urban context where post-war divisions and contestation persist and where statehood and sovereignty is at the core of the conflict; and c) a site where former adversaries reside in close proximity to one another.
Like Jerusalem, Nicosia, and Belfast, Mitrovica is a city divided by armed conflict and contested on grounds of sovereignty and state legitimacy. The city presents features which commonly identify such contested divided cities, like hyper-segregation and rival spatial narratives of belonging (see Gaffikin and Morrissey 2006). In this sense, Mitrovica can be understood as a typical divided city where ‘ethno-nationalist’ conflict and divisions have persevered in post-war times. On the other hand, Mitrovica is the only place in Kosovo where members of the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian community meet on a quotidian basis (Gusic 2017:310). In fact, Mitrovica’s northern part is home to the only truly multi-ethnic neighbourhoods in Kosovo (Interview Andric 2017). This makes the city a site of physical proximity necessary for the empirical study of everyday peace, as this would not be possible where there is no inter-community contact (Mac Ginty 2014:558-559). In this sense, the case is instrumental to the issue (Stake 1994:35) as Mitrovica is a context in which both conflict-grounded and peace-grounded indicators can be observed. The study focuses mainly on the suburban and urban residential areas on the north side of the Ibar. This, as there are no places where Kosovo-Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians live in proximity to one another in the urban areas of southern Mitrovica (Conversation with Nushi 2017). Also, defining the entire city as the case would risk framing the two sides as simply opposed and incompatible, failing to grasp the nuances and diversity that the northern part of the city presents and the encounters that such proximity is likely to provide. The focus of the study is contemporary and not historical, although some context must be provided. Finally, Mitrovica is considered a relatively ‘newly’ divided city which has not been extensively studied by academia (Pinos 2016:128). In light of this, I suggest that it is fruitful to examine the case of Mitrovica, both for a theoretical purpose; in order to apply and develop the Peace Triangle as a tool for understanding and conceptualizing peace in societies affected by civil war, and for an empirical one; in examining the empirical realities of peace(s) in this particular post-war city.

3.2. Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis has been conducted through focused within-case analysis, tracing patterns of meaning (Merriam 2009:205), making out contrasts and comparisons (Miles et al 2014:284), and identifying themes and categories in the data through open coding (Wicks 2010:155, Merriam 2009:178) and clustering. The goal of this approach is to provide an in-depth understanding (Paterson 2010:972) and intimate familiarity with the case (Eisenhardt 1989:540).

Essentially, the first phase entailed coding the data while determining the relevancy of the material from a theoretical point of view by carefully ‘condensing’ the data (Miles et al 2014:279). The interview transcripts and field observations were coded in accordance with the indicators as
outlined in the theoretical framework. This meant coding paragraphs, observations, and other content as either conflict-grounded indicators (e.g. mentioning of a particularly conflictive area as an indicator of regional peace) and peace-grounded indicators (e.g. bilingual signage as an indicator of everyday shared space). In this sense, the process was guided by coding the data that was most “salient to the research question” (Paterson 2010:972). Throughout this process, I identified themes by “careful reading and re-reading of the data” (Rice and Ezzy 1999:258) and labelled data according to emerging themes (such as ‘lack of personal security’ or ‘settlement-related issue’).

The second stage consisted of clustering the codes along the three key dimensions as indicated in the theoretical framework. The codes were kept separate (peace-grounded and conflict-grounded indicators respectively) along the three dimensions. The codes were clustered into categories and subcategories according to themes that emerged in the data. As an example, consider the code ‘government corruption’. This code would be categorized as a conflict-grounded indicator of ‘insecure peace’ and the subcategory would be ‘judicial insecurity/Rule of Law’.

A ‘good’ set of codes should be mutually exclusive, exhaustive, and valid (Gratton and Jones 2010:240). Efforts were made to identify mutually exclusive codes. However, clusters did sometimes overlap (Miles et al 2014:279). Initially, the coding was directed at either peace-grounded or conflict-grounded indicators. However, during the process it became evident that these two indicators were so tightly intertwined that it seemed unfruitful to separate them in some instances. This tendency to overlap is a reflection of the overall theoretical framework as such, given that the categories in the typology (e.g. fearful peace, insecure peace) are not mutually exclusive. In practice, this was addressed by adding a label of ‘intimate contrast’: an instance where one cannot fruitfully extract the meaning and significance of one indicator without contrasting it with the other. While this approach was time-consuming since a new code meant re-coding all of the already coded data, this provided a beneficial approach as careful re-reading allowed me to review the labelling process and compare to the previous coding of the same data. This method then served as a way of ‘semi-triangulation’ in the sense that re-reading and re-coding allowed me to identify the codes that were labelled similarly again and data that may have been overlooked but now fitted into patterns detected throughout the analysis phase. In the analysis process, the codes and categories were assembled graphically in a concept mapping software.

In order to capture what is actually perceived as conflict issues and incompatibilities on a micro-level, the themes had to surge primarily from the interviewees’ accounts rather than being principally informed through external observers’ assessments of what, in their view, would be the most prominent issues. Thus, the data generated from the interviewees’ accounts and the
observations in the field primarily guided the analysis. This data was then complemented or cross-checked with other data and sometimes also with key informants.

3.3. Data Collection and Material

The data collection for this paper was primarily undertaken through fieldwork in Kosovo between October and December 2017. Through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and by viewing informal conversations in the field as data, the study applies “multiple methods in the analysis of the same empirical events” (Denzin 2017:15). The fieldwork was preceded by desk research: examining press releases issued by local authorities and dialogue progress reports published by the governments in Belgrade and Pristina, reviewing reports on community and minority rights, as well as statistical surveys on community attitudes regarding issues such as security, inter-group relations, and relevant political accords and proposals.

The author conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 individuals who are professionally engaged in issues related to community representation and relations in Mitrovica. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken following an interview guide (see Appendix No. 4). The interviews were tape-recorded and all but one took place in Mitrovica. In some interviews, the questions were handwritten in a notebook, in others printed, and finally, given the sometimes unexpected interview setting, I resorted to asking the questions known by heart. For example, one interview took place standing in a neighbourhood minimarket. Informal conversations in the field proved essential in order to grasp the wide array of perspectives on current and past events in the city, as well as their inherent complexities and nuances.

The basis for respondent selection was to yield a diverse set of perspectives on the topics of interest (Merriam 2009:216). Therefore, the initial sampling technique applied in this case study was purposeful sampling. The following criteria were applied for the purposefully selected respondents: (1) a close relationship to the city, i.e. working and/or living in Mitrovica at the time of the study; (2) the interviewee’s work or function was directly related to community representation and relations; local government, news media, and/or civil society initiatives; (3) the interviewee was not directly affiliated with international organizations and foreign missions in Kosovo. This selection criterion emanates from the author’s aim to focus on ‘the voices from below’ (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015:832). The purposeful sampling process was also guided by a few key informants associated with local civil society organisations. The author consciously strived to maintain a balanced representation of women and men, and of members of different Kosovo communities (e.g. Serb, Albanian, Bosniak). As the fieldwork progressed, the author complemented the first sampling technique with snowball sampling.
Participant observation is suitable when studying complex interactions (Denzin 2017). This method functioned as a means of collecting ‘physical trace material’ throughout the city and was particularly valuable since not all of the sites have been extensively described previously in academic literature. Physical traces are “most often suited for obtaining information on the incidence and frequency of behavior” (Merriam 2009:148). As such, recording physical traces was useful in exploring everyday activities and movement in the city. Observation was undertaken on numerous occasions in several of the city’s neighbourhoods and suburban areas on the north side of the Ibar River. In this sense, multiple data sources were used as data was cross-checked through observations across sites at different times (Merriam 2009:216).

The author stayed in a residential neighbourhood on the north side of the river Ibar during the fieldwork. I chose to reside ‘in the north’ since I have previously spent three months living in Pristina, a municipality where the vast majority of residents are members of the Albanian community and the Serb community only comprises around one per cent of the total population (ECMI 2013:18). The choice of location proved useful since, as time went by, the particularities of everyday life emerged; such as the proximity of life in the city (within a week I was running into new acquaintances in the street) or the regular interruptions in water supply and occasional power outages. Also, moving through the city on an everyday basis allowed me to observe routines and changes in the surroundings, and simply participate in everyday life by frequenting shops, restaurants, cafés, and bars. I kept a journal during the fieldwork where thoughts, feelings, observations, informal conversations, and other events were recorded and described. Sometimes, field notes were tape-recorded instead.

In the above outlined manner, the study makes use of multiple methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and data-mining from documents. The data collected for the purpose of this study has been triangulated through the application of multiple research methodologies and diverse data sources (Denzin 1978). As an example, mapping shared spaces in Mitrovica was undertaken through a variety of data collection methods: reviewing literature, collecting data through interviews, cross-checking such data with key informants, as well as the author’s own observations in the field. Participatory observation entailed everything from detecting language use to observing more obvious markers such as flag display. Lastly, it should be noted that in case study research, the researcher themselves is the primary tool for data collection (Merriam 2009) and “scientists must accept the fact that their own experiences probably provide the most important sources of data for their theories” (Denzin 1978:68). In essence, the result of a case study is the author’s interpretation of the phenomena, negotiated through others’ interpretations of the same subject or issue, which in turn is interpreted by the
reader (Merriam 2009). Importantly, when retelling lived experiences and realities, the researcher should maintain a reflexive approach. This means that the researcher must “hold themselves accountable for the knowledge produced” (Iphofen 2016 reference to Holland 1999) and assess to what extent emerging patterns and meaning is independent of the researcher herself (Iphofen 2016:139).

3.3.1. Ethics

The consent procedure used for the interviews was oral. However, the majority of the meetings were preceded by written communication in which the purpose of the meeting and project was stated. In the cases where an interpreter was needed, this was reiterated over telephone ahead of the interview. In a few cases, consent was given during an initial informal meeting, which was followed by a formal meeting where the purpose of the meeting was explicit. In the interview setting, I presented myself as a student from Umeå University, Sweden, conducting field studies in Mitrovica for my master’s thesis on community relations in the city. Six of the interviews were conducted with an interpreter: Albanian to English and Serbian/Bosnian to English respectively. The respondents were given the opportunity to be anonymous and to decline to answer any question. All interviews were tape-recorded. This was also subject to prior consent, I clarified that the audio was only for the author’s records in order to facilitate as accurate referencing as possible. One respondent expressed the wish to review their statements and had the chance to review and withdraw any part of their account prior to publication. The audio recordings were directly transferred to an online password-protected storage platform and erased from the recording device. Transcriptions were stored on the same file storage platform.

While keeping the interview records confidential was not an issue, assuring confidentiality in everyday interaction proved to be challenging in the field. In the author’s point of view, this particular ethical issue was partly due to the small size of the city and the close networks that result from such proximity. This was mainly a concern when pursuing new contact leads or when interpreters were involved. In the end, this was not a major issue since only two respondents expressed that they wished to remain anonymous and the contact with them was direct.
Chapter 4. Background

This chapter provides a brief summary of the armed conflict in Kosovo, as well as its context and aftermath. Secondly, this chapter outlines a short history of the city of Mitrovica.

4.1. Background: The Kosovo War

From 1996 to 1998, Kosovo underwent a period of ever-increasing violence (Weller 2009). At the core of the conflict was Kosovo’s legal status, which in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was that of an autonomous province of Serbia. In 1998, the spiralling violence escalated to outright war which forced more than 80 per cent of Kosovo’s population to leave their homes (HRW 2001). The main armed actors were the principally Kosovo-Albanian guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA, Alb. UÇK), the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), the Serbian Police, and paramilitary groups (Nikolić 2003). Following a 78-day long NATO bombing campaign, Serbia eventually withdrew its troops in 1999. The end of the war was not the end of violence in Kosovo. In the post-settlement period, Serbs and other minorities suffered disproportionately from the violence, which contributed to a hyper-segregation of Kosovo (Boyle 2010:199-200). Even years after the war, Kosovo saw sporadic outbursts of violence. As an example, in March 2004, riots left 19 persons dead and some 4,100 displaced (HRW 2004).

The end of the war was marked by the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement in June 1999; a military technical accord between the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), the FRY and the Republic of Serbia (NATO 1999). Subsequently, grounded in Chapter VII of the UN Charter and expressed through the UNSCR 1244, Kosovo came to be administered by the international community, principally through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Neither document tackled the issue of Kosovo’s legal status and a political settlement was thus postponed. In 2007, the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (hereafter: the Ahtisaari Plan) was put forward by the UN Special Envoy on Kosovo’s future status, which provided the basis for the ensuing Kosovo constitution (Zogiani 2017). With Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008, negotiations between the Serbian and Kosovo governments were stalled. Four years later, the dialogue between the parties was reinitiated (Bjeloš et al 2014:5). This resulted in the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013, a 15-point accord that has been hailed as a historic turning point in the negotiations (Bjeloš et al 2014:5). The agreement provided a legal framework for the so-called integration process of the four Serb-majority municipalities in the north of Kosovo (Bjeloš et al 2014:5-6). Nevertheless, a decade after Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, the question of Kosovo’s legal status remains contested by Serbia.
4.2. The Case of Mitrovica

The city of Mitrovica is located in northern Kosovo, some 40 kilometres from Pristina. More than 18 years after the end of the war, the city remains largely residentially segregated. In broad terms, the south side of the Ibar River is inhabited by a majority of Kosovo-Albanians and the north by a majority of Kosovo-Serbs. In the south, Euro is the currency and the population speaks Albanian, while in the north, people generally use Dinars and speak Serbian.

Local governance in Mitrovica is characterized by duplicate institutional structures. Both Serbian and Kosovo institutions exist in the city and the municipal structures amount to three: one in the Serbian system (Municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica) and two in the Kosovo system (Municipality of Mitrovica North and Mitrovica South). Despite its de facto division, the city was considered one municipality until it became politically and administratively partitioned into the two separate entities of Mitrovica South and Mitrovica North after the local elections held in 2013 (Mijačić et al 2017). The idea to administratively divide the city had already been presented in the Ahtisaari Plan. In 2011, the total population of the southern municipality was estimated to be 71,909 out of which the Kosovo-Albanian population comprised 96.6 per cent and the non-Kosovo Albanian population totalled 2,412 people (3.4 per cent) and 14 of those citizens were counted as members of the Kosovo-Serb community (OSCE 2015a). In the northern municipality, the population total was estimated to be 29,460 (OSCE 2015b) out of which the Kosovo-Serb population was 76.4 per cent and there were approximately 6,930 (23.5 per cent) non-Kosovo Serbs out of which the Kosovo-Albanian population totalled 4,900 (16.6 per cent).

