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Introduction

1   The scope of this paper fits within critical geopolitics and border studies using the mental mapping method of data collection in post-war Croatia (the city of Vukovar) as a micro-scale example. The Croatian War of Independence started in 1991 as a result of the deep Yugoslav crisis and clashed ideas about the future of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in which Croatia was one of the republics. In those clashes the advocators of confederacy and democratization confronted Yugoslav hardliners whose main agenda was not only to preserve existing polity, but also to empower the hegemony of the central government. Moreover, the hardliners intertwined their ideas with the Greater-Serbian agenda making it impossible to reach a consensus on a federal level. As a result, the hardliners used military force to tackle the solution, which ended in the aforementioned war.

2   One of the first cities on the territory of Croatia that suffered open aggression and siege by the Serb-controlled Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) was the city of Vukovar. Officially restored to internationally recognized borders of Croatia in 1998, this city stays remembered as one of the most bombed cities in Europe after the World War II. The peaceful reintegration was set as a successful example of the United Nations' operation entitled UN Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia, Baranya and Western Syrmia (Jakešević, 2012, p. 190). The ethnic structure of the city nowadays consists of 57.37% Croats, 34.87% Serbs and 7.76% of others (Population Census, 2011).

3   The social and individual trauma provoked by the siege, the multi-ethnical character of the city and the burden of confronted historical interpretations created the discourse of Vukovar as an ethnically divided city. This paper seeks to find an answer in regard to

whether the inhabitants of the city perceive it as geopolitically divided. In order to examine this, authors apply the cartographical methodology of mental mapping to explore imagined boundaries in the minds of some Vukovar inhabitants. The visual representation of imagined mental boundaries in the city of Vukovar is the central focus of this paper. This visual representation establishes the geopolitical discourse that supports the idea that Vukovar is a divided city without any visual lines of divisions or concrete barriers in a territorial sense.

4   Accordingly, the intention is to examine if the city is indeed divided, in which terms and to what extent. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology provides tools for this particular micro-scale research. Combining statistical data and a random sample questionnaire with in-depth interviews and field observations provides an opportunity for all the aspects of research questions to be fully comprehended. Furthermore, it is important to avoid the geopolitical trap that considers certain phenomena as taken-for-granted. In the case of Vukovar, geopolitical discourses claim that the city is ethnically divided, but there are no actual arguments to support these imaginations in a physical way. There have not been any findings that show the way in which the city is divided, other than the number of Croats and Serbs living in the city and the divided education programs.

5   In order to examine whether the city is indeed mentally divided and in which kind of geographical patterns, a research was conducted in December 2018. Using one percent of the city's population as a relevant group we performed a random sampling of examinees asking them three questions. The results are additionally supported and explained with the second phase in-depth interviews and field observations, which helped construct a set of conclusions that introduce divisions in Vukovar not only as the matter of discourses, but rather as scientifically proven or refuted facts.

Divided cities – the state of art

6   "Divided cities" is a term used by many different scholars in various fields of science: from political science and geography, sociology, anthropology, international relations, architecture, economy, psychology to civil engineering, environmental science or even materials science. The authors of this paper approach the term "divided cities" as a notion used by contemporary political geography and geopolitics where "we must not limit our attention to a study of the geography of politics within pregiven, taken-for-granted, commonsense spaces, but investigate the politics of the geographical specification of politics" (Dalby, 1991, p. 274).

7   Cities can be divided in different ways. The most common examples are cities divided between two States. Nevertheless, for those examples there are more appropriate terms - "border city" or "frontier city". When defining a divided city, it is important to acknowledge physical visibility, social manifestations and dimensions of power. That is why political geography and geopolitics may provide a complete definition for such a phenomenon. Cities might be divided ethnically, culturally, ideologically, geographically or in administrative ways, but the main characteristic to begin with is the visibility of divisions. Divisions are often defined by physical obstacles (Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovo[1]) and sometimes there are natural barriers that serve as boundaries (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina) or, in not so many cases, the inhabitants are divided by imagined borders (Vukovar). Furthermore, almost all cities could be defined as

visibly divided in an architectural or historical sense (upper town/downtown) or in an administrative way (neighborhoods), but a small number of them is divided in (geo)political terms. Some kind of frictions or power politics is a prerequisite for a divided city. The notion of "political division" refers to different races, classes, cultures, religions, nations, etc.

8   The world's most famous examples of divided cities are Jerusalem (Israel/Palestine[2]), Nicosia (Cyprus[3]), Berlin (Germany) before 1990, El Paso – Juarez (USA/Mexico), Belfast (the United Kingdom), Beirut (Lebanon), etc. (Björkdahl and Strömbom, 2015; Nightingale, 2012; Bolens, 2012; Calame, 2011). Kotel introduces the term "frontier-city" which describes the concept of divided cities in geopolitical terms – "I call frontier-city (or frontier-region) all cities (or regions) that are not only polarized on an ethnic or ideological basis (cf. Berlin during the Cold War), but are, above all, disputed because of their location on fault-lines between ethnic, religious or ideological wholes" (1999, p. 228). There is ongoing debate about divided cities, their representations, definitions or basis. That is why most scholars take case study approach while researching causes and consequences for division(s).

9   Jerusalem could be defined as the world's most famous example of a divided city – it "remains starkly divided between an Israeli west and an occupied Palestinian east and is best understood as a frontier city characterized by long-simmering tensions and quotidian conflict" (Busbridge, 2014, p. 76). Another interesting example is Nicosia. It is best described with the use of words such as walls, division, buffer zone, green line, destruction, and re-connection (Alpar Atun and Doratli, 2009). All these cities are divided by previous or on-going events that seriously disrupted co-existence between two or more different groups. While some authors deal with historical causes of divisions, others concentrate more on current situations with a special overview which gives recommendations for future actions with a goal of overcoming existing divisions (Zorko and Novak, 2019).

