"We are hungry in three languages"

Mobilizing beyond ethnicity in Bosnia Herzegovina

Chiara Milan

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, October 2016

European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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To granma Antonietta,

who could not see the end of this thesis

but wholeheartedly supported me throughout its writing

Abstract

This thesis examines the occurrence and spread of contentious collective action within a country, Bosnia Herzegovina, that historically does not bear a solid tradition of mobilization. In particular, the study focuses on the rise of mobilizations that transcend traditional ethno-nationalist cleavages, and involve individuals and groups that activate an identity other than the ethno-national one, still dominant in the Bosnian Herzegovinian society. I adopted the expression "beyond ethnicity" to label this type of mobilization, stressing that individuals and challenger groups involved in the protest overcame the centrality of ethnicity as social construct, privileging another commonality between individuals that deliberately superseded, and sometimes clashed with, the dominant ethno-national categories that had crystallized in the 1990s. This new, overarching identity is often grounded on feelings of deprivation.

Informed by a five-year empirical research in the country, the study explores the variation in spatial and social scale of contention across three waves of mobilization that occurred between 2012 and 2014 and took divergent paths, despite similar socio-economic structural conditions. Through a comparative case study approach, the thesis analyses three waves of protests, taken as manifestations of "mobilization beyond ethnicity": "The Park is Ours" protests (2012), spawned from the defence of a public park of Banja Luka; the mobilization for civil rights of the children, which became known as #JMBG (2013); and the protests that erupted in Tuzla triggered by local workers, which turned into what activists defined as a "Social Uprising" (2014).

The study explains why the waves of mobilization occurred between 2012 and 2014 spread unevenly across the national territory, involved diverse social groups, and entailed different degrees of disruption. The findings of this research demonstrate that a combination of factors both internal and external to the movements made the territorial and social shift upward more likely, and influenced the organizational patterns and action repertoires of the challengers. These factors are pre-existing networks among movement organizers; the resonance of "beyond ethnic" frames in certain cultural milieus; and a conducive political opportunity structure. In the conclusions, the thesis elucidates the implications of these findings for the study of social movements in the post-Yugoslav space.

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Confronting an environment with a different culture, history, and practices constituted both a challenge and one of the most enriching experiences of my professional and personal life. I wish to thank the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European University Institute for having provided me with the necessary financial support.

Thanks to my supervisor Laszlo Bruszt, who accompanied me in the diverse phases of this journey, offering guidance in particular in the crucial moment of the writing process. Back in 2010, Donatella della Porta bet that I would start a PhD at the EUI soon or later. In spite of my scepticism towards academia, eventually I have to prove her right. I am particularly grateful to her for trusting me since the beginning, and for providing plenty of chances to research fascinating topics and challenging working opportunities throughout these years.

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I wish to thank the Center for Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo who hosted me as a Research Fellow in the fall term 2013-14, and express my gratitude in particular to Adriano Remiddi and Federico Sicurella, to the Erasmus Student Network and the International Relation Office of the University of Sarajevo that welcomed me and helped me finding my way through administrative hurdles.

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Thanks to my family who stood by me throughout these years, following my numerous trips across former Yugoslavia and beyond, to my zietti Mario and Maria, who always encouraged me, and thanks in particular to granma Antonietta, who was never tired of hearing my stories and always waited for me to come back with some Bosnian pastries. Stefania constituted the main and endless source of inspiration and motivation throughout these years. She went way beyond being a colleague and a sister, reading and proofreading all that I wrote in five years, even when she was on the other side of the globe. Thanks for having been the best supervisor, besides being the better sister.

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Last but not least, I would like to address my gratitude to all my interviewees. They dedicated their time to explain to me what was going on in their country, made me feel like home, opened their houses and their hearts even when talking with me meant repeating the same things for the umpteenth time. The countless chats, coffees and lessons I have been offered by the people I interviewed cannot be refunded enough with all my own gratitude. Might one day you live in the country you deserve.

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List of Abbreviations

AFŽ	*Antifašistički Front Žena* (Anti-Fascist front of Women)
BiH	*Bosna i Hercegovina* (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GFAP	General Framework Agreement for Peace
GROZD	*Građansko Organizovanje za Demokratiju* (Citizen's organization for democracy)
HDZ BiH	*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine* (Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
HR	High Representative
IDPs	Internal Displaced Persons
IELB	Inter-entity Boundary Line
IMF	International Monetary Found
JMBG	*Jedinstveni matični broj građana* (Unique Master Citizens Number)
LCY	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NR BiH	*Narodna Republika Bosne i Hercegovine* (People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
OHR	Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina
PIC	Peace Implementation Council
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
RS	*Republika Srpska* (Serbian Republic)
SBB	*Savez za bolju budućnost Bosne i Hercegovine* (Union for a Better Future of Bosnia Herzegovina)
SDA	*Stranka Demokratske Akcije* (Party of Democratic Action)
SDP	*Socijaldemokratska Partija* (Social Democratic Party)
SDS	*Srpska Demokratska Stranka* (Serb Democratic Party)
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SKOJ	*Savez Komunističke Omladine Jugoslavije* (League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia)
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SNSD	*Savez Nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats)
SR BiH	*Socijalistička Republika Bosna i Hercegovina* (Socialist Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina)
SSO BiH	*Savez Socijalističke Omladine BiH* (League of Socialist Youth of BiH)
SSRNJ	*Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije* (Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia)
UJDI	*Udruženje za jugoslovensku/jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu* (Association of Yugoslav Democratic Initiative)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Introduction

On February 5th, 2014 protests erupted in Tuzla, a city of 120,000 inhabitants in the northeastern part of Bosnia Herzegovina[1], in the heart of former Yugoslavia. That day, a group of disenfranchised workers voiced their discontent by staging a demonstration in front of the local government, claiming their salaries and pension benefits. The same night Emin, a local friend of mine, who had been active in the 2009 student occupation of the University of Tuzla, contacted me on the social networking platform Facebook. "Chiara, something big is going to happen in Bosnia", he wrote. "The riot police charged the workers protesting in Tuzla, the whole city is blocked, people have been injured and arrested, this is unconceivable!" A couple of hours later, Emin sent me a piece he wrote on the spur of the moment, which he entitled "Yours, mine, ours? We are all in this all together now!" (Eminagić 2014). In the article, he claimed that the protest had the potential to outgrow people's past attempts to express their anger and discontent, and invited the readers to join the workers in their struggle.

I immediately translated the article into Italian for publication in the online magazine *East Journal*. The article, which appeared under the title "*Lavoratori di tutta Bosnia, unitevi!*" (Workers all over Bosnia unite!) (Milan 2014b), turned out to be the first of a series reporting on the Bosnian protests. Emin's message was somewhat premonitory, and the eventful ensuing days proved him right. In the aftermath of the repression of the demonstration, further protests unfolded in the city and across the country, bringing about a wave of contention that some observers dubbed "the Bosnian social uprising". Shortly following the violent riots in Tuzla and other urban centers of the country, the fierce rage faded away, leaving room for participatory citizens' assemblies known as "plenums". Born out of street protests, the plenums aimed at discussing the grievances of the demonstrators, as well as the protests' trajectory, its

[1] The territory of Bosnia Herzegovina clusters two geographical regions: Bosnia, which covers the northern and central parts of the country, and Herzegovina, which includes the southern part. The official name of the country is Bosnia Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina*) (BiH). For the sake of brevity, throughout the dissertation I refer to the country interchangeably as Bosnia Herzegovina, Bosnia, or with the acronym BiH.

tactics and organizational forms.

The 2014 protests marked the largest outbreak of public anger since the end of the 1992-95 war, and became "more successful than a series of small-scale and short-lived protests of workers from all these companies in the past ten years" (Eminagić 2014, 1). What is more, the participation of different social groups in the so-called social uprising proved that, although ethno-nationalism informs citizens' everyday life, ethnic categories under certain circumstances can be sidelined and even rejected. A slogan written on a billboard during the 2014 rallies reflects particularly the extent to which the feeling of deprivation and rage against corrupt policy-makers was far more salient than ethnic categorization throughout the protests. The slogan, which says "We are hungry in three languages" (*Gladni smo na tri jezika*), expresses starkly that the plummeting socio-economic conditions of the broader population, as well as the problems encountered in everyday life, affect the Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens across ethno-national category of identification. At the same time, the slogan sarcastically stresses the attempt of nationalist policy-makers to divide Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens into three distinct ethno-national categories. As such, they strive to make even the domestic language a matter of dispute, divided into Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian despite the three varieties being mutually intelligible[2] (Hunt, 2015). Hence the title of the thesis.

The 2014 Bosnian protests caught analysts and scholars by surprise. Long-term observers of the country's socio-political dynamics did not expect an ethnified and contested state undergoing a process of transition such as Bosnia Herzegovina to be ripe for large-scale, violent protests overcoming ethnic antagonism. In this regard, Stef Jansen, an anthropologist researching the country for over a decade, declared that "it is not surprising that people are disappointed, enraged, angry at the political class, the injustice and the inequality. (…) But that rage never found a public outlet before" (BiH protest files 2014e). While they were unexpected, the 2014 riots were somewhat predictable. I had left Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia Herzegovina, just one week before

[2] Three official languages are recognized in BiH: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Since linguistically they differ only slightly among each other, throughout the dissertation I refer to them using the singular term "local language".

the demonstrations started, with a nagging question: Why do Bosnians not rebel? Since 2009 I had been living in and out of the country, in both Sarajevo and Prijedor, in the northern part of BiH and a couple of hours from the Croatian border. In both cities I had contact with people living in extreme indigence, and I could see first-hand that the wounds of the 1992-95 war were far from healed. In my last six-month stay in the capital, I had the distinct impression that the living conditions of the Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens had plummeted yet further. More and more elderly people were spotted rummaging through dustbins, as well as begging on the streets. Most of the infrastructure that had been damaged during the war remained wrecked or abandoned; the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies (CIPS) of the University of Sarajevo that had hosted me as a visiting researcher in the fall of the 2013-14 academic year was left without heating in the long mountain winter, while the over-inflated, cumbersome bureaucratic system had drove me to the edge of madness — and I could only guess how it could be for the local residents. The increasing despair and growing social tension were tangible, and, back then, the time seemed ripe for a collective burst of rage.

Still, the people I talked to grin bitterly every time I asked them why the locals had not yet revolted against the unjust conditions in which they were doomed to live. Often, they would caustically argue that "Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens will never rebel. Unless you deprive them of the right to smoke in public spaces… only that could be the trigger for a revolution!" Someone sadly confessed: "How could you expect a revolution to start here? We have no jobs, we have no rights, but the coffee places are full: the only thing we are good at is to complain in front of a cup of coffee"[3]. These statements point to the widespread apathy of Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens, but fail to acknowledge the previous attempts of certain social groups to act for social change regardless of ethnic categories. Yet, in previous years Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens had made various efforts to claim their right to a better life by means of collective contentious action. Upon closer look, in fact, the 2014 wave of protests represents but one episode of a series of contentious events that had started some years earlier, which I have termed "mobilization beyond ethnicity". By using this expression, I intend to stress that these protests activated alternative identities that deliberately superseded, and

[3] Quotes adapted from personal communications, January 2014.

sometimes clashed with, the dominant ethno-national categories that had crystallized in the 1990s.

Informed by a five-year empirical research in the country, this dissertation explores the variation in spatial and social scale of contention across three waves of mobilization that occurred between 2012 and 2014. Adopting a comparative case study approach typical of social movement studies, the dissertation analyses "The Park is Ours" protests (2012); the mobilization for civil rights of the children, which became known as #JMBG (2013); and the protests that erupted in Tuzla triggered by local workers, which turned into what activists defined as a "Social Uprising" (2014). I take these three waves of protests as manifestations, to varying extents, of what I have called "mobilization beyond ethnicity". The common ground among the three waves of mobilization analysed is that challenger groups overcame the centrality of ethnicity as social construct, privileging another commonality between individuals. This new, overarching identity is often grounded on feelings of deprivation, and consciously transcends, and on occasion challenges, the constituents' ethnic categorization. However, there are several differences among these three waves of protests that demand deeper scrutiny, in particular their variance in spatial and social scale. While the most recent wave shifted from the local to the (nearly) national level, the previous two remained mostly local. Similarly, while the latter remained bound to the middle-class urban population of the city in which the protest emerged, the 2014 uprising expanded its social base, coming to involve social groups from all walks of life, such as the working class and pensioners. While did some parts of the country rebel and others did not, across the three waves? And why did different social groups protest together under the same demands?

More specifically, this study aims at determining the factors accounting for said different spatial and social scale of contention. In what follows, I look at how these mobilizations came about, expose the conditions that allowed for their emergence and rise, and explore the collective identity of protesters as it overcame ethnic categories. In addition, I examine the social actors involved (individual activists, domestic organizations, and networks) and the actions they undertook, as well as their organizational structure. The research draws upon the data collected in the period between 2012 and 2016, by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and extended participant observation.

By focusing on political mobilizations that have been largely ignored by sociologists and political scientists alike, this study addresses a gap in the literature dealing with contentious politics in the terrain often referred to as "post-Yugoslav space", in particular with respect to the evolution of the so-called civil society and grassroots movements. To date, in fact, the appearance of social movements in the Yugoslav successor states has not been sufficiently covered in the academic literature. Furthermore, most of the existing work is limited in geographical scope, focusing on a single case and failing to offer a comparative cross-case investigation. Hence, this comparative study provides important insights into the emergence of political contention in the post-Yugoslav space, with respect to its "beyond ethnic" character. In addition, by investigating how organized collective action emerges, develops, and spreads in war-torn societies, this thesis contributes also to the literature on contentious action in ethnically divided environments.

Layout of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Part I describes the research project. Specifically, Chapter 1 elucidates the issue at stake in the dissertation, and details the key concepts that I employ throughout the study. It explains the reasons that I have chosen Bosnia Herzegovina as a country case, and situates the research in the existing literature, highlighting the gap that the study intends to fill. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical tenets of the investigation, touching upon the research problem and clarifying the research questions, the key concepts and the analytical tools used to analyse the variation under scrutiny. Chapter 3 illustrates the rationale of case selection and the research methods. Chapter 4 delves into the historical, political and cultural background of Bosnia Herzegovina, elucidating specifically the features of the civil society and civic engagement in the country prior and after the war. It describes the development of civil society during the socialist rule and the post-war period, focusing in particular on the instances of grassroots activism emerged in the recent years, under the assumption that previous similar occurrences are crucial to grasping the development of mobilization over time.

The second part of the dissertation is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the three case studies. Analytical tools drawn from social movement studies literature, in particular the concepts of networks and resources, frames, and opportunities, are

employed to shed light on the factors affecting the dynamics of mobilizations beyond ethnicity. In order to answer the research questions, each chapter provides a thick description of the mobilization and protest events unfolded during the 2012-14 period. It does so by analysing the internal movement processes within the cultural and institutional context in which they emerged. Chapter 5 focuses on the 2012 protests of Banja Luka, which spawned from the defence of a public park of the city sold to a local businessman close to the political establishment. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the 2013 mobilization for the right of children to obtain ID numbers, which first emerged in Sarajevo and diffused in some parts of the country. Finally, chapter 7 is devoted to the 2014 uprising that started in Tuzla over unemployment and corruption, and spread throughout most of the country. In the conclusion of the dissertation, to which Chapter 8 is dedicated, I discuss the empirical findings in a comparative way, explaining how in the three waves of mobilization the combination of specific factors fostered or discouraged collective action, and influenced the tactical choices of the challengers. In this final chapter, I also reflect upon the limitations of the research project, and suggest potential areas for further research.

PART I

STUDYING CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

Chapter 1
Defining mobilization beyond ethnicity

This chapter presents the theoretical tenets of the research project, and elucidates the key concepts employed throughout the dissertation. Political science and social movement studies provide useful definitions with which to approach the socio-political phenomena and the type of actors at the core of this research. In particular, concepts taken both from social movement studies and literature on ethnicity can be used as points of entry to explore the case studies. The chapter is structured as follows. First, it delves into the main theoretical notions drawn from social movement studies, such as contentious politics, mobilization, civil society, and social movements. Next, it provides an in-depth overview and the definition of the key concepts taken from the literature on ethnicity, discussing the meanings and features of ethnicity, ethno-nationalism and divided societies. Next, a section elucidates the subject of the research, and explains why I opted for the definition of mobilization beyond ethnicity. Another section clarifies the reasons why Bosnia Herzegovina has been selected as country case study, while the final part of the chapter situates the dissertation in the existing literature.

1.1 Defining the key concepts

1.1.1 Civil society, social movements, contentious politics and mobilization

This research focuses on the realm of civil society, a term that can be understood in a number of ways. The term "civil society" was used by French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville to describe a public space for action and debate that lies outside the state and the market, and as a realm of voluntary association among free individuals that balances the power of states and businesses (Tocqueville 2000). In a similar vein, international relations scholars have associated civil society with self-organised citizenry (Cohen and Arato 1992), and "a realm of life institutionally separated (…) from territorial state institutions" (Keane 1998, 6). Across definitions, we find the main features of civil society are a high degree of autonomy from the spheres of the state and the market, and the free will of citizens to participate in diverse social affiliations. Kaldor, for instance, placed great emphasis on "self-organization and civic autonomy in

reaction to the vast increase in the reach of the modern state, and on the creation of independent spaces" (2003, 21). She also noted that there is no universally agreed-upon definition of civil society, with its ambiguity representing one of its attractions (ibid.). In her book, Kaldor stressed also that the term civil society became the catchword of the 1990s in the context of the transformation of Eastern Europe. Thus, the notion of civil society was re-invented at the time to describe both the masses taking to the streets and the dissident intellectuals who demanded the resignation of authoritarian governments in the area of the former communist block (Kaldor 2003). As Hann and Dunn have written, in Eastern Europe civil society was reified as a "collective, homogenised agent, combating a demonic state" (Hann and Dunn 1996, 7).

Kaldor (2003) specifies that within the realm of civil society one can find social movements, associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the non-profit sector. Among these, social movements have been broadly conceived as instances of sustained mobilization, or, alternatively, as "set[s] of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preference for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1217). Along similar lines, Olzak contended that social movements are "goal-directed collective actions that range broadly across a number of different forms of mobilization" (2004, 667), where for instances of collective action we entail "a set of practices (i) involving simultaneously a number of individuals and groups, (ii) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space, (iii) implying a social field of relationship and (iv) the capacity of the people involved of making sense of what they are doing" (Melucci 1996, 20). Among the scholars studying contentious politics, Tarrow stresses that social movements bear the capacity to "maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (Tarrow 2011, 7), a challenging dimension they carry for being "a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures" (Zald and Ash 1966, 329). By the same token, della Porta and Diani underscore that social movements adopt "unusual patterns of political behaviour" (2009, 28), as they often engage in public protests as a source of pressure. Social movements are said to share three distinct traits, which must be concurrently present and sustained over time: conflict against a target (such as the government or a corporation), a shared collective identity, and the ability to create networks of groups and individuals (Diani and Bison 2004).

For what concerns the conflictual dimension of social movements, the use of disruptive techniques "by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities" (Tarrow 2011, 7) has been generally defined by scholars as “contentious politics”. Contentious action is said to occur when “connected clusters of persons make consequential claims on other clusters of persons or on major political actors, just so long as at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a third party to the claims” (Tilly 2006, 21). Among the different types and forms of contention, one can find revolutions, rebellions, strikes, and civil wars (Tarrow 2006), but the most central process in contentious politics is said to be mobilization (Tilly and Tarrow 2015). Without mobilization, Tarrow maintains, “no collective action would take place” (Tarrow 2011, 188). Defined also as the “process of increasing the readiness to act collectively” (Gamson 1975, 15), mobilization happens when people who at a given point in time are not making contentious claims start to do so (Tilly and Tarrow 2006). It follows that de-mobilization ensues when these people stop making claims.

The cyclical rise and fall in mobilization and collective action form what della Porta and Tarrow (2005) call waves or cycles of contention, in which sequences of relative quiet moments alternate with waves of intense mobilization. In short, cycles of contention consist in the clustering of “many episodes in the same or related polities, some of them intersecting, but many responding to the same changes in opportunities and threats” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 119). In an attempt to offer a systematic explanation of contention, Tilly and Tarrow distinguished within the cycle of contention the so-called streams of contention, conceived as the connected “sequences of collective claim at or across those sites [of contention]” (2015, 237), like for instance a series of workers’ strikes in a given industry.

Amongst the key conceptual tools associated with the study of mobilizations are the sequences of collective action known as “protest events”. The contours of protest events are somewhat difficult to delimit. While Beissinger defined them as “contentious and potentially subversive practices that challenge normalized practices, modes of causation, or systems of authority” (2002, 14), according to Kriesi et al. (1995) protest events comprise both politically motivated conventional actions and unconventional actions. To distinguish the former from the latter, the scholars in question drew upon contentious performances and repertoires adopted by challenging groups. While the

former entails the "relatively familiar and standardized ways in which one set of political actors makes collective claims on some other set of political actors" (Tilly and Tarrow 2006, 11), the latter refers to the "arrays of contentious performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors" (ibid.). Tactical repertoires are intentional and embody a strong contestation ethos, representing "sites of contestation in which bodies, symbols, identities, practices, and discourses are used to pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations" . Their importance rests on the fact that demonstrators make claims, signal their identity and reinforce their solidarity by means of actions aimed at interrupting the course of things, such as sitting, standing, or moving together aggressively in public space (Tarrow 2011). Usually, repertoires tend to reflect the collective identities of the activists who adopt them. In fact, tactics are conceived as forms of collective action that "represent important routines, emotionally and morally salient in these people's lives. Just as their ideologies do, their activities express protestors' political identities and moral visions" (Jasper 1997, 237). Tactical repertoires form part of a sort of heritage of social movements across the globe, and in fact their diffusion is usually studied at the cross-national level (see Giugni 1998).

1.1.2 The civil society vs. social movements debate

Amongst the topics of debate that have animated the social science literature, the relationship between civil society and social movements, as well as the distinguishing features of the two, stands out for its salience (for a detailed summary see della Porta 2014a). While the analytical distinction is not particularly sharp in practice, as seen in the previous section, social movement scholars tend to differentiate between social movement organizations (SMOs), namely grassroots organizations with strong roots in civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), that is to say more formalized non-governmental structures "which may have, but may also have no or only weak roots in civil society" (della Porta 2009, 25). The former are envisaged as organizations putting forward radical claims (della Porta 2014a) and seeking to attain a goal identified with the preferences of a social movement (McCarthy and Zald 1977), whereas the latter are said to pursue a more consensual agenda, avoiding conflict and using less disruptive forms of action (della Porta 2014a). For what concerns contentious mobilization, civil society organizations and NGOs are said to have the tendency to evade confrontational

forms of action (Kaldor 2003), and to work through more conventional political channels (della Porta 2009). By contrast, social movements organizations appeal to more radical and challenging actors, more likely to engage in contentious action, and thus to rely on protest, to pursue their goals (della Porta 2009, 2014a).

Notwithstanding the tendency within social sciences to distinguish between social movements as radical actors and civil society as the realm of public interest associations, some scholars suggested not to consider them as two totally distinct spheres. According to Cox et al. (2009), the two are just "different modes of popular organization, the latter typically with input from states and donors or run by the local middle classes, the former normally with only self-generated resources" (2009, 18). This tension fits particularly well the cases under scrutiny in this study, as I will extensively discuss in chapter 4, dedicated to a detailed overview of civil society in Bosnia Herzegovina. Which ones should then be studied? For the sake of clarity, throughout this dissertation I refer to civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina as including both grassroots social movement organizations and more formalized non-governmental organizations[4], which identify two distinct but coeval formations through which individuals get involved in collective action.

1.1.3 Ethnicity, divided societies, and ethno-nationalism

Considering that identification "is the most important component in the formation of a political cleavage" (della Porta 2015, 74), and given the salience of ethno-nationalism as a political and social phenomenon in post-war Bosnia Herzegovina, it is worth reflecting over the concept of ethnicity as a key term in this dissertation before embarking on a journey to a topic to which I refer to as mobilization beyond ethnicity.

In the literature, ethnicity has been approached mainly from two perspectives: primordialism and constructivism. The former conceives ethnicity as essentially natural and unchanged. The basic tenet of this approach is that the defining elements of ethnic

[4] In studying civil society in Bosnia Herzegovina, Helms prefers to use the term "local groups" rather than NGOs, to distinguish them from foreign and transnational organizations. In her view, the latter are perceived as representatives of the international community rather than local actors (Helms 2014). Throughout the dissertation I use the terms local groups, domestic groups, associations, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) interchangeably.

identification emerge from blood ties and natural affinity. Therefore, ethnicity is grounded on "primordial attachments" and emotional bonds (Shils 1957). Following from these assumptions, the proponents of primordialism suggest that ethnic groups are "enmeshed in human biology and embedded in social structure" (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 13). As such, ethnic identities are seen as immutable, and therefore different ethnicities would inevitably come into conflict with one another. The other strand of thought, known variously as constructivism, instrumentalism or circumstantialism, counterargues that the idea of ethnicity is rather constructed and historically (re)produced (Anderson 1991, Brubaker 2004). According to the constructivists, ethnicity is a product of human action and speech, and the result of the meanings that human beings attribute to certain differences. As such, ethnic identities can be manipulated for specific economic or political ends (Eriksen 2010). Accordingly, constructivists see identities as multiple, fluctuating and thus subject to change (Fearon and Laitin 2000).

In an attempt to move beyond the constructivist approach, Brubaker contended that concepts like ethnicity, nationalism and race are rather diverse ways of "perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world", different perspectives *on* the world rather than things *in* the world (Brubaker 2004, 17). Being a result of human interpretation, ethnicity became in Brubaker's opinion a process, a cognitive phenomenon. By the same token, nations are conceived as cognitive frames (Brubaker 2002). Following, Brubaker suggests focusing on the processes and circumstances under which identities are constructed, rather than on treating ethno-national identification as given and rigid. To that end, he investigated under which conditions people do (or do not) feel and act as members of a specific ethnic/racial/national category. Beside his attempts to bypass the idea of ethnicities as social constructs, Brubaker provides another important contribution to the study and understanding of ethnicity, distinguishing between ethnic categories and ethnic groups. Cautioning in presuming a relation between the two, he points out that a group is a "bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action" (Brubaker 2004, 12), while a category is rather a potential basis for group-formation or groupness (ibid). "Starting with groups", he claims, "one is led automatically by the substantialist language to attribute identity, agency, interests, and will" to them (ibid., 24). By contrast, "starting with categories (…) invites us to focus on processes and relations rather than

substances" (ibid., 25). The inquiry shifts thus "from what groups demand" to "how categories are used to channel and organize processes and relations; (…) how they get institutionalized, and with what consequences" (ibid.). Drawing on this distinction for my study, throughout the dissertation I opt for the use of "ethnic categories" rather than "ethnic groups". By the same token, I prefer to adopt the term "constitutent peoples" instead of "ethnic blocs", as I will explain further in the next section.

Brubaker's distinction between groups and categories seems particularly apt when approaching societies that are considered divided. In divided societies, in fact, ethnic categories get institutionalized and entrenched in everyday life, through political, social, cultural, and psychological processes. For Brubaker, in such societies categories get invested with groupness, to the extent that the so-defined ethnic groups bear "a high degree of resilience against change, especially when they are continually iterated through narrative forms, symbols, rituals, social and political activities" (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 6). As a result, identities are treated as rooted, bounded and homogeneous (Hromadžić 2015, 10) rather than multiple, changeable and overlapping. In the case of BiH, for instance, the "ideology of cultural fundamentalism" (ibid.), constantly used by local elites and political entrepreneurs, stresses the salience of distinctive cultural identities and present them as irreconcilable.

To properly grasp the features of divided societies, we need to distinguish between "divided" and "multicultural societies". In a multicultural society, the presence of ethnically and/or nationally diverse groups, or the recognition of ethnicity as a marker of difference between groups, do not spark violent conflict. Contrariwise, in divided societies "ascriptive ethnic ties have generated an antagonistic segmentation of society" (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 1). Hence, the main chasm of divided societies stands in "a deep conflict over the legitimacy of the state itself" which provides the basis for violent division (ibid.). Violence and conflict become the markers of divided societies. In such a context social and civic life tends to occur within rather than across so-called ethnic cleavages. A low level of trust among ethnic groups undermines social cohesion, while "all politics are practically subsumed by the wider ethno-political conflict over state legitimacy" (Nagle 2015, 47). For what concerns political life, political parties mostly claim to represent what they term "their ethnic constituencies", and they mobilize along ethno-national lines. In doing so, they advance policies that appeal to distinct ethnic segments of societies rather than to different sections of it. For this

reason, they have been defined as “catch-us” rather than “catch-all” parties (Mitchell and Evans 2009). Being political parties mainly based on ethnic interests, “you would not vote for lower taxes, for ecological laws, etc. You vote for your own survival” (Mujkić 2008, 22). Or, one might suggest, you would vote *thinking* about your own survival.

To provide a more exhaustive picture of divided societies, it must be mentioned that different ethnic entrepreneurs possess (or control) distinct media outlets, and national groups attend diverse places of worship, enroll in separate schools, undertake unconnected cultural activities, register for diverse sporting affiliations and trade unions, and have separate domains for living and socializing (Nagle and Clancy 2010). A system such as the Bosnian Herzegovinian one, which bears all these features – having “catch-us” political parties, ethnic quotas that determine the allocation of key posts, and state institutions, education and the security sector segmented along ethnic lines – matches Howard's definition of “ethnocracy” (Howard 2012, 155).

In such a context, the most likely form of collective action expected would be ethnic mobilization, which Nagel and Olzak defines as “the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity (for example language, skin colour, customs) in pursuit of collective ends” (1982, 1). The claims of ethnic movements are “based upon particular identity or boundary, *defined by the presence of racial or ethnic markers*” (Olzak 2004, 667, emphasis added). The rootedness of cultural identities in a particular territory can bring about the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism, which occurs when rival ethno-national groupings claim a particular territory as their homeland and/or to fulfil their national ambitions (Nagle and Clancy 2010). Unlike ethnic movements, nationalist ones are characterized by an abiding effort to reclaim territory, wherein to realize the unsatisfied desire of certain ethnic groups to self-determination and independence (Hechter 2000). Ethno-nationalism, thus, merges ethnicity with nationalism. Ethno-national divisions and conflict are other markers of a violently divided society such as Bosnia Herzegovina (but also Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Kosovo, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Lebanon).

1.2 Questioning the primacy of ethnicity: What is at stake in this dissertation

As the purpose of this thesis to show how resistance to the institutionalization and politicization of ethno-national categories is possible in a country in which your very name confines you to an ethnic box, I have decided to classify the waves of mobilization object of this study within the rubric "mobilizations beyond ethnicity". Before clarifying what I mean with this expression, I provide an overview of the different terms used thus far in the literature to label episodes of mobilization transcending or superseding religious or ethnic divisions in contexts that offered more favourable conditions for ethnic mobilization to occur and ethnic conflict to spark.

1.2.1 Non-ethnic mobilization in the existing literature

Few scholars have studied groups and mobilizations superseding ethnic antagonisms in ethnically divided societies. Amongst the scholars investigating this topic in countries different from these of the post-Yugoslav space, Nagle (2015) spoke of "non-sectarian movements". By using this label, he stressed the challenge these movements pose to religious cleavages that stand as divisive factors in societies where sectarianism is enforced (e.g. Lebanon). Among other scholars focusing on a similar kind of mobilizations in Bosnia Herzegovina, Armakolas (2011b) opted for the term "non-national" or "civic mobilization" (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013), with the intention of accentuating the peaceful methods adopted by, as well as the civic orientation of, the challenging groups. Other scholars prefer the term "post-ethnic", stressing the fact that these movements mobilize across ethnic boundaries (Touquet 2012a). Amongst them there is Touquet, who wrote an enlightening dissertation on post-ethnic mobilization in BiH. She borrowed the term from Hollinger, who coined the term "postethnicity" to identify a goal, an ideal model to be preferred over the pluralist paradigm of multicultural society. In Hollinger's view, postethnicity has the edge on the term "multiculturalism" since the latter tolerates rather than overcomes ethnic diversity, being based on the idea of group rights (Hollinger 2006). According to Hollinger, ethnic identity is no longer important in a postethnic society. Although recognizing that there is some diversity among people, his perspective acknowledges the porousness of ethnic identities. Hence, he believes in the free and voluntary choice of human beings to identify (or not) with ethnic identities. In his view, the prefix "post" stands to imply "a

moving away from ethnicity while not entirely abandoning it" (Touquet 2012b, 34). Bounded groups are recognized as formative for the identity of individuals, but categorization on the basis of such identifications is rejected. Placing himself on the middle ground between diversity and homogeneity, in his masterpiece "Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism" Hollinger longs for a society that acknowledges and respects diversity, while at the same time offers a national culture as a base that enables actions about problems of common concern (Hollinger 2006).

More recently, Sekulić defined the manifestations of civic dissent sweeping the periphery of the European Union, and in particular its aspirant countries, as brought about by "the indignados of Eastern Europe" (2014). By using this label, she identified a "sense of indignation about a new system of social inequalities produced by neoliberal forms of exclusion from the social citizenship" as a common denominator among the protesters (Sekulić 2014, 5). This indignation would connect their manifestation of discontent to other instances of "mobilization of the social groups lacking full access to citizenship and its entitlements" (della Porta 2015, 16), unfolding in Western Europe and Northern American since 2011. Along similar lines, Wimmen has referred to the "emerging pattern of spontaneous and increasingly broad protest movements" in the region as a "response to perceived moral outrage" (Wimmen forthcoming); Gordy as "anti-elite protests" (2016); while other scholars saw in the emergence of street actions in the Yugoslav successor states "the return of radical politics in the post-Yugoslav region" (Horvat and Štiks 2015b, 17). As far as Bosnia Herzegovina is concerned, other scholars have classified the recent protests among "protest for the commons", claiming that the unifying element is the defence of the common goods (Arsenijević 2014a, Bieber 2014b). These scholars found similarities between the recent mobilizations and these spreading in the same years throughout the region with the purpose of opposing the privatization of public and common goods such as parks, urban spaces, and public utility infrastructures (Bieber 2014a, Arsenijević 2014, Jacobsson 2015)[5]. According to Horvat

[5] For instance, in 2006 and later in 2014 the citizens of Zagreb, the Croatian capital, mobilized against the commercialization of the public space in the country; in 2009, students opposed the commodification of higher education by means of university occupations in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, while both in 2011 and 2012 demonstrations were staged in Slovenia to call into question capitalism and austerity (Kraft 2015, Razsa and Kurnik 2012).

and Štiks, the so-called "fight for the commons" enjoyed "the support from the vast majority of citizens who see privatisations of the commons or neglect of public interest as intolerable practices" (2015a, 85). Finally, although Majstorović and colleagues do not provide a specific label to these demonstrations, they refer to the 2012-14 protests in BiH as "forms of resistance to the Dayton system of limiting political agency to party membership or affiliation, and of keeping the exercise of political will divided along ethno-territorial lines of difference" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 2).

1.2.2 Avoiding groupism: a "beyond ethnic" perspective

In the process of seeking a term that would be suitable to identify the waves of protests analysed in this dissertation, I decided against Nagle's (2015) "non-sectarian", since the division among people institutionalized by the Constitution of Bosnia Herzegovina is not officially based on confession. The term "sectarian" could be appropriate though, as religion, rather than language or cultural habits, is the distinguishing marker among the three constituent groups composing Bosnia Herzegovina (Marko 2000), inextricably linked as it is to each group's identity. However, the relationship between religious and national identity is still a controversial subject in the post-Yugoslav space in general, and in Bosnia Herzegovina in particular. Therefore, I rejected the term for the current work. In a similar vein, the terms "non-national" and "civic" were, in my opinion, so broad as to risk confusion; they can be used to indicate many more, and different, empirical phenomena. I decided against the term "post-ethnic", as so far it has been used as a normative concept, to designate a desirable social order, a society as it would be *expected* to be. Also potentially ambiguous was the term "anti-nationalist", since ethno-nationalism does not constitute the direct target of the protesters, notwithstanding the fact that these mobilizations bear the potential to attenuate the political salience and pervasiveness of ethno-nationalism. Similarly, I discarded the definition of protests for the commons, used by both Bieber (2014b) and Arsenijević (2015). While I agree that all these movements have in common "a sense of grievance with the way the authorities administer the common good, the public space, and the state" (Bieber 2014b), as well as the "perceived failure of political elites to act in the interests of the common good" (ibid.), I found this definition excessively broad, thus missing the main novelty of the protests: the rejection of divisive ethnic and religious labels.

By the same token, I decided against the terms "inter-ethnic" and "cross-ethnic"

since they would have kept the lexical content of "ethnic" untouched, suggesting an interpretation of group boundaries as a given, and ethnicity as central category. By contrast, the initiators and participants of the protests frequently refuse, and/or deem inadequate, ethnic categorization as it confines them within separate forms of ethnic community. As my empirical data indicate, a significant number of interviewees, and of people I spoke to during my fieldwork, do not define themselves in ethno-national terms, but rather take a critical stance towards ethnic politics and the politicization of ethnic affiliation so often practiced and exploited in the country. The informants frequently define themselves simply as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or "human beings" (RI 47). Others demote their ethnic affiliation to their private realm, thus depriving it of political meaning. I am myself reluctant to speak in terms of ethnic groups. To put it with Brubaker (2004), I intend to avoid adopting uncritically categories of ethnopolitical practice as categories of social analysis. Brubaker refers as "groupism" the widespread tendency of addressing ethnic groups as real and fixed entities "to which interest and agency can be attributed" (2004, 8), thus of treating ethnic groups as chief protagonists of social conflict. This tendency reinforces, rather than questions, the primacy of ethnic groups, as it treats them as fundamental units of social analysis. A similar stance would, in my opinion, open the door to reifying ethnic groups and turn them into immutable, internally homogeneous entities with the power to act collectively – a process in which the ethnopolitical entrepreneurs are constantly engaged in Bosnia Herzegovina.

Nonetheless, although acknowledging that "the reality of ethnicity and nationhood – and the overriding power of ethnic and national identification in some settings – does not depend on the existence of ethnic groups or nations as substantial groups or entities" (Brubaker 2004, 12), I cannot deny nor disregard the predominance of ethnic identity over other indentifications, and its institutionalization and politicization in the everyday life of ordinary Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens. To put it bluntly, Bosnia Herzegovina is a country in which nowadays citizenship is defined through ethnicity, and collective identity is articulated mostly in ethno-national terms (Belloni 2013, 286). In such a context, the "us" is mostly conceived as the ethnic kinship, while "the notion of individual citizen taken apart of *[sic]* his ethnic and religious kinship is viewed as subversive, and even as some form of heavily despised atheism, moral corruption, decadence and rebellion" (Mujkić 2008, 23).

To resolve the tension between the desire to avoid taking ethno-national groups as categories of social analysis and the need to take into account the salience of ethnicity as social construct (and main divisive element among people) in the Bosnian Herzegovinian society, I have decided to approach ethnicity as "variable and contingent rather than fixed and given" (Brubaker 2004, 12). Consequently, ethnic classification goes from being an exclusionary category of identification to "just one among other social identity constituents" (Sekulić 2014, 12) of the demonstrators. By using the preposition "beyond", I aim to foreground that social actors deliberately supersede ethno-national antagonism, activating identities alternative to the dominant ethno-national one, and encouraging the emergence of new political identities that contest ethnic ones. It is important to stress that, in my view, mobilization beyond ethnicity does not entail necessarily the denial or loss of people's ethnic belonging, but rather calls into question the institutionalization and politicization of ethnicity as a collective category of identification *a priori*. To that end, here the proposition "beyond" means to emphasize the "step forward" towards integration on a non-ethnic basis of the protests. In fact, the ethnic category does not entirely disappear, but is constantly challenged by the demonstrators of the three waves of protests. "Beyond" indicates that the claims and goals of the demonstrators transcend ethnic categorization not as an ideal (and thus in a normative way), but in very concrete terms, pertaining to the realm of day-to-day social interactions.

Having provided a definition of the issue at stake in this investigation, in the next section I explain the factors that brought me to choose Bosnia Herzegovina as a case study to investigate within-country variation in mobilization beyond ethnicity. Following that, I elucidate the extent to which this investigation contributes to the literature both on contentious action in divided societies and on collective action in the post-Yugoslav space.

1.3 Country case selection: the relevance of Bosnia Herzegovina as case study

In what follows I identify the features that render Bosnia Herzegovina a country in which mobilization beyond ethnicity is not expected to occur, thus making it a crucial context in which to investigate the within-country variation in beyond-ethnic contention.

First, historically Bosnia Herzegovina does not bear a solid tradition of grassroots

movements, nor of mass street demonstrations. By and large, street protests are not a common occurrence, as Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens have seldom stepped out in great masses to oppose the authorities. Moreover, the country does not have a living history of anti-authoritarian movements that eschewed nationalistic strife, other than the pacifist mobilizations prior to the war. The active expression of opposition through confrontational means such as mass protests and occupation of public space is a phenomenon that emerged mostly in the recent years.

The general attitude of people towards demonstrations on the public space nowadays is commonly of fear and distrust. In this regard, the specific political and cultural backdrop of a country ravaged by a violent conflict cannot be disregarded. The Bosnian Herzegovinian population witnessed large-scale violence between 1992 and 1995, and the possibility that this will repeat itself in the future always looms. Indeed, the country has been defined as a high-risk environment for contentious action (Wimmen forthcoming). A war-torn society, in BiH the fear that massive gatherings will turn violent continues to disincline the population to adopt protests and street actions as tools of contention. One long-term activist highlights that street action and the occupation of the square are novel and high-risk forms of protest in the country:

> Using street demonstrations is a risky tool in Bosnia. We cannot take for granted that Bosnian citizens took to the streets massively, considering that the last time they did it [in 1992 in Sarajevo to prevent the outbreak of the war] they were shot. As well as we cannot understate the symbolic value of the re-appropriation of the public, collective space in a country where the rule is that my presence denies yours. (RI 8)

Another interviewee who witnessed in person the 1992-95 conflict stresses the psychological obstacles that still prevent people traumatized by the war experience from taking to the streets. By drawing on his personal experience, he said:

> After the war there is a fear of mass protests. (…) There is an unconscious fear in people of those manifestations. People think, it is in their mind-set, "It is ok, it is important there is not a war". It is the psychological side of the issue. I am afraid of mass gatherings because I know what it meant and what it might turn into. (RI 25)

Even today, the authorities and the media manipulate fears of safety, and the threat of internal enemies, to prevent, or discredit, collective contentious action (Mujkić 2008). Consequently, demonstrations in open spaces are usually considered "as a form of dissent traditionally limited to a small minority of engaged individuals" (Sicurella 2008).

Second, Bosnia Herzegovina is a country deeply divided along ethnic lines. Following from its constitutional arrangement (see section 4.2.1), the country is split into two semi-autonomous territorial units called entities: the Serbian Republic (Republika Srpska) (RS), and the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina (FBiH), separated by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IELB). Although finding itself within the borders of Bosnia Herzegovina, the semi-autonomous Republika Srpska bears the hallmarks of a nationalizing state (Touquet 2012b), meaning a not-yet nation state characterized by the tendency to perceive itself as an "unrealized" state of a particular nation (Brubaker 1996) – in this case the Serbian one. The incumbents in RS call constantly for more autonomy from the central power, and threaten to secede from it, to the extent that some referred to RS as an "ethnically pure independent Serbian statelet in Bosnia" (Power 2003, 263). At the national level, the political conflict revolves around the political parties in RS, disdaining the idea of a unified country, and advocating for more decentralization; and those in FBiH, more in favour of a unitary and centralized Bosnian state. Furthermore, the incumbents claiming to speak on behalf of the Bosnian Croat constituency lament being discriminated in a Bosniak-held territory, and thus claim the right to their own autonomous and independent entity (the "third entity").

A system of ethnic quota grants proportional representation to the three nations living inside its borders, the so-called "constituent peoples": Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks. By institutionalizing ethnic categories into the form of constituent peoples, the constitutional set-up of the country favours segregation grounded in ethnicity. Furthermore, and in particular since the end of the 1992-95 conflict, the dominant narrative portrays the constituent peoples as separated ethno-national groups, or, to follow Brubaker, as unitary collective actors with common purposes (Brubaker 2004). According to ethnic partition, the national structure of the country appears as follows: Serbs comprise roughly 37 percent of the population, Bosniaks 47 percent, and Croats around 15 percent of the total population in the country (Hromadžić

2015)[6]. As mentioned above, religious ascription and national identity strongly overlap in this context. The three constituent peoples in fact share a distinctive religious heritage, namely "Bosnia's Croats hark[en] back to their Catholic heritage; Bosnia's Serbs call upon their Serbian Orthodox background; and Bosniaks see the Islamic faith and Muslim culture as their most formative influences" (Donia 2006, 2). As for the latter, their Muslim heritage does not necessarily translate into religious belief (Hunt, Duraković and Radeljković 2013)[7].

On a daily basis, ethno-national entrepreneurs and policy-makers oppose the constituent peoples against each other, drawing upon their competing national claims over the question of sovereignty. The alleged cultural distinctiveness among the groups is reflected also in public holidays. As a consequence of the inability to agree on joint holidays, the Serbian entity disputes the 1st of March as the country's Independence Day. RS observes the 9th of January as national holiday, as the day marks the entity's foundation. As far as education is concerned, there are segregated schools and/or school programs throughout the country, with specific curricula studied by children according to their ethno-national category of belonging[8]. In the aftermath of the war, in fact,

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[6] These data are approximations, however. At the time of writing, the results of the national census undertaken in October 2013, the first after the conflict, have not yet been published.

[7] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into the controversial, protracted process of recognition of Bosnia's Muslims as a nation in former Yugoslavia. However, some steps are worth recalling to better grasp the current ethno-national partition. In the 1971 census, the inhabitans of Yugoslavia were granted for the first time the possibility of declaring themselves as Muslims, that is to say as members of the Moslem nation and not just of a religious group bearing the same name. In SR BiH, the Muslims had already received formal recognition as nation back in 1968. In the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, Muslims were recognized as one of the Yugoslav nations, opening up "the prospects of an embryonic nation-state" (Isaković 2000, 81). In 1993 the term "Bosniak" (or Bošnjak), in use during the Ottoman rule to denote the inhabitants of the territory of the Bosnian kingdom, was adopted to replace "Muslim" in the ethnic sense at the congress of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals (Hromadžić 2015).

[8] Nowadays three curricula are in use in BiH: the RS one is adopted in the schools of the Serbian entity, while the Federal one, elaborated by the Bosnian Federal Ministry of Education, is mostly used by the cantons with Bosniak majority. Nonetheless, Croats reject it, and tend to use the curriculum from Croatia. The curricula differ in the "national group of subjects", such as language, literature, history, geography, and nature and society. In some cities, this division has been institutionalized in the format of "two-schools-under-one-roof". In practice, pupils in one school follow different curricula according to their alleged ethno-national background. Sometimes this translates into different school shifts, other times into separate school entrances, or division of the class at time of the national subjects.

"schools and youth became a prolific site for imagining (ethno)national identities and were prioritized as means to unify or dispute the post-war state" (Hromadžić 2015, 3).

The differentiation in terms of ethno-national categories is historically long-standing, to the extent that some scholars consider the system of proportional representation as a legacy of the socialist system (Pearson 2015). Nevertheless, high levels of positive coexistence between ethnic groups were registered prior to the Yugoslav disintegration (Gagnon Jr 2004). At the time in which "Brotherhood and Unity" governed interethnic relations[9], not all Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens identified themselves primarily as Serbs, Croats, or Bosniaks. "Many saw themselves simply as Bosnians (or, before 1992, as Yugoslavs)", recount Hunt, Duraković, and Radeljković (2013, 23). This percentage was particularly high in the urban centers, especially in the capital. In Sarajevo, "in a census taken in 1991, some 17 percent of Sarajevans declared their ethnicity to be 'Yugoslav', rather than 'Muslim', 'Serb', or 'Croat'" (ibid.). However, it is worth noting that such a coexistence was "neither romantic nor ethnically hostile and blood-spattered" (Hromadžić 2015, 13). The pattern changed after the conflict and the ethnic cleansing that took place between 1992 and 1995, in consequence of which ethnic identities have hardened, becoming "more pervasive and rigid, as well as more closely linked with religious markers and institutions" (Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007, 20). The conflict amplified and entrenched ethnic cleavages, transforming the country from "being highly intermixed in 1991 to near full segregation of the three nations" (Bieber 2005, 11). For this reason, some scholars deemed it more appropriate to speak of "sociocide" rather than of genocide. The peace expert Johan Galtung coined this term to describe the murder of an entire society (1982), and to designate the violent

[9] The policy of Brotherhood and Unity (*Bratsvo i jedinstvo)* constituted the guiding principle of the postwar Yugoslav inter-ethnic relations insofar as it was embodied in the federal constitutions. It proposed that all Yugoslav ethnic groups coexisted and lived side by side in harmony, and nurtured the notion of cross-ethnic affiliation. Yugoslav's institutionalized nations (*narodi*) included Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Macedonians, Slovenians, and Montenegrins, while Albanians, Hungarians, Jews, Italians, and others were recognized as nationalities (*narodnosti*). The main distinction between the two categories consisted in the fact that the members of nationalities were conceived as members of other nations living outside the borders of their own republics. The political representation of ethnic groups can be considered a legacy of the socialist period, during which the system of ethnic quota was enforced, although informally, through a principle known as national key (*nacionalni ključ*) (see Pearson 2015).

destruction of the most intimate social bonds among the collectivity of people, neighbors, and friends (Kolind 2007; Sorabji 1995, 2008). In short, the disintegration of social fabric, cultural habits, political ideas, moral beliefs, and even language" together with the physichal environment of the country (Maček 2009, xi). Taken together, these features make Bosnia Herzegovina a strategic case for studying the occurrence of mobilization beyond ethnicity in a highly ethnified and divided context.

The following section situates the dissertation in the existing literature, elucidating the contribution that it brings to the existing literature on mobilization in the post-Yugoslav space and to the field of social movement studies.

