

# **Learning Democracy**

An analysis of young people's engagement and their political  
socialisation within nongovernmental organisations in Bosnia  
and Herzegovina

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Masteroppgave

Våren 2008

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("Colourful Revolution", Presidency, Sarajevo, Oslobodjenje 27.09.2006)

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## Preface

Sometimes writing master's thesis is exceptionally motivated by personal experiences. For every student it is a new experience, often a difficult or even painful process to go through at times. In my opinion, the more one cares and engages in the subject matter, the more complex it can become. There is in the theory of knowledge a postulate, which I think, can apply to all experience with knowledge; the more we *know*, the more we become conscious of the things we still do not know about. The experience of writing about a subject that holds personal importance can be complex indeed, for one already knows of the subject and has already been engaged in or a part of the subject matter. In my own case, this has been the relation I have to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo in particular, from which I and my family had to flee and take refuge in two countries, Slovenia and Norway. Escaping the war and its beginning have been the most defining two incidents in my life. In many ways, these private experiences are some of the most debated social phenomena of our time and they hold definitive importance throughout humanity's history. They are conflict (dissolution, upheaval, social chaos, war) and movement of people (migration, immigration, exile, exchange, globalisation, chains of movement).

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my mentor, Ole Johnny Olsen, for his enduring patience for my often too abstract ideas and formulations and for tolerating the initial theoretical starting point of my thesis. I also want to thank all of my informants for including me into their private understandings of their surrounding social world. It is their resonations this thesis is build upon. Besides, they informed me beyond the relevance of the thesis before us, something I will forever be thankful for. Last, but not least, I want to thank the professors at the universities of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar and Bergen for helpful advices and information they have provided me with during my work.

## Abbreviations used in the text

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Community
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
NDC	Nansen Dialogue Centre
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative of the International Community
OIA	Youth Information Agency (Omladinska informativna agencija)
OKC	Youth Cultural Centre (Omladinski kulturni centar)
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RS	Republika Srpska (The Serb Republic)
SDA	Party of Democratic Action
SDS	Serb Democrat Party
SFRY	Socialistic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
YNA	Yugoslavs People's Army

## Introduction

Reality, the social one included, is often quite chaotic. In studying any socially defined reality, we select specific traits in which we take particular interest in order to abstract a greater meaning and to understand the social phenomenon in front of us. Anomie is in this sense a theoretical concept and a social phenomenon in which norms are blurry, contradictory and weak. Acculturation, in the right sense of the term, of the population and adaptation to the anomic condition in which Bosnia and Herzegovina is at present time, represents a direct barrier to the process of democratisation of this ex-Yugoslav state. Internalisation of amorality present in Bosnian society leads to certain effects that can be accordingly termed as destructive or contra-productive for the individual members of the society of our reference as it is for the society itself. In Emile Durkheim's curious definition of freedom (a seemingly paradoxical view that the individual needs morality and external control in order to be free), we find the sufficient explanation of the social reality in present day Bosnia which we term as anomic, that is, there is a general decline in a common morality that can be identified. The state of anomie is a doxa for this society.

It is in this context that Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-war conditions offer an interesting opportunity for examining the young adults' relationship towards the everyday reality in respect to the social, political, economical and moral conditions present in BiH. Present anomic condition in case of BiH is a direct result of the effects of a breakdown of a social order in the form of dissolution of Yugoslavia; rise of nationalism, war and the highly complex present existence of an ideological hegemony. The combination of such occurrences represents fertile grounds for the breakage of the system of both norms *and* values. It is in this manner the society of our reference is conceived throughout the theses. The subjects, their life experience and their acquired resonations upon the level of moral conduct, both in their immediate surroundings and in regards to the public, collective or macro level of their society will provide us with an angle or an incision of engaged young adults hardships and dilemmas, living in BIH.

This theoretical starting point combined with individually orientated

explanation of a social phenomenon, with direct reference to properties of the subjects involved, namely their motives, resonations and actions, is therefore an appropriate approach for a more comprehensive understanding of the social reality in front of us.

For an empirical study of possibilities of a departure point for the state of anomie, I have chosen a number of young adults, which are active in non-governmental organisations in three cities in BiH. In total there are fifteen key informants and about thirty individuals included in general. Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar can provide us with different settings and experiences, which can render possible comparison of the experiences of my informants. Can these young adults, managers, activists and volunteers within the non-governmental sector tell us anything about the state of democratic development? Can they be perceived as pioneers in the development of a more democratic thought and orientation for BiH? This approach allows for analysis of opinions formed within non-governmental organisations and a further insight into the prerequisites of an active citizenry. Analysing their thoughts on engagement will provide for an arena or a contextual framework of the study of the opinionated, relating to the educative and socialising aspect of NGOs from participants' point of view. Although this can be considered as a small case study of some twenty or thirty individuals, my thesis is not solely empirical. Together with the interpretations of and theoretical reflections upon the empirical statements of the subjects, the theoretical assumptions are also supported by actual indications derived from the media, supplementary studies on the situation in BiH and previous theoretical analysis of the happenings of 1990's and subsequently. Consequently, this will contribute to the more general relevance of the case study.

The thesis is based upon and can be summarised into few postulates and questions to be answered throughout the analytical insights of this master's thesis. These main postulates are:

a) There exists a general condition of anomie present in BiH society, as it is a deeply dissolved and divided society, struggling both economically and culturally.

b) The informants that make up for the prime empirical data of my analysis are per definition active citizens by being involved in the non-governmental sector. Involvement requires engagement into the ongoing political processes and a general alertness to the public issues. They can be classified as active citizens or participants of an erecting civil society as opposed to, for instance, their peers which are



politically passive and do not participate or take any part in the organisational or public life.

Subsequently, the questions to be answered are:

a) What did initially motivate these young adults to become engaged and how do they perceive their own engagement in the non-governmental organisations?

b) How do they perceive the political situation in BiH and in what way is this related to their participatory undertaking?

c) What do they convey as their fundamental moral principals and sources of identification and how do these stand in relation to what they practically do (their factual conduct)?

These are thus the main issues to be discussed in the course of this master's thesis which itself is formulated as follows.

Participation and engagement within non-governmental organisation can function as a space for 'learning democracy', by which I mean, acquiring a democratic thought based on tolerance, inclusiveness and critical reflection. Further, I assume that 'learning democracy' is constrained by the present social climate or context, which could ideally provide for the necessary grounds for formation of democratic thought and possibilities of using the acquired knowledge and values. Theoretical discussion will thereby function complementary in analysing the question of whether their learnt values and skills apply to their wider social environment. Do they find support for their knowledge and can they manifest this properly in an ethnically and socially divided and morally thorn Bosnia and Herzegovina? The general thesis for my master's assignment is that most of the young people involved in the NGOs are pioneers in learning democracy. They are more opened towards discussions and perhaps even towards the change of one's mind because of their involvement in these organisations and the knowledge acquired within the nongovernmental sector. The informal education and thereby political socialisation of young people which takes place within NGOs is therefore central.

Education, in one form or another, has always been the driving force of any society. In its widest meaning education refers to the teaching and learning of specific skills with a fundamental aspect of 'drawing out' or facilitating realisation of self-potential and latent abilities. Knowledge, however, is more problematic term to define, for one simple reason. There is namely a constant struggle of wavering

between faith and doubt in what constitutes irrefutable knowledge and even more important, what does not.

Modern societies have engaged in a world of *institutionalisation* and *specialisation* of education and thus partly, if we might say, of knowledge. School institution has become a very important instrument in the modern era, not the least in the context of nation states. Formal education has become the most important mean of socialising members of a state or a community and is the most basic value input for the coherent feeling of belonging. Belonging is what makes the collective meaningful. In Bosnia and Herzegovina this fundamental feeling is intensively at question since 1990's and up until this day. Formal educative system of today is a perfect indication of this fact. The "differing" political interests are present within the educative programs in BiH. During the eighties and especially since the disintegration of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the feeling of belonging for the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina was put as an overall agenda in the public sphere as 'calling upon a 'return' to some imaginary centralism from antiquity' became more frequent (Ramet 2005:46).

The subject of my study contents therefore in the perceptions and experiences of young adults employed or active in few chosen NGOs, put in an analytical context of their social environments. The informal education, which we consider a part of the engagement in the various NGOs, is in many instances functioning as a political socialisation or re-socialisation of the young people involved.

Their descriptions and viewing of the society in which they live in, their perceptions of participation in their respective organisations and expanded observations of the field, make out this study's fundamentals. This will embrace the reasons for their involvement in the organisations, their aspirations and reasoning about their belonging and their identity in general. This informal education is also an important way of emphasizing the building of civil societies, especially in post-Communist countries. The building of social trust after ethnic divisions is, specifically for Bosnia and Herzegovina, considered crucial. Civil determinants in both conflict and reconciliation periods are obvious. In some states, the NGOs function primarily as an opposition to the political/governmental authorities, while in others they seek to represent the voice of the socially bad positioned in order to strengthen their effect on decision-making. The latter kinds of NGOs are emerging 'as a matter of moment in a

civil society' (Clark 1995:593, see also Ariyoshi 2001:136/7). Either way, both require political action and widening of a democratic praxis. How do their highly important 'servants' (the locally employed young in our case) perceive this sector in an inspiring democracy that Bosnia and Herzegovina is portrayed to be? Although BiH is practically preparing for European Union and is thus involved in the process of institution building in order to achieve a functioning democracy, the feeling of belonging connected to the will of people, which is a crucial component of democracy, is still at question. For instance, there is a strong political and nationalistic will to seclude from BiH state. What are the reasons for such uncertainty in relation to belonging and how do my informants, young adults, deal with this uncertainty?

Young people are typically represented as deficient citizens. If we instead define young people as 'citizens in the making' (Barry 2005:33) and in accordance to this re-defining, to try approaching their age span as a period of formation of relationship towards citizenship, perhaps it would not account to a deficiency. The notion of citizenship depends on both internal (subjective) and external (objective) factors, such as whether one is employed or not, whether one votes or not, but it also relates to the feelings of belonging. In BiH there is a struggle between citizenship as an identity ground on one side and the national identities on the other side. To relate to citizenship is for many young people unsolvable until the question of belonging is untangled. In other words, they may have difficulties relating to citizenship, especially when considering Bosnia as an unsustainable or non-functioning state and in some cases as illegitimate, either generally or at present time. It is remarkably not only a question of being a citizen of what *kind* of a state but also a question of *which* state. Thus, problems relating to citizenship are real as many conditions of inadequate climate for crucial models of citizenship are still very much present in BiH. Where there is no respectable economic independence, no constructive social participation, no social-contractual oblige; how, my informants would question themselves, can we talk about citizenship? Here is how one of my informants from Banja Luka commented on the topics of possibilities for young people to identify themselves as citizens:

"I would be happy if young people were a part of any kind of political options, but essentially they are not a part of political options, so I think it is far more important what they personally feel, in what context they perceive themselves as

individuals that need to take over the responsibility for their futures; they see themselves as a part of some kind of tribes before all, and so in the context of sympathising with certain parties they primarily view themselves as Serbs, Bosniaks or Croats and seldom as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in most cases don't experience BiH as their own state, at least not in this part of BiH.

(...)Well, negative is the political frame and the constitution of BiH which makes us primarily Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats and only than, people (humans). And that's definitively what buries any possibility of common reasoning about each other as people (humans), because even the constitution has defined us to look at each other as members of national groupings rather than people (humans).” (Parenthesis added) (Alex<sup>5</sup>, NDC, Banja Luka,)

Instead of asking what makes young people a passive, neglected and marginalised societal group in the present day Bosnia-Herzegovina, because it indeed is as we will see, I found it more useful to concentrate on what makes young people involved into the ongoing processes, critical debates and where their motivation drive comes from. The pool from which I decided to draw is as mentioned the nongovernmental sector, more precisely, I interviewed young people involved in NGOs dealing with the present social issues and youth issues in general. How would they personally view the political climate and what made them take an active citizen-part in the ongoing social debates? What are their perceptions on the developmental course their country is or should be heading towards? What do they think about young people's situation in general?<sup>2</sup>

The first chapter deals with presentation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which functions as an introduction to the broader field and its basic characteristics. This relates to the context of the study and the studied ones, while there is a discussion on the viable question of legitimacy of the state. Respondents' reflections on this matter will also shortly be discussed.

The next part deals with the theoretical postulates and discussions on the general nature of society and the individual within the society. This dichotomy can rarely be avoided, especially in the context of the study's 'active young individuals'. I

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<sup>1</sup> All informants are given pseudonyms as to secure their anonymity.

<sup>2</sup> It is *estimated* that around at least 70% would leave the country at first chance, from 15 to 30 years of age. Poor conditions for young people are not solely related to economic factors. Young people often feel that political, cultural and social stagnation, and general moral decline in all aspects are explanatory as to why they wish to leave BiH. See for instance [www.oiabih.info](http://www.oiabih.info).

will discuss some of the methodological implications of a classic founder of sociology as an academic discipline, Emile Durkheim, and his theoretical accounts on social structure and moral integration.

Method of acquiring empirical data is discussed in the third chapter. As the thesis is both empirically and theoretically supported, I will reflect critically upon some of the shortages and advantages of methods, where a discussion of qualitative method will be central. Further on, a selection of central concepts from the empirical data is presented with a general comparison of the cities of Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka.

Chapter four deals with presentation of informants' own perspectives and problems facing them in the context of the social and political climate of BiH. This part is a presentation of the empirical basis of the thesis illustrated by few selected informants.

Chapter on politics and participation reflects both theoretical discussions, difficulties of theoretically defining and operationalizing democracy and it reflects the very real constructs of divisions among young people based on ethnicity. What my respondent's reflections on these matters are and how they conceptualise the future of the state they live in will illustrate their perception on the possibility of democracy in praxis.

Constraints between the construction of reality and conformism unfolded in the interviews will embrace the reflections of my respondents on what it means to them to be a part of a nongovernmental organisation. Here we also connect some debates on matters such as universalism and localism and some of the difficulties that both European Union and in comparison, Bosnia-Herzegovina face. This will connect well to the upcoming chapter on a discussion on tolerance while my respondent's reflections will as much as they can illustrate the topics of the study.

The last and concluding chapter deals with a critical theoretical discussion of the concept of tolerance and will function as an upheaval of the thesis presented.

## Chapter 1

### **An important and complex place: Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Whenever scholars or researchers present a culturally, economically or politically distinct area, they claim the area's particularity. Moreover, it is of course true that every region, every country, every local community possess their own specifics. Nonetheless, sometimes, historical events of significant proportions or intensity occur, as a set of circumstances combine in given periods which then make the context of a study even more significant. In this sense, Bosnia and Herzegovina truly is special. The complexity of its history alone provides for such uniqueness. I am surely not the first one to acknowledge this, although I do hold certain reservations on what peoples from Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, the wider region are special about.<sup>3</sup>

In relation to this study I will already at the beginning introduce the reader to a multitude of facts regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereon BiH), both for the purpose of informing, but also to remind the ones already familiar with the region on some basic facts. As we already mentioned, almost nothing relating to BiH is simple and therefore the presentation of some basic 'factual' elements can be problematic, as we will see. Presenting shortly BiH as a historical entity is not an easy task, as it seems to be the heart of Balkan history, or rather, as Bosnians themselves would say,

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<sup>3</sup> There is a tendency among social scientists and others to view Bosnia and Herzegovina as being an obvious place of 'ancient ethnic hatreds'. The assumption is that recent conflicts in the Balkans occurred because of the forces lying within its internal history. Underlying this is the false definition of the conflict in BiH (civil war, religious or ethnic war). Such persuasions often lead us to view the latest happenings as 'uncivilized modes of action' that have been the usual practise in the Balkans, a tautological explanation. The further negative effect of such perception is that it leads us to assume that the mere presence of ethnically and religiously mixed communities were plausible causes of, or had led to the conflict. Such misconceptions have made the understanding of this conflict difficult, presumably also its resolution. There are no eminent proves for these kind of claims. In fact, such claims represent a denial of the role of external factors and actors when analysing recent conflicts in this region. We must not confuse the complexity of Balkan history with ancient hate. See, for instance, Noel Malcolm's *"Bosnia: A Short History"* and Mart Bax's *"Planned Policy or Primitive Balkanism? – A Local Contribution to the Ethnography of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina"*.

the ‘bellybutton’ of Europe, referring to the meeting point of the eastern and western worlds.

We should remind the reader of the conflicting, or rather, competing views regarding some of the most basic recent historical facts, something that is naturally embedded in the political climate of post-war BiH. I will not discuss much complicated details of the recent history permeated by war. Instead I will present some of the older historical data which can illustrate how conflicting interpretations of history are not entirely unfamiliar. We can recognise some of the old themes and similarities throughout what we might term the ‘origin discourse’. Questions as to where do the early peoples stem from and how modern identity is related to this, the distance making between the identities, differences and incorrect parallels have, as it seems, been a consistent part of historical analysis influenced by the relevant ideologies of the given time periods. These few examples are of course taken from an entirely different context and timeframe, but can testify of peculiarities in various interpretations of history. This can show how different theories of the origin of the peoples in Balkan and BiH have changed depending on these theories’ historical contexts. First and foremost, we introduce some basic information on the modern state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Within its recognized borders, the country is divided into two entities; a federation with cantonal and then municipal organisation (hereon FBiH) which covers about 51% of the territory and the Republika Srpska (hereon RS) which is organised in municipalities and makes about 49% of the territory. Besides, there is Brcko district which is a self governing unit, formally a part of both FBiH and RS. The present total population is to this day officially unknown, where ranges of estimations are between some 3, 5 to 4, 5 million people; unfortunately, the population census fell victim to political squabbles and economic instability and is now scheduled sometime after 2010.

The present day government type can be classified as an emerging federal democratic republic. BiH borders Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, with a borderline of approximately 1,500 km and a coastline to the Adriatic sea of some 20 km.

Unlike the other former Yugoslav states, which were generally composed of a dominant ethnic group, BiH was specific in its composition of ethnic groups, neither of which was predominant in number. It is an ethnic tangle of Muslims (44%), Serbs

(31%), Croats (17%) and others (6%); with in total 4.4 million people from the census held in 1991. This mix, especially after citizens of BiH voted for the national parties, contributed to the complexity of the conflict and to the difficulty of consensus about the country's struggle for independence.



(<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/bosnia.html>)

Declaration of sovereignty in 1991, followed by the referendum for independence from Yugoslavia was declared in 1992 and recognition was sought from the United Nations. The referendum was boycotted by many of Bosnian Serbs. This idea was strongly inflected by Radovan Karadzic; the foreman Serb Democratic Party. Results of the referendum announced the country's independence, although by then, Serb paramilitary forces had already set up positions around Sarajevo, the capital of BiH.

On April 6th, 1992, BiH was recognized as an independent state by the European Community, when Serb paramilitary forces fired on a crowd of peaceful demonstrators in front of the parliament in Sarajevo.

Both the Croatian and Serbian presidents had planned to partition Bosnia between themselves, as secret talks in Karadordevo, between Milosevic and Tudjman, can confirm (Silber and Little referred in Ramet 2005:87). Attempting to carve out



their own enclaves by radicalising the local Serb minority, with the help of, for instance, Arkan's paramilitary forces from Serbia and the Serbian Yugoslav army (or rather, the former Yugoslav People's Army, known as 'JNA'), the offensive was taken and the siege was led, particularly on Sarajevo. Ruthless campaigns of ethnic cleansing began, which involved the expulsion and massacre of non-Serb population. Fighting together, until political parting in 1993, political intentions of Croatian and Bosnian-Croat leadership was also coloured by the attempt to carve out 'Croat Community of Herceg-Bosnia' (Malcolm 1994:241). Mostar and the symbolic destruction of the famous old bridge was the pinnacle of Croat aggression, although this town also represents a microcosm of the conflict between all three relevant ethnic groups.

Alija Izetbegovic, president of BiH at the time, claims naively when the war in Croatia had begun, that there will be no war and argues that for a war to happen there must be two opposing sides. This he states at a time when an absurd in history of war was indeed taking place. One side was in fact sufficient for a war to occur and thus analytics worldwide agree upon that this country was facing a war without any army or weapons. Early in the following years BiH *creates* an army. In the beginning this army was truly Bosnian, however, as the war proceeded, it became (to a growing extent) an army of one party and one people only. This fact contributed to the realisation of the partition by the Dayton peace agreement; albeit it can not be denied the role this army played in subsistence of the state of BiH.

The war did not begin to wane until NATO forces entered and acted, bombing Serb positions in BiH in 1995. Serb forces enter the UN safe havens of Tuzla, Zepa, and Srebrenica, where thousands were murdered. Fall of Srebrenica represents the 'blackest moment' of international engagement in BiH. About 250,000 people died during this war, lasting between 1992 and 1995.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The data and figures presented regarding BiH are gathered from and displayed on the Official sites of Bosnia and Herzegovina, The World Fact Book, BBC's and CIA's sites. The figure of estimated dead during the war is given here as well, although we should mention that it is still debated on whether this figure is correctly estimated. See, for instance, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov).

## 1.1 Why Bosnia and Herzegovina? - A specific case

“For almost four years between April 1992 and January 1996, the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina dominated global headlines and soundbites. Since then, BiH may have ceased to be ‘the centre of the world’, as Zlatko Lagumdžija caustically reminds its citizens. Yet this small country of perhaps 3.5 million people, located geographically and otherwise on the margins of Europe, remains an important place to know and understand.” (Bose 2002:2)

By presenting the wider field of my study, my intention is to argue ‘en route’ why it is important for sociology as a subject to engage in theorisation and discussion of this case and thereby widen its concerns for conflicted and consensual aspect of modernity and/or post-modernity. For instance, Kaldor (2002) identifies this concern in the term ‘new war’ placed in the global era, where war has become an anachronism; a mixture of war, organised crime and systematic violation of human rights. The recognised rules of conduct in war are broken and this tendency is highly related to an informal criminalised economy.

Notions as for instance state building, civil society, citizenship and democracy are thereby central here. As the European Union is ever developing its institutions and expanding its roles, while also enlarging its geographical outreach, it is still difficult to predict how great the scope of influence of one such political structure will result in for Europe itself and the world at large. Nevertheless, with basic values such as the importance of human rights, European Union is obliged to (if the aim for it is to endure) spread and preserve these universal values. It is a political formation that, if we come to the core of it, has predicted its own dissolution in the case of its own amorality, precisely because it is a formation based on morality, that is, on human rights and democratic values. Debates about European identity have intensified in the context of EU enlargement and the EU Constitutional Treaty. The aim and values of the EU are under constant pressure from differing powers and power struggles, while citizens of nation-states in Europe indeed are met by civic duties which represent their *choices* on how the EU should be understood.<sup>5</sup> We will later on see how and why the

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<sup>5</sup> See; [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com), EU News & Policy Positions, Future EU, *European values and identity*, Wednesday 19 April 2006

problem of BiH can be related to problems EU is facing.

Therefore, in order for us to answer the posed question in the caption on why Bosnia and Herzegovina, we turn to proper usage of a sociological argument while clarifying some of the objectives of this study. When trying to comprehend the situation and thereby have in mind the context of the study, we should have an account of what my informants' reality is composed of and what they are dealing with on everyday basis. The political situation in BiH, conveniently defined in 'where ambiguity of democracy and self-determination have never been embodied more clearly than in the Dayton Peace Accord' (Bieber 2001:2), clearly depicts the gap between what one of my informants expressed as: '(...) *my own understanding of democracy and the reality labelled as democracy in which people live.*'

## 1.2 Historical and political sensitivity

In fact, in order for us to understand the recent conflict in BiH, we must set the context of our analysis in the historical and in the present political light. To present in short history of BiH here would be an impossible task, both in regards to history's sheer scale and in the context of consistency of the thesis. The region is particular precisely because of the heterogeneous composition of every province in the Balkan Peninsula, BiH being immaculate example. Nevertheless, we will introduce the reader to some of the myths regarding history, as examples of how historical readings were politicised, in terms of racial-ethnic identity, affecting the modern understanding of BiH's pristine and recent past.

A Bosnian writer, Mesa Selimovic (1910-1982), is often considered as one of the greatest 20th century novelists of South-eastern Europe. The complexity which characterises Bosnians, at least what Bosnians prefer to be identified as, this writer captures in his famous passage about Bosnia and Bosnians:

“We belong to no one. We are always on someone's boundary, always someone's dowry. For centuries now we search for and recognise our identity, but soon we will not know who we are. We live on a divide of the worlds, always at fault to someone. Waves of history strike us as a sea cliff. We are torn out and unaccepted. Like a dead-end river that streamed away from its mother it has no flow, nor delta, too small to be a lake, too big to be sapped by

the earth. Others afford us honour to be under their flag while we have none of our own. They entice us when we are needed and discard us after we are expended. It is unfortunate that we love our ghetto and we won't leave it while everything comes with a cost, even love. They all believe that they will trick all others and that is our misfortune. What (sorts of) people are Bosnians? They are most complex people in the world. With no one has history played such a ruse as it has with Bosnia. Only yesterday we were something that we would like to forget, while we have not become something else. With unclear sense of shame because of guilt and dissidence, we don't want to look back while we have nowhere to look ahead. Are we coincidentally so soft and ruthless, mellow and hard. Do we coincidentally hide behind love as the only clarity in this vagueness; why? Because it matters to us. And because it matters, it means that we are candid. And since we are candid, all praises to our insanity!"<sup>6</sup>

This passage illustrates very well how the complexity of Bosnia is something Bosnians take as their rather characteristic uniqueness, when it actually is a universal struggle and a complex matter for all people that come to question their 'border' identity and belonging. Perhaps - we could add - with an exception that this certainly is intensified in the case of BiH. It is not only a country in the Balkans, it is also a microcosm of Balkan itself. This is why Bosnia is an interesting ethnological and anthropological case. Selimovic does have a point about history 'playing' with Bosnia in a rather complex way. The identity of Bosnians is for this very reason a complex issue to deal with, both for Bosnians themselves and for those trying to say something about them. However, we now turn to a selection of examples of illustrative historical 'origin discourse', previously mentioned.

From the empires of Rome, Charlemagne, the Ottomans and the Austro-Hungarians, to the religions of Western and Eastern Christianity, Judaism and Islam, BiH has been the 'dowry' (as Selimovic adequately put it) of great imperial forces and great religions of the world. The earliest inhabitants, Illyrians, who spoke an Indo-European language, were spread throughout much of modern Yugoslavia's territory. Nineteenth century Yugoslav ideologists argued that Serbs and Croats were the 'original' Illyrians and therefore a separate racial group, something that can be prescribed to modern politicians rather than it can to early history of the Balkans (Malcolm 1994).

Most of Bosnia lay under the Roman province of Dalmatia. The last decisive rebellion against the Roman Empire was ultimately crushed in north-eastern Bosnia in

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<sup>6</sup> From Mesa (Mehmed) Selimovic's famous novel "*Death and Dervish*", written in 1966.