Despite the fact that Mitrovica is virtually segregated, there are still mixed residential areas in the north and Kosovo-Albanians live mostly in the western outskirts of the city (OSCE 2010). The main mixed residential neighbourhoods are Bosniak Mahala (Srb: Bosniacka Mahala and Alb: Lagja e Bashqitave), Miner’s Hill (Srb: Mikronaselje and Alb: Kodra e Minato), Three Towers (Srb: Tri Solitera and Alb: Tre rrokaqiejt), Doctor’s Valley (Srb: Dolina Doktora and Alb: Lagja e Doktoreve), Brdjani (Srb)/Kroi i Vitakut (Alb), and Suvi Do (Srb)/Suhodoll (Alb) (OSCE 2010).

Before the war, Mitrovica was a shared urban settlement. The city functioned as one and no distinction was made between ‘north’ and ‘south’. It was a mining town, where a large industrial complex was the main source of direct and indirect employment (ESI 2004). During Yugoslav times, members of different communities worked together in the mining industry and the city had the highest rate of Serbs that were proficient in the Albanian language throughout Yugoslavia (Schwartze 2011). Although inter-communal marriages were rare in comparison to other Yugoslav cities (Gusic 2017), residential neighbourhoods were often mixed and children
from different communities attended the same school facilities, albeit in separate classrooms\textsuperscript{13}. While Kosovo-Serbs tended to live primarily in the north, Mitrovica was still a shared city.

The city saw some of the worst destruction after the NATO bombing campaign ended in June 1999 (Schwartze 2011) as violence, looting, and house burnings forced thousands to leave their homes (Boyle 2010). In light of this widespread violence, the French KFOR set up checkpoints on the bridges, an action which contributed to cementing the immediate post-war division of the city: \textit{“In effect, the French had partitioned Mitrovica which became a divided city like Mostar in Bosnia”} (O’Neill 2002). For many years, travels between north and south were impossible without the accompaniment of KFOR (ESI 2004). Today, two bridges are open for both pedestrians and vehicles: one is the Eastern Bridge and the other is located in the city’s western outskirts in Suhodoll/Suvi Do (Appendix 1, Map 1). There are two bridges that are open only for pedestrians in the city centre: the Main Bridge and the small ‘walking’ bridge (Appendix 5, photo 9-10).
Chapter 5. Empirical Realities of Peace(s) in Mitrovica

The first dimension of the Peace Triangle deals with the conflict issues and the prevalence of these in a particular post-war society. Höglund and Söderberg Kovaes argue that – with regards to conflict issues – Kosovo as a whole is a case of unresolved peace since the status question remains unsettled (2010:377). As will be outlined in this chapter, I propose that peace in Mitrovica can be understood as both an unresolved and contested peace. The two remaining dimensions – conflict behaviour and conflict attitude – refer to the prevalence of violence and insecurity, as well as animosities and fear in the post-war context. In the Kosovo case, the main belligerents laid down their arms and the reprisal violence that persisted throughout the immediate post-war years (Boyle 2010) has effectively stopped. This is also true in Mitrovica. However, remnants of conflict behaviour persist and new strategies to pursue conflict incompatibilities have emerged. When Höglund and Söderberg Kovaes published their framework, they held that Kosovo was also a polarized peace (2010:385). I argue that the case of contemporary Mitrovica cannot be described as a completely polarized peace. Instead, as will be argued below, I suggest that the peace that prevails in Mitrovica may be described as fearful, insecure, and partially polarized.

5.1. Perspectives on Conflict Incompatibilities: What’s at Stake?

In Mitrovica, there are a number of disputed issues that can be understood as post-war conflict incompatibilities. Many of these contested issues are high-level political matters whose negotiation is largely detached from the city’s residents. This section illustrates the nuances of some salient incompatibilities in Mitrovica and is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all the contested issues in the city.

The Main Bridge and Freedom of Movement

The most publicized contested issue is that of the Main Bridge, which is a highly symbolic matter for both sides. While everyday life mostly takes place elsewhere in the city (Schwartzze 2011), the bridge has come to symbolize division between north and south (Appendix 5, photo 9, 14, 16). The bridge has been regarded a flashpoint throughout the post-settlement years (HRW 2004:28, Gusic 2017:310) and is closed to motorized traffic. In a 2017 survey on whether the Main Bridge should be open for traffic other than pedestrian, the division among Mitrovica’s citizens was quite clear: only 12 per cent of young Kosovo-Serb respondents thought that it should be open for motorized traffic, while 64.5 per cent of young Kosovo-Albanians stated that they would like to see it completely open (ADRC 2017:12). On the other hand, 36 per cent of young
Kosovo-Serbs (16-25 years) stated that they would like to see the Main Bridge closed down entirely, as compared to 5.4 per cent of Kosovo-Albanians in the same age group (ADRC 2017:12). Many in the Kosovo-Serb community see the closed bridge as a protective measure, its opening would result in a sense of exposure (Interview Andric 2017) and it’s assumed that the security situation would deteriorate (Interview Project officer 2017). On the other hand, the international community and the Kosovo Government primarily see the closed bridge as an obstacle to freedom of movement (EEAS 2017, Kosovo Government 2016:9). At the same time, members of the Kosovo-Serb community argue that opening the Main Bridge is not necessarily a question of freedom of movement:

> they focus on this issue which is barely an issue, it’s a symbolic problem, but it’s not an issue of freedom of movement, because Mitrovica has three other bridges which you can use for transport and pedestrians, so it’s not like there is a true obstacle to freedom of movement if one of those bridges is only open for pedestrians. And at the same time while they were focusing on the bridge, they did nothing to resolve issues for Kosovo Serbs with accessing documents (…) not all of us can get Kosovo ID cards and almost none of us can get a Kosovo driving license (…) not because [Kosovo-Serbs] don’t want them, but because [Kosovo-Serbs] cannot get them according to the current administrative instructions. So they claim that this bridge that is closed is an obstacle to freedom of movement – and the fact that I cannot drive past that bridge is not an obstacle to the freedom of movement? (Interview Andric 2017)

This perspective on the issue of the Main Bridge highlights the subjective way in which conflict incompatibilities are framed and perceived. For instance, license plates continue to impede travels between north and south. This matter has been resolved in theory (Bailey 2016) but lags behind in implementation. Many people stop by the Eastern Bridge to either change license plates as they go in whichever direction, or remove them entirely, going from the south to the north. These examples illustrate how a symbolic contested issue shifts focus away from the more tangible everyday implications of contestation and conflict incompatibilities in the city.

**Urban Public Space**

In the north, several urban infrastructural interventions adjacent to the Main Bridge have been contested by Pristina. One such project was the so-called ‘wall’ (Interview Andric 2017). This was a 1.7 meter high concrete structure which, according to the Serbian Government, was intended to be part of an amphitheatre but was also called a ‘protective barrier’ (Government of Serbia 2017a:24). From a southern point of view – the wall was perceived as an attempt to physically separate the two parts of the city by constructing a barrier (Interview Milosevic 2017). Following negotiations, the wall was destroyed in early 2017 (EFE 2017) and only parts of the construction site’s corrugated metal fence remained later that same year (author’s observation 2017). The removal of the ‘protective’ structures was followed by the only prominent deterioration in community relations in recent years:

That’s when we started actually having increased number of incidents in the pedestrian zones between Kosovo-Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians which then spills out to all other neighbourhoods, because when a fight happens in pedestrian zone, then there is a revanchism or a revenge fight in Bosniak Mahala, it kind of spreads out and this actually happened because of the Brussels Agreement (…) a majority of CSOs
from Serbian community warned that opening the bridge would not improve relations between communities, it would either stagnate them or bring them back for some years, because Kosovo-Serb community was simply not ready to have it open (Interview Andric 2017)

A less publicized issue is the reconstruction of the old mosque which was located by the Main Bridge in the north. According to the leader of the Bosniak political party Koalicija Vakat (Vakat Coalition), the mosque was built during the Ottoman Empire by a Bosniak woman (Interview Ugljanin 2017). The mosque was destroyed during the war and allegations surged that it was the site of a mass grave. However, an excavation in 2017 yielded no evidence of this (Morina 2017). The mosque was never reconstructed, stairs were built at this site (Interview Ugljanin 2017) and next to the land plot there is now a basketball court (Cirezi 2016). The Bosniak community doesn’t have its own religious building and the sermons are given in Albanian in other mosques (Interview Milosevic 2017). The stakes become a question of the group’s permanence in the city:

It’s 18 years already that we live here without any religious object, we lose our identity, and I’m sure that if you have a place populated by some ethnicity, if you don’t have a religious object, that community will disappear. They will lose their identity. I said to the representatives of the Serbian List® and asked them directly: is it better to build the mosque while the population, I mean the members of [the Bosniak] community are still there, or you will build it when they leave? And who will use it then? (Interview Ugljanin 2017)

This minority rights issue became a contested issue between the northern municipality and the Kosovo Government. The latter advocated for the reconstruction of the mosque, something which the Mayor of the northern municipality countered by saying that if and when a mosque would be built, such an urban planning decision is within the local government’s competence and not a matter for the Kosovo Ministry of Dialogue (Gazeta Express 2016). By some members of the Kosovo-Serb community, the Kosovo Government’s support for the reconstruction of the mosque was seen as a way of co-opting the issue in an attempt to construct a mosque for the Kosovo-Albanian population (Interview Milosevic 2017).

Integration and Education

With the Brussels Dialogue, an integration process of some of the public functions in the north commenced, such as the integration of the police forces into the Kosovo system. The integration process as a whole is contested by many in the Kosovo-Serb community and has been met by protests as this group feels repeatedly excluded from decision-making processes where the outcome directly impacts their lives: “somebody else decides in their name, so, it’s normal that they don’t want to integrate into this whole new society and State of Kosovo. Apart from the fact that they do not see Kosovo as a state” (Interview Project officer 2017). The general perception is that the Kosovo government has been unable to provide adequate possibilities for the Kosovo-Serb community to integrate (Interview Project officer 2017). The process is seen as a means for the Kosovo Government to integrate the territory of northern Kosovo, rather than those who live there: “whenever somebody, some official from Pristina says ‘oh we want to integrate Serbs from north Kosovo’, they usually mean we want the
territory, we don’t want the people. That’s what they are saying, you know. And at least this is how we feel in the north, like (...) they would like it if we didn’t live here at all” (Interview Veljkovic 2017).

Integration of the education system is one of the toughest unresolved issues (Interview Project officer 2017) and it has specific implications for northern Mitrovica. While Belgrade and Pristina have reached an agreement on mutual recognition of university diplomas, this agreement does not include the University of Mitrovica North (Interview Project officer 2017) which is administered by Serbia (Bailey 2017). Diplomas obtained from this institution are recognized by Serbia, but not by Kosovo since the Kosovo Government considers this university as an illegal parallel institution on its territory (Interview Project officer 2017). On the other hand, the University of Mitrovica North is the only institution in Kosovo that offers higher education in the Serbian language (Bailey 2017). The university has approximately 7,500 students (Sovrlíć 2017). If the educational institutions in the north would be integrated into the Kosovo system, there is a fear that an exodus of members of the Kosovo-Serb community would follow, even if all classes would still be given in Serbian:

If this starts I’m afraid that many people will move from here if education completely integrates into the Kosovo system, if we have Kosovo diplomas and everything. Especially for the university I think, I believe this is going to be a big problem. Because we have here many students from Serbia, coming to study here and in case if they would study under the Kosovo system I believe that they wouldn’t decide to come, to study here, which is very bad for the city because it’s mostly student city, many young people, and this will have a negative effect (Interview Project officer 2017).

The fear is then not only that many Kosovo-Serbs would leave Mitrovica, but also that such an integration of the university would deter prospective students from even considering to study in Mitrovica, and the way in which this would impact the northern part of the city as a whole.

(Re)settlement and Housing (Re)construction

Housing (re)construction and (re)settlement is another disputed issue. Reconstruction of Kosovo-Albanian houses in the north was not allowed by the UNMIK administration until 2008 (Conversation with Nushi 2017). The overall return process in Mitrovica has been modest with only a small number of returnees (Interview Hajdarppasíć 2017). After 18 years of displacement, many people have given up the idea of returning to their pre-war place of residence as they have made a life for themselves somewhere else (Appendix 5, photo 15). Meanwhile, representatives of the Kosovo-Albanian community in the north hold that the issue of returns is one of the most pressing for their community (Interviews Čimili 2017, Caushi 2017).

In the northern part of the city, returns to the Brdžani/Kroi i Vitakut neighbourhood have been particularly difficult (OSCE 2014, Interview Hajdarppasíć 2017). After the war, only Kosovo-Serbs remained in this area (Interview Hajdarppasíć 2017). When the reconstruction of houses began, the Kosovo-Serb community demanded that any returns to Brdžani/Kroi i Vitakut should
be undertaken reciprocally – meaning that it should facilitate displaced Kosovo-Serbs to simultaneously return to their properties in the south (ICG 2009:24-25, OSCE 2010:12). In 2013, the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) expressed his concern over the housing construction and reconstruction projects in Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani fearing a continued stand-off ‘spearheaded’ by the Municipality of Mitrovica South (UN SRSG 2013:3). Moreover, while the Kosovo authorities claimed that the returnees were former residents of Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut displaced during the war, the Kosovo-Serbs in the neighbourhood protested the return process and claimed that many of the intended returnees were never residents of the neighbourhood nor did they have valid construction permits (UNMIK 2013:3). Tensions related to returns in this neighbourhood have fluctuated over the years". Eventually, in 2015, the two Mayors called for mutual compromise and introduced a moratorium on construction which helped relieve the tensions (UNMIK 2015). News media recorded how the local government officials shook hands in the neighbourhood (AlJazeera 2015) and a working group was established for these issues, including central and local level Kosovo government officials, as well as representatives of the communities in Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani (MCR 2015).

In 2017, the outright conflict over housing (re)construction in Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut was understood as having ceased. Meanwhile, members of the Kosovo-Albanian community maintained that reconstruction was being hindered by some members of the Kosovo-Serb community and in some parts of the Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut neighbourhood – but not all (Interviews Ahmeti 2017, Uka 2017). On the other hand, this issue was understood as: “illegal building of Albanian houses in Brdjani where local Serbs attempted to stop this because it would change dramatically the ethnic scale and ethnic balance in the North Mitrovica” (Interview Veljkovic 2017). This, since Kosovo-Serbs in the area fear that returns could make them a minority group in the neighbourhood (Interview Hajdarpasic 2017, Scekic 2015) (Appendix 5, photo 2, 12). In an interview with Radio Free Europe, one Kosovo-Serb man said that such a change in the neighbourhood would make his family leave Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut: “If the Albanians arrive here and become the majority, then I really do not know...I will not be the first to leave here, but I will not be the last” (Scekic 2015). What is at stake, then, is to become a minority group surrounded by a majority:

Against these sentiments and fears, housing projects have become contested in the (more or less) shared spaces of both the Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut and Suvi Do/Suhodoll neighbourhoods on the city’s western outskirts. The government parties have not manifested their explicit intention, however, their actions are perceived as strategies aimed at making the other side surrender or
modify its goals. The Kosovo Government holds that Serbia is trying to change the ‘ethnic structure’ in Suvi Do/Suhodoll, Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut (Kosovo Government 2015a), and the north through illegal construction of apartment buildings (Kosovo Government 2016:11-12). The Serbian Government has mirrored Pristina’s claims by saying that the Kosovo Government is attempting to “artificially change the demographic picture” through “land usurpation and illegal construction” in Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut and the entire northern Mitrovica region (Vucic 2014:6-7).