1.4 Situating the dissertation in the existing literature

The transposition of social movement notions and mechanisms to other socio-political contexts might be far from seamless. As Bieber noted, transferring the concept of civil society to societies in Eastern Europe is a challenging and relevant task, since it "necessitates examining the changed context and meaning of civil society" (Bieber 2003, 21). This, though, is one of the challenges of this dissertation. Bosnia Herzegovina offers in fact a unique test ground for the adaptation of existing literature on protest politics to new social and political contexts. In what follows, I elucidate the gap in the literature dealing with mobilization beyond ethnicity and civic contention in the post-Yugoslav space that this thesis intends to address and fill.

To date, the literature has barely investigated the rise of social movements in Eastern Europe, devoting far more attention to developing frameworks and concepts starting, to a large extent, from empirical cases in the Western world. In particular, scholars have paid scant attention to contentious action emerging in ethnically divided environments. Similarly, the literature dealing with grassroots mobilization and social movements in divided societies has nearly neglected the Bosnian Herzegovinian case. Both European and Northern American social movement scholars have centred their attention on conflicts and protest activity emerging in Western Europe and the United States, almost disregarding war-torn societies and post-communist countries.

However, the scholarly community has not been blind to the transition challenges of the country. By and large, the earlier scholarly work investigated the country's dynamics from a civil-society-literature perspective, focusing on international factors, seeking to explain primarily the impact of peace building, reconciliation and

international intervention (Belloni 2001, 2008; Fischer 2006). The country has also been used as a test-case for the effectiveness of international aid (Gagnon Jr 2002), for institution and state-building (Chandler 2006), and analysed as an example of failed democratization (Chandler 1999). More recently, scholars have examined the impact of European Union policies in transforming the institutional and economic dynamics of the potential candidate (Bieber 2011, Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016). Ethnic conflicts, foreign intervention, and civil society development in the area have been extensively researched as well (Fagan 2006b, Carmin and Fagan 2010, Belloni 2001, 2008). Belloni (2001, 2013), and Bieber (2002) strongly contributed to our understanding of the strengths and limits of civil society development. Other scholars concentrated their efforts on the shifting strategies of donors in promoting civil society development and on the impact of their assistance (Mendelson and Glenn 2002, Mendelson 2009, Wedel 2000). Several dealt with the constrains posed by ethnicity, for instance Mujkić (2008) and Bieber (2003).

However, the scholarly literature dealing with the country tends to overlook certain topics like the emergence of social movements and grassroots politics in the country. With regard to contentious action in the pre-war period (late 1980s), Anđelic (2000, 2003) wrote extensively about the anti-nationalist protests and the emergence of civil society in the country, while Bilić (2011, 2012) tackled pacifist mobilizations and feminist anti-war activism in the whole Yugoslav space prior to the war. Armakolas (2011b) debated the non-nationalist politics in the city of Tuzla during wartime, while both Donia (1994, 2006) and Mujanović (2013) dealt with the series of anti-nationalist mass protests taking place in Sarajevo in the lead-up of the war. Kurtović (2012) examined the arena of underground cultural production emerged during the siege of Sarajevo, whereas Spaskovska (2012) investigated the end of the civic activism period in Bosnia Herzegovina happened with the burst of the war in 1992. As for the post-war period, some scholars delved into non-ethnic movements in the country. Goldstein (2013) compared civil society and movements in the divided cities of Mostar and Novi Sad. Helms (2003, 2013, 2014) wrote extensively on the women's organizations and the women's movement in Bosnia Herzegovina, while Fagan (2006a, 2010) considered the environmental movement. Among the recent contentious episodes, Touquet (2015) published on the 2008 non-ethnic protests in Sarajevo. Yet, the 2013 and 2014 mobilizations to date have not been systematically analyzed. There are some exceptions

though. Arsenijević (2014a) edited a book devoted to that wave of protests in the country, entitled: "Unbribable Bosnia. The fight for the commons", while Horvat and Štiks' volume (2015b) treated activism in the post-Yugoslav space, mentioning among others the experience of the plenums, the main novelty of the 2014 protests. The recent articles by Kurtović (2016), Majstorović et al. (2016) and (Murtagh 2016) constitute rare attempts to analyse the current struggles outside the accounts of protests given, often in the heat of the moment, by journalists and analysts. Nevertheless, research so far has remained mainly centred on single-issue collective action, and focused only on isolated cases, such as mobilizations in specific cities of Bosnia Herzegovina. In addition, it has not adopted a comparative approach between different episodes of mobilization, thus ignoring the systemic view and failing to give appropriate consideration to the key role of mobilization beyond ethnicity occurring in the country's recent history.

Among the research on post-ethnic and non-ethnic mobilization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Touquet's (2002a) thesis on post-ethnic mobilization stands out for its novelty, and offers a concrete starting point for this research. Toquet analyses the circumstances under which this type of mobilization emerges in a divided society. To that end, she investigated structural and cultural constraints to post-ethnic collective action that occurred between 2006 and 2010 in Bosnia Herzegovina, inquiring which cities and cultural environments were most likely to experience this type of mobilization. Specifically, she devoted her attention to the content of collective identity frames developed by activists in the protests, contrasting them with the authorities' counterframes (Touquet 2015). In an another article, Touquet took into account political opportunities and cultural environment as explanatory factors for the occurrence of post-ethnic activism in Republika Srpska (Touquet 2012b). Although Touquet accounts for the frequency of episodes of mobilization, she overlooks the importance of pre-existing networks in explaining the variation in the occurrence of mobilization. Similarly, she disregards the variation in their territorial and social scale among different contentious episodes. Likewise, in his study of non-nationalist politics in the city of Tuzla during wartime Armakolas (2011b) downplays the impact of structural conditions in his explanatory framework, stressing instead the role of leadership in influencing the emergence of non-nationalist politics in the city.

This dissertation intends to provide a twofold contribution: on the one hand, the study fills a gap in the social movement literature by delving into an as-yet under-

searched topic, the dynamics of protests beyond ethnicity in societies in which divisions grounded in ethnicity are dominant. On the other hand, the study adds to the strand of literature on post-Yugoslav grassroots activism, focusing on the agency of domestic actors neglected in previous research in favour of a focus on geopolitical dynamics, or studied in relation to their role in state-building, peace-building, and democratization processes. Specifically, the study intends to fill this void in the literature by shedding light on the challenging groups and individuals, investigated within the cultural and institutional context in which they act.

1.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided a thorough description of the key concepts informing this research, central among them being the notion of "mobilization beyond ethnicity". Moreover, I have highlighted the conditions that make Bosnia Herzegovina a strategic case for the occurrence – and the study – of mobilization beyond ethnicity. Finally, I have detailed the extent to which this dissertation differs from previous studies tackling grassroots activism and non-ethnic mobilization in the country, that so far have paid little attention to the agency of domestic actors in bringing about change. In particular, I have explained how my study addresses a gap in the literature dealing with mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies, both in the study of social movements and in the specific case of Bosnia Herzegovina. In what follows I discuss how the concepts illustrated in this chapter apply to the cases under study.

Chapter 2
Researching variation in mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies

This research examines the occurrence and spread of contentious collective action within a country that presents a wide range of unfavourable conditions for mobilization. The study focuses in particular on how mobilizations beyond ethnicity, which transcend "traditional ethno-nationalist cleavages that still segregate society" (McGarry and Jasper 2015, 13) and involve individuals and groups that have activated an identity "other" than the predominant ethnic one, arose.

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the theoretical tools that I borrow from social movement studies, and employ in the thesis to shed light on the empirical case studies. To that end, the first section explains at length the similarities and differences observed among the case studies, while the second focuses on the variation in terms of spatial and social scale of contention that can be noted amongst them. The third section explores a series of theoretical concepts that allow us to explore mobilization beyond ethnicity "in action". The next section details the research questions and the main puzzle of the study, while the final section introduces the argument and summarizes the expectations guiding the research.

2.1 Inside variation: Defining the research problem and the research questions

The thesis stems from the empirical observation that grassroots activism and contentious episodes around issues that "attempt to stimulate new political identities that contest existing forms of ethnic mobilization without being co-opted by sectarian interests" (McGarry and Jasper 2015, 13) have thrived in recent years in Bosnia Herzegovina. Over the last five years, several episodes of low-intensity and short-lived mobilizations have occurred in the country. War veterans staged protests to claim their pensions, while disenfranchised workers organized countless strikes over unpaid salaries. Other social groups took to the streets to demand their rights as well. Such were the cases of women fighting gender violence, LGBT groups staging flash mobs, parents complaining about allegedly discriminatory schooling curricula, and citizens protesting increasing insecurity in the capital (see chapter 4 for an in-depth account of

the events). Disenfranchised workers, dissatisfied students, and war veterans are just a few of the social groups who have been spotted repeatedly protesting in the squares and in front of the buildings of power. A study conducted by the think tank European Stability Initiative (ESI) has revealed that Bosnia Herzegovina witnessed over 60 protest events just in the period 1 to 21 December 2014. Among them, the subjects most targeted by the enraged citizens were the local levels of government (governments of the entities and cantons) and private companies. The same report disclosed that the main grievances concerned pending salaries and unpaid benefits (European Stability Initiative 2014). However, these protests were mostly one-off events, and barely succeeded in reaching their goals. They were in fact performed by an organization or a group of people asking for something specific for that group. As they had no result, "eventually, most of society stopped paying any attention" to them (BiH protest files 2014d).

Among the above-mentioned contentious episodes, three in particular were an attempt to join forces, and were able to survive over time. This made them particularly useful in investigating the dynamics of interaction between the different actors involved (Diani and Bison 2004). As already mentioned in the Introduction, these were: 1) "The Park is Ours", a wave of protests in 2012, in Banja Luka, the second-largest city in BiH, when people demonstrated for a couple of months for the preservation of a park. They strove to protect it from being replaced by a shopping mall, although did not succeed in putting a halt to the project; 2) the "#JMBG" mobilization for the right of babies to receive ID numbers, the issuance of which had been temporarily suspended due to a bureaucratic impasse. Started in Sarajevo on the summer of 2013, the protests lasted for twenty-five consecutive days, during which time solidarity rallies were staged in the major urban centres of the country; 3) the 2014 so-called "Social Uprising", spawned by a workers' struggle in the city of Tuzla, which lasted for almost four months. The latter was the most disruptive protest event to hit Bosnia Herzegovina in the post-war period.

Besides sharing similar initial conditions, these protests have been chosen as case studies as they were triggered by single and specific grievances that "served as conduits for broader social and political discontent, as rallying points for citizens to demand fundamental political and social transformation of their societies" (Bieber 2014b). Furthermore, the identity of the individuals participating in all three waves cut across ethno-national categories, challenging the dominant model of relationships grounded in

ethnicity. The waves of protest witnessed the participation of protestors acting as individuals rather than as members or representatives of an ethnic or religious collective, and were based on permanent and/or occasional groups and networks with a different degree of formalization. Finally, all these protests targeted the same constituency, that is to say the incumbents as a whole, rather than as representatives of a specific ethnic group, blaming them for being unresponsive and corrupt.

These series of protests raise a set of questions for social and political scientists alike, and observers of social movements in particular. First of all, this surge of intense waves of mobilization is puzzling from a scholarly point of view, as the conditions for the occurrence of contentious action in BiH are largely unfavourable. Even more puzzling is the variation in the spatial and social scale of these contentious episodes. More specifically, while the 2014 wave of mobilizations grew from the local to the (almost) national level, making an upward scale shift, the 2012 and 2013 ones failed to do so. The 2012 demonstrations did not shift past the local level, while the 2013 protests scaled partially to the major urban centers. Furthermore, the 2014 wave involved a wide range of social groups, whereas in the other two waves the demonstrators' social basis was comprised almost exclusively of the urban middle-classes. The table below details the puzzle of the research, namely the variation in the spatial and social scale of the protests, across the waves of mobilization analysed:

Tab. 1 Variation in mobilization beyond ethnicity

Wave of protest	**Levels of the scale shift**	
	Spatial	**Social**
The Park is Ours (2012)	Local	Urban middle-class
#JMBG (2013)	Major urban centres	Urban middle-class
The Social Uprising (2014)	Nearly nationwide (mostly FBiH)	Middle and working class

These waves differ also in terms of their repertoires[10]. Whereas some protest events were essentially peaceful in nature, others faced initial resistance and violence. More specifically, the demonstrators taking part in the "The Park is Ours" mobilization in Banja Luka employed a conventional repertoire that included carnival-like parades and street actions. Throughout the 2013 wave, the demonstrators adopted a more unconventional repertoire, which encompassed the occupation of public space and the siege of the Parliament building. Unlike the previous waves, the most recent "Social Uprising" (2014) witnessed the adoption of a violent repertoire, which included the storming of public buildings, as well as clashes with riot police. The table below presents the diverse forms of contention adopted during the protests.

Tab. 2 Action repertoires among the three waves of protest

Wave of protest	Action repertoires
The Park is Ours (2012)	✓ Citizen marches ✓ Cheerful parades ✓ Petition ✓ Pamphleteering
#JMBG (2013)	✓ Citizen marches ✓ Ridiculing public figures ✓ Mass gatherings ✓ Occupying a square ✓ Parliament blockade
The Social Uprising (2014)	✓ Violent riots ✓ Breaking windows and setting buildings

[10] In this thesis, I adopt a tripartite typology of performances and repertoires that divides them into demonstrative, confrontational and violent. This division is modelled after Tilly and Tarrow (2015), della Porta (2007), and Kriesi et al. (1995). According to these scholars, demonstrative types of action envisage legal and nonviolent forms, such as petitions, demonstrations, leafleting, symbolic actions, and strikes (della Porta 2007). Confrontational actions consist of blockades and occupations (Kriesi et al. 1995, 119), whereas violent forms of action include bomb attacks and arson (ibid., 49).

	ablaze ✓ Physical attacks on police and demonstrators ✓ Storming of public offices

This study analyzes the variation across waves of mobilizations, with the aim of examining the factors that fostered (or hampered) their territorial and social scale shift, as well as the employment of diverse action repertoires. To sharpen the research question, I have appropriated from social movement literature the concept of scale shift, to which I refer to as "the change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to a broader contention involving a wide range of actors and bridging their claims and identities" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 331). Simply put, a movement's shift in scale moves contentions beyond their typically localized origins (della Porta and Tarrow 2005), involving new actors and institutions by creating "instances for new coordination at a higher or a lower level than its initiation" (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010, 214). While McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), as well as della Porta and Tarrow (2005), have investigated the scale shift of movements from the national to the transnational level, I analyze the shift from the local to the nearly national scale. The territorial scope, therefore, changes. A further innovation in the present study is that I apply the concept of scale shift also to the social basis of mobilization.

To the best of my knowledge, no research has thus far investigated the factors accounting for the variation in territorial and social scale across different waves of protests occurring in a post-conflict society divided along ethnic lines. This thesis does exactly that. Hence, it attempts to answer the following two questions: why did waves of mobilization beyond ethnicity vary in terms of spatial and social scale, notwithstanding similar initial conditions unfavourable to mobilization? What structural and organizational factors account for this variation? Answering these questions will permit a better understanding of the dynamics of mobilization in divided societies, specifically war-torn ones. The relevance of the thesis lies in the fact that it employs tools and approaches derived from social movement literature to explore, and explain, the emergence and dynamics of collective action in a post-conflict and post-socialist environment with a different line of development from its counterparts in Western Europe.

In order to show the novelty of this study, in the next section I will delve into the levels of the variation that I analyse.

2.2 Levels of the variation

In this thesis, I analyse the scale shift of waves of mobilization beyond ethnicity according to two levels: the spatial (or territorial) scope, and the social field. By looking at the former, I intend to explain why some contentious episodes failed to scale upward, remaining circumscribed within the borders of the city where they emerged, while others diffused from the epicentre to several urban centers and towns. By investigating the latter, I strive to explain why in the first two waves of protests the demonstrators' social basis included almost exclusively the urbanites while the third wave involved a broader range of actors, among which was the working class. In what follows I offer an in-depth definition of each level.

2.2.1 The territorial scope of contention

In defining the territorial scale upwards of mobilization, I draw on Givan et al., who describe scale shift as the spread of collective action *across the space* at a higher level than its initiation (2010, 215, emphasis added). The notion of space is an important one in ethnically divided societies. In these societies, identity is expressed also by means of spatial practice, and the space is imbued with "forms of meaning which can make certain social actions and outcomes more predictable" than others (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 79). As Armakolas remarks, "in BiH, in particular, the physical space represents a site of power and symbolism (2007). In the country, specific parts of the territory are considered as belonging to a certain ethno-national group, insofar as the peace treaties have legitimized the physical partition of the country along ethnic lines.

Yet the investigation of the diffusion of mobilization across the Bosnian Herzegovinian territory is studded with pitfalls. Let us consider several recent analyses in which ethnic connotations were conferred to civic protests by drawing upon the territory in which these emerged. For instance, domestic media and observers labelled the 2012 demonstrations in Banja Luka as undertaken "by Serbs", because they occurred in the capital of the Serbian entity. In a similar fashion, the 2014 demonstrations have been categorized as "Bosniak", since they unfolded mostly in the entity populated by a majority of people recognizable as Bosniaks.

Such categorization of a protest as "Bosniak" or "Serb" on the basis of a given event taking place in a part of the country inhabited by a certain ethno-national majority can be misleading. In fact, such labelling continues to privilege ethnic categorization, presuming that those living in a certain territory are to be ascribed to a specific ethnic category. Moreover, this approach misses the crucial fact that these protests have nothing to do with ethnicity. Simply put, reading these waves of protest through ethnic lenses dismisses their salient marker: their non-ethnic character. Thus Bieber noted:

> In an interview for the Austrian daily Kurier, the current High Representative Valentin Inzko noted that the protests were primarily carried by Bosniaks, the Muslims *('Die Träger der Proteste sind hauptsächlich Bosniaken, die Muslime'*). Similarly, Tim Judah pointed out that the protests primarily took place in the Federation and in areas with a Bosniak majority. While these are not wrong observations, they do emphasize ethnicity when the protests had nothing to do with ethnicity at all. (Bieber 2014a)

So as to avoid the dangers of treating group boundaries as fixed, I do not consider the "ethnic codification" of the territory in which the protests emerged, or the ethno-national composition of the protesting crowd. For this reason, I did not discard Banja Luka or Republika Srpska as a research field for being an allegedly ethnically homogeneous territory, nor do I assess as unsuccessful the 2014 uprising, diffusing as it did only partially to the Serbian entity. Focusing rather on the way in which the challengers framed their grievances, I pay close attention to the claims of the protesters and the fact that they did not self-identify on an ethno-national basis.

Furthermore, in my analysis I define the territorial scale shift upward of beyond-ethnic mobilization as the spread of collective contentious action from its localized origin to other towns and cities. I have found the level of mobilization in Bosnia Herzegovina shifts upwards when contentious episodes occurs in both non-urban spaces, such as small towns and villages, and in segregated settings[11] in which nothing similar had happened before.

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[11] Like the city of Mostar, in the Herzegovina region, and the north-eastern autonomous district of Brčko.

Nonetheless, I am aware that the symbolism of space in BiH cannot be neglected, as well as the fact that ethnic categories remain marked in the region. Furthermore, it is beyond dispute that the 2012 protests *did not* spread beyond the borders of Banja Luka, while the 2013 and 2014 ones *did* take place principally in a territory inhabited mostly by Bosniaks. How might this problem be dealt with? I have identified a solution in moving the "ethnic element" from the explanandum to the explanans level. Namely, I have considered the salience of ethnic categorization in the Bosnian Herzegovinian society as a factor that explains the different territorial scale of mobilization rather than one that needs to be explained. In a nutshell, I propose to look at the tendency to attribute an ethnic label to the demonstrators and their actions as one of the possible factors accounting for the failure of mobilization to scale upwards.

2.2.2 The social basis of contention

As aforementioned, I apply the concept of scale shift to the social basis of protests, with the purpose of explaining the spread of contention across social sectors. To that end, I try to explain why the first and second waves (2012 and 2013) witnessed mostly the support of the urban middle-class, while in the third case the social basis of protesters was comprised also of the working class and pensioners.

Throughout the thesis, I refer to the middle-class as composed of young professionals who live in the urban centers of the country. Notwithstanding this labelling, a proper middle-class does not really exist in the country. Similarly, little has remained of the former working class in a country in which the unemployment rate averaged 45 percent in 2014. As Čabaravdić details, the process of transition from the socialist market to a liberal economy resulted in the progressive pauperization of and increasing social inequalities among the Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens, to the extent that the middle-class, already affected by the consequences of the war, eventually disappeared. Following a similar trend, the working class transformed into *lumpenproletariat* (Čabaravdić 2009). Although one cannot claim the existence of a proper middle and working class in BiH, I have adopted these class categories as reference points useful to get a more nuanced understanding of the Bosnian Herzegovinian society. The intellectual, urban and to some extent cosmopolitan youth can be equated with the "middle-class" as understood in the Western European way. Similarly, although the majority of workers are now unemployed, their identification

with the working class continues to exist, strengthened by the narrative of the workers' rights that existed during the socialist period. What these two social classes have in common is their (alleged) independence from the government and the public sector, as the youth are mostly employed in non-governmental organizations and the workers are unemployed or hired by private companies (for a more detailed account of the interviewees' profile see section 3.2.2.1). This specific situation results in them "having nothing to lose" from participation in street actions and vocal activism, since they are not threatened by their employers with losing their jobs.

Following the strand of thought of the previous chapters, and taking into account the relevant literature, I now move on to consider on an individual basis the factors that have been used so far in social movement literature to account for the variation in mobilization.

2.3 Mobilizations beyond ethnicity in action: Key concepts to understand variation

How and why people collectively engage in social action has captured the attention of scholars for decades. This section details the different analytical tools that have been so far used in the study of social movements to account for the variation in scope and form of social movement activism, and that I employ in this dissertation to explain the variation amongst the case studies. Although these approaches emerged in distinct historical moments, and emphasize different features of movements and of their environment, they complement and inform one another, and they largely coexist in contemporary analyses. In this brief literature review, I explore each of them, for they provide crucial insights for the investigation of mobilizations beyond ethnicity in Bosnia Herzegovina and allow us to make sense of the empirical data of this study. They will be extensively recalled in the course of this research, since a combination of these different perspectives will provide us with an exhaustive explanation of the factors that fostered (or inhibited) contention to move upwards.

2.3.1 Networking for resources

Previous work on protest cycles, resources and social networks provide a composite framework helpful in understanding the socio-political dynamics surrounding mobilization. In particular, in this section I focus on networking for resource

mobilization, exploring the ability of movement's organizers to form networks that are useful in aggregating and mobilizing the material, organizational, and human resources necessary for collective action.

As Tarrow (2011) noted, the existence of protest events as such does not constitute a social movement. By the same token, neither grievances alone nor categorical attributes (such as class) are sufficient to trigger collective action (della Porta 2015, 161). Similarly, although "new threats or opportunities may create motive for collective action, (…) without sufficient organizational resources (…) a sustained opposition movement is unlikely to develop" (McAdam et al. 2010, 405). Hence, for mobilization to be sustained over time, political actors and social movement organizations need to coordinate through "connective structures or interpersonal networks that link leaders and followers, centers and peripheries, and different parts of a movement sector with one another" (Tarrow 2011, 123). By way of example, these mobilizing structures can be informal as well as formal networks of individuals and institutions with a different degree of formalization, such as preexisting groups, movement organizations and interpersonal networks among potential activists (Caren 2007). These connective structures "link leaders and followers, centers and peripheries, and different parts of a movement sector with one another, permitting coordination and aggregation, and allowing movement to persist even when formal organization is lacking" (Tarrow 2011, 124; see also Tilly 1978, Diani 2004, Diani and Bison 2004). Movements also may use these mobilizing structures to distribute information, recruit participants, coalesce collective identities, and organize action campaigns (McAdam et al. 1996). Networks are particularly important since "it is not 'groupness' itself that induces mobilization, but the normative pressures and solidarity incentives that are encoded within networks, and out of which movements emerge and are sustained" (Tarrow 2011, 30).

Some of these assumptions had developed by the 1970s as part of what is known as "resource mobilization theory". This theoretical approach, introduced by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977), challenged the idea of mobilization as an irrational act, by claiming that social movements are enterprises that make efficient use of the available resources (material, financial, human, e.g. pre-existing organizations) to mobilize people (Tarrow 2011, 24). According to its proponents, social movements perform "rational, purposeful, and organized actions" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 14), and calculate costs

and benefits before engaging in collective action. Their leaders, acting as movement entrepreneurs, perform an important role particularly in mobilizing resources.

Drawing on Diani's argument that "social movement activities are usually embedded in dense relational settings" (2004, 339), and are made up of a web of multiple ties that facilitate the aggregation and mobilization of resources, as well as participation – a core claim of the network approach to the study of social movements – in this dissertation I analyse the extent to which connective structures such as pre-existing movement organizations and foregoing strong interpersonal linkages proved able to aggregate and mobilize resources, facilitating (or hindering) the mobilization's scale shift.

2.3.2 Framing grievances and identities

Following the focus on material resources of the 1970s in North American scholarship, in the 1980s European political social scientists began to stress the importance of the role of discourse, immaterial values and culture as *stimuli* to collective action with the ability to create a shared sense of belonging (Snow and Benford 1988, Snow et al. 1986). The cultural grounds of collective action (Melucci 1985) and the notion of collective identity became important elements in understanding movements' dynamics (see, e.g., Melucci 1996).

According to Tarrow, much of a movement's effort is cognitive and evaluative, and consists in "identifying grievances and translating them into claims against significant others" (2011, 153). This process of interpretation, known as "meaning-making", or "meaning work", namely "the interactive process of constructing meaning" (see Gamson 1992, xii) might, for instance, attempt to convert fear into moral indignation and anger, by reformulating and adapting values and motivations in a way that could prove efficient to mobilize certain sectors of public opinion, with the purpose of motivating "people to act and broaden support for their cause" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 66). In order to mobilize successfully, then, movement entrepreneurs (leaders and intellectuals who "define, create, and manipulate grievances and discontent", in the words of McCarthy and Zald [1973, 1977]) and social movement organizations need to "develop new codes, often *politicizing* the conflict, by linking grievances and interests to broader visions of collective goods (and bads)" (della Porta 2015, 14, emphasis added). In a nutshell, such organizations strive to construct what has been called "collective

action frames".

Benford and Snow defined the act of framing as the ability of a movement to make sense of reality in a way that persuades the participants that their cause is just and important (Benford and Snow 2000). Grievances, in fact, need to be shaped into broader and more resonant claims through framing work if they are to recruit participants and prompt people to take action (Snow and Benford 1998, Polletta and Jasper 2001). The notion of "frame" is appropriated from Erving Goffman, who first described frames as "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label events and occurrences" adopted to make sense of reality (Goffman 1974, 21). In fact, frames "simplify and condense the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (Snow and Benford 1992, 137). Activists' efforts to strategically "frame" identities are critical in recruiting participants and supporters, making alliances and defusing opposition (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Framing work is conducted by movement entrepreneurs (Jasper 2008), key activists that are exclusive frame makers. Their target audiences are referred to as frame receivers.

Scholars distinguished among different types of frames. A "master frame" is one that reflects "the rhetorical strategies of numerous social movement organizations over time" (McCammon et al. 2007, 728); as such, it may contain other, more specific sub-frames. Frames might perform different functions. Snow and Benford (1988) distinguished between diagnostic frames, useful to identify a problem a movement seeks to address, and to assign blame to the actors who are considered as the cause of said problem; prognostic frames, which evoke appropriate tactics and strategies to solve a problem, and motivational frames, which provide the rationale that motivate potential supporters to side with the challengers and to take action.

In order to be effective, that is, to "speak to" bystanders and motivate them to act, frames have to circulate, diffuse, but especially resonate with the shared cultural understandings of the population they are addressed to. To that purpose, they need to be consistent with the cultural environment in which they emerge (Snow and Benford 1988). The mobilizing potential of a frame depends thus on its resonance with a population's cultural environment, tradition, and cultural heritage; that is to say, with the identity of the protesters, their "perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities,

although it may form part of a personal identity" (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285). Frame resonance has been described as a process through which challengers "orient their movements' frames towards action, and fashion them at the intersection between a target population's inherited culture and its own values and goals" (Tarrow 2011, 145). Frame resonance typically occurs when a positive relationship emerges between the frame, the target group and the broader culture (Noakes and Johnston 2005, 11). Since frames that resonate with the context in which they are embedded are those that appeal to a broad number of people (Parks 2008), they must be both *credible* "in their content and their sources" (Benford and Snow 2000, 619), and *salient*, namely they have to "touch upon meaningful and important aspects of people's lives" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 81).

When frames are linked congruently, then frame alignment occurs (Snow et al. 1986) and frame resonance is more likely to happen. Four strategies in particular are said to contribute to resonance: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Benford and Snow 2000). Frame bridging consists in "linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (Benford and Snow 2000, 624); frame amplification entails highlighting certain aspects of a problem from time to time to invigorate a certain value or belief to make it more resonant with people's environment (Benford and Snow 2000); and frame extension requires extending the boundaries of the frame by applying the same frame to new phenomena, and to encompass views and interests of targeted groups. Finally, frame transformation is a more ambitious strategy adopted when the proposed frames lack resonance, and consists in transforming a frame into an entirely new one.

As mentioned above, frames are particularly important for and inextricably linked to identity-building processes. In order for social movements to develop, there is in fact a need of a discourse that "distinguish[es] bystanders from opponents" (Poletta and Jasper 2001, 292), and renders social actors able to recognize themselves "as part of broader groupings, and develop emotional attachments to them" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 91; see also Snow 2001). It follows that mobilization is more likely to occur when demonstrators and bystanders share an emotional attachment to the others, perceived as sharing the same collective identity, an "us" rather than a "them", as Gamson (1988) terms it, and are able to "define their enemies by their real or imagined attributed and

evils" (Tarrow 2011, 31). In this case, the ability of a movement to construct cultural meanings becomes evident, as discoursive strategies develop into an indentity-building tool that social movements use via the framing process.

However, frames do not go uncontested in the political arena. Struggles between movements and countermovements, opposing movements, or the state, which elaborate frames in order to marginalize their opposition, directly affect the framing process. "The most compelling issues", Johnston and Noakes claim, "are usually awash with competing frames promoted by social movements, countermovements, elite opponents, mass media, and the state" (2005, 16). Competing frames are often called "counterframes".

2.3.3 Political opportunities

Scholars also have tried to explain the occurrence and variation of collective action by emphasizing the role of factors external to the movements themselves. Specifically, they have focused on how the economic and political context in which collective action occurs influences mobilization (Tarrow 1998). This perspective on social movements, which emerged in the 1980s in the U.S. and is still popular today, became known as "political process approach".

Political process scholars conceive social movements as rational actors that model their behaviour according to the perceived possibilities and opportunities they encounter in the socio-political context in which they are embedded. It follows that "the societal environment in which aggrieved groups exist both affect their capacities to gather resources, and the efficacy of their use of those resources once gathered" (Williams 2004, 95). In other words, grievances and resources alone cannot explain the emergence and development of movements in the absence of political opportunities. The concept of opportunities thus became useful in explaining why grievances transform into action at a given time (McAdam et al. 1996, Tilly 1978).

Political opportunities are a consistent, although not necessarily formal, permanent, or national, "set of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics (Tarrow 2011, 32). When opportunities expand, cycles of contention are likely to happen. To this rubric belongs the set of political conditions external to social movements that make mobilization more or less feasible (Tilly 1978). Constraints and apparently unfavourable changes, too, such as repression against challengers, can turn into opportunities for mobilization. Political opportunities do not inevitably produce a

social movement, but they are likely to facilitate the emergence of contentious politics, as they might "set in motion a chain of causation that may ultimately lead to sustained interaction with authorities and thence to social movements" (Tarrow 2011, 33). However, as Tarrow points outs, opportunities are not structural and objective, but rather situational (2011). It follows that collective actors need first to perceive opportunities in order to seize them (McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow 2001).

While the concept appears rather unwieldy, several attempts to attribute it a specific meaning have been put forward. Tarrow, for instance, narrowed the scope of opportunities to five dimensions: 1) the openness of the state to participation, 2) the stability in political alignments, 3) the existence of divisions among elites, 4) the availability of influential allies, and 5) repression or facilitation by the state (Tarrow 1998, 77-80). In my analysis, I draw on Tarrow's dimensions. I argue that they can be considered as points on a continuum ranging from a situation in which the state is completely open to negotiation with the challengers with strong allies within the state (which refrain from any kind of repression) to a state that, without any internal divide, uses repression against opponents, who cannot count on allies at the state level.

The next session focuses on the importance that state repression might assume as an explanatory factor.

State repression

Political repression has been defined as "the physical coercion of challengers aimed at increasing the cost of collective action, or directly suppress it" (Tarrow 2011, 170). Others have referred to "protest policing", a type of repression that involves overt police action at protest events (Earl and Soule 2010, 77). In the literature of contentious politics, the impact of repression on dissent remains highly disputed, and the existing studies "have produced a body of contradictory findings" (Earl and Soule 2010, 75). Some scholars argue that the use of coercive methods "raises the contender's cost of collective action" (Tilly 1978, 100), hampering protests and thus decreasing dissent (Olson 1965). Others maintained that repression radicalizes individuals and by consequence the intensity of protests (Snyder and Tilly 1972), inspiring dissent (Hess and Martin 2006). According to Goldstone, "where government responds with unfocused repression that terrorizes a wide range of civilians and groups (…), or where repression is inconsistent and arbitrary (…) the movement is likely to attract supporters

while becoming more radicalized in its goals and actions" (1998, 130). In a similar vein, della Porta points out that episodes of brutal repression might provoke "moral shocks", or "emotionally intense reactions of indignation against an action perceived as ethically unbearable (…) [that might] increase rather than quell opposition, as they are perceived as outrageous by the population" (2014b, 33). But, as Earl and Soule found out in their study of policing of protest, not all police strategies produce the same effects. Rather the impact of repression depends on the interaction among protesters, opponents and third parties (Earl and Soule 2010).

The impact of governmental repression of dissent is particularly interesting in the analysis of contention in Bosnia Herzegovina. I assume that the use of force to break up a demonstration affects mobilization in a war-torn society in a different way than in Western European democracies, where the bulk of studies in social movement literature are situated. Therefore, in this study I look at how state repression against the challengers influenced the scale of mobilization by shaping the course of contention, as well as has it impacted on the decision of challengers to shift from one tactics to another. Tilly claims that the way in which "people draw on contentious repertoires remains variable and controversial" (2006, 43). However, political opportunities can be a useful tool to explain how challenging groups make tactical choices, since political opportunities are said to render some mobilization strategies more attractive than others. I posit that is in particular the way actors *perceive* the degree of state's openness and readiness to use coercive methods to repress discontent that influences their choice to adopt cooperative tactics or more confrontational strategies. The same level of closure and readiness to repress might induce violent resistance at the initial stages yet yield resignation and withdrawal at a later stage.

Discursive opportunities

Addressing criticism of the political process model, accused of lacking conceptual precision, some scholars expanded the rubric "opportunities" to the cultural sector, elaborating the notion of "discursive opportunities" (Statham and Koopmans 1999, Koopmans and Olzak 2004). Tarrow cautioned that a widening of the rubric would allow seeing virtually any change in the environment as part of the opportunity structure (Tarrow 2011). However, in the view of its proponents, the concept of discursive

opportunities stands as a corrective of the political opportunity model that tends to neglect cultural dynamics. In their opinion, the combination of POS with a more cultural perspective provides a broader view on frame resonance. By drawing frames and context together, Koopmans and colleagues point out that movement frames and the cultural environment in which these frames are expressed work in combination. The discursive opportunity structure "may be seen as determining which ideas are considered 'sensible', which constructions of reality are seen as 'realistic', and which claims are held as 'legitimate' within a certain polity at a specific time" (Statham and Koopmans 1999, 228). In a nutshell, the socio-cultural context in which contention occurs influences the success of movement framing, as it has the ability to facilitate, or hamper, the reception of certain movement frames.

In order to discern which social movement frames are more or less likely to mobilize and/or to convince the public of a movement's demands, it becomes necessary to "situate the framing efforts of movement actors in the larger cultural context in which the framing occurs" (McCammon et al. 2007, 726). Therefore, in order to understand why certain frames succeed or not in mobilizing bystanders, one has to consider both the content of the frames and the broader circumstances in which framing takes place (ibid.). For instance, if movement organizers offer frames that tap into a hegemonic discourse, they are more likely to be politically effective (McCammon et al. 2007). Conversely, if the same actors elaborate frames without taking into account the political context, these are less likely to be politically effective (ibid.).

In light of the concepts detailed above, I have structured my comparative analysis focusing on the interplay of the above-mentioned analytical tools. The next section examines how these tools have been employed throughout the analysis to explain why contention varied across space and social sectors in BiH. In what follows, I sketch out the preliminary expectations guiding the empirical part of the research, elaborated by drawing on the explanatory factors mentioned above.

2.4 Argument and summary of the expectations driving the research

The analytical factors detailed in the previous section have contributed to explaining the dynamics of mobilization in Western societies, on which most literature in the field is based. But do they apply, and how do they translate, to a community divided along ethnic lines? To what extent can social movement theories help us understand variation

in mobilization beyond ethnicity in a post-conflict and post-socialist country? In order to provide a more comprehensive explanation, I adopt a configurational approach, meaning that I take into account different combinations of conditions, and their associated outcomes, upon the assumption that context matters (Ragin 1987, 128). As suggested by Ragin, the configurational approach to comparative social research is particularly relevant to end the common practice to treat certain features as independent variables "with a separate or unique impact on relevant outcomes" (2000, 65), regardless of the context in which they operate. In order to view each case as a configuration, it thus becomes necessary "to examine relevant aspects of a case all at once, as an interpretable combination of elements" (ibid., 66). Therefore, I argue that neither networks and resources, nor political and discursive opportunities, or collective action frames *alone* are sufficient to adequately explain the variation among the different waves of mobilization approached in this study. In my view, each explanatory factor can account only partly for the variation, and only a combination of the three components provides a proper explanation of the variation.

The first expectation guiding this investigation emphasizes the way in which social networks and organizational resources affected the dynamics of mobilization beyond ethnicity across the three waves of protest. The expectation stems from the argument that networks and interpersonal linkages play an important role in aggregating and mobilizing resources necessary for collective action. Hence, I expect that the more the activist groups and "cadre of activists" (Andrews and Biggs 2006) involved in the 2012-14 protests can tap into previous formal and informal connections, stemming from former experiences of contention, the higher is their ability to gain and manipulate resources, recruit members and organize, and the more likely the upward scale shift will be. To provide evidence for this argument, in each case study I investigated pre-existing informal and formal networks among individuals and organizations, and traced their patterns of interaction. In other words, I claim that *the more activists and/or SMOs can tap into pre-existing network ties created during previous experiences of contention, the higher their ability to gain and manipulate resources, and therefore the more likely the upward scale shift.*

The waves of mobilization beyond ethnicity observed prompt us to reflect also about which frames are the most successful, that is to say which discoursive strategies are more effective in mobilizing people in countries in which collective identity is mainly

articulated in ethno-national terms. Among the "beyond ethnic" frames employed throughout the waves of protests, I expect that the more a frame taps into beliefs widely accepted by the broader population, the more likely it is to resonate to the wider public. I thus expect that *the more activists and/or SMOs are able to build an encompassing beyond-ethnic frame that resonate to diverse social groups, the more likely the upward scale shift.* To complement this expectation, I draw on the concept of discursive opportunities to investigate how framing work and cultural context interact. The cultural environment in which mobilization developed is rife with nationalist rhetoric and symbolism, which leaves room for the authorities to demobilize the movement by elaborating counterframes grounded on the fear of the "ethnic other". Hence, I expect that *the stronger is the resonance of ethno-nationalist counterframes, the less likely the probability of creating broad and effective frames that could help to scale mobilization upward.*

In order to substantiate this expectation, I investigated the discoursive strategies of movement entrepreneurs throughout the waves of protest, and contextualized them in their cultural environment. In fact, the cultural context differs widely across a given territory. It follows that beyond-ethnic frames are more likely to resonate with several social groups in a context in which the intensity of ethno-national rhetoric is the lowest, while in other contexts beyond-ethnic frames are more prone to be overpowered by ethno-national counterframes.

Finally, I investigate the extent to which the political and cultural context in which mobilization occurred influenced its course. I thus strove to assess the power of environmental factors on protest dynamics. In particular, I took into account the way in which challenging actors perceive the willingness (and unwillingness) of the challenged to negotiate, and to make use of force towards protesters. Siding with the approach of Earl and Soule (2010) and della Porta (2014b), which stresses the perspective of opponents and the role played by the ongoing interactions between the opposing sides, I expect that the challengers' perception of state's closeness and readiness to use force influences the selection of their action repertoires. To sum up, I expect that *the more the challengers perceive the state as closed and willing to use coercive methods to repress discontent, the more likely their use of tactics and the radicalization of the movement.*

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have defined the research problems and made the research questions explicit, elucidating that the study investigates the different scale amongst waves of mobilization in terms of territorial and social level of contention. I have explained as well why these dimensions are pivotal in the study of mobilization in a post-conflict, divided society. Furthermore, I have shed light on the explanatory factors that have been used thus far in the social movement literature to account for the variation in mobilization, and explained the way in which I employed these analytical tools in my analysis. I also clarified that the dissertation investigates how the interplay among analytical factors helps to explain the variation in the scale of contention by adopting a configurational approach. In what follows I present the research design of the study.

Chapter 3
The research design:
Case selection, data collection and methods

In the previous chapter I detailed the theoretical approaches that help to explain the variation in the territorial and social scale of mobilization among the three observed waves of protest. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design guiding the dissertation and the methodological framework adopted for the thesis, in light of the concepts and theoretical contributions that have been examined in the previous chapters. To that end, the following sections describe the steps undertaken to address the research question, highlighting the chosen methodology and clarifying the adoption of diverse techniques of data collection.

The first section discusses the rationale of case selection, while the second details the data collection process and techniques. Moreover, it explores the criteria driving the sampling phase and details the on-the-ground fieldwork process. To conclude, a section outlines the challenges embedded in conducting research on the field, explaining by what means I sought to overcome the limitations encountered in the process of data collection.

3.1 Case studies and case selection rationale

As the system of inquiry called qualitative research suggests, the construction of a holistic, largely narrative description aimed at informing the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon permits the use of different strategies, one of which is the case study. Case studies allow a researcher to explore in-depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or a phenomenon within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection procedures (Creswell 2003). Drawing on Ragin (2000), Vennesson refers to the case study as a "research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number, of phenomena in order to explore the configuration of each case, and to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena" (2008, 226). To sum up, the case study approach to research can be understood as the intensive study of a case with the purpose of understanding a larger class of cases.

In my thesis, I rely on small-N qualitative analysis methodology as the most suitable strategy to appraise arguments in small-N comparisons (Amenta et al. 2010, Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004). Small-N analysis allows the researcher to "emphasize the particularities and specificities of individual cases" (Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992). Hence, the research design of the present work consists of a case-based comparison (comparative case approach) involving a small number of cases (three), each of them bounded by time and space (Yin 2008). The choice of a very small number of cases is related to the fact that a limited number permits "an intimacy of analysis" seldom available in large-N comparison (Tarrow 2010, 243), while it provides a thick, comprehensive examination of the phenomenon that requires a "deep background knowledge of the countries being examined" (ibid.).

I chose Bosnia Herzegovina as a critical and strategic case for the examination and understanding of the dynamics of mobilization beyond ethnicity in a highly divided and ethnified context. The country presents a counter-intuitive case in so far as mobilization beyond ethnicity occurred in spite of the country presenting a wide range of unfavourable conditions for contentious action to occur, and in particular for collective action overcoming ethnic antagonisms to happen. As also Murthagh noted, "the space for civic mobilizations is, by definition, limited in a deeply divided society" (2016, 149).

In order to explore the within-country variation in contention, I opted for the selection of waves of protests presenting analogous conditions at their onset, rather than similar outcomes. In doing so, I strove to avoid the bias stemming from the selection on the dependent variable, which carries the distinct risk of studying only successful movements (McAdam et al. 2010). Hence, I chose three waves of mobilization that occurred within the same country, and thus share the same historical and political background unfavourable to contention. Amongst the contentious episodes that occurred in recent years in BiH, I selected these three as they best fit the category of mobilization beyond ethnicity. In fact, in all three of the chosen cases the movement organizers addressed all citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious belonging, and called for rights that transcend ethno-national categories. I decided on the three aforementioned cases as they might not be independent of one other, and their sequences might have influenced the strategies of actors on both sides of the conflict. To explore this issue, in my fieldwork I explicitly investigated how organizers of later

mobilizations have "learnt" from the outcomes of previous mobilizations. If such"learning" actually took place, I will talk about a cycle of mobilization.

In the selection process, I excluded from the analysis these protest events that, although having an allegedly beyond-ethnic character, tackled issues such as right to return, genocide denial and the right to memorialization, which could be subject to controversial interpretation. In line with this position, I opted for not including in the analysis the women's movement, although at first I thought it could fit the "beyond ethnic" category. I excluded it from the analysis for a two reasons: first, in spite of activating identities that transcend ethnic antagonisms, women's mobilizations have not been sustained over time, but rather episodic in nature; and second, while the women's movement in BiH represents an interesting case of "movementization" of NGOs (Helms 2014), it tends to address and mobilize exclusively selected segments of society (Touquet 2012a) by virtue of its strong emphasis on identity dynamics.

The analytical timeframe of my research spans nearly four years – from the first sustained protests in Banja Luka in 2012 until the end of the 2014, the year when massive demonstrations over corruption and unemployment occurred. To evaluate the impact of the 2014 events, some interviews and additional qualitative research was conducted in 2015 and 2016 as well.

3.2 Data sources and data collection techniques

I engaged different techniques to collect data. To make them more reliable and valid, I employed a validation strategy called triangulation, which involves the use of multiple data sources and collection methods simultaneously. Soliciting data from more than one source, and using various data collection devices, expands the quantity of information and detail that a researcher can obtain about a specific subject of study. Specifically, triangulating helps to "corroborate evidence and to shed light on a theme or theory" (Creswell 1998, 202), as well as to ensure the pertinence of findings. Concurrently, it prevents the problems of validity associated with single methods, allowing for a better understanding of the relationship between time, space, and protests in the study of social movements (Ayoub, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán 2014).

In this study, triangulation was accomplished through the collection of data from sources such as interviews (conducted with the purpose of enquiring), in combination with participant observation (that entails experiencing), as well as records and

document analysis (i.e., examining primary and secondary material). In what follows I provide an in-depth account of how the data were collected.

3.2.1 Fieldwork and participant observation

The majority of material upon which this analysis draws was collected first-hand during extensive field research conducted in Bosnia Herzegovina throughout almost five years. Employed mostly by social scientists working in the sociological and anthropological areas attempting "to capture and understand specific aspects of life of a particular group by observing patterns of behaviour, customs, and lifestyles" (Rudestam and Newton 2001, 42), fieldwork is a technique that "refers to the research practice of engaging with other on their own turf (…) in order to describe their cultural practices, understanding and belief" (Hobbs and Wright 2006, xi). While conducting fieldwork, the researcher is driven by "the desire to understand the social worlds inhabited by others as *they* understand those worlds, that is, in terms of the meanings they ascribe to their everyday actions and experiences" (ibid., emphasis added). In a nutshell, through fieldwork a researcher tries to read the reality as insiders perceive it. I considered this technique particularly useful in understanding the dynamics of mobilization beyond ethnicity from the privileged perspective of an external investigator, but at the same time "a professional stranger" (Agar 1996).

As a participant observer, I took part in several demonstrations, open meetings of activists and conferences, as well as plenum sessions. Participant observation allowed me to observe and grasp the interactions among movement activists and bystanders, as well as their inner workings. By taking part in the political demonstrations and marches, as well as through interviews, I sought to understand actors' preferences, their perception and evaluations about the events, the organizational strategies they chose to pursue, the resistance repertoires they adopted, as well as the constraints they faced throughout the period of action. Besides this, I investigated the role played by foreign donors and external supporters in the protest events, striving to build an as much as possible comprehensive scenery. My role as "detached outsider" (Stein 2006) allowed me to adopt a neutral point of view, filtering through my "outsider lenses" what I experienced on the ground. In addition, my presence and involvement on the field gained me privileged access to the subjects of the study and reduced the distance between me, the researcher, and the object of the study.

The choice to undertake fieldwork was dictated by a strong desire to do justice to the object of the study, although I was aware that fieldwork is a high personally involving methodology (Hobbs and Wright 2006). Participant observation requires a "prolonged contact and immersion in a setting of interest, while at the same time maintaining as much detachment as possible from the subject matter" (Rudestam and Newton 2001, 45). The purpose of fieldwork is to enter the "frame of mind" of the people under scrutiny (Bray 2008, 305) and grasp "the meaning they give to their actions" (Balsiger and Lambelet 2014, 144). The fieldwork period started with an exploratory mission (or preliminary research trip) in Bosnia Herzegovina in September 2012. A second short field trip followed in July 2013, immediately following the wave of protest known as #JMBG. During this second short trip, I carried out another round of interviews with the movements' participants. An extensive research stay followed between September 2013 and January 2014, during which I spent a long period based in Sarajevo as visiting researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies (*Centar za interdisciplinarne postdiplomske studije)* (CIPS) located at the University of Sarajevo. Throughout the months of my stay I had countless opportunities for information gathering. Thanks to the full-immersion in the field, I could engage with the local setting, conduct additional interviews, as well as experience and explore in-depth the society. Furthermore, the time spent as visiting researcher at the University of Sarajevo provided me with the opportunity to liaise with locals and be in close contact with professionals and academics dealing with my topic of investigation, some of whom were also actively involved in it. I came back to the country for another round of interviews in the aftermath of the February 2014 mass protests, staying in BiH during the months of April and May 2014. During that period, I also participated in some protest events, organizations' assemblies, and plenums; the plenary sessions were created after the February 2014 riots and were still active, although already running out of steam. Finally, in November 2014 I took part as auditor and observer of an activists' four-days event called *Otvoreni Univerzitet* (Open University), which was organized to discuss, among other topics, the 2014 uprising and the Yugoslav heritage. Finally, in July and August 2015 I conducted the last round of interviews, with the specific aim of assessing the outcomes and impact of the 2014 protest.