AD 9. With the Roman Empire came Christianity, at least the earliest appearance of it, because it was brought to a sudden finish with the invasion of the Goths. Although there is little evidence of the Gothic heritage (there is for instance not a single word which can be shown to be derived from Gothic in any Balkan language), a mythology where Goths were perceived as true ancestors of the Croats and the Bosnians developed and argued later on that Goths were the ancestors of the Slavs. Some time later, the theory was used to promote identification with the Goths in order to distinguish themselves from the Slavs. Bosnians were, according to this, a Germanic tribe, something that was argued by a group of Bosnian Muslim autonomists during the Second World War, when they sent a 'Memorandum' to Hitler. Once again, we can see how ideological remaking of history was often used in political contexts during different periods of time (ibid.).

Besides the Romans and Goths, a Mongol-Turkic people, Asiatic Huns and ancestors of the modern Ossetians, Iranian Alans, also appeared between fourth and fifth century. Two new invaders appeared in the sixth century, the Avars, a Turkic tribe, and the Slavs. The Slavs predominated and within a short period, two new tribes arrived, namely the Croats and the Serbs. Most scholars believe that both Serbs and Croats were either Slavic tribes with Iranian ruling casts or that they originally were Iranian tribes and that they absorbed Slavic subjects. Some Croat nationalist theorists who accepted Iranian ancestry and rejected it for the Serbs, created a divide between two populations and used these arguments later on when ancient Iranians were placed higher in the Nazi racial hierarchy than were the Slavs. There were also those ideologists that rejected in total all evidence of Iranian components (ibid.).

Although Byzantine rulers attempted to Christianise the Croats, it was not until the ninth century that most Croats indeed were Christianised. After northern and north-western Bosnia was conquered by Charlemagne's Franks, the time period between eight and ninth centuries was presumably when the old tribal system reformed into a resemblance of west European feudalism. In modern Herzegovina, where Serbs settled, after a Croat dominance of power under King Tomislav, Bosnia would become dominated by a temporarily powerful Serb principedom that acknowledged the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire. The first mentioning of Bosnia as a unit or a separate territory is written by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his politico-geographical handbook dating to the year

of 958. After a shifting dominance between Croats and Serbs through Byzantine rule between ninth and eleventh century, the emergence of an independent Bosnia was first recorder in 1180s, although this independence was quite close to the Croat-Hungarian political realm by the twelfth century. Even though Bosnia was at this time period religiously linked to Roman Catholicism, there are clear distinct features of Bosnian Church that cannot be compared to Latin Churches of the Dalmatian coast (ibid.).

We can see that this ‘tribal’, early Slav Bosnia has little in common with today’s modern BiH, something that was not apparent to a number of nationalist theorists claiming that Bosnians were either Croatian or Serbian (referring to modern, national identity). Bosnians were Slavs living on a distinct territory that neither was under nor was ultimately separate from territories of Croatia nor Serbia (ibid.).<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3 Contextual sensitivity

Above, it was illustrated how political and historical contexts are interwoven, something we need to bear in mind throughout this thesis content, particularly when discussing the present political climate in BiH. Nevertheless, we also need to bear in mind the context which applies to my informants, the young individuals that make the main empirical section of the thesis. Sensitivity for the context is in fact their specific position within the society together with the individual and time capturing framework of their present reality, as they themselves experience it.

What, then, separates young people as a general group and then primarily young people engaged in the non-governmental sector, from other groups and generations in BiH’s society?

Primarily we have to be attentive to a general division in how different generations experienced the war. The mere fact that the developmental stages which life span entails, specially at young age, are most significant variables as to what extent and in which manner a person is involved within the greater social reality.

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<sup>7</sup> As Noel Malcolm states on the emergence of independent Bosnian state: ‘no simple conclusion can be drawn.’ (ibid. 11) He clearly argues that it would be an anachronism to apply the modern notion of Serb or Croat identity to this period. Other Slavs were even in Bosnia before the two tribes had arrived, that is, the Croats and the Serbs. Most importantly, ‘the history of Bosnia in itself does not explain the origins of this war’ (ibid. xix).

What kind of relation to the social world could my informants' age span imply?

When narrowing the informants' age from approximately eighteen to thirty, at the end of the war, the youngest among them were about nine years old while the oldest among my informants were about twenty. There is an important difference between a nine years old person's perceptions of the war from that of a twenty years old person. How can they be categorized as a coherent group then? All my informants are namely met by the post-war effects in their authoritative of age. This point of common reference in the lives of young people is what is of interest; it is their understandings of and their dealings with the post-war situation as fully-grown people that I wish to grasp.

Furthermore, these generations will be thirty and forty years old in ten years time, presumably active participants of the society in which they live. They will hold jobs or be unemployed, they will vote or abstain, they will have children of their own and they will be the first post-war generation forming some of the future directions for BiH society. A factor that albeit is of interest for us is how they construct their understanding of the social worlds surrounding them in the society of our reference. Moreover, my informants represent the section of the above-mentioned generations that indeed are taking an active role within their local communities. Their involvement within non-governmental organisations is to be treated as a new kind of 'politisation' of young people. They are thus participants of a forming civil society in BiH. Why is, then, the development of a civil society important for BiH?

“In other words, a developed civil society will be the hallmark of successful state-building, the point at which the Bosnian state is able to be left to rule without the international community. (...) The term [civil society] has thus become eponymous for almost every aspect of Bosnia's transition; the lingua franca of interaction between international and local actors, politicians, agencies, citizens and commentators.” (Fagan 2005:406)

NGOs, as a chosen framework for this study, involve grassroots-level citizens in order to enhance different group's capacity to participate in policy-making and legislation. Furthermore, it is specifically important in the context of today's information society that NGOs are able to play an important democratic function (Ogawa 2001). This relates to BiH in an important manner. Citizens of BiH must be engaged in the ongoing increase in the importance of access to information, especially

considering illiteracy in general (estimated 23%) and then the computer illiteracy (estimated 92%) of the population in BiH. Building civil society should presumably be based on local initiatives, although such initiatives sometimes require basic information spreading and further education of the citizens. This is not to say that the local actors should not have a sense of ownership of the projects in question, quite the opposite. This aspect is crucial for the entire NGO sector (Rasmusson 2000).

The OCSE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and its civil society programme is '*possibly the most complicated and challenging programme to make efficient*' (ibid.15). Merging four other programmes, namely Community Development, NGO Development, Youth and Education, and Confidence Building, the civil society programme testifies of the importance of the themes central to the context of developing civil society in BiH. The programme initially involved various target groups (big NGOs, youth, intellectual and religious leaders, school leaders and parents) but has, in the aftermath, focused on more specific target groups such as politically oriented NGOs and various citizen's organisations. In order to increase efficiency and focus strategies one must, as OSCE's departments have eventually realised, target specific issues and groups and have clear ideas on what should be achieved. The pursuit of political and social change has become more evidently important in the context of BiH (ibid.).

"In large parts of BIH the population has no access to unbiased or neutral information. Hard-line nationalists control the media, which is used to disseminate hatred and misinformation. An organized civil society with active structures for participation in the political development of the communities was almost non-existent." (ibid.17)

This is the context we need to bear in mind when assessing what my informants have conveyed. The initiative for a civil society had to be constructed as it obviously lacked any prerequisites in the local atmosphere after the war. Thus, we might claim, my informants are not the initial initiators of a forming civil society in BiH. On the other hand, it can be argued that there was a local need for some sort of platform, which NGOs eventually provided for. We will show later on that my informants did recognise the need for alteration besides the foreign initiative for NGOs. This is important to note as some of the motives for involvement and participation for my informants must have been equally constructed or at least



influenced by the implementation of such initiatives. Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind the question of why some have recognised the importance of such participatory actions while others did not. This is what separates my informants from the often passive-characterised young people in general. It is in this sense that they are the exception.

My informants' motives may vary and they may have entered the non-governmental sector for various reasons. Nevertheless, they are choosing to remain within their respective NGOs and in many instances even look for other ways (outside NGOs) to fulfil their desire for a change of the society in which they exist. In this matter, they do differ substantively from the more passive and lethargic segment of their peers, although their biographical backgrounds have to be taken into consideration here as well.

At this point we must pose few questions: what have these generations experienced in their lifetimes, how could these experiences have affected them and what can these tensions result in? The contextual sensitivity of my field work is to answer the question on *how to understand young peoples past experience?* A brief account of a selection of rather generalised stress and coping contextual situations in the past fifteen years for my subjects and their respective generations can be illustrative for further understanding of the context related to my informants.

There is in psychological research a theory on the exposition to stress at an early age, which holds that exposition to the stressful situations (of course depending on the context and the intensity of the stress factor), makes individuals more resistant to later stressful experiences in their lifetime. This is referred to as '*stress immunising*' (Levine et al. 1967). The war that took place did surely something to these generations and marked its stamp in all likelihood, albeit perhaps not quite as one would have expected. It may very well be that the consequences are far more complex than that of more easily identifiable and instant trauma reactions. Nor are all consequences necessarily negative, as stress produces fairly complex coping strategies. Particularly when referring to long-lasting stressful periods, something war in BiH certainly can be categorised as, we should take into account how these experiences shaped young peoples resonating. Research shows that stress symptoms often surface long after traumatic situations end and stabilisation has occurred, well-known now as post traumatic stress disorder.

We mentioned previously that choosing the topic for my master's thesis was influenced by the visits to my home country after the war had ended. My own encounters with the young people were predominantly filled by the amazement of how young people, generations close to my own, always tried to live as normal lives as possible, considering the difficult circumstances. These were not peers I had nothing in common with; their resonations were not limited or introverted, their interest clearly could compare to any European young person. The "normality" of these generations, their appropriate creative outlooks on the world surrounding them, their critical and often sarcastic views was what amazed me during my visits to BiH. Nevertheless, after some years it was mostly passivism of younger generations one could observe as one of the main consequence of the post-war situation. War meant anarchy, no control over the most basic circumstances whatsoever. Today's young adults, born from approximately 1975 to 1988, were either children or teenagers during the war, barely learning that not everything could be their way, getting to know their wider environments, simply being socialised to the societal reality surrounding them. The puberty-transition alone can represent difficult periods, from a child to a teenager and from a teenager to an adult, not to mention the cruel reality of war that faced these generations at such an early age. The young person which we are portraying here is consumed by the lack of control while observing and experiencing parents, grownups and whole society at large, out of control. Such dissolution of social order leads necessarily to a sense of helplessness. Helplessness, or the expectancy that there are no relationships between ones responses and reinforcement from the environment are therefore one of the consequences of wartime experience. Generalised expectancy of this kind, namely lack of control, is an apparent foundation for depression, state of anomie, lethargic attitude or apathy. Even change in hormones and brain chemistry during prolonged states of helplessness are verified (Murison and Overmier 1993).

Post-war period represented an adaptation of its own sort. This time, instead of getting used to the abnormality, one had to adapt to the forming normality of the surroundings or to the beginning formation of social order. One has to adapt to the mere ending of war; to the silence of ceasefire, to the restoration of free movement and coverage of the most basic supplies. The destruction of infrastructure and economic suffrage implies that the most basic needs still could not be met; for

instance in Prijedor region, central heating was experienced for the first time after the war had ended, in building apartments during last winter of 2005 and 2006.

My informants are thus, by the time war has ended, between ages of nine and twenty. Today, young people cannot be presented in one simple category as they have developed different coping strategies in relation to their past experiences and in relation to their future choices.<sup>8</sup> One of the coping strategies for some of these generations was to get involved in the workings of various NGOs and thus partake in their local communities in some way. In meeting and spending time with these young people, generations close to my own, I experienced insight in their private (yet public) struggles. Defining themselves as struck by something outside their own control or comprehension while actually becoming a part of that whole, my informants nudged me into reflection upon their circumstance. During my stay and interaction with the subjects I found that the younger generations that are approximately 18 or 19 years old now, seemed to cope better (easier) with their surroundings, whilst the ones closer to thirties are having more complex, problematic and critical relationships with the surrounding reality. This is understandable considering that the younger generations are exactly that, younger, more adaptive and still have less of ‘adult worries’ at present time. Nevertheless, this also seems to be connected to their inability to compare their present worlds to something else, something different, as perhaps the older generations of my informants do.

As the war-produced brain drain was an expected outcome, the post-war brain drain seems to represent a prolonged irrationality of the political forces in BiH towards the young people. We will see that this relationship towards young adults of BiH is not the only, ultimately self-destructive policy, which is being practised in today’s BiH.

Some of the many identifiable problems of the post war period for these generations are unemployment, corruption and ethnic intolerance. Although these are social problems which are of great importance for any social study situated in this

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance Jones Lynne (2005), *“Then They Started Shooting: Growing Up In Wartime Bosnia”*. Intensity of traumatic reactions lies not within the event itself, but rather in how one perceives the situation. She follows up on children she works with during and after the war and argues in favour of their coping strategies and their sanity in general.

region, they are far too general and wide subjects to be properly analysed in this context, as their fine details run a risk of not being revealed (Silverman 2004). We will nevertheless return to these important subjects in chapter three. This is why my topic had to be more specific, namely the selected informants which represent my narrow field, so the research results could indicate what some of the general tendencies could be or indeed what could be further explored. The empirical material will provide for the discussion on their political consciousness, their identities and moral standpoints. First, we briefly discuss the implications of the peace agreement.

#### 1.4 The state's legitimacy - can Dayton be transcended?

“Bosnia's current political system is the product of a peace agreement that the international community concluded in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. The significant role of the international community has made Bosnia de facto a protectorate that is characterized by a loose federation with a weak central government.” (Bieber 2006:40)

It has been twelve years since the peace agreement that ended the terrible war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been signed in Dayton. Until the beginning of 1990's, Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the six republics which constituted the Socialistic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Its dissolution was followed by terrible acts of war, driven by strong nationalistic streams. Two thirds of the inhabitants were forced to leave their homes. The events in BiH have been described as a new type of war (Kaldor 2002). One of the consequences of the war, lasting from April 1992 until October 1995, is the current state and social position of young people in the country. The difficult economic, political and then naturally following socio-psychological conditions the younger generations find themselves within, are a direct consequences of the conflict and the post-war period. Actually, and by no wonder, in Bosnia and Herzegovina everything is divided into pre-war, war and post-war periods. This past heritage and minimal improvement of the living conditions for BiH's young people seem by many indicators to function as fertile grounds for producing apathy and demoralisation within age groups of the utmost importance for the reconstruction of the country in every possible sense.

In any assessment of present political condition in BiH one would have to

consider the distinction between legal and legitimate status of the state of BiH. Any analysis that considers this region requires a retrospective on happenings during the 1990's. The war that took place in BiH is often considered illegitimate, both because of the atrocities that happened during the conflict which meant illegitimate means, but also in regards to the initial emergence of hostilities. According to the Geneva conventions which are applicable in any conflict, if it becomes apparent that the objective in an attack is not a military one, the attack must be called of.<sup>9</sup>

The Dayton Accord has brought major consequences regarding the question of the future of this state and nonetheless, on the daily lives of ordinary Bosnians. With it came peace that has been secured since 1995, although this often is taken as the single or the most positive consequence of the peace agreement. Even today, one can still hear many Bosnians saying that the war never seized and that it is continuing through other means than military. While peace does bring stability and some sort of social order under formation, it also renders possible the development of critical discourses towards it. The most interesting and perhaps the most critical among these is the argument that the Dayton Agreement imagined BiH as a political formation of 'a future something' (most likely of a future state), which needs to be filled with certain ingredients which are to combine the necessary components of a state (Curak 2002). This argument presents us with an idea of a 'state experiment' which Dayton supposedly is, without much consideration for the moral, historical or political foundation for the formation of a state. According to this, the new state community is imagined as an ideologically flat surface in which there cannot subsist official nor institutional production of ideology and where the foreign factor administrates while building a functional political structure and community. In this scenario, there is no room for dwelling on past experiences, whether these positions may be in favour of BiH according to its historical importance, or against it. This means that the real discussion on whether Dayton has legitimised an illegal formation of entities in BiH is withered away. Hence, it is easy to identify the paradox of the Dayton constitution; the alien factor must be present. It demands its lengthy engagement while it at the

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<sup>9</sup> Protocol I, Art.57 deals with Precautions in an attack. This regards the ones that plan or decide upon an attack. If there is no concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, the attack must be suspended, otherwise civilian (and therefore not military) population will be under attack. This must not be the aim of the warfare at any point nor of the war aim it self.

same time ensures sovereignty and territorial intactness of BiH. The reason for this is that the sovereignty is not ensured from the “inside” or from the domestic forces at play. In other words, the relationship between internal forces are at conflict, while the international community and the protectorate itself are trying to pull these forces over to the post-nationalist era, although without critical discussion of the past persuasions and therefore, in many cases, neither the present ones (ibid.).

Can a state be legitimate if a considerable portion of its citizens deny it or do not consider it and accept it as their own? In a democracy, the basic values are the people’s values; the state cannot rise above the peoples will.

Why is it then that every serious analysis of the future of BiH must come to terms with the question of self-determination (Kofman 2001)? The answer may appear simple; a permanent protectorate cannot subsist, not in any sense of the word, that is, if BiH is ever to become a sovereign state. When it comes to the question of self-determination, I will argue that it does pose one of the main issues and dilemmas both the citizens of BiH and the international community have to deal with. The case of BiH demonstrates how the blurry difference between the principle or the right of self-determination and the violators of human rights using this principle functioned not only as a motive but as justifying premise of the conflict. Not only are we posed with the difficulty of theorising the possibility for every minority group to claim their independence, we are also confronted with problems such as racism, xenophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide if the right of self-determination is taken to be unrestricted or unlimited and basically an overall reaching principle (ibid). The conservative views of this sort can only weaken the principle of self-determination rather than reify it. This principle must stand in relation to the territorial integrity and stability which are also accepted as fundamental principles of international law. This in turn brings us back to the discussion of the Dayton accord and its inadequacy. Has the Dayton agreement legitimised the illegitimate? Did it ignore a genocide-based partition and in fact, institutionalise it? According to some theoreticians, the national identities dividing Bosnians can be viewed as causes of the conflict. In this sense, it is somewhat artificial for this state to be preserved.

Is it the ‘artificial’<sup>10</sup> nature of BiH as a state that constitutes a problem (Bose

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<sup>10</sup> Bose terms this tendency to explain Bosnia in terms of the ‘artificiality’ paradigm, lacking the very important explanation of the constructed national identities.

2002:42)? When examining how my informants perceive the present political situation in their own country, almost every single person expressed despair when considering how their state in reality functions. Problems they mentioned were never connected to the mere presence of different ethnic groups in BiH. On the contrary, the problem identified by the informants was in fact the way ethnicity is used (misused) by the politicians in order to manipulate the masses, plunder and deceive the citizens in every way possible. Where there does not exist prerequisites for a civil society, as we mentioned earlier, there is greater possibility of a lack of initiative for a change. Manipulation of citizens implies then that we cannot speak of free choices, whether these are electoral choices or any other political choices.

A good portion of my informants, that is, people that are either working for or are active in NGOs, admitted of not voting during the elections, something that pinpoints to a disjunction between their perceptions and the logical mode of action. The paradox is clear; if we have concentrated on young adults who can be defined as active, participatory and reflexive citizens and found that almost half of them do not vote, what, we may ponder, is the condition of the young people that can be contrasted to my informants? Indeed, it is estimated that only about twenty percent of young people do vote.<sup>11</sup> My informants are young adults who are definitely reflecting seriously about the political situation and are conscious of the problems this state is facing. They are even quite aware of the basis for criticism of the standpoint of not voting during the elections, but claim that there are no real options which could be worth going through the trouble of voting and informing one self about the programs of the political parties available. A good portion of them perceive their engagement in the organisations as a form of political struggle. In some way that is compensating or in fact one could argue that the engagement is functioning as a formation of the proper climate for being able to vote. For example, an often-mentioned motive for being active within the organisation is a need for creating a kind of an atmosphere that is suitable for ones private understandings. Perhaps when their own resonations take a more collective form in the society as a whole, young people would to a smaller degree conceive of political situation in the country (as most of my informants do) as totalitarian, profitably criminal, nationalistic, dumb and incompetent. In some

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<sup>11</sup> See for instance *Independent evaluation of the national youth policy in BiH*, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpaysubmissions/bosnia.pdf>

interviews they would simply describe political conditions with a swear word. Of the many descriptions I have encountered during the interviews, one has struck me the most: ‘*Political situation? There is none.*’ How can this be, I pondered. How can this young person think that there is none-existing political situation when everything in BiH seemed to revolve around politics? What is referred to as a political sphere cannot be qualified as politics in its rightful meaning? How is it that young people feel that there are no politics present in their country? This interesting connotation can be interpreted as a metaphorical one, but nonetheless we should envisage its implications. That there is no political system and that it is in reality missing is often explained by the deranged system of values and a wrong outlook on what politics and human society are in general. Perhaps these young people are right in the sense that there is no *real* political platform if there is no *substantive democracy*. This statement relates then to the electoral body in total and it relates to the values which people hold. We might thereby ask; might this be a question of a need for the change of consciousness both for the citizens and for the politicians in BiH? When a totality of a system (BiH society) is essentially undifferentiated, where a large majority is in some way or another in conformity with or supports the perverted form of a state (the corrupted political structures or the essential irrationality for all citizens of BiH, the division based on ethnicity and the ‘Daytonian BiH’), this becomes a problem for the dynamics of change and development of a society. If consciousness must be altered, there must be something done with the constructiveness of a society. The de facto unmoral society cannot be constructive and is therefore *destructive* for its members. Legitimacy of a state depends than on moral consensus and morality per se. If young people can identify that consciousness of the citizens must be dealt with, could that point to the proposal that moral decline must be dealt with? Moreover, if morality is in question, is it not obvious that legitimacy of an already divided state and society is at stake? Thus, the question on transcendentalism of the Dayton conditions is directly connected to these sentiments. This kind of discussion is of importance for our analyses of the problems my informants are facing in their present surroundings in BiH.



## Chapter 2

### Theoretical and methodological perspectives

Sociology considers the totality of social life, which is build upon the condition that all humans are born and introduced into the social communities where their lives unfold within those frameworks and conditions that society sets out for its members to be. Thus, sociology is predominantly occupied with the societal attribute to human existence. It is the process of socialisation, which functions as a tool for the introduction of new members to the wider society and social life in general, that is one of the basic concepts in the study of a social group. Socialisation bears with it the internalisation of values and norms vital for the individual's social existence in a particular society. Successful socialisation in turn forms the individual into a human *specificum*. Human beings can in rare instances survive without a social group; however, developing basic social properties, as language for instance, is impossible without a group. So saying, Emil Durkheim contains that all our knowledge is conditioned by human fellowship; our basic concepts regarding reality in general and the categories so important to social life are possible only through societal experience (Løvlie 1995). Thus, the mutual interdependency between the members of a society is the basis for any human society. This mutual interdependency is also a basis for any kind of analysis of what constitutes social life. Interaction unfolding among the members of a given society is the interdependency in its observable and factual form, which we can depict in action, interaction and in the conduct of the subjects of interest. Interaction patterns in different communities form regularities and relationships that naturally include mutual consequences. Sociology is a subject studying such relationships and consequences of small and large social collectives (Martinussen 2001).

This chapter aims to represent a theoretical framework upon which we will return in the concluding part of the thesis. In explaining how we can understand the society of our reference, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus the subject of our interest, namely the young adults, we discuss at first what is relevant in this context. The societal type that BiH as a society represents has to be reviewed before we can

discuss specific social group or phenomena within this society, namely young people's political socialisation. At first, we consider the general dialectic view on how society and individuals as members of the society are reciprocally productive of each other. Secondly, we consider instances in which these processes are less productive or counter productive of both the individual and the society in general.

## 2.1 The society's dual reality - the objective and the subjective reality

There has been an enduring theoretical debate concerning social order and constrain between the subjective actions of individuals and the objective reality or the societal reality that is 'out there'. In *The social construction of reality* (Berger and Luckmann 2000), a sociology of knowledge was outlined, based on the everyday reality which the subject constructs as meaningful. Everyday reality is the object of a sociologist's analysis accompanied by the knowledge about the society and analysis of it. The dialectic method that the authors embrace forces them to explain their object of analysis in just such way, namely in a dialectical manner. Society as an objective and as a subjective reality depicts the dialectics of, on the one hand, the individuals' made reality and, on the other hand, the reified realities' made individuals. For instance, Berger and Luckmann would point to an ethnological truth conveying that there are as many ways of becoming a human being, as there are human cultures in this world (ibid.65). Socialisation of new members of societies of different cultures and social realities is a dialectic process in itself; as new members are introduced, they themselves will contribute to the reproduction of internalised culture and in many instances (productive or progressive societies) also to the production of new elements of that particular culture.

According to the authors, society truly has dual realities; it projects itself as an objective as well as a subjective reality. Furthermore, objectivity and subjectivity of social reality are inseparable. In every aspect, even on the most individual of levels, a man cannot escape from the reality of the societal force. Society is a reality *sui generis*. Human self-production is thus always and inevitably a social doing (ibid.67). Clearly, the authors are inclined to the idea that a healthy society presupposes individual growth and potential-developing and vice versa. This basic assumption on

humans as social beings and society as such, which Berger and Luckmann point to, is clearly connected to Durkheimian sociology of knowledge and his conception of society (ibid.37/38).

Constructivism, as an ontological position and as a position in social philosophy, is characterised by this dialectical, rather than deterministic, approach to viewing the relationship between the individual and society. Dialectical tensions are essential here and thus order and disorder co-exists while never quite attaining the dynamic balance needed for equilibrium. This ‘existential undertone’ in constructivism is unavoidable (Mahoney 2004). We might even speak of ontological status of social constructions, for indeed, our lived reality is the *meaning* which society produces and then institutionalises such social patterns and perspectives. Reified reality or *meaning* is thus a product of human sociality itself. These assumptions are often falsely opposed to objectivity and it is in my opinion that these theoretical positions do not stand as polarities. Furthermore, I hold that Durkheim held objectivism and truth as founding postulates.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, it would be illustrative to view the introduction to the Norwegian addition of Berger and Luckmann’s (2000) work. The introduction, or rather the concluding part of it, written by Pål Veiden with the title ‘*The threat of Constructivism - and its durability*’<sup>13</sup>, is brought into relation to the events in BiH. This is how he views the constructionist position:

“There has been within Norwegian milieus - not the least at the Institute of Political Science in Oslo - a staggering debate on constructivism. Here, a misunderstood objectivism has gone hand in hand with an unreflected positivism and any social construction of the reality is dismissed as speculative. It can seem as though if the Bergernian and Luckmannian program does not get distinguished from the most extreme post-modern dissipations. Although a subject that studies political institutions, actors and history perhaps can not base it self solely on what people subjectively carry in their minds? No, not that solely, but on that as well. Berger and Luckmann must have rubbed their theoretical hands when they observed what has, for instance, happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Here, a whole world has begun speaking of Muslims, Serbs and Croats as if this should be the biggest matter of course. External variables get the status of representing real people and concrete and real people get tangled in gruesome categories with equal consequences. Theoretically, this means that highly subjective designations

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<sup>12</sup> See Rawls (1997) and also Durkheim’s lectures on pragmatism and truth, *Pragmatism & Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, 1983

<sup>13</sup> The translation of the title and the passage are my own.

have received a sort of an objective status; in Berger's and Luckmann's words, they have been objectified. In this frame of reference, this is no theoretical game, but a sombre reality. It reminds us that the theoretical construction does not take place elsewhere but the practical reality." (Veiden 2000:18)

What Pål Vieden is pointing out here is important for our own analysis. How can subjective designations be used to produce objectified, and thus very real, realised, or perhaps power-exerting categories, which in turn influence individuals, operating beyond the individual level? According to Durkheim, the moral authority of collective representations is something essential for a societal consensus and a stable social order or arrangement.