10   Currently, there are numerous researches in various scientific fields that approach this phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, most of them reflect on divided cities from their scientific background. Even though we approach this notion from a geopolitical perspective, there are also researches in other fields that can provide additional understanding of the concept of divided cities. In this part of the paper we briefly present the current state-of-the-art research related to divided cities, as well as a description of general ideas of our approach to this phenomenon and to the discourse of division in Vukovar.

11   Kliot and Mansfeld (1999) approach conflict and territorial organization in divided cities by using inductive reasoning. Based on the history of division in Berlin, Jerusalem and Nicosia, they describe relevant structures and processes important for understanding the central focus of the study. Their approach shows the importance of history for understanding micro-geopolitical divisions. It not only describes processes that lead to division and segregation, but it also enables some contextual understanding of conflicts that led to territorial organizations in divided cities.

12   Another author, Florine Ballif, portraits the Belfast peace-lines by using photography as an investigative tool to locate devices, analyze the transformation of the urban environment and describe the materiality of place (2014, p. 65). Even though this research falls under the visual ethnography it illustrates the author's struggle to avoid descriptive neutrality by researching pictures, which makes it almost impossible to

bring adequate conclusions regarding divisions in Belfast. This showed us that only field observations may lack information in the case of researched phenomenon. In the case of Vukovar, it should examine if the city is indeed mentally divided, what the background for division is and to what extend it is divided. This could be shown by deconstructing contemporary geopolitical discourses of divisions and constructing a set of geopolitical criteria strong enough to support the hypothesis of division and non-territorial embodiment of the division at the same time.

13   The micro-scale divisions based on debatable narratives, illusions and myths that create discourses on national level (both in Croatia and Serbia) should be disregarded. Instead, the goal here is to deconstruct the essence of geopolitical discourse of division in Vukovar by exploring two perspectives that shape this city into a divided one as well as construct proper arguments that prove (or refute) the existence of mental divisions in Vukovar. Therefore, the intention is to offer an answer if the city is indeed divided and, if it is, in which terms and to what extent.

Geographical and historical backgrounds

14   The city of Vukovar is in the Croatian far east, located in the Vukovar-Syrmia county. Being the capital of the county, Vukovar is the political, cultural and economic center of the region, with four other cities and 26 municipalities gravitating to it. Its geographical positioning on the Danube River[4], which creates a natural border between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia, makes Vukovar a city on a border. The city itself is completely located on the territory of Croatia and is not divided in that way. However, the vicinity of national borders influenced and enhanced geopolitical discourses of divisions and (non)belonging.

15   Furthermore, the position of Vukovar had, strategically, a great impact on the city's distant and contemporary history where the Danube's harbor is only one aspect of it. The second aspect includes more complex strategic paradigms that emphasize the importance of landscape. The city itself is located at the confluence of the Vuka and the Danube, has no surrounding mountains or hills, and it is expanded on pampas of the Pannonian Basin. On one hand, its strategic position includes many advantages. Namely, earlier mentioned transport significance of Danube, fertile land, accessible irrigation, infrastructure adjusted to plain landscape, etc. On the other hand, contemporary history showed that this strategic position had disadvantages too: during the time of the war, the city was rather easy to conquer, bearing in mind that it did not have any useful fortifications. However, a human shield was protecting the city by resisting the siege for almost three months (in 1991).

16   The Siege of Vukovar, also known as the Battle for Vukovar, is a part of the Croatian Homeland War, fought from 1991 to 1995. After the federal government of Yugoslavia failed to reach an agreement on the future of that multi-ethnic, but authoritative federation, YPA empowered by rebelled Serbian minority in Croatia attacked this former Yugoslav republic in order to stop its aspiration for independence and international recognition (Novak, 2016).

17   The siege started in the summer of 1991, not long after the international community imposed a moratorium on the decision of Croatian and Slovenian parliaments to exit the SFRY. After the final round of negotiations between the federal government on one side and Slovenia and Croatia on the other failed, the moratorium was cancelled. Both

countries asked for international recognition. In Croatia, the acts of aggression of YPA and rebelled Serbs continued. The Siege of Vukovar ended on November 18, 1991 when the city was seized by the aggressors and became a part of the self-proclaimed Serbian Autonomous Oblast (SAO) of Krajina.

18   This entity was only one part of a major geopolitical vision evoked by the radical Serbian establishment, YPA, the rebelled Serbs in Croatia, the rebelled Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of Montenegrin political establishment, all for the goal of territorial expansion. The general idea behind this project, in geopolitical terms, advocates that "all Serbian lands" should be joined in one great Serbian State (The Case of V. Šešelj, 2016). However, neither Vukovar nor any other territories claimed by the followers of the Greater Serbian ideology were a part of the Badinter Commission's recommendations relating to the crisis response in SFRY[5]. Vukovar was a part of the Croatian territory for the past few centuries, but the population of the city was multi-ethnic. Table 1 shows the ethno-national structure of the city from 1910 to 2001 (vukovar.hr, 2019). According to the Table 1, Serbs became a significant minority (more than 20%) in the city right after the World War 2.

Table 1. Ethno-national structure of Vukovar.

Year	Croats	Serbs	Germans	Hungarians	Others
1910	39.50%	15.70%	33.80%	9.20%	1.80%
1931	49.60%	16.60%	26.10%	5.60%	2.00%
1948	63.50%	25.50%	0.30%	5.30%	5.30%
1971	48.60%	30.20%	0.20%	2.80%	18.20%
1990	47.20%	32.30%	0.20%	1.50%	18.80%
2001	57.46%	32.88%	0.18%	1.22%	8.25%

19

Source: vukovar.hr, 2019

Geopolitical discourses of Vukovar as divided city

20   The current situation in post-war Vukovar is rather complicated in terms of ethno-national relations between two groups engaged in previous conflict. Policies focused on managing diversity and post-crisis management in general had little success. Modern-day Vukovar is torn between two geopolitical imaginations. First, there is an imagination according to which Vukovar symbolizes heroism, sacrifice and martyrdom in the Homeland War. From this perspective, the city symbolises sacrifice of Croatian defenders and war veterans in their fight for freedom and independence or, on the other hand, the treason of political elites in Zagreb who did not do enough to save the city. The culture of remembrance of the fallen city and the victims that died during the siege represents the key point in Croatian national being deeply rooted into everyday

politics, national history, lived geographies and myths. This imagination ghettoises the city further and insists on divisions which become the means of populism that is used to gain cheap political points.