While one side perceives housing construction projects as illegal and a way of altering the demographics of the neighbourhood (and the northern part of the city as a whole), the other sees the projects as either constructing social housing or as reconstruction of houses in the framework of returns. In this sense, social housing projects which could ‘objectively’ be seen as a way of addressing social inequalities are instead perceived as a conflict behaviour strategy. In Suhodoll/Suvi Do, the municipality in the Serbian system had plans to build more than one apartment building but a political agreement was reached and only one was constructed (Interview Golubovic 2017). In the Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani neighbourhood, both governments have made housing investments and are ‘relocating’ displaced persons who didn’t live in the neighbourhood before the war:

Both sides want to move people who never lived there. That is the biggest problem. So, when they want to resettle people, usually they want to resettle people who never lived there. (…) they are resettle people just maybe they need some additional votes for the elections (…) But these are political games that they play, and you know, they want to use, to change this ethnic situation in every way (…) Now when they don’t try to rebuild or to build new houses, both of the communities, you don’t hear about problems in Brdjani. There is nothing about Brdjani in the news, everything is normal. There is no even single incident happening in the Brdjani and people are living together, why? Because political attention is not anymore on Brdjani, it’s on something else (Interview Golubovic 2017)

Another interviewee said that the protests in Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut were possibly orchestrated, as they ended so abruptly after just a few months – or that they could have been a reaction to a new residential area, Sunčana Dolina in the neighbouring Municipality of Zvecan, being called ‘Serbia’s colonization of the north’ by a Kosovo-Albanian political party (Interview Andric 2017).

One could argue that the city must expand in some direction and that the Western outskirts of the city (both north and south of the river) have previously been identified as potential urban development areas for mixed residential housing and businesses (Schwartze 2008). However, in the cases of Suvi Do/Suhodoll and Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani, housing projects are indeed contested and perceived as conflict behaviour strategies. Moreover, it’s argued that there are other hills in Mitrovica which could be used for such an urban expansion of the city (Interview Andric 2017) and other places that are more attractive construction sites for new urban and suburban housing projects (Interview Golubovic 2017). Similar arguments have been put forward with regards to Bosniak Mahala, where residents have expressed worries of a change in demographics through the construction of apartment buildings (Interview Zejnelli 2017).
The Municipal Boundary

The municipal boundary between the Municipality of Mitrovica North and Mitrovica South is another contested issue. The delineation dispute concerns a section of the municipal boundary in the Suvi Do/Suhodoll and Doctor’s Valley area, located on the Western outskirts of the city (see Appendix No. 1-2, Map 1-3). This matter surged with the creation of the northern municipality in the Kosovo system. Before the Ahtisaari Plan, the city was de facto divided but there was no formal political and administrative boundary. In this sense, one could argue that this issue was derived from the proposal. The Plan paid particular attention to the Suvi Do/Suhodoll area and the attached map drew the municipal boundary north of the Ibar River (see Appendix No. 2, Map 3), including both the Doctor’s Valley neighbourhood and Suvi Do/Suhodoll as part of the southern municipal jurisdiction. The disputed areas are home to both the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian communities. While the residents of the Doctor’s Valley neighbourhood live in close proximity to one another, the residents of Suhodoll/Suvi Do mostly live apart in two adjacent settlements. Despite the contestation, the transition between the urban centre and the Suhodoll/Suvi Do area is seamless in comparison to the division that the Main Bridge represents (Appendix 5, photo 7). People and cars move both ways, and cars with KM (‘Kosovska Mitrovica’) license plates drive through the Albanian-majority part. This tells of the area’s status as a ‘grey zone’ since KM-registered cars cannot go to the south (Conversation with citizen 2017). At the same time, the Albanian-majority part of Suhodoll/Suvi Do is clearly demarcated in symbolic terms: through flag display, street signs in Albanian, and graffiti dominated by ‘UCK’ (Appendix 5, photo 3-4,11,13).

The Government of Kosovo argues that the municipal boundary as outlined in the Ahtisaari Plan should be the final one (Kosovo Government 2015b:17). The Government of Serbia refers to another map found with the Kosovo Cadastral Agency which shows Suhodoll/Suvi Do as a part of the northern municipality (Government of Serbia 2016:19-20). The Suhodoll/Suvi Do residents formed part of the northern municipality’s electorate in the local elections in 2013 (Interview Cimili 2017). The Serbian Government makes reference to this fact when arguing that the delineation should be made along the river and that Suvi Do/Suhodoll is a part of the north (Government of Serbia 2016:19). The Mayor of the Municipality of Mitrovica South has implied that the demarcation is a non-issue by stating that the area effectively belongs to the southern municipality (KoSSev 2015, Municipality of Mitrovica South 2017). In the local elections of 2017, the Kosovo-Serb residents voted as part of the northern electorate (Interview Golubovic 2017), while members of the Kosovo-Albanian community voted as part of the southern municipality (Interview Cimili 2017). The Serbian Government argues that a de facto
delineation was made by allowing Kosovo-Serbs to vote in the north and insists on demarcating the area by dividing it into a de jure Kosovo-Albanian part administered by the southern municipality and a Kosovo-Serb part administered by the Municipality of Mitrovica North (Government of Serbia 2017b:27-28). However, no formal agreement has been reached between the Serbian and Kosovo governments, nor is there an agreement between the Mayors (Interview Golubovic 2017). Solving the demarcation matter was made a prerequisite to continuing the ‘revitalisation’ of the Main Bridge (Big Deal 2015:31) making these two highly contested issues intertwined.

The question of the municipal boundary is indeed profound. The stakes range from municipal electorates and representation in local government, to notions of partitioning Kosovo. One interviewee made a comparison between the four northern Kosovo municipalities and the Serb-majority entity of Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina, alluding to a hypothetical division scenario in which the final municipal boundary would then determine where such a border would be drawn:

> we can also sense how the Serbian Government do think about the territories, and I think that so far they never cared about the citizens, or the communities living there, but all the time they were caring just about the territory. So in that sense, I do think that also...if they can take that part [Kosovo north of the river Ibar] and then the rest of Kosovo do whatever they want, I think that in a way that’s the aim. But this is quietly sort of announced if I may say (...) but in the longer term this is what their aim would be (Interview Civil society activist 2017)

Interestingly, from a contrasting viewpoint, the Kosovo Government’s approach is also perceived as prioritizing territory over the citizens that inhabit the land. Another interviewee said that the southern municipality’s claim of Suvi Do/Suhodoll is seen by the Kosovo-Serb community as seizing the territory without caring for its people (Interview Veljkovic 2017). The fact that the Kosovo-Serb population in this area have not been incorporated as a part of the southern municipality was seen as a potentially strategic move awaiting the right timing, as this would mean minority representation for the Kosovo-Serb community in the local government administration in the south (Interview Golubovic 2017). One respondent said the Kosovo-Albanian community endures the division of Mitrovica as a ‘sacrifice’ for Kosovo’s independence: “it was very painful for Albanians to see that Mitrovica would be organized in two municipalities, it was really painful. But we had to accept it. With the Ahtisaari Plan also independence of Kosovo was declared (...) Now Subodoll is part of south municipality, even though we lost many families who voted in our elections four years ago. However, big agreements have to be respected (Interview Cimili 2017). In another view on the ‘stakes’, a contrasting reality emerges: “Honestly, I would like to live in Suvi Do and then to be reattached to become a part of Mitrovica South (...) because I would ask for all my rights that I’m entitled to in the Mitrovica South Municipality as a Serb. They are not even aware how much they can lose with this request” (Interview Milosevic 2017). The delineation is a matter of demographics, electorates, political
representation, and territorial integrity. The strategies applied in pursuance of the parties’ goals can best be described as gerrymandering of the municipal boundary (see Bollens 2007:19). This contested issue has everyday implications for the Suhodoll/Suvi Do citizens mainly in terms of service provision. The final demarcation is a Brussel’s level issue and is not negotiated locally.

5.2. Spatial Variation: Confictive Areas in the City

On a micro-level, the spatial distribution of conflicts and violent incidents is disparate in the northern part of the city. As has been noted in previous research on continuities of violent social conflict in Mitrovica, the Main Bridge has been a hotspot for conflicts and confrontation throughout the post-settlement years (ICG 2004:12, HRW 2004:28). Historically, other conflictive areas were the neighbourhoods of Tri Solitera, Suvi Do/Suhodoll, Miner’s Hill, Brodjeni/Kroi i Vitakut, and Bosniak Mahala in particular (Interview Ugljanin 2017). Today, the perceptions of conflict prevalence in these neighbourhoods differ, regarding the extent, type, and whether any prominent conflicts at all prevail in these residential areas. Besides the Main Bridge and the surrounding pedestrian zone, the neighbourhoods that are perceived as more conflictive than others are largely the same— albeit to a most varying degree. One director of a women’s association concluded: “Everywhere that is mixed nowadays it is possible for conflict to occur. But we have less conflicts now, but related to more dangerous [criminal] activities” (Interview Milosevic 2017). Some stated that today, they couldn’t necessarily say that one neighbourhood in the city’s northern part is more conflictive than another; although the news might portray it differently (Interviews Zejneli 2017, Golubovic 2017). Indeed, some held that few conflicts prevail on a community-level:

We have these four multi-ethnic areas [Suvi Do, Brodjeni, Mikronaselje and Bosnjacka Mahala] and I think that people really coexist together or they at least try to coexist (…) I don’t really see the tension or any conflicts. I mean sometimes it does happen, it does happen really, but it's usually very, very isolated incidents and it's like kids picking on each other. And this is actually something that happens also within the Serbian community and the Albanian community amongst its members, so it's not really a big issue I would say (Interview Veljkovic 2017)

The neighbourhood of Bosniak Mahala was most often mentioned as one of the particularly conflictive neighbourhoods. Many walls, gates, and garage doors in the neighbourhood are marked with conflicting graffiti. The case of Bosniak Mahala was described as extraordinary by one interviewee who said that, although all parts of Mitrovica portray ethnically and nationally charged murals, the ones in Bosniak Mahala are more pronounced and intersect constantly: “only in Bosniak Mahala you will find ISIS written over this Serbian ethnic cross (…) And then behind that there is this ‘no to shiptar elections’, which is an offensive word for a Kosovo-Albanian” (Interview Andric 2017). Paradoxically, Bosniak Mahala, and the area close to the Eastern Bridge, is seen as a place where both normalization of community relations occurs, as this is where most of the everyday interaction takes place (Interview Project officer 2017). On the other hand, this is
simultaneously understood as a high-risk area – especially after dark – or a ‘hotspot’ for conflicts. Another NGO worker described this contradiction with reference to the neighbourhoods of both Bosniak Mahala and Miner’s Hill: “even though they are the only truly multi-ethnic settlements in Kosovo I would say (...) they are also the ones that have the most conflicts” (Interview Andric 2017). The situation in Bosniak Mahala is understood as having improved, mostly due to the efforts of citizens in this residential neighbourhood (Interview Ugljanin 2017). Finally, although there are disagreements on the micro-level, the normality of such disagreements and the fact that they do not result in violent actions was emphasized (Interview Stojanovic 2017). Moreover, the fact that disagreements no longer attract the attention of residents in other neighbourhoods was also seen as an indicator of security and improving relations, as conflicts no longer mobilize people beyond the neighbourhood in which they play out (Interview Hajdarpasic 2017). At the same time, it was emphasized that the truth about many incidents seldom surfaces (Interviews Golubovic 2017, Zejneli 2017) and that some may be framed as ‘inter-ethnic’ even when they are related to something else, such as debt or crime.

5.3. The Fearful and Insecure Peace

Peace in Mitrovica is characterized by different types of fears and insecurities. There is a general lack of rule of law (Interview Golubovic 2017), while corruption is present on every level and is described as the ‘essence of Kosovo’ (Interview Ugljanin 2017). This climate of judicial insecurity is also characterized by intimidation and threats: “we are aware that we live in an anarchy where (…) criminals get more respect than ordinary and humble citizens no matter from which community” (Interview Ugljanin 2017). In particular, such acts of intimidation were described in relation to electoral coercion in the northern municipality. The campaign period ahead of the local elections in October 2017 was tarnished by a “deep pattern of intimidation” (EU EOM 2017:7). Threats were directed at political entities and candidates that ran against Srpska Lista (EU EOM 2017:7), the political party that holds a majority of municipal assembly seats in the Municipality of Mitrovica North (CEC 2017). Prior to the official campaign period, two political candidates of Gradska inicijativa SDP (Citizens’ Initiative Party) had their cars burned, one of them was Oliver Ivanovic, the party’s leader. This political figure had repeatedly called on the attention of the international presence in Kosovo, as well as the Kosovar and Serb authorities because of threats he and his family received throughout the years (Zivanovic 2018). In an interview with Vreme in September 2017, Ivanovic addressed the security situation in northern Mitrovica by saying that, during the last couple of years, the city has seen “over fifty cases of car burnings, hand grenade throwing, and two unexplained killings, all in the area of two and a half square kilometres which is completely covered by security cameras. It is obvious that the police are afraid to interfere with the perpetrators, or the perpetrators are
In January 2018, almost three months after the elections, Oliver Ivanovic was killed in a drive-by shooting outside the party’s offices in Mitrovica North. At the time of writing, no murder suspects have been arrested.

Ahead of the local elections, acts of intimidation was not only directed towards politicians and political parties, electoral coercion also targeted voters: “the command was that everyone comes at nine, employees of the hospital, in the schools, and then the people, one after another, like sheep they go to vote (...) people are being blackmailed and they are petrified, because they tell them if you don’t show up and vote today you will get fired” (Interview Ugljanin 2017). impunity and fear of retaliation keeps the Kosovo-Serb community from speaking up about threatening acts and practices of coercion:

Because that is very obvious, I mean this the burning of the cars, throwing hand grenades into certain houses, I mean that is truly and realistically happening. But you do see that the people are not even comfortable going into that and talking to the wider public (...) and those officials who are in charge of now taking measures in terms of either arresting or whatever, are not undertaking any kind of activities (...) I think also for the communities that’s the reason they don’t feel safe either talking or expressing this wider to the community or the public because they do think that they might have consequences if they go publicly about certain incidents or threats or intimidations (Interview Civil society activist 2017

Insecurity was also mentioned in other aspects related to the local government administration. For instance, one interviewee said that when municipal tenders are announced they are ‘won’ through coercion and threats (Interview Ugljanin 2017).

