Social Mobilization Beyond Ethnic Divisions: Civic Activism and Grassroots Democratic Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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This book analyses the emergence and unfolding of social mobilization beyond ethnicity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a society deeply divided along lines of ethno-national identification. By applying and adapting notions and tools derived from social movements literature, the author explains the different diffusion of the protests across the country and social groups. Arguing that individuals and groups involved in the mobilization overcame the centrality of ethnicity as social construct, the author examines the factors accounting for protests diffusion and explores the conditions that allowed civic activism to emerge and rise, and a new collective identity stepping over ethno-national boundaries to come into being.

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To all individuals and groups who mobilized for a better Bosnia and Herzegovina
may you live in the country you deserve

Contents

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

List of Tables

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List of abbreviations

BASOC	Banja Luka Social Centre
BiH	*Bosna i Hercegovina* [Bosnia and Herzegovina]
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DF	*Demokratska Fronta* [Democratic Front]
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force
FBiH	*Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine* [Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina]
GFAP	General Framework Agreement for Peace
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
MPs	Members of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NVO	*Nevladina Organizacija* [Non-governmental organization]
OKC	*Omladinski Kulturni Centar* [Youth Cultural Center]
OHR	Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PIC	Peace Implementation Council
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RS	*Republika Srpska* [Serb Republic]
SBB BIH	*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
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]
UJDI	*Udruženje za jugoslovensku/jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu* [Association of Yugoslav Democratic Initiative]
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States

Chapter 1: Researching mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies. An introduction

Abstract

This chapter illustrates the background of this book, which examines social mobilization beyond ethnicity in societies violently divided along ethno-national lines. It presents the topic of the study and an overview of the existing literature on social mobilization in divided societies. A section illustrates why Bosnia and Herzegovina has bene chosen as a critical and relevant case for examining the factors that account for the occurrence of collective action in a divided and ethnified context. Next, a section discusses the rationale of the study and choice of case studies, namely three waves of protest having no ethnic character occurred between 2012 and 2014 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by a methodological section. The remainder of the chapter examines the post-war institutional context, the effects of the 1992-95 conflict in the society and the role of networks and informal practices, prior to concluding with an outline of the book.

Introduction

On February 5th, 2014 violent protests erupted in Tuzla, a city of 120,000 inhabitants in the north-eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)[1]. That day a rally organised by a group of disenfranchised workers to claim their salaries and pension benefits was met by a violent police crackdown. Following the attack, protests escalated further in the city and quickly spread across the country, making headlines around the globe. After few days of riots and looting, shortly the riots in Tuzla and in other urban centres of the country faded away and left room to open discussion in participatory citizens' assemblies known as "plena". Born out of street protests, the plena became spaces where participants had the possibility of elaborating their grievances as they had never done before in the period that followed the 1992-95 conflict.

The 2014 protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been the largest outbreak of unrest to hit the country since the end of the war. They attracted people from all walks of life and had social grievances at their core to the extent that some participants and observers dubbed it a "Social Uprising" (*socijalni bunt*). This book advances the argument that these upheavals, like the others analysed in this volume, are to be considered instances of social mobilization beyond ethnicity for they transcend institutionalised ethno-nationalist boundaries that inform citizens' everyday life in the country, and downplay ethnicity as main category of identification. In spite of taking place in a society divided along ethno-national lines, they involve individuals and groups that activate an identity dimension different to that based on membership in an ethno-national group, around which individual identities and social relations are organized and

reproduced in divided societies. The high degree of participation and the diffusion of the protests to several towns and cities across the country suggest that, under certain conditions, ethnicity can be marginalized and decentred (or even dismissed) as primary category of identification in conflict-ridden and ethnified settlements.

This book explores the conditions that make social mobilization beyond ethnicity possible in a divided society in which "the capacity of individuals to escape from ethnic identities is severely limited" (Nagle 2016, 12). To this end, it analyses three episodes of protests beyond ethnicity occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2012 to 2014, addressing the factors that accounted for social mobilization to diffuse almost state-wide and amongst diverse social groups. It also explains how collective action makes possible to activate alternative identities that deliberately supersede, and sometimes clash with, the dominant ethno-national categories of identification. Here Bosnia and Herzegovina is taken to represent a critical and strategic case for the examination and understanding of the dynamics of mobilization in divided societies, since ethno-national identification in the country is given great weight over other dimensions of identity, and relations amongst different national groups dominate on all political actions, offering more favourable conditions for ethno-national mobilization to occur.

Following the scholarly suggestion to give importance to factors such class and social inequalities when accounting for conflict and contention (Archer, Duda, and Stubbs 2016), this book explores episodes of mobilization that activated alternative, at times "subversive", identities, which silence and/or decentre ethno-national ones. In episodes of social mobilization beyond ethnicity the ethno-national category of identification does not entirely disappear, yet it is constantly challenged by contentious actors whose patterns of identification do not necessarily follow ethno-national lines. The study borrows the expression "social mobilization beyond ethnicity" from nationalism studies, where the preposition "beyond" stands to indicate that the claims and goals of the demonstrators transcend ethno-national 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. However, mobilization beyond ethnicity does not necessarily entail the denial or loss of individuals' identification with a certain ethno-national category, but rather calls into question the institutionalization and politicization of ethnicity as primary and collective rather than auxiliary and individual category of identification.

This volume was born from the compelling need to approach and explain contention in ethnified and violently divided settings within the conceptual frameworks of social movement studies rather than through the lenses of ethno-national antagonism. To that end, it makes the effort to overcome the narrative focusing on long-standing conflict between ethno-national communities, a paradigm that has tended to dominate studies of the region so far. The book stems also from the empirical observation that, in spite of unpropitious conditions for grassroots civic activism and contentious collective action, sustained episodes of mobilization

focusing on social issues have emerged and thrived only in recent years in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This, for certain, unexpected protests did not occur in a vacuum, yet reflect the socio-political transformations that the country and the Western Balkans region have gone through over the last decade. Informed by a five-year empirical research in the country, this volume reflects also on the usefulness and applicability of concepts derived from social movement literature to explain mobilization in conflict-ridden and divided societies, whose characteristics are outlined in the section below.

Social mobilization in divided societies: a beyond-ethnic perspective

The sources for socio-political conflict in violently divided contexts are manifold. One stands in the segmentation of society according to alleged ethno-national lines, a division likely to generate and reproduce antagonism (Nagle and Clancy 2010). Non-pacified cleavages and a deep conflict over the legitimacy of the state, which is often called into question for "actively taking the side of one of the parts in conflict" rather than acting in favour of all its citizenry (Bosi and De Fazio 2017, 11), constitute another reason for conflict. In divided societies ethnic categories get institutionalized, entrenched and reproduced in everyday life through political, social, cultural, and psychological processes. On a daily basis, the political leadership opposes the alleged ethno-national groups against each other, drawing upon their competing national claims over the question of sovereignty. Treating ethno-national identities as "rooted, bounded and homogeneous" (Hromadžić 2015, 10) with their actions and discourses, the political elite reproduces and reinforces the assumption that these identities are fixed and not changeable, multiple and overlapping. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, the claimed cultural distinctiveness among the ethno-national peoples living inside the country's borders is reflected at the institutional level and in several aspects of everyday life, from media outlets to sporting affiliations and trade unions, education system[2] and public holidays. It does not come as a surprise that, in said context, so-defined ethno-national 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). Consequently, mixing of individuals having a diverse ethno-national background remains unlikely, while boundary crossing represents an exception rather than the norm (Nagle 2016).

In divided contexts also social and civic life tends to occur within rather than across ethno-national groups. Political parties mobilize almost exclusively along ethno-national lines and secure their legitimacy by claiming to represent what they term "their ethnic constituencies". In doing so, they advance policies that appeal to distinct ethnic segments of the society instead that to different sections of it. For this reason, this type of political parties have been defined as "catch-us" rather than "catch-all" parties (Mitchell and Evans 2009), which often make use of a "catch within" strategy aimed at maximizing votes inside the same ethno-national group (Nagle 2016). Electoral competition occurs thus predominantly at the intra-ethnic level, as political parties compete for voters within the ethno-national group they claim to represent "with

virtually no contest for votes across ethnic cleavages" (Kapidžić 2016, 129). Given that political parties are mainly based on ethno-national interests, electoral choices are driven more by ethno-national allegiances than by the socio-economic pledges. Consequently, claims Mujkić, "you would not vote for lower taxes, for ecological laws, etc. You vote for your own survival" (2008, 22). All these conditions provide the basis for further violent division in a context where, in most cases, prior group violence has already enforced group identity, making other forms of political identification more difficult (Bieber 2018). Often the legacy of war and violence had yet hampered social trust and cohesion amongst citizens in the past.

It follows that, in divided societies, ethnicity and ethnic identity retain a high mobilizing potential, acting as "central organizing principles for contentious politics" (Bosi and De Fazio 2017, 25). The importance attributed to ethno-national identity reduces to the minimum the space for "alternative modes of politics that cross-cut ethnic cleavages" (Nagle 2017, 185), limiting also the possibility for other sources of social identification – such as class, gender or socio-economic status – to garner importance (Koneska 2014). The space for civic mobilization is therefore severely limited (Murtagh 2016), since groups that do not identify as ethno-national – for instance sexual minorities, migrants, women, and the like – finds little or no space for action (Nagle 2016). Following from the fact that identification is considered "the most important component in the formation of a political cleavage" (della Porta 2015, 74), the most likely form of collective action expected in a divided context is therefore ethno-national mobilization, namely "the process by which groups organize around some features of ethnic identity (for example language, skin colour, customs) in pursuit of collective ends" (Nagel and Olzak 1982, 1). By contrast, mobilization beyond ethnicity appears unlikely as "competing ethnic or national identities can be activated and made salient in a short period of time" (Bosi and De Fazio 2017, 17). Against this background, this book advances the argument that, under certain conditions, mobilization beyond ethnicity is possible even in societies divided along ethno-national lines, when individuals activate identity categories different from the ethno-national ones through collective action, as it was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The relevance of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a case study

Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a critical and strategic case for the examination and understanding of the dynamics of mobilization in divided societies. It presents also a counter-intuitive case, in so far as contentious collective action took place in spite of the country presenting a wide range of unfavourable conditions for its occurrence. Historically, the country bears a weak tradition of civic activism, as ordinary citizens have seldom stepped out in great masses to oppose the establishment. As a post-socialist country, BiH is expected to have a weak or quiescent civil society (Howard 2003). The transition of the country from the socialist system underwent through a war rather than through citizen-led resistance as it was the case in other socialist states, with an important role played by foreign actors. As Fagan and Sircar maintain, "the post-conflict state came into being through an agreement amongst opposing

combatants, which was brokered (and designed) internationally, and guaranteed by kin states that had exacerbated the violence" (2015, 160). The general attitude of people towards demonstrations on the public space nowadays is frequently of fear and distrust, and the country is still considered as a high-risk environment for contentious action. The fear that massive gatherings will turn violent, legacy of the 1992-95 conflict, continues to disincline the population to adopt protests and street actions as tools of contention. Even today the authorities and the media manipulate fears of safety and the threat of internal enemies to prevent, or discredit, attempts of mobilization (Mujkić 2008). The active expression of opposition through confrontational means like mass protests and occupation of public space is a phenomenon emerged mostly in the recent years.

The socio-political configuration of the country severely constrains further bottom-up mobilization, as it allocates a large share of power to so-called ethno-national groups to the detriment of the state. Numerous state's functions are paralyzed as a consequence of the provisions enshrined in the peace agreements that ended the war in 1995. The Dayton peace accords enforced a constitutional settlement that fragmented citizenship along the lines of ethno-national kinship (Džankic 2015), institutionalizing and crystallizing ethno-national categories in the forms of "constituent peoples". According to the state's Constitution, proportional political representation is granted through a mechanism of ethnic quotas allocated to the three nations living inside the country's borders, the so-called "constituent peoples": Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims)[3]. The institutional setting envisages these quotas to determine the allocation of key posts, whereas state institutions, education and the security sector are segmented along ethno-national lines. The key factors behind the separation between the three peoples are considered ethnicity, religion, culture, history and, to a certain extent, language (Keil 2013). Religious ascription and national identity strongly overlap in the three groups, which share a distinctive religious heritage, not necessarily translated into religious practice (Hunt, Duraković, and Radeljković 2013). Bosnian Croats hold a Catholic heritage, Bosnian Serbs call upon their Serbian Orthodox background, while Bosniaks claim Islamic faith and Muslim culture "as their most formative influences" (Donia 2006, 2). According to the data of the last population census conducted in 2013, Bosniaks comprise 50 percent of the citizens, Serbs roughly 30 percent, and Croats around 15 percent of the total population in the country, while around 3% of individuals declare to belong to the category of the "others"[4]. By resting on the principle of balance and equality amongst the three constituent peoples, the institutional and political framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina favours a type of citizenship that treats ethno-national groups as unitary collective actors with common purposes (Brubaker 2004). Against this background, political elites repeatedly resort to the "ideology of cultural fundamentalism" (ibid.) to stress the salience of distinctive cultural identities presenting them as irreconcilable, and often mobilize on the fear of the "ethnic other".

This institutional set-up favours further segregation, making it difficult to uphold values of cooperation and a civic concept of citizenship. It follows that social mobilization around issues that "attempt to stimulate new political identities that contest existing forms of ethnic

mobilisation" (McGarry and Jasper 2015, 13) emerges with difficulty. Furthermore, clientelistic networks control the already ethno-territorially fragmented polities (Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Ker-Lindsay, and Kostovicova 2013) as well as the allocation of jobs. A context like the Bosnian and Herzegovinian one matches Howard's definition of "ethnocracy" (Howard 2012, 155) as ethnic divisions dominate political and institutional life and ethno-national identity converted into the dominant source of identification. Taken together, these features make the country a crucial context to investigate the factors that account for the occurrence of mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies.

Case studies and research questions

As mentioned above, the 2014 Social Uprising represented the prominent and most successful attempt of certain social groups to act for social change regardless of ethno-national identification in the post-war period (Eminagić 2014). Nevertheless, the 2014 upheaval does not constitute an isolate attempt to mobilize beyond ethnicity in the country. Amongst several one-off episodes of contentious action occurred in the last decade in BiH, three in particular were sustained and able to survive over time. These were: 1) "The Park is Ours", a wave of protests happened in 2012 in Banja Luka, the second-largest city in BiH, when citizens demonstrated for a couple of months for the preservation of a park threatened to being replaced by a shopping mall; 2) the 2013 "Baby Revolution", known also with the acronym "#JMBG", a mobilization started in Sarajevo for the right of babies to receive ID numbers, the issuance of which had been temporarily suspended due to a bureaucratic impasse; 3) the above-mentioned 2014 Social Uprising, spawned by a workers' struggle in the former industrial hub of Tuzla, which lasted for almost four months and epitomised the most disruptive protest event to hit the country in the post-war period. These three waves of protests represent manifestations, to varying extents, of mobilization beyond ethnicity, and have been selected on grounds of lasting for a considerable amount of time and sharing analogous unfavourable conditions for contentious collective action at their onset, elements that made them particularly suitable for analysis. Not only the three waves manifested no ethnic character in their content, but also in all the cases demonstrators overcame the centrality of ethnicity as social construct, and the alleged primary attachment and association to the community of ethnic kin, privileging another commonality between individuals that transcended and decentred the ethno-national origin of the demonstrators.

This overarching collective identity was informed by shared experiences of injustice and on the perception of experiencing a common condition of deprivation. Moreover, this new identity consciously transcended, decentred and on occasion challenged the demonstrators' ethno-national categories of identification. In all cases analysed, movement actors called for citizenship rights and social justice, asking bystanders to mobilize for their common interests as citizens rather than as members of ostensibly fixed ethno-national groups. Although at times not explicitly addressing ethnicity, nor openly calling into question the power-sharing system

governing the country, in their discursive practices movement actors campaigned to render social grievances and concepts like social justice and good governance more salient than ethno-national allegiances, struggling to prevent their manipulation "into ethnicised entitlements" (Baker 2018, 9). Ethnicity becomes thus only one dimension of identity construction, which is often not even ascribed important meaning. In all the three cases, single and specific grievances served as both triggers and "conduits for broader social and political discontent" (Bieber and Brentin 2018, 1), which citizens used to demand fundamental political and social change. The social mobilizations analysed in this book were based on permanent and/or occasional groups and networks with a different degree of formalization. In the streets, protestors acted as individuals rather than as members or representatives of a community with a distinct national or religious heritage, of which they position across, against or outside. Furthermore, demonstrators addressed the same constituency, that is to say the entire political establishment blamed of being unresponsive and corrupt.

The study investigates in particular the different diffusion of the protests across space and social groups by adopting a comparative case study approach typical of social movement studies. It strives to explain why the 2014 Social Uprising shifted from the local to the (nearly) national level, while the previous two episodes were mostly confined to the local dimension. Similarly, while the 2012 and 2013 waves remained bounded to the middle-class urban population of the city in which the protest emerged, the 2014 Social Uprising expanded its social base, coming to involve social groups from all walks of life, such as the working class and pensioners. The question arises as to how 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? This book revolves around these questions, as it determines the factors accounting for the social mobilizations to spread, looking at how they came about, exposing the conditions that allowed for their emergence and rise, and exploring how a new collective identity stepping over ethno-national boundaries came into being. To that end, it examines in greater detail the dynamics of interaction between the different 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 by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and extended participant observation throughout almost five years.

The book addresses a gap in the literature dealing with contentious politics in deeply divided societies, contributing to a better understanding of how mobilization occurs in conflict-ridden, divided societies, which has not been sufficiently theorised and thus warrants further inquiry. Bosnia and Herzegovina offers a unique test ground for the adaptation of existing literature on protest politics to new social and political contexts. By using theoretical tools usually adopted to explain the dynamics of mobilization in Western societies, this volume contributes also to an emerging body of work that explores collective action in the terrain often referred to as "post-Yugoslav space"[5], in particular with respect to the evolution of civic activism and grassroots movements. The appearance of social movements in the Yugoslav successor states has not been

sufficiently covered in the academic literature to date, and most of the existing work is limited in scope, focusing on single cases and failing to offer a comparative cross-case investigation. Finally, this analysis probes some analytical limits of the social movement paradigm in explaining contention in a post-conflict and post-socialist context. It thus proposes complementary conceptual tools that enrich the understanding of beyond ethnic unrest in ethnically divided societies.

Methodology of research and data collection

This book is largely based on qualitative research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between 2012 and 2016[6]. The majority of material was collected first-hand during extensive field research carried in the country through in-depth semi-structured interviews, in combination with participant observation, records and document analysis (i.e. examining primary and secondary material). The analytical timeframe of the research spans nearly four years – from the first sustained protests in Banja Luka in 2012 until the end of 2014, when massive demonstrations over endemic corruption and high unemployment occurred. Interviews were conducted with members of formal and informal groups, as well as 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. Alongside formal interviews, several informal conversations took place with participants in rallies and campaigns, as well as with bystanders and external observers. The study benefits also from participant observation in several demonstrations, open meetings of activists and conferences, as well as plena sessions, particularly useful 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.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were adopted as a methodological device due to their extreme flexibility. Forty-eight interviews were conducted as in-depth, guided conversations aimed at covering key issues, while at the same time leaving a certain degree of freedom to the informant, since the structure of the interview was intentionally kept flexible and ready to be modified slightly as the conversation progressed. To protect the interviewees' identity a measure of anonymity was guaranteed to them, 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 2016, 22). For all these reasons and taking into account that the activist community in BiH can be considered vulnerable, throughout the book respondents cannot be identified with their name and surname.

Documents produced by the movement during the protests and destined to fellow activists or to the public at large – such as leaflets, press releases, calls for action, manifestos and brochures, have been analysed as well, together with individual contributions in journals and magazines both in local language and translated into English; oral material, such as past interviews; and video material like 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, organizations' and activists' private archives.

The context

A post-war institutional framework: The Dayton system of power-sharing

After four years of conflict (from March 1992 to December 1995), the internationally mediated General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) put a halt to the war. The GFAP is commonly known as Dayton Peace Agreement after the place in which it was signed in 1995, the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, in the US state of Ohio. To promote stability and discourage further conflict, the accord configured BiH as a consociational democracy[7] and a triple power-sharing system (Bieber 2005). In practice, the deal institutionalised partition according to ethno-national lines by translating "dominant divisions in society into political cleavages, thus allowing ethnicity to drive political competition" (Koneska 2014, 26). The Annex IV of the Peace Agreement constituted what was meant to be the temporary Constitution of the country, although it has not been amended since. Altogether, a peace agreement designed to end a war and to prevent the resumption of armed conflict transformed into a state constitution that put the country under a regime of international governance since its entrance into force.

The alleged provisional arrangement legitimized *de facto* the ambitions of ethno-national contenders by envisaging a country divided into two semi-autonomous territorial units called entities, nationally homogenized by ethnic cleansing and displacement during the war. The entities, *Republika Srpska* (RS), namely the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), are separated by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IELB). RS 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. Besides the two entities, the Dayton agreement established the autonomous district of Brčko, an area belonging neither to the FBiH nor to RS[8]. Following the partition of the country, also the capital Sarajevo was divided in two parts, one under the jurisdiction of FBiH and the other of RS. The latter was called "Serb Sarajevo" (*Srpsko Sarajevo*) until in 2005 a decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court stated the name to discriminate towards non-Serb returnees (Armakolas 2007). It was therefore renamed Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*).

While RS is a centralized sub-state divided into municipalities, FBiH is composed of ten administrative and largely autonomous divisions called cantons, in turn divided into smaller units – the municipalities. Each substate layer of government holds 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 several 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 central state. Following decentralization, the regional entities transformed into the highest level of sub-sovereign unit, while central institutions became extremely weak, with a Council of Ministers enjoying little power, a weak bicameral parliament, and a judiciary often failing to hold public officials accountable. As a result of post-war demographic changes, at present the majority of Bosnian Serbs are settled in RS, whereas Bosniaks moved to cantons inhabited mostly by their ethno-national peers. The Bosnian Croats nowadays populate predominantly the Herzegovinian region and the area along the Sava River in the North (Touquet and Vermeersch 2008). There is thus little mixing between the different communities: in FBiH only two cantons out of ten are significantly ethnically mixed (Murtagh 2016), while the others are considered almost ethnically homogeneous. Nowadays "citizenship in BiH is defined through ethnicity and collective identity is articulated mostly in ethno-national terms" (Belloni 2013, 286). However, the reasons for such a conflation of notions (nationality and ethnic belonging) are to be found in the legacy of the country, as in the former Yugoslav context these concepts overlapped (Džankić 2015).

With the intention to guarantee equal representation and access to political power to each constituent group, the Chair of the Presidency of BiH is a rotating position. Each member of the tripartite Presidency, composed from a Serb representative (elected in RS) and both a Croat and a Bosniak representative (elected in FBiH), holds the chair for eight months. This provision has been criticized for reinforcing further divisions according to ethno-national identification and discriminating against individuals not identifying with any of the constituent peoples. It also brings individuals to choose the place to live in the entity where they will be able to better exercise their political rights, meaning the entity in line with their perceived ethnic belonging (Keil 2013, Džankic 2015). The majority of civic and political rights depend in fact on entity citizenship, on which the very status of citizenship of BiH is reliant (Džankic 2015). The Dayton agreement established also the Office of the High Representative (OHR) with an internationally appointed High Representative (HR) as civilian head and oversight of the peace operations with extensive executive powers. 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 enshrined in the Constitution. These powers provide the HR wide margins to intervene. 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. These provisions qualify the country as being under the formal semi-protectorate of the international community.

Concerning political representation, the Constitution does not foresee any path outside the framework of the three constituent peoples (Gordy 2015). The citizens who do not fall into the Serb-Croat-Bosniak ethno-national grid or refuse to self-identify with one of these groups pertain to the category of the "others" (*ostali*). The "others" are prevented from holding major state posts, as they cannot be appointed either to the House of People (*Dom naroda*), the state parliament's upper chamber, or the presidency of the country[9]. 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 the "others" category. Nevertheless, it did not foresee the possibility to choose the Bosnian and Herzegovinian nationality among the categories available. Those willing to declare themselves as Bosnian and Herzegovinian nationals had to tick the "others" box. This type of institutional set-up reinforces even further ethno-national representation by recognizing veto rights in the decision-making and policy-making processes. Each constituent people hold the power to block the adoption or implementation of specific policy proposals in case a vital interest of the group is considered 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 ethno-national group has the right to veto decisions by Parliament that may negatively affect the interests of the community (Bieber 2005). Although the Constitution acknowledges as vital interest 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), without establishing institutions that would work for public interest. Rather than favouring the emergence of a concept of Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizenship, the state Constitution encapsulated individuals in ethnic boxes, marginalizing and reducing citizens to the rank of "member of kinship" (Mujkić 2008). In addition, the multiplication of institutions, especially at the local administrative level, brought about an abnormal growth of the public sector, creating an environment conducive to corrupt practices. At the political level, the institutional set-up has been accused of favouring nationalist parties by fortifying the position of political actors mobilizing on nationalistic platforms (Touquet and Vermeersch 2008).

The attitude of political representatives towards the central state differs according to ethno-national group they claim to represent: the political parties of the Serbian constituency disdain the idea of a unified country at the national level, advocating for more decentralization and mobilizing on the threat of seceding RS from BiH. Those representing the Bosniak people are more in favour of a unitary system of government and a centralized state; whereas the officials

claiming to speak on behalf of the Bosnian Croat population lament being discriminated in a Bosniak-held territory, and thus claim the right to their own autonomous and independent entity (the "third entity"). Some parties of civic nature strive to distance themselves from the ethno-national grid and discourse, examples being *Naša Stranka* (Our Party) and to a lesser degree both the *Demokratska Fronta* (DF, Democratic Front) and the *Socijaldemokratska Partija BiH* (SDP, Social Democratic Party). So far, however, these parties "have been either ineffective or captured by the larger ethnonationalist logic of political competition" (Bieber 2015, 215), partially thwarting their efforts to organize and attract support across ethnic lines.

The legacy of the conflict: the hardening of ethnic identity and the erosion of social ties

The differentiation in terms of ethno-national categories in the country is historically long-standing, to the extent that some scholars consider the system of proportional representation having some continuities with the socialist period (Pearson 2015, Sasso 2015). Although tracing the history of BiH as multinational state falls out of the remit of this book, it should be reminded that the country has always been an area inhabited by diverse religions and multiple peoples (see for instance Hoare 2007, Keil 2013). The different religious groups developed into nations in the 19th century (Keil 2013). However, the fact that an ethnicised framework has been made hegemonic in the 1980s, when the Communists introduced a system of power sharing and proportional representation on ethno-national basis (Keil 2013) does not mean that "it had necessarily structured Yugoslavs' perceptions so pervasively at the beginning" (Baker 2018, 9). At the time in which the principle of "Brotherhood and Unity"[10] governed interethnic relations, not all Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens identified themselves primarily as Serbs, Croats, or Bosniaks, acknowledging to fall into the category of Bosnians or, before 1992, of Yugoslavs (Hunt, Duraković and Radeljković 2013). The percentage of inhabitants declaring their ethnicity to be "Yugoslav" was particularly high in the urban centres, especially in Sarajevo, where it reached 17 percent, a census undertaken in 1991 reported (ibid.). High levels of positive coexistence between the different peoples were registered prior to the Yugoslav disintegration (Gagnon Jr 2004), although this was "neither romantic nor ethnically hostile and blood-spattered" (Hromadžić 2015, 13).

The pattern changed dramatically after the 1992-95 conflict and the ethnic cleansing that took place between 1992 and 1995, in consequence of which ethno-national identifications have hardened, becoming more pervasive and rigid, and further intertwined with institutions and religious markers (Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007). The conflict amplified and entrenched these cleavages, transforming the country from an intermixed milieu in 1991 to a place in which three nations lived in a status of near full segregation (Bieber 2005). Besides strengthening identification on ethno-national lines, the war affected also the social fabric of the country, as it violently destroyed the most intimate social bonds among the community of people, neighbours, and friends (Sorabji 1995). Referring to this aspect, some scholars find appropriate to speak of "sociocide", a term coined to designate the murder of an entire society

(Galtung 1982). In short, to describe the disintegration of social fabric, cultural habits, political ideas, moral beliefs, and language together with the physical environment of the country (Maček 2009). As a consequence of the conflict and of the societal change that followed it, personal ties amongst neighbours weakened, and trust and solidarity amongst individuals eroded. The trauma of having lived through a war, the memory of violence and atrocities "solidifies group's boundaries even more than the political elites' efforts to mobilize masses behind the ethno-nationalist projects" (Koneska 2014, 25). Besides, it spread on the entire population a feeling of insecurity and longing for the return to normal, peaceful times. The war ripped families apart, leaving behind a weakened political and security environment, a series of vulnerable groups (minority and war returnees, Internally Displaced Persons, veterans, widows and raped women, amongst others) and a high number of people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) syndrome.

More than twenty years since the end of the four-year conflict, the fear stemming from a volatile security environment is coupled with the uncertainty derived from the precarious and contested nature of the state, whose authority and rule of law eroded as a consequence of the conflict (Koneska 2014). The widespread feeling of uncertainty is further fuelled by animosity between political elites whose members, in most of the cases, were engaged in the conflict. Altogether these conditions render the context extremely conducive to informal practices, focus of the next session.

Formal membership, informal practices and clientelist networks

In nowadays Bosnia and Herzegovina family ties assume central importance, in particular due to the low level of social trust and limited possibilities to access to the job market in a society where "for nearly 25 years now people are living on their own resources", as one interviewee argued. The rate of membership in formal associations is very low, and individuals tend to give preference to informal networks. Data show that predominantly "parallel structures" (Sampson 2002, 28) based on personal connections and family ties take precedence over formal membership in associations (UNDP 2009, Touquet 2012a, Jansen 2015). The low level of enrolment in formal organizations does not mean that citizens 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 and existed together with, or supplemented, the primary family groups (Sampson 2002). He discovered also that family groups often fulfilled what we today would call civic functions, providing security and welfare (ibid.).