21   In their research conducted on a national level, Skoko and Bagić (2007) examined what was the image of Vukovar almost 15 years after the suffering. They asked Croatians to choose a syntagma that describes Vukovar the best. 34 percent of examinees have chosen syntagma "city-hero", 24 percent "sacrificed city", 14 percent "poor city", 7 percent "the city of coexistence" and 6 percent have chosen "divided city" (Skoko and Bagić, 2007, p. 176). These findings support premises elaborated earlier in the context of symbolical narratives and victimisation. Everyday urban geographies in contexts of either division or coexistence are not recognised as priorities of the post-war society of the city in the eyes of Croatians but they are present.

22   However, the authors (*ibid.*) compared these results with similar research that focuses on student population (young people that did not live in the time of the war). There, only 28 percent see Vukovar as "city-hero", 29 percent as "sacrificed city", and significant 15 percent of them see the city as divided (*ibid.*). The conducted research illustrates the Croatian national perception in the context of Vukovar and, even though it has been conducted over ten years ago, it still provides a comprehensive insight regarding geopolitical imaginations of the city.

23   On the other hand, there is an opposite geopolitical imagination which sees the city as a multicultural environment that became a hostage of everyday politics. These views tend to overlook any means of division in Vukovar and perceive the city as a melting pot, i.e. a bridge between Croats and Serbs (Catholics and Serbian Orthodox). However, this is hardly a potential interpretation that the city residents would have because fabricated realities became a part of everyday lives of peoples and created a discourse of division that potentially provoked the urban fragmentation in the city. In this context, the media played and still plays a crucial part. For example, headlines about buses full of voters from different parts of Croatia or neighbouring Serbia that used to live in Vukovar report that those voters come there only to vote during local elections (vijesti.rtl.hr, 2017; novosti.rs, 2014; vijesti.hrt.hr, 2014). Other examples include alleged trend among Serbs from Vukovar, living currently in Serbia, who fictively register their residence in Vukovar to take advantage of social benefits (glas-slavonije.hr, 2018; lokalni.vecernji.hr, 2017).

24   Furthermore, already complex ethno-national relations got intertwined with local and national politics that complicated them even further. Political games between the parties on opposite political spectrums on the national level sometimes reflect to the situation in the city by adding *artificial* or *enhanced* ethno-national dimensions. For instance, a few years ago there was an intense campaign by a part of the political spectrum to fully implement the law that obligates all cities or municipalities in Croatia with more than one third of non-Croatian-speaking population to translate the official public institution signs to the language of that specific national minority. Whether this law should or should not be applied in Vukovar became a part of public discourse not only in Vukovar, but also across the whole region of former SFRY. Due to similarities between Croatian and Serbian languages, the discourse was developed towards the question if Vukovar needs Cyrillic script (predominantly used in Serbian language) or not. According to that, there have been several attempts to put "Cyrillic signs", as they were popularly named. All these attempts were violently stopped by protesters who

smashed the signs, which led the Croatian government to postpone the instalment (novilist.hr, 2013; vecernji.hr, 2015; b92.net, 2015; slobodnaevropa.org, 2016).

25   Contemporary challenges in the city provoked by the violent events in the war caused a chain of social changes that reflect the life of ordinary populace of Vukovar. The burden of fabricated realities, different geopolitical imaginations and political discussions empowered with ethnically divided educational system (especially in preschools and schools) made a discourse of urban fragmentation in Vukovar hard to overcome. The divided educational system created new divisions among youth, and it is highly controversial right now in Croatian media discourse (Jutarnji.hr, 2019). There has been a project of an Intercultural School, started in 2014, funded by Norway (supported by Iceland and Liechtenstein). The school should have started its programme in 2017, when all the prerequisites were met (a renewed building, modern intercultural programme). However, due to the local politics and legislative complications it was never functional (euractiv.jutarnji.hr, 2018) and the project now has failed completely (srednja.hr, 2019).

26   The idea of this paper is to explore whether the city is divided, and if yes – in which terms, to what geographical extent and, consequently, to encourage more academic discussions on micro-geopolitical divisions in Vukovar. Due to the issues that were elaborated earlier and the short historical insight, our thesis is that Vukovar is an ethno-nationally divided city with mental borders that are hard to illustrate due to the complexity of interrelations of Croats and Serbs in everyday life and everyday bordering practice(s). Since Vukovar is divided mentally, not geographically, we assume that the perceived borders will be impossible to define in strict territorial terms but rather visualized in different contexts of mental maps defined by its citizen's everyday lives. This paper tends to confirm that, although Vukovar is often referred to as divided in the media, it is also perceived as divided among citizens. Contrary to, for example Mostar (Zorko and Novak, 2017), the division is not territorially strict or geographically defined. Borders of exclusion are embedded not in geography but in society and power politics. That is why this case represents an excellent example of micro-geopolitical divisions and everyday practices of (mental) border making. Due to the fact that there are no visible divisions or physical obstacles, people draw their own borders in mental maps of everyday life.

The methodology of research

27   The research was conducted on December 15 and 16, 2018 in Vukovar city-center. It consisted of 1% of the inhabitants generated by random sampling. According to the 2011 Croatian census in Vukovar there were 26,468 inhabitants (Population Census, 2011). However, according to the estimated numbers from 2017, there has been a slight decrease in population in the whole county from which Vukovar is the capital (Population Estimate, 2017). The most radical estimates proclaim that there were no more than 23,000 inhabitants in Vukovar in 2016 (Glas Slavonije, 2016).