An Orchestrated and Politically Dictated Peace?

Several of the respondents perceived politics as the main obstacle to peaceful co-existence, enhanced inter-community cooperation, and improved neighbourhood communication (Interviews Veliu 2017, Golubovic 2017) – rather than a division primarily upheld on a community-level: “We will not have enough space [to work for cohabitation] because of the political influence. Serbian and Albanian community they are used in the political, for the political cause. The people are just like a commodity, they don’t have a human value anymore, and we need time in order to get that back” (Interview Ugljanin 2017). The latter theme was recurring; the perception that the communities in Mitrovica are used as political pawns, but that little is done by the Kosovo and Serbian governments in order to improve the actual living situation on the ground (Interview Golubovic 2017). Politicians raise tensions and fail to relax the situation (Interviews Stojanovic 2017, Zejneli 2017). According to one interviewee, there is interest from both government parties to maintain Mitrovica as a ‘frozen conflict zone’ as external funding is directed towards municipalities and public services:

Mitrovica is still like, to say, divided place, mostly because of the politics and involvement of Government of Serbia and Kosovo and mostly their unwillingness to create space here for development and to move forward (...) After this Brussels Agreement, and they use like this integration word to get more money, so, for the time being it’s good to have like also artificial incidents even though they are not related, because you want to show that this place is like still with problems, which it’s not, I mean problems between people, I think there is angry people on both sides, but now they are in minority (Interview Golubovic 2017)
In other words, the perception is that with incoming funds for municipal development and institution-building, it is now in the politicians’ interest to maintain a problematic image of Mitrovica, as long as the funding is locally administered. In this sense, portraying the city as problematic, deeply divided, and conflictive serves a political purpose in itself. Other respondents also touched on these ‘artificial’ incidents, saying that there are interest groups who can raise tensions easily if they wish: “I think that there are just tensions whenever somebody wants to raise tensions in Mitrovica, can do it very quickly and without any problem. (...) whenever is a need for certain interest group, or individuals, to create tension, then or sure that those tensions will be...will be on the spot and will be realistically happening on the ground” (Interview Civil society activist 2017). In an informal conversation, one NGO worker stated that, whenever there is an incident or a violent threat, the perpetrator could be anyone; it could be “a Serb paid by the Albanians, or an Albanian paid by the Serbs or maybe the Albanians paid an Albanian guy” (Conversation with NGO worker 2017). This was echoed in another account given during a formal interview:

when it comes to that destabilization of the situation, they have their own people on both sides where they raise the nationalism when necessary, but for the incidents occurring in the north such as like putting cars on fire, throwing hand grenades on the properties, it’s not conducted by ordinary citizens, there are groups which are paid to do so from both sides (Interview Ugljanin 2017)

It was also highlighted how most events and developments on the local level are tightly controlled by the central level and essentially politically dictated:

everything that happens here is very controlled and happens for a reason (...) it’s so well-orchestrated, everything that we have here, I have this feeling that nothing happens spontaneously, like, if we have a spike of incidents, it might be that the first one was honest incident and then they were a bit more exaggerated. So yeah. Politics and unbelievable control of community relations, and basically anything that happens on the local level (Interview Andric 2017)

Additionally, political actions which are understood as provocations by either side, such as the construction of ‘the wall’, impede the process of fostering peace-conducive neighbourhood communication: “it’s difficult, because every time we have some political events that are happening (...) And this make the community to be more careful, or not be so open (...) ordinary people, they are sick of these events, and they want to have peace, they want to have reconciliation, to have good neighbourhood communication. But again, the politics is there (Interview Veliu 2017).

While the news media reproduce conflict attitudes through the messages they convey (Brand and Idrizi 2012:4), some also maintain that the conflict in Mitrovica is exaggerated by the media, as news reports tend to focus on the negative happenings rather than the positive developments in the city (Interview Stojanovic 2017). This influence operates on several levels. For instance, one interviewee told how a Kosovo-Albanian student from Mitrovica South spoke up against a Pristina-student’s conflict-ridden image of the city, in which Kosovo-Albanians are not able to cross to the north side because of the dire security situation (Interview Golubovic 2017). On the other hand, one director of a youth organization in the north said that news
reports reinforce a stereotype in which Kosovo-Serbs are portrayed as criminals, and this in turn affects how young Kosovo-Albanians who live in mixed neighbourhoods in the north think of their neighbours (Interview Veljkovic 2017). Such stereotypes of ‘the other’ and ‘the other side’ commonly conceive the north as anarchic and ruled by criminals, while the notion of the south is practically reflected in this image as being chaotic and lawless, with widespread organized crime (Gusic 2017:199-200). The implication is reinforcement of conflict attitudes, where political actions, provocations, and stereotypical images of ‘the other’ create wedges in establishing everyday encounters and contact.

Diverse Fears

Fear emerged as a theme in mainly three aspects: the above outlined fear related to threats and intimidation in relation to political power or criminal activities, the fear of being stigmatized by one’s own group, and fear of ‘the other’. Gusic (2017) has extensively described how such fears govern in Mitrovica. It’s thus relevant to point out that similar patterns were observed. For instance, the fear of being deemed a ‘collaborator’, which I initially described as in-group obstacles to engagement with the out-group, Gusic had already named ‘internal pressure not to interact’ (2017:204-205). Refraining from inter-group contact serves to uphold the cohesiveness of the in-group and is seen as safeguarding one’s community (Gusic 2017). Surely, more than 18 years after the war it’s still generally not accepted to publicize ‘normal’ relations: “I think that the relations lately they improved a lot (...) but if you want to show it publicly, it’s not so visible, and it’s not so allowed to share-to show that, you know, everything is like normal” (Interview Golubovic 2017). While some of the people who were friends and colleagues before the war are reconnecting and visit each other on both sides of the river, they do not publicize their friendships by, for instance, sharing pictures together on social media (Interview Golubovic 2017). Similarly, in activities organized for young people from different communities, the adolescents sometimes avoid having their photograph taken (Interview Golubovic 2017). They worry that pictures of them engaging with the other community could be shown to others, either on purpose or by accident, and are afraid that members of their own community could think of them as ‘collaborators’ or ‘spies’:

This is the problem that apparently exist in the schools, that certain teachers are very like (...) fascist, whatever you call them, but it’s very bad word, that they don’t allow for their students to have friends from different community. By different community in the north I mean Albanian. I heard of a case where the people were failed just because their professor saw that picture [of a Serb student with an Albanian friend] and he didn’t like it (Interview Golubovic 2017)

This type of in-group impediment to enhancing inter-community relations can be found in many forms. For instance, while the initiative Mitrovica Rock School brings together young adults from all communities, they have never performed in an open event in Mitrovica:

They never performed publicly together in Mitrovica. Why? It’s still not the time. (...) the heads of the school, they’re afraid that something will happen to kids. They think that the situation is still not good
enough for a Serbian kid to perform open in (...) downtown Mitrovica, openly without any problems. And that’s what Mitrovica is today. People are starting to communicate and working together but not going publicly with that. And it’s a sad thing, like, they can perform in Pristina, in Gracanica and everywhere, Albanians, Serbs, Romas and Bosniaks together, but they don’t, they cannot perform in Mitrovica (Interview Zejneli 2017)

Thirdly, the fear of ‘the other’ and fear of crossing to the other side of the river upholds the division in Mitrovica, while the division itself reinforces fear (Interview Zejneli 2017). For some, fear remains an obstacle to engaging with members of the other group, which is expressed through avoiding certain areas and some forms of public transportation in the city. For instance, some members of the Kosovo-Albanian community who reside in the north would surely avoid the centre of northern Mitrovica (Interviews Cimili 2017, Ahmeti 2017). In the mixed neighbourhoods such as Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut, Miner’s Hill, and Bosniak Mahala there is more freedom of movement for this group (Interview Cimili 2017). One person said that she felt safe in Bosniak Mahala where she lives, but that she would not go further into the north (Interview Caushi 2017). Among Kosovo-Serbs and other non-Kosovo Albanian groups in the north, there are those who fear crossing to the south and those who don’t:

I know many Serbs who are afraid going to the south and I know many Serbs who really don’t care, they work even in Pristina. They travel throughout Kosovo, they go to the south shopping. So, I think even in the north there are like two divisions among Serbs themselves, the ones who are just fine with working in Kosovo institutions or international organizations and traveling throughout Kosovo, and the ones who are stuck. The ones who are in bubble. That closed bubble and who don’t want to get out because of the fear (Interview Zejneli 2017)

In this sense, fear as a measure of polarization is subject to experiential variations in Mitrovica. Perceptions of insecurity across neighbourhoods are both subjective and contextual, where only a few streets in a given direction make a significant difference.

5.4. Community Attitudes and Relations

Kosovo-wide, Mitrovica North is the municipality where inhabitants express most concern over inter-group relations. According to the 2015 Kosovo Mosaic Survey, 14.8% of survey respondents stated that inter-ethnic relations is one of the biggest problems that their municipality faces (KMS 2015:51-52). This percentage is by far the highest among all Kosovo municipalities and differs significantly in comparison to the Municipality of Mitrovica South, where a mere 1.0% of respondents stated that relations between communities is among the most critical issues (KMS 2015:51:52). At the same time, a 2014 survey on inter-group attitudes found that the social distance between the Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb communities who reside in Mitrovica (north and south) was less than compared to those who live in the municipalities of Pristina and Gracanica (Jovic 2015:265-266). Although, generally, the division is deep (Jovic 2015), Mitrovica residents were comparatively more accepting of each other. For instance, in Mitrovica South, a total of 72.3 per cent stated that they would accept having a boss who is a member of the other community, and in Mitrovica North a total of 63 per cent said they would
accept such an arrangement in their workplace; in comparison to Pristina/Gracanica where only 45.5 per cent stated that they would accept this. While, overall, members of the two groups have limited everyday contact, 73.9 per cent of Mitrovica respondents said that they would accept a member of the other group to be their friend (Jovic 2015:266). These numbers serve to highlight the multifaceted perceptions and what might seem like contradictory attitudes in the city. Importantly, with regards to other minority communities such as Bosniaks, Gorani, and Roma, co-existence and contact was not seen as an issue, instead, problems that these communities face are mostly related to discrimination in Mitrovica and Kosovo (Interview Project officer 2017).

**Nuances of Co-existence and Communication**

The general perception is that inter-community relations between the Kosovo-Serb and the Kosovo-Albanian communities in Mitrovica have improved in comparison to previous years, although it is still not satisfactory (Interview Project officer 2017). Before 2011, when the Brussels negotiations began, the relationships between communities in the north were dictated from the bottom-up and one single incident could result in tit-for-tat violence that would last for months (Interview Andric 2017). Since the dialogue began there has been a shift in how tensions are induced and community relations are no longer dictated by the bottom-up:

> whenever there is a conflict, it happens first on the political level, then it goes to the community level (... So we [Kosovo-Serbs] don’t clash necessarily more with Kosovo-Albanians any longer, we clash with Kosovo Government who does something that we dislike or is discriminating us, then we react, then they react, then Serbian Government reacts with a statement which is inflammatory in rhetoric and then it comes down to the level of communities, and then communities react. So it used to be coming from communities up, but now it’s top-down (Interview Andric 2017)

Moreover, regional events such as basketball and football games, as well as rulings in high-profile war crime cases were understood as influencing the sentiments in the terrain. For instance, the verdict against the Kumanovo group in Macedonia or a basketball game between Turkey and Serbia are examples of such events (Interviews Civil society activist 2017, Andric 2017).

Co-existence and communication between communities is often understood as something that is not ‘normal’: “we tend to believe people co-exist. But they don’t co-exist normally. Very much sometimes artificially, because they just happen to be there at that time. That place” (Interview Zejneli 2017). The character of community relations also varies across and within the city’s mixed northern neighbourhoods. Generally, the citizens don’t have inter-communal issues on an everyday basis, however, direct and frequent contact is still scarce between Kosovo-Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians who reside in these mixed neighbourhoods (Interview Project officer 2017). Although children attend different schools, playgrounds are a meeting place in mixed residential areas (Interview Caushi 2017). In Miner’s Hill, the communities live in close proximity to one another and from the immediate post-war years up until today, children share the playgrounds in this
neighbourhood (ICG 2005:15, Conversation with citizen 2017). While most Kosovo-Albanians in the north seek medical care in the south, there is a small health facility in Miner’s Hill where a doctor attends to members of all communities in the neighbourhood since Yugoslav times (Interview Veliu 2017). Neighbours live closely, in comparison to the Suhodoll/Suvi Do area, for instance, where the two communities live largely separated (Interview Hajdarpasic 2017). One interviewee described the level of interaction between the residents in Miner’s Hill: “we never had some kind of conflicts, I know that they are Albanians, I don’t have connections with them, they don’t have connections with me (...) we are like “hi”, “hello”, that’s all, because they respect me I respect them” (Interview Stojanovic 2017). One respondent described how she experiences neighbourhood relations in Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut:

The women in the neighbourhood they just say hi, that’s it, that’s all. But all the people who speak Serbian language they were also in the war so they communicate, but not some tough topics, they discuss mainly about daily work (...) The people I know, both Serbs and Albanians, are good people. Most of the places I frequent and know people it’s good, like, my circle, my neighbourhood, we speak freely. If I go elsewhere I don’t feel the same, other Serbs who live in neighbourhood never give me a reason to talk to them. The current state of relations is in between good and bad, I cannot say it is perfect but it is not the worst case (Interview Ahmeti 2017)

The nature of community relations are thus highly contextual. Even in a single settlement there are ‘micro-divisions’ and significant experiential variations in terms of neighbourhood relations. Indeed, there are also friendships that transcend divisions. One person described how she and her friends always accompany each other to the Main Bridge after dark as they live on opposite sides of the river, telling of how their safety zones shift at the bridgeheads:

Some of my closest friends are Serbs (...) we always walk each other up to the bridge at night. I leave them by the bridge when we have been out in the south, and they always escort me up to the bridge if we have gone out in the north. It’s an act of caring and being worried about your friends’ well-being, but you are limited at the same time, because one step further can be dangerous sometimes, especially by night, one step is enough to reverse the roles at the bridge, if you know what I mean (...) Frankly, that’s why we stop exactly at the bridge and do not escort each other further, it’s because when I escort my friends, I cannot proceed, as there is where my safety ends, and theirs begins and vice versa. It’s also a bit paradoxical, when one really thinks of it (Conversation with Syla 2017)

This act of caring and friendship is an example of a story seldom told about Mitrovica. It’s an instance of mutual solidarity, a reciprocal act that is only limited by the boundary that the bridge becomes after nightfall, also for those who pass it problem-free in daylight on an everyday basis.