3.2.2 Interviews

While in the field, I conducted interviews with members of formal and informal groups, as well as with activists, academics, local and international experts, members of think tanks, NGO practitioners, and observers involved in the protest events and/or in the assemblies that followed on their heels. I also carried out interviews with donors' representatives, with the purpose of investigating the content of their relationship with the groups involved in the protest. Alongside formal interviews, I also had several informal conversations with participants who took part in rallies and campaigns, as well as with bystanders and external observers.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were adopted as a methodological device, owing to their extreme flexibility. In contrast to some other methodological devices such as questionnaires, interviews allow the researcher proximity to the informant. As well, interviews have the advantage of adding to participant observation by providing insights into the motivations and behaviours of activists and movement participants, minimizing as much as possible the voice of the researcher (Blee and Taylor 2002). For these reasons, they are particularly useful in understanding the sense that actors give to their actions. While conducting interviews, I opted for the strategy of the "interviewer as a miner", who attempts to unearth knowledge, meant as objective facts or essential meanings, "waiting in the subject's interior to be uncovered" and later analysed (Kvale 2008, 19).

Interviews were conducted as in-depth, guided conversations aimed at covering the key issues, but at the same time leaving a certain degree of freedom to the interviewee. The structure of the interview was intentionally kept rather flexible, ready to be modified slightly as the conversation progressed. With the permission of the participants, interviews were audiotaped, with the exception of certain spokespersons of donors and international foundations who declined to be recorded, and were available to provide only limited information. In the case of sensitive issues, the conversation was not audiotaped in order to foster freedom of expression. Examples of particularly sensitive informants might be activists participating in different waves of protests, or the representative of a LGBT rights-association whose members are under threat. Although many of the interviewees are well-known activists and several amongst them accepted to be quoted with their real name in the context of this research, I

eventually chose to protect their identity by guaranteeing them a measure of anonymity. While I acknowledge that revealing the personal details of the interviewees would make the research more transparent, I decided not to report informants' private details as a measure of caution and confidentiality, motivated by two considerations. First, for a matter of safety, following Kvale's (2008) warning about the potential easily identification of the subjects in a small activist environment, as well as in the belief that accountability towards informants means also to "avoid releasing sensitive information about actions and strategies that might put organized collective action at risk" (Milan and Milan forthcoming). Disclosing personal data might also facilitate repression, whose level already increased in the wake of the protests, in particular towards vocal activists in already tense environments such as the cities of Mostar and Banja Luka. Second, I decided to handle with care the personal relations and opinions expressed by my informants towards their peers in order to avoid fuelling animosity within a small community such as the Bosnian Herzegovinian activist one. According to the findings from my extensive participant observation, certain distrust spread among activists in the aftermath of the 2014 protests in particular. I deem that, at this stage, fully disclosing data and personal opinions of my informants would have ultimately gone to their detriment, contributing to hamper trust within activists' groups and the already fragile, brand-new networks of Bosnia Herzegovina. For all these reasons, throughout the dissertation I identify each informant with the acronym RI (i.e., "recorded interview") and a progressive number attributed to the interview. Whereas recorded interviews were transcribed and eventually analysed, in the case of informal chats I opted for a transcription of the notes. Overall, I conducted 48 in-depth semi-structured interviews. As this type of methodology is time-consuming, the number of interviews was conditioned by time and infrastructural constraints.

During my fieldwork period I was located in Sarajevo, mainly for practical reasons, including the fact that movement activists are largely based in the capital or in other urban centers. Similarly, non-governmental organizations and foreign agencies are predominantly clustered in the major urban centres of BiH, not to say in Sarajevo itself. This accounts for the fact that most of interviews were conducted in Sarajevo. Living in a city of large dimensions and high presence of ex-pats and internationals, it was easier for me to enter into contact with and being accepted in the local setting, and it was less difficult to build what Armakolas (2001) referred to as a crucial network of personal

contacts that facilitate the connection of a researcher with other groups. Furthermore, being based in Sarajevo rendered more likely to "catch" the activists of other cities that oftentimes travelled to the capital, as well as to attend the public debates organized to discuss and reflect about the ongoing and past mobilizations, such as the *Otvoreni Univerzitet* (Open University). On the other hand, I acknowledge the risk that living in a city like Sarajevo entails for a researcher, who might tend to read contentious events through Sarajevo-centred lenses (meaning with urban, cosmopolitan ones, while BiH is mostly a rural country). Moreover, Sarajevo is a city overcrowded with researchers, and Bosnia Herzegovina an over-researched country (Lai 2016). By travelling as much as possible to other towns and cities were protests occurred, I strove to avoid the bias of a capital-centred perspective. To that end, I travelled across the country to carry out interviews, and to get a first-hand account of protest movements outside the capital. Interviews were thus done in other urban centers, such as Banja Luka, Tuzla, Zenica, Konjic, and Mostar. When it proved unfeasible to reach the informant in person, interviews were conducted through Skype.

My previous experience of research in Bosnia Herzegovina contributed to balance my perception of reality and avoid the capital-centred flaw. My first fieldtrip ever in the country was carried out back in 2010 in Prijedor, a rural town close to the Croatian border, known for being a stronghold of Serbian nationalism. Back then, no contentious activity having a beyond-ethnic character was happenings, and grassroots groups were almost inexistent. The experience of living in a small and mostly rural town, overlooked by international organizations and foreign researchers, in which nationalist rhetoric was dominant, shaped my perception of the country. In particular, it helped me to get a full-fledged understanding of a country in which there can be highly cosmopolitan areas such as Sarajevo and rural towns like Prijedor, and taught not to take Sarajevo as a measure of what goes on in Bosnia Herzegovina. Indeed, every city in BiH is different from the others, in terms of social structure, history and activism. My frequent trips to other cities, and my earlier fieldwork in Prijedor, constituted valuable means of comparison that allowed me to elude a capital-centred perspective.

As I am aware that the answers obtained might change according to the context where the interview take place (Bray 2008), and unless otherwise requested, interviews with informants were conducted in the CSO and/or donors' premises, in the case of NGO workers, or in more informal settings where the interviewee could feel at ease. Field

notes were taken throughout the interviews and the whole field research, reporting "other material the researcher may have deemed relevant while in the field" (ibid., 312). Most of the interviews were conducted in English, reflecting my limited command of the spoken local language at the time. A couple of them were carried in local language with the assistance of a translator. Contrariwise, documents, bulletins and leaflets were analysed in their original language, or in English when available. Unless otherwise stated, I translated into English the excerpts of documents provided by activists or available on line.

3.2.2.1 The interviewees' selection

To make the research sample theoretically meaningful, subjects were not randomly chosen, but followed "criterion sampling", meaning that I selected individuals that met some predetermined thoughtful criteria of importance (Patton 1990). It is in fact important to identify the right persons in order to gather data for the analysis of protests and their dynamics. After having framed the general context within which the contentious episodes took place, I identified a number of subjects to be interviewed through the snowballing technique. Known also as "respondent pyramiding" (Cohen and Arieli 2011), this device is used for gathering research subjects by means of the identification of an individual, or a group, involved in the protest (the "central node" in the language of network analysis). This person can play the role of gatekeeper or key-informant, meaning that she helps trace the network of activists and organizations involved in the protests by providing the names and contacts of other relevant informants. As "key individuals who can grant or withhold access to the research site" (Burgess 2006, 299), gatekeepers are especially important at the first stage of the research, since they open possibilities for an expanding web of contacts and inquiry through their social networks (Atkinson and Flint 2004). With the support of gatekeepers, pilot interviews were conducted with key-informants. The gatekeepers were mostly activists with whom I entered in contact before or at the beginning of the fieldwork in the occasion of conferences or activist meetings, and they corresponded to what Sanders defined as formal or informal insiders that facilitate access of the researcher to the informants, and assist passage from the academic institution to the field (2006).

For what concerns the interviewees profile and background, young activists

living in urban centers compose the majority of informants, although not all of them originate from an urban environment. Often they moved to the capital or to the urban centres for their university studies. In that occasion, they got involved in student associations or other types of local activism, such as leftist movements or parties. Mostly they are employed as consultants, translators, project managers and project writers in NGOs or international foundations, especially leftist German ones, as they have a good command of various idioms, sometimes owing to their experience of displacement as refugees in Germany during the 1992-95 war. The majority have a high-level of education, being graduated and sometimes even holding a PhD. In other cases, they are unemployed or under-employed, but generally not employed in the public sector nor with any dependence on government contracts (see also Murtagh 2016). Most of them have good connections with their peers in the former Yugoslav region, as they are invited as speakers to several political meetings. Some are employed in academia, and often they are looking for a way to get out of Bosnia Herzegovina as they see no economic perspectives in the country. Some made a job out of their activism, and struggle to find founds for their NGOs to survive. All of the associations in which they are employed survive on external founds and do not receive financial support from local authorities or the government.

3.2.3 Secondary sources

The study draws mainly upon first-hand materials, namely primary sources and materials gathered in the field. The documents include written material produced during the protests, such as leaflets, press releases, calls for action, manifestos and brochures, but also individual contributions in journals and magazines both in local language and translated into English; oral material, such as past interviews; and video material such as documentaries, produced from the movements, or from the different organizations involved in the protests. Other selected material was extracted from such organizations' blogs and websites, as well as organizations' and activists' private archives.

Besides the material collected during the fieldwork period, I relied upon analyses of existing studies dealing with grassroots activism in the area. The current literature on civic engagement and grassroots activism, as well as previous studies dealing with societal organization in Bosnia Herzegovina before the 1992-95 war, provided me with a

preliminary overview of the context. The literature tackling the socialist period deepened my knowledge of the pre-war period and the mobilizations that occurred on the eve of the war. This was necessary to understand the current political organizations and civic engagement. In particular, the work of Ramet (1985, 1996, 2002) and Seroka and Smiljković (1986) exhaustively elucidated the way associations of an "embryonic" civil society developed in the socialist era.

The analysis of secondary sources provided the general and particular information necessary to formulate the research questions and to elaborate the preliminary expectations, as well support for the development of the theoretical and conceptual framework. I integrated the analysis of existing literature with the examination of other documents and indirect sources, like statements released by CSOs and published on the webpage of the protest events, campaigns, and their platforms. Moreover I consulted reports, flyers and leaflets, internal memoranda of donors and think tanks, alongside statistics and official data on the political and social situation of the country. Whenever possible, I made use of web archives and newspapers as sources of information related to the actions taken and the reactions of the authorities. These are particularly useful when intertwined with the information provided through interviews, and help a researcher to rebuild the chronological chain of events in a more comprehensive way.

3.3 Challenges and limitations of fieldwork

Conducting research in Bosnia Herzegovina is not always an easy task. During the research process I encountered difficulties of both a practical and cultural nature that limited the research. I elaborate on these in this section.

Gaining access to the field was a relatively smooth process, as I could count on a network of personal contacts and on the knowledge of the country gained during my previous stays in the city of Prijedor (in 2009 and 2010) and some short visits to Sarajevo. Furthermore, I already possessed a basic knowledge of the language, which allowed me to understand locals and interact with them. By and large, people were open, friendly and willing to talk to me, commenting about politics and other topics, sometimes for hours. Unlike other researchers whose nationality risks placing them on the "wrong side" of "their imagined geography of friends and enemies" (Armakolas 2011a, 171), I had the advantage of carrying a "neutral" passport, as there was no clear

perception of an Italian position during the 1992-95 war. Furthermore, the memory of Italian volunteers who helped locals during the conflict is still alive, and generally it is a positive one (on the salience of researchers' nationality while conducting fieldwork in Bosnia Herzegovina see Armakolas 2011a).

Challenges of a practical nature have limited the study, however. One of the main problems a researcher has to cope with while conducting research in Bosnia Herzegovina concerns the availability, reliability and currency of data. Little systematic data and reliable information are at the disposal of researchers. Statistics have to be treated with caution as well, since data are often conflicting, unclear or even not available – like, for instance, the exact number of NGOs registered in the country, or the number of people participating in a street action. Access to data appeared difficult also in terms of material and financial support that donors directed towards NGOs, informal organizations, or civic movements. In sharp contrast to activists, donors' spokespersons proved to be a highly reluctant category of interviewees.

Sometimes missing data had to be filled in with best estimates. The original documentary evidence provided by CSOs, like their flyers, documents, reports and manifestos, were particularly helpful in integrating the uncertain data. In some cases, I also had to face some difficulties in gaining access to informants, who proved unwilling to talk with me, or simply did not have time to be interviewed. Bosnia Herzegovina is in fact an over-researched country, and in particular during my field trip in November 2014 I experienced the exhaustion of the informants. Although never hostile, on a number of occasions the interviewees complained about the amount of time they spent talking to outsiders providing the same information, while some alleged that "academia never gave back anything" to them (RI 30).

In this regard, the timing of the field-trip ought to be taken into account. The majority of interviews were carried out between April and May 2014, in the wake of the "social rebellion" that had placed the country in the global spotlight for the first time since the end of the war. As a consequence of the renewed visibility of the country, journalists, experts, and researchers had poured into Bosnia Herzegovina, eager to get into contact with local activists. At the time I conducted the interviews, the level of energy was still high, and people spoke with enthusiasm about their experiences. Needless to say, after a couple of months the "melancholy of the empty square" (Douzinas 2013) replaced the initial enthusiasm, and reflections over the failure of the

protests and plenums to produce change dominated the conversations. As mentioned above, the informants also started to feel a sort of "interview fatigue" (Lai 2016), and proved less available to researchers.

3.4 Conclusions

To sum up, in this chapter I have detailed the case selection rationale, the techniques used to gather data, as well as the criteria that I used in choosing the interviewees. Furthermore, I tackled some difficulties of both a practical and a cultural nature that I encountered while conducting fieldwork in the country.

The next chapter deals with the historical and political context of Bosnia Herzegovina. There, I am to trace the development of civic engagement and grassroots activism in the country before and after the 1992-95, in order to contextualize how civil society and associational life developed in the last decade.

Chapter 4

The political and historical context of Bosnia Herzegovina

A set of historical and political factors has shaped over time the ways in which people engage in contentious politics in Bosnia Herzegovina. The socialist rule, which lasted for forty-seven years, moulded the country's society, politics, economy, and human behaviours. Similarly, the advent of international donors and agencies that brought about the blossoming of domestic NGOs in the aftermath of the war stamped indelibly the social fabric of the country, influencing the practices of formal organizations.

What lessons can be drawn from the past? Are there any recurring patterns that could help to understand the emergence of waves of mobilizations beyond ethnicity in the recent years? The chapter strives to answer these questions and set the ground for a proper understanding of the contentious events analysed in the dissertation, under the assumption that instances of collective action are neither independent, nor comprehensible unto themselves, but rather historically and spatially connected with other similar instances of collective action (Koopmans 2004). Therefore, to comprehend contemporary civic initiatives, it is essential to dig in the contextual set-up of Bosnia Herzegovina and in the system in which the country was embedded over the last several decades. To that purpose, the chapter provides an overview of the trajectory of domestic civil society, movement formation and the development of practices of contentious politics during the country's recent past.

The chapter begins with an in-depth account of the status and development of associational life during the period of socialist rule (1945-92). Then it explores the transformation of civil society, starting from the emergence of grassroots initiatives in the late 1980s, instances of an "unofficial" civil society stemmed from the liberalization of a socialist system already on the brink of collapse. Next, it describes the mushrooming of civil society organizations in the aftermath of the war, providing a critical analysis of their impact on the wider population. Finally, it presents the grassroots initiatives unfolded in the recent years. The chapter concludes with some insights into contemporary BiH, delving into cultural phenomena such as informal networks, clientelism and neighbours' relations.

4.1 1945-92: The socialist period of Bosnia Herzegovina

4.1.1. Social institutions and political organizations

Dismissing the socialist period as a "black hole" for civil society would hinder a complete understanding of current social and contentious practices. Likewise, it would be difficult to grasp the underlying reasons for the low level of civic engagement, the social apathy and disaffection from the elites that characterize the contemporary Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens, without having a historical perspective on the legacy of their socialist past. Many of the analyses on civic movements in Eastern Europe, Glenn notes, are biased because they start from the post-Communist period, turning a blind eye to the events of the historical phase prior to the fall of the Communist regimes (2001). Nevertheless, a country's prior regime type is the most significant variable when explaining current organizational membership (Howard 2003).

An understanding of the current mobilization requires an in-depth study of the country's "modernization period", which lasted from 1945 until 1992 (Hoare 2007), termed by Donia "the formative years of socialist rule" (Donia 2006, 2). Besides presenting the experience of the worker self-management, this section elucidates the extent to which the notion of civil society as envisaged in the Yugoslav system differed from the rest of the Communist countries in both theoretical and practical terms. Next, it delves into the forms of associational life as they were conceived during the socialist rule of Bosnia Herzegovina.

In terms of civic freedom, the scenario of the Socialist Federal Republic of Former Yugoslavia (hereinafter SFRY), a state that existed from 1943 until its dissolution in 1992, and to which the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SR BiH)[12] belonged, diverged slightly from the authoritarianism that characterized the other countries of the Communist block. SFRY differed from its Eastern counterparts with regard to level of civic participation, degree of individual freedom and economic development, coupled with a certain leverage exerted by the population on the political leadership. One of my interview partners, a professor at the University of Sarajevo,

[12] Until 1963, the republic was called the "People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (NRBiH).

claimed that "people felt freer in Yugoslavia than in Czechoslovakia, less alienated from their leadership, since they perceived they could influence the socialist system" (RI 24). Notwithstanding the perceived more favourable conditions of people in Yugoslavia compared with their Eastern peers, some scholars observed that dissidents in SFRY had to face the constraints to freedom of expression and political association placed by state-sponsored socialism. These translated into a higher number of challenges and "disproportionately greater difficulties" for Yugoslav dissidents as opposed as these faced by dissenters in other countries of the Eastern block (Bieber 2003, 21).

The notion of civil society was conceived very differently in SFRY and the West, the latter of which saw it as distinct from both the state and the market. By contrast, the Yugoslav socialist system discarded the independence of civil society from the state in favour of its integration into the socialist system (Anđelić 2003, 80). In a nutshell, civil society and state were no longer separate entities since the state incorporated the former, preventing its autonomous development. In practical terms, this integration was achieved by means of bureaucracy. This does not mean, though, that forms of social organization were not in place. In SR BiH, associational life developed under the model of social and political organizations centralized, licensed and subject to the surveillance of the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), which officially permitted little organizing outside party control. Since independent organisations and movements of citizens faced severe restrictions after World War II, "only organisations that did not address political and social issues were allowed to operate", among which one could find professional organisations and cultural, folkloristic and sports groups (Bieber 2003, 21). With respect to contentious politics, the socialist era has been depicted as "protest-free" (Donia 2006, 233), thanks to the prohibition of public expressions of dissent.

Workers' self-management, a practice to which an interviewee referred as "a kind of participatory form of workers' democracy" (RI 24), constituted the distinguishing feature of the Yugoslav socialism. Introduced in the 1950s as the official state ideology of social organization, it characterized the Yugoslav road to socialism along the forty years of its existence (Musić 2011). The workers represented the backbone of the Yugoslav society, and as such they were entitled a wide array of rights. Namely, the factories were entrusted to them, and formally controlled through the workers' self-management

councils, mandated by law for all enterprises in the country since 1950 (Donia 2006).[13] Back then, the approval of the Law of Nationalization of the Means of Production granted the workers' collective of a single enterprise the right to debate and vote upon primary factory matters. With the introduction of social property in 1951, the workers received a share of the company's income, becoming thus property-owning producers (Musić 2011). The election of workers' leaders in the working places, and of their representatives in the municipalities, created among them a feeling of ownership of their enterprises. On the other hand, though, the workers' councils converted into "the first and easiest step in turning control [of the state] over to the workers" (Donia 2006, 229).

The self-management practice was not the only attempt to involve certain social groups in political affairs and to include them in public discussions. From 1945, the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije*) (SSRNJ) was constituted as an umbrella socio–political organization that incorporated a number of non-party organizations, as well as "all the permitted political and interest activity in the country, including the League of Yugoslav Communists" (Jancar 1985, 239). Called the "People's Liberation Front" until 1953 the SSRNJ performed a variety of social and political functions, embodying an inclusive front organization designed to involve nonparty people in supportive activity that were on the party agenda (Ramet 1996). Rather than an alliance of individuals, the SSRNJ was set up as a kind of "association of associations" aimed at regulating the activities of individuals and groups (ibid., 80). Its members hailed from different social groups, from housewives to workers, including peasants and white collars. The SSRNJ was not meant to play the role of a political party, or to be the transmission belt of the LCY, which anyhow sponsored it, but rather to link government and its institutions to the vast majority of the people, and vice versa (Seroka and Smiljković 1986). In such a system, however, semi-legal coordinating groups and commissions exerted control and excluded the public from having any voice in

[13] The workers' councils gathered workers, technicians and managers who decided together about the industrial production in agreement with the director and the administrative delegates (Bezzi 2009).

personnel questions, perpetuating in this way "the organization's docile subordination to party hierarchies" (Ramet 1996, 14). In a nutshell, these embryonic civil society organizations were prevented from becoming a real oppositional front owing to their close dependence on both the state and party control.

One of the tasks of the LCY consisted in fact in "supplant[ing] and supersed[ing] the very need for independent social activity by creating a dense institutional web of groups and organizations in which memberships and participation were generally mandatory or coerced" (Howard 2011, 137). Besides officially sponsored mass organizations, the party took charge and controlled also vacation time, housing, education, health care, transportation, and the like (Bunce 1999). Although membership in organizations was open to individuals of all ethno-national communities, this was "mainly based on obligation, obedience, and external conformity, rather than on internal and voluntary initiatives" (Howard 2011, 140). Hence, these organizations could neither influence nor control the state. This was the case of official youth organizations like the League of Socialist Youth (*Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije*) (SKOJ), and other mass corporations as the official women's organization, the Women's Conference[14].

4.1.2 Late 1980s: reformist attempts in late socialism

Notwithstanding the importance of this phase of Yugoslavia's history, the late 1980s have received relatively scant scholarly attention, owing to a certain tendency of "reading history backwards" and "ignoring alternatives to the dominant nationalist discourses and policies" (Dragović-Soso 2008, 28). In particular, the so-called "civic

[14] Women contributed massively to the autonomous partisan struggle for the liberation of Yugoslavia, a struggle that became the milestone of the socialist state, and constituted a crucial component of the socialist rhetoric. Within the partisan front, women had organized in the Anti-Fascist front of Women (*Antifašistički Front Žena*) (AFŽ) since 1942. Aimed at mobilizing large masses of women, the AFŽ took care of tasks such as"providing supplies, money and medicines for the army, nursing", and the like (Bonfiglioli 2008, 35). The women of AFŽ did not limit their actions only to service delivery, but devoted their time to educational programs targeting women, such as the organization of literacy courses. In the wake of WWII, the AFŽ emerged thus "as a truly significant political organization in BiH, dealing with women's issues, including political participation of women and campaigning for outlawing veil practice" (Čaušević, Gashi, and Hasečić 2012, 101). The AFŽ was abolished in 1953 on grounds that the goal of gender equality could be better promoted by party agencies that were not gender-specific (Ramet 1999).

options", that is to say the civic-oriented initiatives "developed both inside and outside the existing institutional framework" (Sasso 2014, 28), have not been deeply investigated to date. Striving to partially fill a gap regarding the period of time leading up to the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation, this section narrates both the attempts to reform the Yugoslav system, and to avert war by means of popular mobilizations.

Unlike other countries in the region, prior to its disintegration Yugoslavia did not witness spontaneous mass demonstrations aimed at overthrowing the ruling system. Rather, the first attempts to change the Yugoslav federation emerged from within the system, and aimed at reforming and democratizing rather than at the dissolving it (Anđelić 2000). After the failure of the pro-Yugoslav projects in 1989, and with the approaching war, the fairly independent civic initiatives repurposed themselves. In the years 1991-92, their objective became preventing war.

The boost in civic initiatives can be dated to 1988 (Anđelić 2000, 2003), after in August 1987 the *Agrokomerc* affair had disclosed to the wider public the deep corruption and the plundering of resources of the LCY (Bougarel 1996)[15]. A period of "power vacuum" (Anđelić 2003, 149) followed the scandal, which marked a watershed in the political history of SR BiH. As a consequence, the Bosnian Communists experienced a severe crisis of legitimacy, intra-elite resignations, as well as internal replacements (Sasso 2014, 38). In an attempt to democratize the socialist system from the inside, in 1989 the Association of Yugoslav Democratic Initiative *(Udruženje za jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu)* (UJDI) was created in 1989 at the federal level. The association gathered mainly anti-nationalist, progressive and reform-minded intellectuals. These advocated for a democratic reform aimed at transforming Yugoslavia into a place of equal citizens and nations, albeit deprived of "the socialist/revolutionary/Titoist core as its *raison d'etre*" (Spaskovska 2012, 38). At the federal level, further pressures for change derived from the cultural milieu. Small

[15] At the time, it was revealed that Fikret Abdić, member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists and general manager of *Agrokomerc*, a giant food-processing firm located in the town of Velika Kladuša, that provided jobs for thousands of people, had issued 17,681 promissory notes without coverage to 63 Yugoslav banks between 1984 and 1985 (Anđelić 2003, 57). Although such a practice was common in all communist systems, this was the first time that somebody dared to go so far.

independent organizations and different grassroots groups such as artists, cultural producers, feminists, environmentalists, pacifists, and liberals (Ramet 1996), that in socialist Yugoslavia "enjoyed significant opportunities for creating expression and engagement" (Kurtović 2012, 200), advocated for more political freedom, equality and tolerance (Ramet 1996).

In the meantime, the country witnessed increasing levels of unemployment. As a consequence, in the late 1980s the workers started to mobilize, employing strikes as a tool of contention – a form of action that had been considered illegal (Jancar-Webster 1987). As late as in 1988, some 63,000 employees participated in 239 strike actions throughout Bosnia Herzegovina, while already the previous year 9,000 persons were reported to have taken part in rallies with similar purposes (Anđelić 2003, 50). According to the data provided by the Federal Union's Council, during the first half of 1988 in the whole territory of Yugoslavia the number of strikes had increased of 5,7 per cent compared to the previous year (ibid., 83). Besides the workers, in September 1987 also the students of Sarajevo took to the streets. Claiming their right to better food in the university canteens and more relaxed exam rules, but cautious to avoid any ideological involvement, several thousands students marched on the streets of Sarajevo (Anđelić 2003). Later in 1988, they created the first semi-independent student organization, the University Conference of the Alliance of Socialist Youth. To voice their discontent, they decided to publish a magazine, called *Valter* (Anđelić 2003, 83). Together with another magazine founded by a youth organization[16], *Naši Dani* (Our days), *Valter* voiced the growing dissatisfaction towards the ruling structure and contributed to enrich the debate over freedom and human rights. In that period, the youth press in BiH "acted both as a vehicle of mobilization for youth social movements, and as a practice of pluralist attitude and professional accuracy" (Sasso 2014, 30). Nevertheless, the transformative potential of the youth was limited by a "still firm grasp of the Communist structures, which employed either soft co-optation or hard control fo student activists" (ibid., 37).

[16] *Naši Dani* was in fact an organ of the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of BiH (*Savez Socijalističke Omladine* BiH) (SSO BiH), the youth wing of the Communist party. At the time, SSO BiH was still an official organization, although it was striving to emancipate from the League of Communists.

Besides the workers and the youth, other social groups mobilized in pre-war Bosnia Herzegovina, tackling non-political issues. Organizations advocating for the respect of human rights were created between 1988 and 1989, like the Yugoslav Forum for human rights protection, the above-mentioned UJDI, whose branch in Bosnia gained "the most widespread support and largest membership body" (ibid., 53), and the Green Movement (*Pokret Zelenih*). Initiated by professors and students of the Law Faculty of the capital, the latter became "the first legal, non-Communist, organized movement" (Anđelić 2003, 89)[17]. However, the project "did not gain enough visibility in the public sphere, nor envisaged concrete proposals for political reforms" (Sasso 2014, 29). In January 1989, enraged citizens took to the streets to protest the worsening air quality in Zenica, the most polluted city in Yugoslavia. They also organized meetings to demand better protection and concrete measures to prevent high pollution (Anđelić 2003, 87). Nonetheless, the above-mentioned civic initiatives remained mostly small-scale and elitist in essence (Anđelić 2003, 58), confined to intellectual and urban circles (Sasso 2014).

4.1.3 The anti-war initiatives

While, on the one hand, grassroots civic initiatives increased sharply during the this period, on the other hand the power vacuum left room for the rise of nationalist feelings. A controversial atmosphere characterized the period before the outbreak of the war in Bosnia Herzegovina: enthusiasm spread throughout society, since "freedom was in the air, networks of urban initiatives flourished in the field of art and music" (RI 23). Meanwhile, though, nationalist feelings were gaining a foothold, and soon got the better of the consequences of liberalization. To oppose the spreading of nationalism, which the

[17] Popular mobilizations around environmental issues that occurred throughout Eastern Europe in the dying days of socialist rule were instrumental to its delegitimation (Fagan and Tickle 2002, 46; Pickvance 1998; Rootes 2004). The socialist systems tolerated in fact environmental associations: conservation unions were widespread in former Yugoslavia as well, where also legislation aimed at protecting the environment passed during the central planning period – although it remained practically unimplemented. In the socialist countries environmental associations became thus a tool for political dissidents to cluster opposition and to openly challenge the political autocracy by assimilating environmental claims to human rights concerns, or suffusing them "with nationalist/patriotic protests against the degradation of national patrimony" (Rootes 1997, 342).

republican elites had embraced "as an alternative to state ideology" (Bunce 1999, 107), citizen-led movements emerged all over the federation.

The war became a real threat, and anti-war civic actions started to emerge in the urban centres of Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo. Bosnia Herzegovina was the poorest and most multi-ethnic state among the six republics composing the federation, and it lagged behind the others in many aspects, civic activism included. Mobilizations striving to ward off the outbreak of war remained mainly limited to the capital, while in other urban centers like Banja Luka, Mostar and Zenica they never developed, or were either assimilated or repressed by local nationalisms (Sasso 2014). Tuzla stands as an exceptional case, with which I deal in detail in section 7.1. A series of massive protests with an anti-nationalist character took place in the capital during the month of March 1992. This month of activism was christened "the month of Valter" after the military commander, and Yugoslav partisan hero, Vladimir-Valter Perić[18]. A series of demonstrations drew thousands of people on the streets of the capital, calling for peace and the preservation of "brotherhood and unity" in the country (Mujanović 2013), supported by the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje* (Liberation), and summoned by the radio station SA3. Throughout the demonstrations, the atmosphere was cheerful to the extent that, Donia recalls, at one of the peace rallies, "somebody raised a placard reading 'Sex without Borders' next to one saying 'We are Valter'" (Donia 2006, 280).

On April 5, thousands of peace demonstrators poured into the streets of the capital voicing their anti-war and pro-Yugoslav stands (Spaskovska 2012), converging in front of the Parliament building to oppose the barricades erected meanwhile by the Serb forces[19]. That day, unexpectedly, two snipers shot amongst the crowd, killing a young

[18] Perić led the Yugoslav Partisans of Sarajevo during World War II, heading the liberation of the city from the German forces. He became a city-icon after being murdered in the final hours of Sarajevo's liberation, eventually happened on April 6, 1945. Valter was the nickname he adopted in order not to be identified (Donia 2006).

[19] The Serbs of BiH had boycotted the referendum on the country's independence hold in March 1992, afraid that the independence of the country from SFRY would constitute a threat to their security, and scared of losing their nation status and becoming a minority (Isaković 2000). The majority of Bosnian Serbs supported the option of remaining part of the Yugoslav federation. Using as a pretext the killing of a Serb taking part in a wedding procession in the center of Sarajevo on 1 March 1992, the Serbs, led by the SDS, erected barricades around Sarajevo (Armakolas 2007).

girl. The episode marked the beginning of the city's siege and the end of the civic activism period (Spaskovska 2012). The following day around fifty thousand people took to the streets again carrying signs for peace and against the nationalist leaders (Donia 2006). Once again, snipers opened fire on the demonstrators, this time killing six people and wounding dozen of them. The outbreak of the war ended abruptly the "civic spring" of Bosnia Herzegovina, and the Valter movement as well[20].

4.2 1995-2006: Post-war period: Consociationalism, civil society promotion, and reforms

The burst of the war washed abruptly away the hope that a conflict could be avoided by virtue of grassroots popular demonstrations. The non-nationalist groups that had thrived in the run-up of the war could not find room for development. The conflict, lasting from 1992 to 1995, left on the ground a country brutally impoverished, as well as an estimated number of 100,000 casualties and an undisclosed amount of wounded (Zwierzchowski and Tabeau 2010). It is estimated that during the war 1,5 million people fled their house and were displaced as refugees (Hromadžić 2015).

The aftermath of the conflict, and in particular the period between 1996 and 2006, is remembered as a phase of strong international intervention, meaning of "intensive and wide-ranging involvement of the international community in nearly every aspect of political and economic life" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 4). During this period, the international community channelled resources aimed at fostering reconstruction, while NATO, the OSCE and other UN branches "did everything, from providing peacekeeping forces, running elections, supervising local police, sitting on the judiciary and caring for and re-settling refugees" (ibid.). This behaviour was grounded on the expectation that the former socialist state would unavoidably follow the path towards liberal democracy and market economy (Horvat and Štiks 2015b).

The following sections deal with three outcomes of foreign intervention in the country: the new political and administrative set up of Bosnia Herzegovina; the re-

[20] The memory of the shooting on the pacific crowd resonated until recently. The same square where the 1992 demonstration occurred was occupied in the summer of 2013 (see Chapter 6), amidst the surprise (and in some cases fear) of these citizens who preserved painful memories of the 1992 events.

shaping of associational life; and the political and economic reforms.

4.2.1 An ethnifying system of political power sharing

The first outcome of foreign involvement in BiH became visible in the new constitutional setting of the country. In 1995, BiH was set up as a consociational democracy and a triple power-sharing system (Bieber 2005), within the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), commonly known as Dayton Peace Agreement[21]. Envisaged by the political scientist Lijphart, the consociational system is extensively applied to societies divided along ethnic or religious lines, with the aim of achieving governmental stability and the maintenance of democracy. In practice, the consociational system assures an equal share of power to all contending ethno-national groups on a permanent basis (Lijphart 1969, Touquet and Vermeersch 2008). Over the years, it has become the default mode of conflict regulation in divided contexts (Nagle and Clancy 2010).

Although initially intended as a provisional arrangement aimed at ending the armed conflict, the "consociational package" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 1) at the core of Annex IV, attached to the Dayton Agreement, became eventually the state Constitution. While, on the one hand, the signature of GFAP put an end to the four-year conflict, on the other hand it recognized the territorial gains that the principal hostile parties had acquired through violence (Gordy 2016). In so doing, it legitimized the ambitions of ethno-national contenders. Following the partition of the country into two entities, also the capital Sarajevo was divided in two parts, one belonging to FBiH and the other, called Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*), to RS[22]. Besides the two entities, the agreement envisaged the autonomous district of Brčko, which subdivides the Serbian republic. While Republika Srpska is a centralized sub-state divided into municipalities, the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina is composed of ten administrative

[21] After the place in which the agreement was signed, the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, in the US state of Ohio.

[22] The new-born city was proclaimed in 1992 as "Serb Sarajevo" (*Srpsko Sarajevo*). It was renamed Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*) in 2005 upon a decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court stating that the name of this "Serb counterpart of Sarajevo" discriminated the non-Serb returnees (Armakolas 2007, 80).

and largely autonomous units called cantons. As a result of the decentralization of the country, the central institutions of the Bosnian Herzegovinian state became very weak, while the regional entities (the Federation, the cantons, and Republika Srpska) enjoy wide powers (Touquet 2012b). These substate layers of governments each have its own constitution, government, and court. Similarly, every entity has its own president, parliament, government, and court, as well as jurisdiction in the areas of civil administration, education, health, police, environment, and many others. In FBiH, the responsibility in these matters rests with the individual cantons. Only foreign policy and trade, defence, immigration policies, international communications facilities, Interentity cooperation in terms of transportation, air traffic control, and fiscal and monetary politics rely upon the competences of the loose state institutions. The state is estimated to spend half of its GDP to keep up this dysfunctional and overly bureaucratic structure. The figure below details the divisions of Bosnia Herzegovina as envisaged by the GFAP agreement.

Fig. 1 Administrative structure of Bosnia Herzegovina as envisaged by the Dayton agreement. © Panonian

In the aftermath of the war, demographic changes affected and reshaped the country's social fabric, reinforcing segregation based on ethnic identification. The majority of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) did not return to the homes they inhabited in the pre-war period, while other systemic transformations such as people-drain, massive displacement and reterritorialization of people after 1995 have reshuffled the sense of local belonging (Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007). As a result, nowadays the majority of Bosnian Serbs are settled in RS, whereas Bosniaks moved to cantons inhabited mostly by their ethnic peers. The Bosnian Croats followed a similar pattern, and now they populate the Herzegovinian region and the area along the Sava River in the North (Touquet and Vermeersch 2008, 269). In FBiH only two cantons out of ten are significantly ethnically mixed (Murtagh 2016), while the others are considered almost ethnically homogeneous. There is thus little mixing between the different communities.

In order to guarantee equal representation to each constituent group, the Presidency of BiH is a tripartite one that includes a Serb, a Croat, and a Bosniak member. The chairmanship of the presidency rotates every eight months (Bieber 2005, 48). Among its provisions, the GFAP agreement established the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and appointed the role of the High Representative (HR) as civilian head and oversight of the peace operations. Since 1997, the HR are entitled to the so-called "Bonn powers," namely the right to adopt binding decisions in case of disagreement among local parties, and to remove elected or appointed officials from office in case they violate the commitments envisaged in the Dayton agreement. The HR is not accountable to the state parliament of BiH, but only to the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), an international body composed of 55 states and charged with overseeing the country's peace process and implementing the Dayton Agreement.

Concerning political representation, the Constitution does not foresee any path outside the framework of the three constituent peoples (Gordy 2016). The individuals who do not fall into the Serb-Croat-Bosniak ethno-national grid (Hromadžić 2015), or refuse to self-identify with one of these groups, pertain to the category of the "others" (*ostali*)[23]. The "others" are prevented from holding major state posts, as they cannot be

[23] The "others" were estimated to be around half a million in 2013, that is to say one-eighth of the Bosnian population (Belloni 2013, 283).

appointed either to the House of People (*Dom naroda*), the state parliament's upper chamber, or the presidency of the country. The lack of a "truly shared sense of a Bosnian identity" (Touquet 2012a, 27), and the political unwillingness to build it, emerged in the last census carried out in October 2013. On that occasion, the question about the national identity of the respondents included four tick box responses – one for each constituent people and one for "Other" – but did not foresee the Bosnian-Herzegovinian nationality among the categories available.

The constitutional order reinforces even further ethnic representation by recognizing veto rights for each constituent people in case a vital interest of the group is threatened or endangered (literally "it is destructive of a vital interest of the Bosniak, Croat or Serb people"). At the state level, in entities and most cantons, each community has the right to veto decisions by Parliament that may negatively affect the community (Bieber 2005). Although the Constitution recognizes as vital interests issues related to constitutional amendments, identity, education, religion, and so forth, the veto rights can be expanded to virtually any issue (ibid.).

Among its critics, the GFAP has been said to have reconstructed and redefined completely the state, its territorial structure, its values and society (Savija-Valha 2012, 247), without establishing institutions "that [would] make possible for the citienzs of the state a life unencumbered by ethnifying and parasitic structures" (Gordy 2016). Rather than favouring the emergence of a concept of Bosnian Herzegovinian citizenship, it encapsulated individuals in ethnic boxes, marginalizing and reducing the citizens to the rank of "member of kinship" (Mujkić 2008). However, Armakolas cautions us about the argument that the state structure forces people into identifications, while they would prefer otherwise, as often people subscribe willingly to these categories, and even reproduce ethnic differences (2011a, 127). At the administrative level, the multiplication of institutions, especially at the local level, brought about an abnormal growth of the public sector, creating an environment conducive to corrupt practices owing to the amplification of "the discretional power of politicians on passing laws and procedures at all levels of governmental and judiciary powers" (Lofranco 2014, 9). At the political level, the institutional set-up has been accused of favouring nationalist parties (Touquet and Vermeersch 2008, 270) by fortifying the position of political actors mobilizing on nationalistic platforms.

4.2.2 The post-war NGO boom

Another setting of foreign engagement in the country concerned civil society. In the aftermath of the war, foreign agencies, international donors and humanitarian NGOs engaged dynamically in post-war reconstruction programs. Besides targeting infrastructural repair, promotion of reconciliation among communities, provision of support for returnees, and the strengthening of democracy, the international community fostered the development of so-called civil society building programs. International organizations, donors and multilateral agencies put considerable effort into the empowerment of civil society in the country. The nature of foreign intervention in BiH was thus driven "by the ideas of liberal peace and governmentality" (Savija-Valha 2012, 243), according to which the achievement of a robust and sound civil society had to be reached by means of financing domestic non-governmental organizations. Such an NGO-focused approach presents its downsides: drawing a parallel between civil society and non-governmental sector can be misleading, leading to the assumption that the higher the number and density of NGOs, the sounder the civil society.

As at the institutional level the role of the outsiders acting as "governors" of the country hampered the creation of truly democratic institutions, paradoxically giving room to the grievances of nationalist political parties (Bieber 2002), at the civil-society level the massive intervention of foreign donors brought about an inflated number of NGOs and associations active mostly for the sake of funding, often with no sound connection with the social groups in whose name they claimed to act. To grasp the range of the post-war NGO-boom in the country, as Alvarez (2014) would put it, one has to consider that in 2008 a country of roughly four million inhabitants totalled around 12,000 NGOs (Collantes-Celador 2013). More recent studies reveal that the number has remained constant over time (Belloni 2013). However, the exact amount of NGOs is still unknown, owing to the lack of an official nationwide register of civil society organizations. The chief of a resource center for NGOs suggested assessing these numbers carefully, as "the data (…) might be easily manipulated, since those are not strictly NGOs, but include sport and cultural associations[24]. Out of 12,000, maybe 2,000

[24] The state law recognizes two categories of non-governmental organizations (*nevladine organizacije* in local language) (NVO): citizens associations and foundations. The former are

of them are really active" (RI 23).

Thanks to the massive amount of monies directed towards civil-society-building programs, over the years civil society has ended up being identified almost exclusively with non-governmental organizations, touted as evidence of the growth of civil society and ultimately democracy (Helms 2014). Nevertheless, the increase in number of NGOs has been more quantitative than qualitative in nature, as the proliferation of NGOs did not correspond to an authentic intensification of civic engagement (Belloni and Hemmer 2010a). Belloni, for instance, claims the absence of a "direct correlation between the number of NGOs and the consolidation of civic and democratic politics" (Belloni 2008). In their intervention, often international donors sidestepped existing grassroots associations, and established relationships of domination and dependence between donors and recipients (Savija-Valha 2012, 247). Assistance priorities were regularly driven more by funding requirements than by any real knowledge of the domestic situation (Gagnon jr. 2002). Furthermore, the mushrooming of NGOs concentrated in (and thus benefited) mostly the capital and brought about a sort of artificial professionalized civil society relying upon foreign financial support (Sejfija 2006, 133) in the absence of a reconciled and genuine one. The externally-driven attempts to engender a third sector from scratch, maintained Fagan, resulted in mostly professionalized, depoliticized, donor-driven NGOs dependent upon funders' priorities (2006).

Even nowadays, the general population equates civil society with NGOs (Carothers and Barndt 1999; Collantes-Celador 2013; Belloni 2013), and the third sector

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"not-for-profit membership organization(s) established by a minimum of three natural or legal persons to further a common interest or public interest" (TACSO 2010, 6). The latter include "not-for-profit organization(s) without members, intended to manage specific property for the public benefit or for charitable purposes". Since the law does not envision the existence of sub-categories, the NVO group encompasses a wide range of associations, from those pursuing civic goals and acting in the public interest, such as environmental and women's organizations, to societies serving simply the purposes of their membership, like recreational and sport clubs. The lack of a clear distinction among sectors spawns confusion regarding the scope and essence of civil society organizations in BiH. As the head of a resource center for NGOs explains, a law that does not distinguish among sectors of CSOs qualifies also sport, theatre and music groups as such, rendering the allocation of the already sparse domestic funds more problematic and less transparent. For instance, local authorities are said to direct financial resources mainly towards sports clubs and veterans' associations, especially at the local level (Belloni 2013, 286).

enjoys only a limited degree of legitimacy (Collantes-Celador 2013). The majority of interviewees, many of those NGO workers, confirm the cleavage between CSOs and the disenfranchised communities they claim to advocate on behalf of. As an activist asserted during her interview, over the years "a gap opened between NGOs and society, [that took the form of] almost hostility and antagonism" (RI 30). The mistrust on the part of the wider public towards civil society organizations has been captured by the concept of "credibility gap" elaborated by Bieber (2002, 28). CSOs are sensed to exist "more for personal benefit of staff and their leaders than members of the community" (TACSO 2010, 16). My experience as participant observer confirmed this trend, as activists and NGO leaders spoke of NGOs they headed as "my NGO".

Nowadays, few channels of interaction with institutions are open for the non-governmental sector. Besides a widespread lack of "popular sense of the 'NGO sector' as a potential force for collective action or performing a watchdog function on government" among the general population (Helms 2013, 109), the country "lacks formal institutions and a legal framework for mediating relations between government and civil society" (TACSO 2010, 13). As the EU delegation reports, "BiH does not have a strategy for cooperation of the Government with civil society, neither its Entities". The government and the third sector "have been working independently for years, running on two parallel tracks. Because of that, they do not know each other and they are not aware of the benefits of a joint cooperation" (RI 25). Government officials continue to treat NGOs with scepticism, when not with downright suspicion. Since the beginning of the civil society promotion programmes, the term "non-governmental" has been understood as "oppositional to the government", while the issues that NGOs worked on were perceived as contentious or threatening (Fagan 2005, Helms 2014). Government officials tend to interpret NGOs as in opposition to the state – as "anti-governmental" rather than non-governmental in the words of Helms (2014, 28).

4.2.3 Political and economic reforms

The third area in which the international community intervened in BiH concerned the social and economic field. Over the years, the international community promoted a series of long-term socio-economic reforms, known as "structural adjustment programs", to convert the socialist system into a liberal market-oriented economy. The reforms reshaped the previous economic system, transforming it into a transitional

economy. In practice, the shift from a socialist to a more liberal market-oriented economy was realized through reforms in the realms of economy, labour and social policies, which envisaged economic liberalization, privatization of the state-owned companies, and cuts in public spending.

Looking toward a future integration of the country into the European Union, a series of neoliberal policies were put in place to re-establish the efficiency of the market. Financial support was provided in exchange for structural adjustment policies directed and monitored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and the World Bank, endorsed by the USA and other concerned nations (Majstorović et al. 2016). Measures such as deregulation, liberalization and privatization had a strong impact on social and health security services, labour policies, and pension systems, undermining social protection and rights of the welfare state. The reform brought forth social inequalities, and provoked the exclusion from social citizenship of those groups most affected by the consequence of the economic reforms.

In fact, the 2012-14 protests can not be understood without taking into account the long-term economic and social crisis haunting the Bosnian-Herzegovinian working class, and the other social groups whose economic and social conditions have been deteriorating precipitously over the past ten years. The increasing discontent that led tens of thousands to pour onto the streets of the main cities and towns of the country is deeply rooted in this wave of neoliberal reforms. In particular, welfare cuts and privatization impacted heavily on the working class once employed in the industrial sector. During the socialist period, the country had hosted the industrial sector of the former Yugoslavia, whose importance was emphasised also through the country's coat of arms, with its representation of two factory chimneys belching a plume of sooty smoke. During the 1992-95 war, infrastructures and industries were damaged or totally destroyed. At the end of the conflict, the IMF and the EU required the privatization of the domestic industrial apparatus as a condition for financial assistance to the former Yugoslav state. In particular, the privatization of formerly state-owned or socially owned enterprises took off in 1997, and between 2006 and 2008 (Majstorović et al. 2016). Conducted in a non-transparent manner, and in the absence of an appropriate institutional framework, the privatization process provoked the bankruptcy of the former industrial giants that provided jobs to most of the population before the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Nationalist profiteers engaged in asset-stripping and

undervalued enterprises that were for sale (Pugh 2005, 451), while many shareholders found themselves forced to sell their shares for next to nothing, owing to their inability to repay their loans. Enterprises were thus divided and sold along ethnic lines and through a corrupt struggle for power. In some cases, the workers, who had taken out loans to buy shares in the state-owned part of their factories, sold them to buyers who promised to invest and restart production. Instead of revitalising these factories, the privatization process of state enterprises brought benefits to the local political elite that took advantage of donors funds "conditional on withdrawing the state from the economy" (ibid, 451.). In other cases, the government sold companies whose shares belonged to the workers as though they were in full state ownership. Compounding the cronyism and corruption of the ethno-political elites, the ruling political parties used the privatisation process as a tool to retain their grip on power by manipulating it for their own political ends. The process of transition to market economy affected thus mostly the workers who once constituted the backbone of the Yugoslav system and who faced mass layoffs and economic dispossession as a consequence of the transition process.

In the wake of economic deprivation and the dramatic consequences of four years of conflict, social conditions worsened as well. People found themselves impoverished and stricken by economic reversal, whereupon their living standards declined. Hence, the neoliberal restructuring of the country brought about a further worsening of living standards for a population already ravaged by a four-year conflict, bringing them to the edge of existence.