Given the political and material instability of the country, informal family-type of networks and social relations still play a protective and supportive function, often becoming a source of social mobility (Majstorović, Vučkovac, and Pepić 2016). The job allocation in the country works

predominantly through party membership or affiliation, which requires, in turn, identification with an ethno-national category. It is especially in the state bureaucracy (public administration offices) that employment is most often guaranteed through family and party connections. To secure a job in the public sector is of outmost importance, as it grants a stable salaried position and material benefits, as 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). Occupying a stable position in the state structure or in public institutions is considered an asset and an important means to gain a stable income and good living standards. It follows that political membership or connection represent a potential for clientelist allocation (Jansen 2015). *Veze* (literally "relations, connections") are deemed necessary to find an occupation or to gain access to public resources (Brković 2017), while economic opportunities remain closely linked to the ability of citizens to cultivate ties with party's members and incumbents. Along the same line, informal practices are of primary importance as they "provide parallel channels of interaction and communication for the political elites, outside of the official institutions of the state" (Koneska 2014, 35). Therefore, nationalism and ethno-national identity become a pragmatic choice having in mind to attain a job or a favour (Kurtović 2011). Given that public institutions are directly controlled by political parties, joining a party is often one of the safest ways to secure a position in the public sector (Jansen 2015), a practice that gives birth to the phenomenon known as "party clientelism".

In such a context of intense social relations dynamics, the concept of *štela* is particularly enlightening. The term stems from the German word *stelle,* meaning job or position, but can be properly translated as "connection" (see on the topic the in-depth analysis of Brković 2017). *Štela* can be conceived as "a local notion that articulates a form of nepotism cum clientelism" (UNDP 2009, 12) that connotes (and to a certain extent regulates) the access to public services, university, health care and especially job market by means of social and family ties. While on the one hand it regulates the allocation of jobs, on the other a system based on *štela* reproduces informality and clientelism, gives rise to political patronage and nepotism, and stresses the lack of individual agency (Koutkova 2015). The prominence of such an act of favour and informal exchange provokes 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. Over time, the system based on clientelist networks has become starkly relevant for the everyday life of individuals, as the power and influence of ethnic groups supplement and, at times, provide also the basic services that the state is unable to offer, like access to welfare and social protection (Koneska 2014). Informal channels and political clientelism appear thus functional for maintaining popular support and to reproduce the domination of the country's ruling elite (Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013). In a country having staggering unemployment rates, personal networks result thus of basic importance to enter the marketplace.

The ambiguity of this "benevolent-cum-paternalistic understanding of clientelism", as Brković (2017, 4) clearly labelled the phenomenon, has an impact also on civic activism and collective action on the public space. In a society in which informal networks and mechanisms of

clientelist allocation dominate, the number of retired overpower that of the employed, and politics and economics often intermingle, social pressure cannot be underestimated in affecting the individuals' decision whether or not to get involved in contentious collective action. Social pressure and the embeddedness in clientelist networks refrain citizens from taking to the streets for the risk of being spotted while contesting a possible future employer. Again, this attitude of fear empowers even more the ethno-national elites, which successfully gain from the low levels of horizontal and vertical trust that demobilize citizens (Bieber 2015). Moreover, often local authorities use the threats of job loss to curb dissent. As a consequence, those who happen to have a job tend to refrain from participation in street actions and vocal activism for fear of losing it. On the contrary, the retired are said to be more likely to take to the streets as they do not fall back on an external employer for the provision of basic services– an aspect that emerged in several interviews.

At odds with the importance of political party membership and connections to secure a job, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina at large express a high level of distrust towards political parties, imbued with moral condemnation. Whereas trust in religious institutions appears top-ranking, political parties result to enjoy the lowest degree of trust, a survey found. The survey, elaborated by the Sarajevo-based think tank *Analitika* (Analitika - Center for Social Research 2015), reveals the extent to which the level of citizens' trust in the institutions of representative democracy like political parties borders on aversion to politics.

Book structure

The book is comprised of seven chapters and is articulated as follows. The next chapter, Chapter 2, conceptualizes the concepts of ethnicity and mobilization beyond ethnicity, and provides a review of the available literature on ethnic identity and mobilization in divided societies. It also defines the main puzzle and research questions that the book strives to answer in the framework of current scholarship on social movements. A section delves into the conceptual tools employed in this volume to explore mobilization beyond ethnicity "in action", meaning to explain why the protests analysed varied across space and social sectors, taking divergent paths despite sharing similar socio-economic structural conditions.

Chapter 3 contextualizes historically the evolution of civic activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the emergence of bottom-up civic initiatives in the late 1980s and the anti-war demonstrations preceding the 1992-95 conflict, to the rise in contentious practices since the 2000s. This historical trajectory helps understanding how grassroots activism evolved over the years, detaching progressively from foreign support and shifting from a professional engagement typical of the post-war period to the contemporary grassroots and participatory forms of action, which include topics such as the right to memory and the justice for youth dead in unclear circumstances.

The remaining chapters are devoted to an in-depth analysis of the three case studies by means of the analytical tools mentioned in Chapter 2 – namely the notions of networks and resources, frames, opportunities and emotions. Each chapter provides a thick description of the mobilization and protest events unfolded during the 2012-14 period, analysing the internal movement processes within the cultural and institutional context in which they emerged. Specifically, Chapter 4 focuses on the 2012 "Park is Ours" mobilization in Banja Luka, which spawned from the defence of a green area of the city sold to a local businessman close to the political establishment. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the "Baby Revolution", 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 6 delves into the 2014 Social Uprising over unemployment and corruption that started in the former industrial hub of Tuzla, and spread throughout most of the country.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the empirical findings in a comparative way, explaining how in the three waves of mobilization the combination of contextual factors facilitated (or in some cases impeded) the development of protest movements, influencing also the tactical choices of the demonstrators. Namely, 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.

Notes

[1] The territory of Bosnia and 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 and Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina*) (acronym BiH). For the sake of brevity, throughout the book I refer to the country interchangeably as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia, or BiH.

[2] Throughout the country there are segregated schools and/or school programs with specific curricula studied by children according to their ethno-national category of identification. Nowadays three curricula are in use: the Serbian one is adopted in the schools of the RS entity, while the Federal one, elaborated by the Bosnian Federal Ministry of Education, is mostly used in the cantons of Bosniak majority. Nonetheless, Croats reject it, tending 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 of curricula has been institutionalized in the format of "two-schools-under-one-roof". In practice, pupils in one school follow different curricula according to their 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.

[3] In the 1971 census the inhabitants 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 the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SR BiH), which lasted from 1943 to 1992, 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). At the congress of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals of 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, and therefore started to indicate the national category of "Bosnian Muslims" (Hromadžić 2015).

[4] Data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, http://www.statistika.ba/?lang=en (accessed 27 March 2019).

[5] I draw upon Bilić and Radoman (2018, 12) for whom "the [post-] Yugoslav [space] does not refer to two separate historical realities – one before and the other one after Yugoslavia's disintegration – but, rather, highlights how these are inextricably intertwined in temporal loops that shape our personal/political circumstances and choices".

[6] The research was conducted during three fieldwork phases between 2012 and 2014, during which I spent a period based in Sarajevo as visiting researcher at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies (*Centar za interdisciplinarne postdiplomske studije)* at the University of Sarajevo. Another round of interviews and additional qualitative research was conducted in 2015 and 2016.

[7] Envisaged by the political scientist Lijphart, power-sharing arrangement are common tools extensively applied to conflict-ridden societies divided along ethnic or religious lines, with the aim of achieving governmental stability and re-establishing 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).

[8] Although its residents are required to choose their entity citizenship and register accordingly (Džankic 2015).

[9] The violation of citizens' rights emerged more clearly with the Sejdić and Finci vs. Bosnia and *Herzegovina* (27996/06 and 34836/06) judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. In 2009

two representatives of the Jewish and Roma communities of BiH, Dervo Sejdić and Jakob Finci, lodged a case before the Court claiming that their rights of citizenship were violated as they were not eligible to run for the Presidency and the House of Peoples in BiH following constitutional provisions stipulating that only members of the three constituent peoples are eligible for these positions. In spite of the Court's judgment confirming that the Constitution of BiH violates the European Convention on Human Rights (an integral part of the country's Constitution), and although the lack constitutional reforms complying with that ruling are delaying and greatly undermining the country's path towards EU membership, the Constitution had not been changed ever since.

[10] The policy of Brotherhood and Unity (*Bratstvo i jedinstvo)* constituted the guiding principle of the post II World War 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 (since the 1970s), 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 citizens of other nations living outside the borders of their own republics. The current political representation of ethnic groups can be seen as having some continuity with the socialist period, during which the system of ethnic quotas was enforced, although informally, through a principle known as national key (*nacionalni ključ*) (see for instance Pearson 2015, Sasso 2015).

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Chapter 2: Understanding mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies

Abstract

This chapter presents the analytical framework of the research and the conceptual tools used to explain social mobilization eschewing ethno-national identity cleavages in divided societies. A section engages with the current scholarly work on ethnicity and ethnic identity, while another discusses the diverse terms employed in the literature to address social mobilization crossing ethno-national boundaries. Next, the chapter outlines the puzzle and research questions driving the research, focusing on the diverse territorial scale and social basis of protests. The remainder of the chapter illustrates the conceptual tools and factors that, derived from social movement literature, guide the empirical part of the research: networks and resources, discursive practices, political opportunities and emotions. Next, it discusses the extent to which these factors are useful to explain why the three waves of mobilization diffused unevenly across space and to layers of population, entailing also diverse degrees of disruption.

Conceptualizing ethnicity

The existing work on ethnicity and mobilization in divided societies offers a useful starting point to approach the cases analysed in this volume. In literature, ethnic identity has been approached mainly from the primordialist and constructivist perspectives. The former conceives ethnicity as essentially natural and unchanged, whose defining elements emerge from supposed innate

biological qualities and natural affinity. According to primordialist views, ethnicity is grounded on "primordial attachments" and emotional bonds (Shils 1957), while ethnic groups are "enmeshed in human biology and embedded in social structure" (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 13). Following from these assumptions, ethnic identities are seen as immutable and would inevitably come into conflict with one another. Contrary to primordialist accounts, the constructivist strand of thought counterargues that the idea of ethnic identity is socially constructed and historically (re)produced (Anderson 1991, Brubaker 2004). In line with constructivist views, identity is a process, a product of human action and speech, and the result of the meanings that human beings ascribe to certain differences. It follows that constructivists see identities as multiple, fluctuating and subject to change (Fearon and Laitin 2000), therefore fluid and contested. Ethnic identity becomes thus just one of the multiple social identities of an individual, which can be manipulated for specific economic or political ends (Eriksen 2010). Although constructed, ethnic identity can nevertheless be experienced as real (Kaufman 2006).

Emerging as a result of human interpretation, ethnicity is thus conceived a process, a cognitive phenomenon. In a similar vein, also nations are to be considered cognitive frames (Brubaker 2002) that do not possess naturally an ethnic basis "but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicised – that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture, and interests, which transcends individual and social conditions" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 96). According to Balibar and Wallerstein, all nation states are built on "fictive ethnicity", constructed and defined through language and race. By focusing on the processes and circumstances that create and reproduce ethnicity, rather than treating ethno-national identification as given and rigid, Brukaber suggests to investigate the conditions under which 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 cautions in presuming a relation between ethnic categories and ethnic groups, pointing out that a group is a "bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action" (Brubaker 2004, 12), whereas a category is rather a potential basis for group-formation or groupness (ibid). *He thus refers to 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,* adopting *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as *categories of social analysis. In his view, this tendency* reinforces the primacy of ethnic groups, as it treats them as fundamental units of social analysis. This distinction between groups and categories suits particularly the research in the context of divided societies, where a "groupist notion of nationality" (Jansen 2015, 10) risks to open the door to reifying ethnic groups and turn them into immutable, internally homogeneous entities with the power to act collectively. To that end, this study distances itself from thinking in terms of groups, which would lead to attribute them identity, interests and agency, stressing that talking instead in terms of categories invites to shift the inquiry from "what groups demand" to "how categories are

used to channel and organize processes and relations; (…) how they get institutionalized, and with what consequences" (Brubaker 2004, 24). It therefore moves the focus on processes and relation.

Reading social mobilization through non-ethnic lenses means to call into question the ethno-national dimension as primary form of identification in divided societies. An exclusive focus on this type of identification fails to account for other important dimensions of an individual's identity. This study suggests that ethno-national identities cannot be simply viewed as static, essentialized constructs, since they are often fluid and challenged. The protests analysed in this volume constitute a case in point. Thus, this book embraces constructivist arguments that conceive concepts like ethnicity, nationalism and race as different perspectives on the world rather than things in the world, or diverse ways of "perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world" (Brubaker 2004, 17). In so doing, it leaves a certain degree of agency to individuals. To resolve the tension between avoiding to take ethno-national groups as categories of social analysis and the attempt not to deny the salience of ethnic categories in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, this study approaches ethnicity as "variable and contingent rather than fixed and given" (Brubaker 2004, 12). Ethnic classification converts thus into one social identity constituent, "contingent, cross-cutting and intersecting with other concepts of identity" (Archer et al., 2016, 11), social phenomena and identity categories.

Next section briefly reviews the literature on the topic and engages with the current scholarly work to define the concepts applied in the empirical analysis, drawing on notions elaborated in the study of divided societies and conceptual tools derived from social movement literature.

Defining mobilization beyond ethnicity

Thus far, scholars who have studied groups and social movements overcoming ethno-national identification in divided societies made use of different terms to define it. Nagle (2015) spoke of "non-sectarian movements", stressing the challenge these actors pose to religious cleavages that stand as divisive factors in societies where sectarianism is enforced (e.g. Lebanon). Armakolas (2011) opted for the term "non-national" or "civic mobilization" to underline the peaceful methods and civic orientation of this type of mobilization. Other scholars preferred the term "postethnic", emphasising that these movements mobilize across ethnic boundaries (Touquet 2012a). In this case, the prefix "post" implies "a moving away from ethnicity while not entirely abandoning it" (Touquet 2012a, 34). "For postethnics", claims Touquet, "ethnic categories are salient, but not to the extent that they should become politicized in the way they have in some divided societies (…) [and] solidarity extends beyond the boundaries of ethnic categorizations" (Touquet 2012b, 205). The term "post-ethnic" is in turn borrowed by Hollinger, who coined it to identify a goal, an ideal model to be preferred over the pluralist paradigm of multicultural society (Hollinger 2006). Along similar lines,

Džankić uses the same term to refer to "the capacity of individuals to be loyal to the state instead of to the ethnic kin in practising citizenship" (Džankić 2015, 43).

More recently, Sekulić defined the manifestations of civic dissent sweeping the periphery of the European Union in the 2000s, and in particular its aspirant countries, as brought about by "the indignados of Eastern Europe" (2014). With this label she identified in the demonstrators a "sense of indignation about a new system of social inequalities produced by neoliberal forms of exclusion from the social citizenship" (Sekulić 2014, 5), which would connect their manifestation of discontent to other instances of mobilization unfolding in Western Europe and Northern American since 2011, undertaken by "social groups lacking full access to citizenship and its entitlements" (della Porta 2015, 16). 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 2018, 10); Gordy as "anti-elite protests" (2015), while other scholars saw in the emergence of street action in the Yugoslav successor states "the return of radical politics in the post-Yugoslav region" (Horvat and Štiks 2015b, 17).

When looking specifically at the Bosnia and Herzegovinian case, Puljek-Shank and Fritsch defined the protests occurred in 2012-14 as being "against dual hegemony" of ethno-nationalist elites and international liberal intervenors (2018). Arsenijević and Bieber preferred to talk of "protest for the commons", claiming that the defence of the common goods stood as unifying element among protesters (Arsenijević 2014, Bieber 2014b). According to them, the demonstrations in BiH and these occurring in the same years throughout the post-Yugoslav region, undertaken to oppose the privatization of public and common goods like parks, urban spaces, and public utility infrastructures, display some similarities (Bieber 2014a, Arsenijević 2014, Jacobsson 2015)[10]. Horvat and Štiks argued that the so-called "fight for the commons" enjoyed wide support, as they received the approval of "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 driven by the dissatisfaction with the political and institutional set-up of the country, arguing that these are "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).

This book opts for the expression "mobilization beyond ethnicity" for several reasons. First, the term "non-sectarian" movements would not be appropriated to the context, since the division among constituent peoples institutionalized by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not formally based on confession – although the religious heritage stands as one of the distinguishing cultural identity markers among the three national groupings (Marko 2000). Similarly, the term "non-national" risks to create confusion, as it might indicate multiple and diverse empirical phenomena.

Secondly, the term “post-ethnic” has so far been employed as a normative concept to designate a desirable social order, a society as it would be *expected* to be. Third, not suitable is also the term “anti-nationalist”, since demonstrators in BiH did not always oppose nationalism openly, notwithstanding the potential of social mobilization to attenuate its political salience and pervasiveness. Eventually, the definition of “protests for the commons” was discarded for risking to be excessively broad, thus missing the salient marker of the mobilization: the rejection of divisive ethnic and religious labels, their being “against the primacy of the identitarian register” (Jansen 2015, 11). In spite of all contentious episodes analysed having in common “a sense of grievance with the way the authorities administer the common good, the public space, and the state” (Bieber 2014b), and the “perceived failure of political elites to act in the interests of the common good” (ibid.), using the term “protests for the commons” bears the risk to downplay the manifested non-ethnic character and content of the mobilization.

Likewise, the contentious episodes analysed in this volume are not framed as “inter-ethnic” or “cross-ethnic”, as this expression would keep the lexical content of “ethnic” untouched, suggesting an interpretation of group boundaries as a given and risking the reification of ethnic categorizations. By contrast, the initiators and participants of the protests frequently refuse, and/or deem inadequate, ethnic categorization and institutionalization as it confines them within separate forms of ethnic community. Empirical evidence indicates that a significant number of respondents does not privilege the national identitarian dimension, taking rather a critical stance towards the politicization of ethnic affiliation so often practiced and exploited in the country. Frequently, interviewees inscribe themselves in the inclusive category of “citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, or simply “human beings”[10]. In other cases, they refrain from this matrix by declaring no nationality, or demote the identification with a national or religious category to their private realm, not to the collective one, depriving it of any political meaning.

Nevertheless, the “overriding power of ethnic and national identification” (Brubaker 2004, 12) cannot be denied while exploring mobilization in BiH, nor can be disregarded its enforcement through institutionalization and politicization in the everyday life of ordinary citizens, which makes other forms of political identification less salient. As explained in the previous chapter, individual *identification is more likely to be expressed towards ethnic kins, or another kin state (*Džankić 2015), 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). By using the preposition “beyond”, this study foregrounds that social actors deliberately supersede ethno-national categorization, and activate identities alternative and at times in contrast to it, encouraging in this way the emergence of new political identities. Identification with an ethno-national category might not entirely disappear, but it is at times downplayed, decentred and/or challenged through collective action.

***Puzzle and research* questions**

Given the unfavourable conditions for the occurrence of contentious action beyond ethnicity in BiH, the surge of waves of mobilization and the diverse patterns of diffusion of protests across space and layers of population results puzzling from a scholarly point of view. The 2014 protests made an upward scale shift by spreading from the local level to the main cities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and some towns in *Republika Srpska*. By contrast, the 2012 protests did not shift past the local level, and the 2013 protests diffused partially to the major urban centres of the Federation. Furthermore, the 2014 wave involved different layers of population, whereas in the other two episodes the demonstrators' social basis was comprised almost exclusively of the urban middle-classes, as summarised in the table below.

< TABLE 2.1 HERE>

These waves differ also in terms of the action repertoires employed by demonstrators: some protest events were essentially peaceful in nature, whereas others faced initial resistance and violence. To distinguish amongst repertoires of action, this study follows the tripartite typology of performances modelled after social movement scholars (Kriesi et al. 1995, della Porta 2007, Tilly and Tarrow 2015) that categorizes them into demonstrative, confrontational and violent. Demonstrative types of action envisage legal and nonviolent forms, such as petitions, demonstrations, leafleting, symbolic actions, and strikes (Armakolas 2007). Confrontational actions “consist of blockades and occupations” (Kriesi, Koopmans, Dyvendak, and Giugni 1995, 119), whereas violent forms include “bomb attacks and arson” (ibid., 49). More specifically, the demonstrators taking part in the “The Park is Ours” protests in Banja Luka devised a conventional repertoire that included cheerful parades and street actions. Throughout the 2013 Baby revolution, movement organizers adopted a confrontational repertoire that encompassed the occupation of public space and the siege of the Parliament building. Unlike the previous waves, the 2014 Social Uprising was particularly violent, with storming of public buildings and clashes with riot police. The table below lists the diverse repertoires of action adopted during the protests analysed.

< TABLE 2.2 HERE>

In analysing the variation across waves of mobilizations, this book examines the factors that fostered (or in certain cases hampered) their shift across space and layers of population, as well as the employment of diverse action repertoires. By comparing three waves of social mobilization emerged in three different cities, the analysis allows for a combination of in-country and cross-case comparison. The study borrows the concept of scale shift from social movement literature, which refers to “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). 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, in this study the territorial scope of action changes to focus on the shift from the local to the nearly national level. Moreover, the concept applies also to the social basis of mobilization.

By looking at the spatial scope of protests, the analysis explains also why some contentious episodes remained circumscribed within the borders of the city where they emerged, while others diffused from the epicentre to several urban centres and towns. By investigating the social field, it elucidates why in the 2012 and 2013 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. The following section analyses both levels in-depth.

The territorial scope

In divided societies, physical space assumes particular importance as it is imbued with "forms of meaning" (Nagle and Clancy 2010, 79). In the BiH post-conflict context even more so, ever since the 1995 Dayton peace agreements that ended the war crystallized nationally homogenized populations to the extent that "national groupism had been intensified and to a large extent territorialised" (Jansen 2015, 10). Specific parts of the state's territory are reclaimed by rival ethno-national groupings as their homeland and/or to fulfil their national ambitions (Nagle and Clancy 2010), while the peace treaties have de facto legitimised the physical partition of the country along ethno-national lines. Yet the investigation of the diffusion of mobilization across the Bosnian and Herzegovinian territory is studded with pitfalls, and repeatedly ethnic connotations had been conferred to civic protests by drawing upon the territory in which they 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 unrest has been categorized as "Bosniak", since it unfolded mostly in the entity populated by a majority of people recognizable as having a Muslim background[10]. Such categorization made on the basis of the place where the events occurred risks to be misleading, as reading the protests through ethnic lenses privileges a national identitarian dimension over other forms of identification. Furthermore, it reproduces the country's "trivision" (Jansen 2015) by presuming that individuals living in a certain part of the country are to be ascribed exclusively to a specific ethno-national category. To avoid the pitfalls deriving from treating group boundaries as fixed, this analysis refrains from attributing an "ethnic codification" to the protests according to the territory in which they emerged. For the same reason, it does not focus on the ethno-national composition of the protesting crowd. Yet Banja Luka or Republika Srpska are not discarded as a research field for being an allegedly ethnically homogeneous territory, nor the 2014 uprising assessed as unsuccessful for it diffused predominantly in the FBiH. The study focuses rather on the

ways in which grievances and claims were framed, keeping into account the refusal of demonstrations to self-identify according to the ethno-national grid. It follows that the territorial scale shift upward of beyond-ethnic mobilization is conceived as the spread of collective contentious action from its localized origin to other towns and cities, regardless of the part of territory in which the protest occurred, in line with the description of scale shift "as the spread of collective action across the space at a higher level than its initiation" (Givan et al. 2010, 215). Hence, the level of mobilization in Bosnia and Herzegovina shifts upwards when contentious episodes occur in both non-urban spaces, such as small towns and villages, and in segregated settings[10] in which nothing similar had happened before. Nonetheless, neither the symbolism and power of space in BiH can be neglected (Armakolas 2007) nor the tendency to give ethno-national identification great weight. To deal with this aspect, the "ethnic element", meaning the salience of ethnic categorization in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, is moved from the *explanandum* to the *explanans* level, becoming a factor that accounts for the different territorial scale of action. The tendency to attribute an ethnic label to the demonstrators and their actions becomes thus one of the possible factors accounting for the difficulty of mobilization to scale upwards.

The social basis

Applying the concept of scale shift to the social basis of protests can help explaining the spread of contention across social sectors, namely the reasons why the 2012 and 2013 protest waves in BiH witnessed mostly the support of the urban middle-class, while in 2014 the social basis of protesters was comprised also of the working class and pensioners. Here the middle-class is referred to as composed of young professionals who live in the urban centres of the country. Notwithstanding this labelling, a proper middle-class does not really exist in the country, and little has remained also of the former working class in a country in which the unemployment rate averaged 55 percent in 2018[10]. 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 and 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 presence of a proper middle and working class in BiH, these class categories work as reference points to get a more nuanced understanding of the country's society. The intellectual, urban and cosmopolitan youth can be equated with the "middle-class". Similarly, although the majority of workers are nowadays unemployed, their identification with the working class partially continues to exist.

Conceptual tools: Networks, frames, opportunities and emotions

Different analytical tools derived from social movement literature prove appropriate to approach and explain the socio-political phenomena at the core of this research and to elaborate the

expectations driving the study. These concepts have been manly used by scholars to account for mobilization in Western societies, on which most literature in the field is based. In this book they are applied and adapted to account for social mobilization in a different milieu, the "supposedly separate historical context of (post)socialism" and post-conflict setting (Baker 2018, 10). While on the one hand a combination of these conceptual tools provides a sound explanation of the factors that fostered (or inhibited) mobilization, on the other it also probed some analytical limits of the social movement paradigm to explain contention in divided and conflict-ridden societies. To that end, this study proposes complementary conceptual tools that enrich the understanding of beyond ethnic mobilization in societies where ethno-nationalism remains a key frame of reference and the legacy of war and conflict still dominate political and social life.

Networking for resources

Previous work on protest cycles, resources and social networks explored the ability of movement's organizers to form networks useful in aggregating and mobilizing the material, organizational, and human resources necessary for collective action. In fact, the occurrence of protest events *per se* does not constitute a social movement, and neither grievances alone nor categorical attributes (such as class) are sufficient to trigger collective action (Tarrow 2011, della Porta 2015). Although new threats or opportunities may create motive for collective action, a sustained opposition movement needs sufficient organizational resources to develop (McAdam et al. 2010). For mobilization to be sustained over time, political actors and social movement organizations need also to coordinate through "*connective structures or interpersonal networks* that link leaders and followers, centres and peripheries, and different parts of a movement sector with one another" (Tarrow 2011, 123). These mobilizing structures can be informal as well as formal networks of individuals and institutions with a different degree of formalization, like pre-existing groups, movement organizations and interpersonal networks among potential activists (Caren 2007). By linking these different actors and parts of movement sectors, networks permit coordination and aggregation and allow movements to persist even when in absence of formal organization (see also Tilly 1978, Diani 2004, Diani and Bison 2008). These mobilizing structures can be used for different purposes: to distribute information, recruit participants, coalesce collective identities and organize action campaigns (McAdam et al. 1996). Networks are of paramount importance 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 the resource mobilization perspective. Introduced by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977), this approach challenged the idea of mobilization as being an irrational act, pushing towards a recognition of social movements as enterprises that make efficient use of the available resources (material, financial, human, e.g. pre-existing organizations) to mobilize (Tarrow 2011). According to the proponents of this approach,

social movements perform “rational, purposeful, and organized actions” (della Porta and Diani 2009, 14), calculating costs and benefits before engaging in collective action, and have leaders acting as movement entrepreneurs, who define, create, and manipulate grievances and discontent (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). Drawing upon 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, this study analyses the extent to which connective structures such as pre-existing movement organizations and foregoing strong interpersonal linkages managed to aggregate and mobilize resources, facilitating (or impeding) the mobilization’s scale shift. To that end, this analysis investigates pre-existing informal and formal networks among individuals and organizations by tracing their patterns of interaction. In practices, it expects that the more activists and/or social movement organizations (SMOs) involved in the 2012-14 protest cycle could resort to 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 mobilization upward scale shift.

Framing grievances and identities

Academic debate on resources developed in the 1970s in North American scholarship was followed by an increased attention to the role of discourse, immaterial values and culture emerged in the 1980s amongst European political social scientists (see for instance Snow, Rochford Jr, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). It is in that period that the cultural grounds of collective action (Melucci 1985) and the notion of collective identity gained importance in understanding movements’ dynamics (see, e.g., Melucci 1996) as *stimuli* to collective action with the ability to create a shared sense of belonging. Much of a movement’s effort was said to be cognitive and evaluative, consisting in “identifying grievances and translating them into claims against significant others” (Tarrow 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 attempt to convert fear into moral indignation and anger by reformulating and adapting values and motivations in a way that proves efficient to mobilize certain sectors of public opinion, motivating “people to act and broaden support for their cause” (della Porta and Diani 2009, 66). To mobilize successfully, then, movement entrepreneurs 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), since 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). 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 "frames" is appropriated from Goffman, who first described them 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). Activists' efforts to strategically "frame" identities are critical in recruiting participants and supporters, making alliances and defusing opposition (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 291).

Frames might perform different functions and can be of different type. A "master frame" reflects "the rhetorical strategies of numerous social movement organizations over time" (McCammon, Muse, Newman and Terrell, 2007, 728). As such, it may contain other, more specific sub-frames. Diagnostic frames identify a problem a movement seeks to address, and assign blame to the actors who are considered as the cause of said problem; prognostic frames evoke appropriate tactics and strategies to solve a problem, whereas motivational frames provide the rationale that motivate potential supporters to side with the challengers and to take action (Snow and Benford 1988). In order to be effective, that is to "speak to" bystanders and persuade 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). The concept of frame resonance is particularly useful to this analysis, as it is 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). To appeal to a broad number of people, frames have to resonate with the context in which they are embedded (Parks 2008). Hence, they must be both credible "in their content and their sources" (Benford and Snow 2000, 619), and salient, namely to "touch upon meaningful and important aspects of people's lives" (della Porta and Diani 2009, 81).

Most notably, frames prove particularly important for and inextricably linked to identity-building processes. In order for social movements to develop, a discourse that *"distinguish[es] bystanders from opponents" (Poletta and Jasper 2001, 292) needs to be elaborated, one that 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. *In this case, the ability of a movement to construct cultural meanings becomes evident, as discursive strategies develop into an identity-building tool that social movements use via the framing process. Yet frames do not go uncontested in the political arena.* Struggles between movements and countermovements (meaning opposing movements striving to undermine the former), or the state, which elaborate frames in order to marginalize their opposition, directly affect the framing process (Johnston and Noakes, 2005). Competing frames are often called "counterframes".