It is as though Durkheim speaks to us on the case of BiH; these subjective designations have become *social facts*, affecting individual human conduct. They even affect the creators of these subjective ideas beyond their own control. In this sense that 'Frankenstein' has created his own monster that lives his life independently from creator. We will follow this theoretical frame in our analysis of the young people's conducts, their views and the *meanings* they hold in the context of the social reality surrounding them. Perhaps in the case of BiH, this imposing social reality is most evident and must thereby be a necessary part of our analysis. Besides, we will return to the question of objectivity and truth in our concluding chapter.

Our *social* construction of reality cannot be separated from the influence of the power the society has over our individual reality, and vice versa. These are two reciprocal streams or processes and for this mere fact, they appear as complex and undifferentiated to the studying eye. The solution to this problem Berger and Luckmann found in viewing these processes as a part of a whole that does not necessarily benefit from strict differentiation. Our objectified and external reality is not entirely deterministic (myth-making is a clear example of the dialectic relationship towards our social reality). Furthermore, the transformation of meaning is sometimes much less frictional when circumstances are fertile for these processes to occur. It is thus that in the secondary socialisation reality stands less rooted in the consciousness and thereby more exposed to suppression and alteration. For instance, religious or military socialisation processes must necessarily be intensified and strictly separated from other realities, because the mere presence of conflicting realities is decisive for the "successful" occurrence of transformation (socialisation and internalisation) (Berger and Luckmann 2000).

This can help explain why it was in fact decisive for religious powers in the case of society of our reference, to take extreme measures in order to mobilise people, making religiosity a part of 'a sphere of a vulgarly political instrumentalisation'.<sup>14</sup> The significantly clearer 'cleric-ism' in BiH should not necessarily imply danger, although it provides a peculiar aspect when we consider the political context of the time period in which it rose in a multi-religious and multi-cultural BiH. The international community is in this sense responsible for tolerating the aggressiveness of religious leaders and communities, seemingly hiding behind the argument that Tito's Yugoslavia was suppressing expressions of the religious emotions, which is a notorious misconception.<sup>15</sup>

In the preceding chapters I discuss how reified reality can be fuelled by intensified religiosity, cultural diffusion, myths and social disorder. We now turn to Durkheim and his explanation of religious phenomena, which will function as a fundament or an analogy for our discussion of social reality in the case of BiH.

## 2.2 Society and the Durkheimian perspective; symbolism and collective effervescence, social type, anomie and moral integration

The Durkheimian perspective is unavoidable for our explanation of BiH's reality, where politics and religion are some of the deterministic factors of the social reality. The raise in suicide rate<sup>16</sup> of post-war BiH is but one of the indicators of the pathology of the social type BiH as a society can be said to represent. Durkheim's theoretical perspective will be the crucial connection to the empirical references of this study. This will also be elaborated on in following chapters.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), introduced a new way of observing the social

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<sup>14</sup> See Ivan Lovrenovic, *DANI*, 17/12/1999, <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/133/kraj133.htm>

<sup>15</sup> See Dusan Babic, *Oslobodjenje*, 27/08/2005, [http://www.oslobodjenje.com.ba/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=46596&Itemid=46](http://www.oslobodjenje.com.ba/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46596&Itemid=46)

<sup>16</sup> Suicide rate doubles in post war BiH; See *Social Legal Studies*, Pupavac, 2004, also <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200305/s848492.htm>

reality. This new perspective would help him conceptualise an apparatus, which entailed the reality *sui generis* of a society, that is, a reality of its own kind. Besides the fact that this implied an independent entity which society should be viewed and studied as, society was now conceived of as the prime source of morality. This, we might claim, is the basic difference between his methodological assumptions and his epistemological theory. In fact, Emile Durkheim believed that it was possible to worship implicitly the society itself (Durkheim 1982).

Durkheim thereby announced the irreversible process of secularisation already in his first masterpiece *De la division du travail social* (1893). Instead of mechanical solidarity which religious authority was characterised by, an organic solidarity was forming due to the emergence of worldly, functional differentiation of social roles. In *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (1895) he sets the rules of methodology for sociology as a science. The rules, often characterised as methodological collectivism, were founded on the assumption that the explanation of individuals could never be separated from the society or the collective. Individual must thus always be explained through macrostructures people themselves have collectively created. Social facts were to be viewed as things, which would provide for the accurate study of social life. In *La suicide* (1897) this assumption is crystallized, as suicide is explained as a purely societal phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it is his last work we present here which we will consider as central for the theoretical fundamentals of this paper, namely *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). His last main work is the fundamental literature in sociology of religion, although far from reducible to studies of religious life. It is in this work that his utmost clear view on human nature, contained in the concept of homo duplex, has been presented. Although this view is by some analysts perceived as inconsistent with his earlier writing (Pickering 2001), the transition to the moral philosophy in Durkheim's writing might very well be falsely interpreted as inconsistency, if one does not distinct his methodological inquiry and his social constructivism from his substantial theory on human nature and his epistemological sociology (Rawls 1997). I will argue that his work can be as valid for studying religious symbolism as it can for ideological symbolism, as Durkheim himself would characterise the supra-individual constructs, such as class or nation, of our contemporary world. The conditions of collective consciousness can be found in

symbolic manifestations and these manifestations can be traced in the social institutions of the society studied (Durkheim 1982). We might thereby ask what kind of symbolism can be found in post-war BiH and what moral occurrence can be identified within the society of our reference? Here is how Durkheim's ideas can be applied to BiH and thus to the understanding of how we can view my informants' political socialisation.

“For Durkheim the distinctive characteristics of social life, as against biological life, are to be found in the realm of ideas and values. ‘Society’ is not simply an aggregate of individuals, it is a collective body of ideas, values and sentiments. While societies do possess important ‘morphological’ characteristics that are shaped by material factors, the bonds that hold societies together are not material but ideal. The essential features of social life are the values, religious beliefs, legal norms and rules of language that bind its members together. Society is a *moral* reality, and it was for this reason that Durkheim saw his aim as being to establish a science of ‘moral life’.” (Scott 1997:17)

What is certain, as Durkheim clearly stated, is that *homo socius* is inseparable from our specifically human condition. This seemingly simple assumption is related to development of the complex constructs of all our mental capabilities which are as mouldable as they are and can therefore result in such variety of social forms or cultures. Our *sociality* then, is the source of all that is specifically and exclusively human.

In Durkheim's view, the collective consciousness is the source of religion and collective consciousness comes from one source only, namely from society. Hence, he also believed, maintaining the dialectical thought, in the strengthening of collective morality and at the same time in the future of moral individualism. Successful internalisation of social mores, or successful socialisation, at the cultural and individual level was for Durkheim directly related to our freedom, happiness and moral health. This does not imply that the healthy individual is by definition a conformist; this can as well be taken to a pathological level when subjugating the individual (Ritzer 2000). The poignant analysis of this kind of pathological tendency of the individual in the modern world, which Durkheim also indulged in, can be found in Erich Fromm's famous work, *Die Furcht vor der Freiheit* (1941). Fromm elaborates on human desire for the authoritarian sources and therefore the escape from our true individual freedom. Fromm identified these tendencies in both Soviet,

socialist world and in Western capitalist societies which were both, according to him, dehumanising and alienating for the individual.

### *Symbolism and collective effervescence*

A need for symbolisation of group belonging seems for Durkheim even older than the specific religious forms in which this need thereafter expressed itself. Namely, he held that societal life, highly ideal and representative in character, by itself longs and aspires for symbolic wrap (Durkheim 1982). Manifestation, we might say. Manifestation of societal life is never completely at direct disposal; an individual can never entirely see through something that is collectively prescribed or provisioned. This is why societal life is possible only through wide symbolism, which in simplistic (primitive) totemic societies often implied tattooing of the emblem as symbol of the groups belonging. That is why, in totemic clan, its members venerate or admire the kangaroo's picture (the symbol of the collective) and not the animal it self. The symbol is sacred indeed and while profane members of the clan are only partly sacred through it, and by wearing it, they themselves represent the collective. The symbol is sacred for a reason; as well as it brings collective emotions together in the symbol itself, it also represents their transcendent-ness from individual to collective consciousness. Symbolism, then, is by this logic necessarily connected to the collective and the societal form of human life. It is in fact an initiator of every possible action and every human progeny (ibid.).

Durkheim stated with this a general postulate on what social life constitutes. Symbolism and national identity are closely intertwined, as for instance the emotional impact of the flag can testify. In the midst of Yugoslavia's breakdown we witnessed the immense and emissive (having the power to send out) utilisation of nationalistic symbolism, wherever this was possible. Thereby, one could also witness the absurd nationalisation (through symbol usage) of the most unthinkable things one would never even imagine having national connotations for. An extraordinary example from Croatia can illustrate for us the ridiculous usage of national prefix, namely when people were selling 'Croatian air' on the market to Diasporas that have returned or visited Croatia immediately after the end of the war. The changing of the names of



Bosnian towns or the deliberate switch in language practices and speech are typical examples of the need to symbolise intensively the national differences, even if this meant *inventing* them, in some cases.

This tendency is still present in today's BiH, although marked in slightly different form and manner. In *Dejtonski nacionalizam* ('Daytonian nationalism'), Nerzuk Curak (2004) is presenting us with the critical argument of the distinction between traditional nationalist leaders (like that of Alija Izetbegovic) and the new 'daytonian' nationalists that have created a pseudo-state movement, which does not lack in ideology. This ideology is contained in the preservation of present political regime or rather in the defence of the political concept that has given such nationalists a fresh spring breath of life. Instead of abolishing the Dayton-Bosnia and its absurdities, these new nationalists are promoting 'the necessary modification' of the Dayton agreement, which of course includes the preservation of entities, while many argue that these actually need to be annulled. With this, the democratic space of manoeuvre is belittled drastically, for entities as such are based on the national, while statehood is in this context characterised by anti-statehood as such. This is what characterises and what Curak identifies as the 'new nationalists' in BiH. How to democratise a project based on violence, crime and genocide (thus creation and legitimisation of ethnically clean entities), while at the same time the people that are liable for this violence are sentenced and condemned for crimes against humanity? Curak asks rightfully, how it can be possible to make democrats of people that were sitting with Karadzic and contemplated about how a Serbian republic would look like within BiH. The symbolism of names, for name is a symbol, are as important for the entities as they are for nationalism as a future. Names of reminders of human tragedies (Gernika, Darfur, Srebrenica, Nyarubuye, Auschwitz) are verifying that they are symbols. They resurrect in us certain associations and emotions. The pathological division of BiH, as Curak denominates, and the production of self-negation through the Dayton structures must therefore cease if substantial democracy is ever to mark the grounds of this state (Curak 2004).

This is, briefly, the functioning anomie of BiH's society. The order of things is broken down and continues to produce paradoxes in both formal, private, and perhaps most importantly, in the normative (collective) life for people in BiH.

Interpreting Durkheim's conception of social change and thus his concern with

the changing relationship between the individuals and society implies that ‘change in the social structures through which individuals associate, affects the faculty of reason and the formation of “collective consciousness” and thus the moral and normative regulation of social action’ (Harms 1981).

Let us now turn to collective effervescence. This Durkheimian term, although not too closely investigated in his work, points to collectively exalted pinnacle where greater changes in society are realised. He referred to the great moments in history (for example Renaissance) that had considerable impact on the structures in given societies. Religion’s origin would be another example of a state of collective effervescence, the pinnacle of the emotional state when clan members create totems. Having this in mind, it is from collective consciousness and through symbolism of this consciousness that religion took its form. This in turn is derived from only one source and that is from *Society* itself. This is how Durkheim made the revolutionary connection, or rather regarded as identical, God and Society. Society must be the source of everything, of collective consciousness and thus of religion, concept of sacredness and God (Durkheim 1982).

Collective effervescence, I will argue, can be useful in viewing the connection between the raise of collective consciousness from the most elementary forms of social life towards more modern structures, like that of statehood or nationhood. Even economic rationality or the capitalist spirit, as Weber defined it, can be processed through this term (Tiryakian 1995).

Collective effervescence, than, presents us with the idea that a group of people can reach ‘boiling level’ when the collective is united or ‘lifted’ and where the individual becomes a part of a whole that is qualitatively different from the mere grouping of individuals, which still are not unified in the sense of ritual (Durkheim 1982). It is the conscious emotional act that overcomes the division between the individual and the group itself. It is the act in which the society as such is worshiped, of course in the setting of clan and tribal societies. How can we relate Weber to these sentiments?

Max Weber also studied religion, although in connection to the rise of capitalism in the West. He was interested in the system of ideas of the world’s religions. He accorded the religious factor great importance when it came to distinctive rationality of the West (Weber 2004). Durkheim, ironically enough,

acknowledged that the development of the economic sphere was perhaps the only segment under which religious influence was weak and therefore it had developed separately from religious source. In fact, economic action is rather profane and therefore can be used as something opposite to the sacred. Sacred were the ceremonies in front of totems and these were the collective actions (and collective effervescences) which were supposed to differentiate the profane life from the ritual. Indeed, what Weber found was that what takes place when religious worlds or collectives are in their constitution directly involving asceticism on work, this can develop into a form of specific economic activity (ibid.). Could we view the protestant community, and in fact a specific branch of it, namely Calvinism, as a collective religion that has reached a pinnacle or collective effervescence in its formation of the underlying ethic for its members? This ethic functions in turn as a value for both economic and social life. It seems that both Weber and Durkheim were right in their own ways. Perhaps neither religious nor economic collectives are protected from each other's influence. The theorists we speak about studied different kinds of origins. Weber studied the origin of capitalism, while Durkheim, the origin of religion. Weber found that capitalism's origin lies in a specific branch of religious asceticism, while Durkheim found that religion's origin was the society itself. In BiH, for instance, an economic crisis is taken place simultaneously with the raise in interest for religion.

We can at least resonate, according to Weber, that religion as a social structure had an impact on economic action. One might even dare to suggest that economic structure can influence religious collectives and their actions. If God is society, as Durkheim would hold, it (society) will level or cope with the changes or state of the society's needs. This in turn, must have an impact on how the religious collective is addressing the needs of its members. For instance, might not religious communities be influenced by the state of economy within the society? Practices within the religions structure therefore change. Nevertheless, not only does the economic life influence religious activities, sometimes, political structures have a much greater impact. In case of BiH, it is primarily political and then economical situations that have had the greatest influence on religious action. Religion is after all no exception, the changes within social structures of the society influences religion through its institutional form as well. The symbolism which religion and Church as an institution

provides *was*, but has mostly *become*, the fundamental source of identification for the citizens of BiH. We might even speak of ‘political religion’ on the societal level in the case of BiH. The religious structures were present when influencing the development of the conflict in BiH, they are still present in the political realm and are still responsible for the social relationship that exists between people of different religious persuasions. We need not mention the religious leaders which were in many cases functioning in favour of dividing people of different religious groups, rather than unifying them. Indeed, as a part of social identity, religion can also be a feature of a man’s ethnic identity, although they are social phenomenon of different kinds. Religion is a social phenomenon *sui generis* while ethnic group is a social phenomenon *par excellence*, grounded in individual undertaking (Sokolovic 2006).

It seems as though Durkheim was right when he claimed that religion as a structure will continue to be present in modern societies for far longer than we might assume, in fact, as long as there will be societies. Thus, this is one of the fundamental and permanent institutions of social life. For instance, the phenomena of intensification of religious collectives that truly came into existence in post-war BiH, one of building a number of new mosques and churches serves as an example of deterministic addition to ethnic identity. As an example, it is imposed that one ‘must’ be a Croat if one is catholic. Definition of the Church<sup>17</sup>, which according to Durkheim is a moral community made up of members of the same religion which in turn makes possible religions unity, could explain what the institution (Church) has become in BiH. If we define the Church as a moral unity of its members, then this might reflect the moral trauma the society as a whole has undergone. Moreover, if the Church is a group or a community grounded in morality, than this institution is particularly effected by the moral downfall. Indeed, if we put about our assumption, this

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<sup>17</sup> Definition of religion includes Church as the necessary element which, for Durkheim, proves that religion must be a prominently collective thing (Durkheim 1982). Completed definition of religion is that it is ‘a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them’ (Durkheim 1965: 62).

institution might very well be one of the major causes for the moral downfall. This is why we can speak of an all-embracing collective effervescence, or the spirit of energy that has affected and marked the society of our reference.

The collective effervescence in BiH happened during 1992 to 1995. It manifested itself when people for the first time decided that their ethnic, or perhaps their religious identities, were more important than their identities as citizens, more precisely, as co-citizen. The very first democratic election resulted in the people's preoccupation with a certain social identity. They were proclaiming their specific ethnic identities and rights in a multiethnic state, while forgetting or perhaps deliberately ignoring their common rights as citizens, without any regard to ethnicity. Nowhere in the socialist world did the communist parties experience such a defeat as they did in BiH (only 5 percent of the voices), something that testifies of the peoples discontentment with the totalitarian relationship towards the citizen. Nevertheless, the people were still the ones that did not choose (democratically) to strengthen their citizenship, something that seriously reminds of Fromm's collective escape from freedom (Sokolovic 1994). What could have influenced such a decision? This is, understandably, not exclusive to Bosnian society, but it has taken an extraverted and quite intense form in BiH's case.

In *Nationalism and National Identity*, Elias and Habermas (1994) consider the subject of citizenship and national identity. The relationship between citizenship and national identities has been high lightened by tree historical movements of our time:

(1) The fall of the Berlin wall and with it the unification of Germany that led to emergence of strong nationalistic interests across Eastern Europe.

The collapse of Soviet Union affected former Yugoslavia and its role in relation to the international community. Yugoslavia had a privileged position during the cold war with its specific form of communism and its good relations to most western countries. While a citizen of former Yugoslavia could travel to both western and eastern countries, to take a simple example, a citizen of BiH can hardly travel anywhere today without a visa. In this sense, the right of movement is reduced for the citizen.

(2) The formation of a European citizenship which emancipates the internal market while democratisation processes integrate above the national contexts at a slower pace.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is on its way towards being integrated into the European Union, something that presents enormous demands from the international community on what reforms must be made in order to achieve a minimum of circumstances required for the membership club which European Union represents. At a time when the internal struggles considering formation of citizenship are very much present in BiH, the question of European citizenship appears even more complex in this case.

(3) The occurring mass-movements from the eastern and southern areas which present new difficulties and solutions for West-Europe.

The war in BiH caused the largest refugee catastrophe in Europe since World War II, where millions were driven to flee from their homes, with 2,4 millions internally driven and some 1,4 millions made refuge to other countries (UDI, B-H, 1994). The return of displaced persons is a massive mission for the international community and for the organisations working with the internal structures on attaining this aim.

While it is enough to mention that Elias and Habermas see the development towards the world citizen as a continuum, they also argue that this is something still resting in our far future (ibid.). We will in chapter four discuss further the concept of citizenship.

### *Social structure*

If we can speak of social change, particularly at times of collective effervescence, then we can also speak of changes within social structures (Harms 1981). We have already applied the term social structure throughout the text and consequently it might be useful to primarily define what social structures are and how social change can be understood in relation to these structures.

According to the spirit of functionalism, social structures are observable patterns in social practices. These structures may not necessarily be observable for they are as underlying principles of social arrangements. Are social structures social institutions or are they abstract formulations? Might they merely be reified concepts? Let us remind of how Durkheim perceived social structures.

“But if there is one fact that history has irrefutably demonstrated it is that the morality of each people is directly related to the social structure of the people practicing it. The connection is so intimate that, given the general character of the morality observed in a given society and barring abnormal and pathological cases, one can infer the nature of that society, the elements of its structure and the way it is organized. Tell me the marriage patterns, the morals dominating family life, and I will tell you the principal characteristics of its organization” (Durkheim 1973:87).

We can see how the dialectics of this approach allows for the changes in both morality and within the structures of a society. In fact, the changes are necessarily interrelated. If structural changes have appeared, they must have been rooted in the morality, but also within the patterns of practise of the people. They are reified by the individuals, the structures that is; they are also abstract formulations for social scientists, but they are observable patterns as well, to an analytical eye.

Social structures are crystallised social facts, although social facts are not contained only within structures. For instance, social currents, an even ‘simpler’ form of social facts, can exemplify how our collectiveness is irreducible to the individual counterpart, for it is the *mass* that acts upon *us*. This does not exclude the individual undertaking, it is merely contained that the massiveness decides, presumably what is reified conclusively. Social structures are reified, manifested and observable forms of social facts. In *Masse und Macht*, Elias Canetti (1960) is presenting us with an outstanding analysis of human existence through two concepts, namely crowds (or masses) and power. Here it is very clear how social currents may be absolutely dislocated from the individuals which constitute them. For now, we can conclude that social structures necessarily constrain individual action; they are real powers that often also have material means as weapons of constrain. The state, as a structure, is an example.

### *Anomie and moral integration*

The Greek term anomie, literally meaning ‘without law’, is what Durkheim used to describe the condition on both individual and societal level, namely that of norm framework breakage, which can be depicted in an anomic type of suicide. This concept is crucial in our analysis of BiH society. The original meaning of the term

included a description of a condition where the current laws were not applied, something that resulted in a state of illegitimacy or lawlessness<sup>18</sup>. Anomic society is then, per definition, a condition of illegitimate order. The present condition in BiH, it can be argued, is a condition of illegitimate order. This is naturally brought into connection to the war and the general breakage of social order which took place in the country's recent history.

Why is BiH facing such huge problems when it comes to implementing the rule of law, for instance? The application of the rule of law would imply that the authorities would be controlled by the body of law applying to the government. Although this instruct can be turned into a bureaucratic nonsense even when realised, the rule of law is important for post-conflict areas in terms of establishing a institutional forum for dealing with human rights violations and crimes committed both during and in post-war periods. Such establishment, based on justice, is a threat to the political structures and authorities, for it would imply grounding some basic moral starting point of orientation for the citizens of BiH. The danger lies in the common and collective treatment of the crimes, not based on ethnicity, but on the crime itself. This would in fact represent a moral integration, which is not in accord of the political parties, for their interests lie in the negation of the past events, so that in fact the past can be negotiated on their own terms. The establishment of the truth through the rule of law could be the greatest threat to the present political organisation and the malformed morality of the collective consciousness of great portions of citizenry in BiH. If it would mean social change, it would as well include the transforming of the psychological atmosphere on the individual level. Indeed, most citizens in BiH are not merely aware of the lacking of the state governed by law (constitutional state); they are on a psychological level very much influenced by this state of things. Anomie manifests itself within individuals in their relationship towards the law, something that is easily observable in the attitude of great portion of citizens towards criminality or corruption and thus also towards war crimes. It cannot be logical nor meaningful to any individual person that one is acting in a criminal manner when stealing a loaf of bread and in fact get imprisoned for it, while people who have committed such atrocities, sufficient to be classified as crimes against humanity, as genocide, are still at large and safe in Belgrade, somewhere in RS or

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<sup>18</sup> From The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology 2000



worldwide. Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic are already cliché examples of criminals that have delayed, or even worse, escaped justice. How can these facts produce a state of general anomie in BiH? It is quite clear that Durkheim would characterise this as demoralisation of the individuals which in turn has an impact on the institutional level. The socio-individual synthesis is much clearer when analysing moral integration or social change, something Durkheim's theory was hardly employed for. There is a clear indication for Mladic and Karadzic's absence in ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, established by the Security Council). The western governments would perhaps be, mildly put, embarrassed of what close cooperation with the world leaders such characters might convey during one such a trial. Pale<sup>19</sup>, as an artificial and constructed centre of political negotiations, excepted by the world leading politicians, is a perfect example of either lack of sane judgment or an indicator of improper decisions. Now, it is not our mission to analyse these segments, although it is important to underline that such contradicting 'truths' exist simultaneously in the individual minds of people of BiH, regardless of their current persuasions and orientations.

Is it not obvious, the demoralising factor deduced from this? The socio-individual relationship is clear; while war criminals remain immune the reconciliation will never take place and nor will the disappearance of false consciousness<sup>20</sup> at the individual level. Moral integration must begin with a change in present practices at both structural-institutional levels as well as at the individual level. Needless to say, one without the other will never result in a social change. In regards to this, the last chapter discusses a critique of pragmatism which Durkheim discussed in answering to William James and John Dewey.

## 2.3 Methodological exercise

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<sup>19</sup> Pale was a centre of war time RS as well as important military space. Symbolically for residents of Sarajevo, Pale is a place where many neighbours went to fire on their own city. Sarajevo was bombarded from Pale by Serb forces during the war.

<sup>20</sup> Although this Marxist (or rather Engels') term is usually used to describe the proletariat's failure to view their true interests under the dominant ideology and therefore fail to ever develop a revolutionary consciousness, it can be employed in our case when describing the portion of people that still denying war crimes that took place in BiH.

Theoretical constructs often resemble other theoretical constructs; they often include each others' definitions, partly represent the same phenomena or explain similar dichotomies. Duality is nevertheless unavoidable. Does our specifically human attribute, our exclusivity, makes humans both a productive and a destructive species at the same time? Sociology has never been able to distance itself from this philosophical and moral dilemma, hence the constantly present theoretical tension between the individual and the society, social order on one side and chaos on the other, creativity (questionability and action) and conformism (lack of criticism and inaction), change or stagnation and not the least the constrain between productiveness of man and his destructiveness. Why do we include the concept of destructiveness into these counterparts? BiH is a society that has undergone a period which can be characterised as destructive in nature.

Legitimacy can be viewed as a triad of moral, political and economical legitimacy (Ramet 2005). It is also the key problem and solution for any political system; attaining and withholding (not necessarily keeping the status quo) legitimacy is the most important task (ibid. 421). The war and what we defined as collective effervescence, which altered the structures of this society, can be properly defined as a destructive force. There was a destruction of inherently *productive qualities* of this society, as for instance social trust, security and coherent feeling of belonging. A feeling of belonging is crucial, to belong to a state, a place of origin, but most importantly to each other. Bosnians were made aware of how much they 'belonged to each other' after the outburst of the war affected all families and their complicated 'ethnic mix'. Ethnic tolerance (which was important, although not the key element) is not what characterised the productive qualities of this society. It was precisely the lack of awareness of tolerance. While what had taken place was a *qualitative ruination* of a culture of tolerance that Bosnian society was characterised by, further agony is grounded in the lack of formation of another moral and social order and feeling of belonging which in fact never took place after the conflict ended. The illegitimacy of this war and its following happenings is the explanatory ground for this condition. Legitimacy is, besides being a subjective category, also an objective one (ibid.). Therefore, where auto-destructive tendencies are at force, we cannot speak of legitimacy. For instance, fascist movements are clearly self-destructive when

defined, not as an extreme source of identification, but rather as *pathological* forms of identification. Such systems always endure legitimacy problems, especially in the context of the systems goal attainment. Ultimately, they are destructive for the individual members, upon which the system itself relies on.