Inter-community Cooperation

Inter-community cooperation in the mixed northern neighbourhoods is an important way forward for improving relations and fostering reconciliation (Brand and Idrizi 2012:4). Instances of cooperation are unusual and only take place on isolated occasions, related to issues that concern both communities. These matters tend to be related to infrastructural problems and not to conflictive issues. Politics and lack of trust between communities makes cooperation more difficult (Brand and Idrizi 2012, Interview Project Officer 2017). If the central level government representatives would send messages of dialogue and cooperation, the Mayors on the local level
would perhaps follow their lead and cooperate with each other (Interview Andric 2017). Consequently, inter-municipal collaboration could serve as an example for inter-community cooperation, while also signalling to the wider community that such initiatives are permissible in a normative sense (Interviews Stojanovic 2017, Andric 2017).

Although such initiatives are rare, in Miner’s Hill there are instances of community cooperation: “I know that we have two representatives, Albanian and Serbian, and they are communicating and doing sometimes some things together...but they don’t have power” (Interview Veliu 2017). Moreover, one Miner’s Hill resident said that, even though this type of cooperation takes place on infrastructural issues, the community members don’t know whom they should inform about their joint concerns (Interview Stojanovic 2017). The Suhodoll/Suvi Do representative of the Kosovo-Albanian community said that he knows the representative of the Kosovo-Serb community – they used to work together before the war – and they have had meetings but: “as a representative of a community in Suhodoll, you cannot have that power to make a great impact in order for the communities to cooperate” (Interview Uka 2017). In Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut there was one concrete example of cooperation in 2016, when residents came together to finance a new power supply (Interview Ahmeti 2017).

Disentangling the nature of actual cooperation is a nitty-gritty task as there are often diverse accounts of the same neighbourhood. For instance, one interviewee stated that the Suvi Do/Suhodoll area has been the site of tit-for-tat sabotage between the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian communities for the past fifteen years: “Cutting each other’s telephone lines, water supply lines and whatever (...) and in the end they just realized that they are harming each other, not anybody else, like, if you cut my telephone, I will cut your water and that’s it. Simple problem and they stopped” (Interview Golubovic 2017). On the other hand, a representative of the Kosovo-Albanian community in the area said that there had been no incidents for a decade and stated firmly that:

> for the Serbian and Albanian community in Suhodoll, there are no interethnic problems for many years now. (...) in the last 10 years we didn't have not even the smallest incident. The cooperation is satisfactory, I don’t know how to say this, moving up and down through Suhodoll is possible either by foot or vehicles. We don’t have those problems. Our properties are defined, we don’t have this problem as well (...) I would like to openly say that the Albanian community and the Serb community in Suhodoll cooperate (Interview Uka 2017)

There seems to be at least rare instances when residents attempt to dissuade moments of tensions in these adjacent settlements. In early 2017 street signs in the Albanian language were placed in the Suhodoll/Suvi Do area (Klan Kosova 2017, RTS 2017) something which could be theoretically understood as a conflict behaviour strategy. According to local news media, some of the signs bore names of KLA soldiers (KoSSev 2017a). The signs were disputed by the Kosovo-Serb community and removed shortly after they had been placed there. The representative of the Kosovo-Serb community said that members of the Kosovo-Albanian community had possibly removed the signs, since they said they would do so to avoid any neighbourhood conflicts...
In late 2017, there were no such observable signs in the Serb-majority part, however, in the surrounding areas there were street signs allocated by the Kosovo Government.

Teenagers were considered a high-risk group. While many didn’t experience the war, conflict attitudes are often transmitted from older generations (Interview Project officer 2017). One example of actively addressing this problem is a neighbourhood committee through which residents in Bosniak Mahala confronted quarrels between groups of teenagers. The committee members decided to take the adolescents out of the neighbourhood for a weekend so that they could play sports and get to know one another, after this, the fights in the neighbourhood stopped and now these boys say hi to one another in the street (Conversation with citizen 2017).

Examining Polarization Through Language Attitudes and Behaviour

Opinions on language and its use emerged as an indicator of relative social distance between communities. Language behaviour and attitudes – towards Albanian and Serbian respectively – were implicitly used as indicators of inter-communal acceptance and tolerance, as well as fear and distrust. For instance, one interviewee used language attitudes and behaviour to illustrate increased inter-group tolerance by saying that, nowadays, people no longer feel anger when they hear the other language, but the problem is that people who know the other language don’t want to use it (Interview Hajdarpasic 2017). Again, as an indicator of tolerance, one person said that it’s ‘accepted’ to hear Albanian and Serbian on both sides these days (Interview Milosevic 2017).

While the older generations are commonly proficient in both languages, the language barrier was often mentioned as one of the main obstacles to increased inter-community contact and cooperation between young people: “if people have a common goal, a common interest they will try and find a way for cooperation, but if we have people from two ethnicities who maybe share the same or similar goal but they don’t know that, because they don’t speak, you will hardly find any cooperation between them” (Interview Stojanovic 2017). For the younger generation, learning the other language is often disregarded as superfluous. Since the systems are so segregated, people don’t recognize the benefits of knowing the other language (Interview Project officer 2017). Another reason to refrain from learning the other language is the risk of being seen as someone who is trying to impose integration through Albanian language-learning in the north (Interview Project officer 2017). According to one respondent, language-learning has yet another dimension for young people, where the notion of learning the other language is associated with a fear of being subjugated by the other community:

people don’t really want to learn the other side's language because they view it as being conquered by it, ‘so if I learn Albanian, I’m going to be conquered by these evil Albanians?’ (…) and on the other side it’s also like that, people can say (…) Albanian is the official language in Kosovo, okay, Serbian is too, you know. So why don't you learn Serbian too, why not? (…) This is also an issue, people don't want to be ‘conquered by the other side’ (Interview Veljkovic 2017)
However, this is of course not true for all. Another interviewee described how students from Mitrovica North and South attended an English-language summer course and seemed more excited to learn each other’s languages:

these things are functioning perfectly and there is no problem for them even though that they know (...) there are still different views on the...what is Kosovo and whom it belongs [to], but I think this is not a major obstacle for people to live here, together, so...[To] whom Kosovo belongs it will be decided somewhere else, not by the people here, so they should see how they can improve their lives, because it’s almost twenty years, the situation is not improving at all (Interview Golubovic 2017)

Although some think it’s not yet time to include both languages in the schools, others consider that there is an interest among young people to learn and that second language classes should be given like in Yugoslav times: “I really would like to see that this is coming back to the education system, because if nothing else, I mean the communities are living in Kosovo so it will be good to know the language of one another” (Interview Civil society activist 2017). Including the other language in the formal education, learning the other language, and putting it to use becomes a question of how polarized the community attitudes are. Language is indeed a politicized issue, its use and citizens’ positions towards it presents itself as a barometer of the wide array of attitudes that prevail in Mitrovica, particularly in terms of tolerance and engagement, ranging from attitudes such as interest to fear.

5.5. Everyday Shared Space

Shared space in Mitrovica is not only a place where everyday contact and communication may or may not take place, it is also a space where there is potential for conflict. This contradiction becomes evident in the cityscape, where such paradoxes are plenty. During the author’s time in the field, the Albanian flag day was celebrated on November 28, 2017. The signs on the south side of the river were obvious, Albanian and Kosovo flags appeared on the roof of Restaurant Ura, which is located by the Main Bridge on the southern shore of the Ibar. However, Albanian flags were not only on display in the south. In Bosniak Mahala, Albanian flags decorated the lower part of Krajza Miloša/Princi Millosh Street, which stretches down through the neighbourhood until it becomes the Eastern Bridge (Appendix 5, photo 8, 5-6). Albanian flags hung along the lamp posts on the bridge and the first intersection on the north side. Several weeks later, the Albanian flags remained in place. The nature and degree of this tolerance was captured in a statement made by one NGO worker as we passed this intersection: “You see, here on the same street we have Albanian flags and a minute from here the Serbian flags, but you will not see the Kosovo flag anywhere” (Conversation with Syla 2017). This alludes to the diverse character of Mitrovica north of the Ibar, as well as the non-acceptance of a Kosovar State. Physical signs of coexistence in Bosniak Mahala are plenty, the shops commonly display their business names in both Serbian and Albanian (Appendix 5, photo 1), like bakery (pekara/furra) and butcher shop (mesara/mishtov), some prices are shown in Euros instead of Dinars. It’s not uncommon to hear Serbian being
spoken by people shopping for goods in shops which bear Albanian names. The level of trust between some of the vendors and clients was exemplified by one interviewee who overheard a conversation in a fruit and vegetable shop:

A Serbian comes and buys lots of veggies for his store in the north. Then he tells the Albanian owner ‘Hey, I’m getting all these tomatoes but I’ll give you the money when I sell them’. (...) and he says 'don't worry for the money, whenever you have it, you bring it to me'. And that was beautiful because right there you see some trust. They’re building some trust and that’s really important, to trust each other (Interview Zejnelli 2017)

These interactions may be characterized simply as engagement based on needs, and while it’s considered that the majority of these exchanges are only shallow conversations on practicalities such as prices and features of the product at hand (Interview Veljkovic 2017), there are instances when these encounters go beyond merely need-based factors:

I ran into another Serbian who just came to buy something for his household there, from the north to the Bosnjacka Mahala, and I asked him 'so why do you come here among all the stores over there?' He said, 'well the food is really fresh, vegetables are always fresh, prices are good, and I know the owner, he is my friend, so that's why I come here'. Beautiful, you know? If that was my only story about Mitrovica, oh my God, life is beautiful, you know. So I think people sometimes really can (...) without prejudice, they can coexist, but then you always have these extremists on both sides who are ruining their normal life (Interview Zejnelli 2017)

Across from Bosniak Mahala, on the south side of the river, are the ETC and Emona grocery stores. The supermarkets are close to the Eastern Bridge, which is the most frequently used bridge in the city (ADRC 201734). This is seen as a bridge that connects rather than divides and the two grocery stores are sites of everyday encounters. While grocery shopping in ETC, one hears both Serbian and Albanian spoken among customers. One urban planning professional noted how “This shopping mall they built, it’s visited by everyone. It’s the politicians that are being the obstacle here, the force of the mall attracts everyone” (Conversation with Nushi 2017). Shopping is also the main reason why people cross from one side to the other:

we cross to south Mitrovica to shop in ETC and Emona because it’s cheap and Kosovo-Albanians cross [to the north] to buy better quality things (...) I have a friend whose mother makes her ask me to buy her the dishwasher tablets because she is convinced that they are better in the north than in south. I can give my life that they are not better, but people have the sense that things are better in the north and we think that things are cheaper in the south (Interview Andric 2017)

Apart from the everyday trade that takes place in Bosniak Mahala and the shopping in the grocery stores, the Saturday market is another place where residents from different communities meet through commercial activities in the north. On weekends, this market attracts customers from both north and south (Interview Zejnelli 2017). The marketplace consists of a green market, a bazar with permanent stands, and a flea market. It’s located between the Main Bridge and the small walking bridge on the north side of the river. A significant share of all visitors are from the south side and many visit this marketplace regularly. There are also vendors from the south who sell their goods in this market, especially during peak season (Mitrovica resident 2017).
Common Ground

Taken together, the reasons for engagement and cooperation across divisions and among the communities were identified as business relations, contacts established through civil society organizations, or for some other mutual interest, such as music. Initiated by a local NGO, Mitrovica Rock School is a space where young people from all communities meet in a supportive and creative environment. Every two months the bands get together for a night of performances. This initiative is inspired by Mitrovica’s heritage as a music city and provides opportunities for young Mitrovica residents to write, play and perform their music together.

Another space where young people from all communities meet is the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) in Bosniak Mahala. This is an educational facility where students from all communities study together and interact on an everyday basis (Interviews Golubovic 2017, Stojanovic 2017). The language of instruction is English. One student described this context of everyday co-existence as unproblematic and distanced from problems associated with continuities of the violent conflict:

I have colleagues who are Albanians, Roma, they are Bosnians (...) and we are talking, there’s no problem, we are functioning very well (...) people are usually oriented on the studies and they are not looking on something that have happened twenty years ago. We are looking more in the future and how cooperation between each other can help us more, and try to actually profit out of that (...) while [my colleagues] were having break they go to drink a coffee and nobody asks them what is your ethnicity, and they have coffee, chatting. We are actually speaking a lot and we’re honest, we share the same problems the same issues, for instance, same taste in music and similar (Interview Stojanovic 2017)

The International Business College has thus become a space where students experience frequent ‘problem-free’ engagement. For instance, the faculty and student council are also comprised of members of different communities. In this sense, the college can be seen as a space where everyday peace-conducive activities take place:

[the school is] full of young students who have the same goal. They cooperate good, there’s no problems there. Why? You just need to create space where they will all pursue a common goal, or a huge company where all of them will get the salary at the end of the month and they will be happy. They will. Because when people were employed here and had monthly revenues they didn’t have time to think about this bullshit like, I will kill Albanian or I will kill Serb. They were friends because they were satisfied, they were able to provide money for supporting their families, on the other hand to be friends with everybody, and to, I don’t know, enjoy life in the end (Interview Golubovic 2017)

This success is attributed to such common goals as described by Simonsen (2005), along with the ability to provide for the basic needs and support of one’s family (Interview Ugljanin 2017) as a prerequisite for establishing security and fostering peaceful co-existence. Mitrovica is a post-industrial mining town facing high levels of unemployment, especially among youth. The economic situation is frequently mentioned as one of the gravest challenges for Mitrovica citizens, the city has the highest rate of unemployment in Kosovo (an estimated 60%) (Crowder and Bastian 2015) and the economic situation is also what preoccupies citizens the most on both sides of the river (KMS 2015:50-51). As a way forward, employment and economic opportunities
were seen as a major opportunity, particularly in terms of shared workplaces and business relations among entrepreneurs. Many young people don’t intend on staying in Mitrovica (and Kosovo) because of the limited employment opportunities. A general feeling of disappointment and hopelessness prevails among all age groups. One Kosovo-Serb citizen stressed this weariness: “there is one thing I think we have in common with Albanians, I just want a functioning everyday life and opportunities. It doesn’t matter if it’s in the Republic of Kosovo or Kosovo in Serbia (…) Of course I want Kosovo to be a part of Serbia, but I also want to live a normal life” (Conversation with citizen 2017).

The lack of workplaces where members of all communities could work together was seen as one of the key opportunities for enhancing community relations in the city: “employment is common ground for all people here in Mitrovica, so…when they have something to work on together, there is no problem” (Interview Golubovic 2017). There are a few places in the city where this is already taking place. For instance, the Administrative Office employs members of all communities, and this is also true for some NGOs, such as Community Building Mitrovica, which is also considered an important civil society space for communities to meet. One interviewee also pointed out that on any given construction site in the north there are Kosovo-Albanian workers (Interview Andric 2017). Ironically, one citizen said that the workers who constructed the Tsar Lazar monument were Kosovo-Albanian, as a Serbian company won the tender and outsourced the construction work to a Kosovo-Albanian company as the cost of labour is lower (Conversation with citizen 2017).