The waves of mobilization beyond ethnicity analysed in this volume prompt us to reflect upon which frames result the most successful throughout time, that is to say which discursive strategies proved more effective in mobilizing people in a cultural environment rife with nationalist rhetoric and symbolism, which values ethno-national identification and mobilize on discourses grounded on the fear of the "ethnic other" that demobilize alternative politics (Jansen 2015). Among the "beyond ethnic" frames movement organizers resorted to throughout the waves of protests analysed in this volume, it is to be expected that the more activists and/or SMOs were able to build an encompassing beyond-ethnic frame that resonated to diverse social groups, the more likely they were to involve diverse layers of population, therefore scaling mobilization upwards.

Political and discursive opportunities

Besides analysing the role that resources and frames play in collective action, the "political process approach" perspective, known also as "political opportunity theory", delved into the influence of the economic and political context on mobilization processes. Developed in the 1980s in the USA, political process scholars conceived 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. In their view, grievances and resources alone cannot explain the emergence and development of movements. Hence the concept of opportunities was identified as useful to explain why grievances transform into action at a given time, looking at the societal environment in which mobilization takes place (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald and others 1996; Tilly 1978). While political opportunities do not inevitably produce a social movement, they are nevertheless likely to facilitate its emergence "set[ting] in motion a chain of causation that may ultimately lead to sustained interaction with authorities and thence to social movements" (Tarrow 2011, 33).

Political opportunities can be defined as 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, such as state repression, can turn into opportunities for mobilization. However, opportunities are not structural and objective, but rather situational (Tarrow 2011), meaning that they need to be perceived by collective actors and potential protesters in order to be seized (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001).

Following concerns about the lack of conceptual precision of this model, some scholars expanded the rubric "opportunities" to the cultural sector, elaborating the notion of "discursive opportunities" (Statham and Koopmans 1999, Koopmans and Olzak 2004). Although cautioned that a widening of the rubric would allow seeing virtually any change in the environment as part of the opportunity structure (Tarrow 2011), in the view of its proponents the concept of discursive opportunities stood as a corrective of the political opportunity model that tends to neglect cultural dynamics. In their opinion, the combination of political opportunities with a more cultural perspective provides a broader view on frame resonance. By drawing frames and cultural context together, Koopmans and colleagues pointed out that movement frames and the cultural environment in which these 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. Thus, this analysis expected that perceived favourable political and discursive opportunities prompted people into action, facilitating a scale shift upwards of mobilization.

Violence, political repression and the role of emotions

Finally, this book looks at the explanatory power of emotions, incorporated into explanation of social movements in the 1990s with the so-called "cultural turn" in social sciences. It examines in particular the interplay between emotions, violence and repression by looking at two types of emotions. The first are triggered by political repression, intended as the physical coercion perpetrated by opponents to increase the cost of collective action or to suppress it (Tarrow 2011). Political repression is most often state-sanctioned and comes into the form of protest policing, which involves overt police action at protest events (Earl and Soule 2010). The second are emotions sparked by violence carried out by protesters, which stems from their deliberate decision to act violently. The impact of repression on social action remains highly disputed in contentious politics literature, and the existing studies have produced contradictory findings (Earl and Soule 2010). While 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 (Earl and Soule 2010), others maintain that it 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" (Goldstone 1998, 130).

Yet not all repressive strategies produce the same effects, as the impact depends on the interaction among protesters, opponents and third parties (Earl and Soule 2010). Responses to repression vary greatly, and can drive bystanders to channel their fear and anger into righteous indignation and political activity. Episodes of brutal repression – like police crackdown – 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" (della Porta 2014, 33). These moral shocks, which can act as emotional triggers, occur when "an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined towards political action, whether or not she has acquaintances in the movement" (Jasper 1998, 409).

The impact of violence is contingent also on the context where it occurs: the use of force to break up a demonstration affects mobilization in a war-torn society in a different way than in places with no legacy of conflict. Repression and violence in a post-war milieu are not "a routine, neutral public order task" (Bosi and De Fazio 2017, 17). Taking this into account, this study looks at how repression and violence against demonstrators influenced mobilization dynamics, provoking moral emotions such as outrage, which prompted people into action, but also sparked fear, which scared off potential participants as it evoked the memories of war. Furthermore, it delves into the effect of the use of violence carried out by demonstrators, which at first radicalized the protests. Repression and violence informed also the demonstrators' choice of adopting certain tactics in place of others, as activists opted for more peaceful actions to prevent the riots to escalate further.

Notes

[10] For instance, in 2006 and later in 2014 the citizens of Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, 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).

[10] Interview with an activist of the social center "Basoc" and of the "Park is Ours" initiative. Banja Luka, August 2015.

[10] In an interview for the Austrian daily *Kurier*, the incumbent High Representative Valentin Inzko maintained 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 demonstrations took place predominantly in the Federation and in areas with a Bosniak majority. As Bieber noted, while these are not wrong observations, they do emphasize ethnicity when the

protests had no ethnic character (Bieber 2014a).

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

[10] Data from the World Bank https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/sl.uem.1524.zs (accessed 4 April 2019).

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Chapter 3: Social mobilization and civic activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of civic activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last two decades, focusing on episodes of collective action that mobilised alternative political identities. By looking at the ways in which groups of citizens engaged in contentious action for social change, this chapter shows how street protests became a normalised aspect of domestic politics over time. The chapter first explores the anti-war protests to avert the war that took place in the late 1980s. It then describes the mushrooming of non-governmental organizations in the post-war period and the impact of the international community's intervention on domestic civil society development, which provoked also the restructuring of the country in both administrative and economic terms. A section focuses on the small-scale grassroots initiatives and civic protests that unfolded in the first decade of the 2000s: the *Dosta!* protest movement demanding political accountability in 2006, the demonstrations for security occurred in Sarajevo in 2008, the student protests of the 2016-17, and the civic initiatives for the right to memory in Republika Srpska. The chapter concludes with an overview of the 2018 movement "Justice for David" and its twin fights.

Introduction

A set of historical and political factors shapes over time the ways in which people mobilize and organize to influence governance and politics. Forty-seven years of socialist rule moulded Bosnia and Herzegovina's society, politics, economy, and human behaviour, as did the advent of international donors and agencies in the wake of the 1992-95 conflict. The blossoming of domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that followed the end of the war stamped indelibly the social fabric of the country, influencing civil society practices and discourses, as well as the way in which people engaged (or refrained from engaging) in collective action on the public sphere.

Building on 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), this chapter traces the emergence and development of contentious collective action in the country, setting the ground for understanding the waves of mobilization analysed in the following chapters. To that purpose, it first explores grassroots initiatives of the late 1980s which aimed to avert war. Next, it describes the mushrooming of NGOs and civil society organizations in the aftermath of the war, providing a critical analysis of the impact this phenomenon had in the process of civil society building. Finally, a section investigates the grassroots initiatives unfolded in the first decade of the 2000s, which preceded the largest waves of mobilization examined in the following chapters. In particular, it explores civic activism emerged in both entities, which materialized in the *Dosta!* movement, the 2008 protests for security, the initiatives for the right to remember the victims of the 1992-95 war, the mobilization organized by students to prevent the partition of their schools on ethnic basis, and the 2018 campaigns calling for justice and truth for David and Dženan, two young students who died in unclear circumstances, their deaths allegedly covered-up by local authorities in cahoots with police and judiciary.

Civic activism and the anti-war protests of the late 1980s

The late 1980s have received relatively scant scholarly attention due to a certain tendency of "reading history backwards" and "ignoring alternatives to the dominant nationalist discourses and policies"(Dragović-Soso 2008, 28) that surfaced on the eve of the Yugoslav breakup. Nevertheless, this phase retains a certain degree of importance for Yugoslavia's and Bosnia and Herzegovina's history, as in the late 1980s the first instances of collective action emerged, prompted by the approaching of the war. In the years 1991-92 the citizens of the country pleaded to avert war by means of popular mobilizations (Mujanović 2013, 2018). However, the boost in civic initiatives can be dated back to 1988 (Anđelić 2000, 2003), after the *Agrokomerc* affair[10] had disclosed to the wider public the deep corruption and the plundering of resources of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in August 1987 (Bougarel 1996). A period of "power vacuum" (Anđelić 2003, 149) followed the scandal, which marked a watershed in the political history of the back then Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a consequence, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Communists experienced a severe crisis of legitimacy, which brought about intra-elite resignations and internal

replacements (Sasso 2014). 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 at the federal level to gather anti-nationalist, progressive and reform-minded intellectuals who advocated for a democratic, systemic reform. They 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). Further pressures for change derived from the cultural milieu at the federal level. Small independent organizations and different grassroots groups such as artists, cultural producers, feminists, environmentalists, pacifists, and liberals, which in socialist Yugoslavia owned significant opportunities for expression and engagement (Kurtović 2012), meanwhile started to advocate for more political freedom, equality and tolerance (Ramet 1996).

In the meantime, the level of unemployment in the country continued to raise, triggering the mobilization of workers by means of strikes, a form of action that in the late 1980s was still considered illegal (Jancar-Webster 1987, 296). As late as in 1988, some 63,000 employees participated in 239 strike actions throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, while already the previous year 9,000 persons were reported taking part in rallies having similar purposes (Anđelić 2003). 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 thousand students marched on the streets of Sarajevo in September 1987 (Anđelić 2003). Later in 1988, they created the first semi-independent student organization, the University Conference of the Alliance of Socialist Youth, and published a magazine called *Valter* (Anđelić 2003). Together with the magazine *Naši Dani* (Our days)[10], founded by a youth organization, *Valter* voiced the youth's 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 played an important role, as it "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 of student activists" (ibid., 37).

Besides the workers and the youth, other social groups mobilized in the pre-war period. 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, 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)[10], although it failed to gain visibility in the public sphere and to advance concrete proposals for political reforms (Sasso 2014). In January 1989, enraged citizens took to the streets to protest the worsening air quality in Zenica, the most polluted city in the whole Yugoslavia, and organized meetings to demand better protection and concrete measures to prevent high pollution (Anđelić 2003).

Nonetheless, all these civic initiatives remained mostly small-scale and elitist in essence, confined to intellectual and urban circles (Anđelić 2003, Sasso 2014).

Before the outbreak of the war, enthusiasm spread throughout society, galvanized by the liberalization of a socialist system already on the brink of collapse. As one interviewee recounts, "freedom was in the air, networks of urban initiatives flourished in the field of art and music"[10]. Meanwhile, though, nationalist feelings were gaining a foothold, and soon got the better of the consequences of liberalization. In an attempt to oppose the spreading of nationalism, which the republican elites had embraced "as an alternative to state ideology" (Bunce 1999, 107), citizen-led movements emerged all over the Yugoslav Federation. When the conflict became a tangible possibility, anti-war civic actions began to flourish in the urban centres of Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo. Being the poorest and most multi-ethnic state among the six republics composing the Yugoslav Federation, BiH lagged behind 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 centres like Banja Luka, Mostar and Zenica they never developed, or were either assimilated or repressed by local nationalisms (Sasso 2014). Nevertheless, a series of protests having an anti-nationalist character took place in Sarajevo during the month of March 1992, which was christened "the month of Valter" after the partisan guerrilla military commander and Yugoslav partisan hero Vladimir "Valter" Perić[10]. 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, 2018). The protests, which had been described as representing "a desperate interjection of radical political potential on the part of ordinary citizens into the cataclysmic confrontations of the ruling elites" (Mujanović 2018, 76), were supported by the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje* (Liberation), and summoned by the local television and radio station. Street marches took place in a peaceful atmosphere throughout the month, with demonstrators marching and raising placards reading "We are Valter" (Donia 2006) and "We want peace".

On April 4, 1992 a rally organized by students to demand the resignation of all political parties grew overnight to gather a hundred thousand people (Mujanović 2018). The following day, on April 5, thousands of peace demonstrators poured into the streets of Sarajevo voicing their anti-war and pro-Yugoslav stands (Spaskovska 2012), demanding their politicians wholesale resignation. The crowd converged in front of the National Parliament building to oppose the barricades erected meanwhile by the Serb nationalist forces[10]. That day snipers shot amongst the crowd, killing two young girls named Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić. The episode marked the end of the civic activism period and the beginning of the city's siege that will last 1425 days (Spaskovska 2012). The following day around fifty thousand people took to the streets again carrying signs for peace and chanting slogans against the nationalist leaders (Donia 2006). Once again, snipers opened fire on the demonstrators, this time killing six people and wounding dozens of them. The outbreak of the war ended abruptly the "civic spring" of Bosnia and Herzegovina, terminating the Valter movement and cancelling the opportunity to avert bloodshed my means of popular mobilization[10].

The post-war international intervention and the NGO boom

The burst of the war washed abruptly away the hope to avoid the conflict by virtue of grassroots popular demonstrations. Consequently, 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, an estimated number of 100,000 casualties and an undisclosed number of individuals wounded, dispossessed and traumatized. Around 1,5 million people fled their house during the war and were displaced as refugees (Hromadžić 2015). In the aftermath of the conflict, 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 individuals reshuffled the sense of local belonging after 1995 (Bougarel et al. 2007). Demographic changes that affected and reshaped the country's social fabric reinforced also segregation based on ethno-national identification, further sanctioned by the post-war constitutional arrangement of the country.

In the aftermath of the conflict, and in particular between 1996 and 2006, international actors engaged intensively in almost every aspect of political and economic life of the country, from reconstruction to peacekeeping and re-settlement of refugees (Majstorović et al. 2016). One of the main settings of foreign engagement concerned civil society development. Since the end of the conflict, foreign agencies, international donors and humanitarian NGOs intervened dynamically in post-war reconstruction through the development of so-called civil society building programs, which brought about an inflated number of NGOs and associations (Bieber 2002). To grasp the range of the post-war "NGO-boom" in the country, as Alvarez (2014) termed the phenomenon of steep increase in the number of non-governmental organisations, 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)[10].

In their intervention, often international donors established relationships of domination and dependence between donors and recipients (Savija-Valha 2012), a practice that raised the criticism of scholars and practitioners for it disregarded local needs and often overlooked already existing associations. Frequently assistance priorities were driven more by funding requirements than by an in-depth knowledge of the domestic situation (Gagnon jr. 2002). The blossoming of NGOs concentrated in (and thus benefited) mostly Sarajevo, bringing about a sort of artificial professionalized civil society relying upon foreign financial support (Sejfija 2006) and based in the capital. The foreign-driven attempts to engender a third sector from scratch, maintained Fagan, resulted in predominantly professionalized, depoliticized, donor-driven NGOs dependent upon funders' priorities (2006) and working mainly to accommodate donors' interests. Due to the little legitimacy that the third sector still enjoys in the country, nowadays the wider population tends to

attribute only a limited degree of trust to non-governmental organization, which are widely considered being too bureaucratic, often politicized and rather functional to the existing system. Furthermore, the notion of civil society is mostly equated with NGOs (Collantes-Celador 2013). 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"[10]. Similarly, often NGOs are sensed to exist "more for personal benefit of staff and their leaders than members of the community" (TACSO 2010, 16).

Besides the civil sector, international officials intervened also in the social and economic areas, promoting a series of long-term socio-economic reforms known as "structural adjustment programs", with the purpose of re-establishing the efficiency of the market. The economic restructuring, which qualifies the country as "in transition", 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. 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 the domestic social and health security services, labour policies, and pension systems, undermining social protection and rights of the welfare state, and exacerbating social inequalities.

The 2012-14 cycle of protest can be better understood by taking into account the long-term economic and social crisis haunting in the post-war period the domestic working class and other social groups whose economic and social conditions have been deteriorating precipitously over the past ten years. The increasing discontent that led citizens 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, Bosnia and Herzegovina 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, when the IMF and the EU required the privatization of the industrial apparatus as a condition for financial assistance to the former Yugoslav state, the privatization of formerly state-owned or socially owned enterprises took off, first in 1997 and later in the period 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), 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 (Milan 2018). In some cases, the workers of the factories, who had taken out loans to buy shares in the state-owned part of their plants, 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" (Pugh 2005, 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 over state organs and resources by manipulating it for their own political ends. The process of transition to market economy affected thus mostly the workers that once constituted the backbone of the Yugoslav system and faced mass layoffs and economic dispossession as a consequence of the transition process over the years (Milan 2018). In the wake of the neoliberal restructuring of the country and affected by the dramatic consequences of a four-year violent conflict, the local population found itself impoverished and stricken by economic reversal, whereupon their living standards declined.

Grassroots activism in the early 2000s: the *Dosta!* protest movement

Given the diminished geopolitical importance of the Western Balkans in global relations, and the end of the state of emergency in the area, which led foreign donors to drive their efforts towards other war-torn countries, the international involvement in the country decreased dramatically in the period between 2006 and 2014. This change was also grounded on the assumption that "international influence should be exercised through the more indirect EU accession process" (Majstorović et al. 2016, 4) rather than through direct foreign involvement on internal politics. In the 2000s, the pattern changed slightly in terms of contentious action as well. 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 2015). In the 2000s episodic events of grassroots civil resistance were undertaken in BiH as well, where the level of civic activism and the number of episodes of collective action had intensified since the early 2000s (Wimmen 2018). In the late 2010s, rallies and protests in front of various government institutions became routine. Staged by workers, farmers, pensioners or veterans, the demonstrators advocated for access or maintenance of salaries and allowances, although never managing to mobilize "more than a few hundred people" (Jansen 2015, 229). One of the first attempt to mobilize civil society was done by the *Dosta!* 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 2018). From a small Internet forum, the group rapidly grew, until its members opted for moving their discussions away from the virtual to the public space, namely the main square of the capital. Gathering, amongst others, young conscientious objectors to military service, the group soon transformed into a self-defined civic protest movement that adopted the name *Dosta!* (Enough!)[10]. *Dosta!* aimed at promoting

accountability, responsibility and change towards domestic policy-makers. In the regular weekly meetings that *Dosta!* organized, its members talked publicly about the socio-political problems affecting Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens. In autumn 2005, *Dosta!* supported a group of farmers protesting 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 utility costs. On that occasion, around three hundred persons showed up, mostly elderly and pensioners (Touquet 2015).

Over the time, the civic group became a driving "awakening" force in the capital, which succeeded to establish other similar cells in the main urban centres of FBiH, and to network them in a decentralized and informal way. The group received also the support of local alternative singers and musical groups, such as the band Dubioza Kolektiv that, together with the rapper Frenkie, a militant of *Dosta!*, dedicated a song to the movement that later became its anthem. The logo chosen for *Dosta!* featured an open black hand with the shape of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the palm, and the word *Dosta!* written underneath. The modus operandi of the activists of the *Dosta!* movement differed from the conventional methods used thus far by NGOs or foreign-funded campaigns, as it adopted street actions and counter-cultural gatherings, as well as cyber activism (Wimmen 2018). In the occasion of the 2006 general elections, the group organized actions ridiculing the candidates, and continued their activities once the election campaign was over with initiatives naming-and-shaming public figures and incumbents, denouncing their financial and moral corruption and demanding social and political change. 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. The same year, *Dosta!*'s activists organized "The activism days" (*Dani aktivizma*), during which roundtables and meetings were staged to discuss topics such as civic activism, government accountability, and the like. The downfall of *Dosta!* can be dated to February 2011.

The 2008 protest for security in Sarajevo

Two years later, in 2008, grassroots demonstrations took place in Sarajevo to address the increasing insecurity in the city neighbourhoods. The spark was constituted by the murder of a teenager in a tram of the capital. Denis Mrnjavac, the young man, had been stabbed to death on a tram in early 2008 by three youngsters (Touquet 2015). In response, thousands of protesters (an exceptional figure for Bosnia and Herzegovina) poured into the streets of the capital, demanding more security in the city, a better-organised system of youth criminal justice and the resignation of the city major and of the canton's prime minister. The protests grew into a broader campaign for political *odgovornost*, a word that can be translated as "accountability/responsibility/answerability" (Jansen 2015, 229). This civic awakening has been attributed to the salience of the safety issue in a context characterized by a widespread fear of insecurity, where "especially the bare life of 'our children'

have emerged (…) as a lowest common denominator where people draw the line" (ibid.). The protests continued during February and March 2008, with street marches taking place on weekends.

On the streets, the demonstrators targeted a political establishment blamed for being corrupt and incapable of leading the country, and particularly 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 violence provoked the reaction of the authorities that opted for more repressive actions against the protesters. This season of protests, which some called "the spring of Sarajevo" (Sicurella 2008), lasted months, although it never succeeded to turn into a lasting movement after it ran its course. Nevertheless, 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 increasing civic awareness following the 2008 protest. As Touquet noted, and some interviewees confirmed[10], the 2008 wave of mobilization can be considered a precursor to the 2013 one, not only for having no ethnic character, but also by virtue of its organizers, who were also involved in the 2008 and 2013 waves (*Dosta!* supported the demonstrations as well).

University and high-school student protests

During the first decade of 2000s, other demonstrations occurred also outside the capital. In May 2009 the Faculty of Philosophy University of Tuzla underwent a one-day occupation, in the wake of 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). However, the claims of the students in Tuzla differed slightly from those of their peers in Zagreb (Eminagić and Vujović 2013). Besides equality and free education, the students of Tuzla urged the authorities to solve the problems concerning the lack of space, and requested to use the former military barracks of the campus as university premises. Following the model adopted by 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. An attempt was done in December 2013 when a group of students organized to protest the risk of exclusion from the EU-sponsored mobility program Erasmus +. The refusal of domestic politicians to agree on the issue, and the absence of a unified Ministry of Education at the national level, prevented BiH students to participate in the program. Under the slogan *(R)evolucija +* (meaning Revolution +, echoing the name of the EU program), some student rallies were staged in five

university cities at the end of 2013, urging a solution to the impasse, but witnessing only scarce participation (Milan 2013).

More successful have been the high school student-led protests against educational segregation occurred in the Bosnian towns of Jajce and Travnik in 2016 and 20017 (Piersma 2019). The protests targeted the "Two Schools under One Roof" arrangement, which foresees that in schools with ethnic minority students are required to attend certain subjects like geography, history, nature and society, religion and mother tongue (known as "national group of subjects") in their own national curriculum. This system, which has been dubbed "classrooms apartheid" (Knezević 2017), is criticized for perpetuating divisions based on ostensible cultural differences. In Jajce, for instance, where the first protest sparked, the two schools follow the Croat curriculum, while the pupils of other nationalities attend the "national group of subjects" according to their ethnic minority of belonging. In other cases, two schools with different curricula are housed in the same building, which has also a separate school management and staff. In spite of the "two schools under one roof" arrangement having being declared unconstitutional by the FBiH's court in 2014 (Knezević 2017), this system is still in place in fifty school in three ethnically-mixed cantons in the FBiH, amongst which Jajce. In June 2016 the building of a new high school in Jajce was announced, which would host Bosniak pupils following a Bosnian curriculum. So far, they had been entitled to attend the "national group of subjects" in a school organized along a Croat curriculum. Claiming that the creation of a separate school would have strengthened even more divisions along ethnic lines, nine students marched through the streets of the town, waving national flags of BiH, Croatia and Serbia – they named the march "Friends without Nationalism" (Piersma 2019). In so doing, they gained the support of the main international bodies present in BiH, as well as media coverage all over the region and beyond, managing to put on hold the plan of school partition. Their protests continued the following year, through a platform called "Civic Initiative 'Our School'" (*Građanska inicijativa Naša Škola*), open to schools outside Jajce as well. In June 2017 high school students organized a rally in front of the Ministry of Education in Travnik to prevent another plan of educational segregation, managing to mobilize about 1,500 high school students. Beside showing their open anti-nationalist stance, the student protests highlighted also their political agency, as the slogans written on the banners carried on the street demonstrated. By directing their indignation towards the political establishment, the students openly "criticized the ruling political class and their prevalence of personal interests and capital over the future of Bosnia's younger generations" (Piersma 2019, 10). While on the one hand the mobilization disclosed the youth's deep distrust into politics, as they used an anti-establishment narrative in line with a widespread resentment towards the political elite, on the other it also unveiled their refusal of the dominant ethno-nationalist discourses daily used by politicians in their country. The student protests transcended national divisions as on the streets they screamed that the grievances were similar to that of their peers all over the country, and their demands for a better future equally pressing. A future that, they claimed, passed through a struggle for an integrated school.

Marching for the right to memory in Republika Srpska: the *Jer me se tiče* initiative and the White Armband Day

In the first decade of 2000, several civic initiatives took place in the cities of Banja Luka and Prijedor in Republika Srpska. The *Oštra Nula*[10] (literally "Sharp Zero") grassroots group was the first to stage small-scale street actions with a carnivalesque character in the capital of the Serbian Republic of BiH in 2010 (Touquet 2012b), and also the first to organize street actions having an anti-nationalist character. The members of the group, mostly students and academics, raised their voice against the increase in electricity prices, corruption, privatization of education, and deterioration of social services in the city of Banja Luka. In 2010 they also took part in an anti-government demonstration organized in the city. Due 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. *Oštra Nula* participated in the wave of protests organized by *Dosta!* between 2006 and 2008, developing connections with grassroots groups all over BiH and RS as well.

Other civic initiatives took place in the second-large city of *Republika Srpska*, Prijedor[10]. In 2012 the then mayor of the city, Marko Pavić, banned the commemoration of the International Human Rights Day and prohibited also a march planned for the 31st of May to commemorate he twentieth anniversary since the ethnic cleansing against the non-Serb population has started. The mayor claimed that he would give the victims' associations the consent to organize a commemoration on the public stage under the condition of deleting the word "genocide" from the original title of the event, initially named "Genocide in Prijedor – 20 years" (Trbovc 2014). To protest against the prohibition, on the 31st of May Emir Hodžić, an activist whose part of the family was killed in the concentration camp of Omarska in the surroundings of Prijedor, decided to stand alone and in silence on the city's main square. He held a white ribbon tied around his arm, which referred to the white armbands that non-Serbs were ordered to wear after the municipality was taken over by Bosnian Serbs. On May 31, 1992, the Bosnian Serb forces required via local radio all non-Serbs to mark their houses with white sheets to indicate their surrender, and to wear a white ribbon when leaving home to distinguish themselves from the Serbian population (Riding 2015). Following this solo-protest, and in spite of the ban, hundreds of people from the country and the region assembled in the main square of Prijedor on May 31st 2013, in defiance of the mayoral prohibition. They gathered in solidarity with the victims of the genocide, protesting against genocide denial by marching and wearing a white armband. The following years, on that date the participants to the commemoration in Prijedor carried also roses with the names of children killed during the war, which later they laid down on the main square. With their act they demanded the possibility to erect a monument or a plaque to commemorate the 102 children of Prijedor killed during the 1992-95 war. In 2019, the memorial still cannot be built since Bosnian Serb officials of Prijedor and the mayor of the city continue to deny the systematic persecution of the non-Serb component of the population occurred in the early 1990s. The march and actions were made possible by a network of activists named *Jer me se tiče* (Because it concerns me), who called for justice for all the victims of

the war "from a civic perspective" [10], in the belief that "no ideology can justify the killings"[10] perpetrated during the war. So far, the march has taken place every May on yearly basis and since 2013 it took the name of the "White Armbands Day" (*Dan bijelih traka*). The same year a campaign was initiated to mark May 31st as a worldwide "White Armband Day".

Besides the march for the right to memory and against genocide denial in Prijedor, the young activists of the *Jer me se tiče* initiative engaged also in other types of actions. Given the impossibility to erect memorials for the victims of the 1992-95 war, they fabricated symbolic monuments and placards and placed them in different spots of the city, with the purpose of remembering and commemorating what they called the "civilian victims of Prijedor". To eschew ethno-national connotations, the placards were written both in Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet[10].

United in grief: Pravda za Davida i Dženana

In 2018, the movement Justice for David (*Pravda za Davida*) hit the headlines of international media, sparked by the unsolved death of David Dragičević, a 21-year-old graduate student of Banja Luka found dead under unknown circumstances. David's death and the alleged cover-up by the local police triggered long-running protests and a campaign demanding truth and justice, brutally halted by a police attack on the demonstrators on December 25, 2018. The same day Davor Dragičević, David's father, the most outspoken and visible figure of the protests so far, who openly accused RS authorities of concealing the murder of his son for political reasons, was arrested, together with other activists and opposition politicians (Reuters 2018a).

Since the body of the student was found in a creek of Banja Luka on March 24, 2018 a week after he went missing, David's family and friends had been staging regular protests in the main square of Banja Luka, asking for police investigation and to make clarity on the cover-up of the causes of the David's death. The hip hop song "The guy from the ghetto" (*Klinac u Getu*), which the young student had written when he was 15, became the anthem of the daily protests, staged on the main Krajina square renamed "David's Square" (*Davidov trg*) by the demonstrators. Here, friends and fellow citizens had pitched a tent and built a memorial made of an altar of flowers, candles and other objects perched on a raised fist made of metal. For nine months, until the police crackdown on December 2018, David's father stood every day in the square naming the institutions he hold responsible for his son's death: the Minister of the Interior and the police chief of the RS entity, the leaders of the two criminal police units, and the prosecutor of Banja Luka (Sasso 2018). Every afternoon after 6pm ordinary citizens, friends and family of David gathered on the square listening to David's father speech and his demands for justice, accuses to police, politicians and the entire state. The protests reached a peak on April 21st, when about 10,000 people gathered together in Banja Luka to ask for justice (Sasso 2018). The demonstrators grew in number until in October, on

the eve of the general election, they reached 40,000 (Lazarević 2019), an unexpected figure in a town like Banja Luka.

Following serious threats to Davor Dragičević and the arrests of the leading figures of the campaign, David's father decided to flee the country and seek refuge in Austria. First, he went into hiding, after having led a march around Banja Luka on December 30 demanding the resignation of the Minister of the Interior and being issued an arrest warrant from the Bosnian Serb police for incitement and threatening public safety (the New York Times 2019). In a last sign of protest, the family exhumed the body of David to rebury it in Austria, claiming the unwillingness to leave the body "to lie permanently in a mafia state" (Balkan Insight 2019). After a period in hiding for witnessing political persecution, Davor was also charged with threat to disruption and accused of undermining national security, while local politicians and media controlled by the main party of RS portrayed the "Justice for David" movement as a security problem, using a rhetoric often employed in the entity, which label demonstrators as traitors and "foreign agents" paid for overthrowing the Serbian entity (Lazarević 2019).