4.3 2006-14: Civil society campaigns and grassroots activism in the 2000s

The period between 2006 and 2014 saw a dramatic decrease of international involvement in the country. The visibility and influence of the High Representative in domestic politics dropped noticeably over these years. For instance, he proved more hesitant to invoke the Bonn powers. The underlying reason for this change of strategy ought to be sought in the diminishing geopolitical importance of the Balkans in global relations, as well as in the end of the state of emergency in the area, which led foreign donors to drive their efforts towards other war-torn countries. This change was also grounded on the assumption that "international influence should be exercised through the more indirect EU accession process" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 4) rather than through direct involvement on internal politics.

In terms of contentious action as well the pattern changed slightly in the 2000s. In these years, virtually all the Yugoslav successor states experienced mass protests, such as anti-establishment rallies, demonstrations targeting the deteriorating social and economic conditions, or denouncing the corruption of the elites (Horvat and Štiks 2015b, 11). As far as Bosnia Herzegovina is concerned, in the 2000s episodic events of grassroots civil resistance were undertaken with the aim of addressing economic and social issues. In spite of the efforts, these attempts at sparking a broader movement did not gain momentum. Although nowadays activist networks and engagement through NGOs often overlap (Wimmen forthcoming), in this section I have deemed it appropriate to distinguish among instances of informal activism, adopting more disruptive tactics, and formal activism, employing less contentious strategies, such as lobbying and advocacy.

4.3.1 The *Dosta!* protest movement

As far back as 2005, an informal group of young activists met on a then-popular online forum of the locally-based website *Sarajevo-X.com* (Wimmen 2013). From a small Internet forum, the group rapidly grew, its members thus moving their discussions away from the virtual forum to the public space, concretely to the main square of the city. The group, which defined itself as a civic protest movement (Lombardo 2010) aimed at promoting accountability, responsibility and change towards their policy-makers, adopted the name *Dosta!* (Enough!)[25]. In their regular weekly meetings, *Dosta!* members talked publicly about the socio-political problems affecting the Bosnian population, "and thereby began to affirm their 'disturbing' presence in the political space of the town" (Lombardo 2010, 60). In autumn 2005, *Dosta!* supported the Bosnian farmers who protested in front of the Parliament, urging the government to protect local agriculture, while in March 2006 the group staged regular protests in front of the Parliament building to denounce the rise in the price of electricity. On that occasion, around three hundred persons showed up, mostly elderly and pensioners (Touquet 2012a).

[25] The name *Dosta!* recalls the slogan that protesters voiced on the streets of Serbia demanding the resignation of President Slobodan Milošević in the 1990s (Wimmen 2013). The movement bears many similarities with the Serbian *Otpor!,* the movement formed initially by students in 1998 to call for the ousting of Milošević.

The logo chosen for *Dosta!*, still visible nowadays in the form of graffiti on the walls of the capital, featured an open black hand with the shape of Bosnia Herzegovina on the palm, and the word *Dosta!* written underneath. Over the time, the civic group became a driving "awakening" force in the capital, managing also to establish other similar cells in the main urban centres of FBiH, and to network them in a decentralized and informal way. Moreover, *Dosta!* received the support of local alternative singers and musical groups, such as the local alternative band Dubioza Kolektiv that, together with the rapper Frenkie, a militant of *Dosta!*, dedicated a song to the movement that became its anthem. The modus operandi of the activists of *Dosta!* differed from the more conventional methods used thus far by NGOs or foreign-funded campaigns. *Dosta!* aimed to raise awareness among the population and to bring about social and political change by using non-violent methods to date unusual in the Bosnian Herzegovinian backdrop. As Wimmen explains, the *Dosta!* activists "engaged in provocative and sometimes entertaining tactics of 'guerrilla communication' that drew the attention of a bewildered public" (Wimmen 2013, 11). Among their initiatives, one is worth recalling for its novelty. In the occasion of the 2006 general elections, the group organized a convoy composed of five yellow cars that toured around Sarajevo "blasting the sound of bleating sheep over a mobile sound system, as a sarcastic comment on the voting behaviour expected that day" (ibid.).

Once the election campaign was over, the *Dosta!* activists organized other initiatives to name-and-shame public figures and incumbents, and to "expose the financial and moral corruption hidden behind the façade of nationalist pretension" (Wimmen 2013, 12). In doing so, in 2009 their actions contributed to the resignation of the then newly-elected premier, Nedžad Branković, member of the Bosniak nationalist Party of Democractic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*) (SDA), accused of having purchased a luxury apartment in the capital for a minimal price by virtue of his position and political connections (Lombardo 2010, 91). The same year, *Dosta!*'s activists organized "Activism days" (*Dani aktivizma*), during which roundtables and meetings were organized to discuss civic activism, government accountability, and similar topics. Although the downfall of *Dosta!* can be dated to February 2011, the activists deserve credit for having been the first to draw a sharp division between the citizens suffering economic precariousness, regardless of ethnic divisions, and the ones responsible for it (politicians, the state, and the neoliberal economy) (Lombardo 2010), a cleavage to

which movement organizers often resorted in the following waves of protests.

4.3.2 The 2008 spring of Sarajevo

Two years later, in 2008, other demonstrations took place in the capital Sarajevo to protest the increasing insecurity in the city neighbourhoods, following the murder of a young boy in a tram. Denis Mrnjavac, the young man, was stabbed to death on a tram in early 2008 by three teenagers (Touquet 2015). In response, thousands of people (an exceptional figure for Bosnia Herzegovina) took to the streets in Sarajevo, demanding the resignation of the city major and of the cantonal prime minister. The protests took place on weekends, for a couple of months (February and March 2008). The events targeted "a political establishment seen as corrupt and incapable of leading the country" (Sicurella 2008), as well as unable to cope with juvenile delinquency (Balkan Insight 2008). On the rally of February 13, the city government building was pelted with rocks and eggs, and some policemen were injured (Balkan Insight 2008). The hail provoked the reaction of the authorities that moved towards more repressive actions against the protesters. The season of protests called "the spring of Sarajevo" (Sicurella 2008) lasted months, and for many "it represented the symbolic rise of civil society in Sarajevo" (Lombardo 2010, 77). However, the "spring" soon ran its course, and the protests never turned into a proper movement.

The 2008 wave of mobilization counted among its outcomes the formation of a grassroots association called *Akcija Građana* (Citizens' Action), inspired by the widespread discontent and apparently increasing civic awareness following the 2008 protest. As Toquet noted, and some interviewees confirmed (RI 30), the 2008 wave of mobilization can be considered a precursor to the 2013 one, not only for its "beyond ethnic" dimension, but also by virtue of its organizers, who were also involved in the 2008 and 2013 waves (*Dosta!* supported the demonstrations as well). Furthermore, in 2008 as in 2013 the Internet proved the appropriate space for people to gather, a sort of virtual square from which to organize and somehow coordinate the protests.

4.3.3 Student protests and grassroots associations

During these years, other contentious episodes occurred outside the capital. In May 2009 the Faculty of Philosophy University of Tuzla underwent a one-day occupation, following from the university occupations organized the same year throughout the former Yugoslav states, in particular Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, to oppose the commodification of higher education in the region (Kraft 2015). The Tuzla students' claims were slightly different from those of their peers in Zagreb (Eminagić and Vujović 2013). Besides equality and free education, the students urged the authorities to solve the issue of university space, and requested use of the former military barracks of the campus as university premises. Following the model of their peers in Croatia, during the occupation the students of Tuzla organized a plenary session called "plenum", established as "the highest representative tool of the students" (ibid). Although the occupation ended in one day, it brought together several activist groups that kept struggling "for the commons, new solidarities and emancipatory politics" once the action was over (ibid.).

With the exception of Tuzla, though, a proper student movement never developed in the country. A recent attempt in this direction is worth mentioning. In December 2013, a group of students organized to protest the risk of exclusion from the EU-sponsored mobility program Erasmus +, as the refusal of RS and FBiH ministries to agree on the issue, and the absence of a unified Ministry of Education at the national level, translated into the ineligibility of BiH students to participate in the program. Under the name *(R)evolucija +* (meaning Revolution +, echoing the name of the EU program), some rallies urging a solution to the impasse were staged in five university cities, witnessing only scarce participation (Milan 2013b).

Besides the students' initiatives, symbolic actions were organized in other cities throughout the years. For instance, in 2012 the *Dosta!* branch of Mostar performed street actions against the impasse after the mayoral elections (Touquet 2012a), while other groups, connected mainly to the network "Antifascist Action Bosnia Herzegovina" (*Antifašistička Akcija BiH*) staged rallies and symbolic actions like the cleaning of the anti-fascist memorials in Mostar and in Sarajevo, both abandoned and repeatedly looted for representing the symbol of that "brotherhood and unity" among national communities that had gotten lost with the demise of socialism. In Republika Srpska,

some initiatives took place in the cities of Banja Luka and Prijedor. The *Oštra Nula*[26] (literally, "Sharp Zero") grassroots group was the first to stage small-scale street actions with a carnivalesque character in 2010 (Touquet 2012a). The members of *Oštra Nula*, mostly students and academics, began by publicly expressing their dissatisfaction towards the increase in electricity prices, corruption, privatization of education, deterioration of social services, and the like in the city of Banja Luka. In 2010 they also took part in an anti-government demonstration organized in the city. *Oštra Nula* members were the first to organize street actions with an anti-nationalist dimension. However, thanks to the novelty of the strategy and to the lack of support among the population, the turnout of their performances has always been low. No more than thirty people attended the street actions back in 2010, as the magazine *Žurnal* stressed, adding that "*Oštra Nula* is the only organization willing to publicly criticize the system in the streets". The same article reports a demonstrator saying that "Here even ordinary protests are considered radical" (Žurnal.info 2010). *Oštra Nula* participated in the wave of protests organized by *Dosta!* between 2006 and 2008, and developed many connection with grassroots groups all over BiH (Lombardo 2010, 78) and RS as well, such as Association of Independent Creators and Artists "Ghetto" (*Udruđenje Nezavisnih Stvaralaca i Aktivista "Geto"*) (UNSA), another grassroots group active in Banja Luka since 1999.

In another city of Republika Srpska, more precisely in Prijedor, a march was organized in 2012 to "call for justice for all the victims of all the crimes" perpetrated during the last conflict (RI 19)[27]. As the organizers of the march underscore, the

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[26] The name chosen for the association aimed at mocking the arrogance of the government that "perceived the general public as zero" (Touquet 2012a, 159).

[27] Prijedor, the second city of RS, had been under the control of the Bosnian Serb nationalists during the 1992-95 conflict, and has been harbouring twenty persons convicted of war crimes afterwards (Belloni 2005, 437). The city came into the limelight in the 1990s for hosting four concentration camps set up around its suburbs during the war, whose existence the Bosnian Serb authorities still fail to acknowledge (Domi 2012). Nevertheless, data collected provided evidence that torture against non-Serb population was committed in the concentration camps. The town was also the scene of the second largest massacre after the Srebrenica genocide, for which the United Nation War Crimes Commission determined that "the systemic destruction of the Bosniak community in the Prijedor area met the definition of genocide" (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Committee 1997).

initiative aimed at justice "from a civic perspective" in the belief that "no ideology can justify the killings" (RI 19). The network of activists organizing the march, named *Jer me se tiče* (Because it concerns me), strove to be self-reliant and, as such, refused funds from foreign donors and NGOs. In this way, it tried to steer clear of any problem associated with the support of domestic and/or international organizations. Besides the march in the center of the city, the group organized other actions to call for the right of memory in town. To that end, and since the mayor's denial of the massacres perpetrated against the non-Serb component of the population in the early 1990s translated into the impossibility to erect a monument or a plaque to commemorate the victims of the last war, the activists fabricated symbolic monuments and placards. They placed them in different spots of the city in order to remember what they term the "civilian victims of Prijedor", leaving aside any ethnic connotation. For the same reason, these placards are written both in Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet[28]. So far, the march has taken place since 2012 every May on yearly basis.

4.3.4 The civic platform GROZD and other civil society initiatives

Civic initiatives adopting more formal means of action such as lobbying and advocacy occurred in the same period, organized mostly by formal associations with the aim of raising awareness around a certain issue. In 2006, the NGO-coalition GROZD, an acronym for *Građansko Organizovanje za Demokratiju,* meaning "citizen's organization for democracy", was created with the aim of generating "broad bottom-up engagement in public affairs by top-down initiative", in the words of Wimmen (forthcoming). The initiative was locally conceived, but financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other international donors (ibid.). Composed of a network of (initially) six NGOs, GROZD held a civic platform that hold a campaign aimed at encouraging people to become active in the lead-ups to the 2006 general

[28] Since the 1990s, the language standard, and the alphabet in use, are very sensitive issues and a matter of dispute in the political and identitarian ethno-nationalist politics. The alphabet in use is one of the distinguishing features that the RS incumbents employ to stress their diversity with Bosnia Herzegovina and their proximity with Serbia, where the Cyrillic script is in use. Although the Bosnian language uses both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, only the latter is officially in everyday use in RS, an entity in which the constitution does not recognize any language other than Serbian.

elections (Belloni and Hemmer 2010). The NGOs together elaborated twelve requests for social reforms. The proposals were first discussed through public debate in town-hall meetings convened in about 143 municipalities across the country (Wimmen forthcoming), and then handed on to the candidates. By signing them, the candidates committed to implement the platform, and agreed to be monitored to assess the fulfillment of the promises by the end of their mandate (thus in 2010). Against the odds, GROZD succeeded in gathering half a million citizens' signatures in support of the demands, as well as more than 400 organizations to sustain the platform. GROZD organizers managed also to get thirty political parties committed to implement the platform (Lombardo 2010, Wimmen forthcoming).

Nonetheless, the election results proved at odds with the expectations. Although the turnout improved slightly in the parliamentary election, it declined in the presidential vote. As Wimmen explains, the two parties faring best in the GROZD evaluation achieved only marginal gains, while the party that performed worst in the requests for reforms doubled its electoral support. The second big winner ended up being a nationalist party that refused to commit itself to the "Citizens Platform" (Wimmen forthcoming). Although some activists continued to monitor the conduct of the elected political parties, the GROZD coalition dispersed after the elections.

Other civil society-led initiatives taking place at the national level are worth recalling, such as the "One Billion Rising" campaign (*Jedna milijarda ustaje*), a global campaign organized to raise awareness of violence against women. The campaign took place in Bosnia Herzegovina for the first time in 2013, involving around 220 domestic CSOs with different degrees of formality, which collaborated with little means for two months (RI 17). The initiative was mentioned by several interviewees as successful in terms of establishing cross-entity networks, to the extent that the event has been described "as an unpredecented level of cooperation and wider civil society activism so far" (zenskaposla.ba 2013).

Another campaign, headed in 2014 by the Center for Civil Society Development (CPCD), an NGO and resource centre for CSOs based in Sarajevo, strove to enhance the partnership between governmental and non-governmental actors. By creating a countrywide coalition of 380 NGOs called "To Work and Succeed Together", CPCD lobbied for establishing an institutional framework for the collaboration between governmental bodies and civil society sector (TACSO 2011). As a result, in 2007 the

Council of Ministers in BIH, as the state-level executive body, and the NGO sector signed a cooperation agreement, the so-called "Agreement on Cooperation between the Council of Ministers of BiH and the Non-Governmental Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Similarly, more than 100 municipalities across BiH, roughly two-thirds of the total, signed the accord establishing principles of cooperation between the two sectors. The accord aimed at introducing institutional tools to facilitate dialogue among the government and the third sector. Unfortunately, the foreseen Office of the Council of Minister for the cooperation with the non-governmental sector, together with the Civil Society Council, had not been implemented so far.

4.4 The cultural context: Social practices and informal networks in contemporary BiH

This section is devoted to analyzing the cultural context of contemporary Bosnia Herzegovina, and in particular the dominant role of social networks and organizations of informal type. I have deemed it particularly important to delve into the way social practices and informal networks shape the cultural diversity of the Bosnian Herzegovinian society. A final section investigates concepts as *štela*, *raja* and *komšiluk,* particularly useful to gain a better understanding of the non-ethnic cleavages present in the country.

4.4.1 Formal membership, informal networks and clientelism

The inhabitants of Bosnia Herzegovina have low levels of participation in civic organizations. According to scholars, and as confirmed by an UNDP-led report, they tend to give preference to informal voluntarism, which entails the regular and unpaid help offered to non-family members, friends and neighbours, over formal membership in associations (UNDP 2009, Touquet 2012a). Similarly, "parallel structures" (Sampson 2002, 28) based on personal connections and family ties take precedence over formal ones.

Before attempting to account for this low level of participation in civic organizations, it is worth clarifying the meaning that the term "voluntarism" assumes in a post-socialist country. While in Western Europe the concept corresponds to the principle of taking action on a voluntary basis for the benefit of other people without any financial reward, in BiH it recalls the so-called work actions (*radne akcije*) that the

LCY arranged in order to rebuild the country after World War II. The work actions consisted in particular in cleaning up public spaces like parks, or distributing toys to an orphanage (Helms 2014, 30). Therefore, rather than a bottom-up conception of the term, voluntarism in former Yugoslavia assumed a top-down meaning and a negative connotation for its association with the pre-war socialist government (UNDP 2009, 11).

However, the low level of enrollment in formal organizations does not mean that BiH cannot count on a tradition of solidarity. In his 1997 attempt to map local initiatives and civil society activities, Sampson found that around 400 civil society organizations and voluntary groups, including especially "community groups centred on neighbourhood, occupation, or common interest" existed together with, or supplemented, the primary family groups (Sampson 2002, 27). Moreover, he discovered that "family groups often fulfilled what we today would call civic functions, providing security, welfare, etc." (ibid.). The predominance of informal family-type networks in BiH can be partially attributed to the legacy of the socialist period. In the Communist regimes in fact "friendships and neighbourhood networks represented more meaningful forms of association than the politicised and controlled mass organisations" (Kopecký and Mudde 2003, 166). According to Howard, in Communist countries people relied on the private sphere since the public one was politicized and controlled, people could express themselves freely only within the closed circle of family members, and one had to count on personal networks and acquaintances to find products owing to the shortages of goods (Howard 2011). An interviewee confirmed the importance of family ties, in particular after the conflict, by claiming that: "Animosity, distrust, lack of solidarity: this is a society that for nearly 25 years now people are living on their own resources. It is very difficult to go out of this circle and trust something that is neither yourself nor your family" (RI 30).

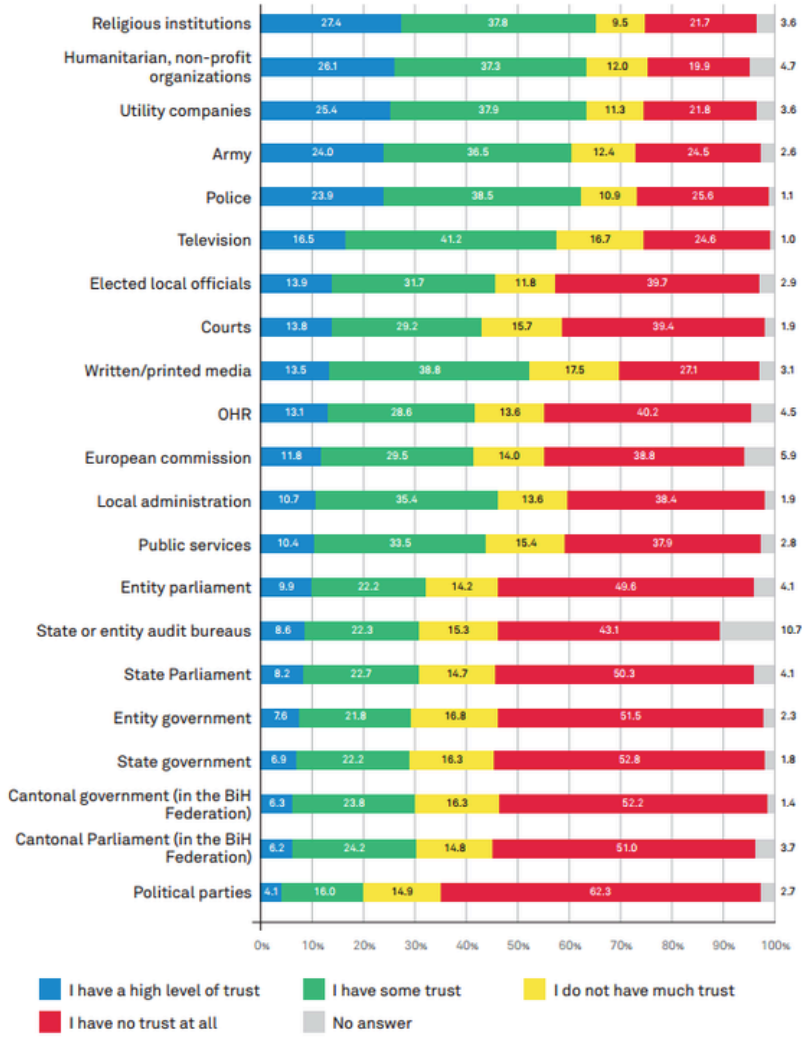
The political and material instability of the country has resulted, even nowadays, in social relations playing a protective and supportive function, often becoming a source of social mobility (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 2). Connections *(veze)* are deemed necessary to find a job or to gain access to public resources (Lofranco 2014), while economic opportunities remain closely linked to the ability of citizens to cultivate ties with party's members and incumbents (Gordy 2016). Political clientelism works often through party membership or affiliation (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016), which requires, in turn, ethno-national identification. It is especially in the state

bureaucracy (public administration offices) that jobs are most often secured through family and party connections. In a country where unemployment constitutes an enormous problem, personal networks are of basic importance to enter the marketplace, in particular the public sector. Occupying a stable position in the state structure is considered an asset and a means to a stable income and good living standards (Lofranco 2014), as well as "a remarkably efficient path to personal enrichment" (Gordy 2016). The government "in all its various, ethnically defined, forms is by far the biggest employer and the only one that is unlikely to go through cuts any time soon" (Hemon 2012). On the other hand, the predominance of clientelist networks prevents the citizens from taking to the streets. It is in fact risky to be spotted on the streets, opposing what can be a future employer. In a society in which informal networks are dominant, and the retired overpower the employed, social pressure cannot be underestimated in affecting the individuals' decision whether or not to get involved in mobilization. Moreover, often local authorities use the "threats of job loss and actual firing to quiet both criticism and dissent" (Lofranco 2014, 7). Therefore, those who happen to have a job tend to keep quiet, for fear of losing it.

Notwithstanding the importance of party connections to get a job, the citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina at large show a high level of distrust, imbued with moral condemnation, towards political parties. The latter are said to control institutions and material resources, of which they can dispose at their behest.

The table below, elaborated by the Sarajevo-based think tank *Analitika*, shows the extent to which the level of citizens' trust in the institutions of representative democracy, such as political parties, is declining, bordering on aversion to politics. By contrast, trust in religious institutions follows an opposite trend: they are top-ranking. The results refer to the year 2015.

Tab. 3 Trust of citizens towards institutions



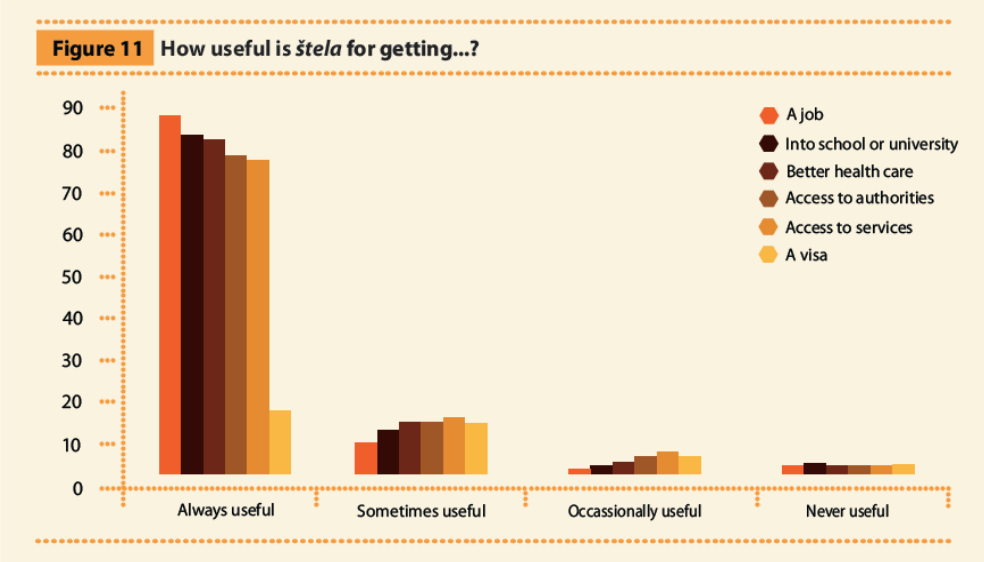
Source: Analitika - Center for Social Research 2015

4.4.2 Štela, raja and komšiluk

In the context of intense social relations dynamics, the concept of *štela* is particularly enlightening. Although it cannot be literally translated, the term stems from the German word *stelle,* meaning job or position. In Bosnia Herzegovina, *štela* can be conceived as "a local notion that articulates a form of nepotism cum clientelism" (UNDP 2009, 12) that connotes the access to public services, university, or job market by means of social and family ties. A system based on *štela* stresses the lack of individual agency (Koutkova 2015), reproduces informality and clientelism, and gives rise to political patronage and nepotism, owing also to the "deceptive concept of 'service' that overlaps with that of help" (Lofranco 2014, 14). The prominence of such an act of favour and informal exchange is said to provoke inequalities and disempowerment, since this practice entails

bribery, and therefore perpetuates the already high level of corruption in a country already plagued by this phenomenon. The table below, drawn from the 2009 UNDP report on social capital, elucidates the extent to which the practice of *štela* is considered important according to the sample of Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens interviewed.

Tab. 4 The benefits of štela



Source: UNDP 2009

Another practice that elucidates the complexities of social dynamics in Bosnia Herzegovina is the informal institution of *komšiluk,* a word of Turkish origin that can be translated as "neighbourhood" (Donia 2006, 4) or "good neighbourliness" (Bougarel 1996, 88). In a similar vein, Sorabji (2008, 104) defines *komšiluk* as a "shared moral space" inhabited by individuals belonging to different communities. The vernacular term *komšija*, used to speak of social relations in BiH, carries in fact "a significant moral dimension" (Hromadžić 2015, 196). In pre-war Bosnian society, the value of *komšiluk* constituted a sort of "social glue" of trust and affection, by linking individuals belonging to different ethnic communities (Koutkova 2015). Donia portrays the climate of tolerance existing prior to the war in the capital by reporting that before the early 1990s the Sarajevans referred to the other national groups as *komšije,* that is to say neighbors, and that they "valued their association with others as 'neighborly relations' (*komšijski odnosi)"* (Donia 2006, 4).

However, the term bears a certain degree of ambivalence. Although according to the practice of *komšiluk* people of different nationalities felt the moral obligation to respect and help reciprocally one another, this never translated into intimacy (Bougarel 1996, 88). According to Bougarel, such lack of intimacy limited the potential of *komšiluk* to lay the basis for civic-mindedness. Quite the contrary, the value of *komšiluk* constituted in Bougarel's opinion the opposite of citizenship, owing to its "constant reaffirmation of community identity and codes" that "represented the inverse of citizenship rather than its premise" (Bougarel 1996, 88). Hence, the value of "good neighbourhood" reinforced the belonging and identification with the religious community instead of fostering the idea of a democratic society composed of individual citizens regardless of their ethno-national belonging. One interviewee summarized tersely the weakness of civic bonds among members of different communities by saying: "We have always lived one next to each another, but never together" (RI 31).

Finally, *raja* is a third concept that can be useful to understand Bosnian specificities, and in particular the divide between the centre and the periphery of the country. Originally, the term *raja* referred to the lower-class, taxed subjects of the Ottoman Empire (Mujanović 2013). Nowadays, it encompasses both one's circle of friends, and "those who share a certain ethos, with whom one identifies even if one does not know them personally" (Hunt, Duraković, and Radeljković 2013, 23). As Hunt et al. explain, there are no ethnic divisions between the members of the *raja*, to the extent that their members make use of nicknames that disguise one's ethnic origins. Across time, the term switched meaning, coming to identify "the people", and specifically a peculiar category of people, the urbanized ones. These were perceived as opposed to the rural population, the peasants, who often moved from the rural periphery to the urban centres. The latter are often disparagingly labeled *seljaci*, or also *papci,* plural from *papak*, which literally means hoof, but Kurtović translates as "hillbilly" (Kurtović 2012).

The *raja,* conceived as embodying the urban population, is considered more inclined to develop an identity that overcomes ethnic belonging, unlike peasants, often despised for being keener to hold onto ethno-nationalist feelings (Jansen 2005). As a matter of fact, the concept of *raja* points at a non-ethnic cleavage that juxtaposes the urban, educated population to the rural one, portrayed as backward and irrational. Following this division, formal networks and mobilization beyond ethnicity would be more appealing to the former category of citizens than to the latter. The urban-rural

divide is still a salient one in BiH, solidified by the low degree of mobility between the rural and urban areas of the country. However, Kurtović expresses caution about the expression "urban culture", describing this kind of rhetorical frame as a political and ideological statement "with potential problematic implications" (2012, 1999). She also criticized the "urban vs. rural" dichotomy as having a simplistic tone.

4.5 Conclusions

Summing up, this overview into the historical, cultural and political context of BiH aimed to lay the groundwork for the analytical part that follows. In the chapter, I tried to contextualize historically the development of civil society and contentious practices. Furthermore, I detailed the main features of the political, cultural and economic context in which the waves of protest developed. Next, I elucidated the forms of social organization that existed in the country prior to and after the 199-95 war. Following that, I delved into the impact of the international community's intervention on the political, social and economic context of the country. In the remainder of the chapter, I detailed the practices of contentious politics in the 2000s, as well as the initiatives undertaken by formal actors, to bring about change. Finally, I shed some light on existing social practices and informal networks that are still predominant in the Bosnian Herzegovinian backdrop.

PART II

MOBILIZATION BEYOND ETHNICITY: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

Chapter 5
"The Park is Ours" mobilization

The mobilization against the dismantling of a public park in the country's second-largest city, Banja Luka, constitutes the first case study of analysis. This wave of protest has been characterized as "the most militant and sustained protest ever taking place in Banja Luka since the end of the 1992-95 war" (Lippmann 2012). Among the few episodes of collective action that occurred previously in the city, this stands out for its high turnout and length, as the demonstrators maintained momentum for a considerable period of time. In terms of scale, the movement organizers were unable to shift their initiative past the local level, or to expand their social base to groups beyond middle-class urban youth.

Nevertheless, the protest organized in defense of the park triggered a broader movement that advanced a strong demand for social and political change[29]. On the streets of Banja Luka, the protesters claimed their right to use the urban space, as well as to have a say on the issues concerning the city in which they live. Moreover, they called an end to corruption and nepotism, and reclaimed their right to a dignified life, as well as freedom of speech. These claims were made on behalf of a community of deprived citizens, cutting across religious or ethnic divides.

The protest, which lasted from the end of May until October 2012 and centred around the initiative *Park je naš* (The Park is Ours) developed a discourse that moved beyond ethnic cleavages. As the citizens' initiative called for the right for citizens to inhabit the urban space and to benefit from it, "The Park is Ours" could be classified under the rubric of "the right to the city" popular movements. These movements are marked by a strong citizen demand for transforming and renewing access to urban life. However, in light of the specific context in which "The Park is Ours" unfolded, and for the sake of clarity, throughout the chapter I refer to it simply with the name of the initiative.

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[29] As an interviewee recounts, "The Park is Ours transformed into a collective movement aimed at broader structural issues having systemic social change as a goal" (RI 5).

In this chapter, I trace the development of this wave of protests. After offering an overall picture of the cultural and political environment in which the protests occurred, I provide a detailed chronology of the events, from the first demonstrations to their peak and decline. Next, I highlight their development, by focusing on the movement actors and their organizational structure. In the analytical part that follows, I offer a thorough investigation of the events by employing the analytical tools detailed in chapter 2. I thus look at the key factors that help to explain why the demonstrators managed to mobilize citizens in the city of Banja Luka, but failed to shift the mobilization upwards and to broaden its support base. To that end, I focus in particular on the role played by pre-existing organizations and networks. I examine the activists' discoursive strategies, as well as the political and cultural environment in which the protests were embedded. Furthermore, I explain the underlying reasons for the adoption of a peaceful repertoire of action. The chapter concludes with a section summarizing the findings and reporting some concluding remarks.

5.1 The cultural and political context of Banja Luka

In order to properly grasp the development of a movement, as well as the conditions that affect its dynamics, it is necessary to analyse the cultural and political context in which it emerged and developed. Bearing that in mind, this section investigates the background against which "The Park is Ours" unfolded.

Unlike FBiH, the RS entity has a centralized system and functions almost as an independent state, of which Banja Luka has been the capital since 1998[30]. Several scholars and local observers have defined the entity as an authoritarian system, owing to the concentration of power in the hands of its president, Milorad Dodik, who has often been accused of exercising power arbitrarily. Since the 2010 general elections, Dodik has served both as president of the entity and leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (*Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata)* (SNSD), the ruling party in RS. He had previously functioned as premier of the entity in the periods between January 1998 and 2001, and once again between February 2006 and October 2010.

[30] It was only in 1998 that the then pro-reformist forces, under the leadership of Milorad Dodik, moved the capital of Republika Srpska from Pale to Banja Luka (Armakolas 2007).

The political agenda of the SNSD party envisages the accordance of further autonomy, and eventually independence, to Republika Srpska. The strongest opposition party is the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*) (SDS), founded in 1990 by Radovan Karadžić, recently sentenced to forty years imprisonment for crimes against humanity and genocide by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (the Guardian 2016). The governing and the opposition parties are said to have essentially the same agenda, which foresees the "maintenance of ethnic supremacy of the Serbs over the Muslims and Croats who have returned home since the war, along with maintaining the thriving regime of corruption" (Lippmann 2014). Along the same lines as the SNSD, SDS aims at unifying the Serb community of BiH.

Fig. 2 The location of Banja Luka

Source: Europe-Atlas.com

Despite its pre-war multi-ethnic fabric, Banja Luka underwent dramatic demographic changes following from the massive displacement of people resulting from the 1992-95 conflict. The demographic equilibrium changed in response to two simultaneous phenomena. The first was the expulsion of around 50,000 non-Serbian people from the territory as a result of the ethnic cleansing campaign perpetrated against non-Serbs in

the area. The second was the massive arrival in the city of Bosnian Serb refugees, displaced from the zones of Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia in which they lived. Nowadays, it is estimated that the majority of the population of Banja Luka defines itself as belonging to the Serbian ethno-national category.

In these regions, memory is still a controversial theme, about which consensus is postponed or impossible (Vilenica and Crnomat 2014, 5). A sort of taboo surrounds the topic, about which the ethno-political elite are said to have elaborated an "organized amnesia" and "institutionalized oblivion" (Šušnica 2015). The RS power holders have been said to have "imposed the postulate according to which what we do not remember the same way and what is not tied to an ethno-religious group, must be forgotten" (ibid.). Consequently, the dominant nationalist rhetoric completely neglects Banja Luka's war history, and does not try to elaborate a consensual narrative about the city's troubled past. In the collective imagination, Banja Luka is considered the stronghold of Bosnian Serbian nationalism, a sort of "heart of darkness" for the country, as well as "the center of unreconstructed nationalism" (Wimmen forthcoming). The constant display of "Serbianhood" is visible on the streets and on the capital's buildings of power. There, RS flags wave in place of the national ones. In such a context, the individuals and groups opposing the nationalizing policy are discredited and labelled as traitors.

The city does not count on a tradition of street activism or political engagement for social change. The factors thwarting mobilization are several. First, the pressure and repression exerted on dissidents renders risky any public expression of dissatisfaction and disagreement towards political representatives. The intimidation tactics of the local authorities against activists work as a further deterrent towards outspoken political action. By and large, local authorities adopt an authoritarian stance towards challenging groups, who the entity's president Milorad Dodik labelled on several occasions as "conspirators". Specifically, the president openly referred to international NGOs as foreign actors aimed at overthrowing Republika Srpska (Lynch 2014b). The frequent threats against the civilian sector raised the concern of Amnesty International, and prompted the international NGO to decry the restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly in the entity. The report Amnesty International drafted back in 2014 acknowledged the persistence in the entity of intimidation against journalists by state officials, which include beatings, death threats, and a police raid on a newsroom. Furthermore, Amnesty reported that domestic authorities frequently failed to open

investigations into complaints (Amnesty International 2015).

Restrictions of a legal nature hinder grassroots activism as well. The Law on Public Peace and Order that the RS National Assembly approved on February 2015 applied to the social media platforms the same sanctions foreseen for gatherings in the public space. In practice, the law enforces strict regulation over protest and the right of association, such as sanctioning online free expression and free media by expanding the definition of public places to social networks. This limits freedom of expression on social media, as it *de facto* criminalizes posts and messages deemed "to disturb public order, display symbols, images, drawings or texts containing indecent, offensive or disturbing content or insult or engage in rude or insolent behaviour" (OSCE 2015). The law is still in place, although it encountered the opposition of local non-governmental associations, backed by international organizations such as OSCE and the international NGO Human Right Watch, concerned about the consequences such a rule could have on the right to the freedom of assembly and speech.

Violent episodes targeting returnees and religious buildings in the entity occurred in the past two decades, concentrated in particular in Banja Luka. Until 2012, it was mostly nationalist movements that mobilized in the city. In 2001 "thousands of Serbs protesters violently interrupted the opening ceremonies for the rebuilding of the centrally located Ferhadija mosque" [31] (Bougarel 2007, 190), killing one Bosnian Muslim and injuring dozens of others. Similarly, in 2008 nationalist groups attacked the participants to a ceremony held at the city Islamic centre. Other mass gatherings with a nationalist character took place on 18 February 2008, on the occasion of the Kossovo's declaration of independence that brought thousands of people to the streets (Touquet 2012a). The demonstrators voiced their discontent by marching through the city centre carrying Serbian flags and chanting the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia". Over the years, war veterans as well staged protest claiming their pensions and lamenting the loss of their wartime status.

The situation of the nearby cities does not differ from that of the RS capital in

[31] The Serb militia razed the mosque to the ground with dynamite in 1993, together with other fifteen mosques located in Banja Luka. The reconstruction of the central Ferhadija mosque was completed only in 2015.

terms of restrictions and impediments to civic activism. In 2012 and 2013 the mayor of the city of Prijedor banned non-nationalist demonstrations such as the commemoration of the International Human Rights Day. The same happened on the occasion of the 31st May march against genocide denial and for equal rights in the city. In spite of the ban, hundreds of people assembled in the main square of Prijedor in defiance of the mayoral prohibition, indicating that the resistance to nationalism has been growing over the years. However, street actions remain a distinctly episodic phenomenon.

Summing up, the centralized context, ethno-national nature of the contention, and restriction on civic freedoms are all conditions unfavourable to mobilization beyond ethnicity in Republika Srpska, and in particular in Banja Luka.

5.2 The history of the movement

5.2.1 2006: The background of the protests

Although "The Park is Ours" initiative burst onto the scene at the end of May 2012, its roots can be traced back to early 2006. At the time, the issue at stake was a green area known as Picin park, located in the central Nova Varoš neighbourhood. The area, which covered around 30,000 square meters, got its name from the prostitutes frequenting it (Wimmen forthcoming). Although according to the town regulatory plan the lot did not serve as a public park, the inhabitants of Banja Luka used to consider it so. The park served as a playground for families with children and pets, and young people frequented it also. Throughout the years, the municipality had legitimized such behaviour by planting trees and disposing benches and bins all over the area.

In 2006, the municipality decided that the lot would accommodate a twenty-floor business and residential complex. The decision, however, did not have immediate consequences. In order to discuss the change in the regulatory plan, the Banja Luka-based environmental NGO Center for the Environment (*Centar za životnu sredinu*), the best-known environmental NGO in the country (RI 2), tried to organize an open public hearing addressing the people living in the neighbourhood where the park was located[32]. The meeting was unsuccessful due to both technical problems, which

[32] *Mjesna zajednica,* which I here interpret as "neighbourhood", can also be translated as "local community". It constitutes a form of local self-government that refers to the smallest

prevented people from entering the premises where the meeting was taking place, and general lack of interest on the part of the wider public (RI 5). The plan for building the business center in place of the park was therefore approved and adopted, becoming official in 2006.

5.2.2 From May to July 2012: The rising phase of "The Park is Ours"

It was only in late May 2012 that the investor and tycoon Mile Radišić, owner of the private real estate development company "Grand Trade", financier of the business and residential centre, approved a fencing in of the area in order to start construction. Radišić, who had previously served as member of the City Council, was considered a controversial figure, the "long arm" of the incumbent RS president Milorad Dodik, with whom he had developed strong personal ties, having performed the role of best man at Dodik's wedding. Radišić had previously been arrested, and then released, for criminal speculation.

On May 28, 2012 workers started fencing the park. The very same day, Miodrag Dakić, president of the NGO Center for the Environment, posted on the social media platform Facebook a photo displaying the park prior to its destruction. He accompanied it with a comment about the apathy of his fellow citizens. His post reads:

> Dear fellow citizens, for this occasion we would like to share with you the photos we have made today, because we can expect that trees will be destroyed, and buildings will mushroom in their place. Surely you must be wondering how is it possible that this is happening. Probably you will not like the answer, and it is exactly what YOU, the residents of our city, deserve. On the one hand, generally speaking, you do not want to be informed and engage in activities that aim to prevent further destruction of our city. On the other hand, you repeatedly choose to be represented by those who for more than ten years have systematically destroyed the green areas in our city. Ask yourselves what may be the next thing that

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administrative unit within a municipality. It is a legacy of the Yugoslav system, in which *mjesne zajednice* constituted the centres of local government, as well as spaces for citizens' participation in solving community problems (Jusić 2014).

> could get irretrievably lost, and what are you willing to do to prevent that from happening. (BUKA 2012a)

Dakić aimed to encourage people to reflect upon their responsibility as citizens with regard to what was happening in the space. However, he recounted, "nobody from the organization [Center for the Environment] meant for anything else to happen" (RI 5). Unexpectedly, a short time after he posted the message on Facebook, people started to share it on the social network. After a while, a page calling on the citizens of Banja Luka to save the park appeared on Facebook under the title *Park je naš* (The Park is Ours), created by a former member of the local *Oštra Nula* grassroots association (Wimmen forthcoming). Within a few days, the Facebook page grew to 4,000 members, a number that peaked at around 40,000 at the height of the protests (ibid.). The creators of the Facebook page called for gathering on 29 May at 6pm to obstruct the construction works with their bodies. The following day, about two hundred citizens who had decided not to remain silent before the destruction of the park gathered in the area. The demonstration held its own, and by the next day as many as 2,000 individuals had joined the protest (RI 5).

Thereafter, a heterogeneous group of different social backgrounds and political stripes – although it was mostly the young, as well as families with babies, that attended the rallies – gathered together for several months to oppose the destruction of the park. During the marches for the park's preservation, the protestors "typically walk[ed] as group to a site of concern, thus expressing the[ir] determination to participate in public affairs by visual movement through real public space, a method that earned the participants the moniker of *Šetači* (the walkers)" (Wimmen 2013, 21). As the protests took the form of parades or marches around the city, those who wished to discredit the demonstrators derogatorily described them as "mere strollers" (RI 5). Turning the attempted reproach on its head, the demonstrators appropriated the moniker and defiantly addressed themselves as "the Walkers".

The Walkers defined their identity in various documents such as leaflets and bulletins, in which they stressed the values and commitments around which they coalesced. In his sarcastic piece "Picin park for beginners and tourists" (*Picin park za početnike i turiste*), published on the first printed edition of the protest bulletin "Parkzin!", Srdjan Puhalo, psychologist and well-known intellectual of Banja Luka, defined the Walkers as:

> A colourful group of people said to have been instrumentalized by political parties (SNSD, PDP, SDS, CIA, Masons, Iluminati, etc.), because they use whistles, trumpets and drums to make noise. The best evidence that intelligent people should not back down. ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 10)[33]

In the same bulletin, the Walkers stated their grievances:

> We are dissatisfied with the arrogant attitude of the authorities and institutions towards economic, social and ecologic needs and rights of [female and male] citizens!
> We all gathered in the movement "The Park is Ours" to ensure that, with our activities, every government, every individual and every institution enforces the law and stops crime and corruption, and that all their activities focus on creating the conditions for a decent, healthy and promising life.
> (ibid., 3)

The demonstrators marched through the city raising banners (RI 5), bringing along their bikes, trumpets, kids and dogs, and generally transforming the walks into carnival-like parades. Artistic performances were staged on the public space as well. On the streets, protestors claimed procedural irregularities in the business centre project, and requested data concerning the sale of the park. The controversy over the park area extended as well to a family that owned (and was lived in) a parcel located in the area where the mall was to be built. Members of this family were regularly menaced and at times attacked by the police for resisting eviction attempts (Jukić 2013). Among the activities of the Walkers was a humanitarian action in solidarity with the "fellow citizens and neighbours who live at the edge of existence" ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 12). The actions consisted in collecting food to donate to an association of single parents and to socially marginalized families, as well as organizing blood donations (Hetman 2013, "Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012).

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[33] This sentence reverses the famous popular proverb that says: "The smarter person backs down" (*Pametniji ne popušta*). The proverb refers to the solution of disputes, in which the cleverer one would give in in order to achieve peace. The writer aimed to provoke the readers by reversing the proverb, inviting thus the bystanders to go against popular wisdom.

The starting point of the protest walks, which took place on daily basis, was the Old Oak (*Stari Hrast*), the eldest oak tree of the city located near the building site. At that time, the two-hundred-year, wilted old oak, which had survived wars and two earthquakes that in 1969 heavily damaged the city, was withering owing to a water shortage (Klix.ba 2011), as its water sources had been cut off in recent years by nearby construction (Lippmann 2012). The old oak under whose shadow the citizens of Banja Luka gathered soared as symbol of the movement, and came to represent a "symbol of the fight against corruption, injustice and 'construction crimes'" (ibid.), to the extent that the logo of the initiative portrayed the outline of a leafy oak (see Fig. 3).

Oftentimes, from the old oak the demonstrators headed for the City Hall and down to the main Krajina Square, the core of the city, located at the entrance of the city's pedestrian walkway. At times, they reached the city ancient fortress (known as *Kastel*) along the Vrbas, the river flowing through the city. The fortress, in state of negligence and progressive deterioration, was pointed at as (another) example of local authorities' inattention towards the public good.

Fig. 3 "The Park is Ours" logo

Source: www.parkjenas.net

While at the beginning of the demonstrations the area of the park was partially closed, a few days later the construction workers had fenced it off completely. The demolition began with the cutting down of trees. According to journalists at the Banja Luka-based independent media platform BUKA, such cutting represented a moment of shock, the instant in which people suddenly realized that the destruction was happening for real. At that point it was clear that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to stop the construction machineries (BUKA 2012d). The park trees came to epitomize the destruction of the cultural heritage of Banja Luka, the conduit for broader social and political discontent about the worsening living conditions, the rampant corruption of the incumbents, the lack of transparency, the restriction on civil liberties and freedom of speech, as well as the increasing and widespread unemployment.

The privatization of the park fuelled the resentment of the dissatisfied citizens (*nezadovoljni građani* as the media frame them) against the political class. The green area became thus the symbol of citizens' resistance, of the deprivation of their decisional and consultation rights, against a political class deemed unaccountable ("Parkzin! Izdanje 2" 2012). An activist, Tihomir Dakić, explains the symbolic importance of the park:

> Here on the former green piece of land there were five Pančićeva Omorika trees protected by the law. They were destroyed as well as other parts of the park. However, the destroyed greenery is the smallest problem. The biggest problem is violating of many laws that hopefully someday will be obeyed. (Radoja 2012)

As Dakić explained, "The park is just one obvious example of government attitude towards the interests of the citizens, which shows clearly how the institutions are full of crime and corruption" (Radoja 2012).

Fig. 4 Demonstrators holding a banner saying: "For you it is meadow, for us a park" (*Vama je livada, nama je park*). Next, another reads: "Cement your backyard" (*Betoniraj svoju avliju*).

Source: www.žurnal.info

The protest walks, which usually took place from Monday to Saturday and were coordinated through the Internet, intensified throughout the summer. In terms of turnout, the local newspapers reported diverse numbers of participants, ranging from several hundred to three thousand.

After few weeks after the beginning of the protests, a dozen NGOs from the area drafted and signed a petition calling upon the city government to halt the destruction of the park, claiming illegality and irregularities in the public tender procedure, and requesting information about the sale of the parkland. Furthermore, they demanded public access to the documentation relating to the disputed construction permits. Some of these organizations belonged to the NGO-coalition called *Re:akcija* (Reaction), active since 2010 in Banja Luka with the purpose of "creating critical thought and encouraging social action of individuals and citizen groups in Banja Luka"[34]. Six thousand citizens signed the petition (Lippmann 2012) addressed to the municipal government and the city mayor, Dragoljub Davidović, nicknamed "Zgradoljub" (literally "buildings' lover") by the demonstrators (Toé 2012). On 6 June 2012 the petition, together with the

[34] From the coalition's Internet page www.reakcijabl.org [accessed 12 January 2013]

signatures, was filed at the city administrative service. Although the law compelled the city administration to respond to the petition within fifteen legislative days, the appeal never received any response.

Fig. 5 Protest walk. The main banner reads: "The Park is Ours" (in Cyrillic script). The yellow one says: "Banja Luka is ours. Save it until Laktaši[35]"

Source: www.buka.com

At the end of July, a declaration of the "The Park is Ours" initiative appeared on the second issue of the bulletin ("Parkzin! Izdanje 2" 2012) and later circulated on the web platforms (BUKA 2012a). Well-known local activists and intellectuals had elaborated the declaration during a meeting in which it was decided that the word "antifascism" would appear in the first sentence (RI 47). Among them there were professors and students of the university of Banja Luka, who participated in the reading group "Language, Ideology and Power" at the Faculty of Philology, active since 2009 (RI 48). The declaration states the following:

> **Who are we?**
> We, citizens of Banja Luka, gathered to protest injustice and we write this declaration so that everyone who feels the regime's injustice knows that we are his/her allies.

[35] Laktaši is a municipality 20km from Banja Luka, known as the hometown of the entity's president, Milorad Dodik.