28   A total number of 260 questionnaires was distributed and a total of 243 valid answers were collected. The questionnaire consisted of three different types of questions. The first one was a closed question with three given answers. The second one was an open question, while the third one was a blind map that examinees were asked to draw on. Mental mapping presents a rather new form of data collecting in social sciences

methodology (Gould and White, 2005). Although visualization of examinees and their geographical knowledge may vary, the practice has shown that similar patterns of answers could be noticed (Zorko and Novak, 2017). Sebastien Caquard (2011) even claims that there has been an up-growth in scientific interest in combining the linkages between maps and narratives. Mental borders in people's heads "show invisible divisions usually hidden from the classical geographies and spatial visions of tourists and visitors. On the other hand, they are unique visions of personal reflections of the people living in the city" (Zorko and Novak, 2017, p. 99). Everyday practices in bordering and re-bordering processes are the most important ones when it comes to local levels and micro-regional divisions. Personal reflections thus indicate potential lines of division and explain internal dynamics of the city.

29   Imagining geographies has become rather popular in geopolitical analysis (Gregory, 1995). Imaginative geographies could be analyzed both on macro and micro levels. They "present the combination of imaginative geographies of identity and global perception of territory ... could be defined as a collective mental map of the world (macro level) or of local surroundings (micro level) ... they change over time, space and power relations thus have strong geopolitical implications" (Zorko, 2018, p. 87). This paper focuses on imaginative mental maps on local levels, micro-geopolitics of division in the case study of the city of Vukovar.

30   The follow-up for this empirical research consists of interviews taken after the questionnaires were conducted. Examinees showed great fear of media and any kind of formal questionnaires. They explained their fear through the fact that the State media often uses the example of Vukovar in the wrong way, and they witnessed misinterpretation of the facts about their city. Numerous examinees were asked whether we are doing this story for the newspapers and insisted that we do not use any recording devices, even more, they had no-photo attitudes even though we were not interested in their photos at all. Only after explaining that this research is done for scientific purposes only, they assented to participate.

31   Nevertheless, after they answered three formal questions, and after the questionnaires were stashed away, they usually opened up and continued with their stories about the city and the quality of living in a more relaxed way. Even though we do not find this part of the field research as methodologically representative, it helped in understanding the background of potential division and everyday life in Vukovar. That is why some of the stories were included and qualitative narrative analysis was applied to confirm already proven research thesis and broaden the context in this particular case. These stories will be mentioned in a form of metadata provided in footnotes while we guaranteed anonymity of the examinees. Some of them have given their consent due to the fact that their profession or their position reveals their identity. Regardless of that, the authors alone know their full names. The second phase includes 10 open interviews, three of which are were answered by females[6].

The interpretation of the result: reaffirming the discourse of division?

32   In the questionnaire the first question was a closed one, asking whether Vukovar is a divided city or not. The given answers were *yes*, *no* and *I do not know*. Out of a total of 260 examinees, 17 refused to answer (6.5 percent) and 243 answered (93.5 percent),

which means that they participated in this research. Out of the 243, 176 of them claimed that Vukovar is a divided city. More precisely, 72,4 percent of answers to the first question were affirmative, 25.5 percent were negative, and 2.1 percent of the examinees were indecisive and ticked the *I do not know* box. The first conclusion is that the majority of examinees had strong opinions on the division of the city, while almost three fourths of them thought that Vukovar is a divided city.

33   The second question was an open one asking: *what do you think is the background for the divisions?* There were no given answers because we wanted to remain impartial. Because of that fact, their answers were coded into ten categories: *ethno-national, ethno-religious, religious, geographical, educational, political, economy-determinated, sociological/ psychological, not sure* and *refused to answer.* The ethno-national category includes answers mentioning national background, Serbs and Croats, as well as all versions of the word *ethnic.* The geographical category includes toponyms and cartographical mentions. The educational category refers to schooling system divisions. The economy-determined category includes mentions of poor and wealthy people as well as salary differences. Finally, the sociological or psychological category refers to personal characteristics of people and will be further elaborated.

34   Out of the total number of people who stated that Vukovar is a divided city 77, 4 percent of them think that the background for divisions is an ethno-national (between Croats and Serbs). Only 1.1 percent stated ethno-religious background and 0.6 religious as reasons of division. 4.5 percent mentioned geographical background as the most important one. 1.7 percent thinks that the divided schooling system is the main reason of the division in the city and 3.4 percent stated that political division is the underlying cause of division. The economy-determined reasons were exhibited by 1.7 percent of examinees, while 4.5 percent mentioned sociological or psychological reasons. The same percentage of examinees did not know the basis of division and 0.6 percent refused to answer this question. The most noticeable reason of division, by far, is the ethno-national one between Croats and Serbs. This kind of division is also visible on the location (in the city). Deeper field research showed numerous divisions in the area of entertainment as well as leisure life. This division is noticeable in the places where people usually meet in the city, e.g. coffee bars and shops. There are Croatian coffee bars and Serbian coffee bars. They differ in the selection of music, the origin of products and the customers that visit them. Different ethnical groups go to different places and tend to avoid mixing with other groups. For instance, in the city center there is a Christmas market, which is visited only by Croats because their period of Christmas differs from the Serbian. The manager of the event said that Serbs avoid this place during the Advent and the only part they attend is the ice-skating place nearby[7].