This is why it is important for us to indulge in the nature of deregulation of the society of our reference. Where rules break down, people no longer know what to expect of the collective nor from one another. This condition has been a strong contributor to the emergence of the conflict in the first place, but we are mostly interested in what kind of effects this has had on the young people in BiH society and more specifically how a segment of these young individuals are trying to cope (resonate and act upon the political and social situation) in today's BiH.

Within what context are then young people in BiH trying to influence the society through their engagements and activities, and what kind of constraints do they encounter? How are their opinions formed? How are they politically and morally socialised and can this represent a chance for a different societal course of development? While children of different ethnic origins are separated in several schools throughout BiH, how do young people that are working for or are active in youth NGOs perceiving this political reality? When posing these few questions, it is obvious that we would like to observe things from an individual level, by analysing the informants' perceptions on the mentioned issues. At the same time, we must ask what influences opinions or actions of individuals and analyse how this is connected to the structures currently present, and nonetheless in what context these perceptions are formed. Can it be that even young people with the urge to contribute to the strengthening of democracy are unable to do so considering the moral damage this society has suffered?

One of the main goals for sociology is to understand how action and interaction rise up from the actors' social placement. Both patterns of action, social relations and institutions vary with the varying societal conditions and change as societies change. Contextualism is a term that can cover a perspective that Émile Durkheim pictured for us more than hundred years ago. The idea was simple; we cannot study social phenomenon independent from the societal type they belong to. Comparison is possible, but the types should not be mingled (Martinussen 2001).

Social facts are determinative of individual conduct, although this does not

contradict the fact (as many theoreticians would indicate) that action and interaction at the same time produce and reproduce the societal whole. Durkheim chose to concentrate particularly on collectives as force fields which surround and influence humans within given societies, but this must not be taken as ignorance of the individual (ibid.).

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim (1982) writes about social facts and comparison of facts. Here, for both sociologists and historians, social facts stand in the function of social system, which they are a part of and cannot be understood when separated. In this matter, two facts, which belong to two different societies, must not be compared for the sole reason that they appear similar. The respective societies must also be similar to each other; they must be of the same sort. The method of comparison would be impossible if there did not exist any social types, for this method can be useful only in the framework of the same type. Durkheim asserts us on how many mistakes have been made by ignoring this rule. This is how the unjust comparison of the facts, which have their similarities, did not have the same sense or meaning. For instance, the initial and contemporary democracy, collectivism of primitive societies and present socialistic directions or monogamy for that matter, which is quite common in Australian tribes, and the monogamy sanctioned by our rules, etc. Comparative method is therefore something that should follow type classifications (Durkheim 1982). We have already introduced the assumption that the society of our reference is typified by the state of anomie.

Are young people of BiH being socialised into a pathological condition, where one *must* become a conformist? From my own observations it is reaffirmed, when speaking to young people working in various NGOs, that one of the reasons for wanting to be involved in educational, social and learning activities through organisations is precisely because wanting to escape the social reality of the rest of the society. The social reality 'out there' is that of having to find a job through private acquaintances or 'contacts'. The society's inability to, among other things, offer an equal opportunity for its members when it comes to education is what portrays young people's social reality. The step towards the desire to be freed of real (although illegitimate) pressures of discrimination embedded in the institutions of BiH society is symbolising their 'escape-entrance' into their respective organisations.

These young adults really feel that there are many aspects which do not

function effectively, productively nor morally. But they are also aware of the great possibility of having to have to be conformist, like many of their peers pursuing their interests in accordance to this social reality, either in relation to political persuasions or corruptive conduct. In such context, NGOs often become a kind of sanctuary (temporary or long term) from this pressurised and conservative outside reality. We will discuss this later in terms of young people's 'world-building' within NGOs.

Faruk, one of my informants from Sarajevo, an executive director of Youth Information Agency, actually boycotts his faculty as he does not agree with the general policy of the education system in present BiH which, in his opinion, tolerates and in many cases directly supports dubious cadre, corruption and institutional injustice. He therefore gave up on his studies and entered the realm of NGO sector in order to provide for his own, informal education through his engagement in the organisation. He confirmed some of my assumptions on the degree of difficulty presented upon the individual departure from the collective reality.

“In order for you to sit on some ‘other chair’, one would have to have a vision of the other chair’s existence, one would have to be informed of it and would have to learn the skill to raise oneself from the old chair and sit on the other, and so on. So people accept to attain the universities which absolutely..., according to all standards, do not even *resemble* universities. So it is perhaps a matter of consciousness, if one is not even aware of the possibility of the ‘other kind of chair’ to sit in, not to mention of ones right to a better chair. ... Now, how can you get the skill of critical thought if not through the educative system?”  
(Faruk, OIA, Sarajevo)

Thus, as Faruk observes, it is perhaps a matter of a state of consciousness which affects the tendency towards conformism in relation to young people in BiH. Nevertheless, he represents the affirmation of possibility of a critical standpoint, even in these circumstances. Although, we might ask, what might be weighting the development of such a consciousness? Perhaps a general perspective of society's establishments can illustrate the point.

“If we adopt a sufficiently broad, general view, we can define a civilisation by the hierarchy it establishes among possible human activities. These are limited in number: religious, political, military, economic and playful. Every society contains at least the basic elements of all these activities, but greater importance is always attributed to one or another of them, in actual fact and

also in the way members of a society envisage their ideal. Therefore, we have societies that are predominantly political, military, or religious. It should be noted at the outset that no process of rationalization could justify any one of these hierarchies of values: they are arbitrary, they are set up as a result of a conflict, and they reflect power relationships. It follows that these relationships are unstable, so there is always the possibility of fresh conflicts.” (Baechler 1975:25/26)

Bosnian society is then by no wonder, according to Jean Baechler, unstable at the present time, given the dominance of *political* hierarchy and importance among possible human activities. The ‘new social order’ of politics revolves around political (nationalistic) and economical (corruptive) interests. Of course, the interplay between the seemingly separated interests is highly correlated. For instance, nationalistic parties which are supposedly in constant opposition, by merely representing vital national interest of their ethnic groups, are cooperating and forming coalitions when their interests become common. One of these common interests is at some point, naturally, the maintenance of their corruptive power-hold. Separatist politics is paradoxically the way by which they obtain common interests, and thus the vicious cycle continues to spin. As Curak (2004) presented in one chapter the titles of the different national parties, namely SDA, HDZ and SDS as SDAHDZSDS, in order to symbolise how these ‘archenemies’ emerge as quite similar.

Considering these arguments, we will turn to closer investigation of the subjects included. Theoretical assumptions of this kind and the methodological exercise outlaid above will underlie our further analysis of the more empirical material for the thesis. Indeed, ‘good theories are supposed to represent what happens in the social world’ (Blaikie 2004:129).

Sociological method is occupied with classifying facts. This is done by induction and generalisation, while we by deduction can extract and verify the particular facts. Social facts are valuated by our own and other’s observations while trying to bring them to order, at which one of the most important things is that such observations, are correct (Eisler 1919). Indeed, the importance of correctness of things, one might argue, is naively taken for granted to be a criterion when it comes to theoreticians and researchers conducts. Nevertheless, the constant discussion and perhaps ambiguity of correctness cannot overshadow the importance of this criterion. As we must judge our own material, we also must judge the material of others. The correctness of the used material will explicitly influence our own valuations (ibid.).

## Chapter 3

### Qualitative method - in the field

When, in research, one is concerned with exploring people's life histories and everyday behaviour, the qualitative method is applicable (Silverman 2004:25). Often, the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is summarised in 'value-freeness'; the qualitative research being defined as value-laden. Nevertheless, most researchers are now familiar with the inescapable issue of 'value' in both methods of inquiry (ibid.).

Often we speak about quantitative and qualitative *methods* in social sciences, although the dichotomy qualitative/quantitative actually refers to the qualities of our data (Grønmo 1996). Thus, our case is dealing with qualitative data, data expressed in the text, conversations or as concepts. My sources for gathering the data are the respondents, more precisely my informants, as they are questioned about their attitudes, actions and interactions (ibid.).

There are some important annotations in regards to 'cases invoking theories' (Walton 2000:121). Cases are situationally grounded and imply some sense of generality at the same time. Thus, a case also implies the claim researcher makes in representing something general - in its particular circumstance - within the various features of the social world. One of such implications of 'known features of the universe from which the case comes' is, for instance, normlessness (ibid.122). Thus, it is self-evident that 'cases come wrapped in theories' and that 'cases always are hypothesis' (ibid.122).

“They are cases because they embody casual processes operating in microcosm. At bottom, the logic of the case study is to demonstrate a casual argument about how general social forces take shape and produce results in specific settings. That demonstration, in turn, is intended to provide at least one anchor that studies the ship of generalization until more anchors can be fixed for eventual boarding. To be sure, researchers are careful about this work.” (ibid. 122)

This is how, as for instance previously mentioned in our discussion of theory, Weber studied, as in his subtitle 'a case study of John Calvin, his Geneva sect, and the

diffusion of their ideas about salvation' (ibid. 123) and how Durkheim studied, what he in his subtitle referred to as "totemic system in Australia".

In the course of this chapter, the intention is to inform the reader of the applied method of inquiry. Analysis of the interviews will elaborate on the categorisation and interpretation of the meaning through narratives. It is however important to mention that 'the central task of interview analysis rests with the researcher, with the thematic questions he or she has asked from the start of the investigation and followed up through designing, interviewing and transcribing' (Kvale 1996:187). The interview guide is attached in the appendix.

Arriving at the Sarajevo airport, for the first time not as a 'Diaspora-tourist', this was going to be my longest stay in BiH after the war had ended. Besides, this time I was going to travel between three cities and visit various NGOs while meeting and scheduling interviews with people I was to meet for the first time. There is a natural scepticism arousing when considering how one indeed can collect anything constructive from meeting what were going to be my informants for a few days and exchanging few conversations. Yet, I was aware of how important this might be, as the interview situation stages a distinctive atmosphere in which one can allow oneself to pose questions one otherwise would not, if in a different setting. The rather formal interviews provide an opportunity to follow up the same individuals and thus initiate further participatory observations and informal conversations. There is a certain defined relationship that develops between the informants and the researcher. Perhaps due to the content of my study and the types of young people which I was to meet, it was fairly easy to get comprehension from my informants as to what could be relevant for me. The very active, reflective and engaged young people functioned as the prime informants, directing and forwarding me during my fieldwork to come to contact with others that might be of relevance or to visit conferences or ongoing activities and projects of interest.

Nevertheless, my task was to observe how these young adults go about their engagements and how do they orientate themselves in one such context. For instance, how does one explore what orientations young adults have towards their own ethnic and other identities and what kind of relationship do they have towards citizenship? An answer to this question depends on the questions raised during the interviewing of people involved in the work of their respective NGOs. When posing questions about



what my informants think when it comes to motivation of other young peoples engagement in NGO's, or whether they think young people perceive their own and others ethnic belonging as an important factor, they are expressing at the same time aspects they agree and disagree with. When conveying their views on other young people, they are at the same time reflecting about their own standpoint on various matters. For instance, when talking about the low percentage of young people participating in elections they automatically include their own praxis and argue for participation/absence of their own vote. The interview-setting, conversations and situations in which it is natural for the informants to refer to, for instance, ethnicity, politics or participation can thus be termed as naturally occurring data (Silverman 2004:159) .

### 3.1 Constructing the field

Constructing the field of study for the thesis in question had to be compromised primarily in accordance to the scope of a master assignment. The ideal intention would be to produce a combined quantitative and qualitative study of young people within NGOs. Such a study would uncover more precisely the real relationship between democratically socialised youth and the institutional democratic progress of BiH society. Nevertheless, a qualitative study of this relationship can pinpoint to the disjunction between these spheres which we can deduce to further gap between civil society and institutional reality of the society of our reference.

In generating a research problem, one had to distinguish between the problems discussed in the public sphere in BiH, in order to avoid falling into a trap of ethnically-founded discourse. This would, in my opinion, represent a typical bias for any analysis of young people. The young adults, as I refer my informants in the text, are an affiliation which would be biased when confined to ethnicity, as it is a distinct group, specific and common both by age-span and perspective with certain, almost biologically determined relationship to the happenings during 1990's (again due to age and young life-span, as we mentioned previously) and naturally by the 'culture of the young' which persist without regards to ethnic politics in BiH. This is not only evident in the NGO sector, but throughout all attractions and sub-cultures marked by and for young people in BiH. This is not to say that ethnic divisions among young

population do not exist, it is rather recognition of the common source for identification among young people which is remarkable and in many instances defies the realities of this society. Rather private examples and non-scholastically shared stories of my informants and acquaintances can illustrate how young people, perhaps easier than adults, can “relative-ise” the ethnic prism of this society. For instance, young couples form love relationships at various underground gatherings, concert festivals and other youth activities while residing in different entities, with different religious and ethnic backgrounds, but hold their relationships secret from their families or friends. It is not easy to be ethnically blind in BiH.

Nevertheless, in proceeding with a critical analysis of my informants life-worlds, the immense debating on the political situation of BiH in the public sphere (including academically confined debates, conferences, all media, the actual institutional structuring and public activities of young peoples initiatives and various NGO activities), would all function as a complementary ground and sometimes as a source of a test-variable or a comparison aspect to what my informants would convey.

Ethnography, ‘the social scientific writing about particular folks’ (Silverman 2004:45), does in most cases weigh the principles of contextualism, of avoiding the early use of theoretical concepts and frames and seeing through the eyes of people studied. Although my own departing point was theoretical (the condition of anomie as we may recall), this was based upon my pre-acquired knowledge upon the societal condition of BiH society. By choosing the group in which I could expect to find a departure point from the societal reality of the society in front of us, perhaps it would say thus more about the constrains of one such condition both for the dynamics within the general society and for the informants in question. This sociological layering, grounded in Durkheimian theory, adds to ethnographic accounts, which are undoubtedly necessary as well. My ethnographic focus is thus, so to speak, grounded in theory, without it being the grounded theory of Strauss and Glaser, for we are not producing a new theory in the course of this thesis. In fact, we are placing an old theory of social constrains up against a fairly recent case. This is naturally not the first time this has been done nor the first time Durkheim is mentioned in connection to the recent events in the Balkans<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance works by Stjepan Mestrovic, a Durkheim scholar by trade, and his analysis of recent Balkan wars. For instance, the theoretical framework in “*Genocide after Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War*” (1996), deals with ‘collective representations’ within the international interplay while his

I have constructed a field of observation based upon grassroots-informants, in order to bring the general overview of a society in need of rooted and ground-based change in order for it to function both efficiently and progressively. The state of anomie is truly diminishing the life-force of progress and liberation; it is rather self-evident by mere overlook of all the major aspects of BiH society and the state of its economic, cultural, political and social progress in general. Throughout observations and interview conversations, revelations of oddly combined struggle and weakness of my informants and their respective organisations were detectible. Struggle against the imposing reality of their contextual realities, weakness; or giving way to the same.

The transcripts of the interviews were categorised, about thirty of them were reduced to twenty two as few of these were mostly complementary. Furthering it was necessary to categorise the meaning which reduced the text and indicated some basic categories (Kvale 1996:187). These were themes in informants lived worlds, although questions were structuring and narrowing the themes which were of interest for the researcher. By these combined, categorisation of meaning revolved around few selected, repetitive and imposing subjects, namely politics, state and ethnicity.

### 3.2 Meanings attached to politics, state, ethnicity and the relation to the engagement in organisations

The aim is to indicate something general for the wider society on the basis of the discussion about the specific group one is studying. Theoretical implications are central here, although alertness to the empirical data the researcher has collected offers the ground for application and discussion of theoretical starting point. One must have permission to raise one self above the individual experiences of ones informants; although this is conditioned by the usage of important tools, in order to establish the rational approach of induction from ones research material. This has to be done systematically, in order to avoid the common cognitive misperceptions in the field by both the respondents and the researcher. The tools that help organise data as objectively as possible, which are in use from the very beginning, are for instance the researchers' role establishment in the field or careful transcription and analysis of the

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concept of *postemotionalism* elaborates on the manipulation of emotions from history related to Durkheim's anomic type and his notion of 'collective effervescence'.

interviews (Silverman 2004:229). These tools give authorisation for a critical analysis of the material collected and the subject explored. How does one evaluate the various meanings attached, which informants might hold and from where does one start?

The internal debate between theory and data collected must not transform into orthodoxy where people are seen as puppets of social structures. Indeed, the theoretical definition of a concept such as state, ethnicity or politics, should not be tested against informants definitions or understandings, nor should we merely reproduce informants' views. Rather we should study the hyphenated phenomena, avoiding both 'objectivist' and 'subjectivist' social science. Contextual situation, or how, when and where informants invoke these concepts is the 'naturally occurring' data. Thus, from this is the analysis derived. For instance, it is not sufficient to report the informants' accounts of one such concept as the state. Instead it is fruitful to observe how participants themselves constitute their explanations and behaviour, reflecting upon pattered character of informants' accounts (ibid. 2004:289-300). This is where studying of the interrelation of specific elements begins, how a pattern of social organisation might emerge and deduction to theoretical assumptions can be made.

In following the above logic, one of the methods used in regards to my transcriptions was that categorisation of meaning – in this instance politics, state and ethnicity – always had to be seen in a contextual manner. The context was provided by the informants' biographical background, as in which NGO they were active, from which town they were from or whether they were a member of a political party. The context was also provided by their relational statements, where their previous statements were 'tested' against their later statements and vice versa. This is how the questions are related as well, for instance if one feels their ethnic identity is important for them personally, how does this relate to the context of the question of perceived negative politics in their state? Analysing relation between the statements of the informants provides a 'portrait' of the contextual empirical data. Contextual sensitivity, which we elaborated upon previously, is thus important.

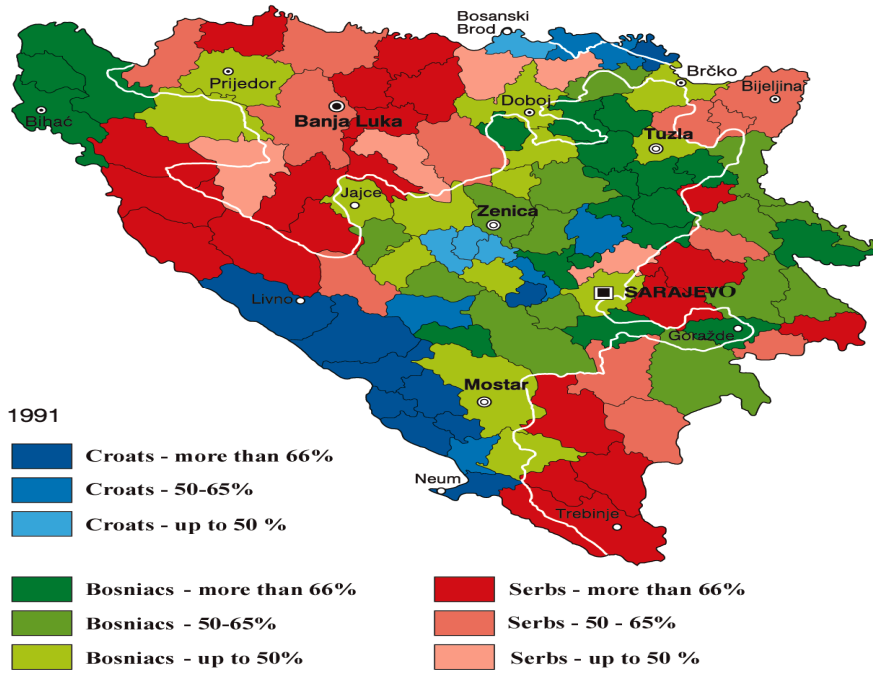
### 3.3 Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka

Why was it important to visit Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka and inform myself on young people working for various NGOs in these three cities? While all three urban settings have their common issues and problems to deal with in the context of post-war reconstruction, they nevertheless differ significantly in their specific position and thereby their distinctive difficulties and problems of post-war period. Taking into consideration the different experiences and positions of Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka during the war, I set out to cover at least five people from each of the cities and at least three different NGOs in each setting. Eventually I had about 22 formal interviews and covered about seven different NGOs as it became simpler to get in touch with people and select the ones that would function as my informants.

Primarily, the three urban settings are located in different entities (FBiH and RS) and three different power-sharing regimes. In fact, Mostar and Sarajevo are divided between two regimes, whereas Mostar stood unique in its formal division of the town. During the war, Mostar was confronting first attacks by Serbian forces and later Croat forces in Western Mostar (Bieber, 2006:66). Banja Luka is the capital of RS as it is a political, an economical and a cultural centre. Serbs now predominantly inhabit Banja Luka. Sarajevo, the capital of BiH, stands in a peculiar position, as it can now be considered from RS's point of view, as the capital of Muslim population, which unfortunately is partly supported by the fact that today it is predominantly Muslim and governed by the nationalist party (SDA) in coalition.

The contemporary term used in BiH, namely 'constituent people' designates Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks, something that defines BiH as a tri-national state (ibid. 2006). A majority of Serbs and a strong minority of Croats prefer secession from BiH, whereas an overwhelming majority of Bosniaks support the continued existence of BiH as a united and sovereign state (UNDP referred in Bieber 2006).

Ethnic composition before the war in BiH (1991)



Ethnic composition in 1998



OHR maps, pre-war and post-war BiH with interethnic borderline  
 (<http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/maps/>)

As we can observe from the maps, tremendous changes relating to the ethnic composition took place after the war throughout BiH. It is in light of these changes and various differences in the past experiences of the three urban areas I wanted to compare my informants' workings and perceptions of the political situation. As mentioned, the capital city Sarajevo is quite often perceived as the 'Muslim' or Bosniac capital, Banja Luka as predominantly Serb and Mostar as the focal point of Croat-controlled areas. It was important for me to engage in young peoples experiences in all three urban settings in order to compare their respective experiences and opinions in relation to the political context of the three cities. This, we presume, will illustrate further how the process of engaging within NGOs, or what I have termed 'learning democracy', is necessarily embedded in the political context of the local setting and also within a greater social reality, which Bosnian and Herzegovinian society represents for my informants.

Sarajevo was largely influenced by the war in terms of large-scale destruction and dramatic population alterations during the siege of the capital during 1992 to 1995. This is said to be the longest siege in history of modern warfare (Andreas 2004). Sarajevo, together with Tuzla and Brcko, is one of the few remaining areas where ethnic diversity is still present, although ethnic homogenisation continues in the aftermaths of the war in various forms (Bieber 2006). For instance, inhabitants of different entities are choosing to 'swap' private properties in between entities in order to 'be amongst their own', while continuous political adjustments and some interethnic borderline adjustments are still contributing to the Dayton's separation of BiH (Sell referred in Bieber 2006:31). I visited various NGOs in Sarajevo, such as Youth Information Agency, Nansen Dialogue Centre, Centre for Non-violent Action and Campaign Consciousness Objection.

Mostar is a Herzegovinian, southern town, widely renowned for its cultural heritage, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. The town's wartime fate symbolises in many respects the destruction of the unusual hybrid heritage in BiH. The destruction of the old bridge was one of the frequent media showing. The town's division in the aftermath of the war is symptomatic of the difficulties encountered by state-builders and 'democratisers' in post-war BiH (Bose 1998:98). The town was

divided up until the year of 2004, when the administration of the town was finally united. This implied that changes, as for instance, the unification of a divided gymnasium ('two schools under one roof') would finally take place in Mostar, although there were still going to be two universities, one on each side. In Mostar, I visited NGOs such as Youth Culture Centre Abrasevic, Peace Builders, Young Bridge and Nansen Dialogue Centre.

The city in north central BiH, Banja Luka, is the second largest city and was a strong commercial and industrial centre before the war. With roughly equal number of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims and a minority of Croats, it was a truly multiethnic community disrupted by new authorities, which subjected Banja Luka's non-Serb population to persecution. Banja Luka is now 'the self-styled capital' as the city is the seat of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, with a special-relations agreement with Belgrade (Bose 2000:30). The University of Banja Luka, one of the entity's two universities, is often viewed as an institution with strong nationalistic leadership. In Banja Luka I visited NGOs such as Nansen Dialogue Centre, Care International, Kastel and Hi Neighbour.

There are, as mentioned, different problems relevant for the cities of our reference. For instance, minority returns are one of the main issues Banja Luka's NGOs have been dealing with in the post-war years. Incidents, such as the placement of the first stone of Ferhadija<sup>22</sup> signalled to the Muslim returnees that they do not have an equal right to exist in Banja Luka.

In Mostar, besides the issue of returnees, there is a different kind of struggle. For instance, Serbs are poorly welcomed in Mostar. Croats and Bosniaks of Mostar continued to live separate lives immediately after the war, although this has improved over the years. This, in combination with constant Bosniak-Croat struggles present in local politics and various parallel institutions and nonetheless the visible economic differences of the towns two sides makes the divided town of Mostar central for the Commission for Mostar, established in 2003, and a focal point of unification and simplification of administration (Bieber 2006).

As for Sarajevo, there exists a problem related to dominance of the Muslim

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<sup>22</sup> Ferhadija is famous mosque in Banja Luka, which was destroyed with explosives during the war, as were many other mosque and non-orthodox Churches in Banja Luka. The reconstruction of it could not take place as the local riots surrounded the site and stopped the Islamic community from placing symbolically the first stone for the reconstruction.



nationalist party, SDA (Party of Democratic Action), previously led by Alija Izetbegovic. The other problem relates to the economy and distribution of wealth in BiH where ‘the international intervention has further accentuated some of the development gaps in Bosnia, in particular between Sarajevo and the remainder of the country’ (ibid 2006:38). The international leadership has played an important part in this circumstance present today, which also justifies the frustration of population of RS in relation to Sarajevo. The average wage differs significantly between the entities, RS being in a worse position than FBiH.

“Particularly noticeable is not only the high degree of inequality in the income distribution, but also the differences between the Serb Republic and the Federation. (...) As the geographic division in the entities translates into ethnic divisions, there can be little surprise at the fact that income and wealth is distributed differently among the three main nations in Bosnia.” (UNDP referred in Bieber 2006: 35/36)

In my comparison of the statements of my informants, I found, although I did pose the same core questions regardless of the setting, that a mere comparison of the different answers was not sufficient. After all, the empirical information could differ significantly for the informants from the same city. Besides, the different perceptions would differ from one NGO to another. This is why I chose to have Nansen Dialogue Centre as a focal point of comparison for Banja Luka, Mostar and Sarajevo. Nevertheless, some general differences could be prescribed to the sole contexts of the cities in which my informants work and live.