With solidarity with our differences and in our antifascist orientation, we have joined in a common struggle against violence and control of our lives, against the self-serving of politicians, and for a just society.
We live in a "particracy" [party-led] dictatorship of a criminal oligarchy, and we are the majority that resists!
(...)
The park is a metaphor of togetherness that allows us to communicate and act!
(...)
We question and provoke because this is a citizens' protest, as a form of political struggle, not only a struggle for a park. Here we defend reason, dignity and right to a better life!
(...)
Why do we walk?
We came at a time when the ruling oligarchy confirms that we, ordinary people, are the biggest losers of the war and consequent transition. The oligarchy puts profits over people under the guise of national interests, self-interests over justice, and terror over equality.
We gathered peacefully, since this is our right, putting forward the following facts:
We walk because we desire to have a normal life!
The park is ours, this land is ours, our bodies are ours!
(...)
We walk for our system to make us equal in all aspects: national, racial, gender, and most of all class-economic. We have remained silent, blind, disenfranchised, intimidated by poverty. That's enough!
(...)
What do we look for?
We all gathered in the movement "The Park is Ours" to ensure that, with our activities, every government, every individual and every institution enforces the law and stops crime and corruption, and that all their activities focus on creating the conditions for a decent, healthy and promising life.
We look for a responsible behaviour of the political elites towards the public good.
We look for prosecuting criminals and corruption at all levels.
(...)
We call for a society arranged according to the citizens' needs, without regard to racial, class, national, birth, sexual, or religious belonging, and for a fairer society for all. (BUKA

2012b).

The declaration was pivotal in broadening the claims of the protesters, as the movement organizers made explicit that their requests tackled not only the privatization of what had so far be considered a public space, but also issues such as criminality and corruption, social and economic collapse, abuse of public good, enrichment masked by "national interest", the denial of civil rights and freedom, tyranny, and the lack of freedom of expression Banja Luka citizens experience in their everyday life.

The Walkers kept demonstrating until the cheerful parades around the city came to a halt with the approach of summer. In late summer, it was decided to take a break from the daily marches, with the purpose of gathering strength to resume the protests ahead of the October administrative elections. Already at the end of July no walks took place, although a group of people continued to meet in front of the Old Oak.

5.2.3 From September to October 2012: The downfall of "The Park is Ours"

As announced in the second issue of the "The Park is Ours" bulletin, the marches and parades resumed after the summer break. On 7 September 2012, hundreds of people gathered under the Old Oak and walked together towards the central square (BUKA 2012c). Since the elections for appointing a new major of the city were approaching, the Walkers began a campaign in which they sought to motivate voters to go to the polls and cast their vote against the incumbent mayor. As an interviewee recounts,

> In September we started walking again, because we wanted to have an impact on local elections, but not a direct impact in terms of support to a political party, [we just wanted to] go against Dodik's party. (RI 5)

On the streets, the protesters invited their fellow citizens to reflect upon the possibility of changing the society in which they live, and contested the candidates to the elections, heckling them by whistling to them (RI 48). The turnout of the September parades was lower than expected, though. As the level of energy was dropping, only 500 people took to the streets. The protests came to a halt after the local elections took place on October 7. The new elected mayor resulted to be Slobodan Gavranović, member of SNSD party as his predecessor.

Fig. 6 The banner on the right reads: "The elections come. You'll pay criminals"

Source: www.klix.ba

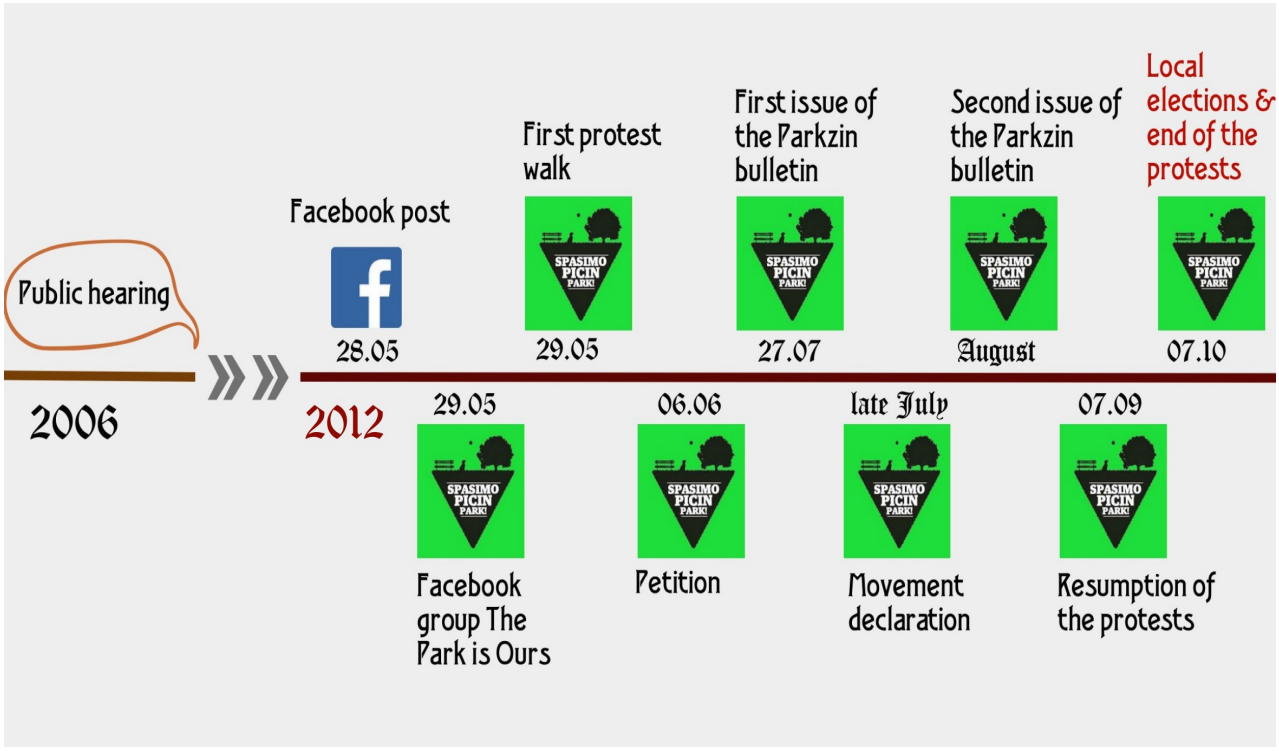

Fig. 7 Author's infographics. Data from own research and other sources (Buka.com, Žurnal.info)

5.2.4 Epilogue

The demonstrators were unable to meet their original goal, since they did not succeed in halting the dismantling of the park. The green area was destroyed in the following months, and at the time of writing the contested complex is in the final stages of construction. In terms of outcomes, the Walkers are said to have influenced the choice of the candidate at the position of mayor. While before the protests the incumbent Dragoljub Davidović of the SNSD party was expected to run for the position of mayor, Slobodan Gravranović was instead appointed in his place, apparently because of the pressure excercized by the Walkers on the streets (Radoja 2012).

Although the daily parades ceased in October 2012, some protesters did not stop making their voice heard, in spite of facing various kinds of repression and intimidation[36]. In November 2013, almost one year since the end of the parades, ten participants underwent a court trial and were fined for having crossed against red lights and blocked traffic during the protest walks (BUKA 2013b). This did not stop them though. On several occasions, they urged the arrest of Mile Radišić, who had fled to Serbia after being sentenced to three years of prison in June 2014 for fraud, and for not having paid a 2,95 millions debt to the City of Banja Luka for the construction of the business center. Demanding his arrest, the Walkers raised banners and placed them on the construction site. The placards read: "Where is Mile Radišić?"[37]. On 29 May 2015, several activists and participants in "The Park is Ours" announced on their Facebook page that they would organize a meeting to mark the third anniversary of the destruction of the park (Radiosarajevo.ba 2015). Although only a few dozen persons participated in the commemoration, on that occasion the Walkers issued a statement reporting: "The Walkers are still looking for answers! We are not gone, we have not

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[36] For instance, at the beginning of the marches the police invited a protester, who played a prominent role in the movement, to the police station for "informative talks" (*informativni razgovor)*, a formula used during socialist time for interrogations. On other occasions policemen used force against the demonstrators and the members of a family living nearby and that opposed the expropriation.

[37] Radišić eventually surrendered in November 2015 to serve a three-year sentence in the prison of Banja Luka, after the Supreme Court of Republika Srpska issued an international arrest warrant against him in October (Dragojlović 2015).

forgotten, we are always there" (Katana 2015).

In the Fall of 2016, activists launched an informal campaign of boycott against the telephone company *M:tel*, as a reaction to the move of its headquarters inside the premises of the contested business center (RI 48).

5.3. Analysis: "It is not only a fight for the park. Here we defend reason, dignity and right to a better life!"

5.3.1 Actors and organizational structure

With regard to the profile and social base of the protesters, the movement counted on the heterogeneity of various constituencies. "The Park is Ours" brought together diverse participants, from elderly people to parents with children, with a predominance of the younger generations. As the activist and professor at the University of Banja Luka Danijela Majstorović explained,

> If we would analyse the structure of people attending the protests, we may find professors, doctors, artists, students, labour workers, people from all social classes united around the environmental protection fight, but also around the fact that they are drowning, and see these protests as a helping hand which direct the light on important issues, and provide them with the renewed feeling of being important again, not just an anonymous electoral body who will do as they are told. (CNN iReport 2012)

Activities were planned on the Internet, in particular through the Facebook page devoted to the initiative. Some of the legal actions were taken at the NGO Center for the Environment (Radoja 2012). An informal group took care of the logistics such as provision of material resources and decisions about which action to undertake (RI 47). As stated in the movement's declaration, "The Park is Ours" did not foresee either a leadership or a vertical organizational structure, and refused the endorsement, as well as the participation, of political parties. In this regard, the bulletin reported:

> Protests do not have leadership, they are not organized by any centre, although this is what the authorities really would like, and the fact that there are no party-label is the biggest strength of this protest. ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 3)

The organizational structure was intentionally kept horizontal and loose. "Nobody claimed the right to be called 'The Park is Ours': we did not have a brand, so every groups could use this name if it wanted, and they did so" (RI 47), recounted one of the movement's leaders. Although officially there was no organizer, a group of individuals can be identified as movement organizers by means of their influential role, organisational skills, and leading role throughout the protests. "It was a bit chaotic in organizational terms (…) but we tried to do our best with few resources", reports another (RI 5).

The participants seldom adopted deliberative methods such as open assemblies or debates. Occasionally, public classrooms were organized outdoors on Sundays. An activist recounts these meetings:

> We were sitting in circles, taking about ideology, social construction in the society in general; we had public classrooms, and afterwards some kind of plenums outdoor in the city. Plenums were started because there was a gap between the activists as the protests escalated, and they were the mechanisms to solve the issue. (RI 47)

No public assemblies were organized apart from these occasional plenums.

5.3.2 Networks and resources

The first analytical tool I take into account to explain why "The Park is Ours" mobilization failed to shift upwards in territorial and social level are network dynamics. To that purpose, this section investigates the extent to which movement organizers built networks to gather and mobilize resources necessary for the initiative.

At a first glance, the protest events appeared as unplanned, or to put it in the activists' words "neither organized nor coherent" (RI 48). The high number of people taking to the streets in reaction to the destruction of the park took everybody by surprise. As an interviewee stressed:

> If a week ago somebody [would have] told me that something similar was going to happen, I would not have believed him, saying it was impossible, it could not happen, at least not in Banja Luka. Here, nobody was ready, it was all spontaneous. (RI 5)

Nonetheless, an in-depth analysis of the 2012 events reveals that collective action emerged by virtue of organized strategic action based on pre-existing network ties of formal and informal type among activists. From its beginnings, the organizational background of "The Park is Ours" was composed of a multiplicity of actors, united in a loose way. Nevertheless, the absence of an official organizer or protest leader does not mean that previous ties between participants were not in place. In her article investigating the initiative, Hetman mentions as one of the protests' outcomes the formation of a coalition of solidarity that supported the initiative (Hetman 2013). She claims that NGOs and other domestic and international groups backed the demonstrators, and that this support coalition would be likely to facilitate the organization of future protests. As opposed to Hetman, I do not perceive the coalition of solidarity merely as an outcome of the protests, but specifically as a precondition for their occurrence.

As a matter of fact, pre-existing networks and personal contacts among activists, NGOs and grassroots organizations facilitated the rise of the movement, constituting the common ground upon which the opposition rested, and collective action evolved. The activists of Banja Luka were in personal contact before the unfolding of "The Park is Ours", as they had organized initiatives having a similar content on a smaller scale in the past, and sometimes had worked together in the previous years. Thanks to the small size of the city, the activists developed strong links with their peers in town engaged in actions targeting local problems of common interests, such as the rise in the price of electricity bills, addressed by *Oštra Nula*, or the construction of a hydropower plant on the Vrbas river, an issue raised by the Center for the Environment.

The grassroots association *Oštra Nula*, one of the NGOs that promoted the petition addressed to the municipality, and whose members participated in the protests, had experience in street actions, having staged anti-government protests in early 2010 (see section 4.3.3). Similarly, the members of the professional NGO Center for the Environment were involved in "The Park is Ours" since its onset, insofar as the president of the association had posted a message on Facebook that triggered the first protest. Unlike many professional NGOs in Bosnia Herzegovina, the Center for the Environment is particularly embedded with the local reality. Its engagement with local problems started long before the 2012 protests took place. Originally called "Young Researchers of Banja Luka" (*Mladi Istraživači Banja Luke)*, the group was created by a group of

university students. Besides being considered "the most successful environmental campaigning organization" in the country (Fagan 2008, 645), the association is comprised of young activists involved in raising awareness of environmental problems. Among their initiatives, over the years they collected signatures and staged demonstrations with the purpose of halting the construction of an hydro-electric power plant on the Vrbas river (Fagan 2006a), organizing meetings and a youth camp to raise awareness of the issue. Furthermore, the NGO organize "Critical Mass" bike rides in the city, that is to say protests performed by cyclists reclaiming the right to ride safely on the streets. Besides these two organizations, other small grassroots groups of students and artists animated the counter-cultural scene of the city in the years prior to the emergence of "The Park is Ours". Most of them are also members or practitioners in the NGOs of the *Re:akcija* civic network.

Banja Luka counts also on an independent web portal, the above-mentioned BUKA[38]. The editor of BUKA, Aleksandar Trifunović, is a country-wide known journalist, a veteran of the Serbian *Otpor* movement (Wimmen forthcoming) who played a role in the 2013 protests (see chapter 6). The web portal produces an online magazine, and also a political talk show, both aimed at dealing with activism and social issues across the country. BUKA is said to cluster local dissidents, and, in a context in which communication media are divided, BUKA airs its talks shows all over the country (Vukobrat 2010). BUKA reported extensively on the protests, publishing press releases that otherwise would have passed unnoticed or disregarded by the mainstream press, mostly controlled by political parties.

Besides the networks established at the local level, "The Park is Ours" garnered the support of both national and international NGOs. The German Heinrich Boell Foundation in particular provided technical support by printing the two-issue bulletin called "Parkzin"[39]. However, it was decided that the logo of the foundation would not

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[38] Acronym that means "noise", but it is also the shortened form of "Banja Luka".

[39] As a political foundation affiliated with the German Green Party, the Heinrich Boell Foundation deals with topics such as ecology and gender equality. Among its tasks, it promotes activities with local partners outside Germany, alone or in cooperation with them. The foundation aims at working together with their partners abroad, performing the role of a partner rather than that of a donor (RI 15).

appear on the fanzine in order not to make problems for the protesters. As a foundation's spokesperson of the Sarajevo branch claimed, Heinrich Boell wanted to avoid the movement being discredited as being "paid by the internationals" to take to the streets (RI 15). Indeed, mistrust towards the non-governmental sector is widespread in RS, and a typical method of discrediting activists and demonstrators is to accuse them of being financed by external donors, acting in the name of vested interests. The local branch of the international NGO Transparency International also provided support by printing T-shirts with the logo of the campaign (RI 48), and made its voice heard in support of the Walkers through media declarations.

At the country-level, the activation of network ties appeared more problematic. In the past, the activists and grassroots groups involved in "The Park is Ours" had developed connections with activist circles outside Banja Luka and the entity's borders. Nevertheless, the movement organizers did not activate these ties during the protests in defence of the park. The reason for this choice is two-fold: the first is the organizational weakness of the challengers (RI 48), and in the absence, at the time, of a nation-wide, structured grassroots network involving activists from all over the country to which they could refer. Second, in the context of a divided society, connections with Federation-based organizations ran the risk of doing more harm than good to "The Park is Ours". The stigma towards the dissidents in RS is such that "activists in Republika Srpska will continue to fear being branded as traitors to the Serb cause if they collaborate (or even express sympathy) with their counterparts in the Federation" (Basta 2013). Support from groups outside the entity, thus, would have endangered the movement rather that provided it with broader support. In this regard, the editor of BUKA claimed:

> We have now arrived at a weird situation in which, if someone from the Federation shows support (…) it produces a negative effect, which is bad, because the majority of people in RS would say they [the protesters] get support from FBiH. The division of this society really makes it difficult to work. (Vukobrat 2010)

Trifunović here wished to stress that support from individuals and groups from FBiH would have made the situation more difficult for the activists in Banja Luka. The dominant discourse grounded on the fear of the "ethnic other" would in fact have

labelled supporters from the other entity as trying to destabilize Republika Srpska. To avoid further discrimination towards the initiators of "The Park is Ours", support from activists and people in FBiH came in the form of personal endorsement of single individuals (RI 48).

To conclude, the human, financial and organizational resources that were made available through pre-existing local network ties proved crucial to the emergence of "The Park is Ours" in Banja Luka. However, the movement organizers deemed that the activation of ties with subjects outside the city would have stigmatized them and their claims further. For this reason, they did not make additional efforts to shift the initiative past the local level. Furthermore, they thought they would not have the organizational capacities of doing so. On the one hand, a network of local media, NGOs and donors afforded the demonstrators with visibility and material resources that fostered mobilization. Furthermore, by giving visibility to "The Park is Ours" claims and actions, they granted the activists a certain amount of protection from state repression. On the other hand, the lack of efficient organization, combined with the fact that the movement organizers did not activate any bonds with other groups of challengers outside Banja Luka, prevented the mobilization to shift to a higher level and to widen its social base.

5.3.3 Frames, counterframes and attempts at demobilization

A second analytical element that helps to clarify the dynamics of the 2012 protests consists in the cognitive frames of meaning elaborated by movement organizers. Following a part in which I elucidate how the leaders framed identity and grievances, another section focuses on the way in which the authorities interpretated the events.

Framing identity and grievances

In opposing the construction of the park, "The Park is Ours" activists had to choose the frame that would best resonate with bystanders. In what a long-term activist called "a struggle for meaning" (RI 48), they thus built on the widespread perception of being deprived not only of a green area they considered of public utility, but also of the right to a normal life. Unlike previous mobilizations, "The Park is Ours" activists and participants constructed an inclusive identity whose main feature consisted of not only overcoming ethnic belonging and social status, but actually completely disregarding such on behalf

of a common feeling of deprivation. Hence, they elaborated an identity frame that relied upon the feeling of injustice towards an unresponsive and greedy political class that had enriched itself during the war, and benefited from the transition process afterwards, to the detriment of citizens. This was clearly stated in the declaration issued in September 2012, in which the Walkers defined themselves as: "We, *ordinary people*, are the biggest losers of the war and consequent transition" (BUKA 2012a, emphasis added). The cleavage opposed then "the deprived citizens, losers of the transition" (what in February 2014 would become "the disempowered") to the "unaccountable power holders" (the "thieves" in February 2014).

The innovative element in the identity frame used by the Walkers is that feelings of injustice did not stem from the perception of being discriminated on ethnic grounds, but rather from having been betrayed by the representatives elected to serve them. The "party-led dictatorship of a criminal oligarchy", as the movement's declaration reports, was blamed for not having acted on behalf of their constituencies. The appeal to the sovereignty of the deprived citizens eager to have a normal life, as stated in the declaration, strove to undermine the dominant discourse based on ethno-nationalism. This, in the view of the interviewees, helps to keep people divided along alleged ethnic lines, and to deprive them of the possibility of uniting against their political class.

At the beginning, "The Park is Ours" focused on a single issue, the destruction of the green area and the urbanization of public space. From a specific, circumscribed claim, movement organizers shifted towards the call for a broader set of rights. In the demonstrations they made connections between the urbanization of the park and other local problems, and soon the demands escalated. In the movement's manifesto, the organizers claimed that the protests evolved from being merely against the privatization and urbanization of a public space to include the protection of "reason, dignity, and the right to a better life" (BUKA 2012b). "We revolt against injustice", the statement reports, in the hopes that "all who feel injustice by the regime know that we are their allies" (BUKA 2012b). Commenting on the protests, another activist said:

> It stopped being just about a park, meaning the green area. It was general dissatisfaction. (…) It was also about public participation, corruption, and influence of the media. (…) The number of subjects was wider. People wanted to widen it even more with the intention of getting more people involved, [to include] social issues, trade unions, problems of the

workers. (RI 5)

Yet, the protesters were unsuccessful at conveying a frame that would resonate with a broader population, thus shifting the scale of their movement past the local level. The frame was bounded to the local reality, as it referred specifically to the inhabitans of Banja Luka. In the declaration, the Walkers defined themselves as female and male citizens of Banja Luka (*Mi, građani i građanke Banjaluke*). This was reflected as well in slogans such as "The Park is Ours" and "The City is Ours" (*Grad je naš*), which appeared on the protestors' news-bullettin, as well as on the billboards carried on the streets. Even the decision to use Cyrillic script in the main slogan "The Park is Ours" contributed to confining the frame to a local reality. Similarly, the first message that appeared on Facebook denouncing the destruction of the park targeted exclusively the inhabitants of Banja Luka, addressed as "fellow citizens". In terms of social base, the frame appealed mostly to a limited part of the population of Banja Luka that shared the idea of a collective identity based on the values of gender equality, anti-nationalism, and anti-fascism.

Counterframes and attempts at demobilization

Throughout the development of the "The Park is Ours" movement, local authorities and the media developed identity counterframes that aimed at demobilizing the Walkers and at denying their claims. Specifically, local policy-makers rejected the political significance of the Walkers referring to them as "simple strollers". Then, they questioned the Walkers' autonomy, branding the protesters as manipulated by the opposition's political parties. The injustice frame did not resonate outside Banja Luka, not even inside the borders of Republika Srpska thanks to the hegemonic narrative associating Banja Luka with Milora Dodik and the Serbian Republic. In an article appearing in the local journal *Puls Demokratije* (The puls of democracy), and entitled "Their and our parks – Eastern Sarajevo and Banja Luka", a local analyst reported that a survey conducted among the citizens of Eastern Sarajevo revealed their detachment from the events in Banja Luka. When queried about this indifference, the respondents contended that Banja Luka is "perceived through the prism of a simple equation where the Banja Luka = Milorad Dodik = Serbian Republic" (Puls Demokratije 2015). In sum, the inhabitants of Eastern Sarajevo did indeed conceive the destruction of Picin park as a

local struggle concerning exclusively its inhabitants. Hence, they were not motivated to mobilize in solidarity.

Outside Republika Srpska, the dominant nationalist narrative depicting every event in the city as "Serb" overpowered the movement's injustice frame, and prevented it from resonating beyond the city borders. As a key informant stressed, the park issue also remained perceived as local thanks to the stigma associated with Banja Luka and its inhabitants. In this regard, he explains:

> This is a problem in the BiH scene: it's a huge problem when you get definitions from other part of this country. They were saying it ["The Park is Ours"] was really local and something really for the first time in Banja Luka, and then it means in the Serbian part of BiH, it means among the Serbs, that is [a way of] denunciation [discrediting] of this protest. It is a strategic point, not just a mistake, to address these protests as local: they were happening on the local level but this problem is not local. It's a huge problem between the activists in BiH. (RI 47)

In sum, although the movement organizers tried to build an encompassing frame, this did not ring true outside the city borders, first because it was perceived as bounded to the local environment, and second because the ethno-national narrative overpowered that of the movement's injustice frame.

5.3.4 The role of opportunities in the choice of action repertoires

The last analytical tool I take into account in the analysis of "The Park is Ours" is the way in which the perceived unwillingness of authorities to negotiate with the challengers, as well as their willingness to use repression against them, affected the organizers' choice of action repertoires. In this section I explain how the strategies changed as a function of the nature of interactions with the opponents.

Since the beginning the authorities were perceived as unwilling to negotiate with the challengers. This was made evident by the fact that the municipality left unanswered the petition promoted by NGOs, and refused to reply to the demands of the challengers about the tendering procedure of the business center. However, the approach of local elections created among the movement organizers the perception of widening political opportunities. In the opinion of the interviewees, this had a positive effect on

mobilization, allowing the movement organizers to connect the park with municipal corruption. Hence, the movement leaders felt they could gain more leverage on politicians. According to the activists, this was confirmed in street walks' higher rates of participation. As one of the main leaders of the movement acknowledged: "Actually I do not know how many people came and stayed in the campaign for environmental reasons, and how many for short-term interest because of the election" (RI 5). The connection between the park and the election period was made evident on the banners raised during the walks, which read: "Elections will come. You'll pay, criminals" (*Idu izbori. Platićete zlotvori*), and "Trees are falling. You will fall too" (*Pada drveće. Padate i vi*).

During the rising phase of the mobilization, the protestors adopted demonstrative repertoires of action, such as distribution of pamphlets and the drafting of a petition. Later on, they deployed tactics with a strong symbolic character, such as peaceful demonstrations, parades, and small artistic performances. Amongst the action repertoires, street protests, artistic and creative actions were preferred over other performances. As an activist recalls, the marches were not planned in advance, in order to avoid police repression:

> We walked through the town, and the walks constituted the protests. Since the walks were unplanned, we did not have any particular place to go, so everyday we would decide where to head. We would never knew, and this was a surprise for the police". (RI 48)

Notwithstanding the strong police presence during the demonstrations, the marches generally followed a peaceful path. Among the street actions that took place on a daily basis, the one performed on June 22, 2012 was named "With noise against silence" (*Bukom protiv tišine*). During the action, the protesters blew whistles and trumpets, highlighting in this way that they were loudly calling for the truth about the construction building. That day the police blocked demonstrators heading towards the entity's government in front of the radio-television building of Republika Srpska[40]. On that

[40] In accordance with the Law on Public Assembly that prohibits for security reasons public gathering in front of official buildings.

occasion, a demonstrator clashed with the police deployed in defence of the building. Other violent episodes targeted isolated individuals. Other forms of repression considered "more subtle" were directed at "the usual suspects", invited to the police station for informative talks and also fined once the protests stopped.

A non-violent repertoire was deliberately adopted with the intent to increase the number of participants and to not discredit the reputation of the Walkers, as the movement leaders claimed and as it was reported in the protest bulletin. A one-page rulebook called "Rulebook for the Walkers" (*Pravilnik za šetače*) was handed out during the demonstrations, and invited the participants to stay composed. For instance, point 2 stated:

> Be calm, especially if they mistreat you. You are ambassadors of peaceful Walkers. Although individuals who will try to disrupt the protests will get on your nerves, you cannot lose patience. The loss of nerves can endanger the walk and discredit the reputation of the Walkers. ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 14)

Similarly, point 8 remarked: "Without violence! Walks are nonviolent activities" ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 14). Two factors account for the use of such a peaceful repertoire: first, the high degree of violence witnessed in the country in the past inclined the demonstrators to refrain from the adoption of confrontational tactics. As some activists explained, violence, recalling the memories of the war, would have alienated the support of the broader population. "People in general are afraid, and with this protests we broke the wall of fear" (RI 5), said an activist. The same person explained that the movement organizers decided to perform street actions in order to eschew police repression, as "you cannot compete with states' violence" (RI 5). In this regard, he said:

> Police could not react, because every time the police stopped us they did not know what to do, as according to the law we did not do anything illegal [by walking]. We did not smash anything, there were kids with parents, people with bikes and dogs: we were just walking! (RI 5)

A third reason for the adoption of a peaceful repertoire stems from the lack of movement experience, and the fear of legal procedures in case of clash with the police

and possible arrests (RI 5).

5.4 Conclusions

In closing, I shall summarize the findings of the analysis conducted in this chapter. As illustrated in the previous sections, a combination of factors can account for the inability of the movement to shift to a higher level, and to widen its social base. First, although the existence of previous networks at the local level among the movement organizers fostered the assembling and mobilizing of resources, the construction of a wider solidarity front was hampered by the choice of not activating ties with subjects outside Banja Luka. As explained in the chapter, as BiH is a divided country, support coming from people and groups perceived as "ethnic others" would have hindered rather than promoted the credibility of "The Park is Ours". Second, although the injustice frame elaborated by activists bridged the call for the right to public space with the unaccountability of the political class, managing to mobilise the public of the city for consecutive weeks, it did not resonate outside Banja Luka due to its boundedness to the local reality. Furthermore, the hegemonic nationalist rhetoric portraying Banja Luka as "the place of the enemy" overpowered the injustice discourse elaborated by the movement organizers, making it more difficult for it to resonate beyond the city borders, and thus to mobilize in solidarity of "The Park is Ours" protesters. Finally, the perception of favourable opportunities for mobilization stemming from the approach of local election gained support for the movement, increasing attendance at the protest walks. Moreover, the fear of violent repression influenced the choice of a peaceful repertoire, adopted with a two-fold purpose: to appear credible to the wider public, and to normalize resistance in a society already traumatized by violence.

To conclude, I suggest some ideas about the movement outcomes and its contribution to the protest waves that happened afterwards. Although the elections held in October 2012 put an end to the movement, "The Park is Ours" constituted a moment of emancipatory potential, during which the content of collective identity thus far built over ethnic kinship was redefined in favour of a more inclusive and beyond-ethnic one. The 2012 demonstrations in Banja Luka have been understood as "part of the resocialization process, against the atomization of individuals as subjects" of the Bosnian Herzegovinian society (RI 47), as well as "a significant sign of the potential for collective radicalization of the Bosnian Herzegovinian reality" (Vilenica and Crnomat

2014, 5). “What distinguished this movement from other outbursts of discontent”, argue the scholars, “was the emergence of new practices of resocialization, repoliticization, and togetherness through the persistence of so-called ‘Walkers’ who expressed their dissatisfaction on the streets every day for five months” (Vilenica and Crnomat 2014, 5). Furthermore, the 2012 protests marked out a path for future civic and political activism in the region, and, in the words of an activist:

> The park issue helped us out of this kind of nationalist framework that we still need to fully work out. So, it was a path that already brought us to – and will bring us to more – struggles to understand the world in which we are living. (RI 47)

Chapter 6
The #JMBG protest

The month-long protest over ID numbers that sprouted up in June 2013 in the capital Sarajevo, is the second case study I employ to examine the variation in the scale of contention in BiH. Enraged by the failure of their MPs to adopt a law allowing the issuance of ID numbers to newborns, in June 2013 a group of citizens occupied the plaza in front of the national Parliament building[41]. The demonstrators managed to remain on the square for twenty-five consecutive days, kept under surveillance by the riot police. Their protests made the headlines internationally as the protesters encircled the National Parliament building, "trapping" hundreds of MPs and foreign investors inside the premises (Milan 2013a). The mobilization, initially termed "babylution" (short for "baby revolution" – *bebolucija* in local language), became rapidly known as #JMBG, owing to the blogging service Twitter.

The protest wave fits the category of mobilization beyond ethnicity. As a matter of fact, civil and political rights stood at the core of the protests, characterized by a local scholar as an attempt to call forth citizenry (Mujkić 2015a). On the square, the demonstrators voiced their discontent and mistrust towards the whole political class, attracting support across the country, and suggesting a broad consensus on the primacy of human needs over ethno-national categories.

In terms of territorial scope, the mobilization started and unfolded mainly in the capital, while peaceful solidarity rallies took place in the major urban centres of FBiH. Some sit-ins were staged in Banja Luka and some peripheral towns of Republika Srpska as well. As in the previous case the protests did not manage to involve other social groups beyond the middle-class, urban youth, and the families that occupied – or, in the words of the activists, reappropriated – the square in a cheerful way throughout the

[41] Whereas some scholars refer to the building hosting the national parliament as "Joint Institutions", translating literally from *Skupština zajedničkih institucija Bosne i Hercegovine* (Lombardo 2010, Čuljak and Kovo 2013), I opted for the less confusing term "national parliament". Similarly, I refer to the square in front of the Parliament, the Square of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Trg Bosne i Hercegovine*) as a "plateau" (platou in local language).

month of June 2013.

Following the structure of analysis adopted for the previous case study, the chapter begins by providing a detailed chronology of the events. It continues with a thorough description of the main actors involved in the protests, paying particular attention to their organizational structure. The analytical section that follows explores the patterns of contention through an in-depth analysis that takes into account the explanatory power of networks, cognitive frames, and opportunities. Finally, the last section provides some concluding remarks.

The next section delves into the cultural and political context of Sarajevo, the city in which the #JMBG protests emerged and developed.

6.1 The cultural and political context of Sarajevo

A quintessential secular and multicultural city during the socialist period, Sarajevo underwent demographic changes during and after the war, which reshaped its social fabric. During the 1992-95 conflict, the city witnessed the longest siege in modern history, lasting from spring 1992 until November 1995. Fearing for their physical security, many of the once-Sarajevan Serbs fled the capital, moving either to Republika Srpska or to Eastern Sarajevo. Following an opposite trend, IDPs and refugees of Muslim background sought refuge in the capital during the war, and repopulated the city in its aftermath. Although the population has started to reintegrate, and the physical threat against Serbs is felt as a less pressing issue compared to the period right after the conflict, many former Sarajevan Serbs who had left the city repossessed their houses, but prefer to leave them empty or rent them to foreigners[42]. It appears that the majority

[42] For a thorough account of Sarajevo's Bosnian Serbs leaving the city see Armakolas 2007. On an ethnographic note, one of my closest friends in Sarajevo, a Bosnian Serb who left the city as a refugee while she was a child, choose to return to Sarajevo as an Erasmus student in 2013. During the year of her scholarship, she lived in her pre-war residence her parents had left vacant when they moved to Banja Luka. She related to me her frustration at being constantly addressed as a Serb, although she felt more German, having spent most of her life in Germany. "I do not have problem acknowledging that the Serbs committed crimes against non-Serbs during the war", she said, referring to the fact that many times while in Sarajevo she was asked to take a stance in the discourses about war, "but I am fed up with being expected to apologize for crimes that I have not committed. I would like people here to recognize their faults as well, get over this

of people currently residing in the capital think of themselves as belonging to the Bosniak ethno-national category.

As well as Banja Luka being transformed into a bulwark of "Serbianhood", in the aftermath of the war Sarajevo underwent a process of de-secularization that turned it into a religious point of reference for the Muslim population. The city became thus "a metaphorical battleground for those who cherish the multi-ethnic heritage of the city and those members of the Bosniak political and Muslim religious elites who want to make it a city with a clear (conservative) Muslim identity" (Touquet 2012a, 145). This cultural shift becomes evident especially in everyday interactions and practices, such as "the rise in popularity of Islamic religious customs" (Armakolas 2007, 86). Nowadays, it is not unusual to hear Arabic greetings on the streets. Several countries exert a strong cultural and political influence on the city. Resorting to their common cultural and religious background, both the Turkish government and non-governmental actors of Turkey endowed educational institutions and cultural centres in Sarajevo, and restored religious buildings that were destroyed during the war. Likewise, investors from states like Qatar financed shopping centres such as the central BBI[43], as well as the central "Gazi-Husrev bey" library.

Unlike other urban centers such as Tuzla, Zenica or Mostar, Sarajevo does not count on a working class tradition, as it has never been an industrial town. In the past, Sarajevo had served as the administrative center of the state, and even now it hosts the main institutions of both the FBiH and the central government, as well as the headquarters of the so-called international community. NGOs and international associations incline towards a presence in the city as well, a concentration that makes the competition for visibility and financial resources particularly evident. Furthermore, Sarajevo is the preferred municipal meeting place for Bosnians and "internationals" (Lombardo 2010). The widespread perception of Sarajevo is that of a relatively wealthy

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victimhood feeling and move on". Categorized as Bosnian Serb by her own fellow citizens, experiencing herself as a German citizen, she quarrelled with her parents, who opposed her decision to return to Sarajevo, contending that Banja Luka was now their home.

[43] The mall known as *Sarajka* before the war.

and cosmopolitan urban center, whose living conditions are slightly better than that of other cities of Bosnia Herzegovina, and whose native population feels a sense of "cultural superiority" towards the rest of the country (Stefansson 2007, 65). When referring to the past history, a feeling of nostalgia towards the good old pre-war times permeates the narrative of its inhabitants, who depict Sarajevo in ideal and nostalgic terms, regretting the social and cultural changes the city underwent over the years, and especially after the conflict (Armakolas 2007). In the words of the locals, "Sarajevo is not, and will never become, the city it once was before the recent war" (Stefansson 2007, 59).

6.2 The history of the movement

6.2.1 From May 2011 to February 2013: Origins of the movement

The spark that ignited the *bebolucija* in June 2013 was a seriously ill three-month-old baby girl, named Belmina Ibrišević. In need of urgent medical treatment outside BiH, she was prevented from leaving the country due to the inability of the Ministry of the Interior to allocate her the 13-digit Unique Master Citizens Number (*Jedinstveni matični broj građana*) (JMBG). On the base of that number, assigned to every Bosnian Herzegovinian citizen, personal documents such as ID cards, passports, and health insurance cards are issued. The deadlock originated from a six-month-long squabble about the amendments necessary to adopt a unified state law on identification numbers. As far back as May 2011, the Constitutional Court had in fact declared unconstitutional the existing law on personal identification numbers owing to the fact that article 5, which enumerated the municipalities, did not contain the new names of some of them, changed after the war (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013, 4). The court had thus ordered the national Parliament to reach an agreement within a six-month period from the declaration of unconstitutionality of the law.

As has happened with many other issues, a technical matter turned into a pretext for a dispute over the centralization vs. decentralization of the state (Armakolas and Maksimović, 2013, 4). The issue MPs could not agree upon concerned the definition of registration areas, necessary for the allocation of identification numbers. While the MPs from Bosnian Serb political parties demanded the last digit, which designates these areas, to indicate the entity, the representatives of the other parties opposed the

proposal (Al Jazeera Balkans 2013). In practical terms, the recognition of the internal geographic divisions of the country according to the entity divisions would result in the citizens of RS having different ID than the citizens of the FBiH. On the one hand, non-Serb MPs perceived the definition of registration areas conforming to entity lines as a further attempt of Bosnian Serb MPs to stress their detachment from the central state, and to push in the direction of more autonomy of the RS from the state, in line with their persistent threats to secede from BiH. On the other hand, Bosnian Serb MPs refused to collaborate in drafting a new law, as they wanted their motion to be approved. Recurring to veto rights, the latter provoked a parliamentary impasse.

Confronted with stalemate, the Constitutional Court abolished the law on February 13, 2013, thus freezing the newborns' registration. That very day, the law lapsed. From then on, no passports and personal documents necessary to travel abroad could be released to the children born after February 2013. The problem concerned only the FBiH entity, though. Unlike their peers from the Federation, the babies in RS could access citizens' rights since the RS government unilaterally adopted an *ad hoc* ordinance allowing the new-borns of their entity to obtain personal documents. Although the adoption of a law regulating this matter stands within the exclusive jurisdiction of the BiH state, the authorities of RS justified the legitimacy of such a measure in the light of the circumstances (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013, 5).

6.2.2 From 5 to 6 June 2013: the square occupation and the siege of the parliament

In early June, Almir Panjeta, a well-known journalist for the investigative news magazine *Slobodna Bosna* (Free Bosnia), based in Sarajevo, sent a Facebook message to Zoran Ivančić, chairman of the Sarajevo-based Public Interest Advocacy Center "Foundation CPI". The message concerned the story of the sick baby Belmina Ibrišević. In need of a bonemarrow transplant, Belmina was unable to receive medical treatment outside the country owing to the impossibility to obtain an ID number, without which a passport could not be issued. Back then, Panjeta and Ivančić had been unsuccessfully trying to launch a media project addressing the issue of medical treatment of children with serious illnesses in Bosnia Herzegovina, whose families resort to collecting money on the streets to pay for treatment (Ivančić 2013). One can easily spot desperate parents on the streets or in the supermarkets striving to collect money to save the lives of their sick

children.

The following day, Aleksandar Trifunović, editor of the aforementioned BUKA, published a status on the social media platform Facebook, complaining about the apathy of people who shared the story of Belmina on social networks without taking any concrete action. Ivančić replied that he was ready to block the access to the Parliament building with his car in order to give visibility to the issue, but that he could not take this personal risk alone (Ivančić 2013). Thus, he called some people to join him, among whom were some friends of Belmina's father. Touched by the case of Belmina, several people decided to take action.

Midday on 5 June, fifteen people gathered with their cars in the proximity of the National Parliament, located at the outskirts of the city centre. Some joined Ivančić with their cars, others by just standing on the plateau in front of the parliament. "It was out of desperation that few of us who did not know what was better to do [decided to take action], so we went to the streets and blocked the Parliament [entrance]", Ivančić recounts (RI 13). The group parked their private cars in front of the exit ramp of the Parliament's garages, with the idea to temporarily obstruct it. "We thought our protest would last at least an hour or two. We had no idea it would last thirty-nine hours", Ivančić writes (Ivančić 2013). Three hours later, in the afternoon, a spokesperson of the Council of Ministers notified the demonstrators that the Council of Ministers had reached an agreement on the issuance of temporary ID numbers, valid for 180 days. Thanks to that, the baby obtained the necessary travel documents. Considering the issue solved, some demonstrators dispersed, while others decided to keep protesting. This second group, thus, stayed overnight, lying on the concrete outside the Parliament in tents and in sleeping bags (Čuljak and Kovo 2013).

The remaining demonstrators drew up a list of demands that they handed to the service of the Protocol of the BiH Parliament the following day (Arnautović 2013). These were:

- The immediate adoption of the Law on ID numbers. As written in the document, "More specifically, we, the citizens of BiH, demand an adoption of a Law that will fully respect the Decision U3/11 of the Constitutional Court which ordered our elected representatives in the Parliamentary Assembly to synchronize Article 5 of the Law on JMBG with the BiH

Constitution"("#JMBG Manifesto" 2013);

- The creation of a state solidarity fund that would finance the treatment abroad for citizens for whom proper treatment is not available in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- MPs and ministers of the Council of Ministers should give up 30 percent of their salaries for the duration of their term in office in favour of the proposed solidarity fund;
- The protesters that took part in the blockade of the Parliament shall not be prosecuted or subjected to repressive measures by the authorities. ("#JMBG Manifesto" 2013).

The demonstrators urged their MPs to fulfil their requests by the end of the month, setting the deadline on 30 June. If their demands were not met, they claimed, the citizens would dismiss the MPs.

On 6 June 2013, the number of people gathering in front of the National Parliament started to increase. Since early in the morning, parents with kids began to pour into the square, joining the handful of protestors who had slept on the plateau. Soon the news spread in the media, and people started to flow in large numbers onto the square. Around the time when a parliamentary session was scheduled, the number of people had grown to a couple of hundred. Among them one could spot many parents with their babies affected by the lack of a law on ID numbers (Mujkić 2015a). In the meantime, a dedicated Facebook page had been created, in which pictures of the car blockade and of the rally had been posted. In the afternoon, a delegation of protesters[44] was invited inside the parliament to negotiate and, apparently, to ease the tension. In fact, rumors had spread that the demonstrators wanted to attack the building and even the house of the prime minister (Ivančić 2013). Once inside the Parliament building, the members of the delegation were reassured that a solution would be found, and pressured to urge the demonstrators to disperse. However, the delegation did not succeed in meeting the MPs. As one member of the delegation details,

[44] Initially composed of three people to which other two joined (e-mail communication with an activist, February 2016).

> Unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to talk with the MPs. Once in the Parliament, we spoke with the person in charge of building and security and administrative staff, a PR person, the deputy minister of security, all the state officials and Parliament officials, but not the MPs themselves. We insisted we wanted to talk with MPs but they did not agree, saying they would create more problems. We wanted to talk to MPs from RS and the Croats, because we heard rumours from inside the building that it was an ethnic protest and we wanted to explain it was not against some of them in particular, but against all of them together. (RI 13)

Notwithstanding having been warned that they might be charged for disruption of the constitutional order, the protesters decided to continue the square occupation. Once the meeting was over, the members of the delegation reported to the demonstrators on the square. In the meantime, news came from inside the Parliament that a quorum on the ID law could not be reached, and that the MPs from RS had refused to attend any further parliamentary sessions owing to the "safety risk" represented by the demonstrators besieging the building in Sarajevo (Balkan Insight 2013). As a reaction, the protesters again blocked the entrances to the Parliament. The same night, a human chain surrounded the building. Composed of thousands of people, amongst whom many young, the crowd pledged not to let politicians out, claiming that they would lift the blockade only once they had solve the ID law issue (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013, 5).

The "Siege of the Parliament" prevented nearly 1,500 persons from leaving the building. As Arnautović recounts "We had no idea they would be there, but later we realized that their presence had been essential" (Arnautović 2013). Among them there were civil servants, MPs and 350 foreign representatives, who were attending the annual assembly of the European Fund for Southeast Europe (*OneWorldSee.org* 2013). Even the chair of the Council of Ministers, Vjekoslav Bevanda reportedly fled from the building through a window (Pasić 2013). Only the overnight intervention of the High Representative Valentin Inzko allowed the evacuation of the "hostages", when it was already 4 am (Milan 2013a). At dawn, the HR negotiated the evacuation of the people trapped inside the building in exchange of the pledge to take full engagement in the efforts to adopt a Law on ID number, and to discuss the issue at an urgently convened meeting of the Council for Peace Implementation (PIC).

Notwithstanding the HR's promise to find a solution to the problem, the demonstrators refused to disband before their demands were met. Beginning on 6 June, the plateau in front of the National Parliament became the central spot for protests. For twenty-five consecutive days, several thousand demonstrators occupied the square day and night until the 1st of July.

6.2.3 From 6 June to 1 July

In the following days, citizens from neighbouring cities joined the protests in the capital, and solidarity rallies were organized all over the country. Around a thousand demonstrators walked the streets of Sarajevo on 7 June, the third day of protests (Balkan Insight 2013). Reports of similar manifestations came from other towns, like Tuzla, Mostar, Bihać, Zenica Brčko, Bugojno, Jajce, Srebrenik, Prijedor, Travnik, and Livno (Čuljak and Kovo 2013). Sit-ins to show support to the demonstrators in Sarajevo were organized in Banja Luka as well, upon a call for participation from Sarajevo's activists (RI 47). An initiator of the #JMBG protests reported about the spread of the mobilization outside the capital in the following way:

> In Banja Luka there were maybe a dozen people, while in Mostar a couple of hundred, but what surprised us the most was that people took to the streets in smaller cities where nothing similar ever happened. (RI 13)

As usual, the situation of RS was different of that in FBiH. On 12 June, in Banja Luka, a group of students staged a street protest to oppose the inefficient university system, and to demand the improvement of the students' residential arrangements. When asked if they had any connection with the demonstrators in Sarajevo, they openly denied any association with the babylution (Basta 2013). By stating publicly that the two issues were not connected (Balkan Inside 2013), the students of Banja Luka refused to offer their support to the ID number cause, showing that "despite their dissatisfaction with the official institutions in the Republika Srpska, [they] still defend the legacies of this entity" (Čuljak and Kovo 2013).

Fig. 8 Map of the #JMBG protests

The map shows the cities, towns and villages in which at least one solidarity rally with the #JMBG initiative was reported being organized.

Throughout the month of square occupation, two large demonstrations were organized on 11 and 18 June, during which thousands of protestors from all over the country were estimated to have participated (Čuljak and Kovo 2013, Mujkić 2015a). The demonstrators received support from well-known artistic bands of the countercultural scene of Bosnia Herzegovina, which played in solidarity with the cause. On 11 June, a handful of taxi drivers blocked one of the main roads in Sarajevo with their cars for several hours (Lippmann 2013). Meanwhile, Serb and Croat parties withdrew their representatives from the Parliament and the Government due to "safety risks" (*OneWorldSee.org* 2013). As a consequence of the MPs' withdrawal, no parliamentary sessions could take place, and therefore a solution to the ID law could not be found. Reacting to the irresponsibility of their power holders, a group of activists travelled from Sarajevo to Baja Luka, and circulated through the social networks a picture portraying activists from both entities together, with a provocative statement saying:

> If the MPs feel unsafe in Sarajevo, we feel safe in Banja Luka, as well as elsewhere throughout the country. Furthermore, if we are a threat to security, and if they need us to be in Banja Luka for them to safely and smoothly work in Sarajevo, whenever they decide to work, we volunteer to come to Banja

> Luka, and stay there as long as the parliamentary session will take, and [as long as] they will solve the JMBG issues. Furthermore, if necessary, we can bring with us the mums with babies and children, if they are crucial for the safety of the MPs. (JMBG.org 2013b)

On 13 June 2013, another sick baby without an ID number, three-month-old Berina Hamidović, died in a hospital in Belgrade before having being able to receive the medical treatment she needed, delayed owing to the lack of JMBG number that rendered her ineligible for a passport (Simpson 2013). By the time the temporary permission to leave the country for urgent health reasons had been granted to her, it was already too late (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013). The death of Berina has been identified as the first "shock" for the movement (Simpson 2013). The night of 16 June, thousands of people encircled the Parliament and set up a candle-lit vigil to pay tribute to the baby. On the square, demonstrators mourned the death of the baby, and held the political class at large responsible for their inability, but especially for the unwillingness, to issue a personal ID number in time. The death of Berina prompted strong emotions among the demonstrators, both of rage and defeat. According to some participants, the mourning of Berina constituted a moment of collective suffering, but also marked the downwards spiral of the movement, as people felt defeated (RI 27).