The police crackdown and arrests of December 2018 shocked the society for the brutality of the repression and the attack against participants to the demonstrations perpetrated by the leadership of RS. The police openly rejected the accuses of hiding the truth and concealing the responsible of David's alleged murder, dismissing the death as accidental and claiming that the student had drowned in the river under the effects of drugs. Nevertheless, the police were unable to provide credible evidence or official clarification (Lazarević 2019), but rather conflicting accounts of the case. By contrast, the participants to the protests blamed the police to misdirect and cover the real perpetrators, and continued to ask for explanations, while the family kept providing documents challenging the version of the authorities (Sasso 2018). Throughout the protests several young associated with the movement were reported being fired or having to leave the entity owing to the threats received for their active engagement or just participation to the gatherings on the square. At the height of the protests, in August 2018, a journalist covering the demonstrations was violently attacked on the street and severely beaten by unknown individuals. The assault raised international concern upon the freedom of speech and act in RS and was heavily condemned by the US and the EU authorities (Euractiv 2018). Over time, and due also to the increased amount of violence and threat against the demonstrators, the case of David "acquired a profound political value" (Sasso 2018), to the extent that the case became the symbol of the abuse of power and injustice experienced on daily basis by citizens of Banja Luka and of Republika Srpska entity. The campaign revealed once again the deep distrust towards authorities, in particular as it evolved into a challenge to the authoritarian government of Milorad Dodik.

The character of the protests was clearly non-ethnic, a stance manifested in the words of David's father, a war veteran who had fought in the RS army, who in several occasions stressed that he went

to war for the country (*Republika Srpska* entity) in 1992, but he had not fought for a place where his son would be killed and his murder covered-up. The alliance that the movement "Justice for David" built with the family of Dženan Memić, another "silenced case", as the violent deaths of young individuals under unclear circumstances are referred to in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sasso 2018), reinforced further the non-ethnic and not religious character of the demonstrations. Like David, Dženan Memić was a 22-year-old who died for the consequences of wounds following a car crash in Sarajevo in 2016, an aggression disguised as an accident according to his family and to the independent media. Also in the case of Dženan's death, the competent authorities had provided incomplete explanations, oftentimes contrasting with that of family members of independent journalists. His death under uncertain circumstances was surrounded by lack of transparency on the part of the police and judicial bodies, fuelling even further the already deep distrust of ordinary citizens towards public authorities. The picture portraying the two grieving fathers together demanding justice for their sons, under the slogan "We will not forgive you for our children", was a clear message that stressed further the non-ethnic character of these movements, which focused on the demand for justice and truth and blamed the public authorities of unaccountability and corruption. Both fathers claimed the murders were covered up by the police in agreement with the killers, probably for the connection they retained with politicians. In several occasions they also repeated publicly that ethnicity or religion had no relevance, since David was "a Serb killed by Serbs", and Dženan "a Muslim killed by Muslims" (Sasso 2019). In so doing, they stressed the need to overcome divisions amongst national communities. Often Davor Dragičević underlined the non-ethnic content of the protests by saying that "Criminals have no religion nor nationality, just their own interests" (Reuters 2018b). Although mobilizing bystanders with different means, both campaigns asking for justice had a strong resonance on the local population, particularly prone to activate on issues of justice and in the name of young, innocent victims like David and Dženan. It was in particular the "Justice for David" campaign that managed to unite people in grief, and to build strong solidarity across entities and ethnic divides (Reuters 2018b) starting from a one-man protest.

Besides asking for justice, the protests emphasised the extent to which corruption is plaguing all the citizens of BiH, regardless of the entity or national background. The emotional drive that the death of two young provoked in the wider population managed to convey the rage and indignation and to direct it towards the establishment, the lack of rule of law and impunity in the whole country, as well as on the freedom of speech and right to dissent. Nevertheless, the campaigns have also been criticized for the perennial narrative mobilizing and revolving around victimhood. Both cases shown transversal participation in the two entities, as hardly previous protest movements had managed to provoke. Besides the emotional drive, both campaign resonated also with the fear of insecurity widespread in the country, and on the "moral purity" of their demands (justice and truth for innocent victims), which made them identifiable as "non-political" and thus less likely to be exploited or hijacked by political parties, and also less prone to be accused of being ethnically or religious driven.

Conclusions

The episodes of contentious collective action exposed in this chapter provided some useful insights to understand the complexities of social dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the study of contentious politics in the country is in its infancy as of today, there does exist a small body of studies that has sought to trace the development of civic activism in the country. The contentious episodes occurred in the 2000s suggest that the 2012-14 mobilizations should be examined and understood also in the context of previous expressions of political disappointment. To that end, this chapter delved into the rise and development of grassroots activism in the two decades that followed the end of the conflict, setting the ground for a proper understanding of the contentious events analysed in the following chapters.

Notes

[10] 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 providing jobs for thousands of people, had issued 17,681 promissory notes without coverage to 63 Yugoslav banks between 1984 and 1985 (Anđelić 2003, 57).

[10] *Naši Dani* was 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 still an official organization, although it was striving to emancipate from the League of Communists.

[10] Throughout Eastern Europe, popular mobilizations around environmental issues occurring in the dying days of socialist rule proved instrumental to its delegitimation (Fagan and Tickle 2002; Pickvance, 1998; Rootes, 2004). The socialist systems tolerated in fact environmental associations: conservation unions were widespread in former Yugoslavia as well, where legislation aimed at protecting the environment passed during the central planning period – although it remained practically unimplemented. Environmental associations in socialist countries transformed thus into 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).

[10] Interview with a professor at the University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, January 2014.

[10] Valter 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).

[10] 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 status of nation 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 centre of Sarajevo on 1 March 1992, Bosnian Serb militias, led by the Serb Democratic party, erected barricades around Sarajevo (Armakolas 2007).

[10] 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 5), amidst the surprise (and in some cases fear) of these citizens who preserved painful memories of the 1992 events.

[10] The chief of a resource centre for civil society organizations (CSOs) suggested treating data carefully, as they "might be easily manipulated, since the figure includes also sport and cultural associations, which are not strictly NGOs. Out of 12,000, maybe 2,000 of them are really active" (interview with a spokesperson of TASCO office, Sarajevo, January 2014). Furthermore, the national law does not distinguish among sectors of CSOs, and qualifies sport, theatre and music groups as such, rendering the allocation of the already sparse domestic funds more problematic and less transparent. Precisely, the state law recognizes two categories of non-governmental organizations (*nevladine organizacije* in local language) (NVO): citizens associations and foundations. The former category includes "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 includes "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 subcategories, 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, creating confusion regarding the scope and essence of CSOs in BiH. For instance, local authorities are said to direct financial resources mainly towards sports clubs and veterans' associations, especially at the local level (Belloni 2013).

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] 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 2018). *Dosta!* was also said to bear many similarities with the Serbian *Otpor!,* the movement formed initially by students in 1998 to call for the ousting of the back-then president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milošević.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

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

[10] Prijedor had been under the control of the Bosnian Serb nationalist forces 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), despite the 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).

[10] Interview with an activist of the *Jer me se tiče* campaign in Prijedor and participant of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, November 2013.
[10] Interview with an activist of the *Jer me se tiče* campaign in Prijedor and participant of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, November 2013.

[10] 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 is one of the distinguishing features that the RS incumbents employ to stress their diversity with Bosnia and 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 the RS entity, whose constitution does not recognize any language other than Serbian.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

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Chapter 4: "The Park is Ours" mobilization

Abstract

This chapter explores the "Park is ours" mobilization taking place in 2012 in Banja Luka, the capital of *Republika Srpska*. Started as a protest walk to oppose the construction of a mall in the place of a public park, known as Picin park, the protest gained in significance over time, managing to combine ecological and social demands. Over the months, the citizen marches developed into a sound political movement named the "Park is Ours", which called for the end of political corruption and nepotism besides raising their voice against the commodification of public space. The chapter charts the rise and unfolding of the protests, the context in which they emerged, the organizational structure of the movement and the discursive strategies adopted by the organizers, which enlarged the grievances to encompass citizens dissatisfaction about corruption and unaccountability of the political establishment. Next, it explores how the activists managed to move from a specific, circumscribed claim towards the call for a broader set of rights without succeeding, however, to shift the movement past the local level. Finally, it explores the role of opportunities in the choice of action repertoires of demonstrators.

Introduction

Amongst the episodes of collective action that occurred in the 2000s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 2012 mobilization against the dismantling of a city park in Banja Luka, the second-largest city of the country, stands out for its high turnout and length. The green area under threat was known as Picin

park, getting this nickname from the prostitutes frequenting it[10]. Over summer 2012, the demonstrations organized in defence of the park under the slogan "the Park is Ours" (*Park je naš*) transformed into a significant political movement "having systemic social change as a goal"[10] . The movement advanced a strong demand for social and political change (Fagan and Sircar 2015) besides calling for what Harvey termed the rights of residents to inhabit the urban space and transforming access to urban life (Harvey 2012). The protests, which maintained momentum for a considerable period of time, centred around the citizen initiative "Defend Picin Park" (*Spasimo Picin park*), born in defence of the green area. Between the end of May and October 2012, mostly local middle-class urban youth took to the streets of Banja Luka, claiming their right to freely use the parkland and voicing their will to have a say on urbanization dynamics. Their slogans addressed also the corruption and nepotism of the political elite, and reclaimed the right to a dignified life and freedom of speech.

Although at its inception the protests were focused on a single issue – the defence of the park, over time they transformed into a "summer of protest against high-handed local rule" (Wimmen 2018, 9), defined also as a "display of civic resistance focused on ecological and social concerns, bereft of nationalist rhetoric or symbolism" (Mujanović 2018, 147). This chapter traces the development of this wave of protests, starting with an overall picture of the cultural and political environment in which the protests unfolded, followed by an investigation of the different phases of the mobilization. It then looks at the key factors that explain why the demonstrators received wider support in Banja Luka, without succeeding, however, to shift the movement past the local level and to broaden its support base. While pre-existing organizations and networks account for the emergence of the movement, the activists' discursive strategies, as well as the political and cultural environment of Banja Luka, are factors that explain the lack of scale shift upwards. Finally, a section focuses on the peaceful repertoire of action adopted by movement organizers.

Banja Luka and the restrictions to civic activism in Republika Srpska

Since 1998 Banja Luka serves as the capital of the Republika Srpska (RS)[10]. Unlike FBiH, RS has a centralized system which accords the entity a high degree of autonomy from the central state. Several scholars and local observers describe RS as being ruled in an authoritarian manner, owing to the concentration of power in the hands of Milorad Dodik, leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (*Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata,* SNSD), the ruling party in RS. Besides being the chairman of the SNSD party, Dodik had previously functioned as president of the entity between 2010 and 2018, and twice as prime minister (between 1998 and 2001 and for a second mandate between 2006 and 2010), before being elected as the Serb Member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018. In several occasions, Dodik has been accused of exercising power arbitrarily (Bieber 2018), raising concerns of the international community owing to his strong nationalist stance.

The political agenda of the SNSD party envisages the accordance of further autonomy, and eventually independence, to Republika Srpska from the central state, and build its support on claims of Serbian nationalism and constant threats of secession of RS from the rest of the country. The second-stronger Serbian party is the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, SDS), founded in 1990 by Radovan Karadžić, sentenced in 2016 to forty years imprisonment for crimes against humanity and genocide by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (the Guardian 2016). The opposition party has essentially the same agenda of the governing one, based on "maintenance of ethnic supremacy of the Serbs over the Muslims and Croats who have returned home since the war" (Lippmann 2014). Negligible political distinction can be found between the two: along the same lines as the SNSD, also SDS aims at unifying the Serb community of BiH.

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 was altered in response to two simultaneous phenomena. First, the expulsion of around 50,000 non-Serbian individuals as a result of the ethnic cleansing campaign perpetrated against non-Serbs in the area. Second, the massive arrival in the city of Bosnian Serb refugees, displaced from the zones of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in which they lived prior to the war. Nowadays, it is estimated that the majority of the population of Banja Luka defines itself as of Serbian nationality. Although over time they became episodic phenomena, attacks against war returnees and the non-Serbian component of the population in Banja Luka occurred in the last decade. In 2008 nationalist groups had attacked the participants to a ceremony held at the city Islamic centre. Similarly, in 2001 thousands of Bosnian Serb nationalists violently interrupted the opening ceremonies for the rebuilding of the centrally located Ferhadija mosque[10], killing one Bosnian Muslim and injuring dozens of others (Bougarel 2007).

Memory is still a controversial theme in Republika Srpska, as ethno-political elite are said to have elaborated an "organized amnesia" and "institutionalized oblivion" (Šušnica 2015) of the genocide against the non-Serb population during the 1990s. The dominant nationalist rhetoric intentionally neglects Banja Luka's war history, and has not managed so far to elaborate an unbiased narrative about the city's troubled past, about which "consensus seems constantly postponed or impossible to achieve" (Vilenica and Crnomat 2015, 5). In the country, Banja Luka is widely considered the stronghold of Bosnian Serbian nationalism, and still figures as a sort of "heart of darkness" of BiH, as well as "the centre of unreconstructed nationalism" (Wimmen 2018, 9). The constant display of "Serbianhood" is visible on the streets and on the capital's buildings of power, where RS flags wave in place of the national ones. In such a context, government critics and outspoken political opponents are repeatedly discredited and delegitimized by using the label of "national traitors" beholden to foreign interests (Touquet 2012a, Wimmen 2018). The autocratic rule, the widespread nationalist rhetoric, and the restriction on civic freedoms represent all unfavourable conditions to social mobilization in *Republika Srpska*, and in particular in Banja Luka, where the headquarters of

the entity's institutions are located. Other factors are thwarting mobilization and civic engagement in the city. Restrictions of a legal nature hinder grassroots activism and street performances in particular: since 2008 the Law on Public Assembly prohibits to stage protests in front of public institutions, except at a distance of not less than 50 meters from the buildings (Heinrich Boell Fundation 2016). Gatherings in public spaces in Banja Luka are allowed only on two locations: the central Krajina Square and the Mladen Stojanović Park. 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 strongly limited 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 approval of the law encountered the heavy criticism of local non-governmental associations, backed by international organizations like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (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.

The pressure and repression exerted on dissidents renders ostensibly risky any public expression of dissatisfaction with and disagreement against political representatives. The attacks on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly intensified in the late 2010s, raising the concern of human rights organizations (Human Rights Defenders 2019). Physical threats and violence towards opponents increased as well, as the police crackdown and arrests occurred during the demonstration of the Justice for David (*Pravda za Davida*) movement on 25 December 2018 in Banja Luka shown (Balkan Insight 2018, see also chapter 3). The intimidation tactics of the local authorities against activists work as a further deterrent towards outspoken political action. By and large, city officials adopt an authoritarian stance towards dissidents, accused in several occasions of being on the payroll of foreigners. In several occasion, Milorad Dodik openly referred to international NGOs as foreign actors aimed at overthrowing *Republika Srpska* (Lynch 2014). The frequent threats against local dissidents raised the concern of the non-governmental organization focusing on human rights Amnesty International, prompting it 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, the NGO reported that domestic authorities frequently failed to open investigations into complaints (Amnesty International 2015).

2006: The background of the protests

"The Park is Ours" initiative burst onto the scene at the end of May 2012, although its roots can be traced back to early 2006. At the time, the inhabitants of Banja Luka used the 30,000 square meters

green area known as Picin park, located in the central Nova Varoš neighbourhood, as a park. According to the town regulatory plan, though, legally the lot did not qualify as a public park. Nevertheless, it had served as a playground for the youth, as well as for families with children and pets. Throughout the years, the municipality had legitimized such behaviour by planting trees and disposing benches and bins all over the space.

In 2006, municipal authorities decided that the green area would accommodate a twenty-floor business and residential complex. The decision had no immediate consequences at first. In order to discuss the change in the regulatory plan, the Banja Luka-based environmental NGO Center for the Environment (*Centar za životnu sredinu*) organized an open public hearing inviting the residents of the neighbourhood[10]. Technical problems prevented people from entering the premises where the meeting was taking place, and the general lack of interest on the part of the wider public rendered it unsuccessful[10]. The plan for building the business centre in place of the park was therefore approved and adopted, becoming official the same year.

From May to July 2012: The summer of protests

In late May 2012, the investor and tycoon Mile Radišić, owner of the construction company "Grand Trade", financier of the business and residential centre, approved a fencing in of the area to start construction works. Radišić had previously served as member of the City Council, and was considered a controversial figure, the "long arm" of the then entity's president Dodik. Radišić had also developed a closed association with Dodik (Mujanović 2018) based on strong personal ties, having performed the role of best man at his wedding. The investor had also previously been arrested, and then released, for criminal speculation. On May 28, the park started being fenced. 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, accompanying it with a comment pointing at 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 the trees will be destroyed, and buildings will mushroom in their place. Surely you must be wondering how it is 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 could get irretrievably lost, and what are you willing to do to prevent that from happening. (BUKA 2012a)

With this message, Dakić intended to warn his fellow citizens to reflect upon their responsibility with regard to what was happening in the park. However, he recounted, "nobody from the organization [Center for the Environment] meant for anything else to happen"[10]. Shortly after posting the message on Facebook, people started to share it on the social network. After a while, a former member of the local *Oštra Nula* grassroots association created a page called *Park je naš* (the Park is Ours) on the social network Facebook, calling on the citizens of Banja Luka to save the park (Wimmen 2018). Within a few days, the Facebook page had gathered 4,000 members, a figure that peaked at around 40,000 at the height of the protests (ibid.). The administrators of the page called for a gathering on 29 May at 6pm to put the project on hold with their physical presence. The following day, about two hundred citizens gathered in the area. Over the course of the weeks that followed, the demonstration held its own, and by the next day as many as 2,000 local citizens had joined the protest[10].

It was mostly the young and families with babies that attended the rallies to oppose the construction project. During the street 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 2018, 21). Since the protests took the form of street parades around the city, those who wished to discredit the demonstrators derogatorily labelled them as "mere strollers"[10]. Turning the attempted reproach on its head, the demonstrators appropriated the moniker and defiantly addressed themselves as "the Walkers".

In various documents such as leaflets and bulletins they issued, the Walkers 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 with the following words:

A colourful group of people said to have been instrumentalized by political parties (…), 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)[10]

In the same bulletin, the Walkers stated their grievances as follows:

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)

During the protests, the demonstrators marched through the city raising banners, bringing along their bikes, trumpets, kids and dogs, and generally transforming the marches 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 local police for resisting eviction attempts (Jukić 2013). The Walkers engaged also in humanitarian actions in solidarity with the "fellow citizens and neighbours who live at the edge of existence" ("Parkzin! Izdanje 1" 2012, 12), which 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). The participants seldom adopted deliberative methods such as open assemblies or debates. Occasionally, public classrooms were organized outdoors on Sundays, which an activist involved in the demonstrations described in the following way:

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.[10]

The protest walks took place on daily basis throughout the summer, starting from the eldest oak tree *(Stari Hrast)* 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 another example of negligence, a "symbol of the fight against corruption, injustice and 'construction crimes'" (ibid.), to the extent that the outline of the leafy oak was used as a logo of the movement.

The protest walks, which usually took place from Monday to Saturday and were coordinated through the social networks, intensified throughout the summer. Local newspapers reported diverse numbers of participants, ranging from several hundred to three thousand. Oftentimes, from the old oak the demonstrators headed for the City Hall and down to the main city's square, Krajina Square, at the entrance of the city's pedestrian walkway. At times, the Walkers reached the city ancient fortress (known as *Kastel*) along the river Vrbas, which flows through the city. The fortress, in state of negligence and progressive deterioration, was pointed at by demonstrators as (another) example of city officials' inattention towards the public good. A few days after the beginning of the protest walks, the park area was fenced off completely, and began being excavated in preparation

for building commercial and residential properties (Fagan and Sircar 2015). The demolition started with the cutting down of trees. According to journalists at the Banja Luka-based independent media platform BUKA, the cutting represented a moment of shock, as 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 2012b).

The demolition of the park fueled the resentment of the dissatisfied citizens (*nezadovoljni građani* as the media called them) against the political elite. The green area became thus the symbol of citizens' resistance and of the deprivation of their decisional and consultation rights ("Parkzin! Izdanje 2" 2012). Similarly, the park trees came to epitomize the destruction of the cultural heritage of Banja Luka, becoming 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. An activist, Tihomir Dakić, explained the symbolic importance of the park by saying: "The destroyed greenery is the smallest problem. The biggest problem is violating of many laws that hopefully someday will be obeyed" (Radoja 2012). And continued: "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).

Few weeks after the inception of the protests, a dozen NGOs from the area drafted and signed a petition calling upon the municipal authorities to halt the destruction of the park, claiming procedural irregularities, and requesting information about the sale of the parkland. They demanded also public access to the documentation relating to the disputed construction permits, in order "to mount a legal challenge to the action by Grand Trade" (Fagan and Sircar 2015, 160). Some of these organizations belonged to an already established coalition of NGOs 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"[10]. Six thousand citizens signed the petition (Lippmann 2012) addressed to the municipal government and the city mayor, Dragoljub Davidović, ironically nicknamed "Zgradoljub" (literally "buildings' lover") by the demonstrators (Toé 2012). On 6 June 2012 the petition, together with the signatures, was filed at the city administrative service. Although the law compelled the city administration to answer to the petition within fifteen legislative days, the appeal never received any response.

At the end of July, another 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). 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[10]. Among them there were engaged academics and students of the university of Banja Luka, who had participated in the

reading group “Language, Ideology and Power” at the Faculty of Philology, active since 2009[10]. The declaration stated 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.

In 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 “partitocracy” [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 are in a time when the ruling oligarchy confirms that we, the ordinary people, are the biggest losers of the war and consequent transition. The oligarchy puts profits above people under the guise of national interest, personal interest above justice, and terror in place of 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 2012c).

The declaration amplified the claims of the protesters beyond the defence of the park, making explicit that their requests tackled not only the privatization of the green area, 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 that Banja Luka citizens experience in their everyday life. In the same bulletin, the demonstrators stated their importance as citizens, by claiming: "We citizens declare that we are not irrelevant, that the authorities are afraid of "the street"! We are in solidarity on the basis of the differences by which they mean to divide us!" (Mujanovic 2018, 148).

The Walkers kept demonstrating until the cheerful parades around the city came to a halt with the approaching of the summer. In late summer, they decided to take a break from the daily marches, with the purpose of resuming 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.

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 to march together towards the central square (BUKA 2012d). 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.[10]

On the streets, the protesters urged their fellow citizens to reflect upon the possibility of changing the society, and contested the candidates to the elections, heckling them by whistling to them[10].

The turnout of the September parades resulted lower than expected, as only 500 people took to the streets, consequence of the apparent drop of the level of energy.

Eventually, the commercial and residential mall was built. Although the protests ultimately failed in the initial goal of saving Picin park, they retain symbolic importance for having been the largest mass mobilization in the RS entity since its foundation. In the short run, the movement of the Walkers is 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 of the same party was instead appointed in his place, apparently also owing to the pressure exercised by the street protests (Radoja 2012). The demonstrations came to a halt after the local elections took place on October 7.

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[10]. In November 2013, almost one year since the end of the street marches, ten participants underwent a court trial and were fined for having crossed against red lights and blocked traffic during the protest walks (BUKA 2013). This episode 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 million debt to the City of Banja Luka for the construction of the business centre. Demanding his arrest, the Walkers raised banners and placed them on the construction site. The placards read: “Where is Mile Radišić?”[10]. On 29 May 2015, several activists and participants in “The Park is Ours” announced on their Facebook page their intention to organize a meeting to mark the third anniversary of the destruction of the park (Radiosarajevo.ba 2015). Although the event did not bring more than a few dozen of people out into the streets, on that occasion the Walkers issued a statement reporting that “the Walkers are still looking for answers! We are not gone, we have not 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 centre[10].

Although with the October 2012 municipal elections the activities of the movement halted, the “Park is Ours” is widely acknowledged as a moment having had emancipatory potential, during which the content of collective identity thus far built over ethnic kinship started to be redefined in favour of a more inclusive concept based on a shared feeling of deprivation – of political rights, of public space, and of freedom of speech. 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 and Herzegovinian society[10], as well as “a significant sign of the potential for collective radicalization of the Bosnian Herzegovinian reality” (Vilenica and Crnomat 2015, 5). As the unfolding of civic activism in the country shows, the 2012 protests in Banka Luka marked out

the beginning of a path for civic and political activism in the region, in particular for what concerns the protest for the commons.

Actors, networks and organizational structure

The movement of the Walkers was composed by a heterogeneous group of individuals from different social background, citizens from across the socio-economic spectrum, political stripes and age groups: from elderly people to parents with children, with a predominance of the younger generations. Amongst those attending the street marches there were cultural and artistic workers, students and professors, as well as labour workers. The social network Facebook served as a tool to connect individuals, and a useful means to plan the different activities, although the organizational structure of the movement was intentionally kept horizontal and loose – for instance, a group of people took care of the logistics such as provision of material resources and decided which action to undertake[10]. 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:

The 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)

As one movement leader recounted, "Nobody claimed the right to be called 'The Park is Ours': we did not have a brand, so every group could use this name if it wanted, and they did so"[10]. Although officially there was no organizer, a group of long-term activists can be identified as movement leaders by means of their influential role, organisational skills, and leading position throughout the protests.

Network dynamics and resource mobilization can help explaining the reasons why "the Park is Ours" movement failed to shift upwards in territorial and social level. At a first glance, the protest events appeared spontaneous, or to put it in the activists' words "neither organized nor coherent"[10]. "It was a bit chaotic in organizational terms (…) but we tried to do our best with few resources", said one of them.[10] Furthermore, initially a high turnout was not expected, as an activist 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. [10]

Nonetheless, an in-depth analysis of the events reveals that collective action emerged by virtue of organized strategic action based on pre-existing network ties of formal and informal type. Since its beginnings, the organizational background of "The Park is Ours" was composed of a multiplicity of

actors, united in a loose way. While a coalition of solidarity comprised of NGOs and domestic and international groups backed the demonstrators, the pre-existing networks with some of these groups facilitated the rise of the movement. Personal contacts among activists, NGOs and grassroots organizations constituted the common ground upon which the opposition rested, and collective action evolved. The activists of Banja Luka held personal contacts with each other before the unfolding of "The Park is Ours" demonstrations, for having organized similar initiatives on a smaller scale 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, previously addressed by the *Oštra Nula* group (Touquet 2012b), or the construction of a hydropower plant on the Vrbas river, an issue that the Center for the Environment raised a couple of years earlier.

It was in particular the grassroots association *Oštra Nula*, one of the NGOs that organized the petition addressing the municipal council, and whose members participated in the protests, that had previous experience in street actions, having staged anti-government protests in early 2010. In a similar fashion, the members of the NGO Center for the Environment were involved in "the Park is Ours" campaign since its onset, insofar as the president of the association had posted a message on Facebook that triggered the first protest. The NGO Center for the Environment was strongly embedded in the local scene, long before the 2012 protests took place. Originally called "Young Researchers of Banja Luka" (*Mladi Istraživači Banja Luke)*, the group was founded by a group of university students concerned with the environment. Besides being considered "the most successful environmental campaigning organization in the country" (Fagan 2008, 645), the association was comprised of young activists involved in raising awareness on environmental problems. Among their initiatives, over the years they collected signatures and staged demonstrations with the purpose of halting the construction of a hydro-electric power plant on the Vrbas river (Fagan 2006), and organized meetings and a youth camp to sensitize upon the issue. Furthermore, the NGO organized "Critical Mass" bike rides in the city to reclaim 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 part of the *re:akcija* civic network.

Banja Luka counts also on an independent web portal, the above-mentioned BUKA[10], whose editor, Aleksandar Trifunović, is a country-wide known journalist, and a veteran of the Serbian *Otpor* movement (Wimmen 2018). Trifunović was also one of the initiators of the 2013 #JMBG protests. BUKA publishes an online magazine and runs 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). The web portal reported extensively on the "Park is Ours" protests, publishing press releases that otherwise would have probably 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 ecological foundation Heinrich Boell in particular provided technical support by printing the two-issues bulletin “Parkzin”. However, it was decided that its logo would not appear on the fanzine in order not to create troubles to the protesters. As a foundation’s spokesperson of the Sarajevo branch claimed, this was aimed at avoiding the movement being discredited as “being on the payroll of the internationals” [10]. Indeed, the mistrust towards the non-governmental sector is so widespread in RS that often activists and demonstrators are accused of receiving funding by external donors, acting in turn in the name of vested interests. Also the local branch of the international NGO Transparency International provided support by printing T-shirts with the logo of the campaign[10], and made its voice heard in support of the Walkers through media declarations.

The activation of network ties at the country-level 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 RS entity’s borders. Nevertheless, the movement organizers did not activate intentionally cross-entity ties during the protests in defence of the park. The reason for this choice is two-fold: first, the organizational weakness of the challengers[10] and the absence, at the time, of a nation-wide structured activist network to which they could refer to. Second, the assumption that a connection with Federation-based organizations or activists could be detrimental to the movement in Banja Luka. 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). Activists in RS are often accused of serving the political oppositions, and therefore working with the aim of destabilizing the entity. Support from groups outside the entity, thus, was perceived as potentially endangering the movement rather that providing it with wider 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)

With these words, Trifunović wished to stress that support from individuals and groups from FBiH would have made the situation more complicated 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 demonstrators of “The Park is Ours”, support from activists and people in FBiH came in the form of personal endorsement of single individuals[10].

Summing up, the human, financial and organizational resources made available through pre-existing local network ties proved crucial to the unfolding 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. The initiators believed also not to have the organizational capacities of expanding the movement besides the city. On the one hand, a network of local media, NGOs and donors afforded the demonstrators with visibility and material resources that fostered mobilization. By giving visibility to the movement's claims and actions, they also 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 "Park is ours" initiative to shift to a higher level and to widen its social base.