The first apparent difference in my informants’ understandings of the political conditions is related to their perception of the state of BiH. While every one of my informants can be said to have a critical outlook on the state apparatus, which in fact many believe to be utterly dysfunctional and even non-existing as we mentioned previously, they have differing grounds upon which they build their criticism. These are not “unusual” differences, most certainly they can be found in the common population of BiH citizens. Although I never posed the direct question of what kind of a state one would approve of, in regards to entities, there are many underlying premises which came through during interviews. Some of my informants approve of both entities, mostly informants from Banja Luka, although also some from the FBiH. Others do not approve of entities and consider that the state of BiH should be the

central focal point, in regards to both the institutional organisation of state but also to the 'emotional' (or 'identictional') public orientation of citizens in BiH. Thus, differences among active and participative young people, involved within the same organisation, appear. This is why, within their own contextual realities one informant can answer in total opposition to another that he 'does not feel that it is necessary that his NGO should require nor initiate the same system of values, for NGO is a place for people with different value systems, opened and available for everyone to feel welcome'. If NGOs do not issue normative or value-laden work and prescribe to it, then perhaps this NGO activist should enter a value-neutral institution. They reside, for instance, in different entities. For one of my informants, it is clearly important to avoid the issue of system of values in connection to NGOs, as he perhaps would be closing doors to a great number of people in his work with building dialogue and facing the past in a difficult setting. For him it is important to have 'a value-free-open-door', even when it comes to referring to himself and others working for NGOs. Although he himself might carry out his function perfectly well, even using actively his system of values, which he certainly has and which might be in accordance to his respective NGO, it is important to demise such normative side of a NGO.

Their context is thus the very real existence of entities, something that can provide an explanation for few contextual variations among my informant. Thus, the struggle between conformism and the self-chosen construction of reality, which we will elaborate on, might go along the lines of entities and their imposing reality in BiH.

## Chapter 4

### "Young people's troubles"

In this chapter, we introduce a range of issues related to young people and a number of exemplary informants upon which this study is based. Thus, we will towards the end of the chapter also present short biographies and backgrounds of some informants, in order to get an overview of the subjects and how exactly they initially came to be associated with their respective organisations. We will introduce some views on young people's own perceptions of social reality, their surroundings and the motivations for the involvement within different NGOs. When speaking of informants as young adults, we refer to an age span from approximately 18 to 30 years of age. The preliminary purpose is to present the 'troubles of young people' as experienced by young people themselves. This chapter will therefore not focus on their differing political views and opinions, nor will we analyse in depth or compare their perceptions at this point. Concluding, we present what is identified as *common perception* of young people's struggles in relation to the wider society and their social reality. Their common views concern their perceptions of the state. Primarily we discuss what we mean by "young people's troubles".

What are, we might ask, troubles of young people confined in and what do my informants identify as their everyday struggles?

"Because I live in a Banana state,  
It doesn't mean that I'm banana man...  
Because I live in the ass of the world,  
It doesn't mean that I'm less worth."

**"Banana stejt"**

"Police of this state always comes too late  
and nobody's doing his business tonight,  
You will see the justice is in my hands,  
Baby..."

**"Policija"**

ZOSTER, a band from Mostar

The verses above illustrate the kind of relationship most young people have towards the state as a set of institutions and here for instance, towards the most important executive institution of the state, namely the police force. The first verse refers to the need for a distinction between the individual 'I', in this case a young man who happens to be from BiH, and the state institution that unfortunately represents the 'I' in a manner, which the 'I' does not wish to be associated with. The second verse is a critical glance at the police force that is responsible for the conception of a just state among ordinary citizens, as it is law enforcing and protecting institution, serving the general public. Eventually, as the verses make it clear, people will take the matters in their own hands, justice will be individually proscribed, as the institution deployed to provide basic maintenance of law and order for its citizens is not capable.

This is truly the case in BiH. For instance, in Mostar, where the cited band comes from, there are several local 'sheriffs' which the police ignore deliberately. These are individuals that have freedom to break the law without any sanctions or consequences. This functions in the manner that the police are afraid to arrest or react to such persons, as they are connected in a network, which opposes and represents a competing group towards all lawful sanctions. Such present status is connected to their status positions during the war, either as soldiers or important relations to soldiers (family relations, for instance).

Interestingly, although perhaps not surprisingly, it often seems as though if difficult and not the least challenging life situations produce appropriate coping strategies at the individual level. This is especially evident among young people as they naturally are mouldable in adapting to the social reality, that is, if one indeed is to be a member or an active participant of the society in which one lives. One indicator of various kinds of coping strategies are the creative reactions and creations of the formed 'groupings' (whether these are bands, self initiatives of various kinds, movements or organisations) of young people and their responses relative to their perception of the morally poor state of matters in BiH. For instance, a recent reaction of this kind was the attack on the presidency building, performed by a nongovernmental organisation, Tutto Completo. The incident took place in September of 2006 and it involved throwing different colours of liquid paint on the main entrance of the presidency building, something the activists from this NGO

referred to as *Sarena Revolucija* ('colourful revolution'). The colourful revolutionists who carried out the attack contemplated numerous requests directed towards the presidency of BiH, some of which involved demands for reforms of the constitutional, educational and health institutions and reforms of the police force, while the request for laws on affirmation of young people of BiH was something Tutto Completo underlined as the most important mission. The main reason for an action of this kind, as one of the activists stated to the television reporter, was the general dissatisfaction with the work done by the presidency. Besides, as the activists claimed, they could not figure out in what other way they would get the attention needed, as they have tried numerous ways of getting their voice heard by the authorities in charge. 'You wanted changes, here are some changes!' shouted one of the activists in front of the crowd of people observing the incident. The situation unfortunately developed into a real conflict between the activists and the security of the presidency building together with the police force, which were later criticized for the mishandling of the situation by the eyewitnesses of the incident. Some eyewitnesses reported 'unnecessary' beating of one of the arrested activist even after he was arrested and put in the police van. Two policemen were taken to hospital as they were injured during the physical dispute. The activists were arrested as the police assessed their action as an attack on the institutions of the state (Oslobodjenje, 28.9.2006).

We can at this point identify a general problem that relates to the authorities of BiH and their relation to young people. The perception of disregard of their problems as a specific social group is, of all views on this matter, the most general and unifying view young people hold of authorities. What consequences can this attitude towards young people imply for the society as a whole?

“Perceiving young people as a resource we thereby focus our attention on long-time solutions, identifying needs and developing policies in order to provide for the young people to realise their full potential as citizens and let society benefit the most from their intellectual capital.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *11 indicators of youth policy*, presented at the national action plan for youth policy in Romania, June 2001, Peter Lauritzen, the Deputy Director of Youth and Sports Directorate of Council of Europe.

As the quotation above illustrates, together with the actions of Tutto Completo, to be uninterested in young people can be equalised with a disinterest for the future of the society as such, precisely because the future of any society is undividable from the potential of its upcoming generations. Marginalisation of young people is a serious problem in many respects. The enabling of this important portion of the population, perhaps especially in post conflict and transitional societies like BiH is, can be identified as unproductive as such. It is an indicator of the lacking democratic, functional and inclusive orientation of the political elite that holds the power over the developmental course of BiH.

Building civil society is a phrase sometimes used to such a frequent extent that it thus often loses its meaning both in the contemporary theorising of civil society as well as in political practise. The revival of the concept of citizenship has to do with the changes in social structures of European societies. The notion was often associated with post-war period together with the development of welfare states, while recently with the ongoing developments in Eastern Europe (Turner 1993). The transition towards a market economy and democratic regulations in Eastern Europe is implemented by international development agencies, western financial institutions and foreign aid programmes with a significant impact of civil society founding of the nongovernmental organisations (Sampson 1996). Developing civil society is controversial in the sense of considering whether civil society is something that can be 'exported', presumably by the international society and its numerous agents.

There is a predominant tendency in assessing the nongovernmental sector itself, often analysed through donor-NGO relationships with a stress on the international community's assistance. Understanding civil society should also rely on the assessment of individuals included and not solely on the estimation of organisational level and its contents. The conditions of young people that are from BiH and are working for NGOs, their views and their relationship towards the authorities responsible for governance of their own state, within which these NGOs are also operating, is too often underestimated. Perhaps this aspect is neglected, as many assume the state apparatus as inefficient. Nevertheless, can civil society survive and operate without a functioning state? And is there a normative consensus on the individual level which can precondition the formation of a civil society in BiH? This,

in praxis, is what refers to the failing state and social anomie which are the main obstacles for the establishment of civil society. Both concepts describe the effects of sudden and violent change in the political and social structure of a country (Götze 2004). It is also in many respects, in BiH's context, a clear indicator of the power preserving practices of the authorities at the expense of well being of the citizens. Political actors cooperate to hamper the emergence of a public space in which citizens can form 'neutral' social organisations, where citizens associate to gain and secure their (sometimes) specific yet non-discriminatory public goods and where citizens can pursue their interests (ibid.). For instance, specific in the sense of public goods relating to young people as a specific group, while at the same time 'neutral' organization in respect to other groupings and variations (ethnicity, religion, gender) prevailing in BiH's society. Other times social organisations are formed in order to pursue universal interests, which include all groupings and all citizens, as many human rights NGOs pursue.

The political elite in BiH is taken to be most responsible for the poor conditions and difficult life situations young people are facing ten years after the ending of the war. Young people's engagement in the nongovernmental sector can be seen as a reaction to these conditions. In such case we might consider state failure as an enabling condition of civil society (ibid.).

#### 4.1 Coping with the surrounding factors (unemployment & brain drain, corruption & injustice, lethargy, war crimes)

1) Unemployment; the easily identifiable social problem which mostly effects the younger generations, as the period of life span entails for them the actuality of employment. One might even consider this effect of unemployment as a matter of course in post-war societies, although the handling of the problem of unemployment can and must be exposed to assessments and criticism. Nevertheless, social problem of this kind should not be taken lightly for it is very serious and complex factor which demands complex efforts of possible solutions. In BiH the official rate of unemployment is 45,5% and is the biggest source of concern especially as young

people make up some 33% of unemployed people in total. Unemployment is one of, if not prime, three main reasons for young people's desire to leave the country. Some 100.000 have already left BiH after the Dayton agreement and some 77% would to this day leave at first chance, although visa regimes make this difficult to carry out.<sup>24</sup> Human capital flight is a clear indicator of the government's inability and perhaps unwillingness to provide the most necessary conditions for young people as that of at least minimal improvement of the employment situation. This is something foreign aid organizations now are starting to recognize cannot be realised by the BiH's authorities. For instance, Swiss aid to the region has now put as top priority young people in BiH, as developmental officials report. Unemployment, due to the depressed economic situation, affects mostly well educated and trained people who simply do not have access to jobs and resources.<sup>25</sup>

BiH does not have an information base on young people. Commission on coordinating youth issues in BiH together with permanent BiH ministry council in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), recently held a conference under the heading "Role of InfoBase and researching in developing youth politics". Experts from German Institute for youth talked about experiences and praxis in Germany in creating and establishing youth politics and the very important part of it, namely creating a unique InfoBase on young people, which BiH at this time lacks. Such a base is important for tracking life conditions for young people, their employment, education, politics, research activities and similar information, in order to assess societal integration and better the conditions for young people of BiH. Bettering of young people's position in the society at large would bring BiH closer to European integration. Youth politics, which is an important part of modern social politics, would secure societal integration, as German experts, Dr. Bedit and Dr. Bender assessed at the conference.<sup>26</sup>

2) Corruption refers to a system's deterioration of its original purpose, either when not performing the supposed duties, performing them in an improper way or both. In BiH, young people experience tremendous all-levels-penetrating corruption,

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<sup>24</sup> See Office for employment RS and Office for employment FBiH: statistics 2005. In addition, research on young people in BiH and South-eastern Europe, Youth Information Agency of BiH, Handbook, May 2005.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.swissinfo.org](http://www.swissinfo.org), 7.11.2006

<sup>26</sup> See [www.mladi.info](http://www.mladi.info), 17.11.2006



from within education institutions to the prospects of employment. Almost everything in public service sector is 'infected' by corruptive administration, either as corruptive favour interaction on individual basis or as various forms of bribe.

According to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the ranking of the ten most corrupt sectors in BiH were: 1. political parties, 2. the customs administration, 3. the police, 4. the judiciary, 5. state-owned companies, 6. the BiH presidency, 7. municipal administrators, 8. private companies, 9. the health care system, 10. the FBiH/RS governments.<sup>27</sup> This is the blank reality of how penetrating corruption in BiH is, effecting all spheres of public life. The institutional reality for citizens of BiH is based on these facts.

As my informants would explain, if young peoples surroundings are corruptive and de facto irrational, there is huge possibility that a young person will think and act in accordance to the lived reality. The alternative reality is not visible and therefore in a sense also unreal, especially for a young person. Generations of their parents have perhaps experienced a different reality under the old system; they are to a greater degree aware of the possibility of a better alternative as opposed to young people's perceptions. This is why some of the nostalgia towards the old system is present with the older generations.

Consequently, this is a question of moral and social conduct in relation to corruption. Even if there is a moral stand versus social praxis, which one can identify among young people, there exists neither moral obligation nor disciplinary indoctrination of such moral stands. In fact, discipline as such can here be seen as, besides functioning as a mean to a goal, a productive tie between the individual and individual's surroundings. Such discipline lacks in present BiH's society. Moral facts are a reality *sui generis*, something that belongs to social order, which cannot be reduced to the individual (Løvlie 1995:68). As such, moral facts are deteriorating in the society of reference. To consider moral conduct on the individual level can explain a great deal on social nature of things in BiH. What many would assess, as corruption has become an integral part of everyday life for citizens of BiH. Black or

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<sup>27</sup> Corruption Perception Study, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2004, Banja Luka 2004:69; also Chr. Michelsens Institute report "Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina-2005", [www.cmi.no/publications](http://www.cmi.no/publications)

grey economy in praxis is, at the individual level for instance, an important indicator of the prevailing social disorder and insecurity. This is how a student of economics, although he is not my informant, explained illustratively the economic reality for citizens of BiH.

“I’m sitting on the buss and listening to a conversation between two women, sitting on the seats in front of me, about how unbearable the economic situation is. The one is complaining about how difficult it is to dispose such a small salary for the entire month. The other one is affirming and then adding: ‘You know how it is... My salary sums up to some four hundred marks monthly. Every month we spend about eight hundred marks. You could kill me and still I wouldn’t know where these other four hundred come from, but they are always there somehow!’ For me personally, that woman really described the situation of survival strategy in this country. It is virtually so that one is spending more than what one is earning. (...) Not even people themselves understand how this can be.”

(Nedžad, student of economics, Sarajevo)

The economic reality on individual or family-unit level is run by these principals, often allowing families to survive in the midst of depressive economic situation in BiH. Black economy in BiH was and is, during post-war period, a necessary source of survival for a majority of citizens, as Nedžad clearly expresses, although regulated marked economy is at the constant expense of grey economy. Thus, one must work in order to bring some of the grey economic entrepreneurs into a regulated economic sector and with this create working places for citizens of BiH. Corruption is the prime cause of concern, as it reflects the penetrating deteriorating moral of the society at large. Still problematical are the informal networks between economic and political actors which, since the times of war, have led to acts of corruption by both individuals and large scale institutions (Promitzer 1999).

3) Lethargy, or a state of lethargy, indicates the inability to perform or function at the level of one’s normal abilities. This is a term very often used by young people themselves when asked to describe the condition of young people in general. Describing a state in which young people find themselves in as lethargic is a very important indicator of their inability to act upon their social reality. The question on whether other important actors in their social surroundings, for instance bearers of public functions or perhaps the society as whole could be labelled as lethargic arises

immediately. Is lethargy something young people as a particular group are specific about or is it perhaps most vivid at their age span? Lethargy is a logical precondition to apathy, or a state of indifference, something many of my informants mention in general relation to young people in BiH. Learned helplessness and external locus of control on psychological level is a product of social reality's status quo, as post-war elections can point to. The fact that most young people do not feel to have any impact on decision making which are important for individual and societal existence is on psychological level accompanied by a sense of social hopelessness and helplessness, distrust, fear and frustration (Savjak 2003).

4) War crimes that took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been recognised world wide, with the international community condemning the atrocities. Many individuals (artists, intellectuals, politicians) have as well reacted to the inhumanity of this war. Nevertheless, legally, war crimes can only be sanctioned by a legal body with the legitimate foundation for prosecuting such acts. This was done by instituting a UN war crimes court in Hague, the Netherlands. Characteristics of war crimes in BiH include the specific cases of organised rape or forced pregnancy and genocide. The term 'ethnic cleansing' refers to the aim of displacing an ethnic group by any means (fiscal liquidation of members of particular group) from a particular territory, which entered international usage and English language in early 1990's as a descriptive term of specific events in former Yugoslavia. More specifically, when Bosnians were 'cleansed' and when Serbian head leaders of the war indicated and discussed openly their plans of cleansing territories. The ambiguity of understanding what this term implied and the seriousness of such planning was poorly comprehended by the internationally community.

"Although the term 'ethnic cleansing' was now in general currency, there was still a tendency to assume that the essential problem was military, and that the flight of coerced and terrorized populations was merely a by-product of the fighting. It was then described as a humanitarian problem which could be 'solved' by moving refugees into refugee camps outside Bosnia. What was still not fully understood was that ethnic cleansing was not a by-product of the war. It was a central part of the entire political project which the war was intended to achieve, namely the creation of homogenous Serb areas which could eventually be joined to other Serb areas, including Serbia itself, to create a greater Serbian state." (Malcolm, 1994:246)

Besides recognising that ‘ethnic cleansing’ as such had a profound impact on the generations we are dealing with here, there is also a prolonged unease facing these young adults and still future generations in BiH. For instance, the unease might be contained in that the controversy in the beginnings of the conflict - regarding western recognising that there were serious violations of human rights taking place, such as genocide - is in fact in today’s BiH a continuation of the same ‘facet’ through the political figures and practices of Dayton BiH. Young people have expressed this, some clearly, some less directly, depending on social and political context of the interviews conducted. This unease is something they associate with the peculiarity of the constitution of their own state. If anything, young people are well aware of the fact that their state and their country is a political oddness, even in comparison to neighbouring states. This alone is a source of ‘abnormality’ young people very often associate with their state; identification on individual level is therefore also obscured. A serious effect of such projection is that when it comes to either facing or letting go of the past, one is constantly disabled by the present condition(ing). The past is somehow captured in Dayton BiH, rather than processed and handled. This insecure relationship young people have towards the past (whether it is denial or deep-rooted fixations, both are equally problematic sources of social identity) will prevail until the political structure of today’s BiH is abolished and restructured. Divisions between young people, divisions in terms of whom they interact with and how, outline such past political divisions that are hard to ignore. Here are two statements that can illustrate this point.

“I travel a lot all over BiH, `cause of my job. Young people can be very open minded or flexible, but at the same time very harsh in judging others. Some are simply afraid, because of the picture planted in their minds, especially when it comes to ‘others’, that is, of different ethnicity than themselves. You see, so many young people don’t even have friends of different ethnicity to base these assumptions upon, and that kind of fear from others is the worst kind. When I’m working for instance, I’m not Musa, in some parts of BiH.”  
(Musa, student of transport communications, Sarajevo)

“I have friends and acquaintances from all over BiH. For instance, when I am with people from Banja Luka, we all know who is who, and there is no need to talk about that. We all know that young people have common problems, no matter which part of BiH they come from. Therefore, that is our common goal and that is what we stick to - solving the difficult life situations for young population in this country.”

(Aldin, representative for youth council in BiH, Sarajevo)

Consequently, these examples show that divisions exist indeed. Musa is not using his name in certain parts of BiH as it affects his sale possibilities. Aldin is comfortable with other young people from Banja Luka when they speak of their ‘common youth problems’, such as unemployment, passiveness of young people, corruption on the universities and so forth. This is something that unifies young people as a specific social group, although when it comes to dialogue on their differing identities or discussing what happened in the past, it is simply taken for granted not to initiate such subjects. Can it be that the discomfort of bringing up these issues would worsen the relations in general which are needed for collaboration on the ‘common goals’? The fear of disrupting the relations makes these young people put a lock on certain issues. Very central issues, we might add. Why is there not any need to talk about ‘who is who’? In this context, presumptions young people hold that need not be disrupted by their interaction and dialogue is something that implies subjugation of these issues. We will discuss ethnic identity further in the next chapter.

## 4.2 "The state I live in"

*“The government does not care about the youth in this country”*, was Youth Information Agency’s slogan presented in front of the parliament in Sarajevo. In addition the eight main demands young people have for BiH authorities:

### YOUTH DEMANDS FOR BiH AUTHORITIES

(In accordance to European standards and praxis)

1. A law on higher education!
2. Measures for employment of young people!
3. State department/direction for young people!
4. Fond for children and young people of BiH!

5. Give 12 millions of convertible marks from the sale of the Marshal complex for the campus!
6. Informatisation of all schools in BiH!
7. A strategy for inclusion of youth of BiH diasporas into the development of BiH!
8. Multifunctional centres for youth!



In order to illustrate what kind of formal demands young people may have in relation to the authorities, we present OIA (Youth Information Agency), which placed a stand stationed in front of the parliament, where young people could get information about the agency and sign the petition on the demands presented. OIA is an active and well known NGO stationed in Sarajevo. These demands are, as we can see above, various and multifaceted although all refer to the general demand of affirmation and

action in regards to young people of BiH. The campaign was in progress during my fieldwork in BiH, although the authorities, who this protest was directed towards, never commented on the issue.

There has been an astonishing correspondence among my informants on their perceptions of the state. All previously mentioned issues, like unemployment, corruption, war crimes, are somehow embedded in the concept of the state in young people's assessments. When asking them what they make of the state, the reactions, thoughts and comments made by young people were almost single-mindedly conceived by all my informants. Describing the state, it seems all previous issues (marginalisation of young people, corruption, unemployment and) are embedded and can be seen as a direct product of the failing state apparatus. We could assess this in following matter: the state has failed as an instrument; the state has failed as an object of morality and is now running predominantly as a locus of ideological and hegemonic reproduction. Its functions are reduced to mere preservation of present political structure and overall status. Nevertheless, should not the citizens of the state they are so critical about be able to change the course of political reality and thus better the conditions for substantial democracy and living conditions for themselves? Citizens in BiH have become objects *for* functioning of the state and present authorities. They have not become the mean only recently, this has been intensifying during early 1990's, when masses were manipulated and lurked into nationalistic discourse throughout whole of former Yugoslavia. The role of democratic nation-states as 'protective agencies' turned into something quite opposite in Yugoslavia's case, leaving democratic legitimacy in far background in its pursue of nation-statehood. This effect questions the nation-state as the most appropriate locus for democracy and turns the attention on social and economic spheres rather than mere relevance of 'governmental affairs' in democratic legitimacy (Held 1999:359-360).

At the centre of all contemporary conceptions of democracy lies the principle of majority rule. Legitimacy of political decisions rest upon this very principle (ibid.). Then again, democratic citizenry is barely debated within the social sciences. How can we be sure of the majority's want of democracy? Have we not seen numerous examples throughout history of citizenry's failure to *choose* democratically? The will of the majority, this 'fetish' of democracy, points to a conclusion that 'so long as power is conferred by democratic procedure, it cannot be arbitrary' (Hayek referred in

Held 1999:257).

Democratic participation in decision making is a precondition of any democracy, although not the only one. It is also necessary, if not even a premium precondition, to have a vast majority, which is in real ability of choosing and comprehending at least the elementary effects and conditions of political decisions which they *choose* form. This involves democracy from below, the education and development of consciousness of the voting body. Having this consciousness developed implies in depth understanding of social moral orders. Only than can citizenry be held fully responsible for 'their own will'. This is how we could explain today's status quo in majority's consciousness and their inability to grasp the spectrum of choices related to their political decision making. This is where our hypothesis referring to young people's engagement comes in: *learning democracy* is the primer precondition of civil society and democratic rule. Have these young adults engaged in the process of learning democracy?

Besides their, often astonishing, criticism of the state (undemocratic, confusing, paradoxical, dysfunctional, pitiful), is there a substantial outlook on what these attributes grasp and what the alternative should be perceived as? Have they developed sufficient power of judgement, as we have claimed is the necessary precondition of democratic society? This is where social anomie will be helpful in further analysis of my informants' reflections upon these subjects, which chapters four and five will entail.

### 4.3 Faruk, Dusan and Mirka

Since we have already presented Youth Information Agency here, we may start by presenting the executive director of this NGO, namely Faruk who was one of my primer informants and in many instances an 'insider' for further acquaintances with other relevant people within the NGO sector. At this point, we shortly and biographically introduce informants from Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar, in order to get a overview of some variety of my informants and their respective NGOs. Here we mention how these young adults entered the world of nongovernmental sector and became engaged in what they currently do.



*Faruk - Youth Information Agency*

Faruk is a 25 years old male from Sarajevo. He spends 5 years of his life in Zagreb where his family fled during the war in BiH. In Zagreb he finished high school and then returned to Sarajevo in 1997. During his time in Zagreb, he joined a debate club in his school and won the first place as a debater at national level which led him to other international competitions. At the age of seventeen, returning to Sarajevo was yet another adaptation to a new climate after Zagreb, where he joined a project named 'School of peace' that brought young people from other schools to Sarajevo from Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia and other BiH cities. Especially unusual for this pioneering project was that students from Banja Luka and other BiH towns would come together with students from Sarajevo, places that were considered quite distant at that time. Fascinated by these 'other young people' and the seminars they had at the time when Milosevic and Tudjman were pretty much relevant was a strange situation to be in for Faruk. All he could think about was when the next meeting would be. And so, of all his classmates that participated in this project, he was the only one posing this question, which in turn led him to become further engaged and travel to similar meetings. Faruk is now the executive director of Youth Information Agency which many today considered central or focal NGO providing information for young people.

*Dusan - CARE International.*

Dusan from Banja Luka is a 30 year old (young, as he himself added) male who has been working within NGO sector since the ending of war in BiH. Working on establishing a constructionist firm immediately after the war, he was doing quite well economically considering the circumstances at the time, as he said; earning some 750 KM right after the war is like earning 3000 KM today. Although he was economically well off, he wanted to do something else and so one day he heard on the radio about Genesis project. They were looking for someone to do psycho-social work. In the beginning there were 14 of them and he was in charge of visiting collective refugee centres where he would collect information about the people, where

they came from, their distribution on the terrain, under which circumstances they came while providing them with information on business opportunities or providing them with newspapers from other parts of the country something that was impossible for them to get by themselves, immediately after the war. Dusan felt like humanitarian worker, but was soon disappointed in the workings of the organisation itself, as it started to resemble 'a private company'. All NGOs have democratic principles, as Dusan would explain. The problem with this one was that one person ran it and we were like his servants. Therefore, he became de-motivated, stopped working for the organisation and was unemployed for three months. However, an American, whom he met in 1996 after Dayton agreement was signed, offered him to come to an interview for a job in CARE International, which he explained had an innovative method. Here, the flexibility was made possible by the donators; there were trainees, integrated approaches and grants for small projects. Exchange of experience and of human and technical capacities was rendered possible in this NGO, as Dusan explained. CARE as an organisation together with the people working here were aware of the fact that they would not be present here for the next hundred years and so Dusan felt the point was not to create some kind of dependency on the organisation but rather develop the capacities of people so that long-term change would be beneficial for wider circles. Dusan has been working for CARE ever since.