Studies of social distance between members of the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian communities suggest that increased and frequent direct and amicable contact has the potential to reduce social distance between these two groups (Jovic 2015:269-270). This was echoed as a way forward by respondents who held that increased and frequent contact through everyday meeting places would surely contribute to fostering inter-community communication. In this sense, instances of shallow and need-based communication could certainly be seen as peace-conducive indicators. Although some advocated for shared school buildings as a way forward, one must also take into account that both the education system in itself, as well as curricula, are contested.

5.6. Conclusion: What Type(s) of Peace Prevail in Mitrovica?

Micro-level peace(s) in Mitrovica are multifaceted. While few contested issues remain among communities on this level, the contested issues that do prevail (or are introduced) affect the fragile process of reconstructing social fabrics – the reproduction of peace in the city. Contested and unresolved issues are internationalized and politicized by actors beyond the city’s boundaries and, in this sense, no issue in Mitrovica is truly a local issue (Interview Andric 2017). The main unresolved and contested issues in the context of Mitrovica north of the Ibar River are
integration with regards to education (e.g. recognition of university diplomas) and healthcare; delineation of the municipal boundary between Mitrovica North and Mitrovica South; the extent to which the Main Bridge should be open and the public space that surrounds it; as well as the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and (re)construction of housing. However, contested issues are fluid, they appear and vanish, and in this sense they could also be understood as conflict behaviour strategies in themselves. For example, the so-called ‘wall-incident’ may be seen as a provocation, or a conflict behaviour strategy, while it was also a contested issue that marked a significant deterioration in the relations between Belgrade and Pristina. As an example of incompatibilities that directly affects a group other than the Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb communities, the reconstruction of the mosque by the Ibar bridge was presented.

Given the contestation of the integration process, this would also be a contested peace – as new issues are derived from the agreements and proposals put forward. These agreements – while having served to relax inter-community relations overall – also have a secondary effect that reinforces some of the conflict behaviour aspects. With the Brussels Agreement, external funding is directed at local governments in order to support the institution-building efforts of the new Kosovo municipalities, thus, upholding an image of Mitrovica as a problematic and divided city, characterized by a ‘frozen conflict’ serves a political purpose.

The fact that local issues are not dealt with by local actors and without consulting the city’s residents results in a sense of exclusion and frustration. At the time of the destruction of ‘the wall’ in 2017 one news portal quoted Mitrovica’s residents expressing this lack of inclusion: “They did not ask us when they built it, and they do not ask us when they destroy it” (KoSSev 2017b). At the same time, the internationalization of contested issues results in missed opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation, where local politicians could have set an example of constructive cooperation across the Ibar (Interview Andric 2017). On the other hand, inter-municipal cooperation is hampered by influence from the central government level and political interests that stretch into Mitrovica from both sides. Such politics, along with the trust and language barrier for the younger generations, were seen as the main obstacles to improving communication and dialogue between communities in Mitrovica’s northern neighbourhoods. Divisions in the city seem to be largely politically dictated and while some do fear ‘the other’, this is understood as constituting either a minority (Interviews Golubovic 2017, Hajdarpasic 2017) or a distinct group of people who are ‘stuck’ in their fear of crossing to the other side of the city (Interview Zejneli 2017).

Mitrovica’s mixed neighbourhoods are all characterized by different levels and types of engagement and communication (Interview Veljkovic 2017) where the overall interaction and
communication on an everyday basis is limited, but where there are no prominent conflict incompatibilities between communities (Interview Project officer 2017). At the same time, Mitrovica is a post-war society where some fear that by learning the other side’s language, one runs the risk of being conquered by its native speakers (Interview Veljkovic 2017). It’s a context in which people meet and nurture friendships, but they do not publicize relations that transcend community boundaries for fear of being stigmatized as ‘collaborators’ by members of their own community. While schools are completely segregated – between the Kosovo-Albanian and the Kosovo-Serb community – some believe that 18 years after the end of the war, the communities are still not ready to begin learning the other language in school. It’s a context where students from all communities attend the same international business college in Bosniak Mahala, in an environment that is described as ‘problem-free’ and where studies are undertaken in a cooperative spirit. While cooperation between communities is not considered a normality, people do try to co-exist peacefully and are generally disappointed and tired of the situation as a whole.

It is a fearful peace characterized by intimidation and threats with the aim to maintain power in local government and control financial resources. It is a peace where corruption permeates institutions on all levels (Interview Ugljanin 2017) and the lack of rule of law creates a sense of insecurity (Interview Golubovic 2017). Thus, basing our analysis on unresolved issues, new disputes derived from post-war settlements, and the prevalence of insecurity and conflict attitudes, Mitrovica’s peace(s) emerge as insecure and fearful, contested, and partially polarized.

Peace in Mitrovica is also politically dictated, characterized by political quarrels and community relations that are controlled and orchestrated (Interview Andric 2017). Because of this political ‘dependency’, peace in Mitrovica could also be understood as a volatile peace – a context in which tensions can be raised when needed and where regional events directly affect the mood in the terrain. From a minority perspective, it can also be seen as a peace characterized by exclusion, where the disputes between the Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb sides obscure the injustices and discrimination that other minorities face.

Finally, if one would turn to solely the peace-grounded indicators for the analysis of peace(s) in Mitrovica, peace in this city is characterized by cautious and partial (re)construction of social fabrics between people and communities. It’s a context where there are few but promising spaces for engagement that transcend community boundaries and divisions. It’s a peace where Mitrovica’s northern residents co-exist and have contact to a varying degree in particularly four parts of the city, and where community relations have improved over the past few years. It is also a peace where, according to community attitude surveys, the vast majority of residents would accept a member of the other community (Kosovo-Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians respectively) as
their friend (Jovic 2015:265-266). It’s a peace where one can cross to the other side of the river, but where the majority does have a feeling of unease when they cross to the other side (ADRC 2017:3) and extra precautions are taken during the evening (Conversation with Syla 2017). It’s a context where trade and economic cooperation between communities never stopped. Similarly, people from both the south and north visit the Saturday market near the Main Bridge every weekend, while Bosniak Mahala is a place where all communities in the north can shop for goods on an everyday basis. Also, although the space for everyday contact surely is limited, there are places where everyday contact and engagement occurs to a varying degree, such as the business college, the ETC and Emona grocery stores, as well as the Bosniak Mahala shops. There are also a few workplaces where you will find staff members from different communities, mostly in CSOs, but also in the Administrative Office, IBCM, and construction sites in the north.

In Mitrovica, the lack of economic opportunities and employment is understood as a major challenge. Theoretically, this aspect could be understood as ‘economic insecurity’ and thus be accommodated as an indicator in the conflict behaviour dimension as part of the broader concept of human security. In a perhaps more constructive understanding of the lack of economic opportunities, employment is seen as an issue that affects all communities and a prime opportunity for peacebuilding across divisions (Interview Golubovic 2017). It’s a vision in which employment in offices and industries would both economically empower citizens and provide opportunities for everyday contact. While fulfilling basic needs – such as employment – is a prerequisite for peaceful co-habitation (Interview Ugljanin 2017), shared workplaces also carry with them a historical connotation of co-existence. Additionally, this is not simply an idealist vision in which members of all communities would be able to work together ‘in peace’. Rather, as indicated in attitude surveys, such an arrangement would arguably be acceptable to a majority of Mitrovica’s residents, since 67.65 per cent would accept having a boss who identifies as a member of the other group (Albanians and Serbs respectively) (Jovic 2015:265-266).

Lastly, a peace-grounded analysis of peace(s) in Mitrovica would conclude that the outside observer perceives the city as more conflictive and divisive than those who reside and live their everyday lives in this context (Interviews Golubovic 2017, Stojanovic 2017). It is a place where all communities are able to study jointly in an English language college and shop regularly in the same grocery store. It’s a context where – when necessary – people who know both languages use them for everyday communication, like in Bosniak Mahala and Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut. It’s an everyday peace where people make use of social practices, like avoiding certain topics by sticking to discussing matters of their daily work, and communities appear to dissuade moments of tension, such as in the case of street signs in Suhodoll/Suvi Do. It’s also a reality where – in rare
cases – communities have come together in order to address micro-level conflict behaviour, such as in the case of the neighbours in Bosniak Mahala.

When community-level conflict incompatibilities appear, they remain localized and don’t attract the attention and involvement of people other than the neighbourhood in which they are contested or where conflict behaviour strategies take place (Interview Hajdarpasic 2017). This was also seen as an indicator of peace – the fact that contestations in one site was not reproduced across spaces and did not cause people in other neighbourhoods to mobilize. At the same time, it’s a context where, although public services are generally not shared and this is not true for all, there are members of both the Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb communities who make use of both pension systems.
Chapter 6. Rethinking the Peace Triangle

6.1. Applicability of the Model

The Peace Triangle is an important and much needed contribution to the study of the diversity of peace(s) beyond the absence of large-scale violence. However, more than an appraisal of peace and its reproduction, the conflict-grounded indicators facilitate the assessment of conflict prevalence in times of ‘peace’. In this sense, the analytical model is an advantageous tool for rapidly assessing key issues that need to be tackled in the aftermath of armed conflict. However, with the mere application of conflict-grounded indicators, the model does not capture the finer nuances and contrasts inherent to the post-settlement context, nor does it seize the instances of cooperation, solidarity, and shared space in the city – understood as indicators of peace-conducive activities. The Peace Triangle is thus not able to capture the wide variety of nuances, contrasts, and sometimes contradictory nature of peace(s) in Mitrovica. While a polarized peace arguably prevails to a certain extent, there is a clear indication even within the strictest interpretation of the empirical data that suggests a more moderate and nuanced image where engagement transcending group-based identities takes place. This can be illustrated by how one CSO worker described communication between members of the Serb and Albanian community in Bosniak Mahala as being ‘not thorough’. This negative indicator, which is evidence of shallow and limited engagement, is nevertheless an indicator of communication, which could arguably be understood as evidence of a peace-conducive activity, given the minimum level of trust that such engagement requires (Simonsen 2005). In this sense, it became evident that solely examining empirical realities based on conflict-grounded indicators obscured some of the more peace-oriented actions and aspects of everyday life in the city. In the interviewees’ accounts, the conflict and peace-grounded indicators were often tightly intertwined – even inseparable. This is illustrated in a story told by a member of the Kosovo-Serb community of how she travels by public transportation from Mitrovica to Pristina, although the bus departs from the south side of the city and is mainly used by the Kosovo-Albanian community:

I take the bus when I go to Pristina, one day I just started doing it and it’s no problem. But this one time, I was on the bus and it was really full and the man next to me asked me where I was from. I told him I was Hungarian because the bus was full and there were teenagers on the bus too you know, I didn’t want to say I’m a Serb. You never know, something could happen (Conversation with Mitrovica resident 2017)

The above example is an indicator of both insecurity and fear. It is an instance that encompasses both lack of fear (going by bus in the south) and constraint; the fear of what might happen if the person’s identity would be disclosed. Despite the fact that the analytical model is intended to provide tools for measuring the ‘relative presence or absence’ of conflict attitudes, issues, and
behaviour, this proves difficult in practice without indicators that equip the researcher with a complementing peace-grounded perspective.

Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs indicate that several types of peace may prevail in the same post-settlement setting; they are not mutually exclusive (2010:385, 376). Not only do I concur with the idea that several of these categories may be applicable to one single case, I also consider that several types are tightly intertwined and overlapping. The attitude and behaviour dimensions are particularly closely interrelated. This has been evidenced throughout the analysis in this paper, where the key indicators of peace tend to overlap, such as in the case of insecurity and fear. As a qualitative study concerned with meaning-making (Merriam 2009), this study examines perceptions of insecurity, which can be considered attitudes rather than behaviour. This tendency to overlap is also observable in Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs’ own application of the Peace Triangle in the case of post-war Sri Lanka (see Höglund et al 2016). As will be argued below, I suggest that some of the categories in the analytical model could be fruitfully merged.

Subsequently, grounded in the study of peace(s) in Mitrovica and based on the applicability of the model, I propose a redeveloped version of the Peace Triangle as a tool for examining and analysing the empirical realities of peace (Figure 1).

As mentioned above, this overlap is evidenced in the cases of fearful and insecure peace where fear of violence or feelings of insecurity can be applied as indicators for both a fearful peace and an insecure peace. Insecure peace then refers to a condition where perceived insecurity prevails. As a result, I suggest that a fearful peace is also an insecure peace in the sense that violence, or the threat thereof, instils feelings of fear. Therefore, I argue that fearful peace and insecure peace could be merged into one category of insecure peace. Moreover, rather than distinguishing between these two categories as ‘types’, I argue that it’s more constructive to delve into their operationalization and associated indicators. This will be discussed further below.
Secondly, unresolved issues remain unsettled because they are contested by two or more parties. In this sense, an unresolved peace overlaps with a contested peace, since the contested issues at the core of the conflict have remained unresolved and therefore continue to be contested. Likewise, new contested issues derived from proposals or settlements reached between the parties are often fluid and tied to the unresolved ‘umbrella issue’, which in the case of Kosovo is its legal status. This is not to say that solving the overarching issue would necessarily solve all other remaining conflict incompatibilities. Reaching an agreement on Kosovo’s legal status was often seen as a prerequisite for improving the overall situation for citizens, however, it was not necessarily seen as a precondition for improved inter-community relations. Also, as was evidenced in the analysis of conflict incompatibilities in Mitrovica, the nature and status of contested issues are undoubtedly subject to interpretation by the parties. As a result, I suggest that the categories unresolved and contested peace may be merged into one category of contested peace.

The third concern is related to the distinction made between the categories partial and regional peace(s). Regional peace takes into account the variations between locales in the same post-war context, while partial peace indicates that some actors continue their armed struggle. The concept of peace in this paper is understood as a ‘located and spatial process’ (Koopman 2017). In this view, the partial continuation of violence is emplaced, it takes place somewhere. I suggest that these two categories can be fruitfully merged into one category under partial peace. The distinction between ‘conflictive’ and ‘peaceful/shared’ places proved problematic on a micro-level since spatial variations in conflict prevalence (at least historically) paradoxically coincided with everyday shared spaces where peace-conducive interactions across divisions could also take place. This is contradictory to the concept of regional/partial insecurity. On the other hand, if this category incorporates both conflict-grounded and peace-grounded indicators, then this ‘paradox’ may be circumvented as the model would be able to capture both emplaced instances of insecurity and violence, as well as peace-conducive activities, such as the reproduction of shared space.