Frames and counterframes

In choosing a frame that would best resonate with bystanders, "the Park is Ours" activists strove to widen the discourse by connecting the destruction of a green area considered of public utility with the deprivation of the right to a normal life in Banja Luka. Following what happened during the protests for the preservation of Gezi Park in Istanbul in 2013, which broadened to include a wider range of issues (Milan and Oikonomakis 2018), also in Banja Luka an environmental issues transformed into a "vehicle of transition that exemplified wider social, political, and economic grievances in the country" (Fagan and Sircar 2015, 160). In what a long-term activist called "a struggle for meaning"[10], "the Park is Ours" activists elaborated a cognitive frame that built upon the construction of an inclusive collective identity whose main feature consisted on a shared feeling of deprivation, regardless of ethno-national belonging and social status. To that end, the discursive strategies of movement organizers relied upon the feeling of injustice towards an unresponsive and greedy political class that had enriched itself during the war, and had benefited from the transition process afterwards, to the detriment of the citizenry. This was clearly stated in the declaration issued in September 2012, in which the Walkers defined themselves as: "ordinary people, [those who] are the biggest losers of the war and consequent transition" (BUKA 2012a), a discourse that would be recurrent over the subsequent waves of protest.

The feeling of injustice on which the discursive strategies were elaborated did not stem from the perception of discrimination on ethno-national grounds, but rather from an ostensible betrayal by the representatives elected to serve their constituencies, the "party-led dictatorship of a criminal oligarchy", as the movement's declaration called the establishment in their declaration (BUKA 2012c). During the protest walks, the demonstrators connected the destruction of the park with

other local problems, and soon their 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 2012c). "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 2012c). 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.[10]

Yet, the protesters proved unsuccessful at conveying a frame that would resonate even more with the broader population, thus shifting the scale of their movement past the local level. The discourse was bounded to the local reality, as it targeted specifically the inhabitants 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*), reported on the protestors' news-bulletin, as well as on the billboards carried on the streets. Similarly, the first message that appeared on Facebook denouncing the destruction of the park addressed exclusively the inhabitants of Banja Luka, named "fellow citizens". In sum, the struggle for saving Picin park was broadly portrayed and understood as a local struggle, intended as concerning exclusively the inhabitants of Banja Luka, even in the city of Eastern Sarajevo (Puls Demokratije 2015). In terms of social base, the discourse appealed mostly to a limited part of the population of Banja Luka concerned about environment and urban dynamics, which shared an idea of a collective identity grounded on gender equality, anti-nationalism, and anti-fascism.

The appeal to the unity of the deprived citizens eager to have a normal life and a say in decisions affecting their lives was countered by the elite's counterdiscourse that tried to discredit the movement by perpetuating a nationalistic, divisive discourse. Throughout the unfolding of the protests, local authorities and the media offered an interpretation of the events aimed at discouraging participation, diminishing the potential and significance of the demonstrators by referring to them as "simple strollers". They also called into question the demonstrators' independence accusing them of being manipulated by the political opposition and foreign actors.

Outside Republika Srpska, the park issue remained perceived as of local concern also due to the stigma associated to Banja Luka and its inhabitants by the dominant nationalist narrative. In this regard, a movement activist explains:

This is a problem in the BiH scene: it is 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. This is a huge problem between the activists in BiH.[10]

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

Repertoires of action and the role of opportunities

The repertoires of action adopted during the 2012 wave of protest changed over time. During the rising phase of the mobilization, the protestors adopted demonstrative repertoires, such as distribution of pamphlets and the drafting of a petition. Later on, they deployed tactics with a strong symbolic character, namely peaceful street protests, parades, and small artistic performances. An activist recalls that the marches were not planned in advance, in order to avoid police repression, by saying:

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 every day we would decide where to head. We would never know, and this was a surprise for the police.[10]

Notwithstanding the strong presence of local police during the protest walks, the marches generally unfolded peacefully. Among the street actions that took place on a daily basis, often protesters blew whistles and trumpets, highlighting in this way that they were loudly calling for the truth about the tendering procedure behind the construction building. One of those action performed on June 22, 2012 was named "With noise against silence" (*Bukom protiv tišine*). That day the police blocked the demonstrators heading towards the entity's government in front of the radio-television building of *Republika Srpska*[10]. On that occasion, a demonstrator clashed with the police deployed in defence of the building. Violent episodes targeted isolated individuals, while other forms of intimidation were directed at "the usual suspects", namely the most outspoken activists, invited to the police station for informative talks and also fined once the protests stopped. In response to the protests, "the local police initiated a concerted campaign of intimidation and questioning", recounts Mujanović, "repeatedly accusing the various organizers of breaching the public peace while rarely formally charging them with any crimes. Minor infractions were met with vicious police assaults while both the city and entity government made it clear that the planned construction project would go ahead regardless of public outcry" (Mujanović 2018, 148).

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 marches, inviting the participants to stay composed and calm. 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 stressed the importance of maintaining a non-violent repertoire of action: "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 highlighted, the use violence, recalling the memories of the war, bear the risk to alienate the support of the broader population. "People in general are afraid, and with these protests we broke the wall of fear"[10], explained an activist. The same person said that the movement organizers decided to perform street actions in order to eschew police repression, as "you cannot compete with states' violence"[10]. As Mujanović noted, "the sight of armed police officers shoving and threatening mothers with strollers and dreadlocked students was a public relations nightmare for the Dodik administration" (2018, 148). Talking about the fragile equilibrium between protesters and police forces, one of the leaders of the protests recounted:

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![10]

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.

Summing up, the perceived unwillingness of authorities to negotiate with the demonstrators on the streets, and their readiness to use repression against them, affected the organizers' choice of action repertoires, which remained peaceful throughout time. Since the beginning, municipal authorities proved reluctant to negotiate with the Walkers, as they made evident by leaving unanswered the petition promoted by the NGO coalition, and by refusing to reply to the demands addressing the truth about the tendering procedure of the business centre. The approach of the 2012 local elections created among the movement organizers the perception of widening political opportunities, which had a positive effect on mobilization, as it offered the opportunity for activists

to connect the park issue with other salient topics, like endemic corruption, unemployment, and freedom of speech. By bridging different grievances, movement organizers felt they could gain more leverage on politicians. According to them, this was confirmed in marches' higher rates of participation, leading one of the main organizers to conclude: "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"[10]. The connection between the park issue and the election period became 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*).

Conclusions

The chapter contextualized the case of the "Park is ours" protests by discussing first the wider political and social environment of Banja Luka, where the protests unfolded in 2012. It also examined the factors that did not enable nor facilitate the upwards scale shift of the "Park is ours" citizen initiative outside the city of Banja Luka. Based on these findings, this chapter argued that a combination of factors accounts for the movement's inability to spread outside Banja Luka and to widen its social base besides urbanites. It explained that, although pre-existing local networks among movement organizers fostered the assembling and mobilization of resources, the choice of not activating ties with supporters outside the city undermined the potential for the creation of a wider, cross-entity solidarity front and coalition. Being Bosnia and Herzegovina a divided country, the support coming from individuals and groups perceived as "ethnic others" was considered to potentially undermine rather than to empower the "Park is Ours" movement. Secondly, although the injustice frame elaborated by movement organizers bridged the call for the right to public space with the unaccountability of the political elite, managing to mobilize bystanders for months, it did not resonate outside Banja Luka due to its boundedness to the local reality. This lack of resonance is to be attributed also to the hegemonic nationalist rhetoric associating Banja Luka with "the capital of Serbianhood", which overpowered the injustice discourse the movement organizers had elaborated, making it more difficult to resonate beyond the city borders. Nevertheless, the perception of favourable opportunities for mobilization stemming from the approaching of local election gained support to the movement, increasing attendance at the protest walks and helping it to gain momentum. The fear of violent repression influenced the choice of a peaceful repertoire, which movement organizers adopted with a two-fold purpose: to appear credible to the wider public, and to normalize resistance in a society already traumatized by violence.

Notes

[10] Picin in local language indicates the female reproductive organ.

[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

[10] It was only in 1998 that the back then pro-reformist forces, under the leadership of Milorad Dodik, moved the capital of *Republika Srpska* to Banja Luka from Pale, a village near Sarajevo (Armakolas 2007). Over the years, the reformist ideology of the then pro-reformist forces got substituted by a nationalist line.

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

[10] The meeting took place at *mjesna zajednica,* which can be translated as "local commune" or neighbourhood council. *Mjesne zajednice* constitute a form of local self-government that refers to the smallest political-administrative unit within a municipality. It is a legacy of the Yugoslav system, in which *mjesne zajednice* were part of Yugoslav workers' self-management and constituted the centres of local government, as well as spaces for citizens' participation in solving community problems (Jusić 2014).

[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.
[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

[10] 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. I thank Saša Vejzagić for making this point clear.

[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.

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

[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.

[10] 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 that opposed the

expropriation.

[10] 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).

[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.
[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.
[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016
[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.
[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

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

[10] Interview with Heinrich Boell Foundation spokesperson, Sarajevo, October 2013.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.
[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.
[10] Interview with an activist of the Park je naš movement, Banja Luka, August 2015.
[10] Interview with a professor and activist of the Park je naš movement, via Skype, February 2016.

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

[10] Interview with a representative of the "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.
[10] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

[10] Interview with a representative of the NGO "Center for Environment", Florence, November 2012.

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Chapter 5: The Baby Revolution

Abstract

This chapter explores the protests for babies' rights occurred in Sarajevo over summer 2013, known as #JMBG, Baby revolution, or in the short form "Babylution". The demonstrations were triggered by the case of a seriously ill baby prevented from receiving medical treatment abroad. Given a political dispute among MPs in the national parliament, travel documents could not be issued. The chapter illustrates the events leading to the civic upsurge, from the first car blockade to the one-month occupation of the square in front of the national parliament. It delves into the actors involved and the discursive strategies that movement organizers used to garner support, portraying babies as symbols and innocent victims of a dysfunctional state and unresponsive political class, and addressing corruption and unaccountability of the political elite. Next, it analyses the rhetorical strategies that, conversely, political officers employed to defuse the movement. Following, the chapter investigates the networks and resources that allowed the mobilization to scale beyond the local level, and the role of opportunities and emotions in the choice of action repertoires.

Introduction

The month-long protest over the right of new-borns to get access to ID numbers started in June 2013 in Sarajevo, when a group of citizens occupied the plaza in front of the National Parliament building[10]. They remained in the square for twenty-five consecutive days, kept under surveillance by the riot police. The protests made the headlines internationally as the demonstrators encircled the National Parliament building, impeding the exit of hundreds of MPs and foreign investors who found themselves inside its premises (Milan 2017). The mobilization was quickly nicknamed "Babylution" (short for "Baby Revolution" – *bebolucija* in local language), and became rapidly known also as #JMBG on the blogging service Twitter.

Civil rights stood at the core of the protests, sparked by the case of Belmina Ibrišević, a seriously ill three-month-old baby girl in need of urgent medical treatment outside BiH, but prevented from leaving the country due to the inability of the Ministry of the Interior to allocate her the 13-digit Unique Master Citizen's Number (*Jedinstveni matični broj građana*, JMBG). On the base of that number combination, assigned to every Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizen from birth, personal

documents such as ID cards, passports, and health insurance cards are issued. By identifying every citizen of the country, the JMBG "makes one bureaucratically legible and embeds people as right-bearing and claim-making citizens into the BiH polity" (Jansen 2015, 225). Enraged by the failure of MPs to timely adopt a law allowing the issuance of personal identification numbers to new-borns, the demonstrators occupied the square to voice their deep discontent towards the ruling caste. The occupation attracted support across the country, suggesting a broad consensus on the primacy of human needs over ethno-national categories. The protesters demanded their politicians wholesale resignation, following the growing frustration with their inability to deliver reforms. In the accounts of some scholars, the Babylution represented an attempt to call forth citizenry (Mujkić 2015a), for it requested to "render [Bosnian and Herzegovinian] people legible as citizens" (Jansen 2015, 231). Although the Babylution started and unfolded mainly in the capital, peaceful solidarity rallies took place in the major urban centres of FBiH. Small sit-ins were staged in Banja Luka and some peripheral towns of *Republika Srpska* as well. Similarly to the 2012 protests against the dismantlement of Picin park in Banja Luka, the 2013 mobilizations were participated mostly by middle-class, urban youth, and the families that occupied – or, in the words of the activists, re-appropriated –-the Parliament square in a cheerful way throughout June 2013.

What follows provides a detailed chronology of the events and contextualizes the case in the political and social environment in which it unfolded. A description of the main actors involved in the protests and their organizational strategies comes after, then a section explores the patterns of contention through an in-depth analysis that takes into account the explanatory power of networks, cognitive frames, and opportunities. The final section of the chapter synthetises the findings and provides some concluding remarks.

The cultural and political context of Sarajevo

A secular and multicultural city during the socialist period, Sarajevo underwent demographic changes during and after the 1992-95 war. Throughout the conflict, the city witnessed the longest siege in modern history, lasting from spring 1992 until November 1995 (Donia 2006). In the aftermath of the war, many of the citizens declaring Serbian nationality fled the capital, moving either to Republika Srpska or to Eastern Sarajevo, fearing for their physical security[10]. Following an opposite trend, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees of Muslim background sought refuge in the capital and repopulated it in its aftermath. Nowadays, the majority of people living in the capital think of themselves as belonging to the Bosniak ethno-national category.

In the aftermath of the war, demographic changes affected and reshaped the social fabric of the country and of the capital, reinforcing segregation amongst national communities. The majority of 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 reshuffled the sense of local belonging (Bougarel et al. 2007). As Banja Luka being transformed in the public imaginary into a bulwark of "Serbianhood", in the aftermath of the war Sarajevo underwent a process of de-secularization that turned the capital into a religious point of reference for the population of Muslim background. Over time, the city converted into "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 2012, 145). This cultural shift has been observed especially in everyday interactions and practices, such as "the rise in popularity of Islamic religious customs" (Armakolas 2007, 86). Nowadays, urban transformations and cultural influence from abroad have reshaped the urban landscape and the social and economic fabric of the capital. Resorting to their common cultural and religious background, both the government and non-governmental actors of Turkey endowed educational institutions and cultural centres in Sarajevo, and restored religious buildings across the country that went destroyed during the war. Likewise, investment groups from Gulf states like Qatar and Saudi Arabia financed commercial centres and residential projects that bloomed in the last decade, as well as cultural institutions like the "Gazi-Husrev bey" library, located in the historical centre of the capital. The influx of Arab investments in the country increased since 2010, raising the sharp criticism by part of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society that cannot afford to do shopping or to rent apartment built by and for wealthy businessmen from Middle-East countries (De Noni 2014).

Unlike other urban centres such as Tuzla, Zenica or Mostar, Sarajevo does not count on a strong working class tradition, as it had no industrial vocation. In the past, the city had served as the administrative centre 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 main institutions of the international community. NGOs and international associations incline towards a presence in the city, a concentration that makes the competition for visibility and financial resources particularly evident. More than twenty years since the end of the war, Sarajevo looks like a relatively wealthy and cosmopolitan urban centre, whose living conditions are slightly better than that of other cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Baby revolution: at the origins of the protest

In 2013 the political standstill that impeded new-borns to receive personal documents originated from a six-month-long disagreement amongst MPs 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 the existing law on personal identification numbers unconstitutional, since 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 on the names of some territories of registration within a six-month period from the declaration of unconstitutionality of the law.

As it has happened with many other issues, what resembled a technical matter turned into a pretext for a dispute over the centralization vs. decentralization of the state (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013). MPs could not agree upon the names 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 of belonging, the representatives of Bosniak parties opposed the proposal on the account that it would lead to further ethnicization of the population (Kurtović 2018). 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 a different ID than the citizens of the FBiH. On the one hand, non-Serb MPs depicted 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, 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 the stalemate, the Constitutional Court abolished the law on February 13, 2013. That very day, the law lapsed, hence freezing the new-borns' registration. 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 entity's government unilaterally adopted an *ad hoc* ordinance allowing the new-borns of RS 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).

The siege of the parliament

The onset of the mobilization can be traced back to early June, when 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 Centre "Foundation CPI". The message concerned the story of the sick baby Belmina Ibrišević who, in need of a bone marrow transplant, 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 BiH, whose families often resort to collecting money on the streets to pay for therapy (Ivančić 2013).

The following day, Aleksandar Trifunović, editor of the independent media platform BUKA, published a status on the social media platform Facebook in which he complained about the apathy of his fellow citizens, who shared the story of Belmina on social networks without taking any concrete action. The idea of occupying the square was first envisioned by Ivančić, who replied that he was ready to block the access to the Parliament building with his car in order to give visibility to the issue. However, he claimed, 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.

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[10]. 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 later wrote (Ivančić 2013). Three hours later, in the afternoon, the demonstrators were notified that the Council of Ministers had offered a temporary solution for the baby and their parents to travel abroad, thanks to which Belmina obtained the documents. Considering the issue solved, some demonstrators dispersed, while others decided to keep protesting as they were “dissatisfied with such a makeshift solution” (Jansen 2015, 225). This second group stayed overnight, laying on the concrete outside the Parliament in tents and in sleeping bags (Čuljak and Kovo 2013).

On the first night of occupation, the remaining demonstrators formulated a list of demands that they handed over to the service of the Protocol of the BiH Parliament the following day (Arnautović 2013), which included:

- *The immediate adoption of the Law on ID numbers;*
- *The creation of a state solidarity fund to finance the medical treatment abroad for children who cannot be taken care of within the country;*
- *Compulsory contributions into this fund of MPs and ministers of the Council of Ministers in the amount of 30 per cent of their salaries until the end of their mandate;*
- *The non-prosecution or use of repressive measures towards the protesters that took part in the blockade of the Parliament (“#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.

Coordinated through social networks, on 6 June 2013 the number of people gathering in front of the National Parliament started to increase, flowing in large numbers onto the square. Since early in the morning, parents with kids, many of those affected by the lack of a law on ID numbers (Mujkić 2015a), 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 the demonstrators had grown to a couple of hundred around the time when a parliamentary session was scheduled. 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[10] was invited inside the Parliament to negotiate and, apparently, with the intention to ease the tension on the square. Rumours 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 to explain the reasons of the protests, as detailed by a delegation's member:

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 that it was not against some of them in particular, but against all of them together.[10]

Notwithstanding the risk of being 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 blocked the entrances to the Parliament again, intentioned to prohibit the exit of politicians and lawmakers. 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 solved the ID law issue (Armakolas and Maksimović 2013, 5).

The "Siege of the Parliament" prevented nearly 1,500 persons from leaving the building, of which about 350 were foreign bankers and investors attending the annual assembly of the European Fund for Southeast Europe (OneWorldSee 2013). As Arnautović recounts, protesters took strategic advantage of their presence, although at first they "had no idea they would be there, but later we realized that their presence had been essential" (Arnautović 2013). Only the overnight intervention

of the High Representative Valentin Inzko allowed the evacuation of the "hostages", when it was already 4 am (Milan 2013). At dawn, the HR negotiated the departure of the people remained 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, during which several thousand demonstrators occupied the square day and night.

The re-appropriation of the common space: 25 days of square occupation

On 7 June, the third day of protests, around a thousand demonstrators walked the streets of Sarajevo (Balkan Insight 2013). In the following days, citizens from neighbouring cities joined the protests in the capital, and solidarity rallies were organized in other cities of the country – like Tuzla, Mostar, Bihać, Zenica Brčko, Bugojno, Jajce, Srebrenik, Prijedor, Travnik, and Livno (Čuljak and Kovo 2013). Support from Western Herzegovina and RS proved minimal (Jansen 2015), although solidarity sit-ins were organized in Banja Luka as well, upon a call for participation from Sarajevo's activists[10]. 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[10].

On 12 June, a group of students staged a street protest in Banja Luka over corruption and poor conditions at the university demanding the improvement of the students' residential arrangements. When asked if they had any connection with the demonstrators in Sarajevo, they publicly denied any association (Basta 2013). By stating openly that their grievances were not connected to that of the demonstrators in the capital (Balkan Inside 2013), the students of Banja Luka refused to offer their support to the Babylution, "since such an endorsement might have lost them some support among the nationalists in their own communities" (Kurtović 2018, 46). According to some scholars, the students' behaviour shown that, "despite their dissatisfaction with the official institutions in the Republika Srpska, [they] still defend the legacies of this entity" (Čuljak and Kovo 2013).

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 participated (Čuljak and Kovo 2013, Mujkić 2015a). The demonstrators received support from prominent artistic bands of the countercultural scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which played in solidarity with the cause. Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat parties had withdrawn their representatives from the parliament and the government due to alleged "safety risks" (OneWorldSee 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 the political elite, 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 reading:

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 ID numbers issue. 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 2013a)

On 13 June 2013, the news reported that another sick baby without an ID number, three-month-old Berina Hamidović, had 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, Jansen 2015). 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 was claimed to be the first "emotional 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 mourn the loss. 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 and powerless[10].

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 new-borns to access to civil rights (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve / #JMBG for all, 2013). In the letter, the demonstrators claimed to speak on behalf of the citizens of BiH, and urged to end of the violation of human rights with the following words:

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 the HR's intervention to force the MPs to adopt the legislation by resorting to the so-called Bonn powers[10] he is entitled to. Later on, movement organizers launched an ultimatum to the Parliament, claiming that, if it did not pass the new law, the citizens would dismiss their MPs on 1 July 2013.

The declining phase of the movement

The "Dismissal day" (or "Firing MPs" action) on 1st July 2013, dubbed "a day of civil disobedience" (Kurtović 2018, 54), ended the month of protests. Facing political inertia and the unwillingness of the ruling 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 took place in the proximity of the parliament building whose square, in the meantime, had been secured with metal fences to prevent it from being occupied again. Another demonstration occurred the same day in the city of Tuzla. The appeal to take to the street on 1 July 2013 built upon the importance of non-violence and solidarity, as the following excerpt shows:

The "Dismissal day" action 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 2013b)

On July 1st, the demonstrators, although in a smaller number compared to the previous days (only 2,000 according to the Oslobođenje Portal [2013]), declared the incumbents wholesale dismissal, on account of their being "no longer credible representatives of the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina"(JMBG.org 2013c) for allowing particular interests to supersede public needs. On the streets, individuals coming from all over the country, including supporters from RS and some from Zagreb, chanted slogans addressed to their MPs such as "Resign!" (*Otkaz*). Also the workers of a local 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, movement organizers announced a campaign of non-violent disobedience action through economic boycott, inviting their fellow citizens to stop paying utility bills, fees, and taxes for a week, as a way to show political functionaries that "citizens are their management board, who reward success and punish failure" (Jansen 2015, 232). The press release reported a statement explaining the relevance of these actions as follows:

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 2013d)

However, the protesters disbanded after the demonstration (Mujkić 2016). No further activities were carried out after the *Otkaz* protest and the final concert. Later that day the movement organizers released another communiqué on behalf of the citizens of Bosnia and 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 and to "flagrantly ignoring" citizens' requests (The Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and #JMBG za sve / #JMBG for all, 2013). Given the loss of credibility of their officials, they also urged the members of the international community to "withdraw all your previous invitations to the representatives of BiH to meetings, conferences and other formal events" as a way of pressuring domestic officials to take responsibility and "to do the job they were elected to do". "From today", warned the communiqué, "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[10].

The demonstrators fulfilled only partially their initial goals, and the endeavour left the participants with a widespread sense of defeat and 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", claimed one of the activists (Hodžić 2015, 52). However, through the occupation of the square in Sarajevo, the public space was re-possessed and used as a venue for political activity by a high number of people and for the first time since the end of the war.

According to some, the 2013 wave of protests represented a success, as eventually ID numbers were issued to babies and the protests succeeding in lasting for a long time without turning violent, which is considered a major achievement in a post-conflict and traumatized society as the Bosnian and Herzegovinian one. In the opinion of others, the movement achieved only a partial victory, since the new law on personal numbers, approved in July 2013, recognized different registration areas divided according to entity lines – and therefore institutionalizes further ethno-national division, as Bosnian Serb MPs had requested since the beginning (Sasso 2013). Furthermore, some claimed, the Babylution lost the opportunity to widen the protesters' front including other social groups, and to connect the ID number issue with an in-depth criticism of the overall system.

The role of Sarajevo urbanites and the movement organizational structure

The demonstrators taking to the streets over summer 2013 were mostly urban, well-educated youth, defined as "a relatively small crowd, mobilised by a self-selected set of educated, urban organisers" (Jansen 2015, 225). Families with babies and some middle-age pensioners joined hands with students, activists, young professionals, and NGO practitioners. University students in particular constituted the bulk of protesters, somewhat reflective of the proximity of university faculties to the Parliament building. Familiar with social networks, the youth were often cosmopolitan and retrained bonds 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"[10]. 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.

Throughout the month of protest, bystanders gathered daily at noon on the square in front of the parliament building for small vigils labelled "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”*), to mock the supposed threat that the demonstrators constituted to MPs, after it was revealed that some of them refused to turn up for work owing to a supposed “Bosniak attack on Serbs dressed up as civic activism” (Jansen 2015, 226).

As regards the organizational structure, movement organizers in Sarajevo appointed four working groups to deal with planning, logistics, media communication, and contact with other cities in BiH in which solidarity rallies were staged. According to some interviewees, though, the large size of the working groups prevented them from functioning efficiently. Due 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 Baby revolution the protesters did not succeed in organizing a structured debate through square or neighbourhood assemblies (Milan and Oikonomakis 2018). For instance, although the academic community endorsed the Babylution, the students on the square felt not getting enough involved in the decision-making process. According to a young interviewee, the tendency of some activists of older generations to prevail did not leave room for dialogic exchange, and discouraged students’ participation, “killing their activist potential”[10].

The use of social networks platforms throughout the protests was facilitated by the presence of young activists, who used online social media to provide constant updates on what was happening on the square. The blogging service Twitter allowed participants to post their comments and to tweet their messages about the protests, while the hashtag #JMBG and #JMBGzasve (#JMBG for all) was created in order to collate messages and information concerning the Babylution, launching and following protest events through the #JMBG hashtag. 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 translating the main articles and declarations in foreign languages to facilitate contact with the international press and supporters.

Personal ties, insufficient resources and disruptive groups

The core group of protest organizers[10] was united by personal bonds. Prior to the #JMBG, most of them had been active at the local level, either as activists or as NGO practitioners. Some had also taken part in the *Dosta!* movement, and/or actively participated in the 2008 wave of protest in Sarajevo. However, they had never organized large-scale protests such as the #JMBG in the past, and retained not to have enough experience in coordinating public debates or assemblies involving a large crowd. It was also for this reason that neither public debates nor large assemblies were

organized throughout the twenty-five days of square occupation. While narrating the #JMBG events, a protest leader underscored the scarce organization, and the chaotic situation on the square as follows:

It was a big chaos […]. 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[10].

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. Another element hindering mobilization stood in the fracture inside the protesters' front. On the square, movement organizers were kept busy to distance potentially disruptive actors and keeping violent groups at the margins. At the same time, they strove to ward off the attempts of political parties' members to manipulate the discontent by diverting popular dissatisfaction to their own goals, in an attempt "to align themselves with the protests" (Jansen 2015, 226) and increase their political leverage. Few days into the demonstrations, the organizers found themselves paralyzed in what one activist defined as a "land warfare"[10]. Members of the "Anti-Dayton" nationalist group had joined the square occupants singing the old Bosnian anthem and waving fleur-de-lis flag and coat of arms of the Republic of BiH, used by the Bosnian army during the war, and therefore considered a Bosniak symbol. The #JMBG activists immediately distances themselves from such groups, whose acts were perceived as an attempt at taking the protest over by "bringing ideology into the movement"[10], as one interviewee explained:

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 back the imaginary, perfect Bosnia that never existed, 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.[10]

From the very beginning, the #JMBG protesters refused any mediation from NGOs and political parties, which were barred from participating in the protests for fear that they will hurt protesters' reputation. Nevertheless, some members and sympathizers of political parties, such as the centre-left Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*, SDP), were present on the square, blamed by demonstrators of participating to campaign in favour of their political party. Likewise, a group of local NGO workers and activists "by profession" were accused of having taken the lead of the protests with the purpose of gaining personal visibility, leaving no room for dialogic exchange and therefore limiting the involvement of other individuals. One respondent 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.[10]

The high degree of mistrust towards political parties and the third sector, coupled with the perceived vulnerability of the demonstrators to party manipulation and/or nationalist interference, contributed to increase the scepticism toward protests leaders. An activist accused the self-styled movement spokespersons of sharing "the same elitist mentality of politicians"[10]. Another blamed them for 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"[10].

On the one hand, the efforts of the activists to keep control of the square managed to undermine 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 political 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 could have been useful to build a more composite front. As one of the movement organizers recounts, such a stance did not benefit the protest front:

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.[10]

Also cross-entity solidarity was difficult to build. Although some solidarity rallies were organized in RS, the case of the coterminous protests of students in Banja Luka who distanced themselves from the Babylution proved that cross-entity solidarity is often still conceived as a liability rather than a resource (Wimmen 2018, Basta 2013), as it had been the case during the "Park is Ours" protest wave analysed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the #JMBG movement 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 individuals, among which public figures from cultural and political life, posted pictures portraying them with placards reading "#JMBG". Also the international NGO Amnesty International endorsed the protests, releasing a statement saying that "the delay in adopting a new law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assigning personal identification numbers to the new-born citizens of BiH constitutes an illegal attack on the country's citizens' basic human rights" (Amnesty International 2013).

Notwithstanding the support 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 further 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.

Framing identity: Human beings first

The discursive strategy adopted throughout the Babylution revolved around the antagonism between citizens and their elected representatives. The former was depicted as a loose group of individuals refusing any sort of ethno-national categorization, described by an initiator of the Babylution as it follows:

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[10].