35   Although war trauma is still present it inflicts people's minds and it ultimately influenced their answers, there is a small percentage of people who were oriented towards current trends and the reasons of division in the city of Vukovar. The differences in wealth or current politics (political parties) show new lines of divisions in the city. There were numerous mentions of politics in the qualitative part of the research. When talking *off the record,* people mostly blamed political elites for the situation in the city of Vukovar. There are two kinds of blames in this sense. The first one is oriented towards *central politics* in Zagreb (and Belgrade). People believe that the main political parties, and politicians in both respective capitals, do not understand the local situation in the city, feeds upon the divisions and populism and harms the

potential coexistence of ethno-national groups. The problems of dual schooling system, or issues of the Cyrillic formal inscriptions appertain to such believing. Namely, those issues are attributed to State politics, which show no understanding for local needs and realities. State politics is also often blamed for remembering the city and its problems only once a year in memorabilia speeches and in protocols of remembering the fall of the city during the war.

36 The second part of *the blame on politics* is related to local politicians and local politics. The common belief among inhabitants is that all politicians are the same, regardless of their ideological or party affiliations. Furthermore, they believe that funds were taken from the city treasury for personal gains and that the opposite party often legalized those actions[8]. There is also evidence of numerous shady interconnections of private businesses and city projects.

37 Geographical divisions (if mentioned) were related to the area along theVuka river, or even along the Danube as well. River Vuka divides the city and its estuary is in the Danube. The Danube, on the other hand forms the official State border between Croatia and Serbia and does not indicate divisions in the city of Vukovar, but rather the divisions between the two States. The latter could be identified as national tensions rather than geographical division.

38 Sociological/psychological background is further elaborated out of the fact that examinees gave interesting answers about the divisions. The most common one was the division between *people* and *non-people*, or *good* and *bad* people. That is why we added psychological to this sociological category as well. Some examinees said that the divisions depend on the company and social circles an individual belongs to. Finally, there was a distinction between *Us* and *Them*. Although this distinction might belong to the ethno-national or ethno-religious categories, the ambiguity of geopolitical discourses was the reason it was included in this imaginative socio/psychological division.

39 Finally, the third question referred to a blind map of the city of Vukovar and the examinees were asked to draw lines of the division if answer that "Vukovar is a divided city" was chosen. Out of the total of 176 examinees, 141 did not know how to draw the map of division. Only a few of them even tried to explain it geographically and all of the interpretations were different. That is why we divided those 35 maps in four categories due to the similarity of the drawings. They were also given names based on the background of the sketches. It is important to note that the following figures represent interpretations by the authors based on sampled sketches of examinees' mental map drawings.

40 *Pattern No.1: Neighborhood divisions* – almost half of the examinees (14 maps) tried to point out the differences in neighborhoods in which either Croats or Serbs live. The visualization of different neighborhoods and their ethnic component were provisional and different in each case. Nevertheless, the examinees pointed out **neighborhoods pattern** as a concept of potential territorial micro-regional divisions. The examinees that drew those maps pointed out that ethno-national divisions on the second question were one of the reasons of division in the city. Although these are imagined borders in the urban structure of the city, the examinees pointed out the visual differences of those neighborhoods. Indeed, the division could be noticed in the form of architecture because in some parts there were renewed houses and, in some neighborhoods, still ruined ones. Nevertheless, this occurs in all parts of the city no matter the ethnical

composition. Also, upon drawing different neighborhoods the examinees did not label them concordantly as Serbian or Croatian. It depended mostly upon personal contacts or feelings and no two maps were similar. This shows that Vukovar could not be considered territorially divided through *neighborhood patterns*.

**Figure 1. The neighborhood division sketch on a blind map of Vukovar.**
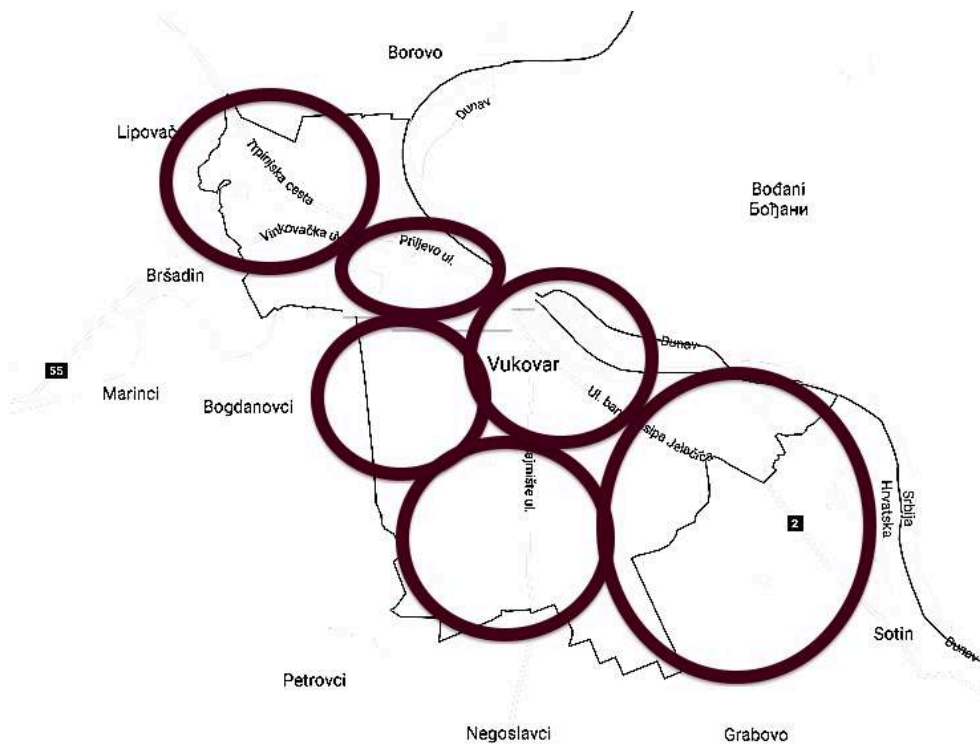
41   *Pattern No. 2: Straight lines of the division* – the second biggest example were divisions in straight lines through the city. Ten examinees divided the city vertically or horizontally and outlined geographical divisions as the background of city's division on second question. The interesting part is that, even though they mentioned the geographical background as a reason of division, they were having trouble pointing out where that straight line of division should be. As mentioned beforehand, there were vertical lines (majority) that stated that Croatian part is on the right, and Serbian on the left side of the map; and horizontal divisions (only few) pointed that the line of division is Vuka river. The map of vertical straight division (figure 2) shows only provisional and summary findings, as no two straight lines in questionnaires were the same. This shows that even the people who believe in the geographical background of division in Vukovar and visualize it through a ***straight-line pattern*** are not able to point out or show those strict lines of micro-regional division physically or drawing it on the map. This shows that Vukovar could not be considered territorially divided with the *pattern of straight lines* as well.

