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**MOVING DEMOCRACY
STUDENT CONTENTION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

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INTRODUCTION

For some time now, the successor states of Yugoslavia¹ seem to have fallen short of all ‘Western miracles’: peace, prosperity and democracy have bypassed it. While moving (more or less smoothly) towards Europe, none of this region’s countries – with the possible exception of Slovenia – appear to enjoy the brightness of untarnished democracy. As this narrative tells us, popular apathy and disaffection from politics are just benign signs of the malaise. The enthusiastic times of the 1990s, when the *Otpor!* movement (for a fine introduction see: Lazic 1999) pushed the “power of the street corners”² (Nadjivan 2008: 90) onto the radar of worldwide attention, are now over. Practitioners and academic observers judge the participatory potential to be fairly bleak in the Yugoslav successor states today. More than twenty years after the collapse of communism, “[t]he transition (...) to post-communism [has resulted in] a transition from a hopeless society to a hope without society” (Buden 2010)³. Within postcommunist studies, some blame collectivist mentalities and “Balkan particularisms” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005) for the “belated” (Golubovic 2004: 83ff) development of so-called civil society. Others do acknowledge that something is filling the residual space between the state and the economy but would not characterise it as civil (Sampson 2002). They rather see this space as captured by foreign donors’ agendas and/or domestic nationalisms (cf. on football hooligans: Colovic 2000; on the mobilisation of the 1990s: Bieber 2011). Bosnia and Herzegovina – rampant with local corruption, ethno-nationalist divisions and socio-economic problems – seems to epitomise it all.

But then came June 2013, and local administration’s inability to issue a passport for an infant in Sarajevo triggered what observers labelled the Bosnian “civic awakening” (Stiks 2013). Then followed February 2014, and newspapers picked up on the early seeds of a Bosnian Spring.⁴ One Bosnian scholar and activist wrote: “Bosnia today is a school of democracy. What is happening in plenums and on the streets is democracy live” Ahmetasovic 2014). Whence this local enthusiasm, and, particularly amongst Western European media,

¹ The question of how to label the countries that once formed the Communist Yugoslav Federation (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro) is difficult. The term Western Balkans, currently preferred by some international institutions (such as the EU), comprises former Yugoslav states plus Albania, minus Slovenia. But the concept of Balkans has a contested history (cf. Todorova, 1999). I will therefore not use it. Southeast Europe appears more neutral, but it is very vague. Since I exclude Albania and include Slovenia in my study, I will use the term “successor states of Yugoslavia”, aka “former Yugoslavia”.

² My translation from German: “Straßeneckenmacht”

³ My translation: “Der Übergang vom Postkommunismus [ist] zu einem Übergang von einer hoffnungslosen Gesellschaft zu einer Gesellschaft ohne Hoffnung [geworden].”

⁴ Compare e.g.: Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/it-spring-at-last-bosnia-herzegov-2014296537898443.html> [01/03/14], and the Economist: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21596572-latest-troubles-bosnia-may-wake-up-countrys-inept-leaders-fire> [01/03/14]

astonishment about the participatory potential in this ostensibly forsaken region of the world? Are the successor states of Yugoslavia a sinister place for democratic participation, or are they not? As usual, answers are not as easily given as questions are found.

A cursory glance into broadly distributed indices and surveys⁵ seems to support the dire assessment of democracy in the Yugoslav successor states. The democracy scorecard provided by Freedom House below⁶ serves as an exemplar. It demonstrates that countries seem to be stuck in the stage of semi-consolidated democracies and hybrid regimes.

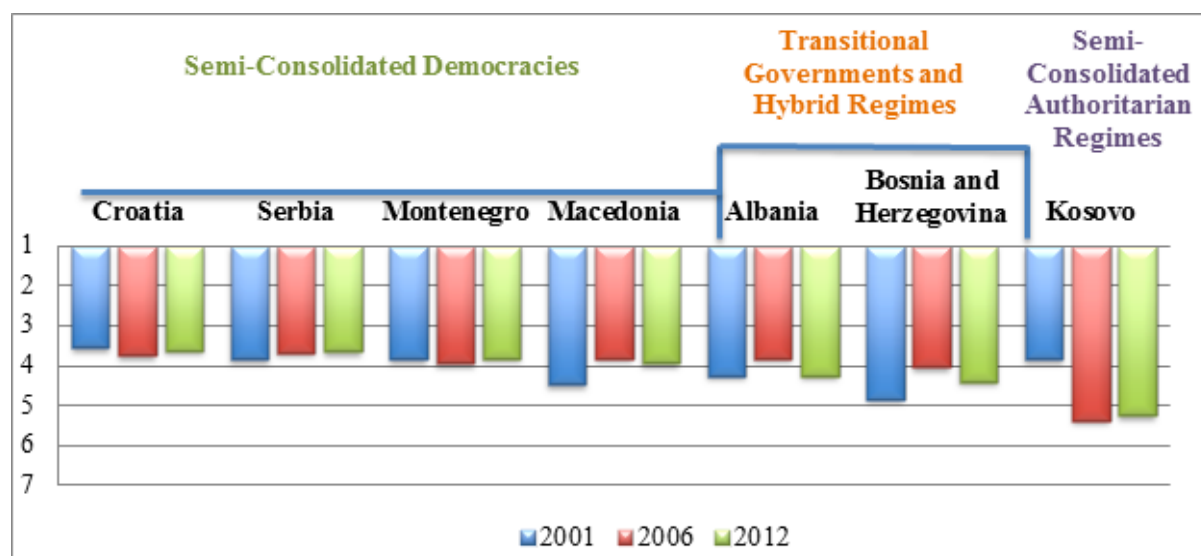


Figure 1: Democracy Scorecard 2013, © Freedom House

Such indices routinely include at least some variables to capture the participatory dimension of democracy. In order to present diverse examples, I herewith illustrate the narrative of popular disaffection with indicators by the Gallup Balkan Monitor survey.⁷ Thus, the two variables of “confidence in civil society” and “volunteering” in the table below may be held to serve as proxy indicators for participation.

⁵ Indices such as the Nations Transition Index by Freedom House (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit>), the Bertelsmann Transformations Index by the Bertelsmann Stiftung (<http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-559FB94A-C9D09EFD/bst/hs.xsl/307.htm>) or the NGO Sustainability Index by USAID (http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/) immediately spring to mind, [01/03/14].

⁶ Available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/blog/democratic-scorecard-western-balkans> [29/12/13]

⁷ All data in percent, accessed on: <http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/index.php/dashboard> [13/02/12] Questions were: a) High confidence in NGOs: “In [Country], do you have a lot of confidence in each of the following, or not? How about ... - Civil Society, NGOs”, b) Volunteering: “Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about ... - Volunteered your time to an organisation?”

		Confidence in Civil Society	Volunteering
Bosnia			
	2009	10.9	3.2
	2012	10.1	4.6
Croatia			
	2009	12	2.3
	2012	17	6.2
Kosovo			
	2009	34.2	14
	2012	14.8	8.2
Macedonia			
	2009	10.2	7.3
	2012	14	7
Montenegro			
	2009	16.3	7.1
	2012	7.5	7.6
Serbia			
	2009	5.3	4.3
	2012	6.1	6.6

Figure 2: Balkan Gallup Monitor, Sources from: Gallup Institute for the Balkans

The table shows consistently low figures for confidence in civil society. The only exception is Kosovo, where in 2009 (i.e. one year after its independence) confidence in civil society rose to 34%. The same holds true for numbers on volunteering. Optimism about the newly gained independence of Kosovo seems to have induced positive responses. But three years later, the data approach the scores of the neighbouring countries. Statistics are one side of the story, but do they tell us all there is to say about the residual public space (cf. Habermas 1990: 36f) between the state and the economy? How much have existing analyses of democracy and participation in this region helped us understand what is ‘out there’?

This thesis does not venture to overthrow all existing models for explaining democracy and participation. However, it seeks to diversify available accounts on the region’s socio-political realities by bringing social movement approaches to the study of democratisation. Academic research does not appear up to have been up to pace with that something that is happening ‘out there’; with this something shifting in numbers and forms beneath foreign donors’ intervention and beyond domestic ethno-nationalism. And as (some) scientific research (sometimes) informs policy-making, it is safe to assume that such limited understandings of the matter constrict the conceptual backbone of policies.

I take issue with the widespread depreciation of democracy in the region on two accounts which I discuss at length in the remainder of this chapter: First I challenge a ‘real-world’ perspective according to which the participatory dimension of democracy (if analysed at all) can be exhaustively captured by looking at civil society (aka non-governmental) organisations. I would argue that this restriction loses out on many phenomena of participation from the bottom up, which do not crystallise into structured organisations. For the real world, this has consequences insofar as surveys measure participation in these skewed terms, informing foreign donor policies that are oblivious of the wealth of participatory phenomena on the ground.

The second aspect pertains more to academic discussions per se: The above-mentioned reactions to the Bosnian upheavals require us to adapt our academic take on the region in three important ways. To begin with, regional scholars of post-communism shied away from probing new models to examine the many dimensions of these (however fragile) democracies, because of their pessimistic presumptions about the region. Introducing the approach of contentious politics has the potential to enlighten us that the region is less exceptional than may be expected. Scholars of transition, on the other hand, chose to focus on elites and institutions more than on awkward fluid bottom-up processes of participation because they traditionally put stability at the core of democratisation theory. Here, the theoretical tools of contentious politics indicate the limits of classical transition studies. Lastly, applying this framework to the successor states of Yugoslavia remedies the deplorable omission by social movement scholars to examine this phenomenon outside of consolidated democracies, in relation to which various theories of new social movements were originally conceived (United States and Western Europe, cf: Della Porta & Diani 1999).

Let me elaborate each of these three arguments in turn: Regional and postcommunist scholarship is affected by an overly strong preoccupation with the apparent exceptionalism of Yugoslavia successor states. Implicitly assumed to be the “dark Alter Ego”⁸ of Europe (Todorova 1999: 267), local shifts and shambles are often interpreted with respect to the region’s supposedly extraordinary nature/culture/history etc. Thus emerged a peculiar focus on ethnicity/ethno-nationalism to explain virtually every defective development. “Nationalism is the last word of communism” (Michnik 1991: 759). This was the sinister prophesy of disconcerted Polish writer Adam Michnik at the PEN Club meeting in Slovenia in 1991. Many explanations for the Yugoslavian disintegration into wars are couched in cultural terms (but cf. for a contrasting point of view: Gagnon 2004). Accordingly, historical traditions of

⁸ My translation from: “dunkles Alter Ego”

authoritarianism provided the basis for political instrumentalisation of ethnic consciousness in the 1980s, which eventually lead to an eruption of “ancient tribal hatreds” (Kaplan 1993) in the so-called wars of Yugoslav succession (1991-1999). After the wars, ethno-nationalism both as a discourse (for example in the media: Kurspahic, 2003) and as a practice (Gagnon 2004; Malesevic 2002; Ramet 2006) continued to drive the quest for statehood (Kuzio 2001). Against this background, research on civil society in particular served to sanctify the “divide between ‘Europe’ and the ‘Balkans’ [since it] act[ed] as a normative template to which the Balkans should aspire” (Bilic 2011: 313).

Against ‘classical’ studies on transition and democratisation one might object that they rely upon a reduced understanding of popular participation. The theoretic reason for this is that – according to the moderation thesis (cf. Bermeo 1997) – confrontations and conflicts are harmful for democratic transition. Thus, academics and practitioners turned their attention towards leaders (Huntington 1991), institutions (Alexander 2001; Shapiro 2000) and the consolidation phase of democratisation (Diamond 1999; Linz & Stepan 1996a; for a critique see: O’Donnell 2010). The submerged actions people undertook here and there on the streets (or in virtual fora) were forgotten. If participation was taken into account after all, it concerned ‘civil society’ (cf. Eberley 2000; Cohen & Arato 1992). This term emphasises structures of, and institutionalised action through, non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It connects with a liberal paradigm according to which any non-state action quasi-automatically implies progress towards fully-fledged democracy. This emphasis concurs with policies of major international political players, such as the European Union. Donors are overall interested in occurrences of participation that can be relatively well categorised and measured, since only a tangible civil society may become a recipient of donor funding. The reality of political (especially EU) interest in achieving measurable results for the transformation of the societies of Yugoslav successor states concurred with an academic focus on exactly those policies. Thus, academics criticised EU (US, and other donors’) “intervention into Balkan societies” (Sampson 2002: 10) for having created a form of “project society” (ibid. 5; cf. Karajkov 2012). They lamented that many local NGOs were heavily funded and directed or even run by actors from outside the region. Or they held ‘local cultures’ as hindering the emergence of civil society (cf. Ramet, Listhaug & Dulic 2011; Sotiropoulos 2005; but see: Höpken 2009: 138). This deflected attention away from alternative bottom-up phenomena of participation, because these were just not on the radar of foreign donors. As is sometimes the case so this time, political reality and academic reasoning went hand in hand, leaving little space for creative thinking outside the box. In conclusion, introducing social movement and

contentious theories to research on transformation countries is promising, because the concept of social movements opens our eyes for participation that is more fluid (Della Porta & Diani 1999: 17) than non-governmental organisations (NGOs). From a theoretical point of view then, social movements literature invites scholars to explore more ‘cases’ of popular participation than if they operated with the truncated conception of civil society.

Unfortunately, most social movements theorists shied away from probing their theories in the context of non-established democracies (but see: Wood 2000; Oberschall 2007). Arising from the analysis of the so-called ‘new social movements’ of the 1980s, scholars preferred to examine the actors (Della Porta & Diani 1999: 24-33) and their internal processes of group- and ideology forming (cf. Benford & Snow 2000; Polletta & Jasper 2001). If scholars researched how social movements fared in times of transformation, they concentrated on those initiatory “brief (...) liberalisation phases in authoritarian regimes that encourage social movement activity” (Pickvance 1999: 368), rather than the complex interplay of social movements in semi-consolidated or hybrid democracies. Thus, there have been some studies for instance on anti-regime unrests during the 1990s (cf. Bieber 2011; Collin 2001; Lazic 1999) or on popular resistance around the time of the fall of the Iron Curtain (cf. Ekiert & Kubik 1998; Osa 2003; Konvicka & Kavan 1994). However, these efforts do not adequately reflect the role of popular participation in democracy after the ‘heated moments of revolution’ were over. Jessica Greenberg and Heleen Touquet brought forward two single-case studies on post-revolutionary Serbia (Greenberg 2014) and post-war Bosnia (Touquet 2012), which do focus on precisely the later stages of transition. Analysing contentious politics – even if they term it differently – they seek to understand how transforming societies determine and re-determine the fundamental values, processes and voices (i.e. the conditions) for democracy. This thesis takes up a similar approach but widens the study to a comparison of various countries from the region. In times of transformation, where about everything is in flux, social movements not only put conflicts on the table, but they also have a role to play in determining who sits at the table and how the issues are being discussed and decided upon. Focusing on transformation democracies allows analysing the weal and woe of participation as if through a magnifying glass. Looking at the whole region, and comparing two countries indepth (more on that later), allows probing just how participation occurred and why it developed similarly or differently.

In sum hope I to contribute to three bodies of scholarship: Regarding regional studies/post-communist scholarship, my thesis firstly helps to zoom in on forms of participation in the region of former Yugoslavia, which were hitherto rarely ‘seen’ by such scholars. With respect

to democratisation/ transition literature, the present project pinpoints the potential of citizens in fanning participation beyond bureaucratic measures from above (by national governments or experts) and outside (European Union, US, other donors). Lastly I hope to add to the theory of social movements literature through analysing the potential of contentious politics in setting the contours for subsequent democratic experiments.

Research Questions, Definitions and Cases

This thesis examines contentious politics in contemporary successor states of Yugoslavia. It directs attention to “what happens when collective actors join forces in confrontation with elites” (Tarrow 2011: 4) in the context of broad social systemic transformations (for a discussion of the terminology see Merkel 1999: 70-76). Based on this general research interest, I direct my attention to two research questions. First, I ask how and why contentious politics varies in most comparable contexts. In this project, the context refers to a region sharing features of European transition, democratisation, marketisation and nation-state building. The second subquestion is normative in nature. I profess to investigate which role contentious politics can and could play for democracy. Inspired by the seminal book “Dynamics of Contention” (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001: 5), I define contentious politics as an episodic, public and collective action that touches upon the interests of social actors with the potential to “change the understandings, policies, and practices that shape the allocation of valued goods” (Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace 2010). It is an episodic form of participation in democracy, alongside other more routine ways such as voting or petitioning. It is public since it transcends the boundaries of private businesses and targets a potentially larger collective. It is collective since it assembles a wide range of (social) activists. When such attempts at change become sustainable over time, one speaks of social movement(s).

I focus on sustained contentious politics rather than upon scattered uproars of resistance or all-encompassing revolutions (cf. Tarrow 2011: 7). I therefore use the term social movement(s) to designate the acting units of contentious politics. I will speak of contentious action when referring to the sum of social movement activities. It is important to underline that I emphasise the disruptive character of contentious politics. This is not to be confused with transgressive contentious politics, as coined by McAdam and his colleagues (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001: 7). Accordingly, contentious action is transgressive if it establishes new political actors to the conflict and/or introduces altogether new strategies, frames and tactics. Not all social movements achieve that. But it is important to remember that every contentious action interrupts the status quo of routine politics, seeking to alter

existing formal and/or informal power structures, practices and/or cultural authorities (see: Snow, Soule & Kriesi 2011: 9). Concomitant with this is the specific position of social movements within society. They act from a position of relative powerlessness (Lipsky 1968; Rucht 2012). Social movements' preference for unconventional tactics (such as protests) sometimes may be a sign of their inability to access conventional politics. Most often, however, being radical and acting radically conforms to their ideology. When writing of democracy, I bear in mind radical theories, which call for a "democratisation of democracy" (Little & Llyod 2009: 5). Democracy, in this picture, is an eternal construction site full of conflicts over the meaning and practice of democracy. Rather than being evaded, conflicts are accepted as ways to continuously contest power relations (cf. Mouffe 1996 & 2007) and put into practice "self-government by citizens" (Barber 1984: 151).

In order to answer the two research questions mentioned on the previous page, I first need to closely scrutinise how and why social movements changed over time. Hence I aim to identify why, if at all, social movements differ from each other and how this relates to their success in coming up with alternative meanings and practices suited to change the status quo of democracy in Yugoslav successor states. In order to accomplish my task, I analyse the processes of how social movements

- 1) frame their goals, activities and identities (*dimension of framing and identification*);
- 2) order their activities (*dimension of organising*);
- 3) relate to their socio-political and institutional contexts (*dimension of context*);
- 4) interact – if at all – with other social movements across borders (*dimension of collaboration*).

When analysing the dimension of framing and identification, I focus on how activists make sense of their collective action, how they ascribe differences and similarities to enemies (i.e. targets and antagonists) or friends (adherents and constituencies). With respect to organising, I will examine how activists evaluate the opportunities or dangers inherent in organising in particular ways, and how they practically make their activities more routinised. When exploring the dimension of the context, I refer to the macro-level political opportunity structures of social movements (cf. Kriesi 2011; Kriesi et al 1997) but also to the more immediate institutional context(s). Finally, I direct my attention to the availability of like-minded social movements in the region and the question of how, if at all, transnational collaboration is established between them.

I choose to restrict my study to the case of student contention, as one example of contentious politics in Yugoslav successor states. I selected student contention for the following reasons: first, students repeatedly struggled against status quo politics (Kanzleiter & Stojakovic 2008; Luxemburg Stiftung 2009) in defunct Yugoslavia. This is also true for the 1990s war period (cf. Lazic 1999; Collin 2001). With the fragmentation of the Yugoslav space after the wars collaboration on virtually all levels (between academics, professors, but also students) was stalled. Student movements are a good case to study, because it is far from self-evident that traditions of pre-existing contentious action re-emerge automatically after the traumatising events of war and ethno-nationalism. Second, tertiary education is a policy issue of tremendous political and symbolic importance for post-war societies in need of reconstruction. In the region of Yugoslav successor states, remodelling higher education involved many actors (national governments, international experts, the European Union), whose interests and ideas shaped education reforms. In particular, adaptations linked to EU accession and the implementation of the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area changed studying conditions at universities (Lemonik 2011).

When discussing student contention as my phenomenon of interest (i.e. the explanandum) I zoom in on student social movements, which carried out and partook in episodes of student contention. My sample includes student movements that:

- wage public protests related to issues of higher education and schooling;
- use non-institutionalised, unconventional, and public means of voicing their ideas, claims and concerns;
- may be interlinked but are not concomitant with non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- take up an oppositional stance against their national government and/or are financially independent from state funding;⁹
- do not operate for private business interests;
- fight for change in particular subject areas that are relevant to a larger constituency than to those activists who are personally and actively engaged;
- have taken up contentious action after the end of the wars of Yugoslav secessions (i.e. after the year 2000) and/or are still operative as of writing.

Geographically, I will base my study in the region that previously constituted Communist Yugoslavia; that is Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro,

⁹ Officially recognised student representative organisations are not part of my phenomenon of interest, even though their knowledge has proved valuable in my empirical research.

Serbia and Slovenia. In a second step, I will narrow down the empirical comparison to Croatia and Serbia. Comparing contentious politics in these two cases makes sense, because they share important characteristics. Both countries:

- once formed part of Communist Yugoslavia and before adhered to the same political realm between the First and Second World Wars;¹⁰
- suffered war(s) on their territories and periodically fought against each other or other states during the 1990s;¹¹
- sought to redefine their state- and nationhood before and after the wars (Merkel, 2007);
- are caught up in processes of Europeanisation, whether as part of preparing for or as members of the European Union;
- witnessed a novel strategy for contention by students, namely occupation. Students occupied university buildings in both Croatia and Serbia. This holds true for Slovenia as well.
- are similar when it comes to a range of evaluations on their 'state of democracy'. As the following table shows, Slovenia is already too advanced not only in the economic realm but also on these essential socio-political indicators to be valuable for the current most-comparable cases design. It is interesting to note that the scores on democracy in Croatia and Serbia in the below table are highly consistent.¹² Namely, the gap between the figures of Croatia and Serbia within each index, respectively, is negligible. So, for instance, there is no difference between Serbia and Croatia in the Freedom House Democracy Score, whereas Bertelsmann only notes a difference of 0.5 points and the Economist Intelligence Unit a difference of 0.6 points. Slovenia, on the other hand, fares much better, even on a number of other criteria that could be thought of relevance to democracy such as the openness of the party system, media freedom or the perception of corruption.

¹⁰ The former Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, which existed from 1918 until 1941 and covered much of later Communist Yugoslavia.

¹¹ Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991-1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), Kosovo (1998-1999), Serbia (involved in all these wars, bombed by the NATO in 1999).

¹² In his discussion of various democracy indices Manfred Schmidt (2006: 412-18) notes that there is a curiously high correlation between the Freedom House scale and other measurements. This does not keep him (and others) from criticising that current indices emphasise procedural qualities of democracies and underestimate the importance of measuring policy outputs, differences in participation modes, chances and the like. Concerning the method of Freedom House, he underlines that responses are – actually – based on subjective observations, that questions varied over time (making comparability difficult) and that their categories were weakly operationalised.

	Croatia	Serbia	Slovenia
<i>Freedom House</i> Nations in Transit 2012 – Democracy Score	3.6	3.6	1.9
<i>Freedom House</i> Nations in Transit 2012 – Civil Society Score	2.5	2.25	2.0
<i>Bertelsmann</i> Transformation Index 2014 Democracy Status Score	8.5	8.0	9.3
<i>Economist Intelligence Unit</i> Democracy Index 2012 – Overall Score	6.9	6.3	7.9
<i>Economist Intelligence Unit</i> Democracy Index 2012 – Political Participation	5.5	6.1	7.2
<i>Party Openness</i> Casal Bertoa & Mair, 2010	19	20.7	11.9
<i>Media Freedom</i> Freedom House, 2014	40 (partly free)	49 (partly free)	24 (free)
<i>Corruption Perception</i> Transparency International, 2013	48 (partly corrupt)	42 (partly corrupt)	57 (modestly corrupt)

Figure 3: Democracy in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia compared (various sources, see bibliography)

Temporally, I will limit my study to the most recent period, i.e. after 2000. It was then that the authoritarian regimes of both Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman, in Serbia and Croatia respectively, were brought to an end. This second phase of democratisation (Ramet 2011a) saw renewed attempts to install multi-party representative democracies (see for Croatia: Sedo 2010; Ramet & Matic 2007; Ramet, Clewing & Lukic 2008; for Serbia: Petritsch, Svilanovic & Solioz 2009; Bieber 2003b). This resulted in systems that were relatively stable but had no “ambition to increase the quality of democratic rule” (Dzihić & Segert 2012: 243). While providing an overview of student contention for all this period and for all of former Yugoslavia in the first part of the empirical chapter, I will – as I said before – subsequently focus on contention in Croatia and Serbia from 2006 to 2013. The reason is, as mentioned, that student activists invented and applied a novel strategy of action – namely university occupations. Students’ activities were under much public scrutiny and had to be undertaken with a higher risk of repression and/or criticism from elite political actors and media than at any prior point in time since the year 2000. With this, both countries can be placed in a row of university occupations that captured many other countries around Europe. Student contention thus reflected developments outside the region, which confirms the

region's peripheric but stable positioning within broad processes of Europeanisation and globalisation. However, student contention also linked back to historic events and discourses specific to the region – thus adapting the diffused models of contention to local necessities. In addition, it evolved in response to the particular context of hybrid non-consolidated democracies. Both specificities as well as trans-regional features of student contention will be scrutinised indepth in the empirical chapters.

The Argument

At the very basic level I assume that the dire assessment regarding an evidently hopeless, passive and disaffected society in Yugoslav successor states needs rectification. More to the point, I argue that student contention has succeeded in advancing innovative identities and practices, which carry within them the potential to transform existing cultural authorities. The term cultural authorities in this sentences fills in for hegemonic “systems of beliefs or practices” (Snow, Soule & Kriesi 2011: 9), through which a distinct type of representative electoral democracy is put into effect as if it were the climax of all possible democratic dreams. Student contention demonstrated the ideological content of this claim (cf. Machart 2002: 306) and thus opened the horizon for formulating and living alternative political identities and practices. Student contention constituted a case of transgressive contentious politics.

According to my first argument, students transcend the symbolic boundaries of ethno-nationalism through conceiving of new political identities. As I will further develop in my history chapter, ethno-nationalism shaped events as Communist Yugoslavia crumbled. Both in Croatia and Serbia, the wars accelerated efforts to match state borders with ethnic boundaries. Ethnically defined nations constituted the population (Serbo-Croat: *narod*) in whose name politics was done. These efforts played themselves out as a discourse and as a practice, and culminated in post-war attempts to root democratic government in an ethnically defined *demos*. In this way, ethno-nationalism seeped into many policy areas such as media, culture, citizenship, human and minority rights, language, post-war justice and urban planning (cf. Bieber 2011; Boduszynski 2010; Gallagher 2000; Ramet & Matic 2007; Todorova 1999). Against this background I hypothesise that students open up de-nationalised counterpublics (Fraser 1992; Warner 2002) through which they recreate, feel and live their roles of involved public actors. Paraphrasing Jacques Rancière one could say that students transform noise into speaking (Ranciere 1999: 50) by adding new voices to the available actor positions. This is not to say that all contentious politics to be found in the region is oblivious of ethnicity. Also, I do not claim that students' contention completely erases nationalised ways of acting and

feeling. However, in studying how student movements organise themselves, create meaning, and interact with each other across state borders, I expect to find hints at an emerging transnational Yugosphere (Judah 2009). Student activists gradually establish a nucleus of an a-nationally defined transnational public and thus disentangle contentious action from the framework of both ethno- and state nationalism. This public arises as a side effect to contention, because students work together for pragmatic reasons of efficiency, necessity and the like, and not because they seek to address culturally loaded topics such as history or regional reconciliation. This is the alternative to ethnically and state defined nationalism students offer their societies.

My second argument is that student activists in Yugoslav successor states devise alternative practices to the hegemonic model of representative electoral democracy, as defined by Dzihic and Segert (2012). Accordingly, electoral democracy has a medium level of stability but does little to improve the quality of its democratic rule through participation (ibid. 243-249). The crucial difference to the *indignados* in Spain (Della Porta 2011) for instance is that their struggle against existing forms of democracy is set within the context of fragmentary transition to a (however idealised or misconceived) ‘European-style’ democracy. As stated before, contentious politics in transformative contexts is part of a process of continuously (re)defining the very fundament of what democracy means, how it could function and who should be involved in it.