In order to preserve their "moral purity", movement organizers denied any support from and affiliation to political parties, NGOs or other formal organizations, widely perceived as belonging to the realm of the amoral, corrupt and irresponsible (Helms 2007, Touquet 2012). In the Bosnian and Herzegovinian backdrop, the term "apolitical" is interpreted as bereft of the influence of any political party, NGO, or other formal subject considered as "partisan" and as such "immoral" (Helms 2007, 242). By the same token, "politicians are similarly cast as prostitutes who sell themselves and their moral principles for personal gain" (ibid., 239). Therefore, the organizers of the protest intentionally and strategically choose to be identified only as "citizens with their full name and surname" (BUKA 2013), framing their identity as grounded on individual subjectivity, as starkly described in their manifesto:

***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 the 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, stressing the lack of ties between demonstrators and political parties or non-governmental organizations for avoiding charges of betrayal:

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 the #JMBG initiative, but as citizens with their full name and surname, not otherwise. (BUKA 2013)

As the protests unfolded, their beyond-ethnic content was made explicit on the billboards carried on the streets, reading slogans with a strong anti-nationalist content such as: “Neither Serbs, Croats nor Bosniaks: Human beings first” (*Ni Srbi, ni Hrvati, ni Bošnjaci. Ljudska bića prije svega*), “Death to nationalism. This is civil BiH!” (*Smrt nacionalizmu. Ovo je građanska BiH*) and “Fuck the three constituent peoples, start working!”. These slogans targeted the whole political elite, “harshly criticis[ing] the ruling caste in its entirety for its incompetence, arrogance, greed, carelessness, selfishness and especially for its ‘non-work’ [*nerad*]” (Jansen 2015, 227). The immoral collective of power holders, blamed also for spreading a narrative of hatred and fear with the purpose of fuelling divisions among their constituencies, was opposed to the citizens, united irrespective of ethno-national categorization. The cleavage was made evident in the movement documents and press releases, like the open letter addressing the High Representative, which 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). The absence of a law on ID numbers was thus taken to represent a broad, and broadly unjust, system, in which the rights of the most vulnerable, new-borns, were sacrificed “for the national cause just as it once required their ultimate sacrifices” (Mujkić 2015b, 9), instead of being taken care of. Babies, and the cases of Belmina and Berina in particular, came to exemplify “the absurd and frequently outrageous costs borne by Bosnian citizens amid ongoing quarrels between the country’s governing nationalist parties” (Kurtović 2018, 43), bolstering the sense of moral purpose of a protest that refused to be read as “political”. In fact, emphasizing the view of new-borns as “icons of innocence and unmarked humanity” (Jansen 2015, 230) allowed movement organisers to articulate “an apolitical link between survival and bureaucratic routines of statecraft” (ibid.), which resonated among a wider population familiar with the rhetoric of victimhood (Helms 2013). Indeed, the protest had a political content, and was inherently political in its demands, as it requested legislative reform around identification numbers, and “it was meant for the collective public interest”[10]. However, activists strategically refrained from framing their action in political terms to ensure wider support from a population more familiar to be portrayed in the role of the victim rather than claimants of political rights, understood as threatening in the classic reasoning. The emphasis on babies as victims and on protestors as individual citizens ensured that an ultimate political act would not be scrutinized as such. This stance stands in continuity with the discursive strategies adopted during the 2008 protest, in which the same organizers were involved: the message was similarly converging around the physical security of human bodies, meaning naked survival (Jansen 2015). Jansen points at the similarities between the 2008 and 2013 waves of protest also in terms of a rhetoric “of care and images of parenting” used to shame the ruling caste for prioritizing their privileges over basic human responsibility” (2015, 229).

Besides building upon the unfairness of the vulnerability of sick babies, activists pursued a discursive strategy that revolved around the demand for accountability of the incumbents, calling upon them to behave according to the role they had to perform, saying: “*We* just want *them* to do their job” (emphasis added), rather than a wholesale rejection of representative democracy as foreseen by

the Dayton setup. All in all, the organizers stressed that their demands did not concern the Dayton structure or the statehood of BiH. Furthermore, they refused to connect a single issue (the political stalemate over national ID numbers) to the structural context of a deepening crisis of representation, still preventing response to important popular concerns (Milan and Oikonomakis 2018). On the contrary, the organizers of the protest called almost exclusively for the fulfilment of elementary services normally provided to citizens. As a protest leader stated: "What is most unbelievable is that [we are demanding] from elected politicians that do what they were elected to do" (Arnautović 2013). As opposed to the unaccountable political class, the demonstrator was framed as a group of individuals deprived of their dignity both as citizens and human beings, who "took the moral high ground by embracing non-violence" (Simpson 2013). This sharp, moral differentiation was visible on a placard that de-humanized MPs by saying: "We are people, not parliamentarians" (*Ljudi smo, nismo parlamentarci*).

While, on the one hand, this "apolitical" frame gave credibility to the movement, on the other it did not allow the grievances to extend beyond the single, narrow issue of access to basic citizenship rights and "the most elementary forms of statecraft in BiH" (Jansen 2015, 228). The choice of political wariness raised the criticism of a movement leader, who maintained that this debilitated the #JMBG movement, preventing it to becoming more radical in their demands, as he said:

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 BiH 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.[10]

The organizers of the protest circumvented the Dayton conundrum by framing their demands as "through an extremely elementary, drily bureaucratic register of citizenship" (Jansen 2015, 227). Altogether, movement organizers proved incapable, and to a certain extent unwilling, to link the issue of ID numbers with other salient claims, like socio-economic rights, or to bridge it with other demands, like the reform of the Constitution and of the Dayton conundrum, which stands at the origin of the political impasse. The reason is threefold: first, the issue of the Dayton setup is generally considered unsolvable at the domestic level; second, movement organizers retained that talking about the institutional arrangement would shift the debate from baby rights towards a systemic problem; third, expressing a perspective on BiH statehood risked to be broadly perceived as siding with specific political parties.

Playing the ethnic card[10]: Counterframes and attempts at demobilization

Throughout the month of square occupation, political leaders strove to demobilize the movement by resorting to the construction of an alleged external threat, a strategy often used to control the masses in the region (Gagnon Jr 2004, 20). Since the beginning of the protests, the political elite labelled the #JMBG mobilization as an ethnically-driven protest threatening the stability of the country and aimed at depriving Bosnian Serbs of their right to self-determination. Government officials accused the ID protestors of being terrorists (Humanrightshouse.org, 2013), using a nationalist discourse that portrayed the Babylution as "an attempt to intimidate the Bosnian Serb representatives in the parliament in the name of Bosniak unitarism" (Kurtović 2018, 52). Along similar lines, politicians from Serbian nationalist parties based in RS and Croatian nationalist ones of Western Herzegovina claimed that the blockade on the first day of the protest was a "hostage crisis" orchestrated by "Bosniak" parties together with "foreign embassies"" (Jansen 2015, 226). In so doing, policy officials aimed at discrediting the grievances of the demonstrators, denying their political agency. The then RS president Dodik claimed that the protests in Sarajevo were "politically motivated" (OneWorldSee 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, claiming that the protests were a lynch mob against them, and blamed the demonstrators to represent 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 standstill (Sasso 2013).

Both domestic and international media focused on the ethnic composition of the crowd, devoting far less attention to its grievances. In an attempt to counterbalance the authorities' discourses, and the attention given in the media outlets to the ethnicity of protesters, the #JMBG organizers found themselves pressed to constantly prove their neutrality, "eventually forced to justify themselves by their ethnic impartiality, and had to keep pointing out their ethnic diversity, or even their non-political character" (Hakalović 2014). On the one hand, the discourses portraying demonstrators as "ethnically-driven threat" undermined the movement discursive strategy. On the other hand, the need for demonstrators to repeatedly justify their "ethnic impartiality" debilitated the movement, involved in a struggle for meaning that rendered harder to develop a frame encompassing other grievances beyond elementary citizenship rights.

Repertoires of action and the role of opportunities

A rich repertoire of action combined traditional protest practices like street marches, during which the effigies of the politicians from both BiH entities were carried on ridiculing them, to more disruptive acts, such as the occupation of the square. Protests were intentionally kept peaceful, as was the case in the previous protest waves, and the demonstrators collaborated with both authorities and the police. They submitted their demands to the MPs; negotiated through a delegation on the second day of protest; and bargained with the High Representative. The organizers of the protests had publicly called for the use of non-violent methods on the square, announcing that the "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 to keep the demonstrations non-violent, inviting bystanders 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 behaviour 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 2013e)

The riot police adopted a collaborative stance as well, without exercising any kind of violence against the protesters, but rather interacting 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. The perception of lack of violence has been said to have encouraged bystanders to participate in the rallies, diminishing the widespread fear of taking part in public events, and thus

contributing to normalizing acts of resistance in a society traumatized by war. One of the interviewees stressed the necessity and significance of the non-violent repertoire in the light of the fact that social mobilizations in the country has often been socially linked with conflict and political instability. In particular, the Babylution was 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 war[10]. Yet, some protesters and movement leaders criticized the use of non-confrontational repertoires, as in their account it jeopardized the chances of the protest becoming more radical. Also the choice to conclude the month of protest with a cheerful concert sparked the criticism of some participants, who blamed the protest organizers (which he called "the NGO sector"[10]) for having "spectacularized" the demonstrations, turning a contentious action having the potential of "a radical emancipatory moment" [10] into a cheerful event, deprived of any political meaning and potential radical message by "making a concert out of it"[10].

Conclusions

This chapter analysed the 2013 wave of protest known as #JMBG, Baby revolution, or in the short form "Babylution", explaining why the mobilization failed to make an upward scale shift, namely to spread beyond the country's urban centres and to involve social groups other than middle-class urbanites. Specifically, it delved into the composition and organizational aspects of the protesters' front and the internal movement processes like the networking for resources. Next, it explored the discursive strategies that movement organizers used to garner support, and, conversely, the rhetorical strategies employed by political officers to defuse the movement. Finally, it examined the extent to which structural factors and the behaviour of external actors influenced the rhetoric and strategic tactics of the movement.

The analysis showed that the insufficient organization capacities and loose network ties among the individuals and groups participating in the protests proved too feeble to mobilize human and financial resources necessary for the protest to maintain momentum. Similarly, the decision to exclude formal actors like NGOs and political parties from the protesters' front weakened the ability to mobilize resources necessary for collective action. The tendency of some protest leaders to prevail on the square rendered the protesters' front less permeable to the participation of other individuals in the decision-making process, weakening the possibility to build a more transversal front. Furthermore, the chapter reflected on the choice of an apolitical, civic discourse centred on the primacy of elementary citizenship rights, which movement organizers adopted in reaction to the negative connotation the term "politics" has in popular discourse in BiH. The analysis revealed that on the one hand this stance granted the demonstrators the support of the wider citizenry, as the movement appeared less vulnerable to ethnic or party manipulation. On the other hand, the focus on "naked survival" and the discourses portraying the babies as mere victims of the system resonated to the wider population, but impeded the grievances to be amplified and therefore limited other social groups to join the protests. The refusal to shift the discourse past the level of

babies' rights to debate the questions of statehood in BiH maintained the movement centred on civic and human values, preventing response to popular concerns regarding social and systemic change. Ultimately, the analysis pointed out that the choice of non-violent tactics substantiated the "moral purity" and credibility of the protesters, normalizing their acts of resistance in a society still traumatized by memories of war and violence. However, in the account of some participants, such a peaceful repertoire of action prevented the protests from becoming more radical.

Notes

[10] Whereas some scholars refer to the building hosting the national parliament as "Joint Institutions", translating literally from *Skupština zajedničkih institucija Bosne i Hercegovine* (Čuljak and Kovo 2013), I opted for the less confusing term "National Parliament". Similarly, in this chapter 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).

[10] For a thorough account of the situation of Sarajevo's Serbs in the aftermath of the war, see Armakolas 2007.

[10] Interview with Zoran Ivančić, Sarajevo, October 2013.

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

[10] Interview with Zoran Ivančić, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with an activist of "Park is ours" initiative, Banja Luka, August 2015.

[10] Interview with Zoran Ivančić, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with an activist in the *Dosta!* and #JMBG movement, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] The so-called "Bonn Powers" refer to the authority granted by the PIC to the High Representative during a meeting in Bonn (Germany) in 1997. With the Bonn Declaration, the OHR is entrusted as the highest and ultimate authority in the country, authorized to "facilitate" the resolution of any difficulties arising in connection with the civilian implementation of the Dayton agreement, with the intention to avoid delays in its implementation. Specifically, the Bonn powers enable the OHR to adopt binding decisions in case local parties are unable or unwilling to act, and to dismiss public officials from office in case they violate legal commitment or the Dayton Agreement.

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO president, Sarajevo, October 2013

[10] Interview with a journalist and participant to the 2013 protest, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with a student and #JMBG activist, Sarajevo, April 2014. However, it should be noted that the few attempts to organize student protests failed owing also to the students' passive attitude towards politics in general, as well as to the influence of some political parties financing students' unions.

[10] Although they prefer to be called "facilitators", to stress the spontaneous characters of the mobilization (Interview with a #JMBG activist, Sarajevo, July 2013).

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO practitioner, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO president, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO practitioner, Sarajevo, October 2013.

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[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO president, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist and NGO president, Sarajevo, October 2013.

[10] Interview with a #JMBG activist, Sarajevo, July 2013.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] I refer here to the possibility of each constituent people to resort to the constitutional right of veto to block the adoption or implementation of specific policy proposals in case a vital interest of the ethno-national group is deemed threatened or endangered.

[10] Interview with a think tank representative, Sarajevo, July 2013.

[10] By using the term "NGO sector", the informant refers to the third sector. As I have already explained, in BiH the concepts of "civil society", "third sector", and "NGO" often overlap in the public opinion, and this reflects on the spoken language.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

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Chapter 6: The 2014 Social Uprising

Abstract

This chapter explores the 2014 Social Uprising, triggered by a workers' rally in the former industrial hub of Tuzla. What began as a demonstration in response to the closing of factories in the area and to reclaim months of unpaid wages, rapidly turned into the largest and most violent unrest in the post-war history of the country. The Social Uprising manifested no ethnic character in its content and spread almost state-wide – although predominantly all over the Federation of BiH. The chapter explores in-depth the context of Tuzla, where the protest broke out; it unearths the actors of the protests and their organizational structure, focusing in particular on the citizens' assemblies known as plena, constituted in the aftermath of the initial riots. Next, the chapter investigates the factors allowing a workers' rally to spark mass protests in a number of BiH cities and to broaden the social base of protesters to diverse groups: the role of resources, the discursive frames devised for the protests, which insisted on socio-economic justice, and the change of action repertoire from an initially violent and disruptive to a peaceful one, also as a consequence of the moral outrage provoked by the use of violence against the demonstrators.

Introduction

February 2014 saw the rise of protests over corruption and unemployment that became known as "social unrest" or "Social Uprising" (*socijalna pobuna* in local language), a movement that reflected the widespread dissatisfaction with the dire socio-economic condition of the country and the unwillingness of the elite to improve the situation. In the media outlets, this wave of protest has been labelled also 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 2014 demonstrations differ from the previous contentious events occurred in the country for their violent unset, and for they brought socio-economic issues to the foreground, catalysing the long-simmering discontent of

almost all sectors of population. The upheaval erupted in early February 2014 in the city of Tuzla, spawned by a rally of disenfranchised workers of the bankrupted factories of the area. On February 5th, the gathering was answered with heavy state violence, as the riot police intervened to suppress the demonstration. In response, protestors reacted violently, bringing about a wave of mass protests that propelled the country into the global media spotlight. On the streets, the demonstrators lamented the increasing levels of unemployment, the loss of labour and social security rights, and questioned the legitimacy of the domestic authorities, blamed for failing to fulfil their duties as citizen representatives.

Compared to the previous protest waves analysed in this volume, the Social Uprising witnessed a higher turnout and large diffusion across the country. The social base of the demonstrators expanded as well, including individuals from all walks of life. The 2014 protests marked a shift also in terms of contentious practices, owing to the high degree of radicalization that "creat[ed] the biggest challenge to the post-war Bosnian polity" (Fagan and Sircar 2015, 161). Not only this wave of protest was the most violent and the most sustained among the three waves analysed here; it also represented a turning point in the recent history of the country. Some scholars maintained that the 2014 uprising constituted thus far "the most significant bottom-up challenge to ethnically constituted disorder, bypassing ethnic divisions in favour of a proto-civic sense of common citizenship and class solidarity" (Majstorović et al. 2016, 3). Others claimed that it 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 2014a). Other argued that the 2014 protests "marked the first time since the end of the Bosnian wars in 1995 where citizen came out *en masse* to protest – not either in support of or against politicians, but rather against the characteristics of politics itself in the country" (Fagan and Sircar 2015, 161).

Although long-term observers of the country's socio-political dynamics did not expect Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens to be ripe for large-scale, violent protests overcoming ethno-national allegiances, the conditions for discontent were there, in spite of not having "found a public outlet before" (BiH protest files 2014a). This chapter explains how the rage against worsening living conditions and anger upon the political elite transformed into months of street protests and public assemblies. What follows traces the development of the uprising, unveiling the dynamics underneath its eruption in Tuzla first and its diffusion to other towns and urban centres across the country later. The remainder of the chapter delves into the main actors involved in the protests and their organizational structure, prior to explaining the factors accounting for the emergence of the Social Uprising and for its shift from the local to the nearly state level, the broadening of the base to diverse social groups, and the change of action repertoire. The next section delves into the political background of Tuzla, where the protest first broke out.

Tuzla, a city with a working class tradition

Located in the north-eastern part of the country, Tuzla is the third largest city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an industrial vocation since the Austro-Hungarian times. Due to the collapse of the Yugoslav market and the dismantlement of the main companies and their equipment in the aftermath of the 1992-95 war, currently the industrial sector provides only a relatively small number of workplaces. Over time, the fame of Tuzla has been built on the narrative of a peculiar historical legacy, and of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and anti-fascist community, having a tradition of tolerance and resistance (Calori 2015). Throughout and after the war, the city managed to preserve its multi-ethnic character and its tradition of resistance, making it a unique case in the country (Armakolas 2011a). 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 counted on a multicultural background. Tuzla holds also a symbolic importance in the history of contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, having been the centre 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), while during wartime the non-nationalist movement local Forum of Tuzla's citizens "gathered the support of several thousand citizens around a civic political platform that confronted the local radical nationalists" (Armakolas 2011b, 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 centre of the town on a suggestive date, 25 May, marking Tito's birthday and Youth's Day (*Dan Mladosti*) during Yugoslav time.

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. 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). 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 nearby 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 constituted the "Workers' Aid for Tuzla" association which provided 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).

Nowadays, the population of Tuzla is estimated to be comprised mostly of individuals defining themselves as Bosnian Muslims. At the time the protests erupted, the city was known for being a stronghold of the allegedly multi-ethnic and centre-left Social Democratic Party. However, the Party

of Democratic Action, the main Bosniak national party, won for the first time the general elections held in the aftermath of the uprising in October 2014.

The 2014 Social Uprising

A violent beginning

On 5 February, 2014 laid-off workers of the recently privatized factories of Tuzla gathered to protest, as they had already done several times in the past. 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. On the streets, 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 2018). All their factories had in fact bankrupted after the privatization process that, from the 1990s onwards, gradually transferred ownership and power of industrial assets from the socialist state to private entrepreneurs (Pepić 2015). In the process of conversion of social to state property, political parties and former warlords enriched themselves through accumulation by dispossession (Pugh 2005). Nationalist profiteers undervalued the once-state-owned enterprises that were for sale, burdening them with bank loans and debts, and in many cases left the employees unable to collect salaries, pensions, and healthcare benefits.

On February 5th, some local trade unions and the association of the unemployed of the Tuzla canton called for the rally, informally announced also with a post published on the social networks Facebook by a group in support of the Tuzla trade unions called "50,000 people for a better tomorrow" (*50.000 za bolje sutra*). Gathered in front of the Tuzla canton's court, the workers marched towards the government building[10]. When they attempted to forcibly break into its premises, 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, and the events succeeded rapidly since. In response to the police crackdown on the workers, demonstrators on the streets started to hurl eggs and stones against the building's walls. The police again charged the demonstrators deploying batons, tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets to disperse them (Busuladžić 2015). Students and other sectors 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. The traffic was blocked for several hours and, by sunset, the turmoil had left about twenty-seven people arrested, while another twenty-three were injured (Ikić-Cook and Jukić 2014). 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 Tuzla government building, hurling furniture from the upper stories and throwing it from the windows (Dzidić 2014).

The repression of the workers' protest in Tuzla acted as a catalyst for mobilization, triggering an unprecedented wave of solidarity across the country. Like a domino effect, the riots spread to multiple cities and towns in the country. The rage of people mounted with the unfolding of the events, fuelled by the images of the destructive rampage across the country projected by the mainstream media. Violent demonstrations lasted for almost a week, taking place, on a smaller scale, also in medium-size towns like Jajce, Brčko, Konjic, Srebrenik, Gračanica, Zavidovići, Maglaj, Fojnica, and Donji Vakuf. In some cases, the rallies in solidarity with the workers in Tuzla turned into attacks on official buildings and violent scuffles with the police, in particular in the urban centres of Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, and Bihać.

In Sarajevo, on 6 February 2014 a handful of protestors participated in the peaceful solidarity sit-in organized in front of the city canton's building, while the day after around 3,000 people poured onto the streets (Hodžić 2015), where a group of youngers threw Molotov's cocktails and stones against the canton government building, emulating the actions of Tuzla. The Presidency building, and both the canton and the town council edifices, became the target of the rage. 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, and clashes were reported between police and demonstrators in some areas of the city. However, rumours had it that the police had been ordered not to attack the protesters[10]. 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 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 and of police brutality against the protesters in Tuzla activated memories of previous conflict, with a strong emotional impact on the public opinion, reminiscent of war atrocity.

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 of Zenica, 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[10].

In Bihać, a former industrial town at the border with Croatia, initially the protests witnessed neither violence nor a high turnout. On the second day of unrest young people were reported crashing the windows of the canton's government, ditching and setting cars alight. Following this violent turn, between 3,000 and 5,000 people poured onto the streets of the city[10].

The riots faded around 10 February, followed by a series of high-level resignations: 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. Notwithstanding being largely contained to the Federation of BiH, some demonstrations took place in form of solidarity rallies in *Republika Srpska* as well. Solidarity support groups were set up in the cities of Banja Luka, Prijedor, and Gradiška (Majstorović et al. 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 assembled in the city of Prijedor as well, while on 9 February a hundred-participant gathering in Bijeljina, a mid-size town located near to the Serbian border, met with the counter-protest organized by Serbian nationalists (Oslobođenje.ba 2014). 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, the resignation of the leader of the RS veterans association, and demanding better living conditions[10] (Lippmann 2014). In the region, sit-ins in solidarity with protestors in BiH were staged in the bordering countries of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia around mid-February 2014. In Serbia, a solidarity protest encountered the opposition of a few Serbian nationalists, who organized a counter-demonstration in response (Barlovac 2014).

From 8 February to mid-May 2014: protests and plena

After a violent beginning, characterized by riots and lootings, a peaceful period followed, during which the self-organised citizens' participatory assemblies called "plena" were staged. A few days after the outbreak of the riots, some activists took the initiative to organize public assemblies open to the citizenry, "as a means of providing voices for their grievances" (Fagan and Sircar 2015, 160). Born out of the need to discuss and make sense of the violent happenings, the plena were conceived also as a way to facilitate the communication across different actors present on the streets. On 7 February, after the local government's building was set ablaze and the government of Tuzla's canton submitted its resignations, some activists of Tuzla decided to gather together in the premises of

Kuća Plamena Mira (the House of the Peace Flame).[10] The organizational model of plena spread from Tuzla throughout the country. On 12 February in Sarajevo well-known activists, who had played a pivotal role already in occasion of the 2013 Babylution, invited the demonstrators to gather inside the premises of Sarajevo's Student radio (*Studentski radio*), hosted in a building of the university campus. There, they strove to articulate the demands emerging from the public. As the crowd was so large that it could not fit into the small space available, the radio provided live streaming to inform those standing outside the building about what was discussed inside[10]. 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 centre. Following Tuzla and Sarajevo, a plenum was set up in the city Mostar (BiH protest files 2014b) on 13 February, when around 400 citizens gathered in the main hall of the Mostar's Youth Centre (*Omladinski Kulturni Centar*, OKC) Abrašević[10], a cultural and political space that "vocally refuses to be identified along ethno-national lines" (Carabelli 2013, 55). Between February and March, plena took shape in more than twenty different towns and cities across the country[10], although the majority were set up in the territory of FBiH.

In the meantime, protests unfolded across the country almost on a daily basis. At the height of the mobilisation, the months of February and March 2014, several thousand people consistently took peacefully to the streets in the main urban centres of the country. The number of demonstrators declined over time, though. Around mid-March, the plena started to run out of steam and slowly withered away (Balkan Insight 2014b). 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 fulfilment of the plena' requests witnessed only sparse participation. The event, staged in front of the FBiH government in Sarajevo, was dubbed "The plenum of the plena" (*Plenum Plenuma*), and aimed at gathering the participants to all the plena across the country.

The May day parade and the floods

On the heels of the protests, in Tuzla several workers had organized into an independent trade union called *Sindikat Solidarnosti* (workers' union "Solidarity"), alternative to the official trade unions closed to and controlled by political parties. *Solidarnost* aimed at bringing together individuals who had been dismissed from jobs in Tuzla factories and all over the country, regardless of cantons' and entities' borders (Milan 2018). On 1 May, some of the members of the new trade union, together with participants to plena, organized a May Day parade in the streets of Tuzla and Mostar[10]. Around 1,500 people gathered in Tuzla (Brkić 2014) and about a hundred in Mostar, with the purpose of reminding the country that the workers' struggle was far from over, and that economic hardship affected all social sectors bearing no relation to national or religious affiliation [10]. A banner raised in the main square of Mostar read: "I do not celebrate non-work" (*Ne slavim nerad*), a message

addressing the hardship of post-war era, which had left the workers with “nothing to celebrate” on this iconic holiday (Kurtović 2016).

In an attempt to gain media attention, on 7 May 2014 some plena participants organized a march called “Freedom March: A trip without return” (*Marš Slobode: Put bez povratka*), to demand the resignation of the Federal government and the acceptance of the plena' requests. The demonstrators reached Sarajevo from the surrounding cities on foot two days later, assembling in front of the FBiH government building on May 9 (Milan 2014). That day a solemn ceremony, attended by public authorities and foreign officials, marked the reopening of the building that housed the old National Library (*Vijećnica*) since 1949. The National Library had also served as city hall during the Hapsburg period, and was finally made available to the public after Serb shelling set it ablaze in August 1992. As the demonstrators arrived in front of the National Library, police officers forced them back. Nevertheless, they continued protesting on the other side of the Miljačka river flowing in front of the library. While the solemn opening ceremony was held in front of the brand-new facade of the library, the demonstrators were relegated to the opposite side, and the slogans they chanted overpowered by the music of the orchestra playing and commemorating the centennial of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Some protesters, amongst which there were construction workers, former library workers, and members of syndicate *Solidarnost* (Rexhepi 2018), wore a mask representing the face of Gavrilo Princip, a young member of the organization “Young Bosnia” (*Mlada Bosna*) who had murdered the Archduke to free the country from Austro-Hungarian domination. Gavrilo Princip was thus taken as a symbol of the contemporary battle against neo-colonial rule of the EU on the country (Rexhepi 2018). With their protests, the demonstrators wished to criticize also the designation of the building that, renovated with EU funds, was transformed into a private event space having a commercial character rather than being devoted to the public use it had prior to the war. Given the absence of a university public library in the city, the demonstrators demanded the designation of the building to its old function.

The 2014 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 drop in participation, in several towns the remaining plena cells transformed into “a sort of humanitarian aid organisation” providing first aid to people in need (BiH protest files 2014c), and coordinating the volunteers who provided assistance to the victims of the flood. Often people active in the plena arranged transportation to drive students, volunteers, and aid material from the main towns to the villages hit by the inundation. In some cases, relief coordinated through plena solidarity networks reached the affected areas faster than the aid provided by local authorities, unable to react in a timely fashion to the disaster.

The decline of the plenum movement and its legacy

The plena represented the main novelty of the 2014 wave of protest, and the first bottom-up attempt to articulate the demands of the protesters before presenting them to the policy-makers, contributing to enacting citizenship in the country (Milan 2017a). However, after a couple of months of activity the citizen assemblies remained mainly places for the expression of discontent, and dissenting voices over plena's and movement's ultimate aims monopolized the debate. Within a few months, the plena ceased to be active, and the movement declined both in the extent of mobilization and in public visibility in mainstream media. According to some, the energy of the plena depleted for the sparse availability of spaces where people could converge, meet and organize, discouraging thus participation[10]. In the opinion of others, the assemblies resented the vulnerability to political parties' interference[10]. No agreement could be reached about the future of the participatory assemblies. Their purpose remained vague and "much of the debate focused on what they oppose rather than on viable alternatives" (Bieber and Brentin 2018, 5). After a couple of months of activity, in fact, the debate revolved around the role that the plena were expected to play, and on the form they should take. While some conceived them as merely arenas for public debate, others envisaged the public assemblies as a corrective to the system of representative democracy aimed at guiding the governments forward[10]. Still others thought that plena should transform into more structured political organizations, such as pressure groups, or to perform a watchdog function[10]; whereas some suggested that the government should recognize the plena as official counterparts. Several people attributed the failure of the plena to the ineffectiveness of the direct-democratic method of decision-making that ruled the assemblies, to their openness and the unfamiliarity of its participants with the method of direct decision making (Marković 2015).

The uncertainty concerning the role of citizen assemblies provoked internal frictions among activists and plena participants. The plenum of Sarajevo was particularly difficult to govern, as the core of activists in the capital was more heterogeneous than in other cities, while the high numbers of individuals participating made it more difficult to handle it[10], one of the reasons leading to its split after a couple of months of activity. In Tuzla, the local plenum supported the appointment of a technical government to substitute the municipality's vacant cabinet, which had resigned few days after the February riots. However, the new government step down in November 2014. In Mostar, the participation to the plenary assemblies slowly decreased due to external pressure and intimidation towards its leading members[10]. Whereas other plena dissolved, some of them, like these in Zenica and Gračanica, remained active in different 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 discontent towards institutions and the political elite continued to be displayed in other ways once the protests faded and the plena ceased to be active.