Lastly, I suggest that the unjust peace category may be divided into two separate types. Based on the findings in this study of peace(s) in Mitrovica, I propose a reformulation of this category into volatile peace and discriminatory peace. First, with regards to how transitional justice processes influence citizens’ attitudes, findings suggested that the extent to which such processes – and other regional events like sports games – influence attitudes and trigger violent incidents are understood as the volatility of the situation itself. In other words, how do regional transitional justice processes in the Balkans affect attitudes in Mitrovica? Do they stir up nationalist sentiments or feelings of injustice, why do they blame us and not them? Do citizens distance
themselves from court rulings and indictments, do they individualize guilt? On a micro-level, the concept of volatile peace could be expanded so as to include how relations, incidents, and sentiments are politically dictated and how tensions are either raised when it’s in the interest of a certain group (above and beyond the community level) or orchestrated for a specific purpose.

Furthermore, I propose that the second dimension of the unjust peace category could be reformulated as discriminatory peace. As its name indicates, this type encapsulates structural discrimination and injustices – both perceived and ‘objective’. A discriminatory peace is characterized by exclusion or lack of consultation with certain social groups. It examines issues such as access to resources and decision-making, inclusion in planning and peace processes, as well as the extent to which groups can impact peace deals and negotiations that directly affect their communities. This type also hones in on perceived and actual relative deprivation and horizontal inequality, as factors that may contribute to renewed conflict when exacerbated (see Must 2016). In contrast, efforts to minimize social inequalities could be seen as peace-conducive activities (Bollens 2007:20). However, such an argument must be advanced cautiously, as we have seen in Mitrovica, social housing projects can carry inherent tension. Finally, the discriminatory peace incorporates issues like individual and collective access to land and land rights, as well as resource allocation like service provision and housing projects that commonly have a direct and substantial impact on conflict-affected communities and neighbourhoods (Bollens 2007:17).

One could argue that broadening the scope of some of the peace categories (Fig. 1) is contradictory to the purpose of a ‘typical’ typology, since such a classification should be designed to “minimize within-type variation and maximize variation between types” (George and Bennett 2005:238). Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs, as noted above, refer to the issue of non-mutually exclusive categories and point out that the Peace Triangle is not a typology in ‘the most common use of the term’ (2010:367-377). It should be understood as a framework rather than a traditional typology. The modifications proposed above (Fig. 1) trade off within-type variation in an attempt to maximize variation between different types of peace. It does so with the aim of yielding a ‘sharper distinction between types’ (George and Bennett 2005:236-237). A way forward could be to develop subcategories of these types, or perhaps more urgently, a more specific set of indicators for the study of both peace-conducive and conflict reinforcing practices, as this might shed light on how to further amplify the variation between types while decreasing dissimilarities within them. This could be undertaken by a more profound analysis of the types of violence that prevail in a particular post-war society while contributing to clearer distinctions between the types of conflict behaviour observable in times of ‘peace’. The original model provides quite limited leads in terms of operationalization. By formulating indicators that address several dimensions of
violence and insecurity as well as perceptions thereof, we may yield findings that inform us on both ‘actual’ prevalence and type of violence, as well as the relative presence or absence of insecurity and fear. This could fruitfully include an analysis of the type of violence that continues in a post-war period (see Boyle 2014, Suhrke and Berdal 2012); whether this violence is organized or not, whether it’s indiscriminate or targets certain social groups. For instance, Boyle (2014) has formulated an important distinction between ‘revenge’ and ‘reprisal’ violence, while also pointing to the difficulties in differentiating between criminal and political violence in post-war settings.

As we have seen in the empirical part of this essay, the extent to which society appears divided and conflict-ridden also serves a political purpose. Surely, the occurrence of ‘artificial incidents’ suggests a peace characterized by orchestrated (in)security beyond merely the prevalence of violent crime or political violence in its more traditional sense. From this point of view, I suggest that more attention should be given to the types of violence that prevail, as well as the type of insecurity that citizens experience.

Similarly, formulating and testing peace-grounded indicators across post-war societies may also allow us to conceptualize other types of peace that perhaps speak to the more profound societal transformations necessary for a durable and just peace. For instance, similar to the way Stavrevska (2016) argues for studying the spaces that groups occupy instead of the communities themselves, notions of acceptance or non-acceptance of language appears to be a useful indicator in understanding conflict and peace-grounded attitudes in this case. Being a highly politicized issue in this context, it is also a scalable indicator that stretches from everyday peace to central level policies of inclusion and exclusion in the aftermath of civil war. Through language attitudes and behaviour, the multifaceted realities and the complexity of peace(s) in Mitrovica can be deciphered. This cross-cutting theme tells of instances where both languages are spoken and spaces of co-existence where bilingual signage appears. On the other hand, language use also
becomes a symbol of dominance, as well as a way of materializing ethno-national space across and within neighbourhoods.

6.1.1. Peace-grounded Dimensions and Indicators

Finally, throughout this paper I have argued for a multifaceted and peace-oriented approach which moves beyond the absence of conflict issues, behaviours and attitudes in the study of peace(s). I propose a complementing peace-grounded module to the Peace Triangle (Fig. 2). Such a module requires the formulation of a set of indicators, some of them which have been suggested in this and previous chapters. Based on the findings of this study, I argue for a set of indicators for the study of micro-level peace-conducive activities and instances (Table 1). Direct contact is a prerequisite for the study of everyday peace and an indicator of a minimum level of trust and engagement. In the Mitrovica case, shallow communication and contact serves as a precondition for decreasing social distance between groups and was seen as a way forward in achieving improved community relations. The trade in Bosniak Mahala is an example of such contact. When shallow contact takes a less polarized form, e.g. when communities live side by side and cooperate on need-based matters of mutual concern, such instances could be understood as co-existence. Thirdly, cooperation could be instances when such micro-level networks are activated beyond basic need-based factors, or address issues that have the potential to directly affect community relations negatively (actively assuage tensions, discourage conflict behaviour).

Secondly, an indicator for assessing peace-conducive attitudes could be the prevalence of attitudes such as indifference as a first step towards more ‘positive’ indicators of peace-oriented attitudes. This indicator could both suggest an indifference when others engage in conflict-behaviour, in the sense that people do not mobilize, as well as an indifferent stance to contact with another social group. As a next step, tolerance would indicate some level of acceptance of the other group but not necessarily mean actively pursuing relations with the other community. Interest goes beyond both acceptance, tolerance and indifference, such as in the case of attitudes towards language in the Mitrovica case. When people showed an interest in learning or using the

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Table 1. Dimensions and summary of associated indicators.
other language, this would indicate that groups could also see the potential benefits of communication, co-existence and even cooperation. Although language is a highly contextual indicator, it could possibly be applied to other cases where language is politicized in a similar manner, or transferred to other types of everyday practices within and across post-war societies. Finally, trust could serve as both an indicator of confidence between groups, as well as the trust between social groups and authorities. In this sense, it is the ‘positive’ equivalent to distrust on the polarization scale, while it also measures sentiments of discrimination.

Thirdly, common ground as a key indicator suggests that the researcher examines what shared compatible interests have been identified in the context at hand. For instance, it assesses whether a shared civic identity is a possible way forward, or whether other more tangible aspects like economic relations, addressing unemployment, or environmental concerns (e.g. pollution) are issues where different social groups could establish common ground. Instead of examining the divisive issues in the post-war context, this dimension assesses instances where connectors and commonalities prevail. Finally, similar to the original three conflict-grounded dimensions of the Peace Triangle, the indicators for the study of peace-conducive aspects of post-war environments remain broad. This, as such an open-ended formulation of the indicators allows for the tool to remain heuristic and capture a wide range of peace-conducive activities across and within cases.

Formulating peace indicators based on a micro-level single-case analysis is both problematic and constructive. It is problematic because it faces some of the same critiques as the concept of everyday peace in being highly localized and context-dependent (see Mac Ginty 2014). On the other hand, it allows us to profoundly examine and understand how peace is socially constructed and reproduced differently across spaces in a particular post-war society. This approach inherently addresses one of the most common critiques against peace indicators for being too blunt and falling short of capturing subtle nuances (see Mac Ginty 2013:59). For such an analysis to become constructive across cases, the arduous task is to identify and formulate peace indicators that are significant and telling beyond the micro-level study of situated peace(s) in single settings (see Mac Ginty 2013). In essence, the significance of capturing situated understandings of peace(s) “lies in building a picture of the contrasts, continuities and connections between different peaces, in different places” (Williams 2015:190).
Chapter 7. Concluding Reflections on the Study of Peace(s)

Peace is a socio-spatial process which is constantly produced and reproduced. It emanates from actions, both individual and collective. As such, peace is also a social construct (see Lupovici 2013) and ‘necessarily plural’ (Koopman 2017). This paper has studied the empirical realities of peace(s) in Mitrovica by exploring both the prevalence of conflict and peace-conducive activities that take place in the city, often in places that are paradoxically perceived as contested and conflictive, while serving as sites where peace can be reproduced. This points us to the complexity of the realities of peace, where remnants of war and potential for a co-existing peace often overlap and are sometimes intrinsically intertwined. In the case of Mitrovica, the spatial aspect of conflict is seldom reducible to purely conflictive areas, but rather, these ‘hotspots’ for conflict often prove to be spaces where reproduction of peace – however quotidian – occurs simultaneously. Without everyday conflicts in urban space there “would be no mixing, creativity and innovation” (Gusic 2017:298). Are conflicts then necessary for the reproduction of peace?

This study contributes to filling the void in scholarly literature on the empirical realities of peace in post-war societies. Moreover, it has specifically contributed to our understanding of such realities in the case of Mitrovica. The study has facilitated an overview of the main contested issues, as well as conflict attitudes and behaviours that prevail in this city. This focus on the continuities of violent conflict in times of ‘peace’ was complemented by a study of peace-conducive instances and activities in the city, in an attempt to counterweigh the ‘gloomy’ outlook for a sustainable co-existing peace in Mitrovica (see Gusic 2017:231). In this sense, the study has attempted to provide a more nuanced image of the empirical realities of peace in the city, by also focusing on instances that speak to the ‘ideals of positive peace’ (Björkdahl 2013).

Furthermore, the paper has developed the Peace Triangle as a tool by applying and adapting it to the micro-level study of peace(s) in the post-war city. Through this application of the tool, and grounded in the empirical realities of peace in Mitrovica, I have proposed a redeveloped version of the Peace Triangle by suggesting a new typology where overlapping dimensions and indicators have been merged. Finally, this paper has contributed to the conceptualization and study of peace(s) by formulating a set of peace-grounded indicators for assessing the quality of peace on a micro-level. Based on these indicators, I have suggested a complementary module for the study of peace(s) in post-war societies which encompasses these peace-grounded indicators.

7.1. Further Research

This paper has suggested that the study of varieties of peace(s) in post-war societies must be multifaceted, so as to include both conflict-grounded and peace-grounded indicators. It also
emphasises the need to undertake peace studies with an inherently peace-grounded and peace-oriented approach, where reproduction of peace and instances of everyday shared space become a central part of our analysis of peace as a social phenomenon – particularly in societies where such instances at first glance appear to be scarce. As such, it adheres to an emerging group of scholars who call for a commitment to peace in peace studies (Megoran 2011) and who study the micro-level aspects of peace formation in communities affected by war and inter-group conflicts.

This research paper has proposed a modified version and a complementary dimension to the Peace Triangle as a tool for the study of peace(s). It suggests that beyond merely the relative absence of conflict-grounded indicators such as violence, contested issues, and prejudices, the analysis of peace(s) in post-settlement societies must incorporate peace-grounded equivalents such as cooperation, common grounds, and everyday shared space. In this sense, this model does not condition micro-level and everyday peace on the communities’ ability to impact the underlying structural aspects of violent conflict (see Nauke 2017). This, since such an understanding of peace sees it as an undividable process in which there is no place for micro-level variations and instances of conflict within peace.

One of the main challenges in this endeavour is to formulate peace-grounded indicators which are both meaningful on the micro-level, as well as on the ‘exogenous’ and ‘comparative levels’ (Mac Ginty 2013 reference to Kreutzmann 2001). Naturally, given the fact that this study is a single case study, only within-case analysis has been undertaken in applying the typology and peace-grounded indicators developed as part of the conceptual framework. In this paper, I have suggested a set of indicators, grounded in the empirical realities of peace in Mitrovica, which could perhaps also mirror the peace-grounded aspects of post-settlement environments in other contexts. Nevertheless, in order to test the applicability, as well as to develop and refine the peace-grounded aspects as highlighted in the present case study, this framework should be applied across cases. By conducting both within-case and cross-case analysis of other post-war societies, this framework could be further refined and (re)developed, with the – perhaps impossible – objective to distil types of peace that are ‘mutually exclusive and exhaustive’ (George and Bennett 2005:236-237). A comparative case study could enhance our understanding of the applicability and bearing of the peace-grounded indicators suggested in this study, as these could be tested and developed across post-settlement contexts in a multiple case study. A comparative study could also shed further light on the reinforcing relationship between peace-grounded indicators linked to the three key dimensions, setting the stage for further conceptualization of peace(s) as new relations emerge.
Notes

1 A note on terminology: Given the fact that basic terminology is highly contested in this context, the most commonly used names in the English language will be used throughout this essay. This means using ‘Kosov’ instead of ‘Kosovo’, ‘Kosovar’ or ‘Kosov’ as these terms carry with them significant and inherent political stances. This also means using the place name ‘Mitrovica’ which is widely accepted. In the Albanian language the city’s name can be spelled ‘Mitrovice or Mitrovic’ and in Serbian it’s called either ‘Kosovska Mitrovica or just Mitrovica’ (Elise 2004). The use of any place names should not be seen as favouring either side. Throughout this paper, the order of place names in Serbian and Albanian language (when there’s no English alternative) does not carry assumptions of whether an area is considered a Serb-majority or an Albanian-majority municipality or location which is common in other reports on Kosova. Place names in respondents’ accounts have not been modified.

2 Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs mention cross-border aspects briefly in their description of the analytical model (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:380).

3 The other three Serb-majority municipalities in the northern part of Kosovo are: Leposavic, Zuhin Potok, and Zvecan.

4 There is only slightly over a dozen Kosovo-Serb residents in the city’s southern municipality (OSCE 2015a).

5 In the Kosovo context, the term ‘community’ is used to describe a group of people who share the same language, religion, or identify with a particular ethnic group (see Kosovo Law on Self Government 2008). The concept of minority and majority communities depend on the level of analysis, e.g. Kosovo-wide, the Kosovo-Albanian community is considered a majority, on a municipal level this group is also a minority community in some localities.

6 The official name of the agreement is First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations.

7 Mitrovica North (which was not yet a municipality de jure) Leposavic, Zuhin Potok, and Zvecan.

8 In the Kosovo system, as an example, the Mitrovica Municipal Development Plan from 2009 was developed before the formal administrative division of the city into two separate municipalities in the Kosovar system and thus planned for the entire city. It was drafted in the south (Conversation with Nushi 2017, Municipal Development Plan 2009). In the Serbian system, the four Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo (Zvecan, Zuhin Potok, Leposavic, and Mitrovica North) have upheld their pre-war institutional structure (Mijalić et al 2017:1).

