

foreword

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I have been asked to insert a personal note in this foreword, so I will start with a provocation and then try to make up for it in the rest of the text. I grew up in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking North of Belgium, and I consider myself lucky to belong to a generation that was fully schooled in my mother tongue. Had I been born fifty years earlier, this would not have been possible. At that time the French-speaking bourgeoisie in Belgium considered the language spoken, in many different dialects, by the majority of the population unfit for the civilising purposes of education. Education was largely in French and instilled this hierarchical view. It took a long struggle to break this elitist notion of 'more' and 'less cultured' languages and people. Today Flemish nationalists abuse this history as a justification for their selfish and narrow-minded propaganda, but this does not lessen my gratitude for having enjoyed the fruits of such a struggle. I am glad I was not forced to be schooled in French (just as I am glad that I did learn French at school—as a subject). Insofar as these are struggles for social justice, I also salute similar ongoing efforts by other groups around the world today. No-one should be forced to learn, in another language, how the language she or he speaks at home is inferior to others.

In the mid-1990s I then started learning your language. Since then, during my long-term research and other stays in Serbia, in Croatia and in various parts of BiH, my speech has accumulated a unique mixture of regional linguistic specificities. With the added spice of an accent and frequent mistakes typical for foreigners, this is a crime against nationalist purism, but it works fine for me.

This biographical trajectory puts me in a peculiar relation to the topic of this book. For, surely, the defensive, anti-discriminatory argument I made with regard to Belgium above is exactly the one used by those who resist integrated schooling in BiH? Those who see no problem with *dvije škole pod jednim krovom* [from now on, I use the appropriately ugly acronym '2špjk'], we find in this book, seek to occupy this defensive position. Few of them argue explicitly for divided schooling *as it exists today*. In fact, since the status quo is one of division, they don't (need to) argue for anything at all. Faced with an interviewer and an imagined audience who they correctly expect to disapprove of divided schooling, many emphasise that the actual reality of 2špjk should *not* be understood in terms of discrimination, intolerance, let alone hatred. Instead, many, especially pupils, present those schools as something that is simply there, a neutral, non-dramatic fact of life. They seem bewildered that outsiders make such a fuss about it.

The contributors to this book argue that this routinisation of segregation is precisely why we should keep making a fuss about it. I agree. Yet, to me, one of the book's key contributions is that it forces us into a brutal confrontation with the fact that, for many pupils, teachers, administrators and parents, 2špjk really *is* an unproblematised given in their everyday lives. Crucially, this reminds us to what extent divided schooling is *just one more* institutionalised embodiment of divided *living*. Whether intentionally or not, in the towns discussed here, most people's lives unfold in ethnationally homogenous cocoons most of the time. But let us be clear: as a result of massive war-related population movements, this is true for the vast majority of the BiH population today. 2špjk may strike us as a particularly painful form of segregation, mainly because it involves children, and this book contains analyses of why this may be so. But it thereby also provokes us to interrogate our own presumptions. Adjusting our zoom to the scale of BiH territory, we see that virtually all schooling is divided along ethnonational lines. Usually the lines of division are some distance away from the school building, whereas in the particular cases discussed in this book they run *through* the buildings. These towns, then, are not islands of segregation, but places where segregation is particularly sharply *visible* because of physical proximity that does not even exist to the same degree elsewhere. To put it bluntly: in most municipalities in BiH today there aren't enough pupils with other ethnonational backgrounds left to share a roof with. This book thus reminds us we must analyse the establishment of

2špjk in the context of postwar concerns about the discrimination of povratnici on an ethnonational basis, and it invites us to develop critical perspectives on divided living in all of BiH.

Yet razumijevanje does not mean opravdanje. If many of the actors involved in them consider 2špjk not worth the fuss, there are good grounds why the contributors to this book do insist on kicking up a fuss. Some of the invocations of tolerance and respect by the actors in 2špjk, particularly politicians and directors, are easily unveiled as cynical ploys, as politically correct stories to justify actual realities of discrimination along ethnonational lines. Here the analysis resonates with a widespread view of *politika* as a dirty game played by cynical men (and the occasional woman), at the expense of 'ordinary people'. Divided schooling then can be seen simply as one more instrument for the maintenance of privileges. It would be naive to exclude this dimension from our understanding, but overemphasising it can be counterproductive. As this book demonstrates, *politika* is often invoked by actors themselves as an explanation for the current situation and as the only domain that can bring effective change. Yet it also shows how this can quickly shift from critique to rationalisation and even justification for the relative compliance and passivity of all people, including many politicians, who consider themselves to be uncontaminated by *politika*.