The plena as deliberative fora

Plena constituted the main novelty of the 2014 protests, providing a platform where grievances, resentment and dissatisfaction could be voiced, elaborated and discussed. After the riots, activists shifted to more discursive and direct democratic forms of engagement, channelling collective discontent and striving to bridge the different strands of opposition movements and diverse social groups on the streets, and to prevent further escalation of violence. The establishment of plena provided thus the public and free space necessary for transforming and aggregating the diverse visions of various components of the movement into a shared discourse. Mainly retirees, but also workers, unemployed, young activists and professionals articulated their demands in assemblies that became "the voices of the street", where the grievances of "the impoverished, the disenfranchised, the workers who haven't been paid for years, pensioners who dig in the trash for food, the marginalized youth (…) have been loud and clear" ("Glas Slobode broj 3" 2014, 14). Plena 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 2014a). Some saw in these assemblies an emancipatory and transformative potential, stemming from their being "a space without restrictions"[10], "the real, and the only, democracy" (BiH protest files 2014e), "the celebration of democracy and tolerance" (Radiosarajevo.ba 2014). Other said that plena represented "a form of exercising the idea of direct democracy" (Marković 2015). Open to the participation of the citizenry, the assemblies were conceived as free spaces in which individuals could have a say on issues concerning their lives, deepening the concept of citizenship intended as the simple act of casting a 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 plena the principle of representative democracy, which entails the vote for elected officials, was rejected in favour of an alternative model of direct democracy grounded in the absence of any intermediary. The assemblies were leaderless, as nobody was entitled to represent anybody else, nor to speak on his/her behalf, and functioned according to a direct democratic method of decision-making. Often long-term activists acted as "moderators" by leading the discussions, rotating at every session, and chosen to perform this role at the end of each plenum's meeting and by means of public vote. While the plena recalled to some the League of the Communist of Yugoslavia Central Committee[10], the assemblies share several features with the deliberative practices of the *acampadas,* forms of organization characterized by gatherings taking place in public spaces, and open to the participation of the population at large, emerged in Spain during the 2011 Indignados protests (della Porta 2015). The plena of Bosnia and Herzegovina drew also from the 2008-09 student protest movement started in Croatia and spread to other universities in the former Yugoslav countries in the same period, demanding the right to free education (Kraft 2015). During the occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb in 2009, for the first time the students adopted discussion forums (called "plena") as organizational structure, following the directives later 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, described the organization of the students' occupation for it to be used by other

activists (Bousquet 2011). In May 2009, also the Faculty of Humanities in Tuzla was occupied for one day, during which the students adopted plenary sessions to discuss and articulate their demands. They then replicated in 2014 the model of the 2009 assemblies, as it had been perceived as viable and hence transferable to other settings.

During the Social Uprising, each plenum followed its own organizational path. By and large, the assemblies worked in a decentralized way that envisaged issue-related working groups dealing with, among other issues, media, education and culture, social problems, cooperation among plena across the country, problems of war veterans, legal issues, and so forth. In Tuzla, each ministry was allocated a working group, this resulting in twelve working groups in total[10]. Demands that arose during the plenary sessions were collected and passed on to working groups tasked with reformulating them in a coherent way before handing them on to the targeted authorities. Once re-elaborated, the demands returned again to the plenum for a final vote. The voting procedure followed the rule "One person, one vote", this meaning that every participant in the plenum had the right to equal representation. Thus, the 2014 plenums could be considered as having a prefigurative character, as the means employed shaped their ultimate objectives, prefiguring in themselves an alternative (Milan 2017a). Specifically, citizen-led assemblies prefigured a more egalitarian society working through direct-democratic means of decision-making, developing in this way "modes of interaction embodying a new model of citizenship at odds with the existing one based on the institutionalization of ethno-national categories" (Milan 2017a, 1347). The voting options available included to cast a vote either "for" or "against", with no possibility to abstain[10]. In Mostar and some other towns no working group was envisaged, as the different issues were collectively discussed during the open assemblies[10]. As a general rule, in all the plena no participant was allowed to take the stage for more than two minutes, before handing the microphone to the next person[10]. Whereas during prior waves of protest no stable state-wide network was established, in 2014 all the plena of the country sent their representatives to each other's meeting, and strove to coordinate their actions through an organizational body called "interplenum". 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 plena reproduced the decentralized set up of the country.

In the same line of "The Park is Ours" and the Babylution demonstrations, political parties, NGOs, and trade unions were ousted from the public fora, their members being granted the possibility of taking part in the assemblies as individual subjects. Nevertheless, NGOs practitioners and prominent figures of the cultural and artistic scene played a leading role in the debates, acting as moderators and spokespersons in the plena, and being thus widely recognized as a sort of "informal community leaders". The plena witnessed the massive participation of citizens, among which many elderly people, who often employed their two-minute time to utter their discontent and personal difficulties, and to lament the worsening of their living conditions as compared to the socialist or pre-war period. 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 plena as “psychotherapy sessions” (Antić 2014), in spite of it not being the initial purpose. Activists and protest leaders often found themselves unprepared and unable to cope with the trauma and the suffering released during the assemblies, a difficulty pointed out by an activist in the following way:

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 publicly, 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.[10]

Although the direct-democratic and horizontal decision-making model of plena encountered different kinds of criticism, according to many respondents it helped the participants to engage in discursive activities. Discussing publicly issues concerning daily life fostered the collective expression and articulation of personal thoughts and needs. Such a participatory and deliberative stance had been so far unusual in a country which presents several constraints to citizens participation in the decision-making process, and in which ordinary individuals do not engage often openly in political discourse[10]. Yet, the function of plena as both deliberative practices and spaces in which to articulate demands was to a degree misunderstood, and at times participants interpreted plena as being formal subjects having potentially an influential impact on decision-makers. In this regard, an activist elaborates on the difference between plena as a practice rather than a subject by saying the following:

Plenum is not an association or an organization or a group. It is just a method of work. Therefore, it cannot organize anything: just like you cannot say that the protest organized a festival, or that the meeting organized a strike[10]*.*

Regarding the content of the demands that emerged in the assemblies, material concerns, labour rights and the revision of the privatization process of bankrupted companies were at stake since the beginning. 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 grievances concerned the suppression of benefits in institutions and public administration, among which the "white bread" allowance[10]; the containing of maximum salaries of elected officials; the improvement of social welfare measures; and the suspension of criminal procedures against the demonstrators (Karamehmedović 2014). On the streets and in the plena, 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, they voiced their "screaming at Europe for salvation" (Jansen 2015, 177), by raising a banner reading: "EU, we are the one *[sic]* with whom you should talk". The message wanted to call the attention of the EU to the needs of BiH's citizens, inviting EU's policy-makers to listen to citizens rather than continuing to legitimize the domestic political elite.

Networks and resources

The workers and the rioters

Two social groups specifically played an important role in the 2014 uprising: the workers and the rioters. Different in age and background, the workers triggered the demonstrations in Tuzla, while the "hooligans" were held responsible of the riots that ensued. The core of protesters was made up of pensioners and middle-age individuals who, according to a participant, had nothing to lose, as "their pensions are guaranteed"[10], contrary to other individuals for whom taking to the streets risks to undermine the possibility to get a job, or even provoking its lost. The disenfranchised workers that set in motion the February 2014 upsurge had started to protest years before, although their cause came into the global spotlight only once the police brutally repressed the demonstration they had organized on 5 February 2014. The redundant workers had once been employed in five companies of the area[10], three of which were under the aegis of the former state-run salt mine conglomerate SodaSo until 2002, privatized in the past decade. Following its privatization, the major shareholder of the DITA laundry detergent company began to pay minimal wages to the workers, and to give them meal vouchers only in bonds rather than in cash (Busuladžić 2015). After an unsuccessful four-year internal struggle against the management, the employees started to manifest their dissent openly, staging strikes in 2011 and 2012 to demand 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 organized 24-hour pickets outside the factory premises in 2013, to later file a lawsuit against the private companies that had temporarily taken over the production plant, yet without succeeding in prosecuting the owners. The other workers who

participated to the joint protest of February share a similar history of DITA, marked by bankruptcy and shut downs after the privatization, due to irresponsible management and mishandled privatization process that brought the workforce to the edge of existence (BiH protest files 2014d). The workers had also previously experimented other means of contention, such as hunger strikes, pickets, and marches to raise awareness of their desperate situation, before joining their peers in February 2014 in voicing their discontent and urging the government to revise the privatization process of their companies.

Besides disenfranchised workers, individuals of different generations and backgrounds joined at the different stages of the unrest. As was evident in the media footage, at first mostly high school students and young football fans stormed the public buildings and ravaged the cities, ransacking the public buildings during the three-day-long riots. Media and politicians rapidly labelled them as "hooligans", a term quickly adopted by the population at large, to the point that also an interviewee referred to these youngsters as "hooligans prepared to wreck the symbols of the state"[10]. According to a witness, these youngsters came from the suburbs of Sarajevo, from at-risk neighbourhoods of Dobrinja and Alipašino Polje[10], and probably had never taken part in street protests previously[10]. Whereas some saw on these young rioters "victimized and disenfranchised children of demobilized fighters, unemployed mothers and pathologized society that offered them no liveable 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.). The youngsters seemed to vanish as soon as the situation calmed down, and very few of them showed up in the plena.

Tuzla and the working class

The plena emerged in the aftermath of the riots built upon pre-existing network ties and coalitions of solidarity made available in particular during earlier waves of protests. As explained above, the workers of the bankrupted factories of Tuzla had previously developed robust ties among themselves. Over the years, they had advocated for access to salaries, income 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 a poor organizational strategy and scarce material resources prevented them from being more vocal, and from involving other social groups in support of their struggle. Similarly, the workers' scarcity of material and organizational resources had previously prevented their protests from becoming more visible[10].

The support of the wider population towards workers stemmed also from the high level of credibility that the category possesses in a country having a socialist legacy. The wider public perceived the workforce as particularly entitled to take to the streets for having been deprived of the social rights and social policies it benefited from during the socialist period. Hence, in the collective imaginary the workers came to represent the symbol of a "golden age" of social rights and welfare services. During socialist time, the working class constituted an essential means for constructing the imaginary of a cosmopolitan, internationalist, modern, and supranational identity of the Yugoslavs (Petrović 2013). An activist stressed the strong mobilizing potential of the working class by claiming that it enjoys a different status as compared to other social groups, which makes them "qualitatively different" from the NGOs, the discontent or the disappointed intelligentsia[10]. Along the same line, Petrović argued that the memory of socialist industrial labour bears still a potential to articulate resistance in public debates (2013), mobilizing "affect, agency, and the language around which dissent (and solidarity) and engendered and articulated" (Rexhepi 2018, 33). Following the collapse of Yugoslavia, and the privatization of the industrial sector that ensued, the role of workers declined dramatically. From being a constitutive element of the society, they 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 they are often portrayed as the most visible symbol of the economic devolution of the country.

Whereas the coalition formed around the workers in Tuzla proved crucial in transforming what could have remained an umpteenth, standalone protest into the trigger for a wider uprising, the contribution of the young cohorts in terms of resources, such as expertise, knowledge, strategies, and contacts with other individuals and groups outside the city proved determining to build solidarity networks all over the country. The role of the youth could be better understood if put into the context of Tuzla, a thriving city with regard to youth activism. Several youngsters involved in the 2014 plena had supported the disenfranchised workers in their previous struggles and strikes, and often had been engaged in youth associations and in political activism for years. The occupation of the Faculty of Humanities of Tuzla in 2009 had generated strong ties among the participants, bringing together several activist groups and creating new solidarities amongst them (Eminagić and Vujović 2013). In sum, the context of Tuzla provided for dense community ties among different individuals coming for manifold social groups, which in turn allowed the formation of a strong coalition able to gain leverage and draw into action different subjects.

The plenum of Sarajevo

In Sarajevo, the broad, heterogenous protest front comprised pensioners, unemployed and activists made it possible to organize both plena and protests. The informal network of activists, in contact since the previous waves of demonstrations, facilitated the emergence of the plenum and the coordination of protest actions. Long-term activists organized the first plenum in the capital by

building on the existing ties among long-term activists in the city, who invited demonstrators to join the public assembly at the *Studentski radio* on the first day of protests[10]. The young professionals 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. Many contacts among young activists in Sarajevo had been established during the 2013 Babylution, while some young people counted on previous militancy in the student movement outside BiH. Many of them had studied abroad, and some had been involved in the 2009 student movement in Croatia and Serbia, before returning to BiH[10]. Acting as moderators in the plena, these activists behaved like bridges between diverse individuals, using Tuzla as "a source of legitimacy"[10], and a model to emulate.

Hence, 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. While the gap between the middle-class urban youth intellectuals and the retired people attending the plenary sessions was recomposed in the plenum, 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 plena, they strengthened the networks among domestic fringe groups all over the country, allowing the mobilization to scale upwards.

The role of media

Social media platforms and alternative media outlets constituted important resources throughout the 2014 protests by generating an "information cascade" outward (della Porta 2014, 91). At the onset of the uprising, a public group on Facebook called "*50,000 za bolje sutra*" (50,000 for a better tomorrow) called on residents to actively support Tuzla's workers protesting and invited them to raise their voice against injustice, corruption and nepotism in the country. The group's administrators stated clearly on the page their exclusive intention to only "informing citizens about the events from the cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina" rather than organizing protests or supporting violence[10]. 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 active throughout the February protests was called "Udar", an acronym for "Constitutional Democratic Association for Bosnia and Herzegovina" (*Ustavnopravna Demokratska Asocijacija Bosne i Hercegovine*), which means also "Attack" in local language. Created on 6 February 2014, right after the violent repression of the workers' rally in Tuzla, this Facebook page supposedly represented a spontaneous and informal group that called for a widening of the movement (Lynch 2014). To this end, on the first days of the protests a video published firstly on the UDAR Facebook page circulated on the web,

asking for a joint “insurrection and revolution” of all the nationalities of the country[10]. Unlike the previous wave of protests in July 2013, Twitter was not widely used during the 2014 uprising, related to the fact that elderly people populating the plena were not familiar with social networks.

Alternative information websites, such as the Mostar-based “Abrašmedia” and the Banja Luka-based web portal BUKA, played an important role in the protest dynamics, reporting about the unrest, hosting interviews with activists and plena's participants, while *Front Slobode* (the Freedom Front), a Tuzla's web portal, wrote extensively about the DITA factory and the struggle of its workers. Finally, a network of volunteers based in BiH and abroad created a blog called “Bosnia Herzegovina protest files”[10], which provided English translation of various documents from local language for the international public.

Framing identity: the protest of the disempowered

Throughout the Social Uprising, movement organizers adopted a discursive strategy that built around a dichotomizing discourse opposing the mass of dissatisfied citizens to the corrupt and unaccountable establishment. By resorting to a language typical of populist style, both the elite and opponents were depicted as an all-inclusive, homogeneous group. The ruling caste holding political and economic power was blamed for having enriched through dispossession and the privatization of prior socially-owned resources, while the people’s identity encompassed the inherently good population, untainted by ethnic or religious divisions. Since the very beginning, the collective “we” was phrased in terms of “the deprived citizens”, the “hungry people” (*gladan narod*) “uncontaminated by immoral *politika*” (Jansen 2015, 211) and united in solidarity regardless of ethno-national allegiances, as opposed to the policy-makers, addressed as “the thieves” *(lopovi*). Gathering all the citizens under the collective, heterogeneous category of the “deprived” and “disempowered” aimed at questioning the dominant ethno-national matrix and contributed to bypass social boundaries as well. Asked about how to refer to the collective identity of the demonstrators, a participant in the Tuzla plenum remarked:

I would call [the 2014 Social Uprising] simply the protest of all the disempowered, of everyone 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 is the mobilizing discourse, it is that “we are all in the same shit".[10]

The inclusive collective identity of the demonstrators 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 unity in diversity between people by reporting: "All for one and one for all" (*Svi za jednog jedan za sve)*. Another read "Our union is your destruction" *(Naše ujedinjenje je vaše uništenje*), a sentence that emphasized the power of ordinary citizens that, united, could represent a real threat to the political establishment. Solidarity and unity were also reflected in the choice of symbols that the demonstrators used throughout the protests: the plenums' logo, for instance, portrayed two shaking hands. Unlike the symbol of the 2013 Baby revolution, which reproduced a pacifier turning into a clenched fist, the 2014 one was intended "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[10]. "We are hungry in three languages" (*Gladni smo na tri jezika*) was a particularly catching slogan that was written on billboards carried on the streets and sprayed on city walls. With this expression the demonstrators referred ironically to the post-conflict Dayton language policy that, abolishing the use of Serbo-Croatian language[10], currently acknowledges three variants as official languages of the country. With the slogan the protesters intended to mock the differences and fragmentation among people, artificially exacerbated and institutionalized in the post-conflict period (Rexhepi 2018). The expression made also reference to the everyday deprivation experienced by the population at large, worried about concrete survival matters and problems of daily living (Kurtović 2016).

The values of solidarity, togetherness and unity remained at the core of the discourse in protests and plena. In that regard, the professor and activist Damir Arsenijević stressed how throughout the Social Uprising "solidarity, as a concept and as a practice, (…) became an everyday word and a lived experience that we had to prove through words and actions" (Arsenijević 2014b, 8). In the following excerpt, a long-time activist expressed hope in the unifying values of solidarity and togetherness to overcome the imposed primacy of ethno-national categories and to link different subjects together:

People have finally overcome this talk about ethnicities and are waking up. Nobody before knew how to define the vital national question[10], 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![10]

Countering the deprived citizens united in solidarity, the elite was portrayed as corrupt and overpaid, blamed of thievery for having enriched at the expenses of its constituencies since the end of the war. In the discourses of demonstrators and of the organizers of the protests, politicians 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*), while a graffiti that appeared on the walls of the Sarajevo canton’s building during the protests read: “The one who sows hunger, reaps anger. Let’s bring them down!”[10]

Framing grievances: recollecting the past and longing for normality

On the streets and in the plena, protesters lamented the high level of unemployment, lack of transparency and the culture of impunity prevailing among politicians. These grievances constituted a common ground for individuals coming from different social groups to unite, facilitating the creation of an alliance between the working class (or, better, the former working class) and other social groups. Under the broad, encompassing frame of social and economic justice, the organizers of the protests bridged the demand for rooting out elites’ corruption with social concerns, the opposition to severe unemployment and inequality, and post-materialist grievances, often framed in terms of “the right for a normal life in a normal country”, as it was frequently heard in the plena sessions. As Jansen noted, normality was interpreted in both forward- and backward-looking terms: on the one hand, the demonstrators yearned for the future, expressed in the hope of having a functioning state. On the other hand, they longed for the previous state of affairs, meaning the everyday lives of the social past (Jansen 2015)[10]. As opposed to previous waves of protest, which focused on specific issues (the defence of a park, and the right to citizenship), during the 2014 Social Uprising the call for social and economic justice resonated across social groups and ideological orientations because it did not refer to a narrow issue, but rather to a broader set of claims, as an activist explains:

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[10].

The centrality attributed to economic matters in the plena and on the streets contributed to return political economy to public discussions (Milan 2017b). Similarly, “the reason behind the uprising”[10] was identified in the neoliberal policies that, since the end of the 1992-95 war were adopted in the country to transform it into a Western-style market economy. However, movement organizers did not adopt an anti-capitalist or anti-austerity frame, unlike grassroots movements taking place in the same years in the US and in Western Europe (della Porta 2015). An interviewee sees in the lack of an ideological base the main reason not to opt for an anti-capitalist narrative during the 2014 protest wave, motivating it as follows:

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. Here, people are just screaming out that those who had been in power until now should resign, and 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[10].

In choosing to frame their grievances as a call for social and economic justice, the movement organizers refrained (once again) from discussing the ethno-territorial set-up of the country, fearing that a debate over a constitutional reform could overshadow demands of socio and economic nature (see also Murtagh 2016). As it was the case in the 2013 protests, addressing the issue of statehood would "inevitably position [the demonstrators] with regard to the competing parties in the parliamentary debate[10]" (Jansen 2015, 227). In addition, in a post-conflict country where the level of social trust among individuals remains still low, exposing the limits of representative democracy institutions as envisaged by the Dayton peace agreement ran the risk of being perceived as an attempt to undermine the precarious equilibrium upon which the country is based rather than the source of any possible remedy. 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 2014a). Hence, movement organizers decided to target institutions "from the local community (…) to the state government" (BiH protest files 2014a) rather than demanding systemic change, as an activist argued:

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[10].

Finally, the time seemed not ripe for the development of a more radical, anti-systemic critique of representative democracy as envisaged by the consociational system, to the extent that the this topic was considered an issue to be discussed in the future, "a luxury to be talk about when we will live as human beings"[10].

Counterframes and attempts at demobilization

To counter the discourse of movement actors, power holders tried to discredit the protests with the usual narrative revolving around accuses of being politically manipulated and threatening the stability of the country. At the beginning of February 2014, when images of flaming power buildings went viral, the local authorities rushed to brand the protesters as "hooligans". By insisting on an essentially apolitical explanation of demonstrators' background, policy officials strove to deprive them of any political agency and divert the attention from their plaints. FBiH Prime Minister Nermin Nikšić publicly 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 Serb population, a rhetoric already used during the Babylution. Others attempted to discredit the protests as politically manipulated when it was revealed that Fahrudin Radončić, the back-then Minister of Security, was

fired suddenly in February, allegedly for having refused to use force against the protesters[10]. This motivation sparked a debate on the theme of "who is behind the demonstrations", a discourse which "became the unifying motif of almost all interviews with politicians that could be seen on television" (Janusz 2014).

The reaction of the international community to the uprising went in the direction of neglecting the agency of demonstrators. 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 also restated the sort of neo-colonial power that the EU exercises on BiH. Admitting the inability of the police to ensure the safety of members of the BiH Presidency, the Director of the Directorate for the Coordination of Police Units in the Bosnian Federation, Himzo Selimović, tendered his resignation (Živković 2014). Echoing the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Selimović called upon the international community and the EU to consider deploying the international military forces in the country if events were to repeat themselves (Živković 2014). As a reaction, on 9 February 2014 the plenum of Sarajevo addressed a letter to the international community in which it reiterated the right of BiH citizens to take to the streets in a way employed by citizens all over the world, meaning through the organization of street marches and public assemblies:

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)

The mainstream newspapers focused very strongly on the violent episodes occurred at the beginning of the riots, reporting extensively "on hooliganism, attacks on democracy, coup d'état and other types of insidious nonsense" (Hodžić 2015). On the second day of unrest, one of the most

popular Sarajevo-based web portal, *Klix,* narrated 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; "Glas Slobode, broj 3" 2014). A second attempt to divert attention from the demonstrators' grievances 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 depicted the demonstrators 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 (Janusz 2014). Summing up, in an attempt to demobilize the protests, both policy-makers and the media resorted to a narrative portraying the demonstrators as ethnically-driven and party-manipulated, threatening the stability of the country, and undertaken by a group of rioters, rather than by a mass of impoverished citizens mostly demonstrating peacefully.

The impact of violence on action repertoires

The action repertoires used by the demonstrators during the 2014 unrest departed from the traditional repertoire of contestation so far employed during contentious episodes in the country. Similarly, the violent means adopted to repress the demonstrations had been so far unused in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the beginning of February 2014, political repression took the form of a violent crackdown against the workers protesting in Tuzla. The police reaction against the unarmed workers provoked moral outrage in a population traumatized by war, marking thus a turning point in the protests, as it was the first time that physical violence was exercised upon the people in the aftermath of the 1992-95 conflict (Eminagić 2014). This "moral shock" provoked a reaction of indignation among the wider population, since the use of violence in a war-torn country has a different impact than in a country that never experienced a conflict.

The police crackdown had a twofold impact on the choice of action repertoires of demonstrators: at first, it radicalized the protesters, which in Tuzla responded 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 centres emulated these in Tuzla, venting 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 demonstrations further encouraged the violence. Moreover, on 7 February, riot officers in Tuzla sided with the protesters, who perceived them as allies. A video circulating across the social networks shows policemen in Tuzla removing their helmets to embrace the demonstrators amidst the applause of the crowd[10]. At first, the blast of violence alienated the

demonstrators from more moderate actors, such as the NGOs, which avoided getting involved in the protests since, an activist of plenum Sarajevo reports, they "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 (...). They [stayed] out of it because [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"[10]. Later, the use of violence and the images of buildings set afire, which recalled the scene of the recent conflict, provoked a sort of memory shock that facilitated the association of protests with the traumatizing experience of the conflict. The fear of instability that ensued translated into a further shift in action repertoires. After a couple of days characterized by riots, the activists decided "to channel the rage into a constructive experiment"[10], namely the organization of assemblies where to convey the rage thus far expressed with "stones and fire" rather than "through theoretical engagement" (Nedimović 2014). While some blamed the plena for having de-radicalized the protests by diverting the anger from the streets to the assemblies, channelling it into a closed space, others perceived this shift as the only means to overcome fear and to build something constructive and lasting beyond street marches.

The violent repertoire gained the protesters a discrete dose of visibility. A protest 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), to the extent that the 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 many condemned the damage sustained by state institutions and private properties during the riots, others legitimized the violent repertoire as a necessary means to give the protests some visibility and to make 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 commented:

Many people from abroad condemned the violent turn protests took in February. I have 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[10] *representing who is stealing our country. No, we needed to take it down and I am glad this happened. (...) It was a success: we burnt two buildings and [the news] circulated on the whole country*[10].

However, repression and fear did also prevent demonstrations to occur in *Republika Srpska*, where attempts to stage solidarity rallies in Banja Luka, Zvornik, and Bijeljina "were met with immediate arrests and a sharp increase in police presence in all public squares" (Mujanović 2018, 148). To add on fear, rumours spread that "local hospitals were braced for a rush of casualties, strongly hinting that the police themselves were prepared to brutalized protesters" (ibid.).

Conclusions

This chapter explored the 2014 Social Uprising, explaining the factors accounting for a worker's rally to transform into a mass mobilization over worsening living conditions and corruption of the political elite, which lasted for a couple of months. First, it argued that pre-existing ties among groups and movement organizers, developed during previous waves of protest, provided useful resources that facilitated mobilization to be sustained and citizen assemblies to emerge, affording the demonstrators with the necessary human, material and organizational resources. Throughout the protests, cross-class alliances were spawned between the unemployed and workers, as well as between the middle-class urban youth and the activists moderating the plena, which contributed with resources of a different type.

Secondly, the discursive practices of challengers and their opponents fostered the spatial and social upward shift of the mobilization. A broad, encompassing frame bridging 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 various streams of the movement. The symbolic value retained by the workers helped the demonstrations further, as over the years the working class had been deprived of the role and position it enjoyed during socialist time, becoming the emblem of deprivation and of the longing for restoring the rights lost in the transition process. For the symbolic role they retained, the workers transformed into a source of legitimacy for the movement, and their struggle became an example to emulate.

Finally, violence had a strong impact on the demonstrators and on the wider population, influencing the repertoires of action employed on the streets. The police crackdown on the protesters at the onset of the demonstrations sparked moral outrage amongst the wider population, radicalizing the repertoire of the young rioters on the streets. Emotions as well played an important role, since the moral shock provoked by the repression against the demonstrators at first increased, rather than quelled, the degree of contention. Later, the fear of a violent escalation and the memories of the traumatizing experience of the conflict provoked a sense of widespread fear that prompted movement organizers to channel the discontent into citizen assemblies, shifting thus from contention to a more constructive and deliberative phase of the movement, elaborated in the plena.

Notes

[10] The canton's government and judiciary are the bodies in charge of following the lawsuits brought by the workers against the owners of their companies, who, taking over their production plants, pull them into debt.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with a member of plenum Zenica, Zenica, July 2015.

[10] Interview with an activist of *Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice), Bihać, Skype interview, July 2015.

[10] Commenting on the protests, RS President Dodik 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 2014a). Unlike the students protesting in Banja Luka back in 2013, who refused any association with the #JMBG mobilization taking place at the same time in Sarajevo, the veterans did not object to being associated with the wave of protests spreading meanwhile in FBiH.

[10] The building, constructed to host the athletes of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games, nowadays serves as cultural centre 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).

[10] Interview with a representative of eFM *Studentski radio*, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] The OKC Abrašević is a youth centre located at the border between the Muslim- and Croat-inhabited sides of the city. The centre attracts youth from both sides, involving them in creative projects, concerts, and critical thinking (Hromadžić 2015).

[10] According to the author's elaboration of press coverage, plena were held or formed in Brčko, Bugojno, Konijc, Orašje, Odzak, Lukavac, Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Prijedor, Kalesija, Novi Travnik, Zavidovići, Banja Luka, Bihać, Travnik, Srebrenica, Gračanica, Fojnica, Zenica, Goražde and Cazin (sources: Balkan Insight, Klix.ba, BiH protest files).

[10] During Yugoslav period, May Day retained an important celebratory meaning, as it commemorated the significant role of workers in socialist society, representing "a perfect moment for harnessing the symbols of socialism and class struggle" (Kurtović 2016, 15). After the demise of socialism, May Day lost its political meaning, becoming merely an occasion for out-of-town holidays and barbecues.

[10] Conventional unions did not attend the May Day parade either in Tuzla or Mostar, and no celebration was organized in the capital.

[10] In Sarajevo the local authorities closed the city Youth House building (*Dom Mladih*) to the public, where initially the meetings of the city plenum were held, and requested its participants to pay a fee to rent the hall. The plena in other cities found themselves in a similar situation, as they had to bargain with the municipality or with private individuals for the right to use the venues.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Zenica, Zenica, July 2015.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Personal conversation with an external observer, May 2017.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] While interviewing two participants to the plena, a journalist of FACE TV said that the plena reminded him of the League of the Communist of Yugoslavia Central Committee [video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYb7-ojCmnA, accessed 2.02.2015]

[10] The ministries in FBiH cantons included: 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.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] Interview with a member of plenum Mostar, Mostar, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of *Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice), Bihać, Skype interview, July 2015.

[10] Interview with an activist of *Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice), Bihać, Skype interview, July 2015.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Skype interview, September 2014.

[10] 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*).

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Zenica, Zenica, July 2015.

[10] Namely DITA, Konjuh, Resod-Gumig, Polihem and Poliolchem. Among them, the laundry detergent factory DITA provided around a thousand jobs before the war.

[10] Interview with an NGO practitioner, Banja Luka, November 2013.

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

[10] Interview with an activist and plenum participant, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Skype interview, September 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with a representative of eFM *Studentski radio*, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, August 2015.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] https://www.facebook.com/50.000.Za.Bolje.Sutra/info?tab=page_info [accessed 12.7.2014]

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

[10] https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com [accessed 12.07.2014]

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] Interview with a participant to the Babylution and plenum Sarajevo. Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Until 1995, the official standard language in Yugoslavia was Serbo-Croatian. Nowadays, the three official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, mutually intelligible.

[10] The interviewee refers here to the possibility granted to each constituent people to resort to the constitutional right of veto to block the adoption or implementation of specific policy proposals in case a vital interest of the ethno-national group is deemed threatened or endangered.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] 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 and Herzegovina.