In the region of interest here, Europeanisation largely defined the yardstick for local democracy-building. ‘Europe’ developed into the hegemonic fundament for political rationality (cf. Dzihic et al. 2006; Dzihic & Wieser 2008b) which implied that criticism of (interchangeably!) too much or too little reforms in a plethora of areas (concerning human rights, good governance, rule of law, stability of institutions etc.) were thwarted as unfounded and hostile to progress. Against this consensus, according to which there were no real alternatives to ‘European’ democracy, student activists organise themselves on the basis of participatory democracy. They stage an alternative practice in public and hence demonstrate that democratic variants exist and can be tested. To quote Ranciere, “[t]here is democracy if there is a specific sphere where the people appear. There is democracy if there are specific political performers who are neither agents of the state apparatus nor parts of society, if there are groups that displace identities (...). Lastly, there is democracy if there is a dispute conducted by a non-identary subject on the state where the people emerge” (Ranciere 1999: 100). In short, this is what student activists in Yugoslav successor states may have achieved:

reopening the democratic imaginary through establishing novel identities and infusing new participatory practices into the public arena.

I propose there are some obstructing and facilitating factors to student contention. Collaborating across borders and conceiving of other activists as partners in a shared cause is not a smooth endeavour. On the contrary, identification as like-minded partners might contradict existing collective identities (cf. Della Porta 2005a). Besides, students face obstacles of everyday organisational difficulties, scepticism from the media, political elites, from non-involved students and the immediate university context as well as controversies within the movement. As for the factors that facilitate the emergence of student movements at transnational levels, I suggest the following: usage of a reciprocally intelligible language (Serbo-Croat, also called *BHS/ Bosanski-Hrvatski-Srpski*); personal friendships amongst activists; socialisation in urban cities; previous experiences in pro-democracy collective action; and international versatility (for example: trips abroad, foreign university degrees or closeness to international donor communities). The more students resemble rooted cosmopolitans (Tarrow 2005: 29), the easier they interact.

Methodology and Sources

This thesis is situated within the qualitative research tradition. My intention is not to explain effects of student movements' transnational collaboration or to trace causality from individuals to movements back to the system (or the reverse). I rather seek to understand the features of contentious politics as practiced by students. According to Weber's *Soziologie des Verstehens* (cf. Weber 1973), actors are cultural beings bestowed with the ability to make sense of an inter-subjectively meaningful world. The researcher's task thus is to get at the meanings actors ascribe to their own patterns of interaction. "[T]he concepts we use to describe and explain human activity must be drawn from the social life that is being studied, and not from the observer's theories" (Fay & Moon 1994: 23). The objective validity of scientific research does not lie in its capacity to 'perfectly explain' reality but in organising and rearranging a (potentially super-complex) reality. "Life in its irrational substance and its *possible* meanings is inexhaustible" (Weber 1973: 213, emphasis in original).¹³ Against this epistemological background, I will conduct an analysis-as-interpretation of the instances of symbolic action through which activists in a never-ending process constitute and reconstitute meaning(s).

¹³ My translation from: "Das Leben in seiner irrationalen Wirklichkeit und sein Gehalt an *möglichen* Bedeutungen sind unausschöpfbar."

“The types of questions that can be answered with [] different methods vary” – two students of social movements correctly note (Klandermans & Staggenborg 2002: xvi). In this thesis, I am not interested in why mobilisation started or why individuals were motivated to participate. Rather, one strand of my research is geared towards the comparative question of how the movements were organised, how they developed and interacted with each other and their context(s). The second strand inspects the question of results. When I say results, I do not mean to measure an eventual direct or indirect impact by movements on their context but seek to explore the policy formulae (i.e. the meanings) student activists invent. The methodology of an intensive comparative case study (cf. Lijphart 1971 & 1975), using a bundle of research strategies seems to be the most fitting way to proceed. As stated before, my phenomenon of interest is contentious politics. Of this large phenomenon I investigate the case of student contention. My units of analysis (i.e. the level at which I analyse my cases) are meanings tied by student activists to actions and actors throughout episodes of contention. I compare my most-comparable cases Croatia and Serbia across time and space, thus enfolding a longitudinal and cross-country study.

The observations to my study come from three types of sources: 1) documents produced by student movement activists and published online, 2) printed handbooks, leaflets and newspapers, and 3) qualitative, semi-structured interviews with non-activist and activist students. In total, I reviewed over thirty websites and ten printed textbooks/ journals/ pamphlets,¹⁴ and conducted thirty roughly one to two hours long interviews in Croatia (16) and Serbia (14). The relatively high number of interviews should allow for diversity while keeping data to a manageable amount. Semi-structured interviews are “guided conversation[s]” (Blee & Verta 2002: 92) with a predefined set of questions or topics, which the interviewer may modify as the interview proceeds. It enables the researcher to gather in-depth insight of the meanings social movement activists ascribe to events, their own or others’ behaviour and identities (ibid. 93-97). It is important to note in advance that semi-structured interviews are not mere “pipeline[s] of transmitting knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium 2001: 112) but “meaning-making occasions” (ibid. 113). This means that such interviews are not objective in the sense of neutral. On the contrary, they are an interactive situation upon which the researcher can build his/her interpretative analysis.

As for the interpretative analysis, I use methods of documents and qualitative content analysis. As I will set forth in the respective chapter II.1.iv.a, my categories for analysis

¹⁴ This low number results from the fact that most of the printed material has not been archived. Online material is much more accessible and – in many instances – reproduces material that had once been printed as well.

revolve around the problem of higher education, opportunities for action, principles of organisation, identification and happenings. My focus is upon the meanings activists attach to the reality of their struggles. Hence, one essential concept for me is frame/framing. Frames are defined as cognitive schemes that condense and simplify reality (cf. Snow et al. 1986). Framing is the process (i.e. the symbolic action) by which activists construct interpretative snapshots of their contexts, their opportunities, and their possibilities and necessities of contentious action.

The Background

The problem of democracy has accompanied me since my studies of political science at the University of Vienna. I regard democracy as a ‘problem’, because this mode of living together is not as stable and self-evident as one might be tempted to believe. A short view into history and across borders enlightens us to the fact that democracy is a rather elusive phenomenon. Kant’s aspiration of a universal expansion of democratic (or, as he terms it, republican) politics (Kant 1795) remains unfulfilled to this day. And he has been contradicted even with respect to those countries that are usually ranked under the heading of established or consolidated democracies. In fact, the literature on the erosion of democracy from within (or without) is at least as vast as the literature on its emergence. And the entire discussion about post-democracy (to name two forefathers: Ranciere 1999 & 2010; Crouch 2004) encapsulates existing uneasiness about “a democracy that has eliminated the appearance, miscount, and the dispute of the people and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests” (Ranciere 1999: 102).

I do not claim to have read Ranciere or other post-democracy theorists during my early years in academia. But my (at first quite unreflective) steps into post-foundational/post-modern theory started pretty early on via extensive readings of discursive theories by Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau or (partly) Jacques Derrida. Moving to the University of Oxford and the European University Institute I was confronted with mainstream statistical approaches to political science. However clear and succinct the language of quantitative academia was, post-foundational/post-modern literature made more sense to me. Appreciating the world as a social construction promises a greater degree of freedom for the individual, even though structures (of discourse, culture, meaning etc.) seem so immutable at first. This is to explain my epistemological and theoretical background. This begs the question of how I came to be interested in the successor states of Yugoslavia.

It all started in a tiny country: Montenegro. During a stay in Montenegro, I immersed myself in this country’s history, petty political happenings and the stunning landscape. And I

started studying the Serbo-Croat language. This endeavour taught me much about processes of identification and nation building. I was intrigued by the economic, social, political, cultural and intellectual vibrancy within and across the region. I also became increasingly appalled by what I felt to be renewed orientalism, which many ‘Westerners’ display when talking or thinking about the region. In contrast to the discourses of many external actors and organisations, I observed enormous resilience, enlightenment and creativity within local communities. And I developed a hunch that the prevalent depreciation of (democratic, economic, rule-of-law etc.) progress amongst practitioners and academics (from outside) somehow do not capture the full picture.

Reading Maria Todorova (1999), I began to wonder what the construction of the Balkans by ‘Europe’ revealed about precisely that Europe. My first doctoral project, however, did not deal with such thoughts. I first set forth to examine media systems in the region. My goal was to demonstrate that liberalising media economically and politically would not necessarily return media to Europe. Over the period of one year I grew unsatisfied with this attempt to measure the Other (i.e. the Balkans) with yardsticks developed and applied by the ostensibly perfect ‘West’. As I followed events on the ground I reconsidered my whole research project. Students were protesting in Serbia. Far from being apathetic (as many academic observers are content to believe), they loudly claimed to participate in and be heard by the regime. Drawing together Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and Ranciere (1999), one could say that they re-filled the empty signifier of democracy with the *demos* that it had previously lacked from it. My focus turned from media to protest movements.

Simultaneously, I thrust myself into the literature on democratisation. A double revelation ensued: First, I realised how much new social movements studies was rooted within America and/or Western Europe. This carried within it the danger to lock me up in Eurocentrism all over again. Second, I hit the explanatory limits of the classical linear model of democratic consolidation. Reading Thomas Carothers (2002 & 2007) brought me an important step forward towards new horizons. Eventually I ended up close to where I had begun as an undergrad: next to post-foundational/post-constructivist/post-modern theories of democracy (see for an overview: Basualdo 2002). Jacques Derrida’s notion of a *démocratie à venir* (cf. Mallet 2004) enabled me to confront the above-mentioned intellectual difficulties. Besides, it was a promising perspective for researching the factor of non-institutionalised political agency in constructing new meanings and practices of/for democracy.

A Tour of the Thesis

This thesis is broadly divided into two parts: in the first part, I delve into a discussion of the theories necessary to derive my core theoretical concepts and to prepare the empirical analysis. I introduce theories on democratisation and democracy (**I.1**) and the scholarship on social movement relevant for my thesis (**I.2**). The second part is devoted the methodological contours of my work (**II.1**). I then recount contentious action in former Yugoslavia (**II.2**) during the 1990s and proceed to present my empirical analysis (**II.3**).

My theoretical endeavour starts with a brief scrutiny of the terms change, transition and transformation (**I.1.i**). These terms can be differentiated from each other based on the completeness with which they induce change, and the directionality, the level and intervals of change. I then (**I.1.ii**) peruse classical theories on democratic transition, and explain the underlying normative and ontological claims attached thereto. I proceed to discuss cultural approaches. These turn attention away from elites, institutions and strategies to focus on the subjective and constructed character of democratisation. The core argument – namely that there is no linear automaticity in the move from authoritarian to democratic regime – provides a fine basis for my discussion of democracy in the consecutive chapter (**I.1.iii**). Then I sketch the most relevant arguments of the abundant scholarship on democracy focusing on the (for me) pivotal dimension of participation. I approach democracy along its etymological lines of rule (*kratein*) of the people (*demos*) and then deal with questions arising from this, namely: What form should ruling take, i.e. how should power be exercised? And second, who is this people, i.e. who is eligible to partake in the exercise of power? In the following three subsections, I develop three lines of thought, which – incrementally – lead up to a notion of democracy used in my analysis. In a first step (**I.1.iii.a**), I illustrate the significance of participation by people in between elections as a central means of securing accountability from their leaders. In a second step (**I.1.iii.b**), I suggest that public spheres are one major avenue through which such participation occurs. Deliberation in public spheres yields public opinion that feeds dissenting ideas, criticism and information into the decision-making process – hence controlling and contributing to democratic rule. I elaborate that these public spheres, far from merging into one homogeneous public sphere, shall be thought of as a multiplicity of counterpublics. These bring together otherwise marginalised or excluded people who voice dissent (or consent) to the system. In a third step (**I.1.iii.c**) I embed this discussion in a radical understanding of democracy according to which the goal of democracy is not to seek universal consensus and eliminate disputes, but to live with and transform them. In the end, I arrive at a definition of democracy as a continuous and rights-based search for

mechanisms to renegotiate and disrupt routines of power. In the following chapter **(I.1.iv)**, I deal with nationalism as an idea, which made the figure of *volonté générale* thinkable. This leads into the debate on the possible link between nationalism and democracy. I conclude that ethno-nationalism (i.e. the culturalist branch of nationalism) contradicts both critical and radical democracies. I close the chapter by setting out the contours of the argument on a Yugosphere. I propose that student contention is a fitting case to test whether a shared subjective sense is emerging from shared experiences of collaboration for explicitly political purposes **(I.1.iv.a)**.

In the second part of my theory chapter, I jump into the scholarship on social movements **(I.2)**. I derive a definition of social movements according to which they bundle collective action from the bottom up to claim something. I underline the disruptive and precarious character of social movements vis-à-vis other civil actors (such as NGOs) and conclude that social movements organise contentious action that is part of contentious politics **(I.2.i)**. I dissect two elements, which sustain the relative continuity of social movements: a) the fact that to keep up mobilisation, some degree of routinisation is needed, and b) that collective identities and cognitive frames motivate and assemble participants around specific goals and demands. In the following bit, I introduce culture to social movements studies **(I.2.ii)** in a quest to understand how people get recruited for collective action, how social activists keep up motivation, and how forms of organisation may express (and reinforce) certain self-understandings. I present identification and framing as the two central cultural techniques at hands of social movement activists with which they construct meaning and thus continuity and coherence as collective actors. I conclude that social movements are able to forestall the ephemerality of counterpublics through providing a) mobilisatory potential and b) continuity. Counterpublics – as spaces of appearance – inherently lack such dimensions. In chapter **(I.2.iii)**, I expand on forms of organisation beyond the national level. I present how and why networks, short-term alliances or long-term campaign coalitions are formed. Students frequently spearheaded contention. Their specific inclination for contention will thus be the topic of chapter **I.2.iv**. I will then **(I.2.v)** knit together the core arguments of chapters on social movements stating that social movements play a particular role for (a radically defined) democracy: they unfold opportunities and spaces for people to meet and discuss alternatives to existing ways to representative democracy and may be venues through which the otherwise fleeting and elusive public spaces acquire regularity and periodicity.

The first part of my empirical chapter **(II.1)** represents the bridge between my research questions and hypotheses, my theory and my eventual empirical study. It establishes the

ontological and epistemological basis for research **(II.1.i)** and clarifies their possible limits but also the reasons why I deem qualitative methodologies useful for continuing with my work **(II.1.ii)**. In the following section **(II.1.iii)**, I discuss in detail why I chose the methods, the comparable-cases design and my sources, and with which methods of investigation and interpretation I confront the empirical material. In an attempt to realise the two most important principles of qualitative research, transparency and reflexivity, I continue to describe the actual course of my empirical work **(II.1.iv)**. Thus I point out how I came to define the units of my study, formulated my interview questions, identified my interview partners and established categories for my interpretation.

Before presenting my empirical analysis, I shall set forth the historical contours of contention during Yugoslav communism and the Yugoslav Wars of Secession **(II.2)**. This section is still based on primary and secondary literature sources, but I try to recount the story with a new angle. Namely, I show **(II.2.i)** that grass-roots activism (not necessarily outright political opposition or even contentious politics) is not new to the area of Yugoslav successor states. It builds upon earlier instances of grass-roots activism that could emerge thanks to the unique federal system and the particular ideology of Communist Yugoslavia. Discussing the decade of the 1990s, I then focus on contention apart from the officially democratically elected regimes in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia and the rump state Yugoslavia **(II.2.ii)**. I conclude that contention sprouted in the form of anti-war protests in the early 1990s and clustered around some left-wing media and student networks. Difficulties however constituted contravening influences of nationalist mobilisation and the overall marginalisation of alternative ideas. Last but not least, I briefly **(II.2.iii)** touch upon the contextual fundamentals for further developments as of 2000. I argue that former Yugoslav states falter both in responding to their voters' ideas and in providing for their needs. In sum, change in the Yugoslav successor states thus corresponds to "the other transition" (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010: 121f), i.e. a relentless fight amongst elites for social control over people and resources.

Based on this groundwork, I finally move on to present the results from my empirical analysis **(II.3)** of online and printed documents, and semi-structured interviews. As a matter of familiarising readers with the subject at hand, I first **(II.3.i)** provide an overview over the most memorable "moments of madness" (Tarrow 1997: 329) of student contention. I give a short chronological overview over contentious events in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Montenegro. I resume that mobilisation was most intensive (in members, events, and public impact) in Croatia, with Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia following in that order. Student contention was less intense in Montenegro, and virtually

absent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Showing that student contention after 2000 was not an evenly distributed phenomenon; I focus on two classes of temporal units: on the one hand, I will foreground episodes of submerged networking. Then I identify moments of madness as transformative events during which protests peak in terms of numbers, strength, publicity and in terms of shifting “the very cultural categories that shape and constrain human action” (Sewell 1996: 263). In the region, occupations (Serbo-Croat: *blokada*) – as mad events of exception – constituted transformative events. During occupations, a new strategy was invented, which was then diffused around the region and became gradually the routine way to do protests. This strategy was directly derived from the interpretations (i.e. frames) relating to the underlying problem and possible solutions. The very first occupation done in that fashion happened in Serbia in 2006. It was there that the twin tactics of a) interrupting lectures and seminars (while leaving other university functions such as the library, administrative services etc. untouched) and b) setting up direct-democratic assemblies (the so-called *plenum*) were implemented for the very first time. I discard the idea that the Bologna reforms of themselves triggered contentious action. Instead, my analysis shows that subjective grievances derived from payment obligations (whether related to Bologna or not) were salient and constructed as the core injustice at the heart of (all) students’ problems.

In the following two sub-sections (**II.3.ii a and b**), I discuss two frames present throughout the region: one framing the aim and antagonists of the struggles, the second framing the chosen tactics and strategies. In the region under scrutiny here, student activists (except Montenegrin and, partly, Bosnian activists) diagnose their activism as a fight against what they see as a global trend of neoliberal commercialisation of universities. They express a local problem (remodelling higher education after communism and war and according to European norms) in internationally available terminology. Hereto students attach a criticism according to which representative democracy is failing. Thus, the ideology of neoliberalism is interpreted as resulting from distorted governing structures, which tilt policies to the interests of a few rich, while completely omitting the interests of the (non-represented) majority. By installing plenary assemblies, student activists framed themselves as defending ‘true democracy’ on a substantial (through their criticism of the non-representation of grievances) and a procedural level (direct democratic deliberation based on inclusivity and equality). The prognostic frame of direct democracy in sum proposed the tactic to solve the problem at hand: the solution lay in creating free spaces where students (and interested persons) could meet, join together ideas and discuss them as equals. I close this chapter on the commonalities referring to constructions of similarities amongst student activists in the region. In the

following chapter **(II.3.iii)**, I carve out differences that existed between grass-roots contentious actions. Differences can be found in the decision to occupy faculties, in the institution of direct democratic plenary assemblies, in the degree of opposition towards the political establishment, in the refusal (or non-refusal) to cooperate with existing student representative organisation, and in the degree to which student activists support collective action waged by other segments of society. Occupation was chosen in Serbia (in Belgrade), Croatia (in Zagreb, and provincial cities) and Slovenia (in Ljubljana). In Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia, there were no occupations. Furthermore, Montenegro and Bosnia are special cases, because there the calls for lower tuition fees were not embedded in the commercialisation frame.

Chapter **II.3.iv** is dedicated to an in-depth comparison of contention in the two comparable-cases of Croatia and Serbia. It takes my prior analysis onto another level of detail, but keeps the main lines of arguments intact. I purport to explain why between two countries marked by substantial macro-level socio-political similarities (democratisation, marketisation, state and nation building), there are still differences as to the eventual course and implications of student contention. In section **II.3.iv.a**, I examine how framing and identification lend emotional, cognitive and subjective meaning to contentious action. The diagnostic frame of commercialisation was very much alike in Croatia and Serbia, but activists in Croatia reached a much higher degree of theoretical sophistication and coherence. As for the prognostic frame, the basic tenets of direct democratic action and occupation were alike, but I demonstrate **(II.3.iv.ii)** that the decision on, and formulation of, demands, tactics, and strategies in Serbia were less inclusive than in Croatia. I explain this by the different success in forging a sound collective identity. While in Croatia an intensive phase of preparation was used to bring together various pre-existing (left-wing) factions, contentious action in Serbia was fraught with deep internal division and rivalries right after the initial overarching bracket initiative *Socijalni Front* collapsed in early 2007. This essential distinction is replicated in the varying fortunes of Croat versus Serb activists in dealing with their macro-level and meso-level contexts **(II.3.iv.c)**. Student contention was embedded within similar politico-economic structures: activists shared the international context of Europeanisation and an economic status of peripheries, formally democratic representative institutions within electoral democracies (Dzihic & Segert 2012), quasi two-party systems with no potential left-wing allies and very similar discursive opportunity structures that shut out left-oriented ideas.

Interestingly enough, Croatian activists were more innovative in using what little opportunities they had / perceived: they planned well, created group cohesiveness and frames

that could hook onto hegemonic discourses, capitalised on global opportunities (international contention against higher education reform) and – finally – made sure that the meso-level institutional context at universities was sympathetic to their cause. Turning to Serbia, activists did not expand on or use the little opportunities they disposed of. Activists did not succeed in forming a strong collective identity and coherent frames. Evidently, there was very little (if at all) consistent discussion and reflection about the theoretical ramifications of contention. Preparation and evaluation of the occupations was very weak. Regarding the meso-level context at universities, activists failed to win the respective administrative and academic staff or student representatives over to their side. On the contrary, all these proved to be either hostile and repressive (compare the private security incident recounted above) or joined into the strategy of indifference prefigured by the state authorities. In the next chapter (**II.3.iv.d**), I enlarge my discussion of the context and explain how and why activists in Croatia and Serbia did or did not manage to cooperate with potentially sympathetic actors of civil society within the country and beyond. Here too, the basic distinction can be observed: in Serbia, there was almost no national and little regional collaboration. The main reason for this was that the divisions within the activist base prevented consensus on the question with which groups one should cooperate. In Croatia, student contention expanded and eventually transformed. This was due to the internal factors I deciphered above – such as a strong collective identity and coherent framing – but also to the fact that student activists regarded collaboration as vital to their struggle.

Chapter **II.3.v** focuses attention onto my last interpretive category, which is national and transnational collaboration. I first analyse informal networking between student activists within the region (**II.3.v.a**), which I see is very common, however mostly due to habit and personal connections and less due to conscious strategies. I debate how students acknowledged and reconstructed similarities through sending letters of support and pro-active diffusion through printed materials (such as the booklets *Borba Za Znanje* from Serbia and *Blokadna Kuharica* from Croatia). I underline that informal and formalised networking, for instance through sending letters of solidarity or through the *Balkan Forum* symposium, seems to have furthered the production and expression of similarities. I examine (**II.3.v.b**) how sub-national features of student contention (particularly the disagreements amongst Serb activists) torpedo regional collaboration. I conclude that this is too weak a basis for an overarching Yugosphere to develop that would at once ignore ethnic identifications, integrate sub-national counterpublics (sustained by student and other social activists) and surpass the compartmentalised state-national public spheres.

In my **conclusion**, I tie together my lessons learnt from trying to answer the research questions and from contrasting my hypotheses with the interpretive observations gathered during the empirical study. I reason that my initial expectation that student contention would not vary much within the region because the context was shared must be revoked. According to my comparative analysis, internal features of student contention led student activists upon partially diverging paths. With respect to the first hypothesis, I arrive at the conclusion that – notwithstanding objectively existing common historical legacies, mutual intelligibility in language and culture and broadly congruent frames – student activists are far from having achieved (or wanting to achieve) a transnational Yugosphere. While the Yugosphere might exist in the realms of culture and economy, the realm of politics (even in the form of grass-roots and bottom up contentious politics) remains untouched by such development. My first hypothesis must thus be refuted.

With regard to my second hypothesis, my verdict is clearly more positive but also more diversified. Results from my analysis show that even if student contention in successor states of Yugoslavia has not concurred in breeding non-state and non-ethnically defined identities, it has brought about alternative democratic practices and ideologies with the potential to relentlessly democratise the democracies of the region. Linking back to my in-depth comparative case study, I first summarise the similarities and dissimilarities in student contention in Croatia and Serbia. Grievances were similar in both countries, since the very basic features of the politico-economic large-scale structures were overall the same. The main differences between contentious actions are to be found in the inner features of student contention: Croatian activists capitalised well on the momentum of their new strategies and tactics thanks to good planning, efficient use of resources, the construction of uniform identities and a coherent but inclusive ideology. In Croatia, as I took pains to elaborate, the activists were able to make use of the few opportunities their larger and immediate institutional contexts presented them with. They adopted tactics to circumvent the strategy of indifference political interlocutors signalled to them. Thanks to their inclusivity, flexibility and creativity, they were able to transform their novel enterprise into a more endurable enterprise of contentious politics. Croatian student activists' perceived strategic necessity to widen contention derived from some important linguistic and cognitive mechanisms: coherent framing, successful construction of similarities with aligned actors, orientation towards a large constituency and the common good prepared the ground for subsequent organisational expansion.

In contrast, student activists in Serbia made little use of the opportunities they had, mainly because activists were disunited and ideologically divided. In addition, contentious action failed to connect to other social actors and external sectors of society. Thus student activists missed out on the chance to move their social aspirations forward in alignment with others (which could have also helped them to capitalise from others' resources). The Serb momentum for student contention degenerated into small and mutually hostile networks of few activists, who react more than strategically anticipating or adapting to their context. Serb student activists did demonstrate their capacity to express dissent. This in itself, as for example Balibar (2013) argues, is an inherently democratic function, since dissent prevents turning citizens into mere subjects of power. However, Croat student contention achieved much more. While Serb student contention degenerated into rivalling enclaves of resistance, Croat student activists planted an emancipative seed within society (and the region) that grew into many different unexpected directions and was harboured by beneficiaries partly different to the originally intended. They kept democracy on the move in that they performed and distributed an alternative democratic model: they supplied this model to other subsequent projects of contentious politics and provided ideological, identitarian and temporal sustainability to a rising country-level counterpublic, thanks to which regular people could deliberate on both the existing contours, and possible future shapes of democracy.

Finally, I delve into a discussion of the larger theoretic benefits of my project: how, if at all, could my empirical examination contribute to the two bodies of literature I singled out at the basis of my endeavour? In the introduction I stated that I hope to contribute both an empiric case to the regional scholarship (i.e. post-communist studies), but I also announced my aim to contribute to social movements literature. Focusing on transition democracies invites one to theorise on what contentious politics might bring on the route of experimenting with differing conditions (values, methods and actors) needed for transforming potentially divisive conflicts into democratically harnessed debates. I conclude that – where institutionalist and elitist approaches to democratisation have largely failed to deliver on its promises – contentious politics might indeed be the only means to enrich and continuously invigorate (representative) democracy with new values, methods and actors.

I – THEORY

I.1 On Democratisation and Democracy

I.1.i A Conceptual Basis for Transformation Research

Before entering the discussion of democracy and democratisation, I scrutinise the concepts of change versus transition and transformation. These terms can be differentiated from each other in terms of their underlying logic, the directionality, the level and the intervals of change (Merkel 1999: 70-76). Change embraces many events: from short-time replacements in persons, governments or tactics to long-term alterations in systems, such as states (Rokkan 1999), class structures (Savage 2000) or technology (Bell 1973; Castells 1996). System-overhauling and long-term processes of change are named transformations. The term transition, in contrast, only designates conversions of subsystems into other subsystems. An example for the latter would be the conversion of an authoritarian to a democratic government. While the end point of transformation remains open, transition has become tied up with the normative goal of consolidated democracy. Since early on, scholars have criticised the underlying assumption of linearity behind transition (cf. Rustow 1970). The arguments of transition studies' latest sceptic Thomas Carothers (2002 & 2007) will be revisited in section I.1.ii.a below.

Apart from the question of directionality, it is crucial at which levels and intervals modifications occur. Regular alternations in government by elections are a recurring component of democracy. Here, one must speak of mere changes. By contrast, dismantling (and rebuilding) a state is a rare, and fairly unsettling, process of transformation. Besides turning upside down a complex system, transformation ties together chains of transitions. The collapse of communism in East and Southeast Europe, for instance, brought multiple shifts in the political, economic, social and state domains. Single transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, from a state-orchestrated economy to free-market capitalism and from a closed to an open society blended into a process of post-communist transformation. Taking place in parallel, these plural transitional chains engendered a transformation that is marred by many contradictions (the dilemma of contemporaneity: cf. Offe 1991a; Merkel 2007). The dilemma of contemporaneity encapsulates the thought that plurifold chains of transitions are interdependent with each other. Due to their different inner logics, they tend to obstruct each other's evolvement and contradict expected positive effects (Merkel 2007: 413f). In the case

of Yugoslav successor states, new nation states had to be built after and during the wars, while – simultaneously – those same states were expected to loosen their grip on societies (liberalisation, privatisation, de-statisation etc., see: Pridham 2000: 13). Faced with the additional complication of state building, Yugoslav successor states thus ended up in a quadruple transformation process (Kuzio 2001).