Figure2. Straight lines division sketch on a blind map of Vukovar.
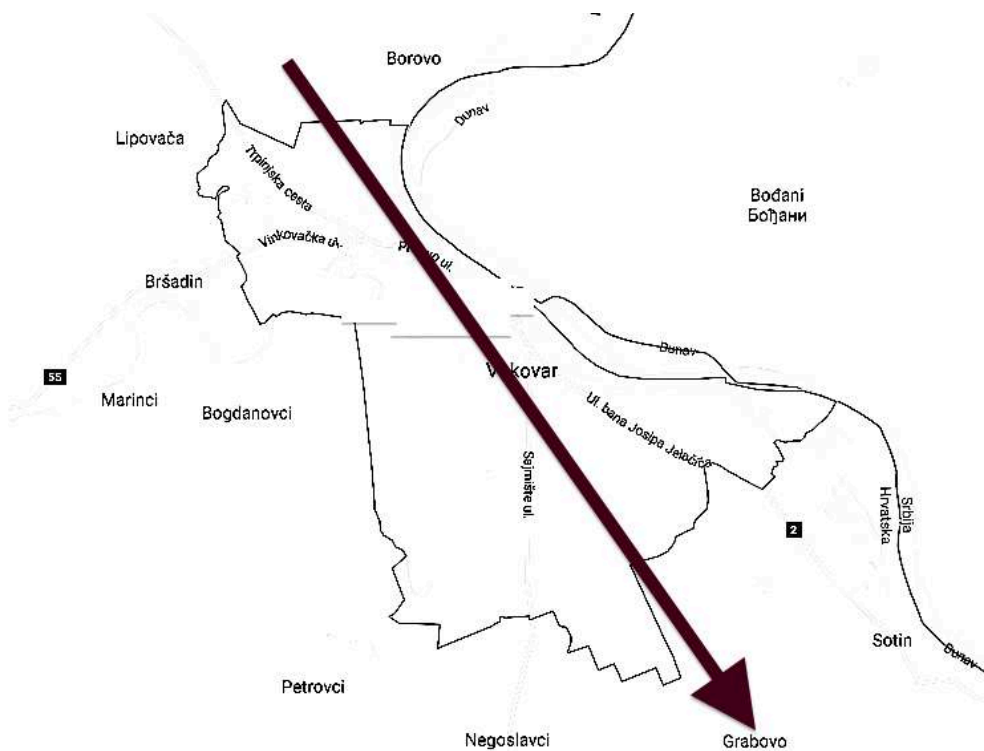
42 *Pattern No. 3: Center-periphery* – eight examinees tried to differentiate the center from periphery as a basis for their sketch. Those mental maps differentiate the city center as a common unified place (mainly Croatian) and peripheries which are inhabited by *Others.* This presentation is geographically similar to the previous one as circles territorially resemble parts of the city center or the right side of the map which noted as mainly Croatian. The left side of the map in this case is the suburbs/periphery and it is noted as Serbian. Although the **center-periphery pattern** does not have clear geographical background as a reason of division (and instead favorizes the ethno-national one) it is so far the most territorially embedded and strict pattern. One could easily define borders of the city center as well as physical marks that show them. Nevertheless, both Croats and Serbs have access to the center as well as business activities and political institutions that represent them, which means that this division could not be seen as a physical one. This shows that although in the *pattern of circles* Vukovar could be imagined and presented as territorially divided, everyday life impugns those visualizations in practice.

Figure 3. Center-periphery sketch on a blind map of Vukovar.
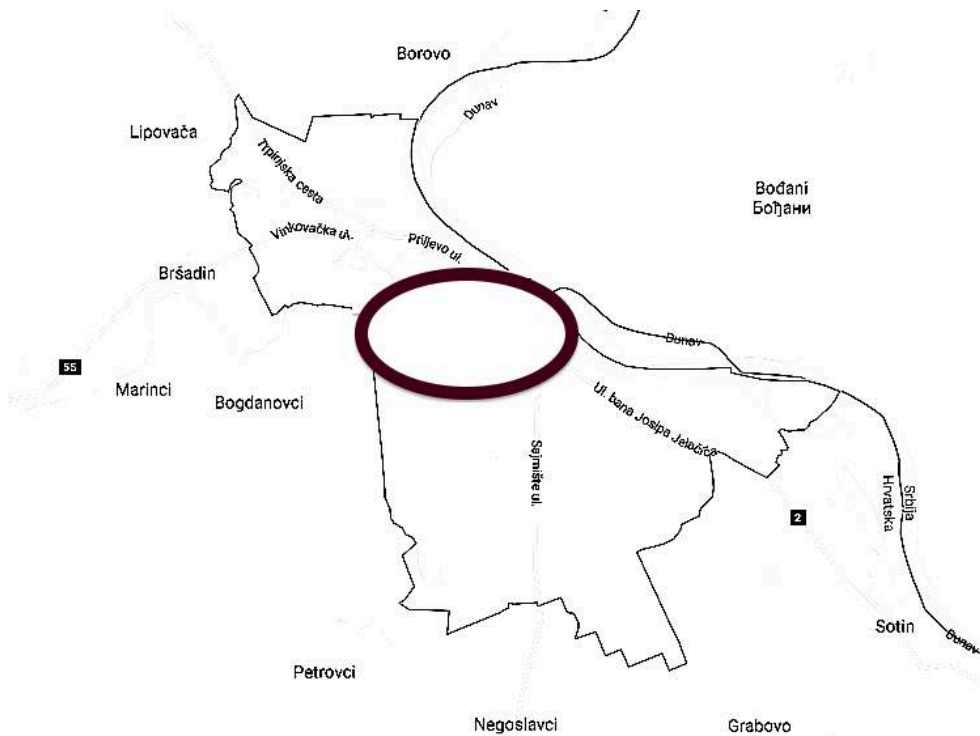
43 *Pattern No. 4: The leopard skin pattern* – the dots of exclusion as a basis for sketch were pointed out by only four of the examinees. Their mental maps consisted of places (namely coffee bars and shops) divided by their consumers based on ethno-national division. For them, those are main places of divisions, and in that sense, the divisions consist of marked locations of social life. For them, urban divisions do not consist out of streets or parks, but rather of meeting points of different ethno-national groups. Those four examinees dotted the map randomly in the ***leopard skin pattern*** showing that locations of socialization in different groups represent divisions. They mainly referred to social circles and social activities of Vukovar inhabitants. They did not refer to official social circles (e.g. political institutions or schools as separated schooling systems run in the same buildings in different turns), but namely to the places of entertainment. The divisions in locations of social activities between ethnical groups were visible in field research as well. Not only does music differ from place to place, but products are also either Croatian or imported from Serbia. As micro-locations of socialization may change daily, this pattern also has no territorially strict division in its core.