Let me therefore emphasise another, complementary route of analysis opened up in this book. Let us for a moment suspend our scepticism. I admit this requires that we switch off at least half of our brains but let us—just briefly—take the rhetoric seriously. This may provide insights into the *terms* in which struggles over education are and can be waged in BiH.

This book shows how the justification of, and compliance with, divided schooling is based on a simple picture: there are three nations in BiH, each with its own culture, including its own language. In this, these actors hasten to add, BiH is just like some other states (Switzerland!). With the exception of a negligible number of 'others', all BiH citizens are then seen to belong to one of those groups. And the intensity of this belonging is absolutised: people's being is defined by their ethnonationality. The entire constitutional structure of Dayton BiH is underpinned by such a notion of 'being' and the need to protect it. Divided schooling is then not seen as forcible segregation but as a fine institution for the transmission of democratic, multiculturalist recognition of these different 'beings'. The logic, of course, is formulated defensively: the system of 2špjk *prevents* discrimination because it protects pupils against following a 'tudi' curriculum, against learning in a 'tudi' language, against travelling over long distances to avoid this. As we saw, this book shows how such concerns must be included in the analysis, particularly in the context of postwar minority returns. Yet it also shows that the broader picture on which it relies, despite its frequent evocations of history, is deeply ahistorical. It is based on a forced temporal rupture: it starts in the early 1990s and projects its static three-way ethnonationalist image backwards into time. Obviously, ethnonational divisions exist in BiH—in constructivist terms: they are real in their effects. Precisely therefore it remains a crucial task for researchers to critically analyse how, where, when and how intensely they are experienced (or not) today *and* how that situation emerged historically.

In contrast, this book shows how many actors in divided schooling ahistorically carve out what we could call a 'tolerant groupist' position for themselves. It goes something like this: nations simply exist and always existed, I belong to one of them, like everyone else I want to be with my people, we must preserve and cherish our culture, and I respect others who preserve and cherish theirs. How tolerant this groupism is in practice remains questionable, but note that, in principle, ethnonational 'others' do not pose a problem to this position. What *does* constitute a challenge to such groupism is any questioning of the significance of ethnonational difference (i.e. of its status as 'being'). This is why integrated schooling constitutes such a threat to the status quo. Therefore, in the video material on which this book is based, very interesting issues arise when people are asked about such possible future integration. A few individuals favour this strongly, but on the whole support is lukewarm at best. Yet few reject it completely. Schematically we find two patterns in most of the comments on possible future integration.

The first pattern is rejection with some vague, limited acceptance. Here, the essence of divided schooling is left untouched, but it is reframed as tolerant schooling. Segregation is thereby reframed as co-existence. Good fences, as the English expression goes, make good neighbours. Divided schools are then presented as the appropriate institutionalised form of multicultural education in a democratic ethnationally diverse society. Integration, on the other hand, is in principle feared as a negation of this diversity. Yet many interviewees do simultaneously express (vague) support for *some degree* of integration. For example, the mathematics curriculum could be integrated. Perhaps in this way certain teachers wish to emphasise their professional status, which relies on the universal validity of some subjects. Teachers and others may also want to show a degree of common sense: after all, we are all aware that $2+2=4$ for everyone. Yet if we look closer, we find that a willingness to consider some integrated curricula does not necessarily imply any step towards integrated schooling. Here we arrive back at the question of language. This only sometimes emerges explicitly—as expected, due to the ambiguities of the pro-BiH stance of many actors in the 'Federal' programme, we find it mainly amongst actors in the 'Croatian' programme. Yet it actually underlies many of the statements. Namely, there are *two* forms of resistance to integration: one concerns the contents of any predmeti and other the language of instruction itself. $2+2$ may be 4 for everyone in BiH, so there is no obvious problem with content here, but in which language should this sum be taught? Since most actors in Žšpk present language as a key expression of their ethnonational 'being', we can answer the question for them: pupils should learn that $2+2=4$ *in their own language*. That implies that, for them, unless we have bi- or tri-lingual teachers and very long časovi, pupils may learn this under the same roof, but not in the same classroom. This is a continuation of Žšpk.