1.1.ii Democratisation: Linking Transition with a Normative Goal

In this chapter, I peruse classical theories on democratic transition and explain the underlying normative and ontological claims hereto attached. I proceed to discuss cultural approaches, which turn attention away from elites, institutions and strategies to focus on the subjective and constructed character of democratisation. On the way, I accord specific weight to criticism against the so-labelled “transition paradigm” (Carothers 2002: 6-9). The core argument – namely that there is no linear automaticity in the move from authoritarian to democratic regime – provides a perfect straw for my discussion of democracy in the consecutive chapter, since this thought merges well with the constructive and non-foundational rationale behind radical theories of democracy. But to start with first things first, I set forth the contours of ‘textbook’ theories on democratic transition.

1.1.ii.a Of Breakthroughs and Consolidations

After the Second World War, and with increased intensity from the 1980s onwards, scholars turned their attention to the conditions and course of democratic “transition[s] from authoritarian rule” (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986). In their book from 1986, O’Donnell and Schmitter analysed moves towards democracy in Southern Europe (Greece, Portugal and Spain). The authors concluded that transition was a product of many uncertainties. Democracy, they argued, was by no means the only outcome of transition. The caution evident in this formulation, however, soon fell into oblivion. The bulk of later studies on transitions followed the (more often than not) hidden rationale that democracy was (somehow) better than autocracy, and that it could and should be the final aim of transition. Lest there would be a misunderstanding: This thesis does not question this premise but insists that the inherently normative basis of transition studies must be rendered conscious. As O’Donnell self-critically remarked:

“I suspect that we students of democratization are still swayed by the mood of the times (...). We shared in the joy when [authoritarian] regimes gave way, and some of us participated in these historic events. These were moments of huge enthusiasm and hope. (...) [T]he Northwest was seen as the endpoint of a trajectory that would be

largely traversed by getting rid of the authoritarian rulers. This illusion was extremely useful during the hard and uncertain times of the transition. Its residue is still strong enough to make democracy and consolidation powerful, and consequently pragmatically valid, terms of political discourse. *Their analytical cogency is another matter*” (O'Donnell 2010: 35, emphasis added).

But what explanations did these classical transition scholars bring forward to enlighten readers on the likelihoods and the shape of democratisation? What are the core assumptions informing their work? Early scholarship was interested in democratic endurance. Rather than looking at which moment autocracies were likely to implode, academics such as Seymour Lipset (1981) focused on the social requisites of democracy. Lipset's thesis of a positive concurrence between the level of economic development and democracy was widely replicated and later proven empirically correct. But the causality (or: direction) of this relationship was not at all clear (Rustow 1970: 362). Critics sketched a dynamic model of interrelation between politics and economics (ibid. 344f). Besides the economy, Rustow formulates another background condition for democracy: national unity. “In order that rulers and policies may freely change, the boundaries must endure, the composition of the citizenry be continuous.” (ibid. 351) Interestingly enough, this aspect was forgotten for some time, only to be picked up much later in the analysis of transformation in East and Southeast Europe. Exploring the latter region, researchers pointed out that the need to build up nation states from scratch complicated prospects of democratisation (cf. Pridham 2000), especially when combined with ethno-nationalism (Kuzio 2001), because it was so unclear just who the people of the newborn states were and should be. Scholars therefore came to realise that “stateness problems must increasingly be a central concern of political activists and theorists alike” (Linz & Stepan 1996a: 366; see for a self-critical revision: Schmitter 2010: 25).

In the 1970s, some Southern European (Greece, Spain and Portugal), Latin American, East Asian and East European countries cast off authoritarian regimes and formed the so-called third wave of democratisation (Huntington 1991). Leaving a thorough analysis of authoritarianism aside (but see: Brooker 2009; Brownlee 2007), the bulk of work thereafter concentrated on the conditions for authoritarian breakdown, and the dimensions to explain the progress (or regress) of democratisation. Erosion of legitimacy, military failure and inability to deliver (Huntington 1991: 46-57) were acknowledged as causes (cf. Linz 1978; Linz & Stepan 1996a). Various criteria were proposed to determine when authoritarian breakdown was probable and when a given non-democratic system would break through to democracy (see for an overview: Ciprut 2008; Huntington 1991; Linz & Stepan 1996a; Merkel 1996;

O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986). For Huntington, the critical point of democratisation sets in with the replacement of the old authoritarian regime with a freely elected democratic government. "Elections, open, free, and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable sine qua non" (Huntington 1991: 9). According to such rational choice-oriented researchers (cf. Huntington 1991: 121-124; Huntington 1996; O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991), elections will be called, if they are in the strategic interest of elite actors. Soft-liners within the old regime and the (new) opposition forces come together and strike compromises to push a country towards elections. Success or failure of democratisation hinges on the quality of elite leadership, not on popular mobilisation or other social prerequisites (for example economic wellbeing). "[T]he conditions for creating democracy ha[ve] to exist, but only political leaders willing to take the risk of democracy [will] make it happen" (Huntington 1991: 108). One conclusion from this research on third wave democratisation was that the nature of the previous regime – and especially of its elites – shaped successive developments (Geddes 1999: 121). Many democracy policies funded by international agencies (such as the USAID, the OSCE) or the European Union rely on these insights.

This minimalistic view swiftly attracted criticism from academics and practitioners. The notion of democratisation was expanded to more than just introducing elections or fundamental rights. "Democratization", as some authors warn (Linz & Stepan 1996a: 3), "entails liberalization but is a wider and more specifically political concept." Elements such as procedures for ensuring accountability or a specific democratic culture were identified as driving democratisation. The latter argument will be taken up in the sub-section I.1.ii.b below. In the quest to understand the course of democratisation itself, scholars divided the process into four stages (cf. Diamond et al. 1997; Linz & Stepan 1996a; Merkel 1999: 119-169; O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986): the i) opening, ii) the breakthrough, iii) the institutionalisation and iv) the consolidation phase. This concurred with the insight that elections at the end of the authoritarian regime constituted little more than a first taste of democracy. As time passed, more analytical weight was accorded to the last phase of consolidation. Consolidation developed into something like a catch-all phrase, meaning anything from turning democracy "into the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan 1996b: 15) to advanced democratic achievements such as sustainable political party systems, so-called vibrant civil societies, authentic rule of law or an independent and pluralistic media system (for a complex conception of consolidation see: Gunther et al. 1995).

"[T]hose scholars who look (fearfully) from electoral or liberal democracy to authoritarianism equate democratic consolidation with avoiding an authoritarian

regression, a ‘quick death’ of democracy. Those who look (hopefully) from electoral or liberal democracy to advanced democracy equate democratic consolidation with democratic deepening. (...) Those who look (with concern) from liberal democracy to electoral democracy equate democratic consolidation with avoiding a ‘slow death’ of democracy (...). And those who look (with impatience) from electoral democracy to liberal democracy equate democratic consolidation with completing democracy, with supplying its missing features” (Schedler 1998: 94).

However, when with the fall of the Berlin Wall, East European and Former Yugoslav countries joined together in this third wave of democratisation, democracy did not consolidate easily, even though the stages of opening, breakthrough and institutionalisation seem to have been accomplished textbook style. New ideas were needed. One group of scholars attempted to grapple with reality by inventing various suboptimal types of democracies. As Schmitter sarcastically remarked, this culminated in a rush to “find the most deprecating adjective to place in front of the word ‘democracy’: defective, electoral, partial, pseudo, low-intensity, sham, ersatz, and, of course, delegative” (Schmitter 2010: 21). Still, even if such scholars were trying out new terminologies, the template for narrating democratisation in phases or stages remained untouched. In a far more radical detour from classical scholarship, another group of scholars thus directly attacked the normative and teleological grounds behind the “transition paradigm” (Carothers 2002: 6-9).

According to Carothers (2002 & 2007; but see for an earlier thrust: Rustow 1970), four basic assumptions require rectification: first that any autocracy would move towards democracy, second that democratisation evolved in stages, third that functioning states naturally existed before democratisation harks in, and last that elections were sufficient for democracy. Rejecting an either/or perspective of solid democracy versus unstable authoritarianism, Carothers calls attention to the fact that there is a grey zone between these two. In this grey zone, any turn is possible. “[T]he various assumed components of the process of consolidation (...) almost never conform to the technocratic ideal of rational sequences” (Carothers 2002: 15). Theoreticians and crafters of democracy should, so Carothers, acknowledge that change occurred gradually, if at all, and not in stages. Transitions “are chaotic processes of change that go backwards and sideways as much as forward” (ibid.). Democratisation should thus not be understood in terms of Manichean binary, leading from ‘hell’ (i.e. dictatorship) to ‘paradise’ (i.e. democracy), but as an ever open and wavering process of transformation that may as well yield a system with both democratic and non-democratic features. The Bulgarian scholar Ivan Krastev sums it up nicely: “The transition

paradigm is misleading not only because of what it assumes to be the case in the present but also because of what it fears might happen in the near future. In other words, it is shaped by the fear of sudden democratic breakdowns, and tends to think of democracy in terms of its opposite, authoritarianism. (...) [Yet, t]he biggest danger for democracy today is not sudden but rather slow death” (Krastev 2002: 44).

Many scholars examining democratisation in Yugoslav successor states concur with his assessment: “The ups and downs in the democratisation [of the Western Balkans] two decades after the break-up of Yugoslavia put a question mark [] behind the assumption of linear transition towards democracy” (Dzihic & Wieser 2008: 2). Belated (and, one might add, ethnicised) state building, simultaneity with economic transition, the specific nature of the prior socialist regime and post-war tensions, as well as the international context, complicate democratic progress (cf. Dzihic & Wieser 2008; but also: Diamandorous & Larrabee 2000: 28; Vucetic 2004: 130). The persistent fragility of statehood not only leads to complications in institutional design but also breeds a “continuing perception of political instability” (Woodward 2007: 26) at the subjective level. Relationships between rulers and ruled remain unclear. Low trust in state institution lingers on. Instead of winning legitimacy by producing good outcomes (output legitimacy) or opening up ways of contributing to government (input legitimacy), local elites rely on a reservoir of populist and/or nationalist understandings to strengthen their position in the eyes of (imagined) voters. While the emergence of a civic culture stifles, ethno-nationalism appears to be a perfect cultural substitute for democratic legitimacy. In the next section, I will discuss culture, and its contradictory role for democratisation. I will expand on links between legitimacy – accountability – participation in the chapter on democracy and then proceed to the relationship of democracy and nationalism in section I.1.iv.

I.1.ii.b The Cultural Side of Democratisation

Rational choice scholars took for granted that democratic culture would follow, rather than precede, democratic transition (cf. Schmitter 2010: 17f). While admitting that some kind of prior positive attachment was important, they fancied that non-democrats could craft democracy. “General factors [such as a democratic culture] create conditions favourable to democratization. They do not make democratization necessary (...). A democratic regime is installed not by trends but by people” (Huntington 1991: 107). This standpoint could maybe be defended when examining the opening or breakthrough of democracy but loses ground when attention moves to democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation, as we recall, implies “a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and

patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, ‘the only game in town’” (Linz & Stepan 1996b: 15). In Linz and Stepan’s model, consolidation features a constitutional, behavioural and attitudinal aspect. Regarding the latter dimension, the authors claim: “*with consolidation*, democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life” (ibid. 16, emphasis added).

But what if culture is – conversely – posited at the beginning of democratic transition? Any kind of regime must count on at least a minimum of acquiescence by its people if it is to survive. This applies even more to democracies. Democratic rule must be “accepted by citizens as the proper form of government per se” (Almond & Verba 1965: 230). Democracies rely on the (more or less active) support of citizens and elites alike, because only if both groups are habituated to democracy, and act accordingly, democracy becomes legitimate. Almond and Verba called this supportive attitude civic culture. “[T]he civic culture is an allegiant participant culture. Individuals are (...) oriented positively to the input structures” (ibid. 30). Robert Putnam (1993) features amongst the most prominent proponents of this school of thought. In his seminal book “Making Democracy Work”, he examined the cultural rooting of Italian democracy. Putnam found that social capital was stronger in the North. “[C]ivic traditions help explain why the North [of Italy] has been able to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries so much more effectively than the South” (Putnam 1993: 159). He took care, however, not to dismiss the South as devoid of culture. Non-democratic regimes do possess culture, but not a civic one. His most significant conclusion with regard to the current subsection is that historical social and cultural structures configure institutions – and that these institutions affect actors rather than the other way around (ibid. 145ff). “[C]ivic traditions may have powerful consequences (...) for institutional performance” (ibid. 157).

Subsequent authors took this point further. They claimed that for a democracy to evolve there must be a civic ethos, constituting the “mental software” that undergirds institutions and markets (the hardware of democracy, see: Offe 1997: 66f). Offe’s conception of civil society as embodying and enacting values such as tolerance, trust and compromise stands in the tradition of Putnam (see review in: Merkel 1999: 164-169). Yet, this conception is nowhere as normatively exigent as another perspective on the roots of democracy in democratic culture: as we will see in the respective chapter below, theories in the line of Jürgen Habermas view civil society actors not only as diffusely sustaining but as directly influencing the political agenda. According to Habermas (cf. Habermas 1973), public spheres stand outside the power structures of politics and the market. Informed by specific cultural

values (such as an orientation towards the common good, inclusivity, rational discourse etc.) individuals in these public spheres deliberate on matters of general relevance (see section I.1.iii.b below).

We have seen that some scholars regard culture as a by-product of institutional engineering by rationally acting elites. Others, however, turned this chain around, implying (even if not always arguing) a reverse causal path from cultural structures to institutions to actors. Confronted with turbulences in the post-communist world, both trajectories can be called into question. In East and Southeast Europe (cf. Pridham & Gallagher 2000), phases of democratic breakthrough, institutionalisation and consolidation overlap (cf. Vucetic 2004: 121). Elites help little to push forward the democratic agenda, either using the slogan of democracy – in conjunction with the narrative on Europeanisation (Dzihic & Wieser 2008a: 5) – to dismiss criticism or to mould it into a tool for nationalist agitation. “[A]ctions of various leaders in some countries illustrated not so much political crafting for democracy’s sake as the utilization of historical legacies for nationalist designs” (Pridham 2000: 10). If elites (to a large degree) fail, hopes could be set on political culture. But even there, hopes seem to have been deceived. Historical legacies matter, for sure. “One of the ironies of democratic development is that, as the future is being planned, the past intrudes with increasing severity. In this field, there is no such thing as a fresh start” (Horowitz 1994: 40). The region is notoriously blamed for having a negative record when it comes to providing a basis for a pro-democratic civic culture. In this process, history (as *histories*) become an object of politics “[H]istory (...) continues to be an instrument of political manipulation, directed to the strengthening of ethnic communities in a continuous mode of quasi-automatic opposition” (Dzihic & Petritsch 2010: 20).

So far, culture was implicitly conceived as having some positive relationship with democracy. But what if culture stands in the way of democratisation? Later on I will start my discussion of democracy with a reference to the pivotal status of the sovereign decision-making body – the *demos* – in democracy. But the answer to the question of who belongs to this *demos* is not always right at hand. In situations of fragile statehood, after wars or breakdown of former power structures, the boundaries of this kind of sovereign body may be unclear. One solution is to define the sovereign via the rights and duties of citizens. This is the civic or so-called French branch of nationalism. German philosophers expanded this thrust into the notion of constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*). This patriotism is not grounded in any cultural or pre-political attachment but in the rational allegiance in a state ethic (cf. Habermas 1992b). The second solution would be to follow the German model of

nationalism and determine the *demos* in terms of culture: thus, the sovereign may be defined by common ethnicity, customs and traditions, a shared language, history etc. (more on that on page 48ff below). The danger is that leaders, who face political insecurity, fluidity in identities and popular distrust, may be tempted to tap into the arsenal of cultural nationalism. Then, they choose to politicise memories (Dzihic & Petritsch 2010: 22), rekindle ethnicity (for Bosnia: Dzihic 2009) and play on the fiddle of the nation to establish a “legitimate claim to sovereignty” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2004: 14).

Many scholars share the view that this culturally tainted solution to defining the *demos* runs counter to democratic values of equality and freedom. The reason is that this sort of ethno-nationalism rules out those voices that do not belong to the ethnic nation or group. “In the absence of political pluralism, ethnicity works as a sort of ‘radar’. Only the ethnically defined nation (...) [provides] belonging that can be appropriated without public communication, common (formally or informally) organized action, or any other social mediation” (Dvornik 2009: 68; idem: Pridham & Gallagher 2000; Savic 2004). In sum, a lack of, or the ‘wrong’ political culture, might obstruct democratisation. The political use of ethnical markers has the potential to endanger democracy. Offe thus pleads for “colour-blindness” (Offe 1997: 68) towards ethnicity. Only then, he sustains, can inclusive self-recognition and trust in *Others* be learnt. Only then, I might add with reference to Chantal Mouffe (cf. Mouffe 2008: 29-30), whose theory I will review in the section on radical democracy below, conflicts will not turn into deadly wars between antagonistic enemies but may be transformed into productive disputes.

1.1.iii Creating Which Democracy?

In this chapter I debate theories of democracy. Since this scholarship is abundant, I do not even purport completeness but point to the pivotal dimension of participation. Behind my preoccupation with participation lingers the insight that – as any other form of rule – democracy embodies power relations as well. Following Foucault’s premises, I conceive power as “a matrix of force relations, at a given time, in a given society” (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 186). Power, in other words, is not to be confused with concrete organisations, institutions or even state entities. Instead, it is an ensemble of relationships that structures actors, their relative acting positions and the actions they may take. Power simultaneously generates subjects (actors, groups, identities, nations etc.) but also subordinates them. “[P]ower involves both subjectivation and subjection. Identities are constructed, and as part of this construction they are placed in specific relations of control and dependence” (Torfing 1999: 164). Power hence combines negative and positive elements. “In defining the effects of

power as repression [only], one adopts a purely juridical conception (...). If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say No, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? [In fact] it also reverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse” (Foucault 2000: 120). A core task of democracy, accordingly, is to determine procedures for deciding on power relations. If democracy is approached along its etymological lines of rule (*kratein*) of the people (*demos*), two questions arise: First, what form should ruling take, i.e. how should power be exercised? And second, who is this people, i.e. who is eligible to partake in the exercise of power? I start with debating answers to the first question and progressively get closer to the second question until I end up with the interconnection of nationalism and democracy.

In ancient Athens, men of a certain age and wealth directly wielded the right to deliberate, discuss and decide in a public space – the Agora (cf. Arendt 1999: ch. 2 & 5). The practice of ruling meant accorded the male, rich and free inhabitants of Athens the right to direct “self-government by citizens” (Barber 1984: 151). In modern-day representative democracy, the major channel for participation is elections. In contrast to the ancient procedure, people do not participate *qua personae*, but their representatives deliberate and decide in their place. According to some, the procedure of election exhaustively characterises democracy. “Selecting rulers through elections is the heart of democracy, and democracy is real only if rulers are willing to give up power as a result of elections” (Huntington 1991: 267). For others, this minimal perspective on democracy overlooks the fact that peoples’ inability to contribute to and/or monitor governmental decisions in between voting days may countervail the effects of nominally free elections. Thus, the overall quality of democracy may decline (cf. Diamond & Morlino 2004). “Citizens are (...) the source and the justification of the very claim to rule upon which a democratic polity relies when making collectively binding decisions” (Guillermo 2005: 9). In this view, the *demos* must at no point in time be left out of the equation. Robert Dahl’s theory on polyarchies (1971), which I delineate in the subsequent section, incorporates this insight. His theory centres on the processes rather than on procedures (like Huntington) or on substances (like, partially, Diamond and Morlino) that render a polity democratic (cf. Tilly 2007: 7-14).

In the following three sub-sections, I develop three lines of thought, which – incrementally – lead up to a notion of democracy of use for my analysis. In a first step, I illustrate the significance of participation by people in between elections as a central means of securing accountability from their leaders. In a second step, I suggest that public spheres are one major form through which such participation occurs. Deliberation in public spheres yields

a public opinion that feeds dissenting ideas, criticism and information into the decision-making process – hence controlling and contributing to democratic rule. In a third step, I elaborate that these public spheres, far from merging into one homogeneous public sphere, shall be thought of as a multiplicity of counterpublics. These bring together otherwise marginalised or excluded people voicing dissent (or consent) to the system. I embed this in a radical understanding of democracy according to which the goal of democracy is not to seek universal consensus and eliminate disputes but to live with and transform them.

I.1.iii.a The Polyarchy: Merging Contestation, Participation and Competition

Robert Dahl (1971 & 1998) establishes that a fully-fledged or established democracy – which he terms polyarchy – depends on the processes of contestation, participation and competition (see accounts in: Schmidt 2006; Schmitter & Karl 1991). People ought to have control over and contribute to government. In order to do that, they must have the real and continuous possibility to acquire information via alternative sources, formulate their interests and express them through various avenues of participation. On the other side of the equation, governments take these interests seriously, because they are held accountable by the process of competition in elections. Certain liberal rights (freedom of expression, right to pluralistic information, freedom of association etc.) safeguard this loop. Dahl (1971) essentially argues that the processes of contestation and participation on the side of the *demos* and competition on the side of rulers together with the surrounding regime of fundamental rights ensure democratic quality. These polyarchies are the ideal against which real-world democracies have to be measured.

So far, it was silently assumed that voters' interests coincide quasi-naturally with their representatives. But the problem of reaching consensus – or the ancient problem of attaining congruency between individual interests and a common will (cf. Rousseau 2011) – has never been fully settled. Besides, the idea that a consensus found by a majority will necessarily constitute the best solution for the entire collective is questionable. “The basis of democracy is not maximum consensus. It is the tenuous middle ground between imposed uniformity (...) and implacable tyranny” (Rustow 1970: 363). I would not like to enter this debate on the dangers of the dictatorship of the majority at this point. Yet I would like to point out that delegating power at least entails the risks of increasing bureaucratisation and within-elite bargaining (Dahl 1998: 113). Together, the drawbacks of representation may result in a situation in which leaders cease to be answerable to citizens. The polity loses its quality of accountability even though elections might have been free and fair (Diamond & Morlino 2005). A solution might be to do away with representation and return to fully-fledged direct

democracy, akin to the way men decided in ancient Athens. At first sight, this would assure direct and endless consultations between people-as-government (cf. Tilly 2007: 13), because the *demos* and the rulers are one. A dilemma, however, arises with the size of the polity. “The smaller a democratic unit, the greater its potential citizen participation and the less the need for citizens to delegate government decisions to representatives. The larger the unit, the greater its capacity for dealing with problems important to its citizens and the greater the need for citizens to delegate decisions to representatives” (Dahl 1998: 110). With an increasing size of the polity, the “maximum number of participants being able to actively participate in speech decreases” (ibid. 108). This objection dates back to the work of French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was sceptical that the *volonté générale* (i.e. the common will of the people) could be found in a purely direct democratic fashion, where the territory concerned is too large (Rousseau 2011: ch. 2 & 3; see also: Vorländer 2003).

How to exit this seemingly vicious circle? How to facilitate accountability and responsiveness in democratic rule? The short and somewhat disappointing answer is: through an expansion of participatory democratic elements. This is what, in essence, Dahl’s work boils down to (Dahl 1971 & 1998, see for a similar conclusion but different argument: Mansbridge 1985). Practically, this means that contestation and participation should take place at elections, but to an equal degree in between the elections through as many avenues of popular monitoring, deliberation and decision-making as possible. This might range from referenda to lively and critical debates in the public sphere and media to town-hall meetings and social movements. It is important to emphasise at this point that participation is not concomitant with direct democracy. Participation may be direct (as in the form of town-hall meetings) but also more intermediate (such as in the case of media campaigns).

In all instances, however, people are invited to hold leaders answerable at any point (Guillermo 2005: 8). This complex accountability requires the mobilisation of various collectives. As Scharpf (1999) has proposed in his book on “Governing in Europe”, there are “two dimensions of democratic self-determination, input-oriented authenticity (government by the people) and output-oriented effectiveness (government for the people)” (Scharpf 1999: 2). Increasing possibilities of participation increases the likelihood that ideas, interests and demands are fed into the cycle of political decision-making. “Input-oriented democratic thought emphasizes ‘government by the people’. Political choices are legitimate if and because they reflect the ‘will of the people’—that is, if they can be derived from the authentic preferences of the members of a community” (ibid. 6). This distinguishes democracies from autocracies: the *demos* gravitates towards self-ruling as (some of the) people (sometimes)

participate in ruling. “All regimes have rulers and a public realm, but only to the extent that they are democratic do they have citizens” (Schmitter & Karl 1991: 77).

I.1.iii.b Placing People in the Public: Deliberation as Participation

In the introduction, I stated my hypothesis that de-nationalised public spheres of deliberation emerge from regionally (trans-nationally) collaborating student movements in the region. I argued that individuals could experience themselves in their role of citizens – and thus deepen democracy in the region. In section I.2.v I add some thoughts to the specific role of social movements in sustaining public spheres. At this point, I limit myself to relaying theoretical tenets of the public sphere. In the section on polyarchies above, I emphasised that accountability is a result of peoples’ ability to monitor their governments. The current section presents the public sphere as an avenue through which people can work towards this end.

According to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1973 & 1990), a public sphere¹⁵ is when individuals gather to deliberate on and find consensus about issues of common concern (Habermas 1973: 61). The assembled individuals reason together and generate a public opinion that mediates between society (or: the private realms of the economy and the household) and administration (state power) (ibid. 62). Through their action of deliberation, these individuals transform into political beings – into citizens (Arendt 1999: 251f). In his seminal work on the structural transformation of the public sphere (Habermas 1990) Habermas traces the emergence and demise of a bourgeois type of public sphere. From these “practice[s] of rational-critical discourse on political matters” (Calhoun 1992: 9), he deduces an ideal-type of public sphere (see for an alternative typology: Ferree et al. 2002). Habermas differentiates between the political and the cultural public sphere. Whereas rational argumentation would dominate the former, expressive speech characterises the latter (cf. Gould 1996; McGuigan 2005).

In both spheres, deliberation is ideally characterised by an absence of coercion. Some conditions must be fulfilled for this to work properly (i.e. in order for debates to legitimately produce consensus). Freedom of speech and association are two prerequisites, while power, status and other economic or cultural inequalities ought to be absent (Habermas 1964: 61; Habermas 1990). Habermas’ aim is to conceptualise a neutral and non-coercive platform for participants to be able to agree on matters without interference from any extra-discursive factor (i.e. from any factor outside of communicative interaction). Besides this feature of non-

¹⁵ I would like to note that the German term *Öffentlichkeit* is less spatially connoted than the English translation. *Öffentlichkeit* in itself does not indicate any spatiality, whereas the term public sphere implicates at least some kind of spatial shape.

coerciveness, public spheres are defined by publicity and by their orientation towards the whole society. As of principle, public spheres have the tendency to extend their own boundaries beyond the presently active participants. They aim to determine not private goods but goods that are valuable for, and can be valued by, the widest possible collective. Inclusivity is therefore a norm valid for all public spheres, whether lived in practice here and now or merely as an ideal horizon. Counterpublics must fulfill this feature as well (to be reviewed below).

Scholars disagree whether political and cultural public spheres should be so rigidly divided (cf. Gould 1996). They are also undecided about the impact of public spheres: whether citizens – via their formulation of a public opinion – only influence (Habermas 1992a: 452; Habermas 1996: 28) the political system or substantially contribute to the decision-making process (cf. Benhabib 1996). But the most fundamental disagreement concerns the theory's blindness towards real existing differences (in terms of power, resources, gender, status etc.) between participants. This – as I would call it – *difference problématique* stands at the core of the debate (see articles in: Calhoun 1992). Deliberation as conceptualised by Habermas departs from the understanding that individuals who enter the public spheres are different from each other in terms of power and money assets. The model assumes that such differences can be bracketed out during deliberation.

Feminist writers demonstrated, however, that deliberation will never be neutral and that unity may never be wholly attained, even if one tried to cancel out extra-discursive economic and political power asymmetries. The assumption of unity serves to “privilege” (Young 1996: 123) assertive and formal styles of speech over exploratory and emotional speech, better educated over less educated participants, and male over female speaking styles. Both the assumption of unity/consensus as a starting and as an end point of deliberation are fraught with dangers (cf. Benhabib 1992 & 1996; Fraser 1992). On the one hand these scholars argue that it is empirically non-feasible to lock all differences out *before* citizens meet to deliberate. On the other hand, ignoring differences (in the form of the norm of consensus) *during* discussions flattens the democratic value of public sphere. “Conflicts and confrontations, far from being a sign of imperfection, indicate that democracy is alive” (Mouffe 1996: 255). Disregarding differences leads to domination within, and exclusion from, the public sphere (cf. Benhabib 1996; Calhoun 1992), while it erases the necessity to talk at all. And this was what Habermas had sought to avoid in the first place.