9 The northern part of Mitrovica was previously administered by UNMIK, besides the municipality in the Serbian system. In 2012, the Administrative Office was created, a structure which is now part of the Municipality of Mitrovica North (Kosovo system).

10 The number of people in the Municipality of Mitrovica South counted as members of the Ashkali community was 647, while there were 528 Roma, 518 Turks, and 416 Bosniaks.

11 It’s estimated that approximately 1,000 Bosniaks, 580 members of the Gorani community, 200 Roma, 210 Turks, and 40 Ashkali reside in the northern part of the city.

12 Mixed neighbourhoods is understood as settlements where members of the Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian reside in the same area, it does not take into account other minorities such as Kosovo-Bosniaks, Kosovo-Romans and Kosovo-Gorani. See Appendix No.1, Map 1, for an overview of Mitrovica’s northern neighbourhoods.

13 Later, as tensions rose, Serbian and Albanian children attended school at different times (Interview civil society activist 2017).

14 However, you can occasionally see people traveling by moped on the Main Bridge (author’s observation 2017).

15 Citizens might be hesitant to show the license plates on their cars for fear of vandalism, for instance, someone with a KM (Kosovska Mitrovica) licensed car would never go to the south for fear of provoking violence (Conversation with citizen 2017). On a broader scale, RKS (Kosovo) plates are not accepted in ‘Serbia proper’ (see Zukiewicz and Domagala 2017:253) while KM license plates are forbidden in the south (Conversation with citizen 2017).

16 Serbian List (Srbi: Srpska Lista) is the ruling party in the Municipality of Mitrovica South. The party holds a majority of the seats in the Municipal Assembly.

17 Also: University of Pristina temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica.

18 In 2014, UNHCR figures suggested that some 6,945 Kosovo-Serbs were still displaced from the south side of Mitrovica to the four northern municipalities, while some 7,121 Kosovo-Albanians remained displaced from the northern municipalities to Mitrovica South (OSCE 2014:6 reference to UNHCR). As indicated previously, the number of Kosovo-Serbs residing in Mitrovica South is extremely low; it’s assumed that only 14 members of this community live in the southern municipality (OSCE 2015) and none of them in the urban area, except for the church compound (Civil society activist 2017, Zejneli 2017).

19 There have been increases in 2012 (UNMIK 2013), 2014 (OSCE 2014), and 2015 (author’s review of media reports).

20 Original: “Ako baš bih dođao da se Albanci doveli u buduću većinu, onda zvati ne znam...neću biti prvi koji će otići odavde, ali neću biti ni porednji.” Author’s translation from Serbian.

21 The Municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica (Serbian system) announced the construction of social housing in Suvi Do/Suhodoll and Krat i Vratku/Bežani in 2014 (see: Municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica 2014)

22 The vast majority of the apartments in that building were subsequently distributed to people who were already residents of Suvi Do/Suhodoll (Interview Golušević 2017).

23 Sunčanica Dolina (Sunny Valley) is a residential area under construction in Zvecan (Radonjić 2017). It’s a project initiated by Serbia intended for some 1,500 people that were displaced from Kosovo to central Serbia (Government of Serbia 2016).

24 The matter was supposed to have been solved in October 2015 through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on issues related to spatial planning documents, such as the Municipal Development Plans and zoning maps (EEAS 2015).

25 The issue of the municipal boundary was later detached from the project of revitalizing the bridge (Kosovo Government 2016:5-10, Government of Serbia 2017:27).

26 According to the Kosovo Law on Self Government (Law No. 03/L-040 2008), there is no minority quota for political parties in municipal assemblies. When non-majority communities comprise at least 10 per cent of a municipality’s total population, those communities should have a non-majority community representative as the Deputy Chair of the Municipal Assembly. The number
of assembly members is decided by the population size of the municipality: the Municipality of Mitrovica North has 19 municipal assembly members while the Municipality of Mitrovica South has 35 seats.

With the exception of Tri Solitera, which was only mentioned once in relation to an adjacent neighbourhood that is informally called 7 September (Interview Ahmeti 2017).

Srpska Lista holds 14 seats in the assembly, GI SDP has three seats, and PDK has two seats (CEC 2017:87).

In the neighbouring Municipality of Zvecan, the GI-SDP mayoral candidate, Dragisa Milovic, also had his car burnt.

Original in Serbian: “U poslednjih par godina u Mitrovici smo imali preko pedeset slučajeva paljenja automobila, bacanja ručnih bombi i dva nerazjašnjena ubistva. Sve se to delava na teritoriji od dva i po kvadratna kilometra, koja je potpuno pokrivena sigurnosnim kamerama. Očigledno je da se policija boji da se ne zmeri počinjacima, ili su počinjaci vezani sa bezbednosnim strukturama” (author’s translation).

Note: It should be reiterated that the north is indeed more diverse than the south.

The Pristina and Gracanica municipalities are adjacent to one another. Pristina is a municipality with a Kosovo-Albanian majority and Gracanica has a Kosovo-Serb majority (ECMI 2013).

The committee was externally initiated by an international organization.

In a recent survey on citizens movements across the ‘north-south divide’ only 9.9 per cent of respondents stated that they had never used it (ADRC 2017:22).

IBCM is registered as an international foundation. It is supported by external donors and was founded by a foreign NGO.

The Tsar Lazar Square is another contested intervention in urban public space in the center of Mitrovica North. Inaugurated in the summer of 2016, the statue of Tsar Lazar – a medieval ruler from the 14th century and a symbol for Serbia’s armed struggle against the Ottoman Empire (NE 2017) – has been rendered a violation of the Kosovo Constitution by the Kosovo Ombudsman (2016:80).

Original in Serbian: “Nisu nas pitali kad su ga gradili, ne pitaju nas ni kad ga rule” (author’s translation).


Gusic, Ivan. 2017. War, peace & the city: Urban conflicts over peace(s) in the postwar cities of Belfast, Mitrovica, and Mostar. Ph.D. diss., Lund University


Iphoven, R. 2016. Ethical decision making in social research: A practical guide. Springer.


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wugMl1SvX1w


1 Note on retrievability: During the first months of 2018, both the Kosovo Central Election Commission (www.kcp-k.s) and the Kosovo municipalities’ websites (all linked to one domain: https://kckla-gov.net/) have been under “reconstruction” and/or out of service. While I have attempted to save as many sources as possible as pdf-files during 2017, some references may no longer be accessible through these websites.


Interviews

Uka, Shemasi. *Interview by author.* Community representative and former head of the Suhodoll/Suvi Do neighbourhood council of the Municipality of Mitrovica South. 10.11.2017. Mitrovica.


Hajdarpasic, Suada. *Interview by author.* Director of Local Communities and Returns, Municipality of Mitrovica North. 23.11.2017. Mitrovica.


Stojanovic, Jovana. *Interview by author.* President of the Student Council at International Business College Mitrovica and Programme director, Youth Educational Club Sinergija. 28.11.2017. Mitrovica.


Andric, Milica. *Interview by author.* Head of the Public Policy Section, NGO Aktiv. 30.11.2017. Mitrovica.


Ahmeti, Diellore. *Interview by author.* Municipal Assembly Candidate to the Municipality of Mitrovica North, representing the political party ‘Vetëvendosje’. 2017.12.05. Mitrovica.

Caushi, Gonxhe. *Interview by author.* Member of the Municipal Assembly in Mitrovica North. 2017.12.06. Mitrovica.

Cimili, Bashkim. *Interview by author.* Deputy Chair of the Municipal Assembly in Mitrovica North and shop owner in Bosniak Mahala. 2017.12.07. Mitrovica.


Informantsii


ii Only those sources who have been quoted with names in the essay are listed here. My key informants remain anonymous. Therefore, this is not an exhaustive list of all the people who kindly helped me to better understand the lived realities in Mitrovica by sharing their thoughts and knowledge with me.
Appendix No. 1.

**Map 1.** Map of Mitrovica’s northern neighbourhoods with names in the Albanian and Serbian languages. This map is for illustrative purposes only. Source: Author* and Google Maps satellite image. The locations are approximate and based on several written and cartographic sources, as well as observation in the field. The map has been reviewed by two municipal officers in the north; one directly with the author and one through a key informant.

*There were no retrievable bilingual maps of all the relevant neighbourhoods. Therefore, the author resorted to creating one for the purpose of this study.

**Map 2.** Map of municipal boundaries (Kosovo system) in the city of Mitrovica. The black lines indicate the municipal boundaries as understood in the Kosovo system. The map shows the boundaries between the municipalities of Mitrovica North and South in the urban and suburban areas of Mitrovica, as well as a section of the boundary between Mitrovica North and the Municipality of Zvecan. Source: Kosovo Geoportal (geoportal.rks-gov.net). Author’s addition: Municipalities’ names in English.
Appendix No. 2.

Map 3. Map of Suhodol/Survi Do area with proposed municipal boundaries (red line), addendum to the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (2007). Source: This digital copy of the map was retrieved from the Map Collection at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations, New York, upon the author’s request.
Appendix No. 3.

Figure 1. The Peace Triangle. See Chapter 1 and 2. Source: Illustration of the analytical tool as presented by Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010) in ‘Beyond the absence of war: the diversity of peace in post-settlement societies.’
Appendix No. 4.
Interview guide

Brief introduction

My name is Sandra Segall. I’m a Master’s student with Umeå University, Sweden, the interview is for a student thesis dissertation. The thesis is focused on community relations in Mitrovica.

- Thank you for your time.
- Presentation and purpose of the interview (for a student thesis).
- Anonymous if you like and free to not answer any question. Ok?
- Is recording ok? For the author’s records and accurate citation only.

Questions

How would you describe the state of community relations in Mitrovica today? And in Mitrovica North?

What do you think are the main possibilities for increased inter-community cooperation in Mitrovica? And on a neighbourhood level?

What do you think are the main obstacles to increased inter-community cooperation in Mitrovica? And on a neighbourhood level?

What do you think are the main obstacles to peaceful coexistence?

What do you think are the main opportunities then for peaceful coexistence, for promoting peaceful coexistence and inter-community cooperation, on a community level?

In terms of community relations, what would you say are the main opportunities for peacebuilding?

On a neighbourhood/community level, would you say that there are any conflicts and/or disagreements? How do these conflicts manifest themselves?

What do you think are the main concerns for people just trying to lead a normal life in Mitrovica?

What are the main obstacles to returns in Mitrovica? What are the main obstacles to reconstruction of housing?

Are there any areas that have been more difficult to return to?

Where in Mitrovica North has it been most difficult to reconstruct the houses? What do you know about the housing construction in Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut and Subodoll/Suvi Do?

Are there land and property rights issues in X neighbourhood?

What would you say the state of community relations are in X neighbourhood?

What are the main/most pressing issues of concern in X neighbourhood? How are these issues dealt with? Who deals with them?

How would you describe the current state of Mitrovica, would you describe it as peace? Would you describe the current state of relations as peace?

What are the main issues of conflict, dispute or disagreement in X neighbourhood/on a community level? (If any)

Do you know of any form of cooperation/dialogue between actors on a neighbourhood level in order to solve those issues?

Other community leaders/representatives?

In your opinion, what has worked and what has not when it comes to increasing inter-community cooperation and trust between groups in Mitrovica?

How do you see Mitrovica’s future?

Are there any community representatives (formal and/or informal) on a neighbourhood level in Mitrovica? In which neighbourhoods? Do they cooperate? On which issues?

Do you know of any cases where community representatives worked together for a common goal/solve an issue of mutual concern? If so, could you give an example?

Are there any neighbourhood associations?

How are disputes/disagreements dealt with?

What are the main meeting places in Mitrovica for different communities on an everyday basis? And in Mitrovica north of the Ibar?

What are the main meeting places for communities in X neighbourhood? (e.g. any shops, cafés)
Are there any shared services in Mitrovica – formal and informal - that are used by several communities? (e.g. health care clinics, youth centres, shared school buildings, and so on?) And in Mitrovica North? Who uses them? If not, do you think that the duplication of services was imposed or did it develop organically?

Children from X neighbourhood, where do they go to school?
Do people trade, buy things from each other in shops? Do the communities do business with each other? What is shared and what is not? And why?

Are there any places in Mitrovica that you find more conflictive than others? (e.g. where there are more disagreements?) And in Mitrovica north of the Ibar?
Which are the spaces/places that you find less conflictive?
Do you think there are any neutral spaces in Mitrovica?

Mitrovica is commonly described as two entities, how do you view Mitrovica? Do you see the city this way or in some other way?
Do you think that Mitrovica is a completely divided city? Why and why not? How would you describe it?
Are there any places in Mitrovica north of the river where you/ members of your community would not go?
Appendix No 5.


Photo 3. A concrete cylinder with ‘UCK’ (KLA) and the Albanian escutcheon with the two-headed eagle sprayed on it by the entrance to the Suhodoll/Suvi Do neighbourhood. In 2014, cylinder blocks that had been put together on the main road in Suhodoll/Suvi Do and named the ‘UCK square’ were removed. November 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 5. Albanian flags hang across the street in an intersection in Bosniak Mahala. The author did not observe any Albanian flags on display in this way until after the Albanian flag day was celebrated on November 28. In the distance, one can see how the flags are displayed all along the street towards the Ibar River. November 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 6. Serbian flags hang across Kajza Milošević / Prince Miloš Street. This is the same street where Albanian flags (Photo 5) are displayed just a few blocks to the south. November 2017. Photo by author.
Photo 7. People walk and drive both ways on Kolasinska/7 September Street. This is the road between the Suhodoll/Suvi Do area and the urban centre in Mitrovica North. The building on the left is part of the neighborhood informally called Doctor’s Valley and if the Ahtisaari map would be final, the municipal boundary would be drawn along and across this road. November 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 8. Eastern Bridge as seen from south to north. Pedestrians and cars can cross freely, some drivers will change license plates before or after crossing. The Albanian flags were on display since the Albanian flag day. December 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 9. The Main Bridge as seen from south to north. Pedestrians cross between the two sides. On the northern shore there is some construction material such as concrete cylinders and a tin fence in the middle. November 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 10. The small walking bridge as seen from south to north. The three apartment buildings are the ‘Three Towers’. Pedestrians can cross freely here. November 2017. Photo by author.
Photo 11. Entering the Suhodoll/Suvi Do neighbourhood. First street sign in Albanian (Kosovo system) between Mitrovica’s northern urban centre and Suhodoll/Suvi Do, October 2017. Photo by author.


Photo 14. The Main Bridge in the evening as seen from north to south. A metal sheet fence stretches from one side to the other. December 2017. Photo by author.
Photo 15. The ruins of a house in the centre of Mitrovica. 18 years after the end of the war, houses still remain in ruins both north and south of the Ibar River. Many have given up on the idea of returning to the places where they used to live before the war. December 2017. Photo by author.

Photo 16. The Main Bridge as seen from north to south. A police car is parked in the pedestrian zone. December 2017. Photo by author.