Figure 4. Leopard skin pattern sketch on a blind map of Vukovar.
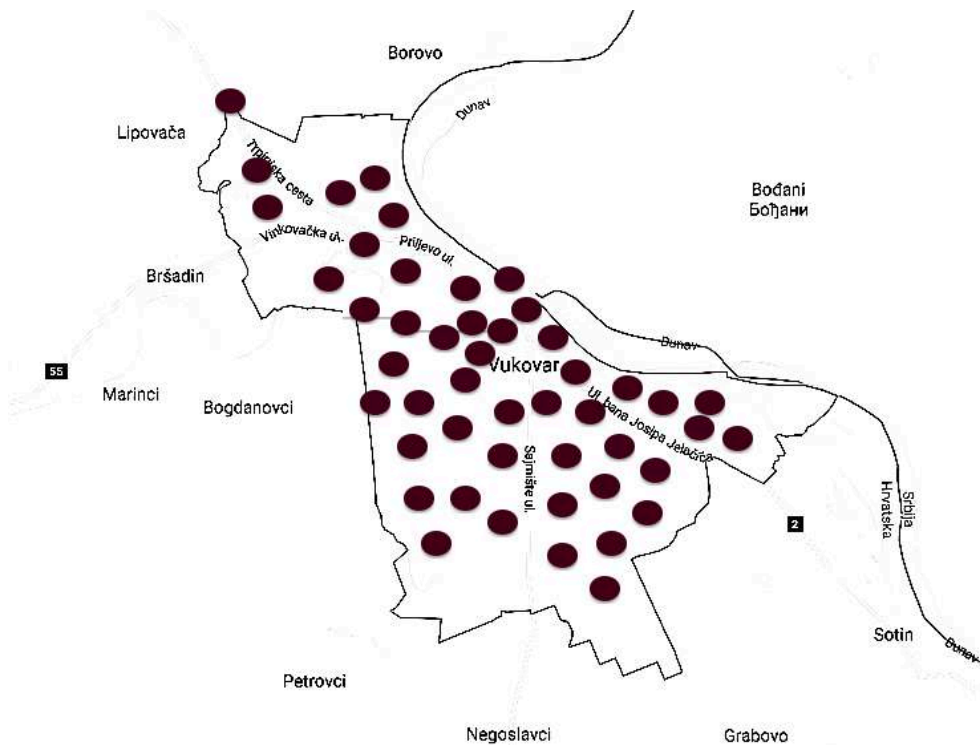
Conclusions

44   There are two main narratives in Croatian contemporary history that influence and fold geopolitical imaginations of Vukovar as a divided city. The first one refers to the city as a symbol of war, keeping the painful collective memories alive. The second one refers to the city as a symbol of multiculturalism but in a divided form and as a city of co-existence rather than a functioning local entity. The first narrative preserves the city in a moment of history, orienting all of the efforts towards the city to be a special case or an example. The discourses of suffering, war and symbolism nurture *uniqueness.* Simultaneously, the second narrative has the same effect because it is insisting that the city is a special case of post-war co-existence. In both cases, the division is the central part of the narrative and is being rebuilt daily through the media and political speeches, different agendas and policies.

45   Nevertheless, the backgrounds of division often seem blurry in both narratives. That is why the first goal of this research was to confirm whether the inhabitants share the opinion and the definition of Vukovar as a divided city. The results have shown that more than 70 percent of examinees believe that Vukovar is a divided city. The second goal was to demystify backgrounds of the divisions and to explain in which terms the city could be perceived as divided. Although almost 80 percent of examinees that stated Vukovar is a divided city find the division in ethno-national background, there were minor divergences in the rest of answers.

46   The third goal was to establish whether divisions are or might be perceived geographically in any kind of physical lines, borders or frontiers. In other words, the goal was to determine to what extent mental divisions existing in people's minds are

possible to be visualized and constructed in territorially defined terms and locations. The thesis was that Vukovar is an ethno-nationally divided city with mental borders defined by its inhabitants, which are hard to illustrate territorially due to the complexity of interrelations of Croats and Serbs in everyday life and bordering practices. The thesis was proven correct when 80 per cent of examinees (141 out of 176 examinees that stated Vukovar is divided city) did not know how to draw a map of division on a blind map of Vukovar. Their common answer was that divisions are *real*, but potential boundaries of division were *fluid* and not visible in a geographical/ territorial sense.