Now there are two solutions to counter this *difference problématique*. The first one would be to let go of the unity/consensus paradigm during the debate in the public sphere (see

the discussion of the consensus criterion in: Ferree et al. 2002). As a consequence, attributes of rationality and (emotional) detachment from the issues at hand would need to be relaxed. In this case a single, overarching public sphere that encompasses the entire social system remains the ideal. This, however, means that differences of participants as they enter the public sphere are left aside. To accommodate all those potentially excluded (workers, women, LGBT persons, people of distinctive race or ethnicity, disabled, radicals etc.) a “multiplicity of publics” seems better adapt (Fraser 1992: 127; cf. Ferree 2002). This approach allows for counterpublics, where marginalised individuals can articulate their concerns, needs and ideas (see for the proletarian counterpublic: Negt & Kluge 1972). What distinguishes counterpublics from a general public are neither certain people nor topics, nor spaces (cf. Asen 2000), nor – to my mind – their attributed radicalism, but a subjective recognition of exclusion from the wider public sphere (ibid. 427). Counterpublics (cf. Warner 2002; Asen 2000) bring together individuals who are or feel excluded from the wider public sphere and attempt to overcome exclusion(s). “[C]ounterpublic signifies the [emerging] collectives that emerge in the recognition of various exclusions from wider publics of potential participants, discourse topics, and speaking styles and the resolve that builds to overcome these exclusions” (Asen 2000: 441). At first, counterpublics benefit from their relative remoteness. But eventually, they “train[] (...) for agitation toward the wider public[]” (Fraser 1992: 124). This point is crucial, since, even if counterpublics are far removed from mainstream arenas of discussion, they continuously strive towards enlarging participation and diversify internal processes of deliberation.

Of course, deliberation is “a demanding activity” (Dryzek 2009: 1399). It might not be the best and first method of participation “for all the people, all of the time. But it might be for most of the people, some of the time” (ibid.). Time constraints, unwillingness or lack of resources may impede or discourage individuals from participating in cumbersome discussions. Another difficulty with public spheres is their elusiveness. Remember the definition from above, according to which a public sphere exists *when* individuals gather to jointly deliberate. It is a sphere of appearance potentially arising due to an activity between people (Arendt 1999: 252). “Publics (...) lacking any institutional being, commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exist when attention is no longer predicated. They are virtual entities, not voluntary associations” (Warner 2002: 61). Logically, the public is bound to disappear as soon as people stop their interaction. Public spheres lack consistency in time and organisation, and a common worldview or subjective awareness that would bind people together. Social movements, by

creating structured frameworks, common cognitive understandings of the world and collective identities, pitch into this gap. They mobilise individuals for, and keep them within, the public sphere. I return to this idea in section I.2.v below. In the following chapter I raise the argument briefly raised before, according to which democracy does not necessarily suffer from dissent, but that disputes are vital for democracy.

I.1.iii.c Conflictual Democracies: Radical Theories of Democracy

Social movements – as we will later discover – are fundamentally oriented towards change, challenge and conflict. They do not (such as non-governmental organisations) use existing tools for reform, but instead employ controversial, unexpected, sometimes even illegal methods outside of or against the state and government. In order to pay full tribute to this conflict-orientation, I develop a conception of democracy which emphasises the virtues of conflict over the norm of consent – as has been assumed by the Habermasian type of the public sphere (as well as by theories of democracies discussed in the chapter on polyarchy).

Thinkers of radical democracy and the above presented writers of a Habermasian public sphere pertain to the so-called post-Marxist tradition of social sciences. Both groups (see overview in: Little & Lloyd 2009: 2-4) consider interests not as fixed and given but as articulated through a process of discourse (i.e. deliberation). The difference between the first strand of post-Marxist theories (called: critical) and the second strand (called: radical) is couched in the importance both groups attach to the norm of consensus. As exemplified above, Habermas and his adepts believe that deliberation can and should result in an overarching rational consensus (the public opinion). Theoreticians of the second group emphasise dissent and conflicts over consensus, and power over reason. While defending and believing in fundamental values of freedom and equality in democracy, post-marxist scholars challenge the hegemonic ideal and practice of liberal representative democracy. The main points of criticism center around the growing influence of the executive over legislative power, tendencies of oligarchisation and technisation of politics, populism, and the predominance of corporatist arrangements in welfare-state market democracies (cf. Beyme 2013; Crouch 2004; Ranciere 1999 & 2010). The solution, for post-Marxist thinkers, is to empower people and to have them regain the space of the (self-ruling) *demos*. In the following, I will set forth the main contours of the radical notion of democracy, drawing primarily on works by Chantal Mouffe and Etienne Balibar.

Post-Marxists' ontological assumption is that democracy is never fully accomplished. It is an eternal construction site, incrementally modified by a myriad of institutional and non-institutional actors. Many different expressions have been found to describe democracy's

ephemerality: Jacques Derrida, for instance, speaks of a *democratie à venir* (cf. Mallet 2004), Stuart Hall of democracy as a horizon lacking any a-priori substance (Hall 2002), Oliver Machart of a democracy unrealised (Machart 2004) and Chantal Mouffe of the democratic paradox (Mouffe 2008). The bottom line is the understanding that society is never complete, but always in the process of being constituted. “We must (...) consider the openness of the social as the constitutive ground or ‘negative essence’ of the existing and the diverse ‘social orders’ as precarious” (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 95f). That implies that the society we live in is never given *a priori* but that the people acting through and discussing about society define what it is by delimiting it against what it is not.

In the language of radical theory, identity is not essential, it is defined in relation to other, non-essential identities (ibid. 106). “[T]he presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution. (...) Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence of myself” (ibid. 127). Each identity is a position in relation to another position, which is always in principle malleable as soon as the relations are articulated differently. Identities (and thus every collective identity) are historically contingent; they shift, never reaching a final form. At most, identities can be momentarily fixed through discourse: for instance, when one articulates that this society is good and another society evil, or that person A is weak and person B is strong, one establishes relations between these positions that are valid as long as no additional statements (articulations) are brought forward. The ‘good society’ and ‘person A’ are not better in absolute terms, nor do they have preliminarily fixed qualities. But they are only defined in their differential relation to the ‘bad society’ and ‘person B’.

This act of definition is an act of power (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 142f; idem: Mouffe 2008: 36f). An articulation of elements (= a discourse) may become relatively stable and prevail over time and space, because it is buttressed by power. Then it turns into a hegemonic discourse. “Hegemony is, quite simply, a political type of relation, a form, if one so wishes, of politics” (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 139). However, since the social and every identity is never fully sutured (i.e. complete), even hegemonic discourse remains fragile. It can be undermined by counter-hegemonic articulations and activities (Mouffe 2007: 27), thus opening the floor for dissent and political contestation. I return to this argument later.

At this point it is crucial to understand that the groundlessness of the social is the ontological reason why democracy (as a form of how society is organised) can never be fully complete. If some democrats suggest that this was the only way democracies can work, others would answer: but it could be done otherwise. The rationale, according to Mouffe, is not the

impossible search for an inaccessible consensus (for example on what democracy should look like to be called truly democratic, Mouffe 2008: 25), but to transform antagonism into agonism, and enemies into adversaries.

As Mouffe explains (cf. Mouffe 2002, 2007 & 2008), antagonism is a fight, in which irreconcilable enemies stand against each other: society is criss-crossed by multiple antagonisms of Us against Them. Mouffe observes that politics naturalises these oppositions, when the Other is conceived in terms of morality. “Since the ‘Others’ are not defined in political terms any more (...) the boundaries [run] between ‘us, the good’ and ‘them, the evil’. (...) It is not possible to debate with these ‘evil Others’ any more, they have to be eliminated”¹⁶ (Mouffe 2002: 109). Hence, conflicts turn into deadly combats. Little wonder that conflicts are then seen not as integrative but as disruptive factors to be overall deleted from democracies. This is when conflicts are likely to descend into violence, and wars.

In contrast, agonism means a kind of conflict between adversaries, who acknowledge each other as friendly enemies. They are “friends, because they share a symbolic space (...), but they are at the same time enemies, because they each seek to organise this symbolic space in different ways”¹⁷ (Mouffe 2008: 30). To give an example: adversaries in a discussion might depart from the assumption that equality and freedom are both crucial values for democracy. But they could differently understand and weigh these values in the way they want to organise democracy practically. Their conflict over equality and freedom, rather than separating them, brings them together in (maybe heated, maybe emotional, maybe even rational) debates. “There must be consensus regarding those institutions that are constitutive for democracy, as well as about [fundamental] ethic-political values (...). Yet there will always be disputes about the implications of such values and the methods of their realisation”¹⁸ (Mouffe 2002: 104). Democracy is not about eliminating conflict but about mitigating and – eventually – transforming it. Transformation of conflicts means that people engage with each other and deliberate on their interests in a process of “inventiveness and discovery” (Barber 1984: 119). Institutions, procedures and constitutions ease this transformation of antagonist conflicts into agonisms by way of providing consistency, routine and structure. In contrast to Habermas and his adepts, hence, Mouffe insists on the integrative function of legitimate (agonistic) conflicts.

¹⁶ My translation from: “doch da diese ‘Anderen’ nicht mehr in politischen Begriffen definiert werden können (...) werden diese Grenzen in moralischen Kategorien gezogen, zwischen ‘uns, den Guten’ und ‘ihnen, den Bösen’. (...) Mit den ‘bösen Anderen’ ist keine agonistische Debatte möglich, sie müssen ausradiert werden.”

¹⁷ My translation from: “Freunde [], weil sie einen gemeinsamen symbolischen Raum teilen, (...) zugleich aber Feinde, weil sie diesen gemeinsamen symbolischen Raum auf unterschiedliche Art organisieren wollen.”

¹⁸ My translation from: “Konsens muss bezüglich der Institutionen bestehen, die konstitutiv für Demokratie sind, wie auch bezüglich [grundlegender] ethisch-politischer Werte (...), doch wird es immer Meinungsverschiedenheiten über die Bedeutung dieser Werte und die Methoden der Implementierung geben.”

Rather than believing in, and searching for, an absolute consensus, politics should therefore embrace differences present in society.

Consensus is always “an expression of hegemony and the crystallisation of power relations (...). The boundary between what is legitimate and what is not, is a political boundary, and it should therefore be open to challenge. The existence of a moment of closure means (...) that one naturalises what is a contingent and temporary hegemonic articulation of ‘the people’”¹⁹ (Mouffe 2008: 60).

Apart from this normative argument, deliberative consensus is practically unattainable in large-size democracies. “[N]o citizen ever gives actual consent to every decision, and hypothetical consent is, at the least, always open to contest” (Mansbridge 1996: 52). Taking the plurality of life seriously implies “abandoning the dream of rational consensus”²⁰ (Mouffe 2008: 100). Plurality (or: differences, as I framed it above) and conflicts arising from plurality are not something to be negated but something that enables or, even more so, provides the necessary ground for deliberation. Only through expressing dissent, people can furnish the system with new information, ideas and facts to correct (Sunstein 2003: 6) personal wrongdoings and institutional malfunctions. “Much of the time, it is in the individual’s interest to follow the crowd, but in the social interest for the individual to say and do what he thinks best. Well-functioning societies take steps to discourage conformity and to promote dissent” (ibid. 213).

Democracy, thus conceived as a “practice of political contestation” (Little & Lloyd 2009: 7), provides multifaceted avenues of participation for an individual before, during and after elections. “[T]here can be no strong democratic legitimacy without ongoing talk. Where voting is a static act of expressing one’s preference, participating is a dynamic act of imagination” (Barber 1984: 136). Only by acting in public individuals become citizens or – to paraphrase Hannah Arendt (Arendt 1999: 214f) – are reborn as political beings. “If there are not some (...) that take it upon them to rebel and exert the role of dissents, then we are left with passive citizens, and – eventually – no citizens at all, but only (...) subordinates to power”²¹ (Balibar 2013: 47; cf. Balibar 2012). Anonymity means hiding one’s face in the

¹⁹ My translation from: “Ausdruck einer Hegemonie und der Kristallisation von Machtverhältnissen. (...) Die Grenze zwischen dem, was legitim ist, und dem was es nicht ist, ist eine politische Grenze, und aus diesem Grund sollte sie herausgefordert werden können. Die Existenz eines solchen Moments der Schließung zu verneinen (...) heißt naturalisieren, was als eine kontingente und temporäre hegemoniale Artikulation des ‘Volkes’ durch ein bestimmtes Regime des Ein- und Ausschlusses verstanden werden sollte.”

²⁰ My translation from: “den Traum eines rationalen Konsenses (...) aufgeben müssen.”

²¹ My translation from: “Wenn einige (...) es nicht auf sich nehmen, zu opponieren und die Funktion des Dissidenten auszuüben, dann gibt es nur passive Bürger und schließlich überhaupt keine Bürger mehr, sondern nur noch mehr (...) Untertanen der Macht.”

darkness of privacy, even if it was the privacy amidst a crowd. “Masses make noise, citizens deliberate; masses behave, citizens act; masses collide and intersect, citizens engage, share, and contribute. At the moment when ‘masses’ start deliberating, acting, sharing, and contributing, they cease to be masses and become citizens. Only then do they participate” (Barber 1984: 154f).

Post-democracy, as mentioned above, led to a reduction of participation. Features of post-democracy such as the erosion of representative principles, the outsourcing of highly pertinent political decisions to non-elected experts/administrations and the augmented impact by so-called market mechanisms on political decision-makers correlate with an increasing distance between politics and the life world. “The relationship between citizens and politicians has become increasingly defective”²² (Beyme 2013: 40). Peoples’ ability to get their voices heard and to hold representatives accountably declines. As Jacques Ranciere says, post-democracy has “eliminated the appearance, miscount, and the dispute of the people and is thereby reducible to the sole interplay of state mechanisms and combinations of social energies and interests” (Ranciere 1999: 102). Representatives do not (any more) represent the *demos*, but supplant it. “[T]he principle (...) is to make the troubled and troubling appearance of the people (...) disappear behind procedures exhaustively presenting the people” (ibid. 103).

Radical theorists call for a “democratisation of democracy” (Little & Lloyd 2009: 5) to counter such developments. At heart, this call implies a “performative constitution and reconstitution of the ‘people’ or the *demos*” (ibid.). Fundamental values of democracy (freedom, equality, solidarity etc.) unfurl their full potential only if they are progressively expanded onto increasing numbers of people, who are enabled to actively (or passively, if they so wish) take part in their definition and application. The procedure to realise radical (some refer to it as deep or strong democracy: cf. Barber 1984) democracy hence lays in augmented participatory democracy, i.e. more “self-government by citizens” (ibid. 151). This implies that conflicts are not shunned but “tamed” (Mouffe 2007: 29) and that the institutions established through such conflicts are suited for “limit[ing] and contest[ing]” (Mouffe 1996: 248) power relations.

The previously noted features of counterpublics (publicity, multiplicity, inclusivity integrating marginalised individuals or groups with their dissenting opinions, orientation towards the common good) provide a forum for people to put their finger on the gap between democracy as an unrealisable ideal and its – necessarily precarious – reality. “By means of

²² My translation from: “Bürger und Politiker haben zunehmend ein gestörtes Verhältnis.”

their [radical] praxis they expose the fact, that a particular regime has (...) captured and hegemonised the concept of democracy, and that it now presents itself as its unrivalled and unsurpassable real-world implementation”²³ (Machart 2002: 306). In a first sense, citizens fight power through contending with the system. “The active citizen is not s/he, who – because of his obedience – follows the law or the system of institutions, (...) but s/he, who says ‘No’ or at least enjoys the possibility of saying so”²⁴ (Balibar 2013: 46). This would be the negative (or deconstructive) dimension of participation. In addition, people can performatively re-invent (Machart 2002: 300) democracy. They may provide inputs to the black box of government, infusing it with alternative images, discourses and proposals of how democracy could be organised differently. In this second sense, people wield positive (or reconstructive) participatory power. Both forms of participation challenge the status-quo distribution of power. “[N]one of the criteria for legitimating coercion – whether based on assessment of hypothetical consent, the substantive justice of outcomes, the (...) closeness to agreement of the deliberative process that resulted in a decision to coerce, or the equal power that participants exercise in a decision process – can produce in cases of ongoing disagreement an incontestable legitimate result” (Mansbridge 1996: 54).

In conclusion, we can say that the quality of democracy lies neither in its perfection nor in the stability of power relations, nor in the fact of it having determined an irrevocable consensus over the values it should or could embody. The democratic rule is not a status that can be achieved once and forever. On the contrary, democratic processes should be appreciated as to whether they safeguard the practical possibility (not: the obligation!) to freely contest the line between legitimate and illegitimate democratic decisions, between this or that direction of public policy. Conflicts are nothing to be feared but everything to be valued. Extending this argument to the theory of democratisation, one could say that a democratic system is not consolidated when it “has become the only game in town” (Linz & Stepan 1996b: 15). This would imply that there is a point at which democracy must and can become steady and immutable. Radical scholars advise us to be more cautious. According to them, no single concrete realisation of democracy can ever in that sense become consolidated – not even so-called established democracies. Rather, democracy is continuous and

²³ My translation from: “Sie exponieren durch ihre Praxis den Umstand, dass ein partikulares Regime (...) den Begriff der Demokratie gekapert und hegemonisiert hat und sich nun selbst als dessen konkurrenzlose und unübertreffbare Realisierung präsentiert.”

²⁴ My translation from: “Der aktive Bürger ist demnach nicht der, der durch sein Gehorchen die Rechtsordnung oder das System der Institutionen sanktioniert, (...) [s]ondern er ist seinem Wesen nach ein Rebell, der ‘Nein’ sagt oder zumindest die Möglichkeit dazu hat.”

conflictive negotiation over its own meaning, its principles, its structures. Democracy is a search for avenues to disrupt the routines of power. The better democracy can cater for this search, the more democratic it will get.

1.1.iv On Nationalism and the Yugosphere

Scholarship on nationalism is abundant (cf. Tilly 1996; Özkirimli 2010) – and this is not the place to present this literature in all its facets. Rather, this section concentrates on delivering three lessons. First, it proposes that nationalism is a modern and politically constructed phenomenon. Second, this phenomenon – rather than being the chimera of a few freaks – is taken for granted because of the small words and little actions of a majority of people. The existence of passports (i.e. nationality) reminds us of the third insight, namely that nationalism moulds people into a collective that may claim to partake in the business of democratic rule.

When I started my debate on democracy, I pointed out the indispensability of determining who belongs to the sovereign *demos*. Because democracy assumes that the people rule, it must establish who fills in for the claim ‘We, the People’. In theory it is not important according to which criteria individuals are defined as inside or outside of that nation. The nation, in whose name democratic rule is exercised, might be defined based on constitutional criteria (such as citizenship, place of birth etc.) or cultural factors (such as language, history, customs etc.). I have briefly touched upon these two variants of so-called French (civic) versus German (cultural or ethnic) nationalism (cf. Kohn 1994). Both variants of nationalism express the need to anchor democratic rule in a spatially bound and temporally stable collective.

This entanglement can be traced through history as well, as the rise of nationalism was intertwined with the rise of democracy (cf. Calhoun 2007a & 2007b). It reflects “growing popular participation and the demand for recognition by ordinary people” (Calhoun 2007b: 7). Nations bind people together into imagined communities of “deep and horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991: 7) – people, who would for the most part never meet face to face. “Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible (...) for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (ibid.). Nationalism sets the ground for constructing solidarity between large masses of individuals. It provides subjective belonging and objective integration between various sub-units such as classes, casts, religious groups or guilds. Nationalism made the idea of a *volonté générale* thinkable.

The majority of scholars nowadays concur that nationalism is a modern phenomenon. They differ in explaining which factors brought nationalism to life. While Anderson (1991),

for instance, highlights print capitalism, Protestantism and the rise of vernacular languages (ibid. 6-36) Gellner identifies industrialisation as the main driving force (see review in: Hall 1998). The conversion of economic systems towards capitalism prompted the state to centralise its power, step up its control over the population (for example via taxes, but also instruments such as statistics) and fortify its borders. The imagined community of the nation came to overlap with the social practices and institutions of the state. In order to root the nation-state subjectively in the minds and hearts of people, traditions – as rituals that refer to a “suitable historic past” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983: 1) – were invented: public ceremonies were held and public monuments erected. Schoolbooks narrated pupils a selected history of past glories and woes, and national newspapers relayed every-day events thought to be of interest for a nationally bound readership.

Not all scholars would follow the account of the modern character of nations. Adam D. Smith (1998) argues that nations do have roots in pre-modern times. He claims that nations are based on primordial feelings of belonging to various groups (such as ethnicities). For him, the raw materials provided for nations by ethnicity are not subjective imaginings in the minds of people but an objective fact. This viewpoint however underestimates the explanatory power of constructivism. Presuming that nations are constructed does not imply we consider them as a simple instrument in the hands of manipulative elites (Brubaker 1998: 289). On the contrary, it raises the question why certain people at certain times are responsive to this particular “way of seeing the world” (ibid. 291). The creative (or performative) dimension of nationalist discourse (cf. Calhoun: 2007a 165ff) and/or nationalist practice (Brubaker 1996: 21) does not ignore that nations appear very real in daily life. But it calls for a careful analysis of how nationalism establishes claims of immutability and eternity (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). “We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable, paradox: modern nations (...) claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so ‘natural’ as to require no definition other than self-assertion” (Hobsbawm 1994: 76).

Claims about a common history and future do not simply float above the heads of citizens. They harden into routines, procedures, regimes and institutions, which are here to stay. As Ernest Renan (1996) stated nations might be defined various facts (race, language, material interests or military necessity), but it is individuals who choose to believe in them. Nations are “a daily plebiscite” (Renan 1996: 53). “[N]ationalism is (...) a way of talking, writing, and thinking about the basic units of culture, politics, and belonging that helps to constitute nations as real and powerful dimensions of social life” (Calhoun 2007b: 27). The

tricky task for academics is not to confuse “categories of practice” with “categories of analysis”, as Rogers Brubaker underlines (Brubaker 1996: 15). Instead of reifying nations’ reality through their work, academics should carefully analyse the ways nations are reproduced through the activities and discourses of people and institutions.

Accepting the idea that nations are created and performed by people and institutions invites the question in which way this is accomplished. For a long time, scholars above all researched the phenomenon of hot nationalism (Billig 1995). This term subsumes episodes of bloody nationalist struggles, revolutions and wars. Whereas national movements in Western Europe were considered to be limited to the relatively benign fight for citizens’ rights, nationalism of the East was defined as cultural, ancient and even aggressive. “Nationalism in the West arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and the struggles of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past; nationalists in Central and Eastern Europe created often, out of the myths of the past and the dreams of the future, and ideal fatherland” (Kohn 1994:164). The violent disintegration of Communist Yugoslavia ostensibly lends accuracy to this insight. Nationalism here, rather than helping states to gain civic legitimacy and functionality, unveiled an evil face through destruction, ethnic cleansing and genocide. The claim of ‘We, the People’ mutated into the formula ‘We, the *only* People’. To put it in theoretical terms, nationalism revealed its “totalitarian potential” by eliminating all other possible categories of collective bonding (Calhoun 2007b: 97).

Some scholars (cf. Kohn 1994; Kaplan 1993) believe in the intrinsically evil (because culturalist) nature of nationalism in the East. Many journalists replicated this slant during the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s. As Maria Todorova has shown (1999), this discourse roots in orientalism. The Balkans was constructed as the West’s dark Alter Ego (ibid. 267) over a period of two centuries, crystallising in the period of the First World War. According to this narrative (cf. Kaplan 1993), the Balkans incarnate irrationality, ancient hatreds, passion, complexity, and a disposition for authoritarianism and collectivism. The Balkans is thought to be the end of Europe.

Alternative explanations challenge this culturalist interpretation of nationalism in Yugoslav successor states. Failure of legitimacy (Ramet 2006), economic hardship (Allcock 2000; Boduszynski 2010), elite anti-liberalist attitudes (Gagnon 2004) or the ideological vacuum after communism (Michnik 1991) have been cited as reasons for rulers to stir up national feelings and conduct war. Such theorists argue against taking real-life categories for categories of research. Thus, nationalist agitators might present nationalism as if it had been a natural thing since ancient times. But the scholar should recognise that nationalism is a fluid

product of human action, and therefore contingent upon its context. “[G]iven the overwhelming evidence of contextual and situational shifts in self- and other-identification, one should be sceptical of the oft-repeated emphasis on the deep historical encoding of national identities in the region, and alert to the danger of over-historicisation” (Brubaker 1998: 284). As we have seen in the discussion of radical theories of democracy above, the groundlessness of the social precludes that any identity, any collective – in this case any nation – is forever fixed. Instead, people constantly reproduce and redefine identities and the borders of collectives through antagonistic struggles. Nationalist mobilisations, revolutions and wars are the most visible forms in which such conflicts are expressed. Wars “infect a sore spot, causing bodily fevers; the symptoms are inflamed rhetoric and an outbreak of signs. But the irruption soon dies down; the temperature passes; the flags are rolled up; and, then, it is business as usual” (Billig 1995: 5).

Focusing on the most fervent moments of national agitation, however, yields a simplified picture of nationalism. Criticising researchers’ overemphasis of hot nationalism, Billig convincingly argues that the bulk of nationalist activities go unnoticed. Individuals reproduce nationalism on a daily basis and at the lowest possible level: be it when paying with national money, when watching the weather map on TV or when cheering for their national sports team. “[Unwaved flags] are providing banal reminders of nationhood: they are ‘flagging’ it unflaggingly. The reminding (...) is not a conscious activity; it differs from the collective rememberings of a commemoration” (ibid. 41). Media – above all – serve to reproduce the contours of the nation in seemingly small words as ‘we’, ‘they’ and ‘us’; or in the division between ‘home’ and ‘foreign’ news. “Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making ‘our’ national identity unforgettable” (ibid. 93). Nationalism is not just a worldview or ideology but a form of social life – a way of being. As Billig suggests, it “seems strange to suppose that occasional events [such as public holidays, commemorations or – wars], bracketed off from ordinary life, are sufficient to sustain a continually remembered national identity” (ibid. 46). Billig terms these small acts of flagging banal nationalism. It stands against, but complements, hot nationalism, which is “engendered by a crisis of identity” (Hutchinson 2006: 299). Armed conflicts and warfare simultaneously express and try to handle such crises, for example, through re-defining borders, re-shuffling the composition of populations or instilling an ideology of national grandeur through war propaganda. Wars may provide a ground for nationalism: they leave “a legacy of inspirational leaders and military heroes, villainous others, climatic battles and memories of collective endurance, sacred sites in the

mass war graves, and institutions such as the commemorative ceremonies and the returned servicemen's leagues" (ibid. 303). However, hot nationalism does not get so well entrenched in daily life as to vanish from people's consciousness: this is the function of banal nationalism. In the eyes of the people, banal nationalism loses its novelty, its acuteness or inventedness – it silently seeps into permanent routines, procedures and institutions. It becomes unquestionable precisely because few remember it. "It is a form of reading and watching, of understanding and of taking for granted. It is a form of life in which 'we' are constantly invited to relax, at home, within the homeland's borders" (Billig 1995: 127). Passport, for instance, are an example for a routinised and banal form of reproducing nationalism.

Let me raise the above-stated relation between nationalism and democracy again. I stated at the outset how nationalism paralleled the rise of the centralised state. And I argued that nationalism might serve to sustain the legitimacy of the democratic nation-state. Two possibilities exist: to define the nation by constitutional criteria – this is what Habermas called constitutional patriotism (Habermas 1992b). But cultural interpretations of nationalism, which make the demos concomitant with the ethnicity, have a tendency to obstruct democracy. Harking back to the theory of the public sphere it becomes clear why this is the case. Remember how the intention with the public sphere is to keep it open to everybody. If you would establish ethnic criteria to rule out non-ethnics from participating in public deliberation, this would contradict the very essence of the public sphere. But radical theories on democracy are equally sceptical towards culturally (ethnically) defined nationalism. Let us remember how radical democrats assume that – in principle – every issue should be open to dispute at any time. Every power relation must remain contestable within the arena of democratic politics. Nothing is pre-political (or: extra-discursive). Alas, cultural and ethnic definitions of the nation are precisely that: according to their believers, nations are eternal and natural. There can be no debate on that. In conclusion, what I call ethno-nationalism (i.e. the culturalist branch of nationalism) contradicts both critical and radical democracies.

I.1.iv.a Excursus: The Yugosphere

In the introduction, I sketched my hypothesis that I expect to find hints at an emerging Yugosphere, arising from the web of interactions student activists spin across borders. The term Yugosphere was introduced into the discussion by Tim Judah – a reporter for the New York Times and the Economist on Southeast Europe. In an essay for the London School of Economics from 2009, Judah defines the Yugosphere as a sphere “in the sense of shared geographical space, shared history, shared experience” (Judah 2009: 20), manifesting itself in economic collaboration, inter-regional tourism, cultural exchanges, military cooperation and regional media. Without going into detail, he contrasts this sphere with the divisive principle of nationhood, which, in his opinion, still trumps state politics in the region (ibid. 27). Judah appears to believe that the emerging Yugosphere is normatively superior to the existing nation-states in the region and akin to the dismantled Communist Yugoslavia. In addition, it seems that he compares this supra-national creation to Europe as he maintains that the “post-war Balkans is becoming, *again more like any other part of Europe*” (ibid. 20, emphasis added).