[10] Jansen explains how for many layers of population in BiH, but also in Serbia, previous life appears central in the formulation of standards for normality, and the concept of “normal life” is “overwhelmingly deployed in positive contrast with one’s current predicament” (Jansen 2015, 38).

Therefore, the state is addressed as both if it "did not sufficiently exist *yet* and did not sufficiently exist *anymore*" (Jansen 2015, 154).

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist in the Babylution protest and plenum Sarajevo. Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] The debates on the constitution and BiH statehood is not new to the local constituencies, being political parties usually lined up between those retaining a position in favour of centralization (mostly Sarajevo-based ones) and those calling for decentralization along ethno-national lines (parties of RS and Croatian-inhabited areas).

[10] Interview with an activist in the Babylution protest and plenum Sarajevo. Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] 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 BIH). Since the beginning of the uprising, he openly backed the protesters, claiming that their rebellion was legitimate. Accordingly, his (party) newspaper reported extensively about the events throughout the uprising, while his behaviour generated rumours about the role he ostensibly played in the uprising.

[10] The video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ujFYB7CCeE [accessed 10.02.2015].

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Tuzla, Tuzla, April 2014.

[10] He is referring to the tripartite presidency of BiH.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

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Chapter 7: Conclusions

Abstract

This concluding chapter returns to the initial questions and summarises the central findings of this study in a comparative perspective. It explains that a combination of diverse factors internal and external to the movements enabled mobilization to shift upwards in territorial and social scale, influencing also organizational patterns and action repertoires employed by movement organizers. Next, it points at a learning path, namely a process of cumulative learning that activists and movement organisers underwent throughout the 2012-14 protest cycle. This allowed for the construction of relational, emotional and cognitive resources and the transfer of knowledge and experience from one wave of protest to another. Finally, it delves into the legacy of the protests, exploring the civic initiatives that developed in its aftermath – the creation of workers union, civic initiatives and urban activist groups. To conclude, it reviews the perspectives for beyond ethnic mobilization in BiH, a country at a continuing political standstill, and the unlikelihood of civic grassroots movement to meddle into the realm of party politics in the near future.

Introduction

This book has investigated the dynamics of contention in a post-socialist, war-torn society divided along ethno-national lines, striving to fill a gap in the literature on collective action eschewing ethno-national schemes in violently divided societies. In so doing, it added an empirically grounded perspective from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country with a wide range of socio-political constraints on grassroots mobilization beyond ethnicity, constituting thus a critical and strategic case for the examination and understanding of the dynamics of mobilization in divided societies. Specifically, this qualitative study explored citizens engagement and civic activism aimed at delivering political change through contentious collective action, as well as the attempts to overcome alleged ethno-national divides and to encourage a shared sense of Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizenship. Throughout the analysis of three waves of mobilization occurred between 2012 and 2014, the book

has sought to explain why these spread unevenly across the country, involving diverse social groups and entailing different degrees of disruption. To answer to these questions, it has taken into account diverse factors, internal and external to the movements, which enabled the protests to shift upwards in territorial and social scale (or jeopardized their chances of doing so), influencing also organizational patterns and collective action repertoires employed by movement organizers.

The 2012-14 cycle of protests provided important insights not only on country-specific protests, but more generally into the thus-far under-researched dynamics of mobilization beyond ethnicity in divided societies, explaining how this occurs even though opportunities for civic activism having no ethnic character are unfavourable. Based on comparative evidence, this book has advanced the argument that factors like networks and resources, discursive practices, political opportunities and emotions alone cannot adequately explain in full the variation among the different waves of mobilization. Contrariwise, it argued that only a combination of these factors accounts for the diverse degree of contention and for the shift of the protests to an upper territorial and social level. This chapter returns to the initial questions and summarises the central findings of this work in a comparative perspective.

Explaining mobilization beyond ethnicity in a divided society: comparative findings

Networks as both resources and liabilities

First, this book argued that the network ties that movement organizers had developed during prior contentious experience contributed to gathering resources necessary for re-mobilization, in line with the importance attributed in social movement literature to pre-existing networks in activating both people and resources (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). Yet some specifics relate the application of this approach to a post-conflict society divided along ethnic lines, where networks with perceived "ethnic others" resulted to function as both resources and liabilities.

In the case of "The Park is Ours" initiative, movement organizers chose not to activate bonds with their fellows outside Banja Luka, since they did not want to be perceived as allies of activists from FBiH. The availability of local resources mobilized by movement organizers helped the protests to thrive locally, while external sponsorship gained the demonstrators material resources and a certain degree of visibility. Nevertheless, movement organizers deemed the support from perceived "ethnic others" detrimental to the initiative given that, in a divided context like that of BiH, and especially in the entity of *Republika Srpska*, protesting against authorities is widely considered an act of treason towards the entity and its stability. Therefore, movement actors estimated that the support offered from citizens of FBiH run the risk to nurture the idea and perception that the Walkers protesting were undermining the stability of *Republika Srpska* with the support of the "enemies" from FBiH.

Pre-existing network ties among the organizers of the protests played an important role in the Babylution as well, allowing to assemble resources crucial to mobilization, at least in the main urban centres of the country. On the one hand, pre-existing personal ties between activists across the country and the use of social networks allowed collective action to thrive, channelling non-party opposition. On the other hand, though, the firm refusal of movement organizers to open up to opposition parties and to other formal actors such as NGOs for fear of institutionalizing opposition alienated further resources that could have facilitated the mobilization scale shift. In an attempt to remain "apolitical" (meaning to refrain from non-party affiliation), the organizers of the Babylution managed only partially to forge broad-based alliances, a decision that translated in a reduced potential for sustained nationwide mobilization.

Prior close community ties linking the workers of Tuzla with the activist youth in the area permitted to mobilize material and organizational resources throughout the 2014 "Social Uprising" as well. Academics and young activists offered in fact a contribution to the workers' struggle both in terms of organization and coordination skills and 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 action, made it possible to forge alliances and to replicate the model of citizen assemblies also outside the city of Tuzla. Alternative media played an important role as well, as together with social networks they supported the creation and reproduction of virtual ties among the demonstrators, giving visibility to the protests and facilitating in this way their scale upwards.

Summing up, resources and networks proved important factors accounting for the capability of movements to shift their scale to an upper territorial and social level. Yet, societal divisions in the country are salient in a measure that hindered the creation of broad-based, cross-entity networks: it is still problematic to be perceived as allies of a political mobilization originated from another entity, as in several cases this is conceived as backing the opposite ethnic group.

A cultural milieu limiting the resonance of beyond ethnic frames

Secondly, this volume explored discursive strategies used by both movement organizers and their opponents. Given that effective frame resonance is context-dependent, frames of meaning and discursive practices employed by both movement organizers and opponents were investigated in the cultural milieu in which they were elaborated and diffused, to assess to what extent cultural values and habits affected their resonance. The analysis of "the struggle for cultural supremacy", defined also as "the contest between competing frames" (Johnston and Noakes 2005, 17), revealed that the cultural context and the historical legacy matter to a large extent in divided societies, and that the success of a frame is contextual and conditioned by power relations between the actor and

the audience. Due to the dominance of nationalist discourses on the media, competing frames offered by the opposition and local activists received in general little to no visibility. Despite discursive similarities, some contexts proved more receptive to beyond ethnic discourses than others, and particular audiences shown a different degree of sensitivity towards identity-based threat frames. To oppose the discourse of movement organizers, the elite drew on established national symbols and other tools to shape their discourses. Often, they resorted to discursive strategies that "ethnicized mobilization", meaning that constructed the opponents as a threat to an assumed ethnic homogeneity based on cultural and religious differences. In other occasions, the local elite classified protests as a security threat largely depended on the national identity of the demonstrators.

In the case of "The Park is Ours" mobilization, the discourse elaborated by movement organizers resonated to a small extent outside Banja Luka, as it was perceived being bounded to the local environment in which it emerged. Throughout the street walks in defence of Picin park, movement organizers in their discourses addressed specifically the citizens of Banja Luka, focusing almost exclusively on the park issue. Therefore, they proved unsuccessful at conveying a frame that could resonate with the broader population not directly involved in defending the park. Slightly different was the case of the Babylution. In 2013, the discourse moved beyond the inability to issue ID numbers, connecting the lack of personal documents to the primacy of human and citizenship rights. It therefore appealed to the broader community of Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens, no matter their identification with an ethno-national community, as it suggested a broader consensus on the primacy of unalienable human rights. Although this discourse proved partially able to revert the elite's securitization efforts, it received wide visibility amongst the middle-class urbanites of capital, in the main urban centres of the country and in the foreign press, but less so in the countryside and amongst the lower classes. Finally, in 2014 movement organizers proved successful in constructing a frame that resonated across diverse social groups. Throughout the Social Uprising they successfully adopted and reinterpreted a discourse revolving around socio-economic justice, which bridged and amplified a wide array of otherwise unconnected claims – from labour rights, economic and social grievances, social security to the right to a normal life in an effective and functioning state. In a similar vein, the collective identity of claimants was framed as encompassing all "the disempowered", a category interpreted to include all the individuals deprived of their rights. This type of collective identity frame appealed to a large swath of population that felt deprived by years of unfulfilled promises of economic enhancement and disillusion brought about by the transition process. The use of a dichotomizing discourse opposing the deprived people to an unaccountable political elite, depicted as a caste, contributed to vehiculate the message by emphasizing the cleavage between the mass of dissatisfied citizens, united regardless of ethno-national ascription, and the corrupt and unaccountable establishment, blamed for perpetuating their privileges instead of solving the social and economic problems of their constituencies.

Social movements' opponents, mostly local authorities, used counterframes with varied success amongst the cases. Given that the cultural milieu of BiH is saturated with nationalist rhetoric and symbolism, a counter-discourse constructing the protesters as a security and cultural threat to certain constituent people and/or the internal stability of the country could easily gain a foothold. In the struggle in defence of Picin park in 2012, 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 dismantling of the park in Banja Luka was merely an issue concerning the citizens of the city, assumed to be all Serbs. The message of the elite was particularly successful, as it diverted public attention from the cause demonstrators were advocating for and discredited them by constructing them as a security, stability and cultural threat. Throughout the 2013 #JMBG mobilization, a discursive strategy portraying the demonstrators on the square as a menace to the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats MPs contributed to read a political protest as an ethno-national remonstration, opening space for a manipulation that, playing on the fear of instability and of the "ethnic other" threatening social order, enforced even further the divisions of the country, discouraging participation. By depicting the demonstrators on the square as anti-Serb aiming to undermine the stability of the country and the safety of the Bosnian Serb population, the Bosnian Serb MPs managed to partially shift the focus of attention from human rights to the ethno-national level, depriving the demonstrators of their political agency. Hence, also in this case the authorities' counterdiscourse partially overpowered that of the movement. In the 2014 social rebellion, the attempts to discredit the demonstrators as traitors or as a threat to the stability of the country were less successful. Political officials and state authorities used a discursive strategy that labelled protesters as "hooligans" aimed at destabilizing the country's order for the violent riots occurred at the beginning of the uprising. Nevertheless, the wide and encompassing frame elaborated by movement organizers proved more resistant to delegitimization by the elites, thanks to different factors: the high degree of solidarity, and thus credibility, which the demonstrators had meanwhile obtained by supporters endorsing their struggle all over the world; the importance that the category of workers still retain in the public imaginary; and the cultural milieu in which the frame first emerged, the anti-nationalist and working class city of Tuzla.

To sum up, 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, a cultural environment saturated with nationalist rhetoric provided a fertile ground to the political use of ethno-national identity, making it easier to discredit grassroots initiatives and civic activism as plots orchestrated by "ethnic others" with the purpose of altering the status quo. Similarly, the discourses used by local authorities which depicted social unrest as a security threat for the country tapped largely into the widespread fear of instability, still high in a war-ridden society. In said context, discourses revolving around social justice find difficult time to echo across the wider population, in particular in contexts in which nationalist rhetoric is particularly intense, unless movement actors are able to bridge different discourses, for instance social and economic grievances with the longing for normal life.

Emotions and the role of opportunities

Finally, political opportunities affected the challengers' choice of certain action repertoires over others. The fear of instability, which stems from the war-related trauma and the current fragile equilibrium of the country, incentivized movement organizers to adopt a nonviolent repertoire in both the "Park is Ours" and the #JMBG mobilizations, as well as in the post-riots phase of the 2014 Social Uprising, during which activists employed part of their time in the "pacification of the street"[10]. Conversely, the police crackdown against the workers during the 2014 February protest had the effect of radicalizing the demonstrators, for it provoked a moral shock and triggered a surge of indignation which prompted individuals to join the workers *en masse*. However, while on the one hand the moral shock stemmed from the police crackdown on workers of Tuzla and the images of buildings on fire increased the degree of contention at first, it also refrained more peaceful actors to join the rioters' front for fear of violence. Later, a group of long-term activists attempted to channel the collective rage burst on the streets into public assemblies, the plena, both for fear that the violence could escalate further, and in an attempt to build something constructive out of people's discontent.

This shift in action repertoire showed also that emotions are formed and reinforced in collective action (Jasper 1998), and play a significant role in a divided and post-conflict society, for recalling the trauma of war and the fear of instability, in particular in the centralized *Republika Srpska*, where the more oppressing civic atmosphere limits also "the scope for such visible public protests" (Keil and Perry 2015, 3).

A cumulative learning process

Amongst the findings, the analysis pointed at a "learning path" throughout the waves of protest, with a cumulative construction of relational, emotional and cognitive resources. Altogether, the three cases analysed appear interlinked rather than wholly independent one of another. Hence, they should not be understood as standalone protests as each stood in continuity with earlier waves. The 2012-14 represented in fact a unique learning process for activists across Bosnia and Herzegovina, "by which demonstrators gradually used more radical and disruptive modes of dissent across waves of protest" (Fagan and Sircar 2017, 1340). Ties between movement organizers were built and strengthened in the course of joint collective action. Therefore, the upscaling in space and social level has to be attributed also to the process of cumulative learning that activists and movement organisers underwent throughout the 2012-14 protest cycle. The experience and reflection upon previous waves of protests was apprehended, and knowledge transferred from one wave to another.

In the opinion of several interviewees, the 2014 protests built upon the legacies of the earlier waves that had helped to normalize street actions as tools of contention in the country, although a certain degree of scepticism about the effectiveness of collective contentious action as a means of achieving social change still persist nowadays. For instance, the discourse that emerged during "The Park is Ours" protests identified a cleavage opposing "the losers of transition", the ordinary people impoverished by the transition to market economy and repeatedly excluded from the decision-making process to "the winners", the corrupted politicians who obtained economic advantages from the same process. This discourse resurfaced with more emphasis during the successive waves of mobilizations, contributing to reshaping the collective identity of the demonstrators participating in the protests that have developed since then. Other activists reported that the Babylution paved the way for further mobilization to occur, to that extent that "the 2014 Uprising would never have happened had the 2013 #JMBG protests not taken place"[10]. Another respondent stressed the learning potential of previous experiences by pointing out that movement organizers apprehended from prior waves of protest, by saying: "We learnt a lot from the #JMBG, and the #JMBG learnt from the 2008 protests. In all the protests there were the same people"[10]. The Babylution in particular appeared having broken the wall of fear that to a certain extent refrained the wider public from taking to the streets, normalizing resistance in a high-risk environment for contentious action and characterised by a widespread fear of insecurity. By maintaining peaceful mass protest and setting aside the violent elements, movement organizers in all three waves of protest demonstrated that civil disobedience and resistance can be used as a conventional tool in a post-conflict context. On that regard, a plenum's 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 had an empowering effect on participants, some of which argued to feel strengthened after taking part in the #JMBG mobilization, to the extent that they perceived to have gained political leverage. As one of the leading figures of the 2014 protests recounts:

We realized we have power in our hands, as citizens, normal people, [we realized that] 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[10].

The network ties amongst activists tightened, and expanded as well, over the course of the protest cycle, continuing on a different extent even after the 2014 experience. Different initiatives of citizen engagement emerged in the aftermath of the Social Uprising proved capable of partially capitalizing and building upon the resources provided by this cycle of mobilization, as the following section explains.

The legacy of the protests

The ways in which BiH citizens reacted on the public space and 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 did not stop with the end of street protests in 2014. As explained in the previous section, bonds of solidarity were activated throughout protest action, while ties and networks that were previously non-existent or very loose developed over time amongst movement organizers and participants. In the short period, this brought about brand-new cross-entity and cross-groups coalitions. By means of the interplenum working group, the body that coordinated the citizen assemblies all over the country, an informal activist network was created at the national level. Following, the network "5F7" (from the date of the beginning and the end of the 2014 riots, 5 and 7 February 2014) was established in January 2015 with a similar purpose. Aimed initially at gathering in a formal way different subjects emerged before and during the 2014 uprising, with the purpose of conducting a joint fight for social justice in the country (Klix.ba 2015), the network was nevertheless 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.

Amongst its outcomes, the cycle of protest was said to have contributed to overcoming the fear and suspicion at the societal level, building social trust amongst individuals and showing that they were not afraid of each other, as a member of plenum Zenica recalls referring to the 2014 protest wave:

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 because 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[10].

Although it might be arduous to ascertain the wider impact of movement actions on social values and cultural changes, a perceived shift in the political discourse and civic consciousness has been acknowledged among the outcomes of the 2014 protests (see Milan 2017, Murtagh 2016).

Another aspect that emerged from the interviews regarded the perceived political leverage gained towards the establishment, in particular through disruptive means of action. A participant compared the peaceful 2013 Babylution with the violent 2014 upheaval maintaining that, while the former did not "threaten the system", the latter had a stronger impact on the power holders, and on the demonstrators as well, who felt to have truly scared the establishment. He refers to the impact of the different repertoires with the following words:

[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[10].

Furthermore, the waves of protests brought about new spaces for civic-minded rather than ethnic-grounded or party-driven politics, creating inclusionary space for civic activism and contentious political action. The cycle of contention allowed also the emergence of new political subjects and grassroots civic initiatives where identities other than the dominant, fixed ethno-national ones could be exercised. Several civic initiatives emerged in the aftermath of the 2014 protests, some of which can be considered a legacy of the cycle of contention. Between March and April 2014, in Tuzla a group of laid-off workers of the five factories that had spawned the Social Uprising founded the workers' union *Solidarnost*, which quickly reached thousands of members hailing from twenty-two different companies in the area. Despite the many obstacles the trade union faced to obtain recognition, its members continued to voice their discontent by staging weekly protests in front of the cantonal court of Tuzla for several months. 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 (Milan 2018).

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 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, whereas groups of local and international activists visited the DITA premises and volunteered to provide assistance to repair the machinery and to optimize production (Haman 2015). Meanwhile, on online social networking platforms a page called "Selfie with DITA" (*#SelfieZaDitom*) invited to advertise the products of DITA on the social networks by posting pictures with detergents produced by the factory, an initiative which gained the workers support and visibility at the national and international level.

Besides the city of Tuzla, some plena across the country remained active in various forms even once the protests lost steam, while others converted into informal grassroots groups. Amongst the latter, the "Movement for Social Justice" (*Pokret za socijalnu pravdu)* in the town of Bihać, located in the north-west side of the country. Over the summer 2015, the movement organized several street

actions striving 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 locals from Banja Luka and the surrounding area. As the leader of the movement argued, the increased support has to be partly attributed to the positive atmosphere following the 2014 protests, which she expresses in the following way:

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[10].

In Banja Luka, in September 2015 a group of activists opened the social centre "BASOC" (acronym for Banja Luka Social Centre). Financially supported by an Austrian foundation, the BASOC activist group aimed to create an environment in which to discuss contentious topics like "genocide, nationalism, feminism"[10], issues generally appropriated by the dominant nationalist rhetoric, particularly sensitive in the context of Banja Luka. BASOC currently constitutes one of the very few non-nationalist spaces in *Republika Srpska*.

In Sarajevo, over summer 2015 a group gathering NGOs practitioners and members of the Sarajevo's plenum working group on culture and art[10] conducted a campaign advocating for the reopening of the National Museum (*Zemaljski Muzej*). Established in 1888 by the Hapsburg administration, the Museum had been closed in 2012 ostensibly due to scarcity of funds for national cultural institutions – which intertwined with the lack of political will to finance an institution that embodied the existence of a common national culture. The action, known with the hashtag *#jasammuzej* (I am museum), foresaw also the screening of movies inside the premises of the empty museum. The museum hosted also a photo exhibition entitled "The Guardians of the Museum" (*Čuvari museja*), which portrayed pictures and the life stories of the workers who took care of the museum even when it shut off, keeping the institution running by working without wages. The action, led by members of the NGO *Akcija za kulturu* (Action for culture) in collaboration with the museum's employees, was backed by international and EU organizations. Besides promoting the reopening of the museum, the campaigners aimed at raising awareness upon the conditions of the institution and of its workers, and also about the state of culture and art in the country. An action called "I guard the museum" (*Dežuram za muzej*) consisted in calling upon ordinary citizens and public figures of the cultural and intellectual national scene, like local and international artists, to take care of the museum acting symbolically as "people on duty" (*dežurni*) (Rexhepi 2018). Intellectuals, 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, partially transforming the museum in a site of contention (Rexhepi 2018). Eventually, the museum reopened to the public in April 2016.

Since 2015, other initiatives emerged in the capital, which regarded the topic of urban space, the commons and the public goods. Similarly to other European capitals, also in Sarajevo "Right to the city" groups emerged to reclaim the citizens' right to make public use of the urban space and to participate in the decision-making related to the urban planning (Castells 1983, Harvey 2012). The group *Jedan Grad, Jedna Borba* (One City, One Struggle), which got actively engaged in the fight against privatization of water, health, space and other public services in the aftermath of the Social Uprising, gathered for instance several people who had actively participated in the 2014 protests (Borrini 2017). Following a period of renewed protests activity, urban activism in the city took many forms, from political organizations like the above-mentioned *Jedan Grad, Jedna Borba* to neighborhood associations and culturally and artistically-oriented pressure groups like *Dobre Kote* (Good Spots), with the intention to re-appropriate neglected spaces in the cities through art and cultural initiatives. All these groups support, in different manners, the struggle against profit-oriented urban policies and the commercialization of what they consider public goods and resources – first of all, the urban space they inhabit.

At the end of 2017, Bosnia and Herzegovina converted into the bottleneck of the Western Balkans migratory route. While in the previous years the migratory route passed through the Balkan corridor crossing the territories of former Yugoslavia like North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia (Milan and Pirro 2018), since the closure of the corridor in March 2016 migrants and asylum seekers escaping from war and poverty sought different paths to reach the EU region. One of those consisted in crossing of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian terrain, a passage that intensified since December 2017, when more and more migrants opted to reach the EU territory via Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the closure of the Croatian-Bosnian border, thousands of migrants and asylum seekers got stalled in the Una Sana canton and the surroundings of the Velika Kladuša village, bringing forward what has been classified as a humanitarian catastrophe (IOM 2018). Once again, local authorities proved unable to provide a timely and efficient solution to the rising number of migrants stranded in the country, and at first it was the local civil society, together with international volunteers, which offered first-hand support and temporary shelter to people on the move. Following a similar path that conducted to the criminalization of solidarity throughout Europe, and a gradual restriction of possibilities to helping stranded refugees, also local authorities in BiH progressively prevented local and international activists to provide support to refugees, limiting their presence to official "transition camps" run by the UNHCR and OIM (Mlinarević and Ahmetašević 2019).

Concluding remarks: the perspectives for beyond ethnic mobilization

The waves of protest analysed in this book foregrounded the transformations that occurred in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian society over the last decade, debunking to a certain extent the "myth" of passivity of its citizens and disclosing the fluidity and permeability of ethno-national

identifications. The book has advanced the argument that, given this fluidity, ethno-national belonging is not the main divisive factor amongst the Bosnian and Herzegovinian population. By contrast, it has shown that similar experiences of disenfranchisement and marginalization can bring individuals belonging to social and economic groups together, fighting side by side into a common struggle regardless of ethno-national schemes. Moreover, the study disclosed that alternative identifications can emerge, interact and coexist with the ethno-national ones, without necessarily disappearing. Throughout contentious collective action, identities other than ethno-national ones can be activated, and, under certain circumstances, differences of status and class, rural or urban origins, prove to be more salient, challenging rigid and long-standing categorizations. Basically, ethno-national schemes can be dismissed in fraught times of economic hardship, and diverse identities cohexist at the same time.

Concluding this book, the 2012 -14 cycle of protests has been said to “challenge the view that the only relevant bonds among people stemmed out of shared origins and blood” (Kurtović 2012, 207). However, nowadays categorizations based on ethno-national origin remain salient and keep dominating the public discourse and in everyday life. So far, the room for beyond ethnic mobilization in Bosnia and Herzegovinian has been mostly been limited to urban settings and to certain social groups, while solidarity across entities constitutes still an exception. 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 2018). While the 2012-14 cycle of protest articulated a powerful alternative politics to the ethno-nationalism reproduced by political leaders, and notwithstanding the connections created among diverse political subjects fighting in the name of social justice, the perspectives for beyond ethnic protests to undermine exclusionist discourses remains partially limited, and particularly so in *Republika Srpska*. The protests organized by the “Justice for David” campaign in Banja Luka in 2018 revealed a worsening of the freedom of speech and restriction of civic liberties in the entity, as police repression affected the possibilities of mobilizing further. Although the protest groups asking for justice for David and other “silenced cases” (Sasso 2018) appeared to be gaining significance over time, the degree of repression by local authorities and power-holders towards those politically engaged still prevent those movements from becoming more vocal, in particular in RS. Furthermore, a “general degree of apathy and resignation amongst people” (Calori 2016) is still widespread across the country, making it difficult to overcome a certain level of disorganization and the need of financial assistance that affect the majority of grassroots civic initiatives in the country.

For what concerns the development of grassroots groups, it seems unlikely that they will take a more formal path, giving birth, for instance, to civic platforms running for municipal elections, as it occurred in neighbourhood countries, like Croatia (Dolenec, D., Doolan, K., & Tomašević, T. 2017) or Serbia, where local activists constituted an electoral platform out of grassroots groups, inspired to the global new municipalist movement (Russell 2019). The pervasive mistrust and scepticism towards the party system of BiH refrain local activists from forming an electoral platform. A

distrustful attitude towards politics, which Jacobsson termed “the politics of anti-politics” (2015, 18), is a common feature in the post-socialist context, where political engagement is yet perceived as involvement in party “dirty” politics, and thus bears a negative connotation for ordinary citizens. Also in BiH politics keeps remaining “a domain reserved for immoral politicians” (Jansen 2015, 181), a reason why ordinary citizens usually distance themselves from it. Therefore, the choice of movement organizers to remain “apolitical”, meaning to choose not to meddle into the realm of party politics, still serves to give legitimacy to their initiatives and to reinforce their credibility.

In the near future, the country seems not to move into the direction of a system based on representation and accountable politics. The flaws of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian political system, which is captured by political parties that dispose of it at their behest, makes the entire apparatus working almost exclusively for the purposes of political parties instead of public interest. The fragmentation of the party system decreases even further the likelihood of non-ethnic parties to achieve meaningful results (Kapidžić 2016), while the dominance of a discourse constantly revolving around statehood rather than concrete citizens’ needs makes the option of creating a civic party or citizen platform even less attractive, disinclining in this way the engagement in party politics. The existing non-ethnically characterized political parties, like *Naša Stranka* (Our Party), are widely considered elitist, since they gain the support of mostly urbanites in Sarajevo, and seem unable to attract support beyond the urban areas of the capital.

If a certain expectation that protests would bring into being a transformation of the political panorama diffused after the 2014 uprising, five years later the political backdrop of BiH 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 (the Guardian 2014), while nine months after the general elections of October 2019 the country still holds no government, after the winning parties have failed to form it in over eight months (the Guardian 2019). Economic decay, widespread corruption, unemployment and a weak, if not absent, social security system continue to plague Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens, while the youth keep leaving the country in search of a better future abroad. The power sharing arrangements established by the Dayton institutional set up continue to create a fertile ground to the political use of national identity, while the opportunities for beyond ethnic movements to achieve social change keep remaining low.

A radical change would entail reforms at the institutional level addressing the systemic impasse provoked by a representation granted on an ethno-national base, which allows ethnically defined parties to keep on dominating and monopolizing the political scene. Similarly, a reform of the educational system, which continues perpetuating ethnic-based segregation, would help school pupils to grow up in a civic-minded environment. A restructuring to reduce the power of the entities and to increase that of the central state, further the coordination among cantons and local levels of government, and guarantee rights to the citizens as political subjects rather than as members of

pre-defined ethno-national groups, could favour the emergence of a civic frame that, in turn, might foster civic activism. All this seems not likely to happen in the near future, and certainly cannot be achieved only by means of street protests, but through a joint commitment of the political elite, the international community and civil society. However, in 2019 the country remains under the shadow of international oversight and ethno-nationalism continues to be a key frame of reference.

Notes

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, March 2019.

[10] Interview with a journalist and participants to both the Babylution and 2014 Social Uprising, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of plenum Sarajevo, Sarajevo, April 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of *Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice) activist, Bihać, Skype interview, July 2015.

[10] Interview with a member of plenum Zenica, Zenica, July 2015.

[10] Interview with a journalist and participants to both the Babylution and 2014 Social Uprising, Sarajevo, November 2014.

[10] Interview with an activist of *Pokret za Socijalnu Pravdu* (Movement for Social Justice) activist, Bihać, Skype interview, July 2015

[10] Interview with an activist of the social center "BASOC", Banja Luka, August 2015.

[10] Interview with activist of #jasammuzej, Sarajevo, August 2015.

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Table 2.1 Variation in mobilization beyond ethnicity

Wave of protest	Levels of the scale shift	
	Spatial	**Social**
The Park is Ours (2012)	Local	Urban middle-class
The Baby revolution (2013)	Major urban centres	Urban middle-class
The Social Uprising (2014)	Urban centres and towns across the country	Middle and working class

Table 2.2 Action repertoires among the three waves of protest

Wave of protest	Type of action repertoires
The Park is Ours (2012)	Demonstrative (citizen marches, cheerful parades, petition, pamphleteering)
The Baby revolution (2013)	Demonstrative and confrontational (citizen marches, ridiculing public figures, mass gatherings, square occupation, parliament blockade)
The Social Uprising (2014)	Violent (riots, arson, physical attacks on police and demonstrators, storming of public offices)