On 17 June, the demonstrators drafted a letter addressed to the HR Valentin Inzko, in which they urged the adoption of a legal framework allowing the allocation of JMBG at the state level, in order for the newborns to access to civil rights (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013). In the letter, the demonstrators spoke on behalf of the citizens of BiH, pointing at the irresponsibility of the political class and urging the end of the violation of human rights, by saying:

> Since 5 June, 2013, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, relying on one of the strongest instruments for participation in democratic processes, have taken to the streets to express their bitterness and discontent with the passivity of their elected representatives in the highest legislative body of the state – the Parliamentary Assembly, and protest all over Bosnia and Herzegovina over the serious violation of legal norms. (…) Mr. Inzko, we don't accept the interim or temporary solutions offered and proposed by state ministers, in the attempt to evade their responsibility and to protect the

> interests of their respective political parties! We reject the improvised legal norms and the attempts to ridicule our legislative system; we reject partial solutions! The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina expect from their elected representatives to adopt decisions that will contribute to social and state progress, they expect laws and other regulations that will uphold and protect the basic human rights – the right to life and the right to existence! (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013).

With their letter, the demonstrators requested that the HR intervenes by using the Bonn powers to force the MPs to "adopt the legislation necessary for proper and functional legal system" in order to ensure legal security and protection to the citizens. (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013). Furthermore, in their letter they claimed:

> The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina expect that you shall use all the competences and authority granted upon you by Article V of Annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the Bonn Declaration, which make you the highest and ultimate authority in our country according to interpretations of the Agreement on Civil Implementation of the Peace Agreement, especially in view of Article II, paragraph 1, line (d) of the Agreement, which authorizes you to "facilitate" the resolution of any difficulties arising in connection with civilian implementation". (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013)

6.2.4 1st July 2013: The final phase and decline of the movement

On 1 July 2013, the organized call for a day of action termed the "Dismissal Day" (or "Firing MPs" action) (*Otkaz*) to end the month of protests. Facing political inertia and the unwillingness of the political class to fulfil their requests, the demonstrators took to the streets again, blocking traffic on the main road of the capital, and chanting slogans such as "Come out and fire them". A live concert was organized in the proximity of the parliament building whose square, in the meantime, had been secured with metal fences to prevent the demonstrators from occupying it again. Another demonstration took

place the same day in the city of Tuzla.

Fig. 9 Dismissal day logo

Source: www.jmbg.org

The appeal to take to the street on 1 July 2013 reported the following statement:

> The action "Dismissal day" is a call to non-violent civil disobedience. Non-violence changes the world, violence destroys it. The most important instrument in the fight against arrogance and passivity of political elites is the solidarity of united citizens. Our politicians react with violence. Violence suits our politicians and they respond only to violence. Our rulers have no response to cleverness, courage, humanity and non-violence. We call on all people to remain brave, dignified and united as ever. We urge being resolute in our demands for a better future of our children. This is our land, these streets, these buildings are ours. We will not destroy what is ours. All those who advocate violence are against us. (...) The "Firing" action will show them that the real power belongs to us. We will show them that with our votes and with our money they have to administer in an accountable and transparent manner. We will show them that we, the citizens, are their steering committee, those who reward their successes and sanction their failures. (JMBG.org 2013d)

On July 1st, the demonstrators, although in a smaller number compared to the previous

days (only 2,000 according to the Oslobođenje Portal [2013]), took to the streets and declared the incumbents wholesale dismissal, on account of their being "no longer credible representatives of the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina"(JMBG.org 2013f). On the streets, people coming from all over the country, including supporters from RS and some from Zagreb, chanted slogans addressed to their MPs such as "Resign!". That day, the movement organizers demanded the citizens to open their wireless connection and make it accessible to the bystanders, "in order to avoid the use of public telecommunication companies" (JMBG.org 2013e). That day also the workers from the *Feroelektro* company, the association of parents of dead children of Sarajevo, the workers of the National Museum of Sarajevo, war veterans, and miners from some villages close to the capital joined the rally (Oslobođenje.ba 2013). On that occasion, the movement organizers called also for a non-violent disobedience action through economic boycott, inviting their fellow citizens to stop paying bills, fees, and taxes for a week, as a way to pressure politicians. According to the organizers, "Money is what's important to them. If you deny them the money for seven days by stopping payments to the budget, the strongest state will feel that and ask what the citizens want" (Georgievski 2013). The press release reported the following statement that explained the relevance of these actions:

> In our case, the fight for children and the Law on ID numbers must be a dignified and non-violent one; it must contain elements such as social boycott and/or disobedience, refusal to pay bills, fees and taxes, boycott of legislative and governmental bodies. These are just some of the ways in which we can rebel against the system, which for two decades has refused to work in the interests of the people. For now, we have chosen one of the most effective ways to combat those who do not do their work. We will deny them the most important lever of power: money. (JMBG.org 2013c)

Furthermore, the movement organizers invited the citizens not to buy anything, stating:

> **DO NOT PAY** During one day, July 1, 2013, do not buy anything, do not spend your money, and do not fill the budgets. Delay paying bills to all public companies, delay paying fines and duties to state institutions until August 1, 2013. Do not fill their budgets. Keep your money in your pockets. (JMBG.org 2013c)

On 1 July, however, the protesters disbanded. No further activities were carried out after the last protest and the final concert (Mujkić 2013). Later that day the protestors released another communiqué on behalf of the citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina, once again to the attention of the international community. In the open letter, they stated that their MPs had been dismissed, owing to their unwillingness to fulfil their tasks:

> The Members of Parliament flagrantly ignored our demands, and in doing so, they demonstrated that they are no longer credible representatives of the citizens of BiH. We urge you to withdraw all your previous invitations to the representatives of BiH to meetings, conferences and other formal events. This will clearly show the BiH politicians that they finally have to take responsibility and do the job they were elected to do. We, the citizens, have decided to strip them of their mandate and to take away the credibility they have already lost. We do not want such politicians to represent us, neither in the country, nor abroad.
> From this day onwards, they are no longer our representatives – we, the citizens, have DISMISSED them. In addition, we urge you to cancel all planned official visits to our country, because, from today, you [the international community] do not have legitimate interlocutors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013)

The call to resume the demonstrations after the Dismissal Day proved unsuccessful, since only dozens of people continued to gather in front of the Parliament (RI 14).

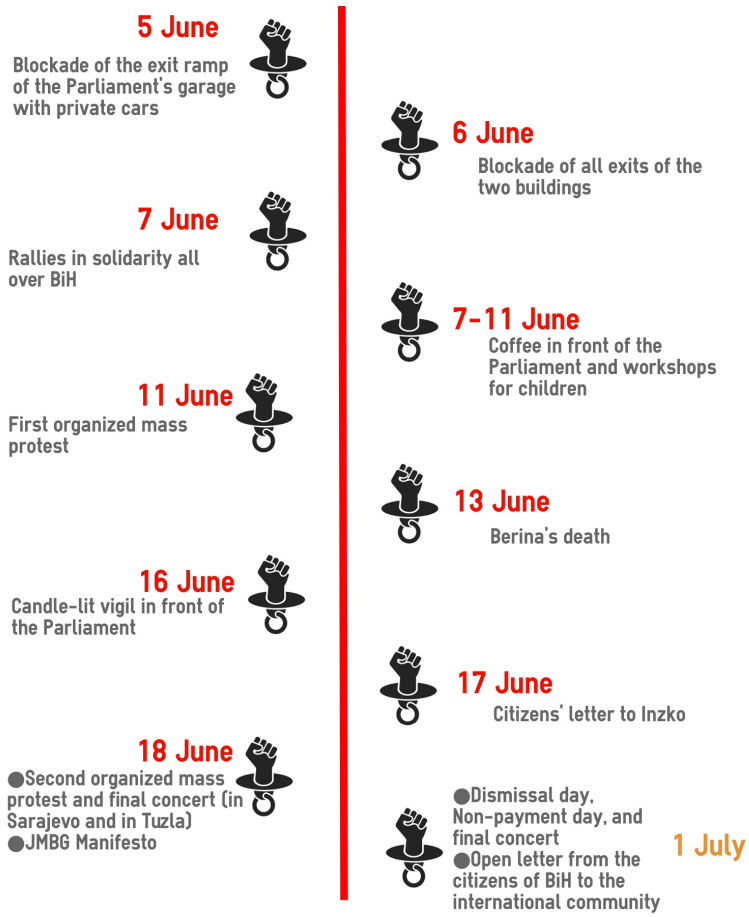

Fig. 10 Author's infographics. Data from own research and other sources (JMBG.org, Klix.ba)

6.2.5 Epilogue

The demonstrators only partially fulfilled their goals, failing to deliver any specific policy change or new type of political organization (Hakalović 2014). The endeavour left the participants with a sense of disillusionment. In the aftermath of the protests, "a certain melancholy infected most activists [which reinforced] the general feeling of acceptance that protests simple do not work in Bosnia Herzegovina" (Hodžić 2015, 52). I myself experienced a widespread feeling of rage and defeat among the persons with whom I had the opportunity to discuss the #JMBG right after the protest.

The participants can be subdivided into those who considered the wave of protests a success and those who deemed it a failure. The former stressed that the protestors fulfilled their goal, as eventually ID numbers were issued to babies. Moreover, they stated, the babylution managed to last for a long time without becoming violent, no minor achievement in BiH. By contrast, the latter argued that the movement's

victory had been only partial, since the new law on personal numbers, approved in July 2013, recognized different registration areas divided according to the entity lines, as requested by Bosnian Serb MPs (Sasso 2013). Furthermore, some claimed, the #JMBG lost the opportunity to widen the front including other social groups, and to connect the ID number issue with an in-depth criticism of the overall system.

6.3 Analysis: "We are not against some of them in particular, but against all of them together"

After a descriptive part reporting a narration of the events, the remainder of the chapter strives to disentangle the explanatory power of the analytical tools employed in the dissertation. In particular, it focuses on internal movement processes, like networking for resources and framing processes, investigated in the context in which the movement acted. Moreover, the analysis takes into account the extent to which structural factors and the behaviour of actors external to the movements influenced the strategic tactics of the challengers. The next section provides a description of the actors and their organizational characteristics.

6.3.1 Actors and organizational structure

The demonstrators were mostly urban, well-educated youth. Families with babies and some pensioners joined hands with students, activists, young professionals, and NGO workers. Students in particular constituted the bulk of protesters, somewhat reflective of the proximity of university faculties to the Parliament building. Familiar with social networks, they are considered cosmopolitan, having often studied abroad, and bonded with peers outside the country. In the words of an external observer, they embody the secular and progressive Sarajevan youth, to which he attributed the moniker of "aesthetic left" (RI 41). Local artists contributed to the protests by drawing the symbol of the movement: a pacifier turning into a clenched fist, that soon appeared in form of graffito on the walls of Sarajevo.

Fig. 11 #JMBG logo

Source: www.jmbg.org

Throughout the month of protest, bystanders gathered daily at noon on the square for coffee sessions known as "Coffee for the ID number" (*Kafa za JMBG*). As Armakolas and Maksimović reported, "Most days the protests took the form of a friendly meeting of Sarajevan families, where parents were sitting in front of the Parliament building having a 'Coffee for the JMBG', while their children were playing, singing and drawing together" (2013, 6). On the garden surrounding the Parliament premises, a gazebo was mounted under which kids played and drew, named: "Playground "Terrorist Camp" (*Igraonica "Teroristički Kamp"*). The name intended to mock the supposed threats that the demonstrators constituted to power holders. In fact, government officials had accused the ID protestors of being terrorists (Humanrightshouse.org 2013).

With regard to the organizational structure of the mobilization, in Sarajevo the movement organizers appointed four working groups to coordinate more efficiently. These groups dealt with planning, logistics, media communication, and contact with other cities in BiH in which solidarity rallies unfolded. According to some interviewees, though, the large size of the working groups prevented them from functioning efficiently. Thanks to the newness of the initiative and the lack of movement experience, autonomous self-organization proved sparse. Unlike similar movements taking place throughout Europe, during the babylution the protesters did not succeed in organizing a proper debate through square or neighborhood assemblies (Milan and Oikonomakis 2013). In the view of one activist, present on the square since the car blockade, the result was indeed quite chaotic (RI 13). For instance, although the academic community endorsed the babylution, the students on the square felt as they did not get involved in

the decision making process. According to an informant, the tendency of some activists of older generations to prevail in the decision-making process did not leave room for dialogic exchange, and discouraged students' participation, "killing their activist potential" (RI 29)[45].

The young people facilitated the use of social networks platforms, as activists used online social media to provide constant updates on the happening on the square to citizens and outsiders. The blogging service Twitter allowed participants to post their comments and "tweet" their messages about the protests, and the hashtag #JMBG and #JMBGzasve (#JMBG for all) was created in order to collate messages and information concerning the protests. The hashtag consented to launch and follow protest events, while the search on Twitter using the #JMBG hashtag reported all the messages related to the demonstration. A dedicated website (www.jmbg.org) published regular updates, press releases and pictures about the demonstrations, both in local language and in English. A specific section ("International") was devoted to the purpose of translating the main articles and declarations in foreign languages, in order to facilitate contact with the international press and supporters.

6.3.2 Networks and resources

In this section, I take into account the role played by networks and pre-existing ties among movement participants as a first analytical tool to explain why the protests failed to make an upward scale shift. In particular, I elucidate the extent to which the lack of previous contentious experience, combined with loose ties among the diverse subjects on the square, prevented the mobilization to spread outside the urban centers of the country, and to build a more transversal front of protesters.

The core group of protest organizers[46] was united by personal bonds. Prior to the

[45] Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that a student movement has not developed yet in Bosnia Herzegovina. The few, recent attempts to organize student protests failed owing mostly to students' passive attitude towards politics in general, as well as to the influence of some political parties that are financing students' unions.

[46] Although they prefer to be called "facilitators", to stress the spontaneous characters of the mobilization (RI 5).

#JMBG, most of the organizers had been active at the local level, either as activists or as NGO practitioners. Some of them had also taken part in *Dosta!*, and/or had participated in the 2008 protests in Sarajevo. However, they had never organized large-scale protests such as the #JMBG in the past, and they did not have experience in coordinating public debates or assemblies involving a large crowd. As a result, neither public debates nor assemblies were organized to articulate the citizens' demands, or to discuss the happenings throughout the twenty-five days of square occupation. While narrating the #JMBG events, a protest leader underscored the scarce organization of the babylution by comparing it to the *Occupy Wall Street* protest movement began some years earlier in the US. In this regard, he says:

> It was a big chaos, nothing similar to Zuccotti Park. There was no procedure to decide who could speak and for how long, how to divide among groups, or how to organize large assemblies. It was chaotic and completely unorganized: whoever was close to somebody with a paper and a pen was shouting what should be written. (RI 14)

The "grave lack of a tradition of resistance" and "the unawareness that an assembly and working groups are being organized" (Čuljak and Kovo 2013) prevented the mobilization to thrive, as demonstrators and bystanders did not have a forum in which to articulate their demands.

The disunity of the front was another element that hindered mobilization. The network ties among the individuals and groups participating in the protests proved too weak to mobilize human and financial resources necessary for collective action. On the square, the movement organizers were busy distancing potentially disruptive actors and keeping violent groups at the margins. At the same time, they strove to ward off the attempts of members and sympathizers of political parties to manipulate the discontent by diverting popular dissatisfaction to their own goals. Few days into the demonstrations, the organizers found themselves paralyzed in what one activist defined as a "land warfare" (RI 13). At first, nationalists tried to take the protest over. In particular, the members of the patriotic "Anti-Dayton" nationalist group joined the square occupants by waving *ljiljani* flags, the flags banners with lilies like the Bosnian army used during the war. They also sang the old Bosnian anthem. Both the flags and the anthem bear a symbolic meaning associated with Bosniak nationalism. These were

perceived as an attempt at "bringing ideology into the movement" (RI 14). In this regard, one interviewee details:

> The first day the front was not united. It was composed of different people with different ideas and origins, but this was not a problem for the first couple of days. But later a patriotic group whose members call themselves Bosnian patriots and wants to bring back the old Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as it used to be before the war, united without entities, they want to bring the imaginary perfect Bosnia that never existed back, and are full of this patriotic symbols and narrative, recognized it [the rallies] as an opportunity for patriotic meetings, while most of us were there just because we could not see these babies dying. On the last day of protests, after everything was over in front of the parliament, they started singing the old Bosnian anthem. But most of the people went home. There were already not many people, and bringing ideology weakened the project. (RI 14)

From the very beginning, the #JMBG protesters refused any mediation, insofar as NGOs and political parties were barred from participating in the protests as formal actors. Nevertheless, some members and sympathizers of political parties, such as the center-left Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*) (SDP), were present on the square, apparently with the intention to campaign in favour of their political party. Likewise, a group of local NGO workers and activists "by profession" had been said to have taken the lead of the protests with the purpose of gaining personal visibility, leaving no room for dialogic exchange and therefore for the possibility to involve other social groups. One informant expressed firmly his disappointment towards these individuals by claiming:

> A group of well-known professionals, which I call "pseudo-civil society", monopolized the protests, and reported to the media, which considered them as legitimate representatives of the #JMBG demonstrators because they are widely recognized as opinion leaders. (RI 14)

The large degree of mistrust towards political parties and the third sector, coupled with the perceived vulnerability of the demonstrators to political party manipulation and/or nationalist interference, contributed to skepticism toward these protests leaders. An

activist accused the self-appointed movement spokespersons of sharing "the same elitist mentality of politicians" (RI 14). Another accused them of having joined the square occupation out of personal interest, as they "perceived the threat represented by the spring of a genuine movement that could undermine their position as official spokespersons of the Bosnian civil society, as well as their own visibility" (RI 13).

On the one hand, the efforts of movement organizers to keep control of the square had a positive effect, as it undermined the attempts of nationalistic groups and political parties to interfere heavily with the protests. This allowed the demonstrators to steer clear of any accusation of manipulation, and helped to ward off the attempts to belittle the movement as politically and/or ethnically orchestrated. On the other hand, though, the deliberate choice of isolate formal actors weakened the protest front, preventing also the involvement of actors and social groups other than the middle-class urbanities. This choice alienated in fact the human, logistics and organizational resources that were needed to build a more composite front. As one of the movement organizers recounts,

> After one or two days of protests, instead of inviting the civil society, labour unions, associations of youth to join us, [in order] to get more people in the streets and better logistics, as well as coverage in the entire country, as would be normal in civic protests in most of the country, here it was the opposite: we had to make a press release asking civil society organizations not to participate as organizations because it would be bad publicity for us, but to join us as individuals, if they want to help. That is the tragic part of the story. Some of them participated. This country is fragmented, and so it is the government and civil society. Not so much [fragmented] by ethnic division, but by organizations that are active in order to achieve some goals and change in society, and those that are comfortable in spending huge amounts of money without actual results, and having insignificant projects. (RI 13)

Also cross-entity solidarity was difficult to build. Although some solidarity rallies were organized in RS, the case of the students of Banja Luka, protesting at the same time in RS but refusing to identify with the #JMBG, "confirm[ed] that cross-entity solidarity is still a liability rather than a resource" (Wimmen forthcoming, Basta 2013), as it had been the case during "The Park is Ours" protest wave. According to Armakolas and Maksimović,

these protests showed that "the Bosnian civil forces are still weak, insufficiently organized and unprepared to cope with serious challenges put before them by ethnic division" (2013, 11).

Concerning external allies, the #JMBG received international support from neighbour Croatia, where solidarity rallies were organized, and from the Bosnian diaspora spread outside the national borders. On Facebook and Twitter several people, among which public figures from cultural and political life, posted pictures portraying them with placards reading "#JMBG". Also the international NGO Amnesty International released a statement saying that "the delay in adopting a new law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assigning personal identification numbers to the newborn citizens of BiH constitutes an illegal attack on the country's citizens' basic human rights" (Euronews.com 2013).

To sum up, notwithstanding the support the #JMBG mobilization received from inside and outside the country, autonomous self-organization proved sparse owing to the lack of prior movement experience, and the inability to create dense network ties that could have mobilized resources. The demonstrators did not manage to create dense networks among participants and bystanders, either to autonomously mobilize human potential or the organizational resources necessary for organizing protests in a more effective way.

6.3.3 Frames, counterframes and attempts at demobilization

This section explores the discursive strategies of challengers and challenged groups, as well as the content of the frames and counterframes they used to gain support, or, conversely, to demobilize the movement.

Framing identity

During the babylution, the main cleavage opposed deprived citizens, united regardless of ethnic categories, to the whole class of power holders. A demonstrator depicted the protesters as:

> A transversal collective of people who recognized themselves in human, solidarity, non-ethnic and anti-party values, who

> constituted the first bulk of civic consciousness able to destabilize a system built on a party-oligarchy as never before. (RI 8)

The demonstrators were portrayed as a loose group of individuals, who refused any kind of categorization in terms of institutionalized, and politicized, ethno-national categories. In an attempt at preserving their "moral purity", the movement organizers denied any support from and affiliation to political parties, NGOs or other formal organizations. To that purpose, they decided to be identified only as "citizens with their full name and surname" (BUKA 2013a). On the website, the demonstrators framed their identity in the following way:

> **WHO WE ARE**: We are citizens of this country – parents with children, students, housekeepers, workers, unemployed, pensioners, regardless of our ethnic or religious background or any other status, and we share the common interest that rights of all persons, above all the rights of children, are fully observed. We represent no organisation or political party, nor we want any of the 191 political parties, the countless local and foreign NGOs and associations, international and local institutions, initiatives, formal and informal groups to speak in the name of citizens. If necessary, we are prepared to list you all by name, because we want to make a clear distinction between you and the citizens. We have no organizers and everybody is welcome to support the #JMBG initiative, but only as individual citizens with full first and last name, and not in any other way. ("#JMBG Manifesto" 2013)

A press release calling for participation to the 11 June protests reinforces this stance, reporting:

> Earlier we rejected the support of all political parties, and now we want to repeat it: We do not represent any organization or party, nor do we want any party organizations and movement to speak on behalf of citizens. All are welcome to support #JMBG initiative, but as citizens with their full name and surname, not otherwise. (BUKA 2013a)

As the protests unfolded, this beyond-ethnic, apolitical identity grounded on individual subjectivity was made explicit on the billboards carried on the streets, reading slogans

such as: “Neither Serbs, Croats nor Bosniaks: Human beings first” (Fig. 12), “Death to nationalism. This is civil BiH!” (*Smrt nacionalizmu. Ovo je građanska BiH*) and “Fuck the three constituent peoples, start working!”.

Fig. 12 A banner reading “Neither Serbs, nor Croats, or Bosniaks. Human beings first”

Source: www.aljazeera.com

In addition to citizens being framed as united irrespective of ethno-national belonging, power holders were depicted as an immoral collectivity resorting to corrupt practices, and spreading a narrative of hatred and fear with the purpose of fuelling divisions among their constituencies. To put it in the words of a member of the delegation invited to negotiate in the first day of protests, the mobilization “was not against some of them in particular, but against all of them together” (RI 13). Power holders were portrayed as unaccountable, not fulfilling their care-giving duty for their citizens, and in particular for sacrificing the rights of the most vulnerable among them, the babies, “on the altar of national interest” (Mujkić 2015b). The cleavage became evident from the beginning in the movement documents and press releases. For instance, the open letter to the High Representative reported: “While *they* follow their particular interests, *our* babies are left to die!” (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve/#JMBG for all 2013, emphasis added). Similarly, one could hear people on the streets calling upon their politicians to behave according to the role they were expected to perform, saying: “*We*

just want *them* to do their job" (emphasis added). As elucidated in the previous section, the demonstrators and organizers were eager to stress they had no ties with any political party or NGO, as these are perceived as belonging to the realm of the amoral, corrupt and irresponsible (Helms 2007, Toquet 2012a). Conversely, the demonstrators, deprived of their dignity as citizens and human beings, "took the moral high ground by embracing non violence" (Simpson 2013). This sharp, moral differentiation was visible on a placard that read: "We are people, not parliamentarians" (*Ljudi smo, nismo parlamentarci*).

Framing grievances

The injustice frame elaborated by activists included a diagnostic element, meaning that the problem was identified in the unresponsive political class violating the rights to existence of all the babies in BiH, and a motivational one. For what concerns the latter, the issue at stake was interpreted as a struggle for basic human rights – or, more precisely, citizenship rights. The demand for the right to a dignified life was coupled with the condemnation of corruption and the demand for accountability of the incumbents. All in all, stressed the demonstrators, the movement was not demanding some revolutionary change. As a protest leader stated, surprisingly "What is most unbelievable is that [we are demanding] from elected politicians that do what they were elected to do" (Arnautović 2013).

As was made evident in the movement manifesto, and in interviews with movement leaders, the #JMBG organizers were careful to frame their protests as civic and apolitical, in the same line of the 2008 Sarajevo protests (see Touquet 2015, and section 4.3.2 of this dissertation). They were in fact afraid that an explicit political frame would be interpreted as partisan, and thus endanger the movement, discrediting it as ethnically-driven or party-manipulated resulting from the distorted meaning assigned to the notion of "political" in Bosnia Herzegovina. In the Bosnian backdrop, the term "apolitical" does not mean deprived of any political meaning, but rather bereft of the influence of any political party, NGO, or other formal subject considered as "partisan" and as such "immoral". As Helms explains, "politics itself is often gendered through the common phrase, '*politika je kurva'* ('politics is a whore'), which is used to emphasize the corrupt, fickle, and immoral nature of political deal-making" (2007, 242). By the same

token, “politicians are similarly cast as prostitutes who sell themselves and their moral principles for personal gain” (ibid., 239). An informant made this point clear by explaining that the #JMBG mobilization could easily be described as political, as “it was meant for the collective public interest” (RI 30). However, the organizers deemed it appropriate not to define it as such, owing to the negative connotation the term “politics” bears for ordinary Bosnians. In her opinion, this choice debilitated the movement. She explains:

> The rhetoric of #JMBG was very cautious, and this (…) in a way it debilitated the movement. (...) There was this fear that if you say “politics” it would have been understood as politicizing the issue. This conflating of terms in Bosnia makes it very difficult to call anything political action, so the social [dimension] remained very much in the background. [#JMBG] painted a very innocent picture like “we are doing that for the babies”. This, in a sense, defused the movement. (RI 30)

The protest was thus described as a civic rebellion, or a rebellion of the citizens (*građanski bunt*). In this regard, it is important to stress the complexities the term *građansko* bears. In his analysis of civil society in the post-Yugoslav space, Stubbs (2007) distinguishes between the terms *civilno društvo*, which would correspond to the English notion of civil society and *građansko društvo*, whose meaning is closer to that of “citizens’ society”. The latter is the commonly used form when talking about protest and street actions. According to Touquet (2015), the term “građani” (citizens) is used to denote a social cleavage that juxtaposes urban, secular city-dwellers to rural, uncultured ones. In the case of the 2013 protests, the *građani* frame was not aimed to address this rural/urban distinctions among the citizens of Sarajevo and the inhabitants of the rural areas. Rather, it aimed at being pertinent to all the citizens of BiH who shared civic and human values, as reported in the #JMBG manifesto, the so-called frame receivers were the citizens of BiH:

> **WHO DO WE TALK TO**: We talk to all citizens who want to live in a country in which politicians do what they are paid to do and meet their legal obligations. A state in which national and party interests are secondary, and dignity and safety of citizens is put to the fore. (“#JMBG Manifesto” 2013)

To sound credible and convincing, the organizers opted for a civic, apolitical frame grounded on (basic) human rights, among those the access to citizenship. While, on the one hand, this frame gave credibility to the movement, on the other hand it did not extend beyond the single, narrow issue of access to citizenship rights. Movement organizers proved incapable, and to some extent unwilling, to link the issue of ID numbers with other salient claims, like socio-economic rights, or the demand for constitutional reforms. Consequently, the frame was not amplified, depriving it of a more political and social dimension that could have made it more resonant to the wider population. As an activist explains,

> The #JMBG mobilization was very specific, for specific demands. It did not have any ideological note, it did not have a note of social justice, nor did it formulate a bond between social issues and the problems the political system itself creates. (RI 32)

Furthermore, the #JMBG protesters failed also to connect a single issue (the political deadlock over national ID numbers) to the structural context of a deepening crisis of representation, still preventing response to important popular concerns (Milan and Oikonomakis 2013). For instance, the issue of constitutional reforms, which is considered a salient topic as many problems stem from the constitutional set-up, was not tackled. Again, this was a deliberate choice, as dealing with constitutional reforms would have risked making the demonstrators vulnerable to the accusation of constituting a threat to the country's stability. "This protest is for the babies", an informant stated while asked about the salient claims of the demonstrators. In stating that, she wanted to pinpoint that any other economic or politically elaborated demand was set aside.

Counterframes and attempts at demobilization

Throughout the month of protest, the policy-makers strove to demobilize the movement by resorting to the construction of an imaginary external threat, a strategy often used to control the masses in the region (Gagnon Jr 2004, 20). From the beginning, the political elite addressed the #JMBG mobilization as an ethnically-driven protest threatening the stability of the country and aimed at depriving Serbs of their right to self-determination.

The RS president Dodik claimed that the protests in Sarajevo were "politically motivated" (*OneWorldSee.org* 2013). Aleksandra Pandurević, MP in the House of Representatives belonging to the SDS party, declared publicly that the #JMBG protestors attempted to undermine the safety of Bosnian Serb MPs. She portrayed the protests as a lynch mob against them, and blamed the demonstrators as representing a threat lodged against the constituent peoples and the stability of the state (Balkan Insight 2013). Another member of the House of Representatives, belonging to the SNSD party, communicated the intention of his party to initiate charges against the national and FBiH televisions, as well as the Sarajevo-based web portal *Klix.ba,* for having incited the population against Bosnian Serb MPs, and identified them as main culprits of the stalemate (Sasso 2013). In a similar fashion, both domestic and international media focused on the ethnic composition of the crowd, devoting far less attention to the grievances of the protesters.

In an attempt to counterbalance the authorities' counterframe, and the attention given by the media to the ethnic belonging of the protesters, the #JMBG organizers found themselves pressed constantly to prove their impartiality. As Hakalović clearly put it,

> The few attempts at protesting against social injustice were eventually forced to justify themselves by their ethnic impartiality, and had to keep pointing out their ethnic diversity, or even their non-political character. This was the case with (…) the 2013 protests nicknamed Babylution (…) The relevant media coverage focused on the Babylution's multi-ethnicity: "The protests united the BiH nations" was one of the most frequent headlines in newspapers, web portals or television reports. The fact that the protests actually united the potentially vulnerable was not much discussed. (…) No one dared to translate the newly awakened awareness of social problems into concrete political demands. (Hakalović 2014)

On the one hand, the counterframe grounded on the ethnic threat undermined the movement discoursive strategy further. On the other hand, the need for demonstrators "to justify their ethnic impartiality", to put it as did Hakalović, debilitated the movement, involved in a struggle for meaning that made it more difficult to develop a frame encompassing other grievances beyond human rights.

6.3.4 The role of opportunities in the choice of action repertoires

In this section, I focus on the way in which the characteristics of the political system, and in particular the perceived willingness of the authorities to avoid coercive methods to repress discontent, impacted upon the nature of protests, influencing the choice of action repertoires used by the challengers.

As was the case in the previous protest wave, the repertoire of action was intentionally kept peaceful. During the #JMBG, the demonstrators opted for a collaborative stance towards the authorities. They submitted their demands to the MPs; negotiated through a delegation on the second day of protest; and bargained with the HR. The protest organizers had publicly called for use of non-violent methods on the square as well. In a statement, they announced that:

> Through disobedience and non-violent methods, dissatisfied citizens can fight for their rights even if they face a far superior and influential opponent. (…) The fight for children and the law on ID numbers must be a dignified and non-violent one. (Euronews.com 2013)

In the same vein, a message posted on the movement's website listed the rules demonstrators were requested to follow in order to keep the demonstrations non-violent. In particular, they invited to avoid any reference to ethno-nationalism or political party affiliation:

> We invite the citizens to comply with the following rules:
> Let's unite because we are here for the babies!
> Protests are a peaceful, respectful gathering of citizens!
> We invite you not to use any kind of party or national flag during the protests, as well as symbols of organization, movements, company and so on… Here we are all only citizens!
> Drinking alcohol is prohibited before or during the public meetings! We can break the rules of public order because of alcohol consumption, jeopardizing the success of protests. The police have the right to distance people because of alcohol consumption.
> Do not react to provocations! There are many people who want to divide and stop the fight of citizens for human rights.
> Any inappropriate behavior can harm our common goal, to

> secure a permanent ID number for babies!
> Accepts the warning of the security guards and the police! Follow the security guards and the police, they are there for your safety!
> In case you notice any violation of these rules, please report to the security guards or the police authority, and move away from individuals who break the rules in order to isolate them and distance yourself from them. (JMBG.org 2013a)

During the street walks, also the effigies of the politicians from both BiH entities were carried on the streets with the intention to ridicule them.

Fig. 13 Protesters carrying politicians' caricatures on the streets of Sarajevo

Source: Sulejman Omerbašić, Demotix

The policemen adopted a collaborative stance as well, and they did not exercise any kind of violence against the protesters. The riot police did not attack the protesters, but rather interacted with the people on the square. A picture that became viral portrays a young girl in the act of offering some water to smiling policemen, whose helmets are taken off (Fig. 14). The perception of lack of repression has been said to encourage bystanders to participate in the gatherings, as it reduced the widespread fear of taking part in public events, contributing to normalizing acts of resistance. One of the interviewees stressed the necessity and significance of the non-violent repertoire in the light of the babylution being the first mass demonstration to be staged in the very same place where in 1992 a shooting on the peaceful crowd marked the beginning of the

Bosnian war (RI 8).

Fig. 14 A baby offering water to policemen deployed in front of the government headquarters in Sarajevo.

Source: Sulejman Omerbašić, Demotix

Yet, some protesters and movement leaders criticized the use of non-confrontational repertoires, as in their account this jeopardized the chances of the protest becoming more radical. As one demonstrator recounts,

> We had the opportunity to go to the OHR for a meeting, but the seven said there was no reason to go there. We lost the opportunity, and we lost momentum. Also the MPs from SDS played the ethnic card, saying that the protests were against the Serbs: we could have sued them for offense, but the seven intentionally said no. We lost momentum. (RI 14)

In particular, the choice to conclude the month of protest with a cheerful concert sparked the criticism of some participants, who blamed the protest organizers for having "spectacularized" the demonstrations. In the words of an activist, in so doing a contentious action turned into a cheerful event, deprived of any political meaning and potential radical message:

> Where I think the NGO sector[47] failed tremendously with the #JMBG protest is that they turned it into an event, they made a concert out of it. (…) It was not a protest anymore, it died out completely. I think they [the NGO workers and professional activists] co-opted the protests in that way, by creating this public event. This is why they failed (…) these protests they did not have this radical emancipatory moment. (RI 32)

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics of the babylution, and strove to explain why the #JMBG mobilization failed to move beyond the country's urban centers and to involve social groups other than middle-class urbanites. Furthermore, it elucidated why the movement organizers opted for a peaceful action repertoire, and the extent to which the perceived willingness of the authorities not to use repressive methods against them influenced their tactical choice.

To sum up, the lack of previous experience with contentious politics, the loose bonds between individuals and groups on the square, as well as the exclusion of formal actors, weakened the demonstrators' front and its ability to mobilize resources for collective action. Moreover, the tendency of some protest leaders to prevail rendered the protestors' front less permeable to the participation of other individuals in the decision-making process. The choice of an apolitical, civic injustice frame centred on human rights appealed almost exclusively to the sector concerned about human and citizenship rights, limiting thus its resonance to the wider public. Finally, the choice of a peaceful repertoire of action was dictated by the perceived unwillingness of the authorities to use force against the demonstrators. The non-violent tactics substantiated the "moral purity" of the protesters, normalizing its acts of resistance. However, in the account of some participants, it prevented the protests from becoming more radical.

[47] By using the term "NGO sector", the informant intends to refer to the third sector. As I have already explained, in BiH the concepts of "civil society", "third sector", and "NGO" overlap in the mind of the people, and this is reflected on their spoken language.

Chapter 7
Socijalna Pobuna, or "The Social Uprising"

The third and last case study analysed in this dissertation is the 2014 wave of protests over corruption and unemployment, which constitutes another example of mobilization beyond ethnicity. This became known as "social rebellion" or "social uprising" (*socijalna pobuna* in local language). In the media outlets, the mobilization has been referred to also as the "Bosnian Spring" (*Bosansko proljeće*), with reference to the events such as the Arab Spring, a wave of large-scale demonstrations against authoritarianism and political corruption that has spread throughout the Arab world since 2010.

The upheaval erupted first in the city of Tuzla at the beginning of February 2014, spawned by a workers' rally. On the streets, the demonstrators lamented the increasing levels of unemployment (youth unemployment in the country currently hovers around 60 percent), and the loss of labour and social security rights. Moreover, they questioned the legitimacy of the domestic authorities, blamed for failing to fulfil their duties as citizen representatives. The attacks of the riot police, who intervened to supress the demonstration, were answered with violence from protestors. Hence, what began as a strike of disenfranchised workers on a former industrial hub brought about a wave of mass protests, propelling the country into the global media spotlight.

This wave of protest was the most violent and the most sustained among the three waves analysed here. Some scholars maintained that the 2014 rebellion constituted thus far "the most significant bottom-up challenge to ethnically constituted disorder, bypassing ethnic division in favour of a proto-civic sense of common citizenship and class solidarity" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 3). Others claimed that the social uprising triggered a new sense of commonality, as it represented a "wondrous moment of awakening (…), that moment when all those people realized that they have the same problem, that they could publicly speak about it and that they could put it in the political agenda" (BiH protest files 2014e).

Compared to the previous protest waves analysed in this dissertation, this one certainly witnessed a high turnout and large diffusion across the country. The social base of the demonstrators expanded as well, including individuals from all walks of life, the majority of whom were workers or the disenfranchised. The "social uprising"

marked a shift also in terms of contentious practices, owing to the high degree of radicalization that has been said to "creat[e] the biggest challenge to the post-war Bosnian polity" (Štiks 2015, 138)

In what follows, I trace the development of the protests, elucidating the factors accounting for the turmoil that erupted in Tuzla and the diffusion of the demonstrations to other towns and urban centres across the country. Following a descriptive part, I investigate the main actors involved in the protests and their organizational structure, before exploring their mobilization patterns. In the analytical part, I illustrate the extent to which the pre-existing ties among groups and individuals provided resources useful for mobilization, as well as the discursive practices of challengers and their opponents fostered (and inhibited) the spatial and social upward shift of the mobilization. Similarly, I strive to explain the extent to which the perception of the state's closure towards the challengers influenced the tactical choices of the latter. Following the structure adopted in the previous two chapters, I divide the protest wave under study into the distinct phases of mobilization, in order to better contextualize the single events. Finally, I provide some concluding remarks.

The next section delves into the context in which the mobilization spawned, that is, the city of Tuzla.

7.1 The cultural and political context of Tuzla

In order to understand why a workers' rally converted into the biggest uprising the country witnessed in the post-war period, it is necessary to look at the cultural and political context in which the protests broke out. Tuzla is the third largest city of Bosnia Herzegovina, located in the north-eastern part of the country. It has had an industrial vocation since the Austro-Hungarin times, and today industry represents the main source of income for the city and its population (Eminagić 2014). However, thanks to the collapse of the Yugoslav market and the dismantlement of the main companies and their equipment in the aftermath of the war, the industrial sector currently provides only a relative small number of workplaces.

The historical legacy of Tuzla differs from that of other cities in BiH. Over the years, its fame has been built on the narrative of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and anti-fascist community (Calori 2015, 16). The city managed in fact to preserve its multi-ethnic character and its tradition of resistance throughout and after the war, making of

Tuzla a unique case in the country (Armakolas 2011b). A crossroads of different peoples owing to the presence of coal mines, salt deposits and heavy industries that attracted workers from different parts of Yugoslavia, before the war the city witnessed an interethnic marital rate ranging between 25 and 40 percent (Weiss 2002). Tuzla holds also a symbolic importance in the history of contention in Bosnia Herzegovina, having been the center of resistance against the Nazi occupation in World War II, and a bulwark against nationalism in the last 1992-95 war. In the 1990s, the city was "the only Bosnian town with a consistent electoral majority against the three main nationalist parties" (Jansen 2007, 199). In wartime, the local Forum of Tuzla's citizens, a non-nationalist movement, "gathered the support of several thousand citizens around a civic political platform that confronted the local radical nationalists" (Armakolas 2011a, 126). In 1995, the city witnessed an infamous massacre as a mortar shell dropped by the Bosnian Serb forces killed 71 young civilians on the main city square. The killing assumed a symbolic meaning, since it happened in the center of the town on a suggestive date, 25 May, marking Tito's birthday and Youth's Day (*Dan Mladosti*) during Yugoslav time.

Over the years, Tuzla has become a symbolic place for its tradition of tolerance and resistance, a particularity that many of inhabitants emphasize when talking to foreigners (Jansen 2007). Besides its multicultural fabric, Tuzla counts on a long-standing tradition of labour movement. In the past, miners used to organize in Miners Unions, staging rallies and peaceful protests to call for the respect of their rights. At the entrance of the city, a huge monument represents a miner holding a gun and dropping a pick. The statue celebrates the 1920 miners' armed rebellion against industrial slavery, known as Husino's uprising (*Husinska buna)* after the name of the village where the revolt took place. Tuzla counts also on a long tradition of workers solidarity. During the 1992-95 conflict, a group of British miners gathered into an informal association named "Workers' Aid for Tuzla", with the aim of providing support to the city inhabitants as a token of appreciation and a sort of reward towards the miners that had helped them during their 1984 strike (Kaldor 2003, 131). As Weiss put it, "the working class identity [of the miners] interestingly seemed to trump their other, more ethnic, affiliations because it was more genuine" (2002, 13).

Notwithstanding its previous multicultural fabric, the current population of Tuzla is estimated to be comprised mostly of Bosnian Muslims. At the time the protests erupted, the city was known for being a stronghold of the allegedly multi-ethnic and

center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP). Unexpectedly, at the first general elections held in October 2014, in the aftermath of the uprising, the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije)* (SDA), considered as the main Bosniak national party, won the elections for the first time in the city.

7.2 History of the movement

The 2014 wave can be divided in two phases: the first, more violent, was characterized by riots and lootings; and the second, with a more deliberative dimension, in which peaceful protest and participatory assemblies were organized.

7.2.1. From 4 to 7 February 2014: A chronology of the riots

On 5 February, 2014 laid-off workers of the recently privatized factories of Tuzla gathered to protest, as they had done many times before. Demonstrations had been regularly staged in front of the local government building on Wednesdays in earlier months, with the participation of several hundred workers of Tuzla and the surrounding areas. The disenfranchised workers demanded the revision of the privatization process of their factories, as well as their wage arrears and the unpaid benefits they were entitled to but were unable to collect (Milan 2014c). All their factories had in fact bankrupted after the privatization process that, from the 1990s onwards, gradually transferred ownership and power from the socialist state to private entrepreneurs (Pepić 2015). The latter burdened the once-state-owned enterprises with bank loans and debts, leaving the employees unable to collect salaries, pensions, and healthcare benefits.

On February 5th, some local trade unions and the association of unemployed of the canton called for the rally, which was also informally announced with a post published on Facebook by a group in support of the Tuzla trade unions called "50,000 people for a better tomorrow" (*50.000 za bolje sutra*). That day, the enraged demonstrators gathered in front of the Tuzla canton's court, before moving towards the government building[48]. When the protestors attempted to forcibly break into the

[48] The canton's government and judiciary are the bodies in charge of following the lawsuits brought by the workers against their owners of their companies, who, taking over their

premises of the government of the canton, the police forces, lined up to secure the entrances of the venue, chased them back violently. Instead of disbanding the protesters, the violent reaction of the police mounted the rage. Suddenly, the protest spiralled out of control. The events succeeded rapidly since. In response to the police crackdown on the workers, people on the streets started to hurl eggs and stones against the wall of the canton's building. The police again charged the mass of demonstrators, deploying batons, tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets to disperse them. Students and other sector of the population rushed in to support the protestors, stunned by the reaction of the riot police, which had never before used tactics so severe to repress public discontent. Emina Busuladžić, the informal leader of the workers of the DITA detergents factory, one of the bankrupted companies that joined the protests, recounts that that day people yelled at the police violently attacking the demonstrators:

> "Thieves, thieves, get out!!!" it echoed. "Drop your shields!" people were saying to the police. But instead, they dropped teargas, beating our young people with truncheons, hitting the hungry, hitting the just, hitting people who merely wanted a job so they could earn their bread. We asked for the resignation of the government, but none of the mighty dared to come out before the people and speak to them. Riot police were busy dispersing people all day long (Busuladžić 2015, 24).

That day, traffic was blocked for several hours (Eminagić 2014). By sunset, the turmoil had left about twenty-seven people arrested, and another twenty-three sustained injuries (Ikić-Cook and Jukić 2014).

The situation did not calm down, and two more days of unrest followed. On 7 February, young protesters wearing masks hiding their faces joined the demonstrators, whose number in the meantime had risen to the thousands. The crowd stormed the local government building, hurling furniture from the upper stories and throwing it from the windows (Dzidić 2014).

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production plants, pull them into debt.

Fig. 15 The government of Tuzla canton set ablaze by demonstrators on 7 February during a protest over job losses and corruption

Source: www.roarmag.org

The workers' demonstration in Tuzla acted as a catalyst for mobilization, as the repression of their protest triggered an unprecedented wave of solidarity across the country. Like a domino effect, the riots spread from the former industrial city to multiple cities and towns in Bosnia Herzegovina. The rage of people mounted with the unfolding of the events, fuelled by the images of lootings and plundering across the country projected by the mainstream media. The disruptive demonstrations lasted for almost a week. Small and medium-size towns like Jajce, Brčko, Konjic, Srebrenik, Gračanica, Zavidovići, Maglaj, Fojnica, and Donji Vakuf witnessed small-scale protests. In some cases, the solidarity rallies turned into attacks on official buildings and violent scuffles with the police, in particular in the urban centers of Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, and Bihać.

In Sarajevo, a handful of protestors participated in the peaceful solidarity sit-in organized in front of the city canton's building on 6 February 2014. Abruptly, on 7 February around 3,000 people poured onto the streets (Hodžić 2015, 52), where a group of youngers threw Molotov's cocktails and stones against the canton government building, emulating the actions of Tuzla. The building of the Presidency, and both the canton and the town councils buildings, became the target of the rage, in their quality of symbols of a corrupted and incompetent political class. On 8 February, the number of people taking to the streets of the capital had risen to the thousands. At first, the police

did not intervene, leaving the demonstrators free to ransack the government buildings, to set cars ablaze and to throw office furniture into the river. According to external observers, a couple of times the police even walked backwards in order to avoid the counter attack of hundreds of demonstrators. Rumours had it that the police had been ordered not to attack (RI 41). However, it is still not clear whether police officers were unable or unwilling to intervene against the demonstrators. Some clashes were reported between police and demonstrators in some areas of the city. The three days of riots in Sarajevo were described as "a mixture of chaos, panic, anger, suspicion and disorganized synergy" (Hodžić 2015, 52). Unlike the cheerful, pacific parades of the 2013 baby revolution, the 2014 turmoil were the most violent scenes the country had witnessed since the end of the war. The images of the governmental buildings set alight had a strong impact on the public opinion, since they brought to the fore memories of the war.

On 7 February, both the town hall and the canton's building in the city of Mostar were set ablaze and vandalized. The headquarters of the two leading nationalist parties in the city, the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH *(Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine)* (HDZ BiH) and the Bosniak SDA, met a similar fate. The same day also the government of the canton of Zenica, an industrial town near Sarajevo, was torched. A member of the city's plenum describes the mounting rage and the urgent will of participation that the crowd transmitted in the streets, and later on in the citizen assemblies, in this way:

> Basically, at the beginning there was a huge amount of anger. People were just likely to throw everything down. It was irrational, most people were irrational, and most people voted for anything that we suggested. Honestly, I think that if we had suggested a war, a war would have been voted, because it reached that point that the anger started to be thrown out, the anger that was kind of pumped up all those twenty years. (RI 44)

At first in Bihać, a former industrial town at the border with Croatia, the protests witnessed neither violence nor a high turnout. However, following a path similar to the Sarajevo events, on the second day of unrest young people were reported crashing the windows of the canton's government, ditching and setting cars alight. Following the violent turn the protest took, between 3,000 and 5,000 people poured onto the streets of the city (RI 45).

The riots faded around 10 February, but the popular upheaval led to a series of high-level resignations, such as that of the prime minister of the Una-Sana Canton, Hamdija Lipovača, on 9 February; preceded by that of Sead Čaušević, head of canton Tuzla, and of Munib Huseijnagić, prime minister of the Sarajevo canton, both on 7 February (Klix 2014).

Although largely contained to the Federation of BiH, some demonstrations took place as well in Republika Srpska. Solidarity support groups were set up in the cities of Banja Luka, Prijedor, and Gradiška (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016). Right after the riots in Tuzla, about 300 individuals rallied in Banja Luka, staging a one-day peaceful march "to call for unity among all Bosnia's ethnicities" (Dzidić 2014). A handful of protesters gathered in the city of Prijedor as well, while on 9 February a hundred-participant rally in Bijeljina, a mid-size town located near to the Serbian border, met with the counter-protest organized by Serbian nationalists (Oslobođenje.ba 2015). On both 18 and 28 February, in Banja Luka around 1,000 demobilized war veterans protested poverty, calling for an improvement of their living standards, namely better wages and higher pensions. In spite of their demands being similar to that of their peers in the other entity, the veterans' demonstration differed to some extent from those unfolding in FBiH (Lippmann 2014). The veterans advocated for specific claims, like the resignation of the leader of the RS veterans association, and better living conditions (ibid.). Commenting on the protests, RS President Dodik's accused the veterans of constituting a threat to the stability of RS. In response, the veterans' spokesperson emphasized that, as the former soldiers had fought for RS, they did not intend to destroy it (Balkan Insight 2014b). However, whereas the students protesting in Banja Luka back in 2013 refused any association with the #JMBG mobilization, the veterans did not object to being associated with the wave of protests spreading meanwhile in FBiH.