Now, to return to my first paragraph, surely if I think it is wrong to prevent citizens of Belgium from studying in their own language, I should not argue anything different for BiH citizens? In officially bilingual Brussels, for example, parents can choose in which language their children learn that $2+2=4$ by sending them to particular monolingual schools. Surely I cannot argue that people in BiH are somehow not worthy of social justice like people in Belgium? I didn't notice a mention of Belgium in the material, but Switzerland does regularly emerge as a model in the resistance against integrated schooling. In my view, such analogies with Switzerland (or with Belgium) are totally misplaced. More importantly, it seems that even the actors who use these rationalisations are quite aware of some problems.

This brings us to a second pattern in comments on possible future integration of schooling. Many interviewees say they are not against some degree of future integration, but that the wounds of war are too fresh. They argue that, at this stage, putting pupils of different ethnonational groups together in the classroom would be insensitive. This argument for postponement is thus not grounded in rights protection, but in compassion. Note the contradiction: on the one hand, these people say some integration might be a good idea but should be postponed for compassionate reasons, but on the other hand they also reject integration *in principle* as an attack against one's right to study in one's own language. The passage of time may reduce the relevance of war wounds, but surely, in this view, it does not diminish language rights?

The language issue is thus central to Žšpk and I expect it will be a key matter of contestation in any future attempt to achieve some level of integration. In BiH, the only way to present divided schooling as multiculturalist schooling (the 'tolerant groupist' argument) is through an absolutist insistence on language difference. Anti-integration and multiculturalist arguments *are* thus compatible but the problem lies in the model of multiculturalism that is used, which is simply a 'friendly' version of ethnonationalism. Of course there *are*, and always have been, many kinds of differences in customs, beliefs and speech between people in BiH. These differences concern regions, classes, religions and many other dimensions. And some of those differences have indeed historically come to be understood as concentrated around ethnonational lines. Recent projects to consolidate standardised ethnonational languages are having strong effects, particularly amongst the younger generations. Yet even if one would accept that Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian as spoken in BiH should be conceived of as separate languages, the parallel with differences between, say, German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance in Switzerland remains completely misplaced. Likewise, the Dutch/French (and German) difference in

Belgium is simply not of the same order. And the reason why these parallels don't work, of course, lies in their ahistorical attempts to detach the language issue from the 1992-5 war in BiH. More than anything else, and certainly more than some imagined age-old naturalised process of separate development, that war produced the shape of, the status of, and the significance attributed to ethnonational linguistic divisions today. In contrast, the resistance to integrated schooling evokes a model of three reified nations-with-languages. Yet the fact that the same actors *also* refer to the freshness of war wounds indicates that there is an awareness that this model alone cannot capture the experience of their own lives. Of course, that doesn't stop them from using it.

As this book shows, in 2špjk such contradictory lines of reasoning are overwhelmingly used in a defensive manner: 'we' should be protected, always and in principle, but also because of recent war-time victimisation. The question then emerges: who or what are people defending this 'we' from? The obvious answer is: from an ethnonational 'they', especially majorities on the local, entity or state-level. Yet the chapters in this book lead me to suspect that, in many cases, there are another forms of defence at work too. One form could be termed a defence against one's own past, and specifically against one's own intimate knowledge of lived experience in a Yugoslav BiH where ethnonational differences were not articulated in the same way, nor lived with the same intensity or attributed the same significance. This is especially relevant for people over forty, but it probably plays a role in other ways for younger people too. A second form might be a defence against one's own common sense. This can be a defence against one's own knowledge or suspicions that there are many utilitarian reasons for the maintenance of divided schooling, such as the existence of two budgets, with jobs, equipment and opportunities of clientelism. It can also concern language: while they may sound like classic romantic intellectuals when they insist on the status of language as an expression of the unique 'being' of nations, these actors also (and like all of us: mainly) actually *use* language on an everyday basis. They therefore know from experience that language, in all its beautiful variety, is at least *also* a pragmatic tool for communication between people. They know that, unlike Dutch-speaking and French-speaking citizens in Belgium, who must *learn* each other's languages to be able to communicate satisfactorily, in BiH people can do so without learning any new language. In that sense, even if they insist on their language being an ethnonational one, and a unique one at that, they know that there isn't anyone in BiH who would be unable to learn that $2+2=4$ in what they would consider the unique ethnonational language of some other citizens of BiH. Unless of course, they are really bad at maths.