In the region itself, the notion resonates much. Some actors take positive recourse to the Yugosphere, because they see it as an alternative to ethno-nationalist state identity tablets or because it helps to devise a transnational identity independent of Europe and the European Union (cf. Dzihic et al. 2006). As Kokan Mladenović, director of the Belgrade’s Atelje 212 theatre formulated it: “People (...) feel claustrophobic, stuck in these cultural provinces created by the break-apart [of the old states]” (quoted in: Klemencic 2011: no page). Other locals refuse the term, because they believe it cloaks a backward looking Yugonostalgia (vividly described by novelist Ugresic; Ugresic 2004). Yet, as Judah claims in an interview these rebuttals are based upon uneasiness with terminology, not with the underlying concept. “[T]he Croats who objected above all mostly did not, or do not, object to the concept or practice of it – just the name. Croats prefer to cover Yugosphere organisations with names such as Adria or Adriatic whatever.”²⁵

Be it as it may, Judah’s idea triggered heated debates also within academia. Some of it is linked to the fact that Judah is not a scholar, as he readily admitted.²⁶ But there is also more founded criticism. One dubious aspect in Judah’s contribution lies in his presumption that the violence in former Yugoslavia exhibited a sort of irrational derailment, an abnormality within

²⁵ Interview with Tim Judah by CITSEE (Citizenship in Southeast Europe Project at the University of Edinburgh), March 2012, available from: <http://www.citsee.eu/interview/citizens-‘yugosphere’-and-‘united-kingdoms’-interview-tim-judah> [24/09/12]

²⁶ ibid.

the normality of Western Europe (Gagnon 2004). To my mind, Judah thus betrays the orientalist reasoning described above (Todorova 1999). Another point of criticism is that cooperation might be based less upon an appreciation of (cultural etc.) commonalities but on simple economic necessity (as in the case of transnational theatre co-productions: Holdstock 2011). Another criticism is that there is little empirical evidence to sustain Judah's optimistic assessment on where Yugosphere practices are to be found. "If the concept of a Yugosphere has any utility, it is probably in the cultural sphere" (Holdstock 2011: n.a).

Although I agree that mere nostalgic sentiments of history, language and cultural heritage might be too little to bring about a Yugosphere, this does not nullify Judah's basic hunch that processes of trans-border cooperation not only bring together people but also help to breed a transnational subjectivity. Thinking the Yugosphere together with the hitherto discussed theories on nationalism, one might suggest that the Yugosphere embodies a possibility to transcend both the culturally (ethnically) defined nationalism and the state-anchored constitutional patriotism. Engaging in a Yugosphere means ascribing importance and weight to non-state and non-ethnic politics, thus bringing about identities and a civic ethos independent of both the ethnic nation and the nation-state. In that sense, 'being civic' could at once act as an important ingredient for democracy (cf. Merkel 1999: 164-169; Offe 1997: 66f; Putnam 1993) but without its national predicaments. Values such as solidarity, trust including self-recognition and an orientation towards the common good would then arise from engaging and struggling for something at the transnational level beyond nation-states. Cultural affinities might motivate such collaboration just as pragmatism based on experiences of economic hardship or the wish to increase efficiency might be part of it. For the purpose of this thesis I would conclude that grass-roots contention, which does not spring from an engagement with culture/arts or regional post-conflict solution, is an exiting case to study precisely because it helps to probe Judah's analysis. In that sense, student contention could help to test whether a shared sense emerges from experiences of collaboration for explicitly political purposes.

I.2 On Social Movements

I.2.i Introducing Social Movements

Social movement arise when people mobilise (moving something and themselves) for a common cause. Social movements bundle bottom-up collective action to push specific claims and issues. As written in the introduction, social movements are acting units of contentious politics. Contentious politics is episodic, public and collective action that disrupts a socio-political status quo, because it affects the interests of “at least one of the claimants” (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001: 5). The targets of contention may be political institutions, transnational economic actors as well as cultural authorities (Snow, Soule & Kriesi 2011: 9). If targets oppose the particular contentious action, they are concomitant with antagonists. Rarely, targets may also turn out to become allies. But in whichever case, “fostering or halting change is the *raison d’être* for all social movements” (ibid. 8, emphasis in original). In contrast to public spheres, which bring together people to criticise a status quo as well, social movements continue over (some) time and space (McAdam & Snow 1997: xvii). They do not vanish when its participants stop to act. Two elements sustain this relative continuity of social movements: a) the fact that to keep up mobilisation, some degree of routinisation is needed and b) the fact that collective identities and cognitive frames motivate and assemble participants around specific goals and demands. The latter dimension will be dealt with in section I.2.ii on social movements and culture below.

Social movements emerge from informal or formal networks of interaction. The basis of social movements is composed of those, whose interest social movements strive to defend (the constituency) and those, who contribute to collective action with symbolic and material resources (adherents). Some form of organised routinisation is necessary to sustain activism, since “in absence of organisation (...) opportunities [for social change] are not seized” (McAdam et al. 1996: 15). Social movements pool their own resources – amongst which organisational forms and tactics are central. They are “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture of world order of which they are part” (Snow, Kriesi & Soule 2011: 11). Organising at this point does not refer to the conventional interpretation of the word; it does not mean that institutions have to be set-up with typical

features such as founding documents, business charts or paid employees. “Strictly speaking, social movements do not have members, but participants” (Della Porta & Diani 1999: 17).

What organising rather means is that routine patterns of interaction are being followed – whether or not these routines are written down or adhered to informally. Also, organising does not imply that social movements stick to one organisational form or that they always keep the same tactics. They adapt through cycles of expansion, transformation and contraction – scholars studied these shifts under the terms of protest cycles (Tarrow 1997) or waves (Koopmans 2011). Accordingly, social movements may take the form of informal networks of interaction today but may grow into social movement organisations and into fully-fledged NGOs after a couple of years. Social movements sometimes bring together NGOs, or merge into them or they may be smaller than NGO’s. In all instances, routinisation ensures longevity, enables efficient use of scarce emotional, human, financial, time and technical resources and eases the transmission of knowledge from earlier to later instances of contention. Besides this, organising may also lend purpose and meaning. As Clemens (1996) argues, the organisational form reveals the identity of the movement. “The answer to ‘Who are we?’ need not be a quality or a noun; ‘We are people who do these sorts of things in this particular way’ can be equally compelling” (Clemens 1996: 211). Specific ways of organising have, for instance, been adapted or abandoned, because they had become associated with a certain identity. Polletta recounts how the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (the main initiative fighting for racial equality in the USA in the early 1960s) at one point renounced direct democracy because it had “bec[o]me white” (Polletta 2006: 81).

Protest is a peculiar feature of social movements’ repertoire of action (cf. Tilly 1995), even if it may not always be dominant. Related to this is the fact that social movements inhabit a fragile position (McAdam & Snow 1997: xxi) vis-à-vis the state. Social movement activists keep their oppositional attitude and put their resources at the disposal of a larger social movement, whose objectives they share (Della Porta & Diani, 1999: 140). In contrast to NGOs, social movements stick to unorthodox tactics, including public protests, to achieve their goals. As soon as social movement organisations transform into NGOs, however, activists abandon this orientation and turn to accommodative and more socially accepted means of action. We could say that they thus cease to do contentious politics.

The hitherto discussed resource-mobilisation approach is not the only way to explain the emergence and development of social movements. Another major research strand foregrounds the insight that social movements do not move in a vacuum. “Social protest movements make history (...) albeit not in circumstances they choose” (Meyer 2004: 125).

Collective actors are bound by the opportunities and limits of their socio-political context(s). Political opportunities are “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form [and/or continue with, A.R.] social movements” (Tarrow 1996: 54). Scholars of political opportunity structures (see for a recent compendium: Goodwin & Jasper 2012) contend that the national and international structural contexts, the configuration of political actors (such as political parties) and their repressive or facilitative interaction with social movements significantly shape the emergence, the level and form, and the outcomes of mobilisation (cf. Kriesi 2011). Dependent on their context, social movements choose their tactics, form of organisations and (sometimes) claims.

On the other side of the equation, targets send out signals to social movements (cf. Meyer & Minkoff 2004: 1470ff) – either by accommodating their demands or by refuting them. These varying strategies by elites have been labelled as repression versus facilitation (Kriesi 2011: 77), exclusion versus inclusions (Kriesi 1997: 52), accommodation versus conflict strategies (Koopmans 2011: 29f), signals of polity openness or closedness (Meyer & Minkoff 2004: 1470ff), encouraging or discouraging signals (Tarrow 1996: 54). Research is inconclusive as to which reaction by targets strengthens mobilisation. In his comparison of France, Germany and Switzerland, Hanspeter Kriesi found that facilitation sometimes “acts like a sponge” (Kriesi et al. 1997: 56) and that repression spurs resistance. However, too much repression may raise the costs of collective action to “unbearable heights” (ibid. 56) so that social movements die down.

One can assume that political opportunities not only influence the shape and development of contention but that they also differently affect chances of social movements to achieve concrete results (Meyer & Minkoff 2004: 1462). However, it is crucial to remember that the context does not predict the course of mobilisation. “If social movements simply reflect national institutional context, there would be much less infra-national variation in movements than we actually see, both between movement sectors and within them” (Tarrow 1996: 50). Beside the political context and antagonist (or allied) actors such as parties, other activists might found so-called counter-movements to counteract a particular social movement. Finally, social movements are influenced by sympathetic social movements within or without the country (in the form of diffusion, see below in section I.2.iii) and by interactions with their own constituency (cf. McAdam & Snow 1997).

So far opportunities have been defined as being composed of structures, actors and their strategic reactions (signals). The notion of signals can be expanded to include symbolic

and discursive signals. As we will see later, one central task of social movements is to construct a frame with which to interpret their context, the problem at hand and their own role in remedying this problem within the specific context. Social movements act within a cultural context of symbolic constraints and possibilities. And they culturally perceive (some and maybe not other) opportunities this context offers them. The cultural environment (Williams 2011: 101) will have a positive mobilisatory impact on social movements only if it resonates with social movements' orientation, world views, beliefs, ideas and demands (i.e. their frames). For instance, one might think that a feminist movement should have a hard time recruiting adherents where women are culturally conceived as confined to the private role of housewives rather than as contributors to public life. In such a context, feminist protest appears neither legitimate nor even intelligible. In other words, the discursive opportunity structure (Gamson 2011; Gamson & Meyer 1996) of patriarchy in this example structures what female protesters can say or demand.

Social movements will be more successful when their frames can be understood from the vantage point of dominant discourses in society. But social movements can also work towards persuading their antagonists of the superiority of their ideas and thus gradually affect a widening and/or adaption of hegemonic discourses. Media are amongst the most important terrains for such "framing contests" (Gamson 2011: 249). Media transport social movements' frames and confront them with the hegemonic discourse.²⁷ Note, however, that media are not "flat soccer-fields" (ibid. 249) for social movements. On the contrary, social movements most often have a hard time being heard by (mainstream) media. One of the yardsticks for measuring the success of social movements therefore could be to carefully analyse their media strategy and/or their resonance within the media.

1.2.ii Social Movements and Culture

In the preceding paragraph I elaborated that social movements are confronted with a cultural environment of discursive opportunities. But how do collective actors attach meaning to their contexts? How do they actually come to identify the problems they want to tackle? And, how do adherents of movements realise they are not alone in their struggle and understand that the vis-à-vis in a protest is walking in solidarity, sharing common values and identifying with the same group? All these questions and many more point at the symbolic

²⁷ When I say transporting I do so knowing that media are not neutral. Media do more than simply mirror reality – they reproduce it. For want of space, I am not able to go deeper into that topic (but compare: Curran et al 1982; Hall 1977).

dimension of contention and are answerable only when introducing culture into social movements analysis.

Culture is a heavily contested concept. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, culture (from the latin word *culturare*) means at once “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” and “the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society” (Oxford Dictionary of English 2010). The latter notion prefigures Clifford Geertz’s definition of culture as webs of meaning that humans create through their interactions (Geertz 1973: 10). Culture “denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols; a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (ibid. 89). As in the discussion on nationalism above (section I.1.iv), it is crucial to recognise that such patterns of meanings not simply fly around with any material anchoring. Rather, cultural meanings solidify in artefacts produced by humans: masks, pictures, architecture or symbolic practices such as festivals and commemoration ceremonies.

What does a Geertzian perspective on culture imply for the analysis of social movements? It helps understand that people get recruited for collective action, because it is meaningful to them even if there were no immediate (or perceived rational) benefits in sight. It sheds light on how – through discursively marking enemies and friends, and telling stories of belonging – social activists build up motivation and strength. It illustrates that forms of organisation are not just chosen tactically, but may express (and reinforce) certain self-understandings. It illuminates how protest events as public performances alter prevailing notions of right and wrong. In the following sub-chapters I explicate collective identities and language as part of the symbolic dimension of organising collective action.

I.2.ii.a Identification: The Strive Towards The Self

One might suggest that social activists mobilise because they realise they are part of a pre-existing collective ‘We’. In this picture, social movement’s cohesion and unity is assumed to come before contention begins. Yet what if social movements are not “characters moving on an historical stage” (Melucci 1989: 24) but “composite action system[s]” (ibid. 28), whose unity emerges with the struggles? Collective identities are incentives for new activists, they are a resource for strategic decision-making and choosing the organisational form (Polletta & Jasper 2001: 286-288), and they affect society at large insofar as they might shift, as hinted at above, cultural authorities. Cultural authorities are “systems of beliefs or practices” (Snow, Soule & Kriesi 2011: 9). Through constituting, expressing and performing new identities,

social movements may expand the pool of available identity concepts. Recalling the above provided definition of contentious politics by McAdam et al., we may then speak of transgressive contention. The women's, LGTB and queer movements of the 1970s are exemplary for achieving recognition of new identities, which unsettled notions of sexuality and gender prevailing in society (cf. Eder 2003: 65; Green 2012; Skrentny 2012). The downside to such an accentuation, however, is imminent. Stressing differences and calling for the recognition of (new) collectives may aggravate fragmentation. The nationalist mobilisations in the disintegration of Communist Yugoslavia have been analysed in this light (Oberschall 2007; Marko 2010; Petricusic 2011).

I define collective identification as a process through which activists cognitively, morally and emotionally link themselves to each other, to a category, a practice or an institution (cf. Polletta & Jasper 2001: 298). In such a way, activists give meaning and continuity to their joint activities. Marking differences helps activists to identify their targets and antagonists. Establishing what they have in common with each other as adherents and with the constituency, nurtures feelings of solidarity and trust. With this definition, I put forward three arguments. 1) The first is that forming a shared 'We' in a social movement is a process, not a variable provided ex-ante. "Identities are about using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being" (Hall 1996: 4). 2) The second idea holds that identifications (in plural) may be overlapping and contested (cf. Della Porta 2005a) rather than homogenous and uniform. From this follows 3) the third argument that the 'Wes' need be continuously re-negotiated and re-created through symbols (language, actions and artefacts). I discuss each of these three arguments in turn.

Identity – common sense suggests – is about "what a person or a thing is" (Oxford Dictionary of English 2010). But anyone who experienced ambiguities in the quest to get at his or her 'real self' might have gotten a glimpse of identity's fluidity. Rather than denoting what remains the same, identities are "never unified, never singular, [but] subject to a radical historicisation" (Hall 1996: 4). Personal and collective identities emerge when human beings grow conscious of themselves through the growing awareness of the Other(s). This awareness implies perceiving, communicating and consequently discursively marking who oneself is not and how oneself is different from the constitutive Other. Hall called this the "production of frontier-effects" (Hall 1996: 3, idem: Bauman 1998: 208; Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 95f). By ways of knowing who one is not one also constructs in what respect one is similar to (some) Other(s). Identification thus is, I would add, about producing 'inclusion-effects' as well (what Laclau and Mouffe call chains of equivalence: Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 130). Identification

establishes relations between categories of actors that are different or similar. Identifying with one collective, however, does not “necessarily (...) prevent similar feelings being directed to other groups” (ibid. 100). On the contrary, activists might feel connected to and show allegiance to more than one group and/or social movement. As Donatella Della Porta (Della Porta 2005a: 186-191; Della Porta 2009) uncovered in her studies of the European Social Forum, activists develop tolerant identities, because they prefer diversity over homogeneity. Multiple memberships in various initiatives were frequent.

Identities are constructed, but they are also “symbolical processes with material effectivity” (Hall 1996: 4; idem: Polletta & Jasper 2001). Human beings often represent their collective self-recognitions through creating texts, artefacts, products and organisations. For example, activists who understand themselves as open-minded, might choose a form of organisation not simply because they deem it (ideologically) appropriate but because they feel it expresses who they are (cf. Della Porta 2005b). In her study of the black emancipation movement in Mississippi in the 1960s (i.e. the SNCC), Polletta discovered that participative democracy was preferred in the first phase of collective action. But later on, it was associated with white domination. Direct democracy “became white” (Polletta 2006: 81) – and this was thought inconceivable for a black movement. The form of the movement itself became (part of) the message (Melucci 1989: 60), because it represented who the activists were. “Answers to the pragmatic question of ‘How do we organize?’ reverberate inward to the shaping of collective identity and outward to link movements to institutions or opportunity structures” (Clemens 1996: 209).

The mechanisms for constituting differences and similarities in the process of collective identification serve several core functions. First, they sustain a shared vision of the group and its boundedness against other collectives as well as of its role in society. Second, they help activists minimise the “risks and uncertainties” (Della Porta & Diani 1999: 88) of their involvement in collective action. Third, they assure that activists apprehend continuity between phases where the collective action is visible in public protests, and more silent phases with little public activities. Fourth, it helps build group commitment, trust and solidarity. The downside of this emotional connectivity might be that identification might accelerate further social control within the group (Hunt & Benford 2011: 448). The last – and probably most important – function of identification is that it provides reasons and motivations to act. This will arise if the relation between different categories of actors is perceived as problematic.

I.2.ii.b Contentious Language: Framing the Challenge

Communication is at the heart of social movements: by stating injustices, accusing of wrongdoings, formulating claims and phrasing rallying calls, activists always stand in continuous dialogues with others around them, be it their antagonists, counter-movements, allies, media, other NGOs, or their own constituency. As we have seen above, social movements produce awareness as a collective actor through the process of collective identification. Language is the most significant vehicle for this process. Through naming insiders and outsiders, activists simultaneously create and re-create with words who they are not, why they do what they do and what they stand in for or against. Scholars proposed various concepts to examine communication with(in) social movements.

Brought to social movement studies by David Snow et al. (1986), the concept of the frame came to be known as a cognitive scheme, which simplifies and condenses reality. “It constitutes a kind of collective packaging device that assembles and collates slices of observed, experienced, and/or recorded ‘reality’” (Snow 2011: 400). Frames carry with them cognition, interpretation and knowledge. They furnish the motivations for mobilising adherents, serve to demobilise antagonists and extract concessions from the targets (ibid. 345). Besides, they also serve to diagnose injustices and predict possible solutions and strategies. Benford and Snow distinguish three frames to capture these three functions: diagnostic frames, prognostic frames and motivational frames (Benford & Snow 2000: 615-618). At times, frames are constricted to a single social movement, an organisation or network. But sometimes actors enlarge frames and seek to bridge differing interpretations of several collectives. Then we speak of master frames. Constructing master frames involves a process of perceiving and constructing similarities. Frames become salient, i.e. if they resonate with the constituency (ibid. 618ff). This means that the ideas expressed by the social movement are believed to be relevant to the (potential) constituency. With respect to my empirical research, I employ frames as analytical devices to examine intra- and inter-movement debates over meaning. These debates are not necessarily, but may be, intentional. In the end, most scholars expect that activists within one social movement or even from different social movements will coincide in their framing efforts. In other words, activists will eventually come to agree on one coherent master frame. This is founded upon the assumption that frames can only effectively mobilise people for contentious action once they have become salient.

The framing approach has been criticised on a number of accounts. First, it is not evident why a group’s representation through coherent frames should mobilise people easier

than inconsistent stories (cf. Polletta 2006 & 2009). On the contrary, what people tell each other to motivate themselves might be as effective if left ambiguous. A second point of criticism is that the framing approach underestimates how institutional norms and common sense affect which frames are pronounced, heard and understood (Polletta 2009: 35f). Finally, there appears to be a tendency to concentrate on the contents of frames while neglecting the action of framing (i.e. the communicative interactions), through which such frames are constituted. But for my purposes, frames are important since they link up with the above-presented theory on identification. As we have learnt, collective identities are never fully accomplished. There always remains a gap in a group's self-definition. Frames may fill this gap and represent the collective *as if* it was a closed, fixed and homogenous unit.

This chapter relayed that culture is important not only because it confines or refines the opportunities and resources of social movements but because it constitutes patterns of meaning through which collective actors perceive the world, themselves and Others and their actions. Culture is a prism for attaching meaning to one's own direction and purpose within the social terrain. And it enables mechanisms of collective identification and frame production, which serve to enhance the mobilisatory capacity of social movements, their inner cohesion and solidarity and their continuity over time. In the chapter on social movements and democracy (section I.2.v below), I link these insights up with my prior discussion of public spheres/ counterpublics. I thus argue that social movements are able to forestall the ephemerality of counterpublics through providing a) mobilisatory potential and b) continuity. Counterpublics – as instances of appearance – inherently lack such dimensions.

1.2.iii Contention Beyond the Nation State

Collective action often cannot be reduced to a national context. As suggested above, movements across borders may impact on how social movements from another country frame their demands and tactics. But how often will such diffusion evolve into transnational collaboration? How does contentious action expand beyond borders? Scholars generally hold that collaboration amongst activists from different movements is “relatively rare” (Diani & Della Porta 1999: 125; but see: Della Porta & Tarrow 2005). The most important reason is costs in material, human, ideational and sometimes emotional terms. “Acting collectively requires activists to marshal resources, become aware of and seize opportunities, frame their demands in ways that enable them to join with others, and identify common targets” (Tarrow 2005: 42). Tarrow holds that certain types of persons – what he calls rooted cosmopolitans – are mostly inclined to mobilise such resources. Rooted cosmopolitans are individuals who “move physically and cognitively outside of borders” (ibid. 42), but draw resources from their

domestic contexts, and return thereto after having achieved their aims. Transnational activists, as a sub-group of rooted cosmopolitans, “reveal[] cosmopolitanism without cosmopolitan ideology (...) moving back and forth between the local and the translocal and among a variety of (not necessarily compatible) identities” (ibid. 46). Transnational activism emerges when activists from one country link with social movements in other countries, or when activists target international organisations and countries other than their own. Various forms of collaboration exist on the transnational level: they might range from loose (and informal) networks between (some) activists to short-term alliances (cf.: Della Porta, Kriesi & Rucht 2002), to long-term campaign coalitions. In this section, I delve deeper into the question of how collective action expands geographically and may be formalised.

I.2.iii.a Informal Transnational Networking

Movements change in appearance. Networks rank at the least formal level of routinisation. At the most formal level, we find long-term coalitions between social movements organisations. Networks are agglomerations of more or less strongly involved individuals that tie those individuals to a social movement in between strongly visible “moments of madness” (Tarrow 1997: 329f) and more silent phases of hidden back-door actions. Through networks, individuals exchange information and resources. Alberto Melucci viewed submerged networks as capital for building up force for future protests. “[T]he potential for resistance or opposition is sewn into the very fabric of daily life. (...) Paradoxically, the latency of a movement is its effective strength” (Melucci 1989: 71). It is important to note that shared resources can be tangible but might also be emotional or symbolic.

Networking involves personal communications, information exchanges, and mutual learning through meetings or visits. But it does not imply that activists coordinate (all of) their actions, or that they set up an organisation. Networks may be a consequence of collective action (Della Porta & Diani 1999: 127), but they can also be understood as a precondition for recruiting activists and mobilising them. Whether networks precede or ensue from contentious action, they always remain informal and simultaneously wider but less dense than social movements. Networks cut across, and sometimes integrate, activists from different social movements. It is crucial to note, however, that networking does not generate collective identification. Activists might feel solidarity towards the persons they network with, or they might express sympathy for their cause, but they do not feel part of one collectivity. Only through forming transnational coalitions, activists enable sustained coordination of actions and engender processes of joint identification (I.2.iii.b).

Networks are the vehicles through which activists diffuse their worldviews, norms, claims and strategies beyond borders (for all six processes of transnational activism compare: Tarrow 2005: 32-179). This process is called diffusion. Diffusion is the “spread of an innovation” (Kolin, Roberts & Soule 2010: 1; Soule et al. 2010; Soule 2011) from a sender (the innovating social movement) to a receiver (the adopting social movement). Innovations could mean frames, stories, claims, tactics, strategies, practices or organisational forms. Structurally speaking, diffusion is most often based on informal networking (although diffusion through institutionalised venues of collaboration is possible as well). A condition for diffusion is that activists perceive each other as similar. The so-called homophily principle presumes that the more innovators and adopters are, or perceive each other as, similar, the easier diffusion gets. Snow and Benford (2000) criticise this idea. They propound that conditions of similarity between the social movements are not always fixed. Rather, similarities often need to be actively (re)constructed by the parties (Snow & Benford 2000: 25). Innovators need to frame their innovation as useful for the new context. And adopters need to concur with this to understand that their situation is indeed similar (enough) for the emulation of the innovation. In this process of framing similarities, social movements alter their problem definitions, claims, perception of opportunities – and their collective self-identification. Therefore, framing as a process underpins diffusion.

I.2.iii.b Formalising Transnational Activism: Coalition Building

Social movements from different countries might find that collaborating with each other is advantageous and that it would therefore be good to transpose collaboration onto a new organisational level. Organising transnational coalition is a cost- and time-intensive way of working together. It requires resources, emotional and cognitive involvement, intensive negotiations to deal with internal differences, acts (and not just claims!) of solidarity, and sustained coordination of actions and agendas. Transnational coalitions can be defined as “collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organisational entities to pool resources to effect change” (Tarrow 2005: 164). Forming transnational coalitions frequently goes hand in hand with stories told about this organisation, stories about its history, its participants, and its agenda. Depending on both their longevity and the intensity of activists’ involvement, Tarrow (2005: 166-175) differentiates four types of coalitions:

- Instrumental coalitions are formed for a short period of time around a particular topic. Requiring low involvement, they provide little ground for collective identification and quickly dissolve again after the respective aims have been met.

- Event coalitions are clustered around a specific event that is set externally by the context (for example, a conference organised by an international organisation). Such coalitions usually bundle together intensive activities and attain high public visibility. But they die down rapidly with the end of the event.
- Federations are entrusted with an overarching and long-term mandate by national social movements. They demand little involvement from activists. Their sophisticated structure impedes flexibility in organising collective action.
- Campaign coalitions, finally, combine long term with high involvement. They are founded around single issues but endure because activists identify with the coalition and are socialised into sustaining the collaboration.

Mechanisms facilitating coalitions' durability include trust building, credible commitments, managing internal differences, framing and story telling (cf. Tilly 2002; Polletta 2009; Polletta & Jasper 2001). The European Social Forum(s) is a case in point where socialisation and the construction of overarching tolerant identities sustained collaboration between many separate social movements over an extended period of time (Della Porta 2005a). For the sake of my further argument it is important to note that coalitions concur with at least a minimal process of identification. People within a network, as we remember, may feel close to their homologues, but they do not perceive themselves as participants of a collective. Coalitions not only presuppose cognitively shared frames and common understandings of underlying problems and opportunities. In addition, they build up an emotional and moral recognition of similarities, which add an additional overarching layer of identity to possibly pre-existing identities of sub-movement(s).

1.2.iv Student Contention: The Power of Disruption

Students frequently spearhead contention. Be it during the 1848 or 1968 revolutions, before and during the fall of the Iron Curtain (Konvicka & Kavan 1994) or during the recent upheavals of students in Chile in 2012 (Silva 2012), student contention bears historical resemblances in expressivity, ideology and inclination to violence (cf. Lipset 1971: 27). Different models exist to explain why students mobilise relatively more often than other parts of the society (Lemonik 2011: 6). Socio-psychological approaches trace students' proneness for strike back to their assumed irrationality and youthfulness. "[Y]outh are more prone to favor change, reform, radicalism of all varieties, than older people" (Lipset 1971: 120). Accordingly, students tend towards liberalism and against institutions incarnating their parents' ideology. "They have not established a sense of affinity with adult institutions; experience has not hardened them to imperfections. (...) They tend to be committed to ideals

rather than to institutions. Hence, those events which point up the gap between ideals and reality stimulate them to action” (ibid. 20). This statement, however, cannot elucidate why non-student youngsters are less often involved than students. Besides, not all student contention was liberal or left-oriented (cf. Binder & Wood 2012).