#### *Mirka - Nansen Dialog Centre*

Mirka is a 26 years old woman from Mostar finishing her studies in Croatian and English literature. She has been involved with NDC activities since their beginning in Mostar, where she participated in seminars on dialog as peaceful solution to conflict in September 2000. People that Mirka knew from before were working for the organisation, besides NDC organised activities that had always attracted her. At the seminars Mirka was in a way representing Croatian people and there were people participating from whole BiH. There she met many young people that have through these seminars recognised the same problems, this was after all the first opportunity for people from Mostar even to make a network of acquaintances, not at least from BiH. People from western and eastern side met for the first time here, Mirka met young people from her own town that she had never seen as well. That

period, as she recalls, was some kind of a transition towards coexistence, thus everything NDC was doing during that time was novice and actual in a sense. Even if there always existed a multiethnic milieu, at this particular period there was no communication whatsoever, therefore the primary goal was to connect people. Her motivation for participation was initially curiosity, although what really light the spark was that for the first time she felt that somebody was interested in young people. For the first time she was asked about her own opinion and this was not something young people were used to through formal education. Primarily she was impressed by the working atmosphere of NDC, where young people had a certain approach that composed of a readiness to bring back Mostar to a normal condition while they were not burdened by external political influences. Mirka started working for NDC and has now been employed there for the past two years.

My informants pinpointed for me the institutional reality of a society in which young people are influenced and formed by complex institutional constrains. In the next chapter we therefore look at the reflections upon political reality and participation in general and more specifically, in chapter five, participation within the NGOs.

## Chapter 5

### Politics and participation

*“The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”*

-Plato-

In this chapter, it is essential to further analyse what kind of relationship my informants have towards political reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, how do they understand their own participation in their respective NGOs in relation to the political reality? Thus, it is their own participation, thoughts and perceptions on their engagement that are central here.

Political activity and social engagement is often a constructive and an inventive undertaking, which can either restore institutions or lead to an institutional innovation. It is evidently not always the case that political activity will lead to altering institutional organisation of a society. Revolutions, on the other hand, can lead to overall changes and these are quite often constitutional changes, which represent rupture in a country's political history (Malnes, Midgaard 2003). Participation of my informants can therefore be termed as reformative rather than revolutionary. Nevertheless, as BiH holds a specific political position in regards to the surrounding states<sup>28</sup> and the general development of the region as a whole, there are ‘numerous possibilities for creating a state with a new political system, which could benefit from the lessons learnt’, as Amir contains. Almost all my informants do hope for constitutional alterations for BiH. According to Amir, this kind of perspective relies necessarily on the possibilities for learning from the lessons provided by the recent history of BiH. How do these young adults perceive politics, how and where do they place their own undertaking within the non-governmental sector?

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<sup>28</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina is bound to the neighbouring states, Croatia and Serbia, as all three presidents signed the Dayton Accord at the time. The diffusion of sovereignty together with the tripartite BiH presidency makes this state specific indeed. In this sense it is true that ‘Bosnia's future as a democratic country depends on institutions and institutionalisation, not on particular individuals or political factions’ (Bose 2002: 274).

“For a revolutionary change to take place in this region, especially in BiH, it would only take our own responsible-ness. Responsibility is lost here. Surely, we are special here in BiH, we have something no other surrounding state has and that is the convention on human rights built into our constitution. And all problems in this country are related to human rights! The international community is the only one drawing attention to the things that are wrong here. This is why the High representative is always the bad guy; by blaming him we avoid pointing our fingers on somebody besides us locals. The problem of older generations, along this, is that they simply can’t substitute former syndicates with today’s Ombudsman; the people that are here at our service, which we don’t know how to use.”

(Amir, Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic, Mostar)

This is how Amir from Mostar, a program coordinator of the Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic, views the problem of the lack of political participation in BiH. In reality, he believes that people, if they only knew how, could take advantage of the fact that the convention on human rights is secured through the constitution<sup>29</sup>. For Amir, this problem is necessarily related to the educational factor; whether people are able or provided for, the right atmosphere for ‘learning the lessons’, something he perceives as undividable from taking responsibility for own political mistakes.

Amir believes that the kind of socio-cultural engagement Cultural Centre Abrasevic is trying to encourage could be the sparkle for people’s return of trust in societal participation in general and thus lead to much more important alterations for the society as a whole. While he was elaborating on his personal motivations and reasons for his involvement, he also explained how he perceived the supposed downfall of a participatory spirit in BiH, which according to him existed immediately after the war. Amir believes that the state of apathy is the unhealthy consequence of both war and post-war situation. After all, people were never as disengaged from the outside reality as they are now. Everybody is occupied with their own problems while ‘the big picture’ is of no interest to people, even though Amir believes it is precisely this ‘big picture’ people need to tune into. He views both local political powers and the international community’s approach as suppressing of what in fact existed in BiH society subsequently after the ending of the war.

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<sup>29</sup> See Dayton Peace Agreement, Annex 4: Constitution. It is indeed rare to have human rights built into the constitution of a state. Perhaps this is primarily due to the predominating name of the constitution, namely “Dayton *Peace Agreement*”.

“In 1996, I know that Bosnia and Herzegovina moaned for political change and activism and this kind of ‘movement’ was in reality politically suspended! You see, it seems like democracy works best when nobody is protesting, so this status quo is something inflicted in BiH. When you observe other democratic systems, like USA for instance, lethargy among young people is in fact one good democracy!”

(Amir, Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic, Mostar)

Nevertheless, Amir can unfortunately not be proven right in this particular matter, considering the first post-war elections held in BiH, which in fact reinforced the de facto partition of the Dayton accord. As we mentioned previously, the ‘movement’ that Amir is speaking about is in fact depending on the able-ness of learning valuable lessons from the war period in order to develop a democratic thought. Although we can perhaps relate to Amir’s resonations about some forms of suspension of a segment of citizens, which in fact could have represented a potential alternative by opposing the dominant nationalistic politics in BiH. As Amir himself feels, it is agencies deployed to help citizens of BiH develop a democratic thought that are of utmost importance. Thus, it is crucial for them to function exemplary instead of reaffirming the (mis)conceptions of the already greatly enabled portion of the citizenry. Nevertheless, when it comes to citizens’ post-war political choices, they cannot exemplify of what Amir expressed because the citizens voted for the national parties. Although he is correct in that ‘the system’ (for instance, the electoral system), which was crafted by the international community, was in a sense suspending people’s choices. Thus, no matter how small portion of the citizens could be categorised into what Amir termed as this ‘wanting-a-change movement’ (as opposed to the nationalistic orientated), this portion of the citizens were obstructed. Even more important though, many were perhaps de-motivated (which would probably entail a more significant portion of the population) to begin to *think* and thus, choose alternatively. For instance, according to the third Annex of the Dayton accord, citizens of BiH were forced to vote in their pre-war municipality, which was impossible immediately after the war, as the return of the expelled refugees was quite difficult and minimal at the time (Bieber 2006). Surely, similar ‘moves’ by the international community could not have functioned as ‘educative’ of a democratic thought. In this context, we can argue that ‘the surest way to kill the idea of

democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American electoral system of first-past-the-post' (Lewis referred in Bose 2002:215), which implies that there existed real obstructions to citizens' possibilities at that time. In praxis, this meant that 'winner-take-all' mentality was incorporated into the electoral system, indeed the first practical aspect of democracy rendered visible to the citizens of BiH. We can only conclude logically it was in the interest of the national parties to publicly encourage the citizens to vote in their current place of residence, as to ensure ethnically homogenous electorate body and to 'extend their own control over their respective electorate and the elected institutions' (Bieber 2005:89).

As mentioned earlier, BiH can be understood as a state-building experiment where democracy is externally *injected* by outside force, lacking an eye for fine details, something Amir also finds problematic. This is why it seems to him that democracy, perhaps, does function best when a lethargic state of mind is present within the citizenry. Whether the international community, for Amir, lacks an eye for details or whether it represents for him a blindfolded democracy, is quite clear in his case. Somehow, Amir is already disappointed in democracy concurrently as he has just begun learning about it. Often, this is the case with many of my informants who not only reflect upon and discuss about such subjects, but also live the factual, often paradoxical issues. For instance, the distrust in the electoral system or the overall majority's choices which democracy entails is a strong argument for some of my informants' retreat from voting. These individuals compensate their voting by some other actions, from which they can see results by themselves. Thus, it is sometimes difficult for them to be objective in their perceptions. Their subjective needs have prevailed over the objective right and obligation to vote. This, however, does not imply the impossible-ness of capturing important elements of *the objective reality* in their statements.

Political life is a participatory life in the sense that political action is deployed with the power to form, re-form or construct institutional organisation of the societies in which politics act. Participation is a popular term in political vocabulary and its widespread usage in the media has often deprived the concept of its true place within a modern and viable theory of democracy. Political theorists and political sociologists have in their theories of democracy; not only viewed participation as an obvious and necessary feature of democracy, but have also considered the danger inherent in a

widespread popular participation in politics in general. Mass participation has been throughout history a crucial element of fascistic regimes as well, sometimes forcing theoreticians to link ‘participation’ to totalitarianism rather than democracy (Pateman 1977). Is participation a prerequisite for democracy to function in praxis? Not all social theoreticians would agree upon this. Quite the opposite, some believe a majority’s apathy can play a valuable role in maintaining the stability of a system as a whole (ibid.). This critical outlook on participation can be useful in our analysis of participatory life of my informants. As in any analysis of participation as such, it is important for our analysis as well to differentiate between the mere presence of participatory spirit or engagements within NGOs and the *motives* and explanation of their own participation.

Popular participation in NGOs is analysed here through participants-based view of participation. The role and the potentials of participation are, within the NGO sector itself, often downplayed. One of the reasons for this is the constant predomination of accountability towards the international donors rather than to the local communities or members of the organization upon which developmental aims are being targeted towards. Both, when it comes to assessing the NGO sector in terms of scientific analysis and in terms of workings of the organizations themselves, the preoccupation with the donor-NGO relations can be misleading, that is, problematic.

Socialisation aspect of participatory democracy is thus an important element to take into consideration in relation to the general framework of contemporary theory (ibid.).

“The notion of a participatory society requires that the scope of the term ‘political’ is extended to cover spheres outside national government. It has already been pointed out that many political theorists do argue for just such an extension. Unfortunately this wider definition, and more importantly its implications for political theory, are usually forgotten when the same theorists turn their attention to democratic theory.” (ibid.106)

To be active in any given NGO is to take part in, to define it broadly, an organization that is not based in government and which is not created to earn profit. The World Bank defines NGOs as ‘private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development’ (Operational Directive



14.70). The NGO sector, or the so-called ‘third sector’, has been often described as heterogeneous to that extent that it is almost impossible to derive a common or an operational definition for that matter. In functional terms, NGOs can be classified as operational or/and advocacy actors. Operational in terms of actual delivery of services while advocacy in terms of influencing politics of public figures and authorities and influencing public opinion in general<sup>30</sup>.

In our selection of NGOs in Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Mostar there are elements of both operational and advocacy activities either within the same organisation or in terms of different NGOs selected. This would ensure, in relation to the selection of my informants, that an organisation deployed with, for instance, dialogue building as opposed to an organisation as an activity centre for young people, would not function as a criterion for my informants engagement *per se* and therefore neither my own selection of informants nor their respective organisations. Besides, these two functions within the NGO sector are hardly clearly divided, as we will see later on. To begin with, we will look at some of the critical perspectives conveyed by my informants in relations to NGOs.

The above-mentioned definition illustrates the importance of the ‘atmosphere’ associated with the NGO sector. For a volunteer worker to become engaged in it entails willing-ness, a participatory spirit, a voluntary basis and benevolent motive. Clearly, we are not asserting everybody engaged in this kind of work as having such motives (nor such motives only). Nevertheless, in defining participation within NGOs in this manner, we can assume, has a direct connection to the appeal for the individuals initially attracted to participate in this sector. It is in light of these matters that we weight participant-based perception and thus my informants’ engagement within different NGOs in BiH. Nevertheless, my informants have been clear in their criticism of both a certain type of a participant and certain types of NGOs.

While informing myself about various active NGOs in BiH some of my informants directed my attention to a phenomenon, which they referred to as, the ‘*sunflower-NGOs*’. When asked to explain what this term implied, they would refer to certain organizations, mostly run by local young people, which either existed or were most likely to prevail for a short period. The kind of organisations, as they would

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<sup>30</sup> These classifications can be found in the ‘*Nongovernmental Organizations Research Guide*’, <http://docs.lib.duke.edu/igo/guides/ngo/index.htm>, 9.19.2006

explain, that would simply alter their agendas or missions as the priorities from various funding sources would change as well. “Sunflower”, they would elaborate, because of the flowers shifting position in accordance to the sun. In other words, according to the resources and the means that would be available at that time. These are usually international funds and donors, which often have yearly priorities. As my informants would explain, if priorities for the year were to aid sport activities or to support reconciliation projects, or to stay the gender issues, the ‘sunflower-NGOs’ would claim these categories or issues to be their main goals or outlines of the activities for such types of NGOs. The point made by my informants is that it all boils down to money or funding which the organisation can gain in such cases.

The problem with the “sunflower” phenomenon is that a true drive for agencies and the people involved, a main and a constant goal or a prime agenda, is lost and thereby the effectiveness of the organisations diminishes. Not to mention the fact that these cases can ruin other young peoples’ perception of the NGO sector in general, especially for young persons wanting to be an activist or that would like to participate in important causes. As we will see later on, some of my informants have expressed their personal disappointments regarding similar matters and one of the informants, deliberately included in my empirical material, and in fact abandoned a NGO for just such reasons. This problem that clearly is present when my informants convey their perception of the NGO sector, represents a common view among young people in general, that is, people that are not active within any organizations. Most of them express scepticisms when referring to NGOs, while some have even renounced from any kind of involvement within NGO sector. My informant from Mostar, Marija, is thus a perfect example of this kind of disappointment. Fortunately, Marija still holds participation as a value, though for her, it did not find place within the NGO sector. Others still are discarded from participation of any kind when having legitimate reasons to perceive the NGO sector as quite similar to any other institution in BiH’s society. As we will see in the next chapter, where we will discuss ‘world-building’ within NGOs, the initial reason for my informants’ engagement was in fact to escape the institutional reality present in BiH society.

This is how Marija explains her experience as a volunteer for a NGO in Mostar.

"... But you see... I worked for this youth NGO in Mostar, which worked on the formation of youth politics. After some while, I realized that people with whom we were supposed to collaborate and work with and the young people that were supposed to initiate something within the organization were simply, in many aspects, disorganised and, like everything else in this country, corruptive. These missions we had and the see-through of the assignments were in the interest of the persons themselves dealing with the assignment, in the interest of all of us working there and of the future participants. And still there was this egoistic, material interest, which also was short-term for the people involved. But there was always this mentality present, that of 'we will deal easily with tomorrow'. A perfect example of such mentality was the seminar I attended in Herceg Novi in Montenegro where six participants from Mostar should have participated. We *merely* found four persons, while the remaining two wouldn't participate as they asked for this to be paid. Even if everything... I mean accommodation, transport, food was covered, these two expected to be paid for attending an educative seminar! Is this not nebulous? Such things, not the organizations themselves, but the mentality of people here are the main reasons for my giving up on participating in NGOs."  
(Marija, former NGO activist, Mostar)

Although Marija did not continue her work within the NGO sector, she chose not to give up on her values, as she herself explains, and to work further on things she holds important. She is now employed at a local radio station and attends the University in Mostar, but is pessimistic in her viewing of the political situation in BiH. We will come back to Marija on several other occasions.

## 5.1 Democracy - democratic government or/and democratic society?

As democracy has become 'the fundamental standard of political legitimacy in the current era', it is thus of even greater significance to define and at least try to understand the meaning of democracy unattached from the current, nation-state context. The theoretical concerns and questioning of whether 'the nation state can remain at the centre of democratic thought' have become more frequent recently, although they remain quite unexplored (Held 1999: xi/xii).

Democracy is an old idea, albeit an idea of topical interest in contemporary global world. Democracy as a new form of political regime in the small Greek city-state of Athens has become the basis for regular political authority in our time. The word democracy (*demokratia*) comes from Greek language and is composed of the

words *demos* (the common people), *kratein* (to rule) and the suffix *ia*. Thus, the literal translation would be ‘the common people rule’. Nevertheless, when it comes to classical democracy one has to bear in mind that in Athens the composition of the *demos* consisted specifically of free adult males of Athenian decent. Citizenship was on quite rare occasions granted to others, through the approval of the Assembly, thus excluding large population of ‘outsiders’, namely women, slaves and other settlers from decision-making (ibid.15). Democracy for the Athenians then was a system of citizen’s self-rule, either by voting or occupying a role as a head of executive body of the Athenian state or as a council. The citizen of Athens could occupy this role for only a day throughout his life. The non-citizen residents on the other hand, the ‘metics’ of Athens, have been compared to a modern democracy example of Germany and the similarly numerous *Gastarbeiter* that enjoy none of the political rights (Hornblower 1994:10).

Democracy is a system in which people exercise some kind of control over the body that has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the community. In modern political theory, this body is understood as a government having three forms of power, namely the legislative one (formation of the laws), the executive one (the implementation of the laws) and the judiciary one (sanctioning the braking of the laws). The separation of these three powers into three forms of government can be understood as a product of modern democracy where the function of the three distinct government bodies is to operate independently in order for power balance and mutual control to be achieved between the bodies. This separation stands in contrast to the traditional forms of government, like that of a monarchy, where the head of the state, an individual or a small group of people, hold these powers concentrated.

The *meaning* of democracy will probably remain disputed about for a long time, although the empirical reality of patterns of power and injustice with the diminishing quality of democracy in many of the leading ‘democracies’ cannot be ignored in terms of contemporary discussion. There remain various views on what democratisation should be understood as theoretically, that is, whether democracy is merely a political method or a procedural democracy or whether we need to discuss substantial democracy which, in my view, implies a moral consensus in Durkheimian terms. The empirical reality can nevertheless testify of the fact that there are always possibilities for every democracy to be more democratic, i.e. more inclusive, more

transparent and serve the public interests (rather than private) in a better way (Held 1999). Democratisation for BiH implies alterations in the *praxis* of democratic principles or the implementation of democracy in terms of procedures, institutions and administration, while at the same time strengthening civil society in their responsiveness and participation, in which democratic political culture plays a central part (Raik 1998). In BiH the development of political parties and reinforcing the rule of law are still actual. In other words ‘doing democracy’ besides the tendency to ‘subscribe to democracy in principle’ is central for this society (Rasmusson 2000:24).

Some of the general criteria for democracies are inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and competition. Inclusiveness relates to political equality. Albeit, if democracy is to be considered as political equality it must require a minimum of economic, education and health-related rights which in turn insure life chances and opportunities to *exercise* political influence on the respective political processes. It mostly considers, in certain segments, self-management of a society by the members themselves. As most theoreticians contain, ‘democracy certainly has something to do with the people ruling in some form or another’ (Simon 2001:11). Although we will discuss the dichotomy of procedural versus substantive democracy, it is necessary to review shortly the already mentioned basic criteria.

Transparency refers to the access to information regarding political decision-making. This stands in many ways opposite to privacy or secrecy and allows for participation in political processes for the media and the public in general. Participative democracy is closer to the will of people because its processes are in constant continuation rather than being reduced to elections or referendums. For example, it is useful to investigate and consider publicly the connection between the companies that produce computerised electronic voting machines as financial contributors for the Republican Party in USA. Access to this kind of information allows the public to view various political implications in a more critical matter. Democracy and truth are thus crucially interrelated. The decline in participation, as an international phenomenon, relates to in many ways to corruption. Corruption is a force depoliticising the common people, drawing them from civic life (Bohara et al. 2004). This poses a serious threat to democracies throughout the world and while a degree of distrust is always ‘healthy’ within a democratic society, the very high levels of distrust can become lethargic. Lethargy refers as much to a psychological state of

citizens as it does to the societal milieu.

Accountability refers to answerability and to *opportunities of correction* for any political decisions taken within a democratic society. The government that is elected by the people must accord to the laws like any other citizen; this is the most basic political obligation. Albeit, accountability also revolves around credibility, as people in democracies have the right of not electing the same government. This is where governments outsource their legitimacy form. In BiH, institutions like Office of the Ombudsman or Human Right Commission's (OHR) function as maximisations of the government's accountability by monitoring the government's actions.

Competition in a democracy is crucial as well. It relates to the political parties and the competition between them. Competitive struggle for power is a problematic sphere, because it can alter into power struggle *per se* rather than it functioning as an ideological competition. The presence of political competition is highly important within a democracy for the simple fact that there must be more than one alternative (although only two are dubious) in order to have substance in a political debate in which citizens can be included.

All these criteria are immensely important elements, which if neglected, threaten every de facto democratically regulative system. The criteria of a procedural democracy are indeed necessary components of any democracy and have been outlaid for the purpose of a more just system. However, they alone cannot insure justice. Substantial democracy can thus offer further insights in this matter.

Justice does not solely apply to equality per definition. There can also be justice in difference. The core problem in BiH is not that there exists for instance economic inequality as such; the problem lies in the *injustice* of the existing inequality. Extreme social inequality is most often unjust either directly or more implicitly. Either way, extreme conditions of inequality are always difficult to legitimise. Another important element is that most of the existing economic differences among people have neither been based on merit nor on expertise in contemporary BiH. The effects of such conditions for the economic reality of BiH society are double-sided. Economic inequality can be either just or unjust as such, although this also depends on the further effects of the existing economic inequality (Nathanson 1998:98).

“[...] inequalities of wealth are acceptable under two conditions. They must not deprive people of the resources for a decent level of life and they must not undermine political equality. If economic inequality leads to political domination, then the conditions for a just society have been violated.” (ibid. 112)

There is a double-sided effect of the economic injustice in BiH, namely the accumulations of wealth as such, but also the further effects of the economic inequality. The political domination, needless to say, in form of authoritarian nationalists, is apparent in BiH. Democracy in BiH can be classified as illiberal democracy in which the leaders are elected by the people regardless of the fact that they are corrupt. This state of affairs is indeed related to deprivation of the resources and political inequality. Political domination rests in this sense upon a lack of a democratic political culture.

In his analysis, Simon (2001) poses a crucial question: ‘can procedural democracy insure social and economic justice?’

“Democracy only makes sense as a mythology if, in places like Bosnia, it is allowed to operate uncontested in the midst of widespread inequality or massive economic malaise.” (ibid.12)

This is why it is important to consider substantive democracy in BiH. The issues relate to economic conditions, though there are several aspects to consider in the case of BiH. Justice for post-conflict societies relates to all spheres of societal life and cannot be limited to the economic sphere. Lack of justice as such can enable people to develop a democratic thought, which is equally important in terms of actual democracy taking place. ‘Democratically disposed mind’, or what is referred to as ‘demokratisk sinnelag’ in Norwegian is thus central here. The consolidation of democracy must perhaps begin here. The ‘democratic idea of tolerance’ is in this way thoroughly connected to ‘reasonableness orientation’ which presumes the basic acknowledgment of moral resonations and willingness for peace (Rawls referred in Malnes and Midgaard 2003). We will return to these issues in relation to my informants subsequently.

Further on, we must consider the external actors in democratisation. Are there identifiable faults in the institutions deployed to shape the process of democratic transition in BiH?

“The inequality in income in Bosnia is higher than in most other countries in the region, possibly a particular feature of both the war and the substantial, yet uneven, distribution of international aid afterwards.” (Bisognia and Chong referred in Bieber 2006:35)

Faruk from Sarajevo, a founder of a youth NGO, explains how he views this problem. There are almost no sources or institutions ‘dignified’ enough of *teaching* democracy, he explains. Besides, Bosnian’s cultural and historical background is not a relief in this matter.

“Here in BiH people never did govern for themselves before. Never were people from BiH holding responsibility upon themselves. *Inat*<sup>31</sup> as a characteristic developed here because of this, as there was always somebody else doing the thinking for us Bosnians. This is the ambient, or a style of thought in BiH. If you were to remove whole of presidency, all the ministry, nothing different would take place here. Total lack of investment in young people is a clear proof of this. There is no development of a critical spirit, neither through educational institutions nor in the society in general.”  
(Faruk, OIA, Sarajevo)

This is how Faruk explains lack of the ability of BiH’s young people to alter their thinking in regards to democracy. Instead of what Rawls (1993) considers crucial for the formation of stable social institutions, which are the self-imposed bonds of avoidance of disintegration and discord people need to embrace, people in BiH have developed a kind of a reverse or what we might term ‘unreasonableness orientation’. This is what Amir referred to as a culture of despite in BiH, namely *inat*. In addition, there is no visible effort to direct the younger generations into a more critical thought, which would imply for Amir a possibility of thinking not in terms of their culture, unreflective tradition and impulsiveness, but rather critically, reflectively and rationally. The ‘reasonableness orientation’ we mentioned previously can provide for a conceptual framework for what Amir was trying to express and what indeed is lacking in BiH’s society.

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<sup>31</sup> *Inat* is a typical Bosnian term. It is a word from Turkish language for despite, stubbornness, wilfulness, endurance.



This is precisely what Durkheim is considering when it comes to morality. It (morality) needs to be ‘sufficiently flexible in order to change gradually as proves necessary’. Morality can never stand above criticism and reflection (Durkheim, 1973:52). Durkheim’s viewing of the individual as a free moral actor is indeed dominated by the collective that roams authoritatively above the individual but where there also is room for the individual evaluation and action. This is what the moral realism for Durkheim is contained in, which he ably secures through his dualism between the individual and the collective. The healthy society is responsible for our morality’s development. Durkheim’s fundamental axiom, then, is that there can be no morality without individuality (Østerberg 1995). In terms of how Durkheim treats morality, it is easy to see parallels between his concept of healthy society and his viewings on moral restraint, contained in anomic, egoistic, altruistic and fatalistic as ideal forms of suicide.

We might say that in case of BiH and all present consequences in it today, the overall situation is reflecting contemporary framework of the non-comprehended relationship between democracy and morality.

“If I did have the power to do something, it sure wouldn’t be in only one segment of our society; even thorough change isn’t enough if in one aspect only. It is a long-lasting and all-embracing process. Firstly, though, I would create a space for citizens where critical reflection upon the things that are happening around us would be possible. The relationship towards violence is the key issue, I think. Our society is in the stage of legitimising violence, of unrecognising violence or even closing our eyes before violence.”  
(Nele, CAN, Sarajevo)

Nele from the Centre for a Non-violent Action in Sarajevo is evidently preoccupied with the fact that in Bosnian and Herzegovinian society there exists a disfunctional relationship towards violence. However, Nele touched upon an important issue, namely the moral level reflected in the attitude towards violence and the possibility of a democratic thought.

In learning democracy, I will argue, the crucial process is confined in understanding why the truth must not remain rigid. This will be elaborated on properly in the last chapter, where we will discuss tolerance.