Outside BiH, solidarity sit-ins were staged in the bordering countries of Croatia, Montenegro, and Macedonia around mid-February. In Serbia, a protest organized in solidarity with the demonstrators in BiH encountered the opposition of a few Serbian nationalists, who organized a counter-demonstration (Barlovac 2014).

Fig. 16 Map of the 2014 social rebellion.

Locations where protests took place or were announced, and plenums were formed. Author's elaboration according to press coverage (sources: Balkan Insight, Klix.ba, BiH protest files)

7.2.2 From 8 February to mid-May 2014: protests and plenums

A few days after the outbreak of the riots in Tuzla, some local activists decided to organize public assemblies open for participation to the citizenship. These citizen assemblies, called "plenums", functioned according to a direct democratic method of decision-making. As the leader of Tuzla-based DITA factory workers recalled, it was on 7 February, the same day that the local government's building was set ablaze and that the government of Tuzla's canton submitted its resignations, that some local activists took the decision to gather together and organize. She recounts:

> When Dita and workers of other factories were joined by so many other forces – school pupils, college and university students, the unemployed, pensioners, war veterans and the marginalized – the government resigned. Later that day, people I had known for some time, those who had been with us during our struggle, called me to come to Kuća Plamena Mira.[49] There were about 20 people there. I was the oldest. The rest were all the next generation of our young and educated people. That is how the Plenum was created. (Busuladžić 2015, 24)

Started in Tuzla, the organizational model of plenums spread throughout the country. In a similar fashion, on 12 February in Sarajevo well-known activists, who had played a pivotal role already in occasion of the 2013 #JMBG mobilization, invited the demonstrators to gather inside the premises of the local Student radio (*Studentski radio*), hosted in a building of the Sarajevo university campus. There, they strove to articulate the demands emerging from the public. The crowd was so large that it could not fit into the small space available. In an attempt to solve the problem, the radio provided live streaming with the purpose of informing the people standing outside the building about what was discussed inside (RI 42). Almost every day since, about a thousand residents of the capital have taken part in the assemblies, which in the meantime were held at the Youth House concert venue (*Dom Mladih),* in the city center.

Following the example of Tuzla and Sarajevo, some people decided to set up a plenum in Mostar as well (BiH protest files 2014c). On 13 February, around 400 citizens gathered in the main hall of the Mostar's Youth Center (*Omladinski Kulturni Centar*) (OKC) Abrašević, an "anti-hegemonic 'safe space' where cultural and political activity takes place on daily basis" (Wimmen 2013, 9)[50]. Between February and March, plenums

[49] The "House of the Peace Flame" is a venue in Tuzla that had been built to host the athletes of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games. Nowadays it serves as cultural center where different kinds of activities are organized, usually by renting the spaces. In February 2014, it was given to the demonstrators for free, because of the circumstances (personal conversation with A.S., January 2015).

[50] The OKC Abrašević is a youth center located at the border between the Muslim- and Croat-inhabited sides of the city. The center attracts alternative youth from boths sides, involving them in creative projects, concerts, and critical thinking (see Hromadžić 2015, chapter 5).

took shape in more than twenty different towns and cities across the country (Rossetter 2015), although the majority of assemblies were set up in the territory of FBiH.

Tab. 5 List of towns and cities in which plenums were organized

Brčko	Konijc	Odzak
Bugojno	Orašje	Lukavac
Mostar	Zavidovići	Gračanica
Sarajevo	Banja Luka	Fojnica
Tuzla	Bihać	Zenica
Prijedor	Travnik	Goražde
Kalesija	Srebrenica	Cazin
Novi Travnik	Konijc	

Author's list according to press coverage (sources: Balkan Insight, Klix.ba, BiH protest files)

The months of February and March can be considered the height of the protests, as several thousand people consistently took to the streets in the main urban centers of the country, peacefully and almost on a daily basis. The number of demonstrators declined over time, though. Around mid-March, the plenums started to run out of steam and slowly withered away (Balkan Insight 2014c). Similarly, a smaller number of people attended the street protests. On 9 April, a demonstration to urge the resignation of the Federal government and the fulfillment of the plenums' requests witnessed only sparse participation. The event, staged in front of the FBiH government, an institution located in Sarajevo, was dubbed "The plenum of the plenums" (*Plenum Plenuma*), and aimed at gathering the participants to all the plenums across the country.

7.2.3 The May day parade and the floods

In Tuzla, on the heels of the protests, several workers had organized into a trade union called *Sindikat Solidarnosti* (workers' union "Solidarity"). *Sindikat Solidarnosti* aimed at constituting an alternative to the official trade unions, as the workers were disappointed by the way the traditional unions advocated for their rights. Furthermore, they wanted to create a union independent of political parties, as the existing unions are said to be close to political parties. Stemming from the 2014 protests, at first the labour union

gathered the disenfranchised workers of the troubled firms of the area. The brand-new union did not seek any political allegiance, but rather aimed at gathering workers coming from all over the country, regardless of cantons' and entities' borders (Milan forthcoming). On 1 May, some of the members of "Solidarity", together with plenums participants, decided to organize a May Day parade in the streets of Tuzla and Mostar. During Yugoslav period, May Day had an important celebratory meaning, as it commemorated the significant role of workers in socialist society. As such, it represented "a perfect moment for harnessing the symbols of socialism and class struggle" (Kurtović 2016, 15). After the demise of socialism, May Day became merely an occasion for out-of-town holidays and barbecues.

On 1 May 2014 around 1,500 people gathered in Tuzla (Brkić 2014) and about a hundred in Mostar. Their purpose was to remind the country that the workers' struggle was far from over, and that economic hardship affected all social sectors regardless of national divisions. A banner raised in the main square of Mostar read: "I do not celebrate unemployment" (*Ne slavim nerad*). The message aimed at pointing out that the post-war era left the workers with "nothing to celebrate" on this iconic holiday (Kurtović 2016). Conventional unions did not attend the May Day parade either in Tuzla or Mostar, and no celebration was organized in the capital.

In another attempt to gain media attention, on 7 May some participants in the plenums decided to establish a march called "Freedom March: A trip without return" (*Marš Slobode: Put bez povratka*). The initiative aimed to demand the resignation of the Federal government and the acceptance of the plenums' requests. The demonstrators reached Sarajevo from the surrounding cities on foot two days later, and gathered in front of the FBiH government building on May 9 (Milan 2014a). The same day marked the reopening of the old National Library, fully renovated and finally made available to the public after Serb shelling set it ablaze in August 1992. As the small number of demonstrators arrived in front of the National Library, located in the city center, the police forced them back. Nevertheless, they continued protesting on the other side of the river flowing in front of the library. The solemn opening ceremony, attended by public authorities and foreign officials, moved the protesters and their claims to the background. While the ceremony was held in front of the brand-new facade of the library, the demonstrators were relegated to the opposite side, the slogans they chanted overpowered by the music of the orchestra playing for the opening ceremony.

Fig. 17 A banner raised in the main square of Mostar reads: "I do not celebrate unemployment"

Source: Author's picture, May 2014

The protests came definitively to a halt as the flood that hit the country in mid-May 2014 turned into a national emergency. Most of the territory of north-western Bosnia was inundated, twenty-four people were left dead and around 90,000 temporarily displaced (Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly 2014). Although weakened by a decrease in participation, in several towns the remaining plenum cells coordinated the volunteers who provided assistance to the victims of the flood, and promoted donations in their support. The people active in the plenums also arranged transportation to drive students, volunteers, and aid material from the main towns to the villages hit by the inundation. This transformed the plenum solidarity networks emerged during the uprising into "a sort of humanitarian aid organisation", which provided first aid to people in need, regardless of ethnic category or entity of belonging (BiH protest files 2014f). In some cases, relief coordinated through the plenums reached the affected areas faster than the aid provided by the official authorities, revealing the corruption and ineptitude of the government, unable to react in a timely fashion to the disaster. As a matter of fact, the solidarity efforts around the flood brought forth new forms of cooperation, a "newly found sense of possibility achieved through self-organization into unprecedented grassroots humanitarian work that crossed all ethno-territorial boundaries" (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016, 8).

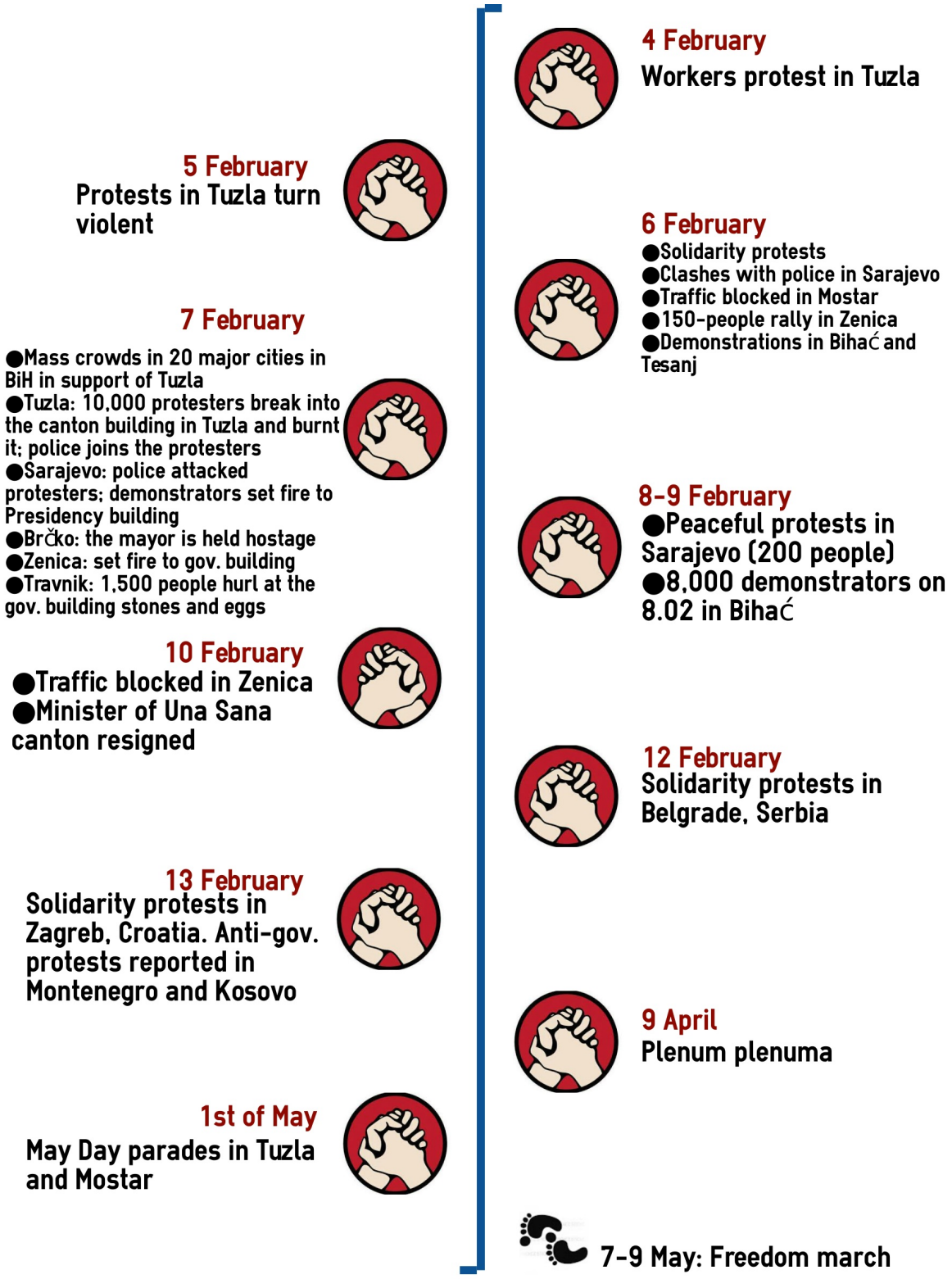

Fig. 18 Author's infographics. Data from own research and other sources (Klix.ba, BiH protest files, plenums' bulletins)

7.2.4 Epilogue

A couple of months after the first riots in Tuzla, the energy of the plenums depleted for several reasons. According to some, the sparse availability of spaces where people could converge, meet and organize discouraged participation[51]. In the opinion of others, the assemblies also resented the vulnerability to political parties' interference (RI 30). Furthermore, no agreement was reached about the future of the participatory assemblies. After a couple of months of activity, the debate revolved around the role that the open assemblies were expected to play, and on the form they should take. While some conceived them as merely arenas for public debate, others envisaged them as a corrective to the system of representative democracy (RI 40). Still others thought plenums should transform into more structured political organizations, such as pressure groups, or to perform a watchdog function (RI 44); and some suggested that the government should recognize the plenums as official counterparts. The uncertainty concerning their role provoked internal friction among activists and plenums participants. The plenum of Sarajevo was particularly difficult to control, as the core of activists in the capital was weaker and more heterogeneous than in other cities. It should be also taken into account that this was probably the plenum witnessing the biggest turnout (RI 30). As an activist of Sarajevo explained, the capital is a peculiar spot for activism and political engagement:

> Sarajevo is particularly bad in that regard; it's a difficult city, it seems to work through the network of groups and everybody is against each other. Ego-mania has something to do with that. (RI 30)

Hence, after a couple of months of activity, the plenum of Sarajevo split. While one group continued with the activities as usual, another group took a more "anti-Dayton, pro-Bosniak colouring" (De Noni 2014), and continued to stage protests in front of the

[51] With regard to the space issue, in Sarajevo the local authorities closed to the public the city Youth House, which was initially utilized by the city plenum to hold the meetings. The plenum participants were also requested to pay a fee in order to rent the hall. The plenums in other cities faced similar problems, since they had to bargain with the municipality or with private persons for the right to use the areas.

Presidency building on daily basis, which witnessed the participation of a nearly dozen people. On 25 August 2014 the "secessionists" organized into the informal group "the Council of the Citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina", and staged a small-scale protest in front of the OHR building.

In Tuzla, the local plenum was more united than in Sarajevo. To solve the issue of the vacant cabinet, which resigned few days after the February riots, the participants in the plenums decided to support the appointment of a technical government headed by a professor at the Tuzla's faculty of Economy, Bahrija Umihanić. As a proof of their apolitical stance, both Prime minister Umihanić and the other ministers signed a statement claiming that they would freeze their membership in political parties, and guaranteed not to run in the upcoming general elections. The new cabinet took office on 26 March, 2014. Contrary to the expectations, the new government has been said to have worsened the situation further, rather than improved it (De Noni 2014). The government resigned already in November 2014.

Other plenums dissolved, while some of them, like these in Zenica and Gračanica, remained active in various forms once the protests lost steam. Although the protest movement did not sustain momentum over the long term and the elections held in October 2014 produced little observable change, the mass refusal of institutions and the wide gulf between the ethnifying elites and the deprived citizens continued to be displayed in other ways once the protests faded and the plenums ceased their activities (Gordy 2016).

7.3 Analysis: "Now people are learning how to articulate their demands"

The analytical part of the chapter strives to disentangle the impact of the explanatory factors accounting for the emergence of the 2014 protest, and for its shift from the local to the nearly national level. Similarly, it tries to explain why in the 2014 upheaval the demonstrators broadened their base to include diverse social groups, and why they changed their action repertoire from a disruptive to a non-violent one. Next section delves into the actors of the protests and their organizational structure, as a first step to understanding the dynamics of the protests.

7.3.1 Actors and organizational structure

We can identify two main social groups that stood at the core of the 2014 demonstrations: the workers and the "hooligans". Whereas the first contributed to trigger the demonstrations in Tuzla, the second were held responsible of the riots that followed in several cities of BiH. This section explores the composition and role of these two groups that differ in age and background, but were both pivotal to the dynamics of the 2014 unrest.

The workers

At a first glance, it was evident that the core of the protesters was made up of pensioners and middle-age people. In this regards, a participant remarks:

> The ones getting involved in the protests and plenums are those who have nothing to lose: the retired, the pensioners, whose pensions are guaranteed. If you have a job, it's too dangerous to take to the streets and be seen, since you can lose your job. (RI 44)

Specifically, the group of disenfranchised workers of the Tuzla area set in motion the February 2014 rebellion. Although they had started to protest almost a decade before, their cause came into the global spotlight only when the police brutally repressed their demonstration on 5 February. The redundant workers had once been employed in five companies (DITA, *Konjuh, Resod-Gumig, Polihem* and *Poliolchem*). Until 2002, three of these factories were under the aegis of the former state-run salt mine conglomerate SodaSo, which was privatized in the past decade. Among those companies, the laundry detergent factory DITA provided around a thousand jobs before the war. Following its privatization in two rounds (2001 and 2005), the DITA's major shareholder began to pay minimal wages to the workers, and to give them meal vouchers only in bonds rather than in cash (Busuladžić 2015, 14). After an unsuccessful four-year internal struggle against the management, the employees started to manifest their dissent openly. In December 2011, they staged a series of strikes that lasted until March 2012, demanding from the company's owner the pension benefits and health insurance they were entitled to. Following the closure of the firm in December 2012, DITA workers resorted to a wider range of protest actions. In 2013, they organized 24-hour pickets outside the

factory premises. Later on, they filed lawsuits both against *Lora*, a private company from Sarajevo and co-owner of DITA since 2005, which had burdened the factory with bank loans, and against *Beohemija,* the Serbian chemical company that had temporarily taken over the production plant in 2013. They did not succeed in prosecuting the owners, whom they held responsible for the situation.

The other workers who participated to the joint protest of February share a similar history of DITA. The once-leader of the chemical industry *Polihem* bankrupted and shut down after privatization, its properties later disassembled and sold as scrap metal (BiH protest files 2014d). Likewise, the onetime chemical giant *Poliolchem* closed in 2012, thanks to a mercury and chlorine leakage that almost provoked a human and ecological disaster. The factory's equipment was dismantled (Rtvslon.ba 2012), and the workers were left unable to collect unpaid wages and unremunerated night and holiday shifts, meals, and transportation (Bljesak.info 2012). Similarly, the laid-off workers of *Resod-Gumig,* an industry that once produced rubber and plastics, still claimed their unpaid wages and pensions after almost sixteen years. Finally, the woodworking factory *Konjuh*, located in the town of Živinice, 15 km away from Tuzla, had fallen into debt thanks to irresponsible management. Its former employees had already experimented with hunger strikes, pickets, and marches in order to raise awareness of their desperate situation, before joining their peers in February 2014. All these disenfranchised workers took to the streets together at the beginning of February 2014, voicing their discontent and urging the government to revise the privatization process of their companies.

The "hooligans"

During the protests, individuals of different generations and backgrounds joined the workers. Their profile and demographics were heterogeneous, and varied according to the different stages of the unrest. Apart from the workers in Tuzla who triggered the uprising, it was mostly the young who took part in the riots in the main urban centers. As was evident in the media footage, among them one could spot highschool students and football fans who stormed the public buildings and ravaged the cities. However, it is still unclear who were the individuals who precisely started the riots, and whether their action was prepared and coordinated. In Sarajevo, an observer recounts that several

teenagers were seen breaking the pavement in front of the canton's Presidency building, and throwing pieces of concrete against the building's walls[52]. The media often referred to these young people depreciatingly as "hooligans", a description quickly adopted by the population at large, to the point that also an interviewee referred to these individuals as "hooligans prepared to wreck the symbols of the state" (RI 20).

Several days after the turmoil, the newspapers reported the stories of parents desperately begging police officers to release their children who had been detained for involvement in the destruction of public buildings (Balkan Insight 2014a). According to a witness, in Sarajevo these youngsters came from at-risk neighborhoods, and probably had never taken part in street protests previously. He says:

> These kids came from all unprivileged neighbourhoods such as Dobrinja and Alipašino Polje[53]. I recognized some faces from the #JMBG protests, but many of the people who took part in that wave did not show up during the 2014 riots (RI 41).

Whereas some saw on these young rioters "victimized and disenfranchised children of demobilized fighters, unemployed mothers and pathologized society that offered them no livable futures" (Kurtović 2016, 10), others perceived them as mere criminals who took advantage of the chaotic situation "to wreak havoc on the city and its physical infrastructure" (ibid.).

These "hooligans", students and youngsters born during or right after the war, who threw stones and ransacked the public buildings during the three-day-long riots seemed to vanish as soon as the situation calmed down. Very few of them showed up in the plenums that followed the disorders.

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[52] Personal communication with an external observer, February 2014.

[53] Residential neighbourhoods located at the outskirts of the capital.

The protesters' organizational form: the plenums

The plenums constituted the main novelty of the 2014 protests. In contrast to the violent onset, these open assemblies that followed the outburst of rage brought together different strands of opposition movements and diverse social groups. In the assemblies, mainly retirees, but also workers, unemployed, young activists and professionals articulated their demands. As a participant in the plenum of Sarajevo reported in an interview that appeared on the plenum's bulletin *Glas Slobode* (literally, The Voice of Freedom): "Plenums are the voices of the street. The impoverished, the disenfranchised, the workers who haven't been paid for years, pensioners who dig in the trash for food, the marginalized youth, and those voices have been loud and clear" ("Glas Slobode, Broj 3" 2014, 14). In a similar fashion, the journalist and long-term observer of the country Peter Lippmann wrote:

> The plenums represent a concrete answer to the feeling of disenchantment and disgust that nearly everyone in the Federation has with their elected leaders. The demonstrations and riots that took place were an expression of anger and desperation, and the plenums then formed in order to develop specific solutions to the corruption and overall dysfunctionality of Bosnian society (Lippmann 2014).

The plenums have been defined as "the form of self-organisation and the method of work, in which citizens come together to articulate demands, underpinned by the action of protest marches" (Arsenijević 2014b). Some saw in these assemblies an emancipatory and transformative potential, stemming from their being "a space without restrictions" (RI 32), "the real, and the only, democracy" (BiH protest files 2014b), "the celebration of democracy and tolerance" (Radiosarajevo.ba 2014). Other said that plenums represented "a form of exercising the idea of direct democracy" (Marković 2015). As a matter of fact, the open and participatory assemblies were conceived as free spaces in which citizens could have a say on issues concerning their lives, thus moving beyond the simple act of casting their vote every four years. According to an activist, "plenums were born precisely because people felt the need to get actively involved in finding a common solution for their problems" ("Glas Slobode, Broj 3" 2014, 14).

In the plenums, the representative logic was rejected in favor of an alternative model of direct democracy. The assemblies were allegedly leaderless; nobody was

entitled to represent anybody else, nor to speak on his/her behalf. The discussion was moderated by participants to the plenum who acted as "moderators". The moderators, who rotated at every session, were chosen to perform this role at the end of each plenum's meeting and by means of public vote. While the plenums recalled to some the League of the Communist of Yugoslavia Central Committee[54], this model has actually little to do with the past. The practice drew rather on the occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb back in the spring of 2009, during which the students adopted plenums as organizational structure for the first time. Plenum participants followed the directives outlined in a publication titled "The Occupation Cookbook – or the Model of the Occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb". The self-produced work, issued in 2009, aimed at describing the organization of the students' occupation in order for it to be used by other activists (Bousquet 2011).

In BiH, each plenum followed its own organizational path. By and large, the assemblies were established in a decentralized way that envisaged issue-related working groups dealing with, among other issues, media, education and culture, social problems, cooperation among plenums across the country, problems of war veterans, legal issues, and so forth. In Tuzla, for instance, a working group was allocated to each ministry – thus there were twelve working groups in total[55]. In Mostar and some other towns no working group was envisaged (RI 34). As a general rule, no participant was allowed to take the stage for more than two minutes, before handing the microphone to the next person (RI 32). Demands that arose during the plenary sessions were collected and passed on to working groups, who were tasked with reformulating them in a coherent way before they were handed on to the targeted authorities. Once re-elaborated, the demands were passed again to the plenum for a final vote, according to

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[54] While interviewing two plenum participants, a journalist of FACE TV said that the plenums reminded him of the League of the Communist of Yugoslavia Central Committee [video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYb7-ojCmnA, accessed 2 February 2015]

[55] The ministries in FBiH cantons include: Education, Science, Culture and Sport; Administration of Justice; Trade, Tourism and Traffic; Health; Industry, Energy and Mining; Veterans' Affairs; Internal Affairs; Cooperation with Workers; Finances; Work, Social Policy and Return; Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry; Development and Entrepreneurship; Physical Planning and Environment.

the rule “One person, one vote”. This meant that every participant in the plenum had the right to equal representation. The voting options available included to cast a vote either “for” or “against”, with no possibility to abstain (RI 32).

Unlike prior waves of protest, during which no organized and stable connection among different subjects and actors was established, in 2014 all the plenums of the country “kept in touch with each other, sending representatives to each others’ meeting and, at times, coordinating actions” (Lippman 2014). An organizational body called “interplenum” was arranged with the purpose of connecting and coordinating the various assemblies springing up in towns and cities across BiH. The demands that applied to the government level were discussed in the interplenum group, while each local plenum was in charge of articulating the requests that dealt with the local level of government. In practice, the plenums reproduced the decentralized system of the country.

Following a stance already adopted during “The Park is Ours” and the #JMBG mobilization, formal actors such as political parties, NGOs, or trade unions were ousted from the public fora. However, their members were granted the possibility of taking part in the assemblies as private individuals. The choice of a horizontal structure stemmed from a reaction to the problems experienced during the 2013 wave of protests, in which a small number of protest leaders tended to prevail, without leaving room for dialogic exchange. Nevertheless, as it happened in the previous waves, NGOs practitioners and prominent figures of the cultural and artistic scene played a leading role in the debates, and were recognized as “informal community leaders”. A participant in plenum Sarajevo commented on the fact that it was mostly NGO practitioners and academics who acted as moderators and spokespersons in the plenums:

> I am involved in an NGO, like others: most of us come from an academic and NGO background. But there are also students, unemployed, workers, it is pretty diverse. It is a heterogeneous group of people participating, nothing really fixed and categorized. We are there as ourselves, not representing anybody. (RI 32)

The plenums witnessed the massive participation of citizens, who attended the sessions with different attitudes. Mostly elderly people employed their two-minute time to utter their discontent and personal difficulties, and lamented the worsening of their living

conditions. Several participants also seized the opportunity the assemblies offered to express the anger and frustration they had not released in the prior twenty years, to the extent that some described plenums as "psychotherapy sessions" (Antić 2014). As one activist recounts, this created some difficulties among the activists and protest leaders, who sometimes did not know how to cope with the trauma and the suffering related to the experience of the war:

> Plenary sessions were run on a direct democracy principle, but it turned out to be much more difficult than predicted to have productive sessions; for instance, trying to prevent plenums from becoming psychotherapy sessions for traumatized citizens, some of whom spoke publicly for the first time about their situation and concerns. The animosity that was directed at the political elite soon turned inwards, due to distrust, paranoia, infiltration and other similar disruptions. (Hodžić 2015, 55)

Another activist of plenum Bihać stressed that, on the one hand, people felt the urge to vent their anger, to participate and to express their opinions, on the other they experienced difficulties in shifting from a complaining to a claims-raising stance:

> I was shocked by how many people did not even understand what she [the speaker in the plenum] was saying, and then they still voted. (...) Other people were like: "We do not understand what you are talking about, but we are now officially voting for it". We still get people who come to plenums and first thing they do is to complain. (...) Maybe it takes one week for this person to realize the difference between complaining and demanding. (RI 44).

According to some, the purpose of the plenums as places in which to articulate demands was partially misunderstood, and the fact that the open assemblies were organizational structures rather than formal subjects was not completely grasped. In this regard, an activist recounts:

> Plenum is not an association or an organization or a group. It is just a method of work (like a protest, or a meeting). Therefore, it cannot organize anything: just like you cannot say that the protest organized a festival, or that the meeting organized a strike. However, this is not something that

> everybody understands, including the people who participated in plenums. (RI 39)

Although the direct-democratic and horizontal decision-making model of plenums encountered different kinds of criticism, it helped the Bosnian Herzegovinian residents to become more active in public debates. Discussing publicly issues concerning daily life fostered the expression and articulation of personal thoughts and needs. As an interviewee stressed, such a participatory stance is sort of unusual in a country in which ordinary individuals are not used to articulate their demands and to engage in political discourse:

> In Bosnia people have a huge problem with that, because nobody ever asked them: "What is your problem". In socialism it was like: "You've given everything, that's it. What are you complaining about? If you complain, go to jail!". Now people are learning how to articulate their demands. (RI 44)

Regarding the content of the demands that emerged in the plenums, labour rights and the revision of the privatization process of companies were at stake since the beginning. Demands of materialist type, such as the revision of the factories' privatization process, labor reforms, more effective health care, the fight against unemployment, and cuts to irresponsible expenditures, came along with post-materialist requests, such as the right to existence and to a dignified life. Increasing corruption and nepotism, low pensions, economic decay, job losses, political stagnation, and high unemployment were tackled as well. Other requests coalesced around the resignation of the governments of FBiH and of the cantons, and the consequent appointment of a technical cabinet detached from traditional political parties, elected with the plenum's support. Further demands tackled the suppression of benefits in institutions and public administration, among which the "white bread" allowance[56]; the containing of maximum salaries of elected officials; the improvement of social welfare measures; and the suspension of criminal procedures

[56] According to the Law on Salaries and Allowances of FBiH, elected officials and holders of executive functions have the right to receive up to a year's salary after the termination of their mandate, and until obtaining new employment, of the same amount as they had while in office. Such an allowance is called "white bread" (*bijeli hljeb*).

against the demonstrators (Karamehmedović 2014). On the streets and in the plenums, the protesters also called for more democracy and further participation in the decision-making process, both at the national and supranational level. On this regard, a banner read: "EU, we are the one *[sic]* with whom you should talk". The following table presents a summary of the claims emerged across the different plenums around the country.

Tab. 6 Plenums' demands

Categories	**Demands**
Labour issues and economic policies	Review of the privatisation process, tenders, public companies
Allowances and benefits of public employees	Revisions and cancellation of salaries, boards, severance packages for state employees ("white bread")
Political appointments	Gov. resignations, new appointments of expert/technical governments
Corruption	Fight against corruption, more transparency
Social issues	Improve social welfare
Civil rights: Freedom of expression and assembly	Protection of the protesters; right to a dignified life
Education	Reform of the educational system
Tax	Tax-VAT review
Rural policies and problems	Agricultural reforms

Source: Damir Karamehmedović, Visualizing plenums demands (Karamehmedović 2014)

7.3.2 Networks and resources

This section investigates the extent to which previous networks among individuals and groups allowed movement organizers to collect and mobilize resources, thus encouraging mobilization and facilitating the spread of protests and plenums across the country.

The uprising lacked any formal organization when it broke out. By contrast, the plenums that emerged in the aftermath of the riots were structured by building upon network ties and organizational resources made available by previous contentious experience, and in particular during earlier waves of protests. In what follows I analyse specifically the role of two groups, the workers and the young activists, as well as the extent to which media outlets facilitated connections and communication.

The workers

In Tuzla, where the uprising began, the workers of the bankrupted factories of the area had developed robust ties among themselves. Over the years, they had advocating for access to salaries, incomes and benefits to which they were legally entitled, but were unable to collect. They experienced a similar situation of deprivation, and also a physical proximity, which made it easier for the workers of one factory to call upon their peers of the area in support. Faced with the shutdown of industries in which they were employed, they had been supporting each other's struggles, laying the groundwork for class solidarity. A young interviewee referred to the previous contacts and personal ties among the disenfranchised workers of Tuzla as an asset for mobilization. On the other hand, though, he maintained that the lack of organizational strategy and material resources prevented the workers from being more vocal, and from involving other social groups in support of their struggle. In the following excerpt, the informant explains how the workers' scarsity of material and organizational resources had previously prevented their protests from becoming more visible:

> Since they [the workers] didn't receive any wage for years, they lacked material resources [for mobilization]. However, many of the workers, especially union leaders, were in personal contact with each other. For instance, three out of five factories were once part of the SodaSo holding (*kombinat*). They are also the same age, educated in chemistry, which means that some of them were friends in their school days. Also, Tuzla is not a big city, and Živinice is geographically very close to Tuzla, so it is not difficult to get into a contact with the workers of the “Konjuh” or “Gumig” factories. Besides, they all protested quite often at the same place, which means that all of them knew about each other problems. All this helped in organizing them. [Before the

> protests] they actually had one meeting attended by the five factories' representatives. They decided to unite, but they didn't develop any big strategy. (RI 39).

In the opinion of several interviewees, the wider public perceives the category of the workers as possessing a high degree of credibility, and as a group particularly justified in taking to the streets, as the working class had been deprived of the social rights and entitlements it benefited from during the socialist period. In the collective imaginary, the workers represent the symbol of a "golden age" of social rights and welfare services. Back then, the working class constituted an essential means for constructing the imaginary of a cosmopolitan, internationalist, modern, and supranational identity of the Yugoslavs (Petrović 2013). Following the collapse of Yugoslavia, which resulted in the privatization of the industrial sector, the role of the working class diminished dramatically. From being a constitutive element of the society, the workers turned into the most vulnerable social group, having been deprived of their jobs, their means of production, and their livelihoods. Celebrated in socialist times as the heroes of work, workers were transformed into its victims (Petrović 2013). Nowadays, workers are often portrayed as the most visible symbol of the economic devolution of the country. Having been deprived of their role and position in the society, during the protests the workers called for the restoration of the social and economic rights lost in the transition of the country to a market economy. Furthermore, the Yugoslav socialist heritage is often still part of personal biographies of those middle-aged people who marched on the streets and populated the plenums. An activist stressed the strong mobilizing potential of the working class by claiming that its status is different as compared to other social groups:

> It was primarily the workers with their unions [that mobilized], and the others joined. The fact that it was the workers made it very different: it wasn't the NGOs, it wasn't the disappointed intelligentsia, it wasn't the discontented, not all those categories in social need. It was something qualitatively different. (RI 30)

The younger cohorts

Several interviewees proposed the coalition formed around the workers in Tuzla as pivotal in transforming what could have remained an umpteenth, standalone protest into the trigger for a nearly nationwide uprising. As the leader of the DITA workers recounts, in the city the demonstrators' front was heterogeneous, and comprised also young people who had supported workers in their previous struggles and strikes. In particular, the contribution of the young cohorts proved determining, as the latter provided with resources such as expertise, knowledge, strategies, and contacts with other individuals and groups throughout the country that mobilized in solidarity.

Tuzla is a thriving city with regard to youth activism. Among the youth groups active in the area we might mention the local chapter of the anti-nationalist group *Revolt!.* Active since 2006, *Revolt*! is an outspoken left-wing group striving to motivate young people to participate in public life (Touquet 2012a, 174). Its actions included, among other things, putting up posters all over the city walls urging the end of nationalism, as well as cleaning partisan memorials looted and abandoned after the breakup of Yugoslavia. In the previous years, the members of *Revolt!* organized several protests in the area, and developed connections with other anti-nationalist groups all over the country, in particular with those based in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. Several youngsters involved in the plenums in 2014 had been engaged in such youth associations and in political activism for years. The leader of DITA's workers explains the decisive role played by the younger supporters during the 2014 protests:

> [the plenum of Tuzla] consisted of honest, decent, educated youth, young people that I knew, those who were following us through the struggle to save DITA, to save jobs; youth I trusted, smart, stubborn, persistent, fearless young people. (Busuladžić 2015, 24).

Moreover, the youth were instrumental in choice of organizational forms. For instance, the horizontal model of decision-making of the plenums drew in the experience of the one-day university occupation in Tuzla in May 2009, during which the students adopted plenary sessions to discuss and articulate their demands. The occupation of the University of Tuzla's Faculty of Humanities took place in the framework of the 2008-09 student protest movement known as "Independent Student Initiative" for the right to free education emerged in Zagreb, which spread to other univiersities in the post-

Yugoslav space in the same period. In Tuzla, the occupation has been said to have generated strong ties among the participants, and have "opened up new common space and brought together several activist groups who today continue the struggle for the commons, new solidarities and emancipatory politics" (Eminagić and Vujović 2013, 7). The model of the assemblies adopted in 2009 was replicated in 2014, as it had been perceived as viable and hence transferable to other settings. In sum, the context of Tuzla provided for dense community ties among different individuals coming for diverse social groups, which in turn allowed the formation of a strong coalition able to gain leverage and draw into action different subjects.

If, on the one hand, the network in Tuzla united older and younger activists, in the other cities the ties connecting the participants to the protests and plenums were looser. Furthermore, connections with other cities were lacking, owing to poor infrastructure, and to some sort of psychological divide that reinforces mistrust towards "the other". It is a widespread feeling that what happens inside the city borders concerns only its citizens. I frequently heard the following statement while talking about grassroots protests in a certain city: "This does not concern *us*, it is *their* problem"[57]. In Sarajevo, for instance, the informal network of activists, in contact since the previous waves of demonstrations, facilitated the emergence of plenums and coordinated the protest actions as well. As one of the participants in the local plenum explains, long-term activists organized the first plenum in the capital:

> The activist scene in Sarajevo is not that big, thus we know everybody and we were out on the streets as well. When the idea of plenum arrived, some people like Zoran and Zara [activists and initiators of the #JMBG mobilization] asked to do it here [at the radio's premises in the campus of university of Sarajevo]. Nobody expected such a turnout, and since not all could fit in, we provided a live streaming on the radio of what was talked about during the plenum. The first plenum ended soon since there were many people, media came as well and people became nervous. (RI 42)

[57] Quote adapted from personal communications, November 2013. Emphasis added.

Since Sarajevo is not an industrial town, the movement could not count on a workers' component, unlike Tuzla. However, a broad alliance between pensioners, unemployed and activists made it possible to organize both plenums and protests. In particular, the young professional employed in the academia or in the third sector established communication across different subgroups of the movement, and activated bonds with other individuals across the country. It is noteworthy that many contacts among young activists in Sarajevo were established during the 2013 wave. Similarly, some young people counted on previous militancy in the student movement outside BiH. Many of them had studied abroad, and some were involved in the 2009 student movement in Croatia and Serbia, before returning to BiH (RI 46). Acting as moderators in the plenums, these protest leaders strengthened the existing loose ties with other individuals and social movement organizations across the country, coordinating actions also by means of the interplenum working group. These activists behaved like bridges between diverse individuals, using Tuzla as "a source of legitimacy" (RI 30), and a model to emulate.

To sum up, during the protests cross-class alliances were spawned between the unemployed and workers, and the middle-class urban youth and the intellectuals moderating the plenums, which contributed with resources of a different type. In particular, academics and students performed the role of brokers and transmission belts between social groups that, otherwise, would not have had other means to get in touch with each other. If, on the one hand, the gap between the middle class urban youth intellectuals and the retired people attending the plenary sessions was recomposed in the plenums, on the other hand the former played a leading role and were the most visible actors on the media. First, the expertise they had acquired by working in international organizations, academia, the press, or the third sector provided them with the skills necessary to moderate public discussions, to articulate demands, and to network with their peers. Second, their English-language skills and cosmopolitanism facilitated the flow of information with the international press and supporters. By putting their knowledge at the service of the plenums, they strengthened the networks among domestic fringe groups all over the country, allowing the mobilization to scale upwards.

The use of media

In terms of resources, it is worth looking at the role that social media platforms and alternative media outlets performed throughout the 2014 protests. In fact, they helped to spread the protests across the country by generating an "information cascade" outward (della Porta 2014b, 91). While mainstream media split over the way to report about the demonstrations, highlighting the persistent divisions in the country that the demonstrators strove to overcome in the streets, social networks played a crucial role in particular at the onset of the mobilization. It was a public group on Facebook called "*50,000 za bolje sutra*" (50,000 for a better tomorrow) that contributed to spreading the information about the rally that took place in Tuzla at the beginning of February. The creators of the Facebook page called on residents to actively support Tuzla's workers and invited them to raise their voice against the injustice and nepotism in the country. The group, however, stated clearly on its page that it was active "exclusively for informing citizens about the events from the cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and that it did not organize protests and does not support violence[58]. Thanks to the call posted on the social networks, the Facebook group bolstered the diffusion of the protests outside Tuzla (Eminagić 2014). Another Facebook page was active throughout the February protests. It was called "Udar", an acronym for "Constitutional Democratic Association for Bosnia and Herzegovina" (*Ustavnopravna Demokratska Asocijacija Bosne i Hercegovine*), but also "Attack" in the local language. Created on 6 February 2014, just after the violent repression of the workers' rally in Tuzla, this Facebook page supposedly represented a spontaneous and informal group that called for an extension of the movement (Lynch 2014a). To this end, on the first days of the protests UDAR[59] circulated a video on the web, asking for a joint "insurrection and revolution" of all the nationalities of the

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[58] https://www.facebook.com/50.000.Za.Bolje.Sutra/info?tab=page_info [accessed 7 December 2014]

[59] Aldin Siranović, supposedly the leader of UDAR administering the Facebook group, is an unemployed young man connected with football fans and patriot groups, with no previous activist experience. Eventually Siranović turned out to be a controversial person, close to the political party Union for a Better Future of BiH (*Savez za bolju budućnost BiH*) (SBB). Before leaving the country for Austria shortly after the uprising, owing to constant pressure and threats against him and his family, Siranović reported to have been arrested and beaten (Al Jazeera Balkans 2014).

country[60]. Unlike the previous wave of protests in July 2013, Twitter was not widely used during the February protest, related to the fact that elderly people were not familiar with social networks.

Alternative media, too, played an important role in the protest dynamics. Besides the independent *Studentski radio* that hosted the first plenum of Sarajevo, other alternative information websites, such as "Abrašmedia" (based in Mostar in the premises of the above mentioned Youth Center "Abrašević"), and the web portal BUKA reported about the unrest, hosting interviews with activists and plenum's participants. *Front Slobode* (the Freedom Front), a Tuzla's web portal, wrote extensively about DITA and the struggle of its workers.

Last but not least, an open network of activists and academics created a Wordpress blog called "Bosnia Herzegovina protest files"[61], with the aim of spreading the voice of the protesters outside the country. In the website, many volunteers translated into English articles, interviews, reports of demonstrations and protests accounts produced by the plenums and that had appeared on domestic newpapers in local language. On their webpage, the initiators stated:

> We believe that the words of ordinary people at moments of revolutionary change and upheaval are important and should be part of the conversation. They are also a refreshing antidote to the nationalist fear-mongering, political spin and "expert opinion" about current events in the region. The contents of this website should not be considered an exhaustive account of the literature being produced in BiH but merely what our network of volunteers has so far been made aware of and been able to translate. (BiH protest files 2014a)

The website provided also updates on the flood that hit the country in May 2014. It has stopped publishing articles ever since.

In conclusion, pre-existing informal networks and coalitions of solidarity proved

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[60] The video is available at: http://en.labournet.tv/video/6651/protests-bosnia-around-factory-closures, and it results to have been created back in March 2013.

[61] https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com [accessed 7 December 2014]

important mobilizing structures, first, to foster mobilization and, secondly, to set up the plenums. The use of social networks boosted the organizational process as well.

7.3.3 Frames, counterframes and attempts at demobilization

This section investigates the discursive strategies of the demonstrators, as well as the content and resonance of the frames they elaborated in an attempt to interpret the contentious events. Furthermore, it delves into the endeavors to demobilize the movement undertaken by their opponents through public statements and mainstream media.

I have traced frame development through the analysis of documentary sources, such as publicly available documents like the plenums' bulletin, and by means of semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with selected participants and leaders actively involved in the framing process.

Framing identity

From the very beginning, the collective "we" was framed in terms of "the deprived citizens", as opposed to the policy-makers, addressed as "the thieves" *(lopovi*). As an activist explains, gathering all the citizens under the collective, heterogeneous category of "deprived" and "disempowered" questioned the dominant ethnic matrix, and overcame gender and social boundaries. Asked about how to refer to the collective identity of the challengers, a participant in the Tuzla plenum remarked:

> I would call [the 2014 social uprising] simply the protest of all the disempowered, of every one who got left without a job, or is working without a wage. A protest of every student who does not have a perspective, whose only possibility is to work in the American wars in Iraq or Afghanistan once he completes university. I am not calling it a "workers' protest" or "students' protest": we are all together in it. All of us. (...) You identify with all those people suffering the same the others are suffering, and you start working together. I do not think it is even important to keep stressing "the workers" and "the students" anymore. I do not think that's the mobilizing discourse, that is "we are all in the same shit". (RI 32)

The inclusive collective identity of the challengers was grounded on the shared values of solidarity and sense of togetherness, frequently mentioned in the banners carried on the streets. Some slogans stressed the sense of unity in diversity between people by reporting: "All for one and one for all" (*Svi za jednog jedan za sve)*, while another read "Our union is your destruction" *(Naše ujedinjenje je vaše uništenje).* The values of solidarity and togetherness were also reflected in the choice of symbols that the demonstrators used to identify themselves: the plenums' logo, for instance, portrayed two shaking hands (Fig. 19).

Fig. 19 Plenums logo

Source: Bljesak.info

As an interviewee commented, this logo differed from that used in the 2013 baby revolution, which reproduced a pacifier turning into a closed fist (Fig. 11). In his opinion, this change bears significance, as it aimed:

> (…) to make clear that this time people are not only enraged, as the closed fist shown during the #JMBG protests, but decided also to unite in solidarity with each other by shaking hands. (RI 29)

Another slogan that went viral, and that inspired the title of this thesis, proved particularly appealing. In saying "We are hungry in three languages" (*Gladni smo na tri jezika*), the demonstrators intended to mock "the basis upon which the ethno-nationalist political system exists" (Rossetter 2015, 2). The protesters' message referred to the everyday deprivation experienced by the wider population, the so-called "hungry people" (*gladan narod*), worried about concrete survival matters and problems of daily

living (Kurtović 2016), a condition that had emerged starkly from the people's voices in the assemblies.

Fig. 20 At the 2014 protests a man holds a sign saying: "We are hungry in three languages".

Source: Midhat Poturović, RFE/RL

A professor at the University of Tuzla, who acted as moderator in the local plenum, stressed the importance of the values of solidarity and unity, pointing out that by means of protests and plenums "solidarity, as a concept and as a practice, was rescued from being held hostage by those who were all too ready to relegate it to history. It became an everyday word and a lived experience that we had to prove through words and actions" (Arsenijević 2014a, 8). On the same values of solidarity and togetherness that linked together different subjects throughout the uprising, a long-time activist explains:

> People have finally overcome this talk about ethnicities and are finally waking up. Nobody before knew how to define the vital national question, now we do know it: our vital national question is that we are unemployed; we have neither pensions nor jobs. This is the vital national question, not self-determination or belonging to an ethnicity! People are moving beyond that, they started asking this question, not just hiding in their respective camps anymore. They know they suffer the same. We are all in this, together! (RI 32)

As against deprived citizens united in solidarity, incumbents were accused of being corrupt and overpaid, and of having robbed from their constituencies since the end of the war. They were thus relegated to the realm of the amoral and irresponsible. One billboard seen at the protests displayed slogans such as "You have robbed for twenty

years, and it is enough!" (*Pljačkali ste 20 godina, i dosta je*). In particular, the power holders were held responsible for the botched privatization process of state industries that brought people, and in particular the former working class, to the edge of existence. Graffiti that appeared on the walls of the Sarajevo canton's building during the protests stated it clearly: "The one who sows hunger, reaps anger. Let's bring them down!" (Fig. 21). The final part refers to the refrain of a song, "Let's bring them down" (*Hajmo ih rušit'*), performed by Frenkie, a Tuzla-based popular rapper, whose lyrics often address and criticize the political situation of Bosnia Herzegovina.

Fig. 21 Graffiti appeared on the wall of Sarajevo canton's building stormed by protesters. It read "The one who sows hunger, reaps anger. Let's bring them down!".

Source: Author's picture, November 2014

Framing grievances

The protesters identified unemployment and the unaccountability of policy-makers as main grievances, creating a common ground for people belonging to all national communities to unite and demonstrate in solidarity. This allowed for the creation of an alliance between the working class (or, better, the former working class) and other marginalized groups. These claims were framed in terms of social and economic justice. Under this broad, encompassing master frame, the movement organizers bridged the corruption of elites with social concerns, materialist claims (opposition to severe unemployment and inequality) and post-materialist grievances (the right for a normal life, "to be a normal citizens in a normal country"). The call for social and economic justice resonated across social groups, ethnic categories and ideological orientations. A participant in the protest and plenums explained that a wider frame tackling social and

economic rights resonated to the wider population because it did not refer to a narrow issue, but rather to a broader set of claims:

> This time the problematic was wider, it was not only ID numbers, but it was about the whole system that made people miserable. That resonated in different parts of society. (RI 30)

In choosing to frame their grievances as a call for social and economic justice, the movement organizers decided not to tackle the problematic political system, because they did not want a debate over constitutional reform to overshadow the demands having socio and economic nature (see also Murtagh 2016). In elaborating a frame that would resonate with the wider public, they decided to target the power holders without rejecting the institutions. In this regard, their grievances were not radical, but rather "very modest (….) as people just want the political system – not the parties, but the institutions, from the local community to the public institutions to the state government – to do what they are there for" (BiH protest files 2014e). The demand for the common good (Mujkić, 2015b), rather than a radical, systemic change is twofold. First, in a country hanging in the balance of a delicate system of equilibrium among ethno-national quotas, questioning representative democracy would not have appealed to the broader population, which perceives it as an attempt to undermine the precarious equilibrium upon which the country is based. As I have noted in the previous sections, it ought to be remembered that the 1992-95 war ended only twenty years ago, and that the level of social trust among people is still low. The widespread fear of instability originates from having lived through a war, an experience that created "a huge longing for stability which has transformed into a fear of instability. Since people are so afraid of instability, they feel any stability is better, even if it consists in misery and insecurity" (BiH protest files 2014e). Second, as was observed already during the #JMBG mobilization, a discourse envisaging constitutional reforms would easily lend itself to discrediting the demonstrators as undermining the stability of the country. An activist justified this choice in the following way:

> You cannot ask for constitutional changes because that would be seen immediately as an attempt to centralize or unite the country. The protests were socio-economic, people asked for jobs, the end of corruption, nepotism, and they wanted that message to get through. If they would have asked for anything

> else, they knew that immediately the nationalists would just have destroyed the original message. Therefore, it was not possible to tackle constitutional changes. People know that everything here get manipulated, so they stayed with a simple message: socio-economic issues. (RI 26)

The movement organizers perceived that the time was not ripe for the development of a more radical, anti-system critique of the dysfunctional and discriminatory representative system as envisaged by the Dayton agreement. As a protest leader noted,

> We were clear in saying this is not about constitutional reforms, and you cannot change the constitution overnight and on the streets in a country like BiH, you are risking too much. What we want is first to talk about socio-economic problems, and socio-economic solutions. And when we will live as human beings, then people will have the luxury to talk about the constitution". (RI 30)

Similarly, direct democracy remained just a decision-making practice adopted in the plenums rather than a model to pursue.