A second approach accords more weight to students’ resources and social status. It seems that students’ biographical availability is a factor that eases mobilisation. Students simply have more time at their disposal than persons caught up in responsibilities of capitalist production and reproduction. “They are in transition between having been dependent (...) and taking up their own roles in jobs and families. Studenthood is inherently a tension-creating period” (Lipset 1971: 17 & 35f). But students’ social situation does not exhaust reasons for student mobilisation.

A third approach draws from the political opportunities angle. It explains student contention with reference to the specific context at universities. Hence, the degree of openness of the university’s organisation conditions the emergence and development of student contention (cf. Lemonik 2011: 10-17). Universities are complex institutions, often organised as interlocked but federalised sites of decision-making. Student contention gains momentum, because of the role of the campus in facilitating the assembly of previously unconnected individuals. On campus, individuals acquire an overarching collective identity qua their professional role as students (cf. Giguere & Lalonde 2012). “Universities generate and concentrate within a relatively small geographical area, huge populations of young people who enjoy (...) relative freedom with respect to their time” (Crossley 2012: 1; idem: Lipset 1971: 37f). Rather than changing their underlying values and orientations when coming to universities, students find a “sufficient number of likeminded” people (Crossley 2012: 1) and the infrastructure they need to wage struggles. Harking back to the theory on collective identification presented above in I.2.ii.a, one could say that through meeting and communicating with each other in campus, students conceive and reproduce similarities. This lets them develop shared collective identities. Thus, universities infrastructures enhance students’ capacity to act (ibid. 2).

But do universities make any difference apart from having the physical peculiarity of gathering masses of people within a small space? Answering this question starts with their educational and academic functions. Universities are sites of amassing, condensing and creating knowledge. Even if one harbours the idea that universities have a general social task and must not be reduced to capitalist production of knowledge, universities are in reality structured around a division of labour. Different professional subgroups partially oppose each

other depending on their role as researchers, students and/or administrators. This holds true also for state-funded universities. As in any other case, the process of knowledge production at universities can be interrupted.

This relates back to the general idea behind strikes: by withdrawing from their respective site of labour, workers disturb capitalist production, often causing high costs for their employers. This logic can be applied to universities as well. Accordingly, students disrupt the education function of universities through “withdrawing their cooperation in social relations within [these] institutions” (Gonzalez-Vaillant & Schwartz 2012: 1). Occupying university buildings, or, more precisely, interrupting the usual business of lectures by occupying the lecture halls, is such a form of structural disruption. Students come to “sit down” (ibid.) in rooms of academically structured learning and redefine the usage of those spaces.

A second possibility, as Gonzalez-Vaillant and Schwartz (2012) point out, is invasive disruption (ibid.). Here, students enter and sit in foreign institutions that are alien to their professional identity. For instance, they walk up to the Ministry of Education or block traffic on the streets. This type of disruption derives from the sit-ins activists performed in cafés and restaurants in the USA in the fight against Afro-American exclusion and discrimination (cf. Oberschall 1993). Because students wield comparatively little power, have few natural allies and few monetary resources, students are usually more effective when sitting down at their own university. “[A]gainst outside targets, students require alliances with other groups to overcome the resistance of these alien structures. The use of invasive disruption, therefore, depends on the creation of bridging organizations to collectivities with positional power in the target institution” (Gonzalez-Vaillant & Schwartz 2012: 3). In conclusion, student activism occurs often and is infused with a relatively high degree of radicalism. “A completely inactive student body is a much more curious phenomenon historically than one which is involved to some degree in activism” (Lipset 1971: 263). This does not, however, imply that students automatically have better chances to achieve their demands. Their precarious position makes students receptive to social problems and difficulties, but their social role also leaves them vulnerable to repression.

1.2.v Social Movements and Democracy: Keep Rolling Through Dissent

In the chapter on democracy, I argue that democracy flourishes on tamed conflicts (agonist conflicts, as Mouffe calls them). I also point out that excluded collectives or individuals are best integrated through negotiating their potentially dissenting views, interests and identities in counterpublics. This is due to the main principles upon which counterpublics

operate (publicity, multiplicity, inclusivity, orientation towards the common good and the integration of marginalised actors). I qualified this argument by warning that counterpublics fail to provide continuity to public deliberation. Hence, I presented social movements as units that act in a more structured manner. Thanks to their construction of frames, their collective identities and their organisational routines, social movements turn somewhat elusive deliberations of counterpublics into dynamic yet sustained contentious action. In this chapter, I seek to shed light on the potential capacity of social movements to deepen democracy. In so doing, I also take up the criticism often fired against social movements that they harm democracy – precisely because they subvert and abuse the very institutions and values upon which their contention thrives.

We have learnt above that the *raison d'être* for social movements is to foster or halt change. Social movements re-constitute, express and act upon views, interests and identities, which dissent²⁸ from the majority's views, interests and identities. In this capacity, social movements turn aggrieved subordinates without voices into participating rebels. "The individual, who sanctions the legal order and the system of institutions with his obedience, is not an active citizen. To the contrary, [the active citizen] at his core is a rebel"²⁹ (Balibar 2013: 46). Social movements bring power and exclusion "to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation" (Mouffe 1996: 255). The same procedures that serve to mobilise individuals internally (namely: framing and identification) also function to externally perform difference (through the act of saying 'No').

With respect to internal democracy of social movements, Donatella della Porta and Dieter Rucht discovered that activists at the European Social Forum not only ideologically disapproved of consensus but that they revealed a high degree of mutual respect for diversity (Della Porta 2009a; Della Porta & Rucht 2013: 218). Thus activists accepted conflicts as normal rather than as exceptional. Deliberation – as a form of taming conflicts and remolding interests – was found to outbalance other types of communication such as bargaining, pressure or persuasion (Della Porta & Rucht 2013: 230). The authors conclude that the "groups would fall below the legal standards that are set, for example for the internal structure of political parties in liberal nation states. However, when it comes to respecting minorities and dissenters, listening to each other, limiting the role of leadership, empowering ordinary group members and being open to preference transformation in light of discussions, our

²⁸ Sunstein defines dissent as the rejection of the view most people hold (Sunstein 2003: 7). I would add to this cognitive approach that dissent is (also) expressed through performing minoritarian identities.

²⁹ My translation from: "Der aktive Bürger ist demnach nicht der, der durch sein Gehorchen die Rechtsordnung oder das System der Institutionen sanktioniert, (...) [s]ondern er ist seinem Wesen nach ein Rebell."

groups seemed to fare pretty well” (ibid. 231). A focus on internal democracy (cf. Della Porta 2009a & 2009b; Blee 2012) might but does not necessarily have to coincide with demands by these same social movements to reform democracy more broadly (Della Porta & Rucht 2013). But even when social movements do not explicitly struggle for democracy, they can fulfil tasks in a democracy...

- extract and publicise information (cf. Sunstein 2003);
- criticise the status quo through pointing out exclusions and power (cf. Mouffe 1996);
- correct wrong directions taken by society (cf. Sunstein 2003) and influence society through presenting alternative policies;
- enhance self-determination through constructing new identities and/or an oppositional consciousness (cf. Mansbridge 1985; Mansbridge & Morris 2001);
- shift the discursive horizon by either filling existing categories with different meanings or by introducing and making dominant altogether new concepts (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 112);
- perform democracy’s incompleteness through giving examples of alternative democratic practices from within the movements: radical democratic activism “begins with the experience of an unrealised democracy”³⁰ (Machart 2002: 304) and ends with the attempt to “realise something that must in principle always remain unrealisable” (ibid. 305);
- set up safe counterpublics, or, as Ranciere put it, a “community stage” (Ranciere 1999: 109), upon which previously separate and excluded actors are being brought together and simultaneously integrated into the demos.

What differentiates social movements from NGO’s in performing these tasks is their opposition to the system and to normal (i.e. hegemonic) ways and discourses of participation. But these tasks are not merely aesthetic gestures. Saying ‘No’ to the world is socially relevant when and if social movements are oriented towards the public good, i.e. when their cause is extendable to an ever-increasing part of the population.

This norm of inclusivity, which I defined above as one of the fundamental principles of the counterpublic, is crucial: some social movements may not frame their struggle as relevant for the whole society and might not be willing to develop tolerant identities. Social movements may expound exclusive and discriminatory behaviour and ideology (cf.

³⁰ My translation from: “Aktivismus beginnt mit Erfahrung unvollendeter Demokratie (unrealized democracy) und trifft auf unvollendbare Demokratie” (304) / “etwas zu realisieren, das im Prinzip immer unrealisierbar bleiben muss.” (305)

Beissinger 2002; Dvornik 2009: 80ff). Other social movements may very well be oriented toward the public good but lack the appropriate resources, skills and capacity to contribute their ideas. In all these instances, social movements cannot be understood as opening up counterpublics for joint deliberation in the interest of (potentially) all. Such movements will form underground “enclaves of resistance” (Mansbridge 1996: 47) or “spaces of autonomy”³¹ (Balibar 2012: 68) without linkage to the larger society. While they may quite heavily disturb society (e.g. through acts of violence or terrorism), these social movements do not democratise power relations and contribute to democratic rule.

The objection that counterpublics may in reality turn out as relatively exclusive does not contravene the basic argument according to which social movements establishing counterpublics are oriented towards society as a whole. Enclaves of resistance, on the other hand, celebrate isolation. Participants contempt themselves with remaining outside of society; they stack up “frontier-effects” (Hall 1996: 3), rather than developing similarity. While the participatory significance of enclaves of resistance for democracy is limited, the important lesson here is that some social movements can and do enrich understandings and widen routines of participation within democracy. Not only do they add formerly marginalised citizens to the process (Benhabib 1996a: 68) and thus increase diversity; but also strengthen the value of diversity in democracy. Eventually, this strengthens the input side of democracy: decisions will become more representative, informed, reflective and legitimate than before.

Knitting together the core arguments of the preceding chapters, we may now state that social movements unfold opportunities and spaces for people to meet, discuss and explore alternatives to status quo representative democracy. As social movements seek to overcome existing political structures, they have the potential to challenge hegemonic practices and meanings of democracy. They raise, embody and construct voices that might otherwise be excluded from the hegemony of states and strengthen the value of diversity as such. Building upon and reinforcing oppositional consciousness, social movements foster debates on matters of the common good within their temporally, organisationally and ideologically (relatively) stable collective framework. Social movements, to put it differently, may be venues through which the otherwise fleeting and elusive public spaces (that only exist as long as people actually physically or virtually meet and discuss) acquire some degree of regularity and periodicity. It is through public spaces that social movement activists not only change things but also debate about how they want to change them, and why. This renders them vital for enriching democracy.

³¹ My translation from: “Orte der Autonomie”

II - EMPIRICS

II.1 From Research Question to Results: Designing Research

II.1.i Ontological and Epistemological Basis

This thesis is situated within the qualitative research tradition. The ontological and epistemological basis for this thesis is Social Constructivism. According to some of its most prominent proponents (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1984), reality is socially constructed through the meanings actors use to perceive and describe it with. This ontology harkens back to Weber's *Soziologie des Verstehens* (Weber 1973), whereby actors are cultural beings bestowed with the ability of making sense of an inter-subjectively meaningful world. As Furlong and Marsh remind us, this does not cancel out the reality. "We are not claiming that such researchers do not acknowledge that there are tables/ mountains/ institutions and so on. Rather, they contend that this 'reality' has no social role/ causal power independent of the agent's/ group's/ society's understanding of it" (Furlong & Marsh 2010: 191).

Interpretation is the essential link between the perception of the world and social action within it. An essential advantage of this ontological position over non-constructivist (or: positivist) approaches is its openness to human agency. "Standard non-constructivist explanations (...) look for reasons why some set of conditions (...) required a certain response. (...) Constructivists, by contrast, base their arguments in contingency. The logical format of any constructivist argument is that certain people faced an indeterminate set of 'real' conditions (...) and only arrived at a course of action when they adopted certain social constructs" (Parsons 2010: 88).

Epistemologically, Social Constructivism presumes that there is no objective or direct access to reality. All knowledge about reality is linguistically mediated; it is locally specific and structured by the values, ideas and positioning of the percipient actor. "Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 24). All researchers may hope to gain through their work is to re-construct these constructions. By doing so they knit the meanings actors ascribe to their own patterns of (inter)action into a "complex, dense and reflexive" (ibid. 4) *bricolage*. This process is named the "double hermeneutic": social actors interpret reality, and then the researcher interprets these interpretations (Furlong & Marsh 2010: 185).

The analysis starts from a particular meaning to explain larger patterns or solidified structures of social life. “We want to understand the (...) reality of life (...) in its peculiarity – [we seek to understand] the interrelations and the cultural meaning of life’s instantiations in their present formation, and the reasons for their historical evolvement”³² (Weber 1973: 170). In order to comparatively pair up meanings, researchers can abstract ideal types from their observations. But Weber hastens to underline that these ideal types, as any categorisation, always remain tentative. The researcher, just as any non-academic observer, remains bound by the textuality and contextuality of his/her knowledge.

The validity of scientific concepts does not rely in their capacity to represent reality in its entirety but in organising and rearranging a (potentially super-complex) reality. “Life in its irrational substance and its *possible* meanings is inexhaustible”³³ (ibid. 213, emphasis in original). Inevitably then, the goal of science is not to formulate general laws nor to predict politico-social behaviour but to understand (ibid. 183) the beliefs people hold about the world and how these latent structures of meaning guide action (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 210f). Any such analysis-as-interpretation will remain fragmentary for two reasons. First, because social reality is overflowing with meaning or – as I have discussed with reference to Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 95f) – because social space (i.e. society) has no essence. Second, because the researcher him/herself approaches the world s/he observes with a specific set of previously formed ideas, values, preconceptions and knowledge.

This does not mean that qualitative research is wholly accidental or even superfluous. The question is how to deal with previous knowledge within research. Luckily, students dispose of scientific methodologies to structure their process of knowledge production. Methodologies are general directives for how to do empirical research. In particular, they give answers to deal with problems of perspective and previous knowledge. They are intrinsically bound up with the ontological and epistemological ground of the respective research project (the researchers’ “skin”, see: Furlong & Marsh 2010: 192f). And they offer particular methods as concrete tools that guide data extraction and analysis. Together, methodology and methods make scientific knowledge not any less fragmentary. But they render more traceable and comprehensible how this particular knowledge was attained, which decisions were made in the research process, and why.

³² My translation from: “Wir wollen die (...) Wirklichkeit des Lebens (...) in ihrer Eigenart verstehen – den Zusammenhang und die Kulturbedeutung ihrer einzelnen Erscheinung in ihrer heutigen Gestaltung einerseits, die Gründe ihres geschichtlichen So-und-nicht-anders-Gewordenseins andererseits.”

³³ My translation from: “Das Leben in seiner irrationalen Wirklichkeit und sein Gehalt an *möglichen* Bedeutungen sind unausschöpfbar.”

II.1.ii The Possibilities and Limits of Qualitative Methodology

Doing research involves a sequence of decisions (Flick 2005: 257). Qualitative methodology provides a systematised grid for taking such decisions. Decisions must be made at every turn: based on the research question, one has to decide on the overall guiding theory and methodology, cases, the sources/ observation fields, the kinds of methods appropriate to investigate the observations, methods for interpretation, the way of presenting the results and so forth. Ideally, such decisions should be justified and reflected at each step of the process. The goal is to make as many informed choices as possible, each against the respective level of extant knowledge in society and the previous knowledge by the researcher. And, since the position of the researcher influences his/her activities, his/her relative positioning in society in terms of status, education, age, ethnicity, interests etc. and basic positioning towards society in terms of previous knowledge, preconception and fundamental ideas must also be reflected upon as far as possible.

There are two ways of handling the influence of previous knowledge on research. Quantitative researchers solve this problem by fixing their prior expectations and preconceptions in the form of precise and invariable ex-ante hypotheses (cf. Meinefeld 2005: 266f). The disadvantage is that this does not account for the existence of unacknowledged (unknown) previous knowledge and that it renders research activity inflexible towards unexpected findings and non-attributable data. Quantitative research limits itself to “inspecting what we know about the world, and draw some conclusions about *that* world” (McKeown 2004: 147, emphasis in original) rather than “extending [the] web of knowledge” (ibid. 167) about a possibly new world.

In contrast, qualitative researchers counter the difficulty of previous knowledge with strategies of openness and constant reflexivity. Thus, they may explicate their previous knowledge in the form of hypotheses (some do not, including Grounded Theory researchers, cf. Bryant & Charmaz 2007), but they are open to readjust and reformulate these hypotheses as they go along (Meinefeld 2005: 267ff). Openness requires not only to become aware of preconceived ideas and prejudices but also to be open in methodological terms. With this, I do not, however, propose to go along with the school of Grounded Theory. This research approach pushes the qualitative approach to an extreme. At the risk of being inadequate I would summarise Grounded Theory as demanding total openness from researchers, who are expected to construct all aspects of research exclusively and inductively from the research field up (cf. Bryant & Charmaz 2007). This, as Meinefeld correctly notes, “covers up the fundamental constitution of the [research] field based on the ‘stock of knowledge’ at the

discretion of the researcher at the specific point in time”³⁴ (Meinefeld 2005: 269). My intention is to profess relative openness in my research, and I will explicate further down how this strategy played itself out concretely.

Qualitative researchers are required to be as reflective as possible about their research. Reflection “turns attention ‘inwards’ towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature, of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context” (Alvesson & Skölderberg 2009: 9). As no research is neutral, its “political-ideological character” (ibid. 11) has to be made explicit. Thus, each research project necessitates prior reflection on the scholars’ own embeddedness within a particular context and his/her position towards this context. In addition, each step of the analysis-as-interpretation should alternate with reflections about the basic concepts and categories for investigation, the appropriateness of the chosen methods or the preliminary results (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 28f).

In sum, the advantage of qualitative methodology is that it provides convincing ways of dealing with the issue of previous knowledge in research. Another advantage of it is, as shortly hinted at before, its awareness of the social embeddedness of scholars and thus the inherent intersubjectiveness of research. Now, quantitative researchers most often criticise that their qualitative counterparts produce too narrow results, which – even though putting light at the examined cases – tell little about the entirety of society. According to this criticism (pointedly discussed in: Keohane, King & Verba 1994: 9-12, 213-217), the qualitative preference of single or few cases (i.e. ‘truncated samples’) a) tilts research results to the extreme and 2) makes results unreliable because other researchers cannot reproduce them.

To my mind, this means comparing apples with pears. While both approaches tell us just something about the world, qualitative pretensions are simply not geared towards the individual case as a representative of a larger population. The qualitative researcher is interested in the singular (or few) case(s) precisely because it is (they are) puzzling as such. The academic gaze is not fixated on degrees and variations, but on the complex qualities of the subject under examination. “Typically, the task is not how to move from a position of ignorance to one of certainty regarding the truth of a single proposition. Rather, it is how to learn something new about a world that one already knows to some degree” (McKeown 2004: 167). In contrast to quantitative approaches, then, qualitative approaches yield thick

³⁴ My translation from: “verdeckt gerade diese grundlegende Konstitution des Feldes in Abhängigkeit von dem dem Forscher zu diesem Zeitpunkt ‘verfügbaren Wissensvorrat’.”

descriptions and deep understanding of exceptional phenomena and processes. They include rather than exclude the context of the respective case and approach their case with an exploratory attitude that seeks to reveal the phenomenon in a holistic perspective (Vromen 2010: 255ff). Qualitative research does not aim at providing causal explanations for macro-social phenomena. Naturally it is severely limited in achieving representativeness. Accordingly, the results of qualitative research cannot be valid (i.e. reproducible) as defined by quantitative researchers. The question of validity turns into a question of consistency.

The inter-subjective and discursive constructedness of knowledge forestalls objectivity to begin with. What is left (and indeed required of qualitative researchers) is to make as comprehensible as possible the choices and decisions which led up to their interpretation. The above-treated strategies of openness and reflection are to guard against excessive arbitrariness. This is the first dimension of validity in qualitative research: theories and concepts get “translated to fieldwork” and are “reconstructed from conversations in fieldwork” (Furlong & Marsh 2010: 203) – in this process they are constantly reflected, reconstructed and specified. The second dimension of validity is also inherent in the social constructedness of knowledge: knowledge is malleable over time, hence the “academic community’s judgment on the narratives produced” (ibid.) is the most crucial benchmark against which the quality of qualitative research can be judged. This is possible, since, contrary to what some quantitative scholars profess, even the most basic conceptual category is a matter of inter-subjective consensus production. Thus, for instance, cases are “linguistic constructions that enjoy intersubjective validity” (Davis 2005: 156).

II.1.iii Choosing Methods, Cases and Sources

Qualitative research can take different forms. The method, cases and sources chosen are informed by theoretical concerns. In fact, none of these elements can “be disengaged from theory (...) since assumptions and notions in some sense determine interpretations and representations of the object of study” (Alvesson & Skölderberg 2009: 11). According to Flick (2005), there are five basic designs of qualitative research: the case study, the comparative study, retrospective studies, process analyses and longitudinal studies (Flick 2005: 253-255).

The objective of a case study is to attain deep understanding (a so-called thick description) of all possible facets of the case. Attention centres on the “specific features of individual members of conceptual categories rather than the usual focus on supposed common [i.e. essential] features” (Davis 2005: 165). For this, one ought to find a typical case, which promises to yield insights for the features one is interested in. The second design is

comparative in nature. Here, the scholar turns to compare specific aspects or dimensions of at least two or more cases. Again, the scholar faces the problem of too “many variables, [but] small N” (Lijphart 1975: 159). This repeats the quantitative criticism against qualitative research recounted above, whereby researchers have too little observation points to test their hypotheses.

According to Lijphart (1975), there are a number of solutions to counter this argument. First, one could increase the number of cases. But, as should have become clear by now, this quantitative solution holds little promise for qualitative research. If the selection of cases is driven by theoretical considerations, simply including more cases threatens to undermine the unique strengths of qualitative research, which is that it directs the “attention (...) to the (...) specific features of individual members of conceptual categories rather than the usual focus on supposed common [i.e. essential] features” (Davis 2005: 165). Second, one could reduce the “property-space of the analysis” (Lijphart 1971: 687). A third solution lies in cutting down (based on theory) the key variables of interest (ibid.). If that is not possible or not opportune with respect to the research question, a further possibility is to concentrate on similar cases, where the variance in the independent variables is low, while the variance in the phenomenon of interest persists.

The comparable-cases (or most-similar cases) strategy dates back to John Stuart Mill. By choosing two (or more) very similar cases from which the researcher gathers his/her observations on the subject of study, the researcher is able to reduce the “potentially confounding background variables” (Lijphart 1975: 163). The more two cases – such as two countries – are similar on a range of significant dimensions (such as: level of economic development, political features etc.) the more easily one can single out those few variables that eventually matter for the subject, i.e. the dependent variable.

The third research design presented by Flick (2005) – the retrospective analysis – should be chosen when the aim is to reconstruct subjective remembering and psychosocial construction of meaning. This fits analyses of biographies, for instance. Somewhat more common for political sociology are historical or process analyses. The aim is to detect the causal mechanisms behind a chain of social events. “[The temporal context] becomes a point of entry for thinking about how events and processes are related to each other in social dynamics that unfold over extended periods of time. It is decidedly not a matter of treating each social setting as unique and infinitely complex” (Pierson 2004: 172). Within political science, qualitative scholars interested in historical processes came up with the concept of path dependence. The core idea is that a chain of events enfolds as conditioned by the first

(contingent, i.e. chance) event in line. “There is often a strong case to be made for shifting from snapshots to moving pictures. This means *systematically* situating particular moments (including the present) in a temporal sequence of events and processes stretching over extended periods” (ibid. 2, emphasis in original).

The last research design mentioned by Flick (2005) takes the form of longitudinal studies. In order to “maximize comparability” (Lijphart 1971: 689), scholars set out to compare a specific phenomenon of interest diachronically across different points in time. The focus is not on individual stages of change per se, but on how (if at all) the phenomenon itself has changed along some prior defined dimensions. In sum, each of these designs holds different promises in telling us something about reality out there. Depending on the research question one might choose one or the other of these designs. And, depending on the research design, its implied logic invites us to choose one or more fitting methods of investigation and interpretation. Thus, for example, the choice of a historical study design calls for methods such as document analysis (investigation) and process tracking (interpretation). Conversely, a researcher using a retrospective research design would be inclined to use unstructured narrative interviews (investigation) and discourse analysis (interpretation). Accordingly, one must choose the (number and dimensions of) cases and the sources.

According to Gerring, a case is a “phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period in time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain” (Gerring 2007: 19). Each case exhibits spatial and temporal limits. Yet the case is not to be confused with an observation, nor with the unit of analysis. One case may include many observations. Observations within a case might be examined at a specific point in time or might be distributed across various cases over a period of time. Units of analysis refer to the level at which observations are gathered. With respect to social movement studies, for instance, units of analysis might be “intended or reported behavior; (...) group identification, attitudes, grievances, relative deprivation, and cognition” (Klandermans & Staggenborg 2002: xv).

Cases are not just empirically given units but “linguistic constructions that enjoy intersubjective validity” (Davis 2005: 156). An example might flesh out this claim. If the study were about democracy’s correlation with the respect of human rights, human rights would be the explanatory variable. And as such its conceptualisation would vary according to the meaning it has for the researcher and the scientific community. Human rights might thus constitute something completely different depending to the cultural background of the researcher: this is another way of saying that no concept (of human rights) is ever theory-free.

The theoretically informed concept of human rights would then be used in order to find meaningful cases for the research question. From this discussion it should become clear that case selection is never neutral, just as research is not neutral. “What is explored, and how it is explored, can hardly avoid either supporting (reproducing) or challenging existing social conditions. Different social interests are favoured or disfavoured depending on the questions that are asked (and not asked)” (Alvesson & Skölderberg 2009: 11). In sum, the case could be a human being, a group of human beings or nations, a pattern of behaviour (e.g. war declarations) or even a huge, structural phenomenon (globalisation).

As with cases, the researcher is most probably confronted with too many rather than too little potential sources. Again s/he must choose what can be expected to yield the best data/observations within the existing time and resources constraints in order to answer his/her research question. Sources might be written texts or verbal enunciations. They may as well be pictorial products of social behaviour (such as films or photographs) or cultural artefacts such as architectural styles and rituals of national commemoration or theatre performances. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research appreciates the fact that “social phenomena only come into being thanks to inter-subjective communicative processes of meaning production”³⁵ (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 17). Hence, all interpretations of reality are simultaneously discursive. They reflect and reconstruct the general characteristic of the social system, and they entail statements about the ‘situation’ within which they were produced (whether it be the situation of a research interview or the situation of an unfolding protest captured on TV camera).

All human products (such as speeches but also cultural artefacts) are texts – results emerging from inter-subjective communicative meaning production. The second insight is that the shape of these texts, i.e. the form through which a certain meaning is constituted also impacts on the meaning. The medium is never neutral. Thus, for instance, documents yield data not only through their content. Rules about what makes a document a document, so that may be recognised as a document by writers and readers, is an important fact too. Thus, documents appear objective precisely because their “circumstances of production have become invisible”³⁶ (Wolff 2005: 512). Who writes a particular text (or produces an artefact) why and for which audience (or spectatorship) reveals a lot not only about the object itself but also about the meaning it has for the producing/listening/watching individuals and about the

³⁵ My translation from: “Soziale Phänomene kommen in einem kommunikativem Prozess der Vergesellschaftung zur Geltung.”

³⁶ My translation from: “den Umstand ihrer Hergestelltheit unsichtbar zu machen”

patterns of behaviour in which the text is embedded. In a similar vain, the situation of conducting interviews influences the statements (i.e. data) thereby obtained.

II.1.iii.a Methods of Investigation: Documents Analysis and Interviews

There are many procedures for collecting data (or rather: for gaining observational material) in qualitative research projects. Documents analysis is one method. As stated below, I first collected manuals, pamphlets calling for participation, press releases, Q&A sections and ‘About us’ sections as well as information provided in the introductive paragraphs of more than thirty websites, blogs and Facebook groups. I disregarded individual voices and comments wherever they were listed as such (for example in Facebook groups). I considered these texts as documents in the sense of “methodologically shaped containers for communication”³⁷ (ibid. 511). This implies a critical stance towards the rules according to which texts-as-documents are produced.

Online texts are not just presenting various topics, issues, claims and contents. They also transport meaning about the underlying roles of text producers, their identities and (supposed) relationships with the audiences they address (or hope to address). One particular feature of the texts I examine, for instance, is anonymity. This not only reveals possible personal concerns about staying unnamed in public for security reasons. But it uncovers a double claim to authority: first it serves to demonstrate that the personal qualities of the authors (e.g. their age, level of education, status etc.) are of no import for evaluating the text. In other words, concealing who the author is precludes the possibility to ascribe reputation or seriousness to the text because of the author’s person. The ‘message’ behind anonymity is that issues are more important than persons – and that every one of us is competent in speaking about it, because we are truly egalitarian amongst ourselves. The Croatian trope concerning the lack of faces in the revolution crystallises this (*Ova revolucija nema lice*, cf. Horvat & Stiks 2010: 105-119).