## 5.2 Ethnicity and divisions among young people

Ethnic identity is one of numerous social identities people hold in various societies. Thus, we can say our social identities are stratified and they are multiple. Social identities are also mouldable and they can develop or change on group level while an individual can also alter his or her identity. We distinguish between personal and collective identities, although this dichotomy can be confusing in a theoretical sense, for there is no clear line between personal and collective identities. All identities are rendered possible through human interaction and through various forms of societies. We can at least think of this dichotomy as, to a certain degree, self-determined and collectively determined distinction on different identities. Ethnic identity, as any other identity is relational. There is always a relationship between individual members of an ethnic group and the group itself, although the group is somewhat autonomous in relation to migration and alterations of its members. An ethnic group can change the identity largely independently from its members. Nevertheless, individual understanding of the determined identity can influence a whole group's identity in some cases (Sokolovic 2006).

Defining ethnic identity in this manner is soothing our empirical findings among young people, for it is precisely the constrain between their own individual understandings of their ethnic belonging and the collectively prescribed understanding of what ethnic identity should be understood and practised as. In BiH, the phenomenon of intensifications of ethnic identities, in other words, the raise of deterministic proscriptions of what ethnic identity should constitute, is posing serious problems for my informants and, we can assume, for young people in general.

“Personally I experience ethnic identity as quite flexible. As a Bosniac, with that identity, I can put forward my perspective on things. Apropos our talk on the freedom of bringing about own opinions - and that is that I as a Bosniac can overview critically upon reality. In this manner, I can crush monolithic picture of Bosniacs in general, both in regards to the perceptions of Bosniacs and others. My peacekeeping engagement is related to my ethnic belonging, while at a personal level I do not feel it as important. It is not my provision and quite often, it is not clear to me what it means to be a Bosniac, not the least a good Bosniac. Often there are expectations bounded to ethnic belongings with which I have problems, as they are in conflict with my values

and every time I say that I am a Bosniac, there is an urgent need to distance my self or explain what that identity means to me. [...] I did have a chance to experience difficulty, feelings of endangered-ness, or fear, which goes along with this, though I do not experience such episodes as personal attacks, probably 'cause I do not perceive ethnicity as among emphasized identities. In other contexts it is quite important that I as a Bosniac do state certain things!" (Nele, CNA, Sarajevo)

This is how Nele talks about his ethnic identity. In reference to the above-mentioned phenomenon of ethnicisation, which can result in a problematic relation of young people towards ethnic identity, Nele often feels as though he must clarify as much as he is aware of the responsibility when he does have a chance to express anything publicly. He is always aware that people will primarily, because of his name, perceive him as a Bosniac, while other identities he holds (for instance peace activist or the fact that he is a male) are at the background. It is perceived, not only by Nele, as agonising to be aware of these things at any point. It is necessary though, as he would explain, for one's own responsibility in expressing various opinions is precisely connected to such intensified sense towards ethnic belonging that people have developed in BiH. Even if one's personal feeling towards this particular identity is not as strong, one has to be aware of the objective reality of ethnicised politics in BiH and thereby take the responsibility in a way which allows one to be sensitive of the possible perceptions of others.

Amir from Mostar, adversely, feels it is not even possible to talk about normal state of things in BiH when it comes to ethnic identity. He makes a very important point:

"To have an identity is possible only when your basic needs are covered, so you can deal with small details and beautify your life. When you deal with existential thing in life, you don't even have time to think about your identity - in that instance it is a quasi identity, a situation in which everybody tells you who you are instead of you finding out about your self! So, a determination instead of a development."

(Amir, OKC, Mostar)

Amir has pointed to the core problem of what we in Durkheimian terms can classify as altruistic or even fatalistic determinations of ethnic identity. The expectations are far too great, while there is no space for individual variations and

contributions and thus development. This is why stagnation in development of social identities can occur, namely they can perhaps not be defined as identities *per se*, but rather as perverted forms of collective identities.

In order for us to understand how problematic relations towards ethnicity can be, here is how Marija from Mostar reflects about her ethnic belonging:

“Perhaps if you had asked me about this before all of this happened, maybe I would say I was proud of my ethnic identity. Now I can’t speak about this pride precisely because all things connected to ethnicity are reversed, envenomed. [...] For it is misused. I have been taken away this pride. In certain way I’ve started hating what I am. In some healthy environment, perhaps people would be punching their chest and say I am this or that...”  
(Marija, former NGO activist, Mostar)

Marija’s frustration over the ‘ethnicised’ social reality around her, perhaps in the context of Mostar’s specific circumstances, is clearly felt in the manner where she feels something has been taken away from her when comparing herself to an average European young individual.

Alex from Banja Luka reflected also upon the importance of his ethnic belonging and the proper strengthening of bonds between the ethnic groups. When asked how he perceived his ethnic belonging, Alex responded:

“Not exaggerative, not at all actually[...] I think that ethnic belonging is something I myself didn’t have any effect on, it’s given by birth. I don’t even see any reason to claim the fact itself that I’m a member of an ethnic group, but on the other hand I think that there are many wonderful things concerning my ethnic group which are neglected and overlooked, while I perceive it as very negative that things that were never a part of history of my people emerge now in the front. In that context, while we talk about Bosnia and Herzegovina, that all these wonderful things about each other, that in a way also joined us together for quite a long period, that we try to get the strength to make them surface in a way and experience them as differences as well as very nice things that we need to get to know about each other.”  
(Alex, NDC, Banja Luka)

Alex feels his ethnic identity as insignificant, although his resonations penetrate the sentiment of permeation with the negative associations with his respective ethnic group.

### 5.3 Political solutions or economic prosperity - what can and should insure our future?

Is it political integration or is it economic sustainability that poses the most likely solutions for young people in BiH? BiH is a fitting empirical case of the theoretical postulate that markets are *embedded* in non-market social relations. Market relations are one among many ways in which individuals interact with one another. The cultural resources, interactional organisation, knowledge and constraints existing in the society are reflecting the types of social relations which in turn influence market relations.

The collective effervescence, which followed the dissolution of structures of Yugoslav society, implied that people were no longer forced to pay morally binding attention to others (Durkheim referred in Shilling and Mellor 1998). Thus, market relations and the present economy in BiH are reflecting these consequences.

“Few moments ago I said that the youth do not care about politics. Well, nobody is interested in politics any more, it seems. Everybody is fed up! The thing that I’m most frightened about is that there does not exist options. Somebody must replace these people some day; okay, today the right wing holds the power in Bosnia, but I’m afraid that the left wing isn’t that great either. [...] To choose - but whom? This genuine person does not exist. The people that are worth something are hiding. Professors worked on the market place, while people who were never on these positions achieved suddenly to become this kind of a quasi-elite.”  
(Marija, former NGO activist, Mostar)

The comments are exemplary of how young people conceive of the social reality. We could identify two main sources of *perceptions* of problems among my informants. They can be pinpointed in terms of political and economic categories, and they represent the exaggerated influence of politics in everyday lives and the difficult economic situation young people face in BiH. The relationship between these two categories will be discussed further on.

The first perception, the one that holds that politics enter the lives of people in every possible way, expresses the discontent towards the ethnicised politics in BiH’s

society. When political reality is preventing people to interact either in private or public contexts, it somehow becomes meaningless to deal with politics as such. It is easily understandable why young people perceive the political element as an obstruction to democratisation of society and normalization of economic standards. What is of even greater concern is that young people come to have negative attitude towards or perception of politics in general and not of the specific, ethnicised and nationalistic politics that are dominating the society.

The danger of such perceptions lies in the possibility of becoming an idiot, in its right sense of the word. The word idiot is derived from the Greek word *idiôtês*, which implies that the citizen is private, meaning a person who declines to take part in public life, in the collective, for example in democratic city government. In our case, 'an idiot' can represent a person that is not concerned with politics and does not realize that politics will deal with one even if one does not want to deal with politics. Sure enough, in Athens, public life and democratic government were considered honourable activities, but most importantly they could affect all citizens and it is in this context that an idiot was derided for not realising this. What happens then to young people in BiH when they are met with one-sided political scene? Perhaps it is wrong to classify them as idiots in the mentioned sense, if we consider the proposition that they actually never did experience democracy. Could lower ranks in Athens, without any right to participate be defined as 'idiots'? This argument can be derived, for my informants, for young adults of BIH, based on several reasons. To mention just a few: the consequences of the Dayton peace agreement serving a quasi-constitutional role in BiH since 1995, the repetitive conditioning of the negative outcome of elections, the constant neglecting by the authorities of the young people and their difficult living conditions. If one is socialised into this kind of political reality, especially when this is one's initial experience with the world of politics, than one comes to doubt that the present situation could change for the better. Not only this consequence is apparent, young people also come to see this as a normal condition, they come to normalise the abnormality and rationalize the anomie of the surrounding society. It simply must be that way, because there is no other way. The tautological thinking about political reality is very much present and it transfers easily to other aspects of social life. The current political scene is one's first experience of politics as such, it is often perceived as a silent continuation of the 1990's conflict and thus it

seems institutionally segmented for these generations. My informants though, do wish to change these segmented realities. The question is whether there are real possibilities, in analysing their own perceptions, to accomplish the aims that are common for my informants.

The second perception, the one concerning economic situation, inserts not only the low standard of BiH, but also corruption and illegal activities in all their forms, the so-called 'grey economy' we already mentioned. The main problem when considering younger generations is that they are socialised into a world of unregulated economic relations. This kind of domination of grey economy is present in almost all segments of BiH society and thus corruptive behaviour is something that becomes natural way of dealing with things in almost all aspects of economic life, connected with obtaining power, status making, social climbing or even surviving. It thus becomes normal and accepted to pay for the driving licenses or to pay the professors to pass the exams, or even to slip a note for the doctor when you are in need of a prudent operation. Simply legitimising why this must be done in order to survive in such a society is for my informants obvious and understandable as they themselves are, though unwillingly, a part of the imposed condition. We cannot deny that there is a real need for such solutions for young people in general and in relation to my informants, when considering how an average citizen resonates. The main problem does not lie in whether we can observe, understand or sympathise with this real and existing need for corruptive conduct. Our problem revolves around how this can affect young adults, my informants, in their acquiring a democratic thought. These generations have never even experienced a normalised economics or a regulated system, in a sense, rationalised economic relationships and proper functioning of such relationships, where they as consumers, patients or citizens are protected instead of being in a real need of bribing every public service employee within the institutions without which one cannot function as a participatory member of a society. This is why corruptive behaviour is naturally inevitable within the NGO sector, of which we previously argued implying certain norms, morals and principles. Once again, the objective reality of BiH's society penetrates into a sector raised in order to counter balance the anomic system of state institutions.

“Perhaps not everybody is like that, but I'm afraid most of them become like that after a while, precisely because this is a poor environment and nobody

wants to get the job done and say ‘now I’m happy ‘cause I did it well’. It is simply a matter of somebody having and others thinking ‘how can they have while I don’t’, and therefore they want to have and achieve everything overnight as well. This is why they don’t try consistently and give up easily. This is the present mentality ruling. When people leave BiH to work abroad, they are working from morning ‘til evening, earning their money. The same person, when he returns here, will not work as much, nor be as disciplined as he was in the west and will still whine about how there is nothing here. That is the surrounding world, mentality and democracy in Balkan.”

(Marija, former NGO activist, Mostar)



## Chapter 6

### Reality construction and conformism

Entering Nansen Dialogue Centre in Mostar, I was met by two very polite young women with whom I had arranged to meet at the location of NDC some days ago. They recognised me from the day before, when there was held a seminar in their locales on sexual education for teachers from elementary schools and high schools. I was also present, as Faruk from Youth Information Agency in Sarajevo invited me to participate in the seminar they were organising for teachers and school nurses in Mostar. Mirka and Gorica, my informants, asked how my impression of yesterday was, how I thought the lectures went and if they did a good job organising it. I confirmed positively but commented on some of the stands of few teachers that felt pressured into 'talking about sex' in their classrooms. They nodded affirmatively and felt a big part of the problem in BiH in relation to reforms within education is these still-stigmatised themes and taboo subjects, besides the direct unwillingness to change some old persuasions and practices. Namely, Mostar as a community is facing HIV-virus, which is a novice problematic for the inhabitants.

We began our interviews. The first young woman whom I interviewed, Mirka, presented herself shortly and talked about how she came to initial contact with NDC. After participating in NDC's first organised seminar on building dialogue and peaceful resolutions to a conflict, she was 'hooked'. Impressed by the mere fact that somebody was interested in knowing how they, the young students, felt about the situation combined with the methods of work in this organisation, it all seemed appealing and she felt their approach to the problems was professional. Almost as if she saw a good parenthood-method in their working, it became vividly clear that there were 'other solutions' to certain problems, which were different compared to any other approaches she had previously experienced. Upbringing, family backgrounds and stands that these young people held appeared to be important factors during the seminars. People with certain kind of upbringing had already had a fundament upon which one could build during the dialogues, as she explained. Nevertheless, Mirka reminds herself, it was perhaps even more important to attract people, which did not

know about how Mostar used to be. Young people that one normally could term ignorant or xenophobic play an important part during dialogues and seminars because others that would oppose and argue against their perceptions realise themselves where their own ignorance lies. There were also young people that, for instance, needed to be explained about the necessity of ‘us all being able to live together here’ and that this was in fact the only solution to the problem of a divided Mostar. ‘NDC is really about integration and democratisation’, said Mirka.

When I asked if she could explain, in her own words, about the political situation in BiH and how she felt about this, she took a long pause. ‘It is confusing’, she said finally. For one thing, people are not informed properly. Nowadays they are talking about reforms, changing of the constitution, while at the same time people still do not know in what way to approach these issues, what interests they might hold or how they might benefit from certain changes. The international community and the politicians have not laboured enough in drawing such issues nearer to the public. When it comes to Mostar area, it represents a perfect political status quo, Mirka explains. People have made their choices, national parties are still in power in BiH and nothing is improving. Their mouths (politicians’) are full of prosperity and better future, but after the elections are finished, there is nothing-concrete happening. It all boils down to not knowing democracy, Mirka explains. The cognition of the citizens here on what kind of politicians are supposed to represent one as a citizen, is not yet developed. It all revolves around the augury of the politician that is prognostic of people’s choices. Even though everybody is saying ‘they are all criminals, corruptive’, it seems as though people also think it be better if they are wrong-done and stolen from by ‘their own’, rather than ‘theirs’. Consequently, and besides the problem of the very real lack of political choices and offers, there is no tangible vision of a democratic society in the minds of citizens in BiH.

The main division in this society and in Mirka’s local community, namely Mostar, is still an ethnic division. Mostar is even now, after almost eleven years, a divided city. Ethnic divisions and the gaps between people, which are widened through education system, can never represent for Mirka the real interests of people of Mostar, for they are always firstly reduced to the interests of Croats, Bosniaks or Serbs. The strict political division is a part of the manipulation itself. Mirka herself does not feel her ethnic identity as among most important identities she holds. For

her, it is drastically more important what kind of values people hold, which have very little to do with their ethnicity, as she would explain. In this sense, Mirka cannot find herself to conform to such an overall ethnicity paradigm surrounding her in her everyday life.

Young people in general do feel ethnic belonging as an important factor in interaction with others. This, says Mirka, is often put in front projection even if there exists a general confusion on precisely that aspect of identity. Religion is also put forward as an important provision, something Mirka finds comic. 'This is because we now presumably live in a democracy and are thus allowed to shout aloud about our own religions, something we allegedly could not do before', which Mirka finds absurd in relation to young people, as they never actually experienced communism. In context of sudden religiosity and ethnocentrism, it is obvious for Mirka that these are injected by and through very important institutions, authorities and communities, which young people attend to and are socialised by.

In BiH, the introduction of religious education in schools was followed by de-secularisation, which took place during 1990s, which again related to the markings of divisions between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Only recently was the gymnasium in Mostar unified. This school was segregated along ethnic/religious lines, with two sets of administration, teachers and pupils. There are about 50 such cases of 'two schools under one roof' in BiH (Popov and Ofstad 2006).

“Politicians in Mostar, asked about two curricula in one school, as they like to call it, reply that they are in favour of keeping them apart, because: “We had a joint curriculum before, and you can see where that lead us-to war”.” (ibid. 100)

As we have seen from preceding chapters, political and social reality young people are facing in today's BiH, are making young people's social worlds tremendously difficult and complex to comprehend. The society is experienced as a chaotic and an unmoral entity that young people are unavoidably part of. Mirka's resonations here are representative of most of my informants in Mostar. If we are to make sense of these sentiments, we need to embrace a struggle between forces, which we can identify as constructing and conforming.

In a social environment composed of strong currents of social constrain, the struggle between reality construction and conformism appear obvious. Such tensions

are not visible merely between individuals or between groups of young people. Struggle between conforming and rejecting the reality of their society and constructing something novice - if possible - runs straight through individuals. My informants ponder reflexively upon this, with a constant rational balance between the pressures of principal conducts, the losses principality often can entail, and on the other hand, the gain of short-term advantages when complying with the surrounding conditions. It is a constant struggle and a part of their everyday life. Rejecting a reality that is supposedly the objective reality out there, implies one must substitute it with some other reality. In the case of my informants, most of them did have a vague concept of what they should be searching for in their respective NGOs in terms of some basic principles. Here is how Armin from Sarajevo explained his motive for involvement in NDC.

“For a long time, there was a negative image about NGOs. People viewed us as those that get money from foreigners, have good salaries and do nothing, which is not true. You see, in BiH, the main motivator is a problem. It means, if I personally have a problem, let’s say a problem with hewing down the forests or a problem with the political situation, I will try to do at least something about it. For me personally, I had a problem with the lack of dialogue between people. People of different ethnic, religious, national and other affiliations did not communicate between themselves, they communicated only within their own group. I was bothered by the absence of dialogue and found an organisation, which addressed precisely this! So, surely it is a personal interest, interest in wanting a better situation for my self in this society.”

(Armin, NDC, Sarajevo)

Armin felt the need to get involved in creating a dialogue in what he experienced as fragmented society where communication revolved according to the groups’ prefixes. For him this need existed prior to the explosion of NGOs in BiH. This is why Armin is also politically active as a member of SDP (Social Democratic Party), but did not find it sufficient as the political activity is limited within a political party due to the limitations of the program, hierarchical order and likewise. When he was younger, Armin did not recognise that political engagement is a much wider concept. This is why he engaged within the NGO sector where he experienced significantly wider array of political action. In the ideal environment, these two sectors would cooperate, which is naturally not the case in BiH, Armin explains.

The criteria for my informants, when it came to their respective NGOs, related mostly to the education of young people, a multiethnic environment to work in, anti-discriminatory and anti-violence principles where promoting tolerance, democracy and dialogue could be possible. In terms of these fairly generalised, albeit subjective needs of my informants, NGOs were providing them with an objectified reality (the NGOs' working environments and the entire NGO sector) that could be compatible with the needs of these young people. In terms of constructing these needs, NGOs were obviously at the same time functioning as 'socialisers' of the young people engaged. Some of my informants in Mostar described openly their own 'socialisation paths' within the organisations, in retrospect. Besides, all my informants reported cases of re-socialised young people through participation in the organisations' activities.

In Sarajevo, where I visited a local NGO named 'Centre for Non-violent Action' (CNA – Centar za nenasilnu akciju), the young people working there told me their strategy was to reach out to specific groups, that is, groups either by profession, geographical location or age, and organise trainee programs in what they term as 'non-violent elaborations of a conflict'. Categories of people range from former soldiers to teachers, journalists or politicians. Usually, as Nele from CNA explained, there are many underlying issues when such group of people is formed for teamwork, but it is in this organisation's spirit to try to make people understand that such issues cannot be swept under the carpet but rather worked up in trying to identify what "the others" can perceive as violence. A big part of this is what is termed as 'facing the past'. NGOs, Nele is certain, provide a possibility of getting out of a lethargic state of matters for young people, which definitely is not a normal state of matters and the young people feel this. It was certainly a way out for him, says Nele.

In constructing our own social realities, our objective social reality is the main pillar. In the process of learning something novice, our social reality does not stand outside our learning process. Therefore, the question is whether the societal reality outside the NGO environment allows my informants the space for a change of behaviour or conduct. Let us briefly remind ourselves on how Durkheim categorised social facts.

Durkheim organised levels of social reality into material and nonmaterial social facts. Material social facts, as we know, relate to society, its structural

components (a church or a state) and to the morphological components of the society. Nonmaterial social facts relate to morality, collective conscience, collective representations and social currents. According to Durkheim, material social facts affect the nonmaterial. In Durkheim's theorising, they often have causal priority, although the real focus in his work revolved around nonmaterial social facts. To study nonmaterial social facts scientifically, the sociologist would have to seek and examine material social facts that reflect the nature of, and changes in, nonmaterial social facts (Ritzer 2000). Thus, for Durkheim, and indeed how we must place the representations of my informants, material social facts cannot be ignored in explanation of individual sentiments.

This implies that the state and all its institutions are a reflection of the current state of collective morality in the society of our reference. Social disorganisation refers to the material social facts that have lost their stable frameworks which again lead to demoralisation, which refers to the individual state. Durkheim's well known definition of a social fact is in fact that acting containing an external constrain, which has a general quality over the whole of a given society and exists on its own, that is, independently of the individual expression.

Nevertheless, my informants are in a different position in relation to the collective state of moral in the society of our reference, as we will argue, and can represent a departure point in the state of matters in BiH. It is, after all, from the collective thought that we can materialise our ideas and afterwards experience the truth about the same things<sup>32</sup>. If NGOs do attract and socialise young people into a democratic school of thought, could this be a rationale for a more tolerant citizenry? If we at least confine our selves to younger population, as we have done here, this kind of comprehensive non-formal education does not have to seem as an impossible project. We have already identified the state of anomie, apathy and pathology in the objective, or as Durkheim would term it, material social reality. The question remains whether the NGO sector can provide for comprehensive re-socialisation of young people in capacity. Besides, how do my informants construct their reality within NGOs and what do they conform to in the material social reality?

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<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/durkheim.htm>, "Pragmatism and the Question of Truth", Durkheim lectures

## 6.1 Working for NGO's - "My world-building"

In Hermann Hesse's novel the main character, Harry Haller, in whom this great writer almost depicts his own second self, carries in him the problems of a man embedded in modern time. Harry, who finds himself in conflict with himself and the world surrounding him, does this as a Steppenwolf, an animal symbolising loneliness, separation and unrest. The escape from conflict and a neurotic duplicate of the creature, the author finds in surpassing bipolarity, in propagating the human "I" and by liberating himself from civil conformism through humour, which is the only way for a realisation of demands of the higher life wisdom. Steppenwolf is the best-known literary work from the German writer, a Nobel prize winner in literature.

We will now explain how "Steppenwolf" can be seen analogically in light of my informants' experience of NGOs. There is certainly *boundary work* in action within NGOs. My informants do hold an interest of social, cultural and moral value in being participants of the non-governmental sector. They do distance themselves symbolically from other groups, perhaps mostly from young people they would typically term ignorant. There are clear preferences in regards to certain moral stands, opinions and cultural orientations such as choice of music or literature among other things. Nevertheless, what is specific in BiH, and perhaps paradoxical, is that significant portions of active young people are in fact perceived as outsiders rather than participants of the society. The informants were, for instance, most likely to be 'loner wolfs' prior to their engagements because of the persuasive objectified reality to which majority of people comply with in their local communities. This implies that my informants were not only in incompatibility with the institutions of BiH, schools, police, politics, administration but also stand in contrast with the general collective opinion and the public sphere. Many participants of civil current can be described as 'unfitting' of the objective reality. The humorous atmosphere of the NGOs I have visited, which the informants and their co-workers create, is literally surpassing the bipolarity of their personal and social realities. The outside reality and the NGO realities, that is. It is in this sense one can experience my informants resembling Harry, the Steppenwolf. Nevertheless, there is not a culture of glorification of their

engagement present in my informants' attitudes or behaviours. My informants would often joke about their own work and engagement, about the society in which they must exist, releasing some of the frustrations in relation to the lack of influence and acknowledgment from the outside reality. There is neither a diminishing of their own role in the informants' perceptions, as they are quite aware of being a part of important currents, regardless of how small-scale, that otherwise would not take place at all in their local communities. This is why they, as I believe the case to be, represent the category from which it is fairly profitable to pull qualitative analysis from.

When asked to put themselves in context of young people in general, almost none of my informants could point to specific events, traits or ability that would differentiate them from other young people that are, for instance, passive. Rather than being 'different', most of my subjects became portrayed to me as initial 'Steppenwolf-s' that had eventually found their small packs. Thus, it became obvious during my contact with young people in general (non-active) that their apparent lethargic condition reminded me of Steppenwolf characters my informants had previously painted for me. My informants could surpass this condition of passiveness or apathy, because of their conflict with the surroundings, which would not be enough by itself, as the NGOs provided the spot for their sentiments. It seemed as if the thing uniting my informants as a coherent group in fact presupposes a realisation for these young adults which symbolised the transformation of the Steppenwolf in them was that *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to a man). If they would look at their objective world as 'Croat is a wolf to a Serb' or Muslim to a Croat, or any combination of the three ethnic groups, they would not be able to spread a certain mission in a divided society with demised values. When a part of their respective organisations; a divided town is a problem, discrimination of returnees is a problem, absence of reconciliation is a problem which needs to be laboured on. A good portion of the interviewed informants were in many ways lonely wolfs that have finally found some kind of understanding for the discontentment with the surrounding circumstances. Most importantly, they found in the NGOs the institution, the material social reality, with which they could start acting. They are reflecting about their previous 'condition of consciousnesses' and many of my informants feel that their work within organisations has made them more aware of their prior conformism. The problem, which then arises



for some of my subjects, is that their private social milieus, their families, relatives and friends persist in their own (nationalistic) modes of thinking; particularly in regards to their political perceptions and practices. Some of my subjects have difficulties clarifying their work and engagement to their families that do not perceive their engagement as desirable. This is an additional strain for some of my informants' strain between what we have defined as the struggle between conforming to the objective reality and constructing their realities within the NGOs.

Political socialisation within NGOs can work on several levels. For instance, through the activities organised, in which both volunteers and working staff participate and through interaction with other young people, they themselves are met with different kinds of outlooks on a given subject. For example, simply by hearing others opinions and arguments, it makes one reflect about one's own opinion on a matter, or perhaps even revise some of the perceptions on a given subject. In a way, these young people are learning how to cope with the complexity of a dialogue in post-conflict society. This alone makes them more flexible and able to choose and filter by constructive reflection. This is what my informants describe as uplifting experience in being a part of the organisations. This in turn because the process of exchange influences their own growth, results in better understanding and affects other young people. It is kind of a double gain, as my informants would explain.

In Durkheimian perspective we find the ultimate explanation of anomic society and the effects this type of society can produce. As society sets the frames of action and conduct for its members and the social groups, which humans become parts of, habits take form. Habits must therefore change, if social change is to be achieved. This is how one of my informants explains his change in thinking.

Faruk, a most interesting character and one among the first persons I met in relation to my fieldwork. He introduced me to the workings of one of the biggest local NGOs (OIA), active in BiH. He also explained much about the NGO-sector and introduced me to a number of young people from which I have learned a great deal.