The February 2014 demonstrations brought socio-economic issues to the foreground, and catalyzed the long-simmering discontent of all the sectors of population bearing the brunt of neoliberal policies. Notwithstanding the centrality of material issues contributed to return political economy to public discussions, and although the dynamics of neoliberalism were defined as "the reason behind the uprising" (RI 37), the movement organizers did not adopt an anti-capitalist or anti-austerity frame, unlike grassroots movements taking place in the same years in the U.S. and in Western Europe (della Porta 2015). An interviewee sees in the lack of an ideological base the major obstacle for the absence of an anti-austerity narrative during the 2014 protest wave:

> People are just screaming out that those who had been in power until now should resign. In each protest you have different kind of people, and lot of them are ideologically on the left. But that is not a sort of anti-capitalist movement. The common denominator is that things are bad, and people want change. That is why everybody united. But it will take sometimes to articulate some ideological basis. (RI 26)

Counterframes and attempts at demobilization

In this part I focus on the identity counterframes employed by domestic and foreign policy-makers in an attempt to demobilize the protests. By disputing the collective identity created by the movement organizers, power holders resorted to the usual way of discrediting the protests. Namely, they accused the demonstrators of being politically manipulated and threatening the stability of the country.

At the beginning of February, when images of flaming power holders' buildings went viral, the local authorities rushed to brand the protesters as "hooligans", depriving them of any political legitimacy. FBiH Prime Minister Nermin Nikšić pubblicly accused "unidentified hooligans" of having organized the riots, while RS President Milorad Dodik congratulated the citizens of the Serb entity for not falling for provocations by the protests sweeping the Federation (Živković 2014). In a similar vein, the political elite in RS ethnically branded the demonstrators, portraying them as threatening the Bosnian Serbs. Another attempt to discredit the protests as manipulated by a political party emerged when Fahrudin Radončić, the Minister of Security, was fired suddenly in February, apparently for having refused to use force against the protesters. Radončić is a tycoon, a "media mogul-turned politician" (Kurtović 2016, 9) and founder of the newspaper *Dnevni Avaz* (the Daily Voice), as well as the leader the political party Union for a Better Future of BiH (*Savez za bolju budućnost BiH*) (SBB). Since the beginning of the uprising, he openly backed the protests, claiming that their rebellion was justified. Accordingly, his (party) newspaper reported extensively about the event throughout the uprising. His behaviour generated rumours about his role in the uprising. The alleged manipulation of the protesters by Radončić and his party diverted attention from the grievances of the demonstrators to the political struggle for visibility. As a result, "the theme of 'who is behind the demonstrations' became the unifying motif of almost all interviews with politicians that could be seen on television" (Janusz 2014), side-lining in this way the plaints of the demonstrators.

In addition to domestic authorities, the international community contributed to demobilizing the protests. Whereas the HR Valentin Inzko had acknowledged the 2013 #JMBG protests as legitimate, to the extent that at such time he even negotiated with a delegation of demonstrators, in 2014 he took a very different stance. Speaking on the Austrian TV, Inzko declared: "…if the hooliganism continues EUFOR [EU] troops may be

asked to intervene" (Novinite.com 2014). In saying this, he undermined the legitimacy of the protesters as the domestic elites had previously done, but also restated the sort of neo-colonial power that the EU exercises on BiH. Echoing the High Representative for Bosnia Herzegovina, the Director of the Directorate for the Coordination of Police Units in the Bosnian Federation, Himzo Selimović, tendered his resignation (Živković 2014). Admitting the inability of the police to ensure the safety of members of the Bosnian Presidency, he called upon the international community and the European Union to consider deploying the international military forces in Bosnia if events were to repeat themselves (ibid.). The protesters reacted to this statement by claiming they had the right to take to the streets, and to express their discontent in a way used by citizens all over the world. In this regard, on 9 February 2014 the plenum of Sarajevo reported the following message:

> A Message to International Organisations and Institutions
>
> For years, you have been inviting citizens of this country to act responsibly. This is precisely what has been happening for the past couple of days across Bosnia and Herzegovina—us taking responsibility for our lives, the lives of our parents and our children. We are not a mob that is out to destroy. The sights from some of the protests may not have been pleasant, but they are not anything that hasn't been seen worldwide, including in your countries. We are inviting you to treat us as you treat those other protests, where you recognize and celebrate the spirit of freedom, justice, and equality, irrespective of incidents. We are asking international human rights organizations to support our cause.
>
> Plenum of the People of Sarajevo, For the Common Good (Kurtović 2015, 102)

The mainstream newspapers focused very strongly on the disruptive means of protests used by the demonstrators. Throughout the time the protests lasted, the media reported extensively "on hooliganism, attacks on democracy, coup d'état and other types of insidious nonsense" (Hodžić 2015, 54). On the second day of unrest, one of the most popular Sarajevo-based web portal, *Klix,* reported the bogus news that the police had seized 12 kg of drugs from arrested demonstrators. The information circulated widely, until the following day the police issued a disclaimer, explaining that the confiscated

drugs did not belong to the demonstrators (Hodžić 2015, 54; "Glas Slobode, Broj 3", 2014). A second attempt to divert attention from the demonstrators' demands to their violent repertoires came from another left-centre media outlet that runs a popular online portal called *Radio Sarajevo.* In an article published under the headline "This is a crime", *Radio Sarajevo* portrayed the images of damaged books and other items that were stored in the National Archive, located in the basement of the Presidency building. The edifice was burnt down during the riots in the capital, which damaged the National Archive as well. The images published online aimed at depicting the demonstrators as uncultured hooligans, plundering the country's historical heritage. Notwithstanding the fear of an irreparable loss, upon investigation it was eventually discovered that the great majority of material had been saved. However, the information was spread only through social networks (Janusz 2014).

In conclusion, in an attempt to counter the socio-economic justice frame, both policy-makers and the media strove to represent the protesters as manipulated and inspired by certain political parties, and undertaken by a group of hooligans, rather than by a mass of impoverished residents mostly demonstrating peacefully. Notwithstanding the attempts to discredit the movement, the socio-economic justice frame managed to mobilize for long period different sectors of the population, with diverse backgrounds. The broad, encompassing frame elaborated by movement organizers resonated with the broader population and with the everyday experience of diverse social groups. As opposed to the previous protest waves, the frame jibed with the cultural environment of the bystanders, motivating them to take action. Similarly, it made it more difficult to discredit the demonstrations as ethnic-driven or manipulated by political parties.

7.3.4 The role of opportunities in the choice of action repertoires

This section analyses the extent to which the perception of the state's closure and propensity to use the force against the demonstrators provoked a shift in their action repertoires.

At the beginning of February, political repression took the form of a violent crackdown against the demonstrators protesting in Tuzla. The police reaction against the unarmed workers provoked moral outrage in a population traumatized by war, and marked a turning point in the protests, as it was the first time that physical violence was exercised upon the people (Eminagić 2014) in the aftermath of the 1992-95 war. This

event provoked a reaction of indignation among the wider population, since in a war-torn country, the use of violence has a different impact than in a country that never experienced a conflict. Specifically, it can be understood as a threat to the stability of the country.

The demonstrators perceived the repression against them as a proof of the authorities' unwillingness to negotiate. This had a twofold impact on the choice of the action repertoires used by challengers. On the one hand, it radicalized the movement. Following the police crackdown, the demonstrators in Tuzla responded with equal violence, assaulting and breaking into the building of the canton's government. As in a domino effect, in a couple of days demonstrators in other urban centers emulated these in Tuzla, and vented their rage by throwing batons and cobblestones at the riot police and power buildings. The police's lack of coordination, training, and experience in dealing with disruptive demonstration further encouraged the violence. Moreover, on 7 February, riot officers in Tuzla sided with the demonstrators, who perceived them as allies. A video circulating across the social networks shows policemen removing their helmets to embrace the demonstrators amidst the applause of the crowd[62].

On the other hand, the use of violence and the images of buildings set afire, which recalled the scene of the 1992-95 war, provoked a memory shock and another shift in action repertoires. After a couple of days characterized by riots, the activists decided "to channel the rage into a constructive experiment" (RI 32). In the words of several movement organizers, they decided to gather people together to overcome the fear, and to convey the rage thus far expressed with "stones and fire". An activist participating in the Sarajevo plenum stressed the impact of violence as a critical juncture that triggered change in the Bosnian Herzegovinian society:

> Our social reality changed most dramatically in response to the challenge which had not come through theoretical engagement, but with stones and fire and language of swear words combined with slogans (Nedimović, 2014)

While some individuals blamed the plenums for having de-radicalized the protests by

[62] The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ujFYB7CCeE [accessed 2 October 2015].

diverting the anger from the streets, channelling it into a closed space, others perceived this shift as the only means to overcome fear and to build something constructive with the rage.

At first, the blast of violence alienated the demonstrators from more moderate actors, such as the NGOs, which avoided getting involved in the protests. As an activist interviewed explains,

> NGOs were too cautious on this protest: lots of them refused to have anything to do with it, they even did not help us with the most basic terms, like (...) sending project analysis that would have helped [the working groups' activities]. They were very cautious, staying out of it because it [joining] would have endangered them. All in a sudden there were people on the streets who got violent, and they could have been associated with them. (RI 30)

However, the violent repertoire gained the protesters a discrete dose of visibility. A leader recounts that "when the workers of five of Tuzla's factories took to the streets on 4 February 2014, hardly anyone paid any attention" (Hodžić 2015, 52). The worker rally risked "ending up in the margins of leading newspapers" (ibid.), as the previous short-lived demonstrations did, had it not turned violent the following day. Although some condemned the damage sustained by state institutions and private properties during the riots, other legitimized the violent repertoire as a necessary means to make the protest visible and the voice of demonstrators heard. Commenting on the damages to the presidential building, set partially alight during the turmoil after having remained untouched during the wartime siege, a young participant says:

> Many people from abroad condemned the violent turn protests took in February. I've been asked why we set fire to the Presidential building, which during the last war had stood as a symbol of freedom. The point is that it does not represent freedom anymore: it is just a three-headed beast [63] representing who is stealing our country. No, we needed to take it down and I am glad this happened. (...) It was a success:

[63] He is referring to the tripartite presidency.

> we burnt two buildings and [the news] was trained on the whole country. (RI 29)

To sum up, whereas in the first stage violence and state repression against the challengers brought about violent resistance, and alienated the support of formal actors, it also facilitated the escalation of mobilization in solidarity with the attacked workers. Later on, the moral shock provoked by the use of violent means in a traumatized society proved instrumental to move from a destructive to a constructive phase of the movement.

7.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I provided some explanations for the scale shift upward of the 2014 wave of protests, for the capacity of the movement to spread beyond the city where the unrest erupted, diffusing almost all over the country and involving diverse social groups, and for the change in action repertoires provoked by the perception of the closure of the state towards the demonstrators.

Summing up, I explained how close community ties, developed during previous waves of protest, facilitated the protests and plenums, and provided the demonstrators with human, material and organizational resources necessary for mobilization. Secondly, I showed that a broad, encompassing frame that bridged materialistic grievances with demands of a social nature under the call for socio-economic justice resonated with the broader population, fostering the creation of a collective subjectivity that gathered together heterogeneous participants. Furthermore, the symbolic value of the workers, which over the years had become the emblem of deprivation and lost rights, became a source of legitimacy for the movement, and their struggle an example to emulate. Finally, I explained that the perceived state's closure towards the challengers influenced their selection of certain tactics over others at a certain point in time. In an early phase, the demonstrators adopted confrontational forms of protest against institutions. In the following phase, they shifted to more cooperative strategies. The rage was conveyed into citizen assemblies in which demands were articulated and handed on to policy-makers. Emotions played a role as well, as the use of repression against the demonstrators provoked a moral shock that increased, rather than quelled, the degree of contention.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation began by asking why the popular mobilizations that erupted in recent years in Bosnia Herzegovina developed in different ways and took divergent paths, notwithstanding very similar structural conditions. This question emerged out of personal interest and direct experience. Over the years I have spent travelling back and forth between Italy and Bosnia Herzegovina, I have witnessed a growth in the size, number and intensity of collective actions transcending traditional ethno-national cleavages. This variation made me wonder whether there was a factor, or set of factors, which could explain the different scale of what I termed "beyond ethnic" mobilizations. Looking for an answer, I deemed it useful to apply social movement studies scholarship in order to understand the context in which contentious mobilizations, still-uncommon phenomena in BiH, emerged.

The research project investigated the dynamics of contention in a post-socialist, war-torn society divided along ethnic lines, with the intent of filling a gap in the existing literature on collective action overcoming ethno-national cleavages in the territory of former Yugoslavia. It did so by adding an empirically grounded perspective from Bosnia Herzegovina, a country that presents a wide range of unfavorable conditions for beyond-ethnic mobilization. Specifically, this qualitative study has sought to explain why the waves of mobilization transcending ethno-national antagonisms, which occurred between 2012 and 2014 in the country, spread unevenly across the national territory, involving diverse social groups, and entailing different degrees of disruption. In my attempt to answer these questions, I investigated the extent to which factors both internal and external to the movements enabled the protests to shift to higher levels in the territorial and social scale (or jeopardized their chances of doing so). I also examined how such factors influenced the organizational patterns and collective action repertoires of the challengers.

The Bosnian Herzegovinian protests provided important insights not only on country-specific protests, but also into the thus-far under-researched dynamics of

grassroots mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies more generally. This final chapter returns to the initial questions and summarizes the central findings of this body of research in light of the empirical data analysed. The chapter unfolds as follows. First, it synthesizes the findings of the study in a comparative way; next, it delves into the strengths and weaknesses of the 2012-14 protests; finally, it outlines the directions for future research.

8.1 Explaining variation in mobilization beyond ethnicity in an ethnically divided society: key findings

In an attempt to explain the variation amongst waves of mobilization beyond ethnicity, I employed the classical theoretical social movement toolkit and adapted it to the post-socialist and post-war context of Bosnia Herzegovina. The analysis of empirical data revealed that a combination of three factors made the territorial and social shift upward more likely, and influenced the choice of collective action repertoires. In what follows, I address the issues that I have previously tackled in each case separately, and I present the findings of the investigation in a comparative perspective.

8.1.1 Networks as both resources and liabilities

I started out with the expectation that pre-existing networks among movement organizers would facilitate the activation of both the people and the resources necessary for mobilization. According to social movement scholars, resources are in fact an important factor that explains much of the variation in the level of mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). More precisely, I expected that in, a society deeply divided along ethnic lines, network ties between movement organizers developed during prior contentious experience have a "beyond ethnic" dimension, and contributed to the gathering of resources necessary for re-mobilization. The findings of this thesis supported this expectation. However, some specifics related the application of this approach to a post-conflict society divided along ethnic lines are worth stressing.

In the case of "The Park is Ours" initiative, the availability of resources mobilized by movement organizers helped the protests to thrive locally. However, although external sponsorship gained the demonstrators material resources and a certain degree of visibility, movement organizers did not activate bonds with their fellows outside Banja Luka, as support from these "ethnic others" is perceived as a liability that inhibits

rather than a resource that encourages mobilization. In a divided context like that of BiH, and especially in the nationalizing entity of Republika Srpska, support from FBiH is understood to do more harm than good to the movement, as it fuelled the perception that demonstrators are "traitors" undermining the stability of the country.

In the case of the #JMBG mobilization, pre-existing network ties among organizers allowed them to assemble resources crucial to mobilization, which enabled protests to take shape in the main urban centres of the country. On the one hand, pre-existing personal ties between activists across the country, as well as the use of social networks as means of communication and exchange of information, fostered mobilization. On the other hand, though, the refusal of movement organizers to engage with other actors pressing for political reforms, such as NGOs, alienated further resources that could facilitate the scale shift. In an attempt to remain "apolitical", the movement failed to forge broad-based alliances, which resulted also in a reduced potential for sustained nationwide mobilization.

In the 2014 "social uprising", as the locals called it, prior close community ties linking the workers of Tuzla with the younger cohorts of the city permitted the gathering and mobilizing of material and organizational resources. Academics and young activists offered a contribution in terms of skills related to the organization and coordination of assemblies, as well as connections with other groups across the entities and abroad. Thus, labour solidarity and personal bonds between activists and movement organizers, developed in previous experiences of contentious collective action, made it possible to forge alliances and to replicate the model of citizen assemblies outside the city of Tuzla. The media played an important role as well, as social network platforms such as Facebook created and reproduced virtual ties among the demonstrations, which facilitated the organizational process and the scale upwards.

Summing up, resources and networks proved important in accounting for the capability of movements to shift their scale to an upper territorial and social level. However, societal divisions are salient in a measure that still hinders the creation of broad-based, cross-entity networks.

8.1.2 A cultural milieu limiting the resonance of "beyond ethnic" frames

In the analysis, I paid attention to the frames of meaning and discursive strategies employed by movement organizers to interpret the events and to make sense of the world around them. By the same token, I also investigated the interpretative devices elaborated by movement's opponents in an attempt to weaken the contention.

In the case of "The Park is Ours" mobilization, I found out that the frame elaborated by movement organizers did not resonate outside the city borders, as it was perceived as bounded to the local environment in which it emerged. The "citizens of Banja Luka" frame referred in fact to the rights of a specific community, that of Banja Luka, and emphasized a strong local identity. "The Park is Ours" organizers proved thus unsuccessful at conveying a frame able to resonate with the broader population beyond the city borders.

In the case of the #JMBG mobilization, the frame built on the primacy of human needs and citizenship rights appealed to the broader community of Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens across ethnic boundaries, as it "suggest[ed] a broad consensus on the primacy of human needs over ethnonational categories", as Gordy, too, put forward (2016). However, its narrow focus on citizenship rights made sense mostly to certain sectors of society, such as middle-class urban activists and students, failing to attract the lower classes, who considered economic and social issues more pressing than human rights.

Finally, the wave of protest that started as a worker strike in February 2014 was successfully reinterpreted through a socio-economic justice frame, which bridged and amplified a wide array of otherwise unconnected claims – from labour rights to social security. In a similar vein, the demonstrators' collective identity was framed as encompassing all "the disempowered", namely these individuals deprived of their rights. Hence, the social-justice frame resonated with diverse social groups and the wider public, regardless of ethnic categories. As well, the identity frame appealed to a large swath of population that felt deprived by years of conflict and disillusioned by the promises of economic enhancement brought about by the process of transition to a market economy.

Moreover, I have investigated the cultural milieu in which frames were elaborated and diffused, to assess the extent to which cultural values and habits affected

their resonance. The cultural environment determines in fact which symbols, frames and counter-discourses can be used and which ones are more likely to succeed in a certain context. To that end, I analyzed how movements and their opponents engaged in what Johnston and Noakes referred to as "the struggle for cultural supremacy", or "the contest between competing frames" (2005, 17). The analysis showed that cultural context and historical legacy matter, and that the local authorities used counterframes with varied success amongst the cases. In fact, the most successful messages appeared to be those "integrated with some cultural components from the population to which they are addressed" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 82). Given that the cultural milieu of BiH is saturated with nationalist rhetoric and symbolism, a counter-discourse framing the protesters as threatening a certain constituent people and/or the internal stability of the country can easily gain a foothold. In the first wave, the dominant nationalist rhetoric that portrays Banja Luka as a symbol of Serb nationalism limited the resonance of the movement's frame, as it fostered the perception that "The Park is Ours" was merely a "Serbian issue". The message of the authorities, thus, overpowered the one elaborated by the protesters.

Throughout the #JMBG mobilization, a counterframe grounded on the (supposed) threat represented by the demonstrators to the Serbian constituent people shifted the focus of attention from human rights to the ethno-national level. The authorities depicted the protesters as anti-Serb, desiring to undermine the stability of the country and the safety of the Bosnian Serb population. Also in this case, the authorities' counterdiscourse partially overpowered that of the movement.

In the 2014 social rebellion, my data confirm that, as Wimmen wrote referring to the actions organized by GROZD in 2008, "the attempts to discredit the initiative as yet another Sarajevo-based plot to alter the ethno-national status quo appeared less plausible than on other occasions" (Wimmen forthcoming). The authorities tried to construct a counterdiscourse tapping in particular into the use of violence by protesters, labelled as "hooligans" who aimed at destabilizing the country's order. Nevertheless, the wide and encompassing frame elaborated by movement organizers proved more resistant to delegitimization by the elites, thanks to the high degree of solidarity, and thus credibility, the demonstrators had meanwhile obtained by supporters endorsing their struggle all over the world.

In a nutshell, the beyond-ethnic frames used by movement organizers across the

cycle of protests competed, with different degrees of success, with the authorities' counterframes. By and large, the findings revealed that a cultural environment saturated with nationalist rhetoric still makes it difficult for certain injustice frames to echo across ethno-national and social cleavages, in particular in contexts in which nationalist rhetoric is more intense.

8.1.3 The perception of violence in a war-torn society

Finally, I have investigated the extent to which political opportunities have affected the challengers' choice of certain action repertoires over others. The perceived willingness of the authorities to use force against the demonstrators, coupled with the fear of instability stemming from the shared war-related trauma, incentivized the movement organizers to adopt a nonviolent repertoire in both the "The Park is Ours" and the #JMBG mobilizations. Conversely, the police crackdown against the workers during the 2014 social uprising at first radicalized the movement, as it triggered a surge of indignation among the broader population, which joined the workers *en masse*. In a second phase, movement organizers shifted to a less confrontational form of action, in an attempt to channel the collective rage into a constructive experiment, and in order to be perceived as actors who could legitimately make claims and negotiate with the authorities. This shift in action repertoire showed also that emotions are formed and reinforced in collective action (Jasper 1998), and play an important role in a post-conflict country, especially if they recall the trauma of war. The attack on workers and the images of buildings on fire constituted a moral shock that increased the degree of contention at first, and the participation to public assemblies afterwards.

8.1.4 Identifying a learning path

The empirical analysis revealed that a combination of the abovementioned explanatory factors account for a movement's ability to shift action to an upper territorial and social level, as well as to employ more or less disruptive tactics. However, it suggested also that none of the factors alone is sufficient to explain in full the upward scale shift of a movement.

My findings seem to identify a learning pattern in the protests that, starting in 2012, swept the country in the following three years, reaching its peak with the 2014

uprising. The three cases appear interlinked, rather than wholly independent one of another. Stemming from this observation, I argue that the upscaling in space and social level can be attributed not only to the power of the explanatory factors, but also to the process of learning that activists and movement organizers underwent throughout the protest cycle. Activists and movement organizers apprehended from the experience and reflection upon the previous waves, and transferred knowledge and experience from one to another. Therefore, each wave of protests provided incentives for the following ones to occur.

Several informants share this view. In the opinion of many interviewees, the 2014 protests happened as a result of the previous events, and building upon the legacies of the earlier waves that had "normalized" the use of contentious tools. For instance, the discourse that emerged during "The Park is Ours" protests identified a new cleavage opposing the "losers, the ordinary people excluded from the decision-making process" to the "winners, the corrupted politicians". This discourse resurfaced with more energy during the successive waves of mobilizations, and contributed to reshaping the collective identity of the movements that have developed since then. Other activists reported that the #JMBG paved the way for further mobilization. One activist said that the 2014 uprising would never have happened had the 2013 #JMBG protests not taken place (RI 41). Another stressed the learning power of previous experiences: "We learnt a lot from the #JMBG, and the #JMBG learnt from the 2008 protests. In all the protests there were the same people" (RI 30). The baby revolution in particular broke the wall of fear, normalizing resistance in a high-risk environment for contentious action. By maintaining peaceful mass protest and setting aside the violent elements, it proved that civil disobedience and resistance can be used as a conventional democratic tool in a country still traumatized by the legacy of the war. In this regard, a movement leader recounts:

> Now, after everything, I can say that I witnessed a historical movement of the breaking of the mental barricades of fear among the inhabitants of Sarajevo. Because of fear, yes, citizens cannot change anything. Fear that the citizens in this country cannot scare the government. (Arnautović 2013).

Moreover, the mobilization provoked a change in the power structure, as several demonstrators reported feeling empowered after the #JMBG, and perceived themselves

as having gained political leverage. The protest wave strengthened also the network among activists, upon which the 2014 protests rested. This demonstrates too that the "oppositional front" grew over the course of the protest cycle, as it began the networking process during the previous waves of mobilization, and continued it after the 2014 experience.

8.2 "People understood their own people": Strengths and weaknesses of the cycle of contention

The thesis foregrounded the transformations that occurred in the Bosnian Herzegovinian society over the last five years, and debunked the "myth" of passivity of its citizens by elucidating the ways in which they reacted with an unprecedented level of contention to the enduring corruption of their power holders, the long-lasting economic decay, and the consequent pervasive job loss. At this point, it is worth reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the cycle of contention analysed in this study.

The wave of mobilization strengthened the existing networks among movement organizers, and activated bonds of solidarity that were previously nonexistent or very loose, bringing forth brand-new cross-entity and cross-groups coalitions. In this regard, a member of plenum Zenica recounts:

> Before the protests, the connections were only at the local level (between the cities of Prijedor and Banja Luka, Bihać and Velika Kladusa, Mostar and Konijc, Zenica and Gračanica). After the protests we started to connect. We recognized each other: before I thought that if I would go to Prijedor they would shoot at me cause I am a Muslim, but after the protests I realized that even here there are non-nationalists! We started to count each other, and now we are starting to connect. Before we did not have the opportunity to do so. (RI 44)

New bonds were forged in particular during the last protest wave in 2014. For instance, the interplenum working group, aimed at coordinating the citizen assemblies all over the country, constituted the first attempt to create an informal activist network at the national level. With a similar purpose, the network "5F7" (from the date of the beginning and the end of the 2014 riots, 5 and 7 February) was created in January 2015. It aimed at gathering in a more formal way different subjects among those that already existed

prior to the 2014 uprising, and those that sprouted up afterwards, with the purpose of conducting a joint fight for social justice in the country (Klix.ba 2015, 7). The network was short-lived, as it split over the summer 2015 upon the decision of some groups to accept funding from foreign donors. Other groups opposed the proposal, opting for remaining financially independent. Nevertheless, the "5F7" network constitutes to date one, if not the only, attempt to build a countrywide, formal network involving grassroots groups.

The cycle of protests had also an empowering effect on participants. In this regard, one of the leading figures of the 2014 protests claimed:

> We realized we have power in our hands, as citizens, normal people, people can decide, confront them [the policy-makers] about the decisions we do not want. The protests were successful because people understood their own people (RI 45).

Another participant compared the peaceful repertoire of the 2013 demonstrations with the violent one employed during the 2014 uprising. He maintained that, while the peaceful babylution did not threaten the system, the violent "Social Uprising" had a stronger impact on the power holders, and on the demonstrators as well, as they felt as they had truly scared the power holders:

> It is a problem of protests in Western Europe as well, this "spectacularization" that makes [protests] harmless to the system. If you organize a concert the system does not feel afraid or threatened. [In 2014] power holders felt threatened even physically, it is a fact, and it is the first time I saw the system was scared, that there was the possibility to change a bit the situation. (RI 41)

Furthermore, the waves of protests brought about new spaces for citizen-based rather than ethnicity-based politics, as well as the emergence of new political subjects and grassroots civic initiatives in which identities other than the dominant, fixed ethno-national ones could be exercised. In Tuzla, between March and April 2014, a group of laid-off workers of the five factories that had spawned the "Social Uprising" founded the already-mentioned workers' union *Solidarnost*. The union quickly reached a membership of 4,000, hailing from twenty-two different companies in the area. One

activist who participated in plenum Tuzla defined *Solidarnost* as "the best and most visible result of the February protests" (RI 39). Despite the many obstacles the trade union faced to obtain recognition, its members continue to voice their discontent by staging weekly protests in front of the cantonal court of Tuzla. Besides embodying a new, autonomous example of independent unionism, *Solidarnost* epitomises the workers' will to overcome the administrative and institutional obstacles preventing the creation of a state-wide labour union.

In March 2015, the workers of the DITA factory single-handedly occupied their factory upon receiving the notification that the bankruptcy proceedings of their company had begun, as consequence of the decision taken in early 2015 by the canton's government to revise the privatisation process of several enterprises. As a way to enable the creditors to get their money back and to create the possibility of reviving production, a controlled bankruptcy procedure had to be implemented (Pepić 2015). According to the law, this would entitle the workers to receive their unpaid wages and pensions, but only once investors and bureaucratic agencies were paid (ibid.). Several days after receiving notification that the bankruptcy procedure had been initiated, the DITA workers took over their factory, aiming to restart the production of detergents. They released a public appeal for international support, which met with widespread approval from citizens, activists, and public figures across the region. Local shops and some retail chains made an intentional decision to sell DITA products, so as to financially support the workers. Moreover, groups of local and international activists visited the DITA premises, and volunteered to help the workers to repair the machinery, and to optimize production (Haman 2015). Meanwhile, on online social networking platforms, a page called "Selfie with DITA" (*#SelfieZaDitom*) invited people to advertise DITA's products on the social networks by posting pictures of themselves holding detergents produced by the factory.

Besides the city of Tuzla, other grassroots initiatives emerged across the country. Some of the plenums remained active in various forms even once the protests lost steam. Others converted into informal groups, like the "Movement for Social Justice" (*Pokret za socijalnu pravdu)* in Bihać. Over the summer 2015, the latter organized several street actions to halt the construction of a hydropower plant on the Una-Sana river, flowing close to the city. During their action, the activists were supported by local people and by activists coming from Banja Luka and the surrounding area. As the leader

of the movement said:

> After the protests the conscience of people is different than it was before: people became more active, and a network of activists from all over the country was created as a result of the February 2014 protests, which came in support of our fight (RI 45).

In Banja Luka, in September 2015 a group of activists opened the social center "BASOC" (Banja Luka Social Center). Financially supported by an Austrian foundation, the BASOC activist group aimed to create an environment in which to discuss "genocide, nationalism, feminism" (RI 47), all topics that are generally overlooked by the dominant nationalist rhetoric, and considered particularly sensitive in the context of Banja Luka. The BASOC social center currently constitutes one of the very few "beyond ethnic" islands in RS.

In Sarajevo, over the 2015 summer some activists undertook a campaign for the reopening of the National Museum, closed three years earlier due to lack of founds but also of the political will to finance an institution that embodied the existence of a common national culture. The action, called #jasammuzej (I am museum), foresaw the screening of movies inside the premises of the empty museum, in which an exhibition was hosted as well. The exhibition "The Guardians of the Museum" (*Čuvari museja*) portrayed pictures and the life stories of the workers who decided to take care of the museum even when it shut off, without receiving any salary. The action, realized by the activists of the NGO *Akcija za kulturu* (Action for culture) in collaboration with the museum's workers, aimed at raising awareness about the conditions of the museum and its workers, and also about the state of culture and art in the country. The initiative was organized by individuals who met during the 2014 protests, and were active in particular in the working group dealing with culture and art (RI 46). They also organized an action called "I guard the museum" (*Dežuram za muzej*), which consisted of calling upon ordinary citizens and public figures to take care of the museum. In practice, public figures of the cultural and intellectual national scene, as well as religious authorities and high school pupils, took shifts to symbolically safeguard the museum throughout the summer months. The action had high resonance in the country and abroad. Eventually, the museum was reopened in September 2015.

But while the cycle of protests brought forth a strengthening of networks among

activists, and a renewed enthusiasm for citizen engagement, it presented some pitfalls as well. It is worth reflecting on the organizational model of plenums, on the ground that they represented the main novelty of the 2014 wave of protest, and also the first bottom-up attempt to articulate the demands of the protesters and to present them to the policy-makers. Said to have enacted and shaped citizenship in the country, after a couple of months of activity the plenums failed to transform into a real alternative, remaining mainly a place for the expression of dissatisfaction. No common agreement was reached on the future of the assemblies, preventing thus the creation of a sound organization that could build on their legacy once the situation calmed down. Several people attributed the failure to build on the deliberative experience of the plenums to the ineffectiveness of the direct-democratic method of decision-making that ruled the assemblies. Goran Marković, professor and trade unionist taking part in the plenum of Sarajevo, pointed to the openness of the assemblies and at the unfamiliarity of its participants with the method of direct decision making as two of the factors jeopardizing the potential of this method. In an article entitled "What did we learn from protests?", written on the first anniversary of the 2014 upheaval, he explained:

> [The plenums] enabled everybody to speak, but they became and remained a place for the expression of discontent. To express dissatisfaction, even when it is pretty clear, is not enough, because the critique is not enough; rather, concrete demands are necessary. (Marković 2015)

To conclude, the legendary apathy that characterizes Bosnian Herzegovinian society seems to have been only partially and superficially scratched by the 2012-14 cycle of collective action. Notwithstanding the number of grassroots initiatives that followed in particular the last wave of protests in 2014, and the connections created among different political subjects fighting in the name of social justice, the development of a counter-cultural, anti-nationalist scene in BiH still present several limits. On the one hand, it is difficult to overcome the spontaneity and disorganization that mark the majority of grassroots civic initiatives in the country. On the other hand, it seems equally unlikely that movements would take a more institutional path, as the widespread mistrust and scepticism towards the party system that resists in the country, as well as the pitfalls related to the system of ethnic politics, still disincline activists to form a political party. In the opinion of many, new and probably even more disruptive protests

are expected, as the daily life of the population has not improved since the last demonstrations. However, although the cycle of contention contributed to normalizing street actions as tools of contention, Bosnian Herzegovinian residents still seem dubious about the effectiveness of collective contentious action as a means of pressuring policy-makers. In this regard, Marković commented: "People seemed to know what they were protesting against, but did not know how to obtain the changes they wanted" (2015). Likewise, it is not clear to them what changes new protests might bring about (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the widespread expectation that protests would bring about a transformation in the political panorama, two and a half years after the end of the 2012-14 protest cycle the political backdrop appears substantially unchanged. On the occasion of the political elections held in October 2014, the same nationalist parties ruling the country since the 1990s were confirmed into power. Economic decay, widespread corruption, unemployment and a weak, if not absent, social security system continue to plague Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens, while the young continue to leave the country in search of a better future abroad.

8.3 One last reflection on how to overcome ethnicity

At the conclusion of this study, a main question remains open to discussion. To what extent is it possible for a movement to move beyond ethnicity, considering the context in which it operates, and the fact that, as explained throughout the thesis, oftentimes acting "beyond ethnicity" is interpreted as backing the opposite ethnic group?

This thesis has showed how so far the room for beyond ethnic mobilization in a divided society such as the Bosnian Herzegovinian one has mostly been limited to urban settings and to certain social groups. Several factors, among which a heavily ethnicised context as well as the urban-rural cleavage, continue to hamper the development of a sounder, stronger movement. Hence, solidarity across entities constitutes still an exception. However, my findings indicated that the 2012-14 wave of protests represents the starting point for the development of a civic movement that has the potential to overcome ethnicity. Nevertheless, this process may take time to complete. It is noteworthy that, beyond the structural and institutional differences, social divisions still hamper the development of a wider and stronger movement. As I explain in different points of this thesis, during the last wave of protests the middle, urban class composed of politically radical people, academics and intellectuals joined hands with workers and

unemployed. The cross-class alliance developed between the workers that, in post-industrial Yugoslavia, have been deprived of their rights and livelihood, and the intellectuals, whose possibilities to have a decent life in the country are constantly denied. Whereas the workers advanced more materialist demands, and reappropriated the memory of the past and of their lost rights, drawing on the socialist cultural heritage as symbolic resource, the youth reclaimed rights related to the public use of urban space, the right to existence, and the like. On the one hand, this alliance among heterogeneous collectives helped the challenging groups to gain collective agency. On the other hand, it presented some limits, like its temporary nature and the difference in terms of grievances and common goals, as well as the restrains related to the generational cleavage. Furthermore, public intellectuals still occupy an elitist political position within the Bosnian Herzegovinian society, which makes them somehow detached from the rest of the population, and with little capacity to mobilize wider popular support. Over the years, other steps were taken in the attempt to overcome ethnic divides inside the mainstream political system. Non-ethnically characterized political parties, like the civic party *Naša Stranka* (Our Party) and *Lijevi* (Left), were created, and set up their branches in Tuzla and Sarajevo. However, they still fail to attract support beyond the urban areas.

In order to create further room for beyond ethnic movements to operate, more spaces for civic participation and political engagement need to be carved out, as well as further opportunities for people to get in touch with their peers considered as belonging to other ethnic groups, and to empathize with them. To that end, movement organizers should encourage mobilization across entity lines, identifying issues of concerns for both the citizens of FBiH and those of RS, forging alliances and building sustainable networks with different subjects. This would require, for instance, getting involved in the political arena, and overcoming the distrust and disillusion towards politics. This distrustful attitude towards politics, which Jacobsson termed "the politics of anti-politics" (2015, 18), has been identified as a common feature of activism in the post-socialist context, where political engagement is yet perceived as involvement in party "dirty" politics, and bears a negative connotation for ordinary citizens. As a consequence, the attempts of movement organizers to remain "apolitical" weakened the oppositional front, and hampered the development of a stronger alliance including diverse political subjects. Furthermore, although a shift in the political discourse and civic consciousness has been

acknowledged among the outcomes of the 2014 protests (see Milan 2015, Murtagh 2016), it is widely known that cultural changes and shift in collective thinking take time to occur.

The opportunities for beyond ethnic movements to be successful would increase with a radical political change that entails reforms at the institutional level. Undoubtedly, this would mean to address the systemic causes of ethnic divides. As long as representation will continue to be granted on an ethnic base, and rights guaranteed to ethnic-groups to the detriment of individuals, ethnically defined parties will keep on dominating and monopolizing the political scene. Similarly, as long as the educational system will perpetuate ethnic-based segregation, it would be unlikely for school pupils to develop a civic-minded frame. A reform able to reduce the power of the entities, further the coordination among cantons and local levels of government, and guarantee rights to the citizens rather than to the ethnic groups, could favour the emergence of a civic frame that, in turn, would foster the support for beyond ethnic movements. Such institutional reform would need to be addressed jointly by the political elite, the international community and civil society actors, although the latter has so far refrained from engaging with it.

8.4 United in discontent: Yugoslavia 2.0

The recent resurgence of grassroots mobilization in Bosnia Herzegovina is not an isolated case in the region. By contrast, it constitutes an expression of a new wave of grassroots mobilization and collective contentious action emerged over the last decade in the Yugoslav successor states. As such, it can help understanding more in-depth the recent development of civil society in post-socialist countries, with which BiH share several distinctive features.

Over the last ten years, protests having a non-ethnic character occurred in many countries of the former Yugoslav space. Students opposing the commodification of higher education by means of the occupations of university buildings occurred in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia in 2009; urban and "right to the city" movements contrasting the privatization of public space developed in Croatia and Serbia; demonstrations were staged in Slovenia both in 2011 and 2012 to call into question capitalism and austerity (Kraft 2015, Razsa and Kurnik 2012, Krašovec 2013), while anti-government mobilizations happened in both Kosovo (2016) and Macedonia (from

2014 to 2016). The two years of continuous anti-government mobilizations that Macedonia experienced, peaked with the 2016 "Colorful Revolution", share many features with the Bosnian Herzegovinian ones. On the streets, both ethnically Albanians and Macedonians protested side-by-side against their corrupted government. The demonstrators managed thus to override political and strong ethnic divides, still salient in the Macedonian society (Sadiku 2016). The claims were similar as well, since citizens revealed problems of corrupt government practices, and demanded the resignation of the incumbents.

Notwithstanding the specifities of each local context, the protests in Bosnia Herzegovina can be considered as an emblem of what I term "Yugoslavia 2.0"[64], borrowing the title of the bloggers' portal *Kosovo 2.0*, an online magazine considered an interesting experiment of citizen journalism in the Balkans (Ferrara 2012). Kosovo 2.0 aims at giving voice to the Kosovar youth, which contributes by posting articles, videos, and the like. Commonly, the expression "2.0" describes an upgrade of a software, meaning that the product has improved from its initial state to a higher level. The term is broadly used to describe a second major era in the Web started around 2004-5, more interactive than the previous one thanks to new services and digital devices which allow people to collaborate and share information online, such as Youtube, Facebook and Flickr.

Here I use the label of Yugoslavia 2.0 to identify the current new phase of civic engagement that characterizes the former Yugoslav successor states, challenging the vision of a weak, passive and donor-dependent society. In this era, different forms of contentious action emerged and flourished, taking the shape of street protests, grassroots campaigns, and other less visible acts of resistance that entailed also the use of digital technology to mobilize. The Yugoslavia 2.0 era is characterized by several features, which I identify as it follows: 1) a more active role of citizens, which recognize and claim the streets as proper sites for political action; intervene in issues that affect their lives by using both traditional contentious tools, such as street protests, and mobilize through digital devices like email, and social media platforms like Facebook

[64] I owe my colleague Miguel Rodriguez Andreu the idea that came up during a fruitful discussion in Belgrade in summer 2016.

and Twitter; 2) grassroots action became a normalized tool of contention, and is preferred over professional engagement through civil society organizations, a way in which civil society has traditionally organized previously; 3) ethnic divisions have not disappeared, but other kinds of social cleavages became more salient, such as that opposing the wider population, regardless of ethnicities, to the whole political class. As a consequence, the attempts to divide people by the use of ethno-national discourses appear less persuasive than before; 4) there are a higher sense of togetherness, more space for civic self-organized activism, and new participatory and deliberative forms of action, as well as a different attitude towards public authorities. It is rather the opposition to the neoliberal restructuring of the country, as well as the discontent towards the corrupted practices of the political elite, that unite people "in discontent" throughout the region.

These features prove to be useful tools to understand and analyse how social movements and resistance developed in what Jacobsson has termed a "new phase in the development of post-socialist civil societies" (2015, 4). The Bosnian Herzegovinian case thus stands as an emblematic one for the understanding of current post-socialist civil societies.

8.5 Future research avenues

Several questions have been left unanswered in this study. Whereas the use of a comparative case study approach proved ideal for a thick description of the characteristics and dynamics of beyond-ethnic mobilizations, an analysis of quasi-ethnographic depth does not leave much room for delving into other topics that, in my opinion, further research must address. In this final section I outline some directions for future research.

The first area of future research endeavors concerns what Armakolas referred to as "the political relevance of civic activism" (2011a, 127), namely, the effectiveness and impact of protests. As early as in 2011, the scholar wondered about the political relevance of non-ethnic movements in the country, as well as their political impact and potential for change. He asked: "Are the post-ethnic movements really important? If yes, are they truly successful? If not, why not?" (Armakolas 2011a, 128). The short time frame of this investigation made it hard to observe, and to some extent unfeasible to assess, the long-term consequences of movement actions. The vast scholarly literature

dealing with the direct and indirect consequences of social movements could help investigating different typologies of outcomes. For instance, Giugni (1998) and Bosi, Giugni, and Uba (2016) distinguished among the changes movements produce on the political, cultural and biographical spheres. Concerning the former, I believe that future research should inquire into the extent to which popular movements fostered institutional change. For example, further research could assess the impact of the cycle of protests on the political agenda of governing and oppositional political parties at the domestic level, as well as the changes brought forth at the international level, for example, in the stance of the international community towards the domestic authorities in BiH and its citizens.

As for cultural consequences, meaning the extent to which social movements altered their broader cultural environment, further research should investigate the impact of the movement actions on social values. The present research revealed that, throughout the protests, identities other than ethno-religious ones can be activated, and that, under certain circumstances, differences of status and class, rural or urban origins, proved more salient than ethno-national ones. Nevertheless, Armakolas maintained, "there is no evidence that cross-cutting identifications (…) necessarily undermine the exclusionist ethnicity discourses" (2011a, 174). Similarly, the waves of protests that took place between 2012 and 2014 have been said to "challenge the view that the only relevant bonds among people stemmed out of shared origins and blood" (Kurtović 2012, 207), but some questions remain unanswered: to what extent are ethnic boundaries permeable? How do these alternative identifications interact with the dominant one? Are ethnic antagonisms sidelined only temporarily in fraught times of economic hardship, and do ethno-national categories remain dominant in the public discourse and in everyday life? According to Wimmen, rejecting the pressure for conformity to the national mainstream is still an exception rather than a growing trend in this society (Wimmen forthcoming). His argument seems to have been confirmed by the results of the last political elections in the country, in which the nationalist parties kept their lead (Borger 2014).

Finally, it is worth investigating in detail the transformative impact of protests and their influence on the personal lives of movement participants. Biographical consequences of activism, meaning the extent to which participation in social movements changes people's lives (Earl 2004), would deserve further attention in a

country such as BiH in which political engagement is a quite novel phenomenon, and one that challenges its rigid and long-standing ethno-national categorizations. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate the biographical consequences of activism according to the different generations that took part in the cycle of contention, in relation to their life experiences. Some individuals lived under the socialist system, in which rights were not claimed but rather taken for granted; others experienced the pre-war period, whereas some lived through the traumatic experience of the war. Finally, the generations born after the 1992-95 war appear to be less familiar with contentious action, and even less aware of its social and citizen rights.

A final research avenue lies in the connection of Bosnian Herzegovinian activism with "the new rebels" of the region (Horvat and Štiks 2015b). It might be worth widening the geographical area to investigate the interaction of domestic political activists with their peers in the post-Yugoslav space, as other protest movements and leftist groups have emerged in the last decade in the area. For instance, during the writing of this thesis the disenfranchised workers of Tuzla began to connect with their peers running occupied factories in Serbia and Croatia (see Milan forthcoming), while the urge to cope with the refugees passing through the Balkans is said to have strengthened the cross-country networks among activists engaged in taking care of these people.

To conclude, at the moment it is difficult to predict the evolution of non-institutional politics and beyond-ethnic movements in Bosnia Herzegovina. Notwithstanding an apparent boost in civic initiatives in the aftermath of the 2014 protests, nowadays the situation seems to have calmed down. Those who keep mobilizing lament "the general degree of apathy and resignation amongst people" (Calori 2016). Although street actions and protests have become normalized over the years, the challenges to beyond-ethnic mobilization remain high in Bosnia Herzegovina, and particularly so in Republika Srpska. A certain degree of repression by local authorities and power-holders towards those politically engaged still prevent them from becoming more vocal.

List of interviewees

Number assigned to the interviewee	Role of the interviewee	Date and place of the interview
1	NGO president	Sarajevo, September 2012
2	NGO practitioner	Mostar, September 2012
3	NGO practitioner	Sarajevo, September 2012
4	NGO practicioner	Sarajevo, September 2012
5	NGO president, "The Park is Ours" activist	Florence, November 2012
6	NGO president	Zenica, July 2013
7	Think tank representative	Sarajevo, July 2013
8	#JMBG activist	Sarajevo, July 2013
9	Civil Society Initiatives Program Coordinator	Sarajevo, September 2013
10	NGO practitioner	Konijc, September 2013
11	NGO president	Sarajevo, October 2013
12	NGO practitioner	Sarajevo, October 2013
13	#JMBG activist/NGO practitioner	Sarajevo, October 2013
14	#JMBG activist/NGO president	Sarajevo, October 2013
15	Heinrich Boell Foundation spokespersons	Sarajevo, October 2013
16	LGBT- rights association practitioner/activist	Sarajevo, November 2013
17	Grassroots association spokesperson	Sarajevo, November 2013
18	Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation spokesperson	Sarajevo, November 2013
19	#JMBG activist, *Jer me se tiče* spokesperson (1)	Sarajevo, November 2013
20	NGO practitioner	Banja Luka, November 2013
21	NGO practitioner, "The Park is Ours" activists	Banja Luka, November 2013
22	Grassroots association spokesperson	Sarajevo, December 2013

23	TACSO- Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations spokespersons	Sarajevo, January 2014
24	Professor at University of Sarajevo	Sarajevo, January 2014
25	Civil Society Promotion Center president	Sarajevo, January 2014
26	#JMBG activist, *Jer me se tiče* spokesperson, plenum Sarajevo (2)	Sarajevo, April 2014
27	NGO *Zašto ne?* president/*Dosta!*/#JMBG activist	Sarajevo, April 2014
28	Student, *(R)evolucija+* activist	Email correspondence, April 2014
29	Erasmus Student Network, #JMBG activist, plenum Sarajevo	Sarajevo, April 2014
30	Activist, plenum Sarajevo	Sarajevo, April 2014
31	PhD Candidate in women's studies and feminist activist	Skype interview, April 2014
32	Activist, plenum Tuzla	Tuzla, April 2014
33	Director OKC Abrašević	Mostar, April 2014
34	Activist, plenum Mostar	Mostar, April 2014
35	OKC Abrašević representative at the Youth Council of Mostar	Mostar, April 2014
36	Human rights activist, #JMBG participant	Sarajevo, April 2014
37	Activist, plenum Sarajevo	Sarajevo, April 2014
38	Activist, plenum Sarajevo	Sarajevo, April 2014
39	Activist, plenum Tuzla	Skype interview, September 2014
40	Professor, trade unionist and participant in plenum Sarajevo	Sarajevo, November 2014
41	Journalist, #JMBG and 2014 uprising participant	Sarajevo, November 2014
42	*Centar za kulturnu i medijsku dekontaminaciju* (Center for cultural and media decontamination) spokespersons, eFM *Studentki radio* representative	Sarajevo, November 2014
43	Program manager at Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung Southeast Europe Foundation	Email interview, April 2015
44	Activist, plenum Zenica	Zenica, July 2015
45	*Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice) activist, Bihać	Skype interview, July 2015
46	*Akcija #jasammuzej*, activist	Sarajevo, August 2015

47	Social center “Basoc”, “The Park is Ours” activist	Banja Luka, August 2015
48	Professor, “The Park is Ours” activist	Banja Luka, February 2016

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