This City Card is one of 13, which presents a very brief overview on the city. The information provided is not exhaustive, nor would it be possible to encapsulate the entirety of the diversity of experience, outlook and communal identity of the population of any of these cities. Statements about political facts are not intended to prefer one perspective on those facts over another, the interest here is not in entering into political differences over the country’s sensitive institutional arrangements. The political parties are categorized according to local voter base, although some parties with a pronounced mono-ethnic constituency also oppose what they see as the predominant forms of ethnic politics. Furthermore, the 1991 census did not give individuals choices of how to describe themselves, and its categories confused ethnic and religious identities; the categories also did not allow for a representation of individuals or families from mixed backgrounds, which the reader should keep in mind. In addition, the segment that captures “Voices” of citizens are not filtered or approved but presented as a reflection of local perspectives that have been raised by individuals that attended one of the events during this research process. Lastly this project involves a long-term engagement with the people in these cities, and our will involve going back to them to examine the perspectives of parties interested in further reconciliation or trust-building activity. For more details about the project and the research results please visit the our website: Religion and Ethics in the Making of War and Peace and the Faktori pomirenja i izgradnja povjerenja (BiH/S Languages)

Mostar is located in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina, administratively belonging to the entity Federation of BiH (FBiH), and the capital of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The population of size according to the 2013 census is 113,169 people, while in 1991 it had 126,628 people. The ethnic composition of Mostar before the 1990’s war was equally distributed between the three constituent groups. When referring to the City of Mostar, it relates to the municipality in the FBiH. The population in the City is equally populated by Bosniaks and Croats, where the two constituents cluster homogenously into two areas, the east and the west. This division is the consequence of the war clashes in 1993, at the time when the Old Ottoman Bridge (after which the city was named) was destroyed. Mostar after the Dayton Peace Accord has been labeled as a divided city, and subject to high political disputes over political power between the two constituent groups. The Statute of the City was declared unconstitutional by the 2010 decision of the BiH Constitutional Court. The Mostar government has not adopted a changed Statute by the next local elections cycle, whereby it brought the city to a political gridlock after the 2012 election and leaving it without the Assembly. Currently the Mayor’s office acts as a decision making authority and adopts the city budget.

The city has two universities, one predominantly attended by students of Bosniak background while the other by students of Croat background. The political environment doesn’t favor the fragile economic situation in Mostar, but it is slightly better than in other, mostly smaller, local communities. The unemployment rate in 2013 was 35% (23rd in BiH), the average salary was 956 BAM (9th in BiH), while GDP per capita was 11,535 (5th in BiH). The largest alumni manufacturing factory “Aluminij” is seated in Mostar, while other economic activity is characterized by a large number of small and medium enterprises in agriculture and tourism. Mostar has a number of monuments that are on the UNESCO world heritage list, including the Old Bridge that was rebuilt after the war.

VOICES FROM MOSTAR: Citizens of Mostar are unhappy with the “special case” label it acquired in general discourse, referring to divisions of the city and the political gridlock. Politics and political elites are derogative terms connoted to self-interest, breathing of ethnic tensions and corruption, to the degree that “decent” individuals in Mostar are not considering to run for offices and talented youth seeks opportunities to migrate. This division has been institutionalized in the education system with “two schools under one roof” that segregates schoolchildren according to their ethnic belonging. Youth of different ethnic background is rarely commuting with each-other in schools, but also rarely crossing the imaginary ethnic border of the town. The citizens explain that there are no real initiatives to overcome these prejudices, which are more bound to the city itself and not so much entirely to a people.

1 The Statute was originally imposed by the Office of the Higher Representative, Lord Padd Ashdown, in 2003. In 2010 the BiH Constitutional Court has passed a decision that the Statute’s articles are unconstitutional, disabling the city to run elections and constitute the Assembly until it changes the Statute. To date the Statue has not been changed.
2 Available at www.mojemjesto.ba
3 This section is a summary of main discourses that took place during the Focus Group and Public Event in Mostar.
Many citizens explain they feel comfortable visiting the other ethnic majority in another city, but not in their own. Youth that seeks to cooperate amongst each other, mainly finds opportunities outside of Mostar, with initiatives from other places that would organize education events with participants of diverse background, or with the NGO sector. They have very pessimistic view that religious communities would make a break-through, despite the influence that they may have. It is not infrequent that religious leaders attend the same events during elections as politicians running for office, indirectly sending a message of their support for a certain candidate. A further frowned on fact is the fragile economic situation, coupled with the high level of corruption, citizens are experiencing an ever growing economic class differences, inability send their children to higher education due to unemployment or low income, while the education system is not supportive and doesn’t have appropriate criteria for selection of individuals that would be assisted by the government.