47   A small percentage of examinees (20 percent) that drew the map of division could be subcategorized in four different types of division patterns. The authors have summarized the drawings in four categories due to the similarity of drawings and explanations given by the examinees. The most common pattern was the one dividing neighbourhoods between Croatian and Serbian ones. Such ethno-nationally driven division proved not to be territorial or geographical because the examinees drew and categorized neighbourhoods differently. The second and third patterns are the most similar ones since both point out the city centre as being mainly a Croatian part of the city. Nevertheless, the strict-line pattern showed some ambiguities in drawn lines from vertical, to horizontal ones. Hence, this pattern has no territorial characteristics. The centre-periphery pattern could be defined as the most territorial one in its representation and visualization but proven incorrect due to the everyday life practice shown in field research.

48   Finally, the most underrepresented pattern might be the most interesting one as it outlines the social dynamics of a divided city. The leopard skin pattern is also not territorially embedded but consists of everyday border-making practice in people's activities. Micro borders of division are here drawn and re-drawn depending on people's mental maps on everyday basis.

49   The majority of examinees could not visualize the city divisions territorially, and those who did showed that there are four different patterns, which are also territorially neutral/blurred. Thus, divisions in Vukovar are not physical, territorial or geographical ones but personal in the bottom-up perspective of inhabitants as well as imposed in the top-down perspective in (geo)politics. Due to the fact that borders nowadays represent more than physical obstacles defined in territorial/geographical terms it could be stated that people write and re-write micro-local borders and divisions in Vukovar with their everyday practices. Moreover, the geopolitical discourses of division imposed onto citizens through politics make them re-write narratives of division on a daily basis, although without any logical or geographical parameters in their personal mental maps of the divided city of Vukovar.

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NOTES

1. The Republic of Kosovo is a partially recognized State. Hence, some Member States of the United Nations refer to its territory as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija within the Republic of Serbia.

2. The State of Palestine is also a semi-recognized State, whose territory and official institutions are disputed by Israel.

3. The Republic of Cyprus has no effective control over the north part of the island. That part is administered by the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

4. Its geographical position on the Danube River has significant geopolitical and strategic importance. Danube is one of the biggest and most important rivers in Europe. This navigable river connects central parts of the continent with the eastern shore on the Black Sea. In that

sense, Vukovar is one of the most important river harbors located between Budapest and Belgrade. These characteristics make Vukovar the only Croatian city that has a river harbor and connects the country with the rest of the countries in Central Europe. Nevertheless, the channel between Danube and Sava rivers that could make transport easier has its opponents in local Vukovar politics due to the environmental issues. It has been left out of strategic documents several times and is still a disputable project in Croatian politics (Glas Slavonije, 1/23/2019).

5. On 27 August the European Community appointed Robert Badinter to be the president of the Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, colloquially known as the Badiner Arbitration Committee. The first opinion concluded that SFRY is in a process of dissolution and there should be no legal successor (Craven 1996). The second and third opinion included national self-determination and internal boundaries, respectively. According to Cornelia Navari (2014), the Commission separated territoriality and self-determination from ethnical principle. Namely, the Commission transformed the internal boundaries of SRFY in the borders of the new successor States.

6. Two females were former schoolteachers, and one is still a nursery school teacher. One male is law enforcement officer, and one is maintenance officer. One of them is a local politician, member of city council, and the rest of interviewed male persons were private business owners or employees.

7. Interview with a small private business owner conducted in Vukovar, 12/16/2018.

8. In his interview, a city council member from political party Živi zid (rather new radical left-wing party in Croatia) explained the process of legalization of money extraction in the local politics. No matter which major party ruled the town, it helped people from opposite party to gain profit and vice versa. According to the testimony of this council member, this process uses special contracts that provide in their annexes financial compensation in the case of firing. These annexes were granted by people of the then major party for people in the opposite political party. After the change of political rule, these persons were fired by their own party, then sued the city and received huge amounts of money. Following his words, such procedure legalizes money extraction out from the city treasury (Interview conducted in Vukovar on 12/16/2018).

ABSTRACTS

This paper seeks to answer to what extent the city of Vukovar is divided and in which way this division is geographically imagined and embedded in everyday life. Since each case of divided cities is driven by different factors and consists of different manifestations, case study design is the most appropriate one for researching micro-divisions in this post-conflict area. The case study of Vukovar is interesting because war legacy influenced new local policies and politics; open border issues affect bilateral relations on State level; and micro-regional frictions show deep identity-based divisions. Regardless of the lack of physical obstacles in the urban structure of the city, the research presents multilevel divisions that are visible in a form of imagined boundaries. Although Vukovar is an ethnically divided city we presume that division(s) lacks any strong geographical (or territorial) aspect. That is why the method of mental mapping on a random based sample of local population is used to compare imagined divisions in everyday life with administrative, ethnical and political ones.

Cette étude vise à établir dans quelle mesure la ville de Vukovar est divisée et comment cette division est représentée d'un point de vue géographique et intégrée dans la vie quotidienne. Les études de cas s'avèrent la méthode la plus appropriée pour étudier les micro-divisions présentes dans cette zone post-conflit. Le cas de Vukovar est particulièrement intéressant dans la mesure où l'héritage de la guerre a pesé sur les politiques mises en œuvre, mais aussi parce que les questions de frontières ouvertes affectent les relations bilatérales au niveau de l'Etat et que les frictions à l'échelle micro-régionale recèlent de profondes divisions basées sur l'identité. Nonobstant l'absence d'obstacles physiques dans la structure urbaine de Vukovar, notre recherche montre des divisions à différents niveaux, sous la forme de frontières mentales. En dépit de la division de la ville en termes d'ethnicité, la (les) division(s) ne présente(nt) pas d'aspect géographique (ou territorial) très marqué. C'est pourquoi la cartographie mentale est utilisée ici sur un échantillon aléatoire de la population locale afin de mettre en parallèle les divisions fantasmées dans la vie quotidienne et les divisions administratives, ethniques et politiques.

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