As mentioned earlier Faruk, for instance, *boycotts* his faculty. He explains that he has given up on his studies, because he cannot find himself agreeing with the current policy and the present state of things at the faculty or the functioning of the entire education system, particularly the universities throughout BiH. Faruk considers young people's choices, in that they want to take a degree at the current universities in

BiH, as acts of compliance with the present system. By attending their respective faculties, they are legitimising the current state of things within the educational system. He views their attendance as a justification of corruptness that the present unjust system holds, which does not even provide for a legitimate selection of students. Furthermore, the system as it stands today, does not provide for a legitimate selection of the cadre and employees in general at the universities in BiH. Faruk's Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo is a perfect example of the chaotic circumstances, which accompany the disparity between young people's needs and the reality they are met with when entering the system of higher education, as he would explain. A considerable proportion of students are critical of the functioning of the system, especially if they themselves experience injustice, Faruk explains, while many find themselves comfortable with the unspoken norms of conduct at the various faculties. These unspoken norms regard, among others, the familiar practice of 'grades against payment', namely various professors charging for passing the exams, in some instances even degrees against payment. Furthermore, sexual blackmailing and various kinds of bribes are not particularly rare epiphanies. In Faruk's opinion, a significant part of this problem is the students themselves. By complying with such reality, they become adapted to the abnormalities of such system, something that results in a loss of perspective over one's own disadvantages and losses in one such arrangement. This is why he consciously chose not to be a part of the problem and thereby rather try to seek and examine a different kind of solution for himself.

Faruk has visited more than forty countries throughout his involvement and work connected to NGO sector, specifically his current organisation. He feels his alternative education, as he puts it, will 'fulfil his intellect in a better way than what present universities could do' for him in his country. His informal education through seminars, lectures, conferences and many other activities, his total experience with the organisational work, are all part of what he wants to construct for him to be *his* educational path. In this way, Faruk is rejecting to be a part of the objective reality, to hold a degree of an institution, which he feels, is not worthy. The escape he finds in his work related to the organisation he hopes will influence the objective reality present in today's BiH.

Dusan from Banja Luka told me about how Care International was the first organisation to work in the eastern part of BiH, at a time when 'nobody dared to do

anything over there'. This part of BiH was, back then, still under the embargo of OHR. As everybody knew what had happened there, the genocide that had been committed, which in turn rejected people, so that nobody in fact wanted to work or invest in these areas. 'We were the first ones to open an office in Zvornik', Dusan continues, as they questioned the purpose of opening an office in Bijeljina, which is close to the Serbian border and already well off economically, that is, under dubious ('criminal') conditions. 'Zvornik, Bratunac, Srebrenica, Skala, let us go there and open a dialogue with young people, where NGOs were perceived as some kind of sects', Dusan explains.

Precisely this kind of atmosphere for NGOs was evident in Banja Luka in 1996, immediately after the war, which was understandable. However, here, in this part, it was the same struggle in the year of 2000, because no one dared to break the ice. People were stigmatised for entering NGOs, even scouts or people sticking up posters were perceived as 'strange'. In this sense, Care International was revolutionary. For instance, bringing up and putting as an agenda Srebrenica in Bratunac, was something nobody believed would be possible.

Dusan, which we mentioned briefly in chapter three, held a regular job prior to his entering into the world of voluntarism and eventually paid work for Care International. When I asked why he chose to turn to NGO sector he explained how he always felt to be an idealist and how he believes in his possibility of contributing to the bettering of this dysfunctional state.

In this sense, we can identify young people as a marginalised group in many transitional or conflict-characterised societies. Transitional societies like BiH have a superior need to establish a fruitful social order, to engage in the socialisation of its members, particularly its forthcoming generations. When this is not done, it indicates a basic irrationality of the logics of the system.

## 6.2 Universalism or localisms or 'alternativism'?

Nongovernmental organisations have a long history, while the first formal non governmental organisation is said to be founded in 1839, the Anti-Slavery International (Davies 2008). As civil society is throughout history on the fall and on

the raise, influenced mostly by the climates of pre-war, war and post-war periods, 'the end of the Cold War is said to be the critical event in facilitating the accelerated growth of transnational civil society in the last two decades' (Kaldor referred in Davies 2008:12). Although this increase is apparent, there are difficulties facing the civil society in the increasing globalised world, often implying fragmentation. The transnational civil society may itself contribute to its own demise, as has happened before. The factors promoting civil society are often the same as those promoting its decline as 'the growth of xenophobic and fundamentalist groups is arguably partly a defensive reaction to a perceived threat to local cultures posed by apparently 'Western' ideals promoted by many of the predominant liberal elements of contemporary transnational civil society' (ibid. 14) .

The constrain between universal, local or what we might term 'alternative' orientations is something that can be detected in my informants' thinking and conduct. We can argue that there exist general tendencies of struggle between the universal principles NGOs are obliged to, the locally dominant understandings of problems and the alternative approaches to the problematic issues in local communities. This constrain is not limited to the different cities or various NGOs, rather they run through individuals and represent a struggle which my informants exhibited. Some have chosen to work on rather universal campaigns, as for instance a group of young people in the Centre for Non-violent Action in Sarajevo do, or the fight for abolition of obligatory military duty and introduction of civil service which Campaign Consciousness Objection (Prigovor Savjesti) does. Others have chosen to participate in local NGOs, which rather relate to local issues, such as a local NGO Kastel in Banja Luka, founded by and for local youth, providing them with a variety of activities and a public space for young people, regardless of their ethnic belonging. The same can be said for the organisation Young Bridge which holds a local aim of informing young people, regardless of their residence in either western or eastern part of Mostar. The more alternative orientation can be observed in local Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic in Mostar, where there is a 'social, cultural-artistic community with a sub cultural foundation drawing the alternative scene', as Aida, one of the managers in the committee of Abrasevic centre explained. They relate mainly to the relevant issues in BiH and expose an anti-commercial undertone. Their donors, for instance, have to be local donors, that is, the companies supporting them need to be from BiH.

In talking to my informants, they would find their own participation in these various NGOs as important departure point in regards to general social change in BiH. Some were of the persuasion that the local issues must be dealt with before one could address the more general, institutional change in the society. Others believe that overall values and attitudes should be the starting point, if there is to be any change at all in the way people resonate. This includes all relevant target groups, such as politicians, the police force, the educators, the soldiers, something that accompanies fight for change in overall consciousness of all citizens of BiH.

In my comparison of these ‘orientations’, the most significant feature of my informants was that they almost unanimously agreed upon the main problematic BiH is facing. Nevertheless, the locally and alternatively orientated organisations seemed to suffer economically and organisationally in comparison to the international NGOs, such as NDC or CARE. On the other hand, the local/alternative organisations tend to provide a significant cultural connotation for my informants as well as for visitors of Abrasvic and the wider community of Mostar. Local initiatives are thereby more inclined to their local voluntarism and are a function of spontaneity, which in a sense implies a self-initiating morality. Thus, a spirit of cooperation, derived from Durkheim’s analysis, ‘must be grounded in voluntarism and cannot be superimposed upon the social order through the agency of the state’ (Saunders 1993:71).

### 6.3 E U - Bosnia and Herzegovina’s saviour?

Many concerns and difficulties that European Union raises, it shares with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Alternatively, BiH shares them with Europe.

“The European core’s concern over its peripheries is not only directed to their progress in relation to market integration, but also to the condition of democracy and the rule of law. Nor is the concern limited to the scope of the formal enlargement of the European Union, [...] Civil society has not been rebuilt in BiH, but newly-feudalized, argue Bob Deacon and Paul Stubbs. The term “new feudalism” is defined by the emergence of a strong state that carries with it ethnic discrimination, patron-client relationships and Mafia-like power. [...] One must confront the paradox that the more disintegrated a society is, the greater its need for the coherent coordination between the domestic democratic system and support from external sources.” (Ogawa 2001:135-142)

Political cooperation between the core and peripheries of Europe toward the aim of bolstering civil society, testifies of this. Similar to the conventional development assistance in developing countries, this kind of process faces contradictions and difficulties. Reasons for emphasising the building of civil societies in post-Communist countries are directly related to the conditions of democracy. The intellectual and social movements that originally challenged the police-state regimes and the transition from socialist welfare institutions to market economies left behind a vacuum of social services. Societies that suffered from ethnic division and xenophobia were perhaps in a special need of the building of social trust (or ‘social capital’), which can function as a foundation for all remaining progresses (ibid. 2001). The substitution of state by international NGOs through the case of the social sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina implies the state-NGO relationships in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

“The main problems facing civil society actors in BiH were identified as being in their relations with their constituency, with the ruling structures, and with the international community.” (Rasmusson 2000:18)

It is in this particular sense that EU can provide a safe haven for BiH, although implications are many. If BiH enters EU without a developed civil society, without real democratic ordering, will these be imposed by the inclusion? On the other hand, is it not a precondition that these things should be at place in order to enter the EU?

The disciplinary measures of the international community in regards to BiH can be highlighted by Durkheim’s explanation of the spirit of discipline, which he also defines as the fundamental element of morality (Durkheim 1973:31).

“The practical reason for the limitations imposed by discipline is not so immediately apparent. It seems to imply violence against human nature. To limit man, to place obstacles in the path of his free development, is this not to prevent him from fulfilling himself? But we have seen that this limitation is a condition of our happiness and moral health. [...] The function of discipline is to guarantee such restraint. If such necessary limits are lacking, if the moral forces surrounding us can no longer contain or moderate our passion, human conduct-loses itself in the void, the emptiness of which is disguised and adorned with the specious label of the infinite.” (ibid. 48)

It is especially important to consider this in critical and abnormal circumstances, where the feeling for the rule and for discipline must be awakened.

Durkheim continues:

“In sum, the theories that celebrate the beneficence of unrestricted liberties are apologies for a diseased state. [...] “Rules” and “liberty” are far from being exclusive or antithetical terms. The latter is only possible by the virtue of the former. The idea of regulation should no longer be accepted with docile resignation; it deserves to be cherished. This is a truth important to remember these days, and one to which public attention can’t be too often drawn. For we are living precisely in one of those critical, revolutionary periods when authority is usually weakened through the loss of traditional discipline—a time that may easily give rise to a spirit of anarchy.” (ibid. 54)

Since we have identified the all-including state of anomie in the society of our reference, these passages designate well to our context. Thus, whether the EU will be ‘the saviour’ of BiH capsules the question of moral education. In shaping national morality, the political society, the nation:

“If a man is to be a moral being, he must be devoted to something other than himself; he must feel at one with a society, however lowly it may be. [...] In a general sense, morality begins where and when social life begins, but there are nonetheless different degrees of morality, if for no other reason than that all human societies are not of equal moral value. Now there is one that enjoys a real primacy over all the others—the political society, the nation. However, it can enjoy moral primacy only on the condition that it is not conceived of an unscrupulously self-centred being, solely preoccupied with expansion and self-aggrandizement to the detriment of similar entities; but as one of many agencies that must collaborate for the progressive realization of the conception of mankind. The school has, above all, the function of linking the child to this society.” (ibid. 79)

As we have discussed previously, the feeling of belonging, the coherence of the identification, the moral state of affairs in BiH are all indicators of the anomic condition. Thus, it is of utmost importance for the analysis of this society and for our case in particular to attend to these questions and possible explanations of existing conditions. This is why it is important to discuss, as in the proceeding, the notion of tolerance.

## Chapter 7

### A question of tolerance?

In the last chapter, I will argue that the anomie identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a post-conflict society is *totius substantiae*, affecting the whole organism (Durkheim referred in Giddens 1972). The anomie is contained in the structural defect of the society of our reference, namely in the constitution, the government and in the territorial organisation of the state.

We discuss further that implicit to the notion of tolerance is that the tolerated are in fact aberrations. Furthermore, in most cases there is a dominant position in the relation of the parties in question, namely the tolerant party and the spared, tolerated party. Nevertheless, even if there is an even distribution of dominance and power between two groupings that tolerate each other, the notion of tolerance implies that the tolerant one is tolerating some deviation from their respective points of view. In addition to this implication, there is always the self-imposing question of what we in fact are tolerant of? Should intolerance be tolerated, or, can tolerance of intolerance remain properly defined as tolerance?

When defining nationalism as a contra productive force within BiH society, it stands in contrast to the idea that national unity is a background condition of democratic transition (Rustow referred in Raik 1998). Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to stimulate and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states, which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole, and by the particular milieu for which he is specifically destined (Giddens 1972:204).

In this sense and in the light of Durkheim's devotion to cohesion and collective cognition, I will attempt to discuss in the concluding part of the chapter his notion of the truth and why it must not remain rigid.



## 7.1 Sociology and choice making

Author of the book “*Sociology after Bosnia and Kosovo: Recovering Justice*”, Keith Doubt (2005), presents us with an interesting study of the events and a sociological analysis of the complexity of human interaction in BiH that has unfolded in the past ten years. The introductory here, written by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, warns us about the lack of sociological research work in relation to the recent history and the present situation in Bosnia. He poses something we will treat as an important question on whether sociology as a valid science about society can exist as such if ignoring one such alarming and difficult theme of its time. He continues further by stating that no matter how incomparable and unique events in BiH are, it would be wrong to assume that they are isolated from the events outside BiH. It would be naive and dysfunctional for both BiH, the wider world and for sociology as a subject, to occupy a standpoint from where only authentic spokesmen can convey something and have privileged position on these matters. The opposite extreme is the standpoint, which argues that we ought to dislocate every such authentic position, so that in fact no privileged positions should be viewed as such. With these extreme perspectives, the postmodernist position is put under a critical magnifying glass, that is, for claiming the exclusive legitimacy of either authenticity or, on the other side, the dissolution of any such privilege.<sup>33</sup> This becomes problematic especially when ignoring an important component of the theme in front of us, namely the role of choice making. If we ignore the process of reaching a decision, where does this leave the subject in our analysis? Social action cannot be adequately analysed if this important aspect of human action is ignored. The subject as such becomes invisible in analysis holding their respective positions and is reduced to his or hers behaviour as reactive in character. Reductionism of the subject is something that poses a serious error, if we indeed are interested in the subjects’ membership within a society.

Bosnia is in this context contradicting sociology. Perhaps, Bauman boldly

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<sup>33</sup> See Keith Doubt’s “*Sociology after Bosnia*”, particularly his chapter on the injustice of postmodernism: “Peter Handke about Serbia and a lesson from Bosnia”. Here he criticises a postmodernist position of an Austrian writer and photographer who dismisses the view that the justice for victims of war crimes also is justice for war criminals. ‘Is justice not an advantage, not only for thousands of victims in BiH, but also for those who victimised them?’ (Doubt 2005:103), he poignantly asks.

wonders, the events are too heavy for the conventional sociology to conceive. Nevertheless, sociology itself must take risks when working on such theme of its time. For if the case is, as it in actual is in Bauman's opinion, that sociology is incapable of explaining the events in BiH, than the horizons of sociological knowledge need to be reinvestigated and widened. In his "*Sociology after the Holocaust*", Bauman also states and refers to the same passage in the introduction of Doubt's book:

"The Holocaust has more to say about the state of sociology than sociology in its present shape is able to add to our knowledge of the Holocaust." (Bauman, 2005:13)

Doubt and Bauman, then, wanted to warn us of the very important subject of quite recent European history; the tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If explanations of these events remain reductionistic, we will never be able to grasp the *actions* of the *subject* (not the subject's behaviour, which does not involve choice making) and therefore we will neither comprehend the lessons to be drawn from Bosnian case. From a reductionist kind of standpoint there cannot be any development of moral understanding whatsoever, something that is crucial for future restoration of human relationships in BiH and otherwise (ibid.).

## 7.2 Moral in the making - "Learning morality"

Tolerance is a virtue in modern pluralistic democracy, which emerged in modern America. In this sense it is a political virtue of contemporary world. Tolerance in regards to conflict resolution is the most necessary component, not the least a defining condition for avoidance of an outburst of a conflict. One part will, for instance, tolerate another until intolerance sets in, which would call for action against the other part. At the onset, the hypothesis is that tolerance is not merely preferable to the intolerance but a necessary moral commitment in modern democracies or any healthy society in Durkheimian terms. Nevertheless, we have to consider what tolerance actually entails and how we could define this concept as objectively as possible.

In any practical situation, tolerance forces upon us the question of which part

is tolerated and which part is tolerant of the other. In this sense, tolerance presumes a discourse of power, a power position that enables one part to represent itself as a tolerant part. The other part, the tolerated part, is implicitly or explicitly representing a deviation, either from the majority or from the authority. This is first component of tolerance.

Possibility of universal tolerance, a tolerance that would in theory have zero boundaries, is needless to say utterly idealistic. This is then another element of tolerance; it needs differentiation (Marcuse 1997). Tolerance for something presumes intolerance for other things. What is to be tolerated and what is not to be tolerated? Somehow, considering this concept, an expecting problem awaits behind tolerance, as if an end to tolerance almost contains trouble.

As tolerance is an absolute necessity for a civil society, there are a few problems arising when defining tolerance in the manner as described above. As an absolute tolerance comes to question when its rational foundations are taken away, there is another crucial component of tolerance. Namely, that the *telos* of tolerance is the truth (Marcuse 1997:128). Consider for instance the foundation of mass media and the idea that the uninformed are as equal as the informed, where pure tolerance justifies by a democratic argument, that no one party can decide what is truthful or good and what is not. The people must by themselves consider the opposing opinions and choose thereby. This again implies that the people are in a position to consider, choose and have an autonomous opinion. In defining borderlines of tolerance, the absolute impartiality in presenting opposing positions needs to be evaluated and reconsidered. Objectivity of this kind can, in a democratic regime, delete differences between the truthful and false, between information and indoctrination (ibid.).

In democracy, whether representational, parliamentary or direct, in which majority does not arise from independent thought and opinion but from the ‘oligopolistic manipulation of public opinion’ (ibid. 147), there is neither moral commitment nor tolerance. Indeed, the illusion of tolerance is obvious in the importance of tolerance in modern democracy, as that is held as the ultimate goal. Thus, tolerance is in reality implemented: within firm borders of ‘in advance established inequality’ (ibid.148).

International approach to rebuilding plural society in BiH is very much conditioned by introducing tolerance, which in turn would reduce ethnic tensions.

There have been identified shortages in the theoretical basis behind peacebuilding projects many times over. One of the more relevant studies in terms of my study regards a critique of the conflict resolution theory which is most often applied for practical peacebuilding and which also shows to be in disjunction with the empirical observation, a case study of young people living in wartime Bosnia (Gillard 2001). In fact, this study is based upon young people from the organisation Mladi Most (Young Bridge) in Mostar, which we have mentioned previously. The critique of this study contains the epistemological basis for impasse in social sciences; that (social) reality can be objectively observed and known is flawed and that the objectivist approach actually allows for subjectivity to shape the research findings although denying that same subjective impact (ibid. 83). The ‘subjective objectivity’ and the theory constructed within such discourse, inform further assumptions and further experimental designs and observations, which account for further gaps between theory and empirical contexts (ibid. 84). Thus, alternative understandings of meaningful peacebuilding and identifications among young people were becoming apparent. The study examines how social reality is constructed and negotiated intersubjectively, interaction being the main source of non-nationalistic and non-conflictual identifications (ibid. 92).

In the context of my own study, I would suggest a further step in both theoretical and empirical conduct. Namely, throughout the analysis of young people’s engagement, what is termed as ‘learning democracy’, a moral segment is unavoidably underlying this concept. The same is true for concept of anomie. The dissolution of norms and morality, which represent main traits of an anomic state, implies that norms and morality must *actualise* if the state of anomie is to diminish. Implementation of norms is thus an absolute necessity for a civil society.

As civil society has become an integral part of international intervention with enormous amounts of financial, human and symbolic resources invested in civil society and its building programs, the results showing are disappointing (Belloni 2001).

“The international community’s idealized conception of civil society differs dramatically from the actual conditions in which Bosnian civic groups and organisations function. By viewing civil society building as a technical task, [...], the international community misunderstands the struggle to overcome nationalist fragmentation. As a result, it miscomprehends the nature of its

involvement and retards the transition towards more substantive levels of democratization.

Civil society's contribution to peace, tolerance, and the reintegration of the country thus has been extremely limited. This is due not only to the lack of international foresight, but also to the postwar constitutional structure that does not encourage local initiatives for peacebuilding and is ambiguous about the possibility of reconciliation among the three ethnic groups." (ibid.163/164)

This is something clearly projected throughout my empirical data on the subject matter. As we have investigated the post-war constitutional structure and identified in itself an anomic type, here is one possible explanation, which covers socio-individual components of the problem in front of us.

Some peoples have, as Jewish people for instance, had such experiences with identity pressures that they have in actual developed certain characteristic modes of thought based on the share amount and intensity of such historical pressures (Bar-On 2004). Repressed traumatic events, on the social level as well as on the individual level, do not cease to exist. They continue to boil under the surface, as silenced facts. The internalised aggression of the previous persecutions that have not resolved reappear in forms of displaced aggressions (towards the Palestinians) or in the form of seeing oneself in the negative light of an eternal victim (ibid. 112). As the problem with the acknowledgement arises in the society of our reference, this is a 'common problem for the Serbian and Israeli-Jewish societies: They have to acknowledge their responsibility for their roles as perpetrators of other people, thereby giving up part of their self-perceptions as being only heroic freedom fighters' (Ron referred in Bar-On 2004:113). Facing brain-drain in the Balkan region, similar problem is relevant for other conflict-characterised regions, as it is clear that without the young capable intelligent generation a society loses its future (ibid.).

In the context of my own study, I have been investigating the possibilities for social doers, my informants, to envisage a society based on tolerance and the truth.

We have seen what some of the theoretical constrains to democracy in multiethnic societies are, in terms of procedural versus substantive democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 'The common people rule' - how to teach the common people to rule? Just as a government can be undemocratic, so can a majority of electorate body be undemocratic. How do we learn to be moral? As when a child develops, there is a critical stage where morality is developed, so must a society develop collective morality, in Durkheimian sense.

In Durkheim's critique of pragmatism as radical empiricism and as contradicting thought, there are important lessons to be drawn. He contains that:

“Pragmatism therefore lacks those basic characteristics which one has the right to expect of a philosophical doctrine. [...] Its dominant trait is the need to ‘soften the truth’, to make it ‘less rigid’, as James says - to free it, in short, from the discipline of logical thought. [...] It is here that we can establish a PARALLEL BETWEEN PRAGMATISM AND SOCIOLOGY. By applying the *historical* point of view to the order of things human, sociology is led to set itself the same problem. Man is a product of history and hence of becoming; there is nothing in him that is either given or defined in advance. History begins nowhere and it ends nowhere. Everything in man has been made by mankind in the course of time. Consequently, if truth is human, it too is a human product. Sociology applies the same conception to reason. All that constitutes reason, its principles and categories, has been made in the course of history.” (Durkheim 1983:2-4)

Durkheim poses a crucial question regarding the postulate on truth. How can truth be conceived of as something definitive, in the light of pragmatist logics? His answer is as follows. Truth grows, it does not change. It is enriched by virtue of its creative power, it is the collective representation that we experience in the presence of truth and the major role of the collective representations is to ‘make’ that higher reality, which is *society* itself. For pragmatism, on the other hand, ‘truth *has no speculative function*: all that concerns it is its *practical utility*’ (ibid: 6).

“The error of the pragmatists is precisely that of denying the specific nature of knowledge and consequently of thought and even of consciousness. The role of consciousness is not to direct the behaviour of a being with no need of knowledge: it is *to constitute a being who would not exist without it*. [...] That is why truth *is a norm for thought* in the same way that the moral ideal *is a norm for conduct*.” (ibid. 4-8)

Thus, the search for truth for truth's sake is neither an isolated case, nor a pathological fact, nor a deflection of thought. Indeed, even if we suppose that it is an aberration, and that men were driven by illusion to seek for a truth, which could not be grasped, we should still have to explain that illusion. To deny that there is truth would be to deny human society. It is from the collective thought that we can materialise our ideas and afterwards experience the truth about the same things. As Durkheim contains, ‘that is why truth *is a norm for thought*, in the same way that the moral ideal *is a norm for conduct*’ (ibid.9).

“A further consequence of this transformation is that *tolerance* must henceforth be based on this idea of the complexity and richness of reality, and then on the diversity of opinions, which is both necessary and effective. Everyone must be able to admit that someone else has perceived an aspect of reality, which he himself had not grasped, but which is as real and as true as those to which he had gone from preference.” (ibid. 10)

Now, in defining the anomie as discussed above brings us to conclusion that the type of society of our reference is in urgent need for a collective representation of a democratic norm for thought and democratic norm for conduct. It is viable for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to indulge in ‘learning democracy’ if there is to be any chance for collective truth to take form and thus to put an end to the ‘ethniced truths’, which are fuelling the condition of anomic state of affairs in all segments of social life in BiH. Let us, in short, consider the content of following statement.

“In BiH, nationalism as a phenomenon or nationalists as a group is a reality, although far too many people are ready to ascribe responsibility of the present condition to this. For me, it is a simplification of things, nationalism as an appearance is a *consequence* of some kind of ambient in the society.”  
(Nele, CNA, Sarajevo)

In fact, Nele has identified the core problem, which can explain causes and further consequences of ‘ambient’, which we term anomie, for a moral coherence of the society in front of us. This is what the subject matter of sociology ought to be.

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## Appendix A

### Interview guide

The first interview guide designed during my fieldwork is very similar to the here attached interview guide. The one included contains some additional questions and sub-questions which were in use during the twenty and some interviews.

- 1) Could you please tell me a bit about your self, your age, background your interests and what you might find important in your life?
  
- 2) Could you please tell me what led you to become involved in the organisation you now are a member of?  
(What made you found the organisation?)
  
- 3) And what would you think motivates other young people to become involved in the nongovernmental organisations?
  
- 4) What kind of activities are usually organised in the organisation which you are a member of?  
(Are there certain activities which you prefer taking part in or consider more important?)  
(So you are more concrete now in your activities, you would say?)
  
- 5) Would you say that you find more recognition or acknowledgements for your standpoints within the organisation, or do you find this in some other places?  
(So you would say values are most important within your organisation?)
  
- 6) And how would you describe political situation in the country?  
(So you would say this (democracy, tolerance...) is very important?)
  
- 7) In your own opinion, how do you think this kind of political situation effects young people in general?

- 8) What would you think ought to be done, concretely?  
(Do you think that is too idealistic?)
- 9) Can you draw on one positive political change from which you personally have experienced an effect of in the past few years?
- 10) And negative political leadership and management? What enters your mind at first?
- 11) How important do you perceive your own ethnic belonging?
- 12) Do you think that young people in general consider this as an important factor in interaction with others?  
(Sorry for interrupting... Do you think this is based on the fact that they didn't experience somehow directly...? (what it means to live together in peaceful times))  
(So they would rather blame this other ethnicity than grown ups in general?)
- 13) And would you say that young people experience political persuasion as an important factor in interaction with other young people?
- 14) Do you have any examples where this, political persuasion or ethnic belonging, played a part in some activities in the scope of the organisation?
- 15) And would you like to add something to the interview?

## Appendix B



(A sign showing the way to the NGO in Mostar, Young Bridge or 'Mladi Most')



('Us Croats', written on the pavement, showing direction to the 'right side' of the city)