The second aspect of anonymity is that it establishes a claim to speak not only to the public(s) but to be mouthpieces for the grievances of (the however imagined) public(s). Thus, anonymity not only ascribes authority to speak *to* the public(s), but also the authority to speak *on behalf of* the public(s). While anonymity at first sight buttresses an ideology of egalitarianism and the irrelevance of expertise, it re-establishes the role of expert student activists who take over specific articulative roles with respect to others (i.e. non-active parts of society). Reading texts as documents hence turns the researcher’s attention to relationships

³⁷ My translation from: “methodisch gestaltete Kommunikationszüge”

of production and reception, which serve to render the ‘document quality’ of documents invisible (Wolff 2005: 512). Staying sensible to documents’ qualities invites the researcher to be critical of his sources (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009: 296f) and therefore contrast various sources with each other. This is why I chose to add problem-centred interviews as a supplementary source. Combining documents with interviews and analysing them in two different (subsequent) stages allows me to increase variation and to stay true to the requisites of reflective research.

Interviewing constitutes another technique for obtaining statements on a linguistically mediated reality. Interviews provide a window on a window on the world. They enable a glimpse of how meanings are inter-subjectively created, hegemonised and expanded outside of the interview situation. “[I]nterviews are one of the primary ways researchers actively involve respondents in the construction of data about their lives” (Blee & Verta 2002: 92). Besides that, interviews are “meaning-making occasions” as such (Holstein & Gubrium 2001: 113) insofar as the interviewer and interviewee inter-subjectively recreate meaning through their talking. This meaning had not been there before. Answers to interviews are artefacts, not mere facts (Atteslander 2010: 170). Since interviews are bound by the (social, spatial, temporal) context of their production, they are never free of distortions (ibid. 171).

The most important criterion for differentiating interview types is how much control over the interview process is ascribed to the interviewee in the interview setting (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 22ff). At one extreme (cf. Gläser & Laudel 2009: 40ff), we find strictly qualitative interviews (also termed open, narrative, non-standardised or ethnographic interviews). On the opposite side we find quantitative interviews. The interviewee guides qualitative interviews. The role of the interviewer is reduced to the role of a conversation partner. The interviewer might introduce the aim of the research beforehand, but otherwise the interview is punctuated by the pace and narrative flow of the interviewee him/herself. Open interviews might be opportune for research projects oriented exclusively towards latent structures of discourse and/or subjective biographical remembering.

Another possibility is to use interviews in order to discuss notions of problems identified inductively by the interviewee or deductively by the interviewer. In this case, we speak of problem-centred interviews (cf. Witzel & Reiter 2012: 4f). The idea behind this method is to trigger story telling that is as authentic as possible. But even seemingly authentic and creative stories, as Polletta emphasises, are underpinned by implicit epistemologies of story telling (Polletta 2006: 22) that encapsulate assumptions about stories’ values and structures. Thus, researchers will not only interpret the issues told through the interviewee’s

story, but also attempt to reconstruct the underlying cultural schemes expressed by such stories (ibid. 13).

Depending on the degree of intensity with which the researcher will interpret the individual interview text, the number of interviews might range from one to a dozen of interviews. Some qualitative researchers (such as those committed to the Grounded Theory tradition) will build their sample of interview partners strictly from the empirical field up as their investigation proceeds (Merkens 2005: 295ff). Two principles channel the theoretical sampling procedure (cf. Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 30). First, the researcher will choose material that promises the highest degree of variation with respect to previously held supposition and incurred conclusions. Second, the researcher will select material that can be expected to be similar to the previous material. Thus, the researcher is able to buttress conclusions s/he has arrived at with further observations.

Quantitative (or closed, standardised, survey) interviews are characterised by a highest degree of standardisation (Blee & Verta 2002: 92; idem: Atteslander 2010). Questions will be exhaustively formulated and strictly ranked before the interview situation. Most often, answers to such questions take a yes/no form. The aim is not to detect latent structures of meaning construction but to map the distribution of clusters of statements within a given population. Standardised interviews most often serve to collect data for statistical research. The number of interviewees will consequently be high and randomly picked so as to form a representative sample of the population in question (cf. Merrens 2005: 291; Keohane, King & Verba, 1994).

Semi-structured interviews (also called semi-guided interviews, Gläser & Laudel 2009: 110) are found somewhere on the continuum between purely qualitative and quantitative interviews. Based on a previously established outline or field manual, the interviewer will confront the interviewee with partly preformulated questions, which are clustered around topics or dimensions of interests (see the design of questionnaires: Gläser & Laudel 2009: 142-153). The responses to the questions may be open and narrative in character; the interviewee is expected to answer in his/her own style. The interviewee might even independently raise topics of importance. S/he can thus alter the direction of the interview situation and may as well modify subsequent research. However, the room for digression is not endless, and the interviewer will pay attention to acquire the information s/he has identified as valuable so as to guarantee a certain degree of comparability between the interviews. Since the interviews are less demanding in terms of time and resources than

strictly qualitative ones, the number of interviewees will be higher, but the sample is not expected to be random or representative in statistical terms.

As described above, the researcher might choose to use theoretical sampling as a method for constructing the case. But there are two other possible sampling procedures (Merkens 2005: 292ff). First, there is the stratified sampling procedure in which case the researcher will select the interviewees depending on characteristics such as age, gender, education or job status, membership criteria, temporal considerations, orientations etc. The other possibility is to enter the research field based on recommendations by so-called gatekeepers. These are informed persons frequently situated at the centre of a social system. Following from the first interviews, other interview partners will be added in a snowball-effect fashion. The advantage of this method is that the researcher will enjoy some advance trust before meeting each subsequent interview partner. A disadvantage resides in the fact that the researcher will be inclined to follow existing patterns of socialisation with little internal variation or differentiation. Thus, s/he might miss or overlook contradictions within his/her field of research. Therefore, researchers must explicate who the gatekeepers were and reflect these persons' role in opening (or closing) access to the research field (ibid. 288).

Comparing these three interview types, semi-structured interviews trump strictly closed interviews in their ability to reflect latent meaning structures. In addition, the impact of the interview situation (i.e. the context) on the interview can be examined (i.e. the text: Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 101). The advantage of qualitative (i.e. semi-structured and narrative) interviews in general is that they are able to reveal the contextuality of interview statements and the hidden structures behind situational utterances. Besides registering the manifest content of interview statements, they shed light on how answers are given (e.g. why specific terms are being used for describing facts rather than others or why an informant prefers certain verbal forms over others, ibid. 23 & 102). Both in addition and in contrast to standardised interviews, semi-structured interviews take the interviewee seriously. This refers to the notion that informants are viewed as experts of an interview (ibid. 36ff).

Since interviewees participate in the social system (i.e. in the phenomenon) of interest to the researcher, they possess knowledge depending on their positioning within the system. "Academia attributes expertise to the questioned persons. This expertise is based on unequal distribution of knowledge and can be understood as sedimented, stored and disposable privileged experience" (ibid. 37). This expertise of action (*Handlungsexpertise*) is what the researcher wants to get at in order to understand the meaning structures that give rise to certain patterns of social behaviour (see for the following paragraph: ibid. 36-39). A second

kind of knowledge held by some interviewees is expertise of reflection (*Reflexionsexpertise*). This more abstract and relational knowledge pertains to actors at the interface of two or more social systems. External experts, finally, harbour a kind of knowledge (*externe Expertise*), which could serve as point of orientation for researchers who either want to get a first glimpse into the research field or would like to probe alternative explanations. Qualitative interviews in general are good for investigating all three kinds of knowledge. However, semi-structured interviews outrival narrative forms of interviewing, if the researcher seeks to attain a degree of standardisation of the issues raised throughout the conversation so as to ascertain comparability between the collected interviews.

Some remarks hold for the hitherto presented (and particularly the qualitative) types of interviews; first of all, each interview is a “tiny excerpt of a virtual text, which could have been produced in a longer or differently structured conversation” (ibid. 99). Qualitative interviewing means recognising the fundamental patchiness of research. Qualitative interviewing calls upon the scholar to reflect upon the framing capacity of the interview-as-window: interviews reveal some things while shaping and obscuring others. Social factors (such as social relations between the interview partners, assumed orientations and attitudes ascribed to the interview partners because of appearance, age, gender etc.), topical and temporal factors influence what and how what might be said during an interview (ibid. 97 & 104f). Thus, interviews might be used simply to get an understanding of which topics are present in which groups or who holds specific knowledge within a group. Such descriptive research aim, however, should not make forget that what is presented to the interviewer is not reality but a construction of reality. The phase of conducting and collecting interviews can be closed and the researcher move on to transcribing and interpreting the interview as soon as the level of knowledge gets stabilised (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 21), or – differently put – when a degree of theoretical saturation has been reached (Merkens 2005: 294).

II.1.iii.b Method of Interpretation: Qualitative Content Analysis

Once material has been collected through appropriate methods of investigation (for example through interviews), the qualitative researcher turns to interpretation. Various methods of interpretation exist. Comparable to the different approaches to interviews, they vary according to their degree of standardisation and to the degree to which they seek to excavate latent meaning structures versus manifest content. At the one end, one finds quantitative content analysis. Their aim is to measure distributions of statements in and across texts and thus come to conclusions about the significance of topics or policy positions (cf. Klüver 2009; Tonkiss 1998). At the other extreme, one finds diverse approaches of discourse

analysis. Now, discourse itself is a heavily debated concept, and this is not the place to review this discussion (for an excellent overview see: Howarth 2000). For the demonstrative objective of this text suffice it to say that discourse analysis as a method is preoccupied with dissecting the rules behind certain ways of talking about (i.e. representing) reality (Fairclough 2003; Tonkiss 1998: 373). The idea is that such rules express and (re)constitute power relations. In a critical twist, discourse analysis hence seeks to shed light on “how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimised by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions” (Van Dijk 1996: 84).

Discourse analysis sits at the extreme end of qualitative research. In contrast to discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis targets the manifest content of texts. But in contrast to quantitative content analysis, it also allows for considering latent meaning structures (Mayring 2005: 469; Mayring 1997). The researcher will not only register the preponderance of certain topics, statements or positions but also wonder why these topics, statements and positions are uttered, in which (immediate textual and social) contexts and how. Finding out latent meaning structures means steering attention away from superficial content and towards the social relationships that are expressed within the texts (cf. Gläser & Laudel 2009: 208f; Mayring 2005).

In order to code large amounts of text, researchers may want to use computer programmes. But coding texts – hence referencing parts of texts with predefined categories of interpretation – can also be performed by hand. In the case of deductive coding (cf. Gläser & Laudel 2009: 199-220) an analytical grid for interpretation is constructed before the coding starts. The grid contains theoretically derived categories expressing certain social phenomena of interest to the scholar. It is paramount that these interpretive categories were precise and sufficient so as to avoid problems of classification. However, due to the above-stated principle of openness in qualitative research, the grid should be reflected and may be adapted as the interpretation phase proceeds. Another possibility (Mayring 2005: 472f) would be to determine interpretive categories inductively from the text up. This approach again roots in Grounded Theory perspectives (cf. Bryant & Charmaz 2007) and requires notable skills in reflectivity and much time and personal resources.

II.1.iv Moving from the Field to Interpretation to Reflection and Back

So far I have laid out the general epistemological and methodological background to this thesis and contrasted different investigative and interpretive methods. At this point, I focus on and argue for decisions made on questions such as case selection and operationalised categories for research, criteria for selecting interviewees, constructing the questionnaire, and

building up the interpretive grid. Then I narrate the eventual process of study and reflect how and why my research design was adjusted (or not) during subsequent cycles of research.

II.1.iv.a Cycles of Research: How My Study Evolved

My empirical investigation evolved in two stages. Starting from preliminary hypotheses, I threw myself into reading texts produced by student activists online. My initial approach was fairly unsystematic in that I simply read what I could find. Advancing further I focused on those texts that summarised the quintessence of the event and/or initiative at hand. Thus, I collected manuals, pamphlets calling for participation, press releases, Q&A sections and 'About us' sections as well as information provided in the introductory paragraphs of more than thirty websites, blogs and Facebook groups. I disregarded individual voices and comments wherever they were listed as such (for example, in Facebook groups). A first phase of interpretation ensued which appeared to yield a positive finding: I detected that collaboration between student activists around the region was quite advanced. My hypothesis on an emergent Yugosphere was seemingly confirmed.

But then I was introduced to activists at the so-called *Subversive Festival*.³⁸ I spent a couple of days in Zagreb in May 2012 and conducted four interviews. Neither did I have a proper questionnaire, nor had I applied any specific rule for selecting my interviewees. These initial interviews, however, opened my eyes in many respects. I realised, simply put, how badly I had been methodologically prepared. I also understood that relying on online texts only, without paying attention to their particular nature as documents, probably was not the best way to proceed. I left Croatia utterly confused. But that confusion – inadvertently – brought me to reflect upon the appropriateness of my previous questions, my knowledge and hypotheses, and my methods.

Without yet knowing much about the above-quoted principles of qualitative research (openness and reflectivity) I plunged myself into a radical revision of my initial points of departure. I started to read (again) into literatures of methodology and epistemology. And I reopened my field of empirical research. In order to re-orient myself, I conducted orientative interviews with experts external to the empirical field (Boris Kanzleiter and Boris Buden). The reason lay in the attempt to re-evaluate my own hypotheses and orientations that could guide my further interpretation. Boris Kanzleiter has been heading the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Serbia since 2010. Before talking to him on February 12, 2013, I had read one article by him on the 1968 revolt in Yugoslavia (Kanzleiter 2008). This article

³⁸ See website at: <http://www.subversivefestival.com/> [17/02/14]

was based on his PhD research on the same topic. Kanzleiter thus disposed of prior academic knowledge and research experience and was also involved as a political intellectual through his work at the foundation. Since Kanzleiter lived and worked in Serbia at the time of the interview, I chose to concentrate my questions on Serbia. But I also included comparative questions on Serbia and Croatia, which I posed in identical fashion to Boris Buden on April 9th of the same year.

Philosopher, journalist and translator Boris Buden had studied in Zagreb and Berlin before he moved, first to Austria in the nineties and then to Germany. In 2009, he published the book “Zone of Transition. On the End of Post-communism” (Buden 2009) – which diagnoses the post-communist condition as moulded by the ‘Western’ transition paradigm. According to this argument, the transition paradigm brought with it a retrospective disablement (*Entmündigung*) of East and Southeast Europe (ibid. 43f). Buden concludes that resistance would be the only recipe for regaining maturity by the post-communist “child” (ibid. 49). In short, Buden, as well as Kanzleiter, was a sophisticated interlocutor with primary sympathies for our subject of discussion – student contention in Croatia.

I explained to my potential interviewees that I wished to speak to them in order to re-orient myself. And indeed, some of their ideas partly contravened what I had so far accomplished. First of all, they underscored my yet tentative ventures towards knitting together the issues of democracy (or democratisation) and social contention. Buden suggested that palpable structures of political opportunities would not suffice in explaining differences between Croatian and Serbian student activism. Instead he directed my attention to the potential role of political opportunity memories and/or discourses. In a similar vein Kanzleiter argued that the reduced impact of student contention in Serbia was tied to local vocabulary, which inhibited open avowal to left politics. In contrast to Buden, Kanzleiter saw specific context variables (like the aforementioned local discourses but also: media, presence of allies such as unions or other NGOs, generally more receptive public etc.) were lacking in Serbia, while their presence positively influenced events in Croatia. Kanzleiter praised students for having generally succeeded in creating a new paradigm that transgressed both explanatory models of ethnicity/culture and transition/modernisation. Both Kanzleiter and Buden judged transnational cooperation between students in Croatia and Serbia with each other to be positive and relatively strong. Equipped with such preliminary ideas on my research subject, I returned to Zagreb and Belgrade in May 2013. This time I was much better prepared.

Unknowingly, at first, I had lived through the cycles of qualitative empirical research. My two-tiered approach had helped confront the material with deductively derived categories

and hypotheses. Also, it facilitated horizontal comparison across a relatively large group of cases and thus expanded the width of the study. The transition from the first to the second tier of empirical research – eventually – aided my reflection of so-far achieved insights. After having re-studied my methodology, I was equipped with the right terms and could structure my research much more consciously. Thus, my investigation came to satisfy the above-discussed principles of qualitative research: namely that the researcher should take informed decisions and that they should punctuate investigation with phases of reflection.

II.1.iv.b Decisions Taken: On Units, Questions, Partners and the Grid

The research questions stated in the introduction are twofold. The first question contains a descriptive and a comparative component. It aims at comparing and explaining the differences in the features of student contention. This question will be answered using the method of document analysis in the first part of the empirical chapter. My empirical case is contentious politics in the former Yugoslav region. The level at which I study this case – i.e. the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of my study – are instances of student contentious action within a certain geographic area (former Yugoslavia) and after a certain point in time (after 2000, turnover to multi-party systems).

The second question is descriptive-normative. It targets the role of contentious politics for democracy. My units of analysis here are democratic meanings and practices exhibited by student activists. The question will be dealt with in the second part of the empirical chapter and is designed to a) reconsider and b) expand upon the comparative insights arrived at in the first part. For this section, I specifically draw upon a sub-sample of the previously selected units of analysis. I take up observations from my in-depth analysis of transformative events of university occupation in Croatia and Serbia.

Units of Analysis

When I speak of instances of student collective action, it is clear that I am examining my case according to events within larger units (the successor states of Yugoslavia). Within the scholarship on social movements, various ways of identifying units of analysis of interest exist (cf. Klandermans, Staggenborg & Tarrow 2002). One level of analysis could be the form collective action takes: then one would focus on waves of contention (cf. Koopmans 2011), on social movements organisations, on submerged networks for collective action (cf. Melucci 1989; Diani & McAdam 2003) or on the individual activists. One might also want to examine what activists create through their action. In that case one would turn towards frames or stories (cf. Benford & Snow 2002; Polletta 2006), towards tactics or repertoires of action (cf. Tilly 1995; Taylor & Van Dyke 2011) or towards processes of diffusion (Kolin, Roberts &

Soule 2010). A third possibility would be to emphasise the temporal aspect of collective action. Sidney Tarrow was amongst the first to zoom into what he phrased as “moments of madness” (Tarrow 1997: 329; see for later contributors: McAdam & Sewell 2001). He contended that collective action fluctuates through cycles of intensity. Tarrow defined cycles of protests as “waves of interrelated collective actions and reactions” (Tarrow 1997: 330). At peak times, protests not only increase in numbers (throughout the country and policy sectors) but also qualitatively expand and modify frames, practices and identities. This reflects the “historic turn” (McDonald 1996) in the social sciences. Authors such as Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, Stein Rokkan, Immanuel Wallerstein, Kathleen Thelen and Paul Pierson tackled with the temporal trajectories of phenomena as diverse as revolutions, the development of states/ nations and capitalist world systems, and institutions (cf. Mahoney & Rueschmeyer 2003). Originally, historians had used historical methods to explain the specificity behind historical events or epochs.

In contrast to this, historical sociologists attempt to explain causalities behind historical processes. “[The temporal context] becomes a point of entry for thinking about how events and processes are related to each other in social dynamics that unfold over extended periods of time. It is decidedly not a matter of treating each social setting as unique and infinitely complex” (Pierson 2004: 172). But unlike contributions before 1945, the focus nowadays hinges on tracing mechanisms behind contingent, continuous and open-ended social developments (Sewell 1996: 272) rather than on discovering eternal laws. In this respect, Sewell advanced a concept of particular value for the study of contentious politics. He defined transformative events as a “rare subclass of happenings that significantly transform [pre-existing] structures” (ibid. 262; idem: McAdam & Sewell 2001: 102). Although events do not necessarily always change ‘it all’, they are able to shift “the very cultural categories that shape and constrain human action” (Sewell 1996: 263). Events – irrespective of their precise duration – possess a substantial, rather than ephemeral, quality.

Events are embedded in a *longue durée*. “[L]ong term change processes are in fact punctuated by and, in important ways, fuelled by events and the collective processes of interpretation and social construction by which meanings are assigned to those events” (McAdam & Sewell 2001: 123). Unfortunately, neither Sewell nor other scholars (cf. Bartolini 1993) provide precise guidance as to how to categorise events. “Objective criteria for the identification of temporal units remain absent” (ibid. 149). It seems to me that the only way forward is to dissect the (most important) events or sequences – or whichever other name might be given to those time spans upon which researchers base their studies – by means of

deduction (cf. Büthe 2002: 487). Thus, for my first research phase I focus on events such as protests, meetings, street actions etc. replicated and presented by online textual materials across the region of Yugoslavia. I include sequences of collective action, which...

- were triggered by objective and/or subjective grievances related to issues of schooling and higher education;
- were shaped by the use of non-institutionalised, unconventional and public tactics and strategies;
- expressed an oppositional stance against the status quo of policies and politics with relevance to the triggering issue;
- were waged by initiatives/networks/groups of individuals who did not operate for private business interests, claimed to act in the interest of a larger community than their own and might be interlinked to but not concomitant with non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- publicly emerged after the end of the wars of Yugoslav secession and the downfall of Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman in their respective countries.

While I already use insights from my in-depth study of Croatia and Serbia for answering the first research question, my observations are of particular value for dealing with the second question. I narrow down my case to a subsample of contentious politics within two successor states of Yugoslavia (Croatia and Serbia). In line with the above-discussed comparable-cases research strategy I selected Croatia and Serbia based on their similarities with respect to socio-political criteria and ranks on democracy (see page 14 above).

In examining my comparable cases, I move to meanings (and meanings of practices) as units of analysis. I am interested in understanding how activists render their actions and their own positions meaningful with respect to democratic ideas and cognitions they hold and with respect to the reality of democratic rule in their respective countries. I zoom in on meanings generated around and during university occupations called *blokada* (from singular *blokada*) in Croatia and Serbia. I do this because these *blokada* constituted transformative events. As Tarrow suggests (Tarrow 1997: 330ff) new frames, practices and identities are conceived during such phases of transgressive contention. Thus, student activists in Croatia and Serbia added new argumentative figures to their criticism of higher-education policies. But, more significantly, the tactic of occupying the buildings was interlaced with the strategy of direct democratic decision-making.

Tactics became modular (Tarrow 1997: 337) during the course of these transformative events of the *blokada*. With his notion of modularity, Tarrow refers to two things. First, it

means that a particular tactic/strategy/organisational method is being expanded in numbers. Most often it is being picked up and copied by others than those activists who had originally introduced that particular form of action to the field. Besides that, it also means that this innovative form of action is transformed into a routine, i.e. it is considered as a regular tactic within the existing repertoire of contention. The *blokade* in Croatia and Serbia thus not only increased in terms of participants and activities. But they also transformed the culture of collective action in terms of its ideology and forms of actions. I dissect the *blokade* taking into account the following criteria: first, these events are recognised as clearly marked and definable temporal units by the actors themselves. In both countries, interviewees readily identified *blokade* as if it was a historical epoch any child could identify. There is thus an inductive reason for picking the occupations. Second, from the theory on cycles of collective action I deduced that these events fall into the category of heightened phases of conflicts (i.e. moments of madness). In sum, both for inductive and deductive reasons, it makes sense to focus on transformative occupations to research meaning production with the objective to answer the second research question.

The Interview Questions

Starting my second stage of research, I spoke to student activists again but in a more consistent fashion than the first time around. Regarding my potential interviewees as experts on their field, I set out to acquire insider knowledge about the often superficial and declamatory online documents I had analysed up to that point. In total, I conducted thirty interviews with Croat and Serb students in Croatia (16) and Serbia (14) in 2012 and 2013.³⁹

My entry door proved to be *Subversive Festival* in Zagreb. The festival had been founded in 2008 as an alternative film festival by author and activist Srećko Horvat. Over the time the festival tilted towards a more philosophical agenda. The aim, as Horvat wrote with respect to the 2013 conference, is “a much needed gathering of Balkan progressive forces and an urgent development of their cooperation as well as of a common vision of another Balkans built on true democratic foundations, social equality and international solidarity.”⁴⁰ Prominent intellectuals of the Left debate topics such as social justice, resistance and democracy of the future with interested participants. In 2012, speakers included Saskia Sassen, Slavoj Žižek,

³⁹ In quoting my interview partners I will use pseudonyms to safeguard their anonymity. For Croat interviewees I will use the country code HR and add an individualised reference code (A-M) to that. For Serbian interviewees I will use the country code RS and add the reference codes (A-P). I provide some basic information about each interview partner that I collected through a short written form at the beginning of each interview in the Annex 2 (from page 239 for Croat interviewees, and page 253 for Serb interviewees).

⁴⁰ Available from: <http://www.subversivefestival.com/txt/1/185/en/conference#sthash.j5rmJPNe.dpuf> [17/02/14]

Tariq Ali, Michael Hardt and Stephane Hessel.⁴¹ In 2013, Bernard Stiegler, Chantal Mouffe, Erik O. Wright, Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Zizek gave keynote lectures.⁴²

When I drove to Zagreb in May 2012, I expected that I would meet with activists. But I ended up with people who conceived of themselves as intellectuals-as-activists or activists-as-intellectuals (depending on personal priority). In other words, I got to know superbly informed, rhetorically well-equipped, multi-lingual and critical minds, who saw their role not only in doing things with hands but also with words. Their activism seemed like a bacchanal of enlightened – and very shiny – activities. Then I interviewed two Serb activists. These were equally versatile in arguments and presentation. But their narrative was much less coherent. At times, they profoundly contradicted each other. And, when I referred to homepages and texts that I had analysed during my first phase of research, I sensed rivalries behind their depiction of activist groups and activist strategies.

This was a catch: The stories of the two Croat interviewees coincided with what I had read on Croat activist websites. But the Serb narratives were riddled with insecurities and tensions and sometimes openly contradicted what I had analysed as online texts. Whence from? I left Zagreb with a growing doubt about the accuracy of my previous analysis. Or rather, I had seen a glimpse of the patterns of textual production. Written texts, I realised, are well suited for making inner contradictions and tensions disappear. Thus, I understood that interviews would provide not only additional material in quantitative terms; they would furnish me with potentially diverging meanings. Thus, I decided to return to Zagreb the following year. But the second time around I stayed for a longer period of time, I travelled to Belgrade as well, and I was better prepared.

To begin with, I had set up an interview guide. While I had only scribbled tentative subjects for discussion into a notebook the first time around, this time I elaborated a template for interview questions. In line with my comparative dimensions, I had clustered questions around the following operationalised categories:⁴³

- *Overall assessment by the individual interviewee:* Putting this topic at the very beginning, I hoped to get a first statement by the interviewee relating to perceived successes and failures. This fresh and untainted reaction was very often expanded upon and/or modified in the course of the remaining interview.

⁴¹ Available from: <http://www.subversivefestival.com/uploaded/Subversive%202012-HR.pdf> [17/02/14]

⁴² Available from: <http://www.subversivefestival.com/forumone/8/3/en/keynote-lectures> [17/02/14]

⁴³ Compare my template for interview questions and a form to be filled out by interviewees in the Annex 1 (from page 236).

- *Framing*: under this heading I hoped to get at the general worldview of the movement as framed in the demands and the principles of struggle (again, as remembered and presented by the individual interviewee).
- *Target and constituency*: these two categories operationalised the comparative dimension of identification.
- *Strategies and organisation*: these two terms guided questions on the reasons, timing and process of actions. At this point I rephrased the assessment question from above, broken down to the very specific actions/events/memories the interviewee had just described to me.
- *Context*: here I invited the interviewee to reflect about the obstacles or opportunities of the struggle.
- *Comparison*: this issue dealt with similarities and differences between one's own collective action and earlier student protests and/or developments in the neighbour country (Croatia and Serbia, respectively). Thus, interviewees were induced to talk about their image of and (if it existed) relationships with other groups of the past and across borders.
- *Personal role*: at this point, I specifically asked about the interviewee's personal role during the movement, about his/her emotions and experiences, if it had not been touched before.
- *Ideology*: the last cluster of questions was also optional. The objective behind it was to check the interviewee's individual attitudes against the movement's framing s/he had presented to me in the beginning.

The interview guide included a short introductory questionnaire. I handed out this questionnaire to the interviewee as we sat down to start the interview. I always asked the interviewee to fill it out before we began. This questionnaire was designed to gather background information about the person. It also serves as a means of checking the interviewee's personal evaluation of the degree to which s/he had been involved in (which) collective action. Lastly, it included a Yes/No question on whether s/he considered herself as being part of a social movement. I took care so as to explore the meaning of this term during the subsequent interview in case the interviewee did not him/herself touch upon it. I introduced the interview's objective before starting it, and routinely asked for permission to record it. Following the interview I wrote down impressions and thoughts on the interview in the form of a post-script.

The Interview Partners

The second time I better prepared my selection of interviewees. The first time around, I had simply relied on the snowball mechanism (cf. Merkens 2005: 292ff). In general, this sampling technique is well suited for my research area, because my ‘organisations’ do not have membership registers or organisational charts. Recommendations furnish the only viable access to the field. But the problem lurking behind snowball samples is that interviewees probably recommend interviewees they considered as potentially worthy or interesting. This kept me along routes of emotional closeness and/or cognitive similitude. It did not guarantee that the recommended respondents would dispose of more authentic knowledge about the topic than (disregarded) respondents (Bilic 2011: 89).

An exclusive reliance on the snowball method carried the risk that I would be introduced to only those activists who were remembered by others. And since the student movements under examination did not publish names on websites or as authors of texts in newspapers nor issue member cards, only those who were memorable due to their special role/value/friendship to the collective would be remembered. Naturally, such “key informants” (Blee & Verta 2002: 105-107) would dispose of a high degree of factual insider knowledge. However, one could expect them to concur with each other’s narratives, precisely because they had spent so much time hating, loving and (eventually) doing things together. Based on these considerations, I deliberately stratified my sample so as to achieve maximal variation in my sample as concerns a) gender, b) the degree of involvement and c) functions.

At the *Subversive Festival* in Zagreb 2013, I deliberately approached women, who talked or somehow participated in sessions. This method obviously excluded those female activists that had not attracted my attention and/or had not showed up at all at the festival for whatever reason. In Serbia, I attended a protest action on the street and asked some female activists there if they were interested in conducting interviews. However, the result was not heartening: In Croatia, 4 out of 14 respondents were female and in Serbia 5 out of 16. One might speculate if this was a coincidence or not. All I can state here is that paternalism was raised during interviews in Serbia (RS-I, RS-L), whereas this was not a topic in Croatia. Instead, one interviewee in particular praised (some) women’s achievements for student contention (HR-D).

Regarding the degree of involvement, I sought to assemble a variety of persons in my sample. I defined the degree of involvement as the length of involvement (in years). My method for finding respondents with shorter involvement was similar to the one described above concerning the gender balance. In Croatia, the median years of activism was 4.5 years,

with years ranging between 1-18 years. In Serbia, the median stood at 4.5 years, with a range between 2-8 years of activism. During my second stay in Croatia and Serbia in 2013, I realised that I should also include even more radical ‘outsiders’ to my phenomenon of interest.

I recognised that students who committed themselves to issues of schooling and higher education but principally agreed with official policies and politics were lacking from my sample. This led me to contact members of officially recognised representative student organisations. With those interviewees, of course, the snowball technique would not work, since activists considered student representatives as their enemies and vice versa. Luckily for me, official student representative organisations were hierarchically ordered and publicly propagated their members. All I had to do was go to websites, check out the respective persons and wait for their response. In Serbia, 3 out of 16 interviewees belonged to such organisations, in Croatia 3 out of 14. The reason for the slightly higher total number of interviews in Serbia (16) as opposed to Croatia (14) lies in the fact that the level of saturation was reached earlier in Croatia than in Serbia.

I hit a fairly solid level of knowledge quicker in Croatia, which does not necessarily say anything about the quality of the interviewees. But it constitutes part of my finding regarding the greater consistency in collective identification and discursive rigour in Croatia, as opposed to the much more heterogeneous situation in Serbia. Thus, diversifying my sample, I had gathered respondents for all three kinds of above-presented expertise (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 36ff). The bulk of interviewees furnished expertise from within the system (as positively or negatively inclined key informants), whereas Srećko Horvat in particular supplied me with reflective expertise. Boris Buden and Boris Kanzleiter, finally, had served as external experts to my research area. In addition to the interviews, my second visit to Croatia and Serbia also added to my stack of printed materials, since I collected ten informational booklets/pamphlets/journals published by activists in Zagreb and Belgrade.

The Interpretive Grid

The interpretive grid provides analytical categories for interpretation for qualitative content analysis. Again there are many specific ways of handling this task within qualitative methodology. Some prefer to code a text (possibly with the aid of computer programmes) based on deductive categories for interpretation (cf. Gläser & Laudel 2009). Others inductively compose categories for interpretation as the process of interpretation goes on (cf. Bryant & Charmaz 2007). Whichever the direction for building categories to guide our

interpretation of texts, the objective is to condense the text's quantity to reveal its a) manifest content, b) latent meaning structures and c) meaning contexts (Mayring 2005: 469).

Coding means linking a sub-part of a text with one or more categories, which summarise the data expressed (or not expressed) within a particular paragraph (Gläser & Laudel 2009: 199 & 208f). Coding is a process of indicating data and extracting this data guided by a definite theoretical interest (and not simply by emotions or chance, although both emotions and chance may, and do, equally play a role in interpretation) through subdividing a text into various bits and pieces. This deconstruction (Froschauer & Lueger 2003: 86f) aids the researcher in first 'destroying' the text as it is and then reassembling the extracted data (i.e. meanings) according to the categories for interpretation.

After coding during the phase of open analysis (Witzel & Reiter 2012: 101-109), a researcher then joins the categories dissected from one text (e.g. document or interview). This vertical interpretation is inductive. It results in an insight into the details of a text, including speculations about causal interrelations of the categories within that particular text. The horizontal analysis, finally, involves comparative interpretation across several texts. Now, causal relationships between the meanings recognised within individual texts can be established and related to the broader context of the texts. "The development of empirically-grounded typologies and concepts is one way of consolidating and synthesizing findings from such a thematic cross-case analysis" (ibid. 109).

As I have been at pains to show, my empirical research was designed as a two-tiered process containing phases of interpretation and reflections. My interpretive grid (i.e. the categories with which I examined the texts) changed as I stabilised, de-stabilised and partially again re-stabilised my interpretative findings. It derives from the dimensions for research or sub-tasks established in the introduction. Thus, my categories for interpretation are deductive. In my first stage of interpretation after May 2012, they revolved around: the problem of higher education, opportunities for action (including threats, repression, openings etc.), principles of organisation, identification and happenings (meetings, sessions, protest actions, occupations etc.). At the later stage of interpretation after my visit to the region in 2013, I fine-tuned this grid and examined my interviews and printed texts with the help of the following categories and sub-categories:

- Contextualisation of contention
 - Historical collective actions
 - Collective action in other countries
 - Opportunities for collective action

- Organisation
 - Principles
 - Strategy
 - Reasons for choosing certain strategies and tactics
- Framing
 - Reasons for action: definitions of the problem
 - Values for action
 - Orientation for action: demands
 - Evaluating actions: successes and failures
 - Terminology: social movement, participatory democracy
 - Constituency, target, participant, adherent, adversary
- Identification
 - Exclusions (dissimilarities)
 - Inclusions (similarities)
- Agency
 - Power relations
 - amongst the participants
 - amongst different contentious initiatives
 - between contentious initiatives and context actors
 - Practice of participatory democracy
 - Discourse of participation

I started this chapter with describing possible designs and methods for doing qualitative research. I then took a step back and reflected upon the reasons for doing my thesis, and with what previous knowledge and presumptions I had entered the field. In the following section, I described how my initial empirical research resulted in disheartening confusion and how this induced me to redesign my thesis. I detailed the particular steps and eventual methodological decisions that guided me through my two-tiered cycle of research. Towards the end, I presented how I arranged my investigative phase (the documents analysis and interviews) and with which interpretive categories I finally interpreted my collected written and non-written texts (interpretive grid).

II.2 History: Protests and Democratic Change

II.2.i Grass-roots Activism and Contentious Politics in Former Yugoslavia

Grass-roots activism is not new to the area of former Yugoslavia. However, not all bottom-up actions by people during communist and war times might be qualified as contentious politics as advanced by this thesis. Many actions by ordinary people were neither aimed at nor effectively disrupted the political status quo of communism. The most important example would be the so-called system of workers' self-management (*radničko samoupravljanje*). Through this institution, the Communist League of Yugoslavia for some time effectively harnessed activism within the limits of its fundamental ideological tenets. Other organisations, too, above all youth organisations and various associations for daily social life such as sport clubs etc, tamed the disruptive potential from below. But the mere fact of allowing and, to some extent, even promoting non-party engagement became significant. As the legitimacy of trans-republic institutions (such as precisely the League of Communists, the Yugoslav Peoples' Army or the Federal Presidency) and federal reforms from 1974 were stepped up, grass-roots activism prepared the ground for the irruption of contentious politics in the 1980s. Contentious politics fed upon earlier grass-roots activism, which had grown thanks to the relatively malleable politics of Yugoslav Communists. This development was different to most other countries under Soviet rule.

Grass-roots activism in Yugoslavia emerged due to the very specific position of the federation "Between East and West" (thus the title of a chapter by Kanzleiter on 1968 in Yugoslavia: Kanzleiter 2011; idem: Vladisavljevic 2002). The roots trace back to Yugoslavia's dissociation from the USSR in 1948. Disentangling themselves from the totalitarian and state-centred bureaucratic ideology of Stalin, forced Yugoslav communists under the leadership of Partisan Josip Broz Tito to devise an attractive alternative; thus, the Yugoslav version of socialism was born (Calic 2010: 192ff; Allcock 2000). At the heart of it lay economic self-management (part of which the above cited workers' self-management), political federalism, a supranational identity of brotherhood and unity (*bratsvo i jedinstvo*), and external neutrality through the Nonalignment Movement (see the respective section on Yugoslav history in: Ramet 2006).

In an attempt to regenerate legitimacy for the communist state (Irvine 1997; Lilly 1997), the Communist League started to gradually decentralise the political system along the lines of the republics Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and the two Serb autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. Decentralisation stood in contrast to

Stalinist centralism. It is important to emphasise that – even though decentralisation introduced more entry points into the political system – it substituted for rather than invited real democratisation (Dvornik 2009: 80). Self-management was introduced to the economic sphere in 1952. These twin processes of federalisation/decentralisation and self-management culminated in the constitutional reforms of 1974. The constitution of 1974 devolved substantial decision-making powers to the level of the republics (cf. Spehnjak & Cipek 2007; Dimitrijevic 2000). Far from heralding multi-party democracy (Posavec 1992), these openings however fundamentally altered the relationship between the state and society. Even though the League of Communists took care to monopolise public discourse, “the focus was on ideological dissidence rather than on grass roots expression of discontent” (Vladisavljevic 2002: 10). By consequence, grass-roots activism, which followed the accepted language and ideology, was less repressed than elsewhere in the Communist sphere.

Three elements were of pertinence to the growth of opportunities for self-organised (social) action. The first of these factors was politico-ideological, the second economic and the third organisational/structural. As said before, self-management stood at the heart of the Yugoslav ideology. Accordingly, workers were expected to be actively involved in the decision-making about production, even if at the lowest level of production (Calic 2010: 192f). Instead of centrally planning all aspects of economy, the state was expected to limit itself to coordination tasks (Allcock 2000: 84). While not relinquishing any of its politico-ideological power, the League of Communists thus allowed a certain degree of localised autonomy at companies, mines and industrial plants. Slowly, this localised autonomy expanded to other areas such as to de-facto party-associated organisations. Examples would be the League of Socialist Youth in Slovenia and the Student League in Serbia, which, although monitored by the party, were never fully under its control (Kanzleiter 2011: 88). In fact, as was shown with respect to Slovenia, the pluralisation of the League of Socialist Youth during the 1980s spurred its transformation into an ally for grass-roots activism (Figa 1997: 177). Around Yugoslavia, various magazines and literatures (especially around universities and within intellectual and arts circles) sprouted, as did new forms of music – notably rock and punk music (Steinberg 2004; idem: Ramet 1999: 126-150). Within this scene of alternative music, the seeds of contentious politics sprouted.

The second factor relates to economic and social changes during the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Calic 2010: 205-207; Allcock 2000: 161ff). The shift towards industrial production prompted sudden urbanisation. A highly educated, individualised and Western-oriented middle-class formed. Due to frequent interchanges with the non-communist West (in the form

of *Gastarbeiter* migration and/or shopping travels to and holidays in Italy or Austria), Yugoslav citizens absorbed Western products, knowledge and values. Within Yugoslavia, mobility between various layers of society increased, and traditional social roles and customs waned. “The industrial revolution engendered a gradual liberation from traditional norms and legal constraints (...). But while the system tried to cement its legitimacy through more prosperity, leisure and consumption possibilities, its socialist ideology lost its concrete meaning in daily life. (...) The individualisation of ways of life (...) undermined the authority of [the] political system”⁴⁴ (Calic 2010: 226). Growing economic prosperity together with the interwovenness of Yugoslav society with Western consumption patterns spurred a significant degree of socio-cultural diversity. This diversity (not to be confused with political plurality!) stimulated activities outside of the Communist Party structure. The student movement of 1968 and the so-called Croat Spring of the early 1970s bear witness to this. I will elaborate on these examples of grass-roots activism below.

For the moment, I would like to raise the third factor that alleviated the emergence of grass-roots activism in Yugoslavia. This was the structural devolution of decision-making to the republic levels of the Federation of Yugoslavia. Invented in the early 1970s as an attempt to pacify nationalised unrest at universities, decentralisation was firmly enshrined in the 1974 constitution (cf. Dimitrijevic 2000). It upgraded the State Presidency at the federal level, in which all nine republics and the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo enjoyed veto rights. Republics and provinces (i.e. the League of Communists at these levels) gained enormous importance. The prevalence of Belgrade as a power hub was undermined and “the polycentric character of Yugoslavia” (Magas 1993: 37) fortified. Cross-republic class-consciousness, if it had ever existed, crumbled, while republic and ethnic identities were reinforced (Allcock 2000: 177f). “The putative unity of the ‘working people of Yugoslavia’ was legitimately qualified by their division into nations, without being undermined by any recognition of their diversity of individual citizens” (ibid. 304). While this system worked relatively well in times of economic upswing, it faltered when the economy turned down from the late 1970s.

The death of the “only trusted Yugoslav” (Dimitrijevic 2000: 411) Tito in 1980 further weakened the federal system, as the League of Communists suddenly lost its final arbiter. “Tito's extraordinary success in making his control omnipresent was also his failure [because] (...) when Tito died, no one else had any legitimate authority. (...) Thus we see that the very

⁴⁴ My translation from: “Die industrielle Gesellschaft brachte Befreiung von traditionellen Normen und rechtlichen Zwängen (...). Aber während das System danach trachtete, seine Legitimation durch mehr Wohlstand, Freizeit und Konsummöglichkeiten zu stärken, verlor die sozialistische Ideologie im Alltag immer mehr an konkreter Bedeutung. (...) Die Individualisierung von Lebensentwürfen (...) untergruben die Autorität [des] politischen Systems.”

attributes that contributed to the survival of communist Yugoslavia for 35 years of Tito's rule – his tactical skills, charisma, and pragmatism – ensured the failure of the regime after his death" (Lilly 1997: 29).

As the federal system lost its legitimacy, more and more local politicians turned to the national question (cf. Banac 1984) as a means to regain that legitimacy. In spite of the official ideology of brotherhood and unity, Yugoslavia had shaped the borders of the republics mostly alongside territorial ethnic lines. Thus, in "treating national identity as a legal category, [Yugoslavia] codified nation and nationality as a fundamental social classification and increased the potential for citizens to view their political identity in ethnic terms" (Irvine 1997: 129). "[I]nsofar as this regional pluralization operated within a federal structure founded on differences of nationality, it was apt, in conditions of political illegitimacy and economic deterioration, to reinforce nationalism, an orientation at odds with universalist values" (Ramet 2006: 379; idem: Irvine 1997: 14). This proto-nationalism lent itself very well to "ideological engineering" (Hobsbawm 1990: 92) since local elites were interested in increasing their own power-hold. As Irvine points out, "[t]he evolution of federal institutions in the Yugoslav socialist state goes a long way toward explaining the greater extent of national mobilization then. (...) The main consequence of the new federal system [of 1974] was that it shifted the locus of power and legitimacy to the republics. By significantly augmenting the power of republic party organizations, it vastly increased institutional incentives for regional elites to sponsor ethnic mobilization within the republics" (Irvine 1997: 14).

This early nationalism strengthened over the 1970s and 1980s until Slobodan Milošević manipulated these sentiments to his advantage. A so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution (*antibirokratska revolucija*) arose from the second half of the 1980s, which, in essence, was the culmination of increasingly ethicised protests into an anti-establishment and disruptive contentious politics. It hardly matters at this point whether these happenings were authentic *događanje naroda* (i.e. happenings of the peoples in the sense of the German term *Volk*, Mujkic: 2010 17) or not (I will problematise this further down).

Essential is the observation that decentralisation, even if it backfired as a project of federal legitimisation, had succeeded in increasing entry points for citizens and incentives for politicians to focus on sub-federal levels. "[W]hat mattered was the diffusion of propensity for protest rather than diffusion of nationalist demands" (Vladisavljevic 2002: 17). The more the Yugoslav state – and its most important federal institutions (the League of Communists, the Yugoslav People's Army JNA and the leadership symbolised by Tito), dwindled, the more

grass-roots expressions of discontent could be voiced and be used by (increasingly nationalist) politicians. “The role of civil society in this fight over values, expressed in the struggle over the language of public discourse, was an essential component of the legitimization crisis faced by state socialist regimes” (Irvine 1997: 6).

II.2.i.a 1968 and the Croat Spring

In the above section I laid out, how politico-ideological, economic and structural elements of the Yugoslav context increased opportunities for self-organised grass-roots activism. In the following I examine cultural currents within society at large on which grass-roots activism fed. As explicated above, socio-cultural diversification laid the social foundation for subsequent contention. Rock and punk music turned into one of the first avenues for the expression of alternative identities and orientations (Steinberg 2004: 16ff). Punk was listened to by young people, most of which urban and highly educated students. Figa describes with respect to Slovenia: “Punk initiated the process of uncoupling of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia from other official organizations. (...) In Slovenia, this quest for freedom and authenticity (...) began with Punk” (Figa 1997: 167).

This reservoir of music adepts partly drew from the pool of young academics gathered around the academic journal *Praxis*. The journals’ authors – while couching their ideology within Marxism – attempted to go beyond and reform the top-down regime-defined version of Yugoslav Socialism (Kanzleiter 2008: 107f). Promoting a human Marxism they can be viewed as forefathers (and -mothers) of a locally distinct anarchism (Razsa 2008: 327). Other movements that emerged from the 1970s (after *Praxis* had ended) circled around questions of feminism, ecology and/or pacifism (Figa 1997: 168ff).

At inception, all the so-far mentioned streams of grass-roots activism did not aim at interrupting the political status quo. The original objective of these initiatives was not to overhaul Yugoslavian socialism per se but to improve the system from within and in conformity with its central ideological tenets. Feminism, for example, had begun with pointing out the “unfulfilled promise of women’s emancipation” (Benderly 1997: 183) within communism, but did not yet question the communist idea of women’s emancipation through the workforce. It was only later, and increasingly from the late 1980s, that feminism challenged hegemonic ideologies and structures. During the wars of the 1990s, women were polarised into those opposing nationalism and those equalling the *topos* of female with national victimisation (ibid. 184 & 196ff). The latter orientation discursively attached women to the body of the nation. “[T]he maternal body is not only the symbol of national territory

through the gendered images of fertility or gentle landscapes: the maternal body is the marker, as well as the maker, of national territory” (Zarkov 2007: 68).

Far from presenting a comprehensive account,⁴⁵ I will now concentrate on selected actors and events that laid the ground for subsequent student contention. Amongst the most important turning points in the history of grass-roots activism in Yugoslavia was 1968. 1968 demonstrates how much Yugoslav society benefited from a comparatively liberal regime. But it also shows how an initially regime-supportive protest built up a reservoir and knowledge of opposition, which could be reactivated in later periods. Students – and intellectuals in general – were amongst those who profited most from the above-described exchange of cultural and ideological artefacts.⁴⁶ Through magazines (like *Perspektive*, *Student*, *Tribuna*) students at universities in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Zagreb around the mid-1960s picked up the issue of local studying conditions. Eventually, the scope of interest widened, and these magazines relayed texts from left radical authors of the West (like Marcuse and Dutschke).

On June 3, 1968, students occupied the University of Belgrade, and established a “Red University of Karl Marx”. The following day, protests quickly spread to other universities around the federation. The protests struck the League of Communists with awe. For the first time since the Second World War, students “destroyed the illusion of a conflict-free society”⁴⁷ (Kanzleiter 2008: 100). They called into question the regime’s claim to be the sole interpreter of the society’s interests (Beslin 2009: 61). At first, authorities tried to interpret the events as legitimising the idea of self-management. But eventually, repression augmented and many of the activists were imprisoned (Spehnjak & Cipek 2007: 278). In contrast to what authorities thought, however, the protests had an affirmative character. Rather than staging systemic criticism against Yugoslavia, students had rooted their demands within a humanist Marxist ideology. “Yugoslav students subscribed to the hegemonic values [of Yugoslavia] and contrasted this with the disappointing political and social reality” (Kanzleiter 2011: 89). While opposing authoritarianism, students defined themselves as pro-Yugoslav and warned against the destructive potential of nationalism based on the interests of decentralised political structures (Kanzleiter 2008: 102f). In short, 1968 transgressed the established boundaries of grass-roots activism as students publicly claimed the right and the capacity to reinterpret

⁴⁵ As of date, I am not yet aware of any comparative and scientifically valid contribution on grass-roots activism during Yugoslavian times written in English. There is one publication in Serbo-Croat that attempts an overview, published by the Luxemburg Stiftung (2009). There are, furthermore, scattered – and partly English – monographs or articles on individual movements (like: the feminist movement, the students movement etc.). I will cite these works as I proceed in the following paragraphs.

⁴⁶ The only relevant studies on 1968 are based on the Phd by Boris Kanzleiter (cf. Kanzleiter 2008 & 2011).

⁴⁷ My translation from: “zerstörten die Illusion einer konfliktfreien Gesellschaft”

Yugoslav communism. However, this initial claim of Serb students was not contentious in the sense of challenging Yugoslav communism as a system of political power per se.

As time passed and student protests developed in other republics, the nature of the movements shifted. Thus, in Croatia from 1971 until 1973 (= the Croat Spring), proponents of an explicit federalisation of Yugoslavia co-opted student protest. Backed by intellectuals of proto-nationalism, especially from within the *Matica Hrvatska* (Croat Academy of Sciences and Arts, dating back to 1842), nationalist (i.e. anti-Yugoslav) ideas gained ground (Ramet 2006: 285ff). Some politicians at the level of the Croat republic joined the pro-federalisation camp, hoping, naturally, to have their own powers increased. Faced with this growth of power at the republic levels, the federal authorities from 1973 crashed down on grass-roots activities and radically purged the Croat republican League of Communists of any liberal (i.e. proto-nationalist) adherents. But by this moment, nationalism had already entered the political imagination as a viable source of alternative legitimacy. The lesson politicians learnt from the Croat Spring episode was “that broadening the basis of legitimacy must not include any independent political initiative from below” (Dvornik 2009: 81). In other words, pro-democratic contention, aimed at transforming cultural diversity into multi-party political plurality was henceforth strictly suppressed. Indeed, the ideological taboo upon ideas of multi-party pluralism is one reason why contention (against the Party, to federal Yugoslav unity) could henceforth only be expressed in nationalist terms (Posavec 1992: 16).

II.2.i.b Unrest under the Impression of Nationalism in the 1980s

With Tito’s death in 1980, Yugoslavia spiralled into a state of paralysis, which, eventually, exploded into the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s. This period is usually viewed as a phase of unfettered ethno-nationalist contention – being defined as a process of disruptive mobilisation through means of re-interpreting the past (and present) alongside (newly) re-created nationalist identities (Marko 2010: 9). Ethno-nationalist mobilisation was contentious because it attacked one of the central tenets of Yugoslav ideology: the official claim of replacing republic (Croat, Serb, Macedonian etc.) identities with transnational/federal brotherhood and unity. But while it is true that Serbs living in Kosovo, and partly in Vojvodina or Montenegro, rallied behind the newcomer politician Slobodan Milošević neither can a simple manipulation of the people (Gagnon 2004: 10) nor personality (Milošević’s “motiveless malignancy”, Popovic 2006: 50) satisfactorily account for Yugoslavia’s violent demise. Indeed, Yugoslavia “was not preordained to fall apart or to go to war. It *took the combination* of system illegitimacy, dysfunctional federalism, economic deterioration, and the mobilization of Serbian nationalism by Milosevic and his coterie to take

the country down the road to war” (Ramet 2006: 379, emphasis added; idem: Allcock 2000; Monnesland 1997).

Since the Yugoslav Federation’s legitimacy had been associated with few federal cohesive institutions such as the charismatic leader (i.e. Tito), the Communist League and the military (Irvine 1997: 8f), irredentism from those institutions metamorphosed into an opposition against Belgrade and the Serbs. But not all strikes or protests can be fruitfully analysed through the nationalist lens. Indeed, as Brubaker (1998) forcefully argues in his article on “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism”, researchers are well advised to take care not to fall in the trap of over-historicisation. In the following, I will briefly sketch out the main events during the 1980s until the beginning of the last congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists in 1990, carefully dissecting those instances that could be subsumed under nationalist mobilisations and those that cannot.

In contrast to common expectation, Yugoslavia was the socialist country counting the highest number of protests. Between 1980 and 1986, the frequency of strikes increased by 30% with the number of participants rising from roughly 13,500 to 88,900 (figures taken from: Music 2009: 161). Social unrests started to spread from 1981, when Kosovo Albanians requested the status of a republic for Kosovo (Mujkic 2010: 10). Most of the rallies were initially of a socio-economic nature, relating to living or working conditions in the industrialised parts of Kosovo. “The movement was strongly shaped by the structure of the party-state and actions of state actors. It was oriented towards political institutions because authorities rarely tolerated non-institutional action while peripheral position of Kosovo and minority constituency of the movement ruled out large-scale discontent” (Vladislavljjevic 2002: 12). Witnessing the regime’s relative tolerance towards these protests, Kosovo Serbs seized the moment and decried the violation of their rights in Kosovo. Thus by the mid-1980s, other Serbs had learnt that “collective action was viable” (ibid. 15).

It is important to point out that a great deal of strikes during the first half of the 1980s was not primarily nationalist but rather based on multi-ethnic class interests (Music 2009: 163f). These uprisings became contentious insofar as they overturned another pivotal assumption of Yugoslav ideology: namely the idea of a self-managed society. “The rising wave of protests by the working class [] undermined the very foundation upon which the political regime legitimated its rule” (Vladislavljjevic 2011: 150). Work-related strikes peaked around 1978 (Loncar 2013: 166), after which workers’ disobedience got infested with a manifestly nationalist agenda. One example is the eight-day hunger strike of the so-called *Trepča* miners in Kosovo in February 1989. This fight was vividly pro-Albanian. Thus, a

contemporary text reads: “The Trepča miners may (and indeed will) enter into Albanian legend (...). Strictly speaking, their retreat underground cannot be called a strike, but a national rebellion that is only taking the form of a strike” (Magas 1993: 186). The themes of the protests had moved from socio-economic issues, working relations etc. to nationalist topics. This nationalisation of contention was a consequence of a) the federalised structure of Yugoslavia, b) the enormous quantity of unrest and c) populist leadership (Vladisavljevic 2011: 155ff). While plurifold opportunities for protest were there, it was the Serb politician Slobodan Milošević who gave the nationalist ‘anti-bureaucratic’ revolution the spin and official endorsement it needed to destabilise the country (cf. Monnesland 1997: 313ff).

In 1987, Milošević had ousted his rival Ivan Stambolić as president of the Serb republic. Underpinning his ideology with the pro-Serb 1986 memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,⁴⁸ Milošević framed the battle as one defending unity (i.e. the centralism symbolised by the federal capital Belgrade) against the disintegrative and pro-federalist tendencies within the republics (mostly of Slovenia and Croatia). The Memorandum, as Ramet emphasises, “broke every rule of the proverbial book of post-Tito Titoism” (Ramet 2006: 321). It explicitly espoused the fate of one ethno-national group (the Serbs) at the expense of the federal community brought together in ‘brotherhood and unity’. Milošević, who recognised the window of opportunity, strategically used the media and mass gatherings to exert political pressure. Thus, he succeeded in toppling the provincial governments of Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro and thus wielded control over the Federal Presidency (Magas 1993: 206ff).⁴⁹

Fanning contention from below served his goal of doing away with the unwanted constitution of 1974. While (some) Croat and Slovenian politicians had, as described above, cried out for more federalism, Serb politicians in Belgrade, where the federal institutions (presidency, army, leadership) were situated, mostly advocated centralisation. The 1974 constitution, which had gone in the direction of more federalism, thus it epitomised much of what Milošević sought to abolish. Thus he repealed the constitution so that the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina lost their autonomous status. The symbolically most memorable event of his anti-federalist and pro-centralist (i.e. pro-Serb) politics occurred in 1989: Milošević delivered his famous speech at the *Kosovo Polje*. Recounting the myth of this historically charged place of battle from the Middle Ages, Milošević claimed that the moment for Serb

⁴⁸ The Memorandum became the intellectual wake-up call for nationalism, pointing to the constitution of 1974 as the main reason for the ‘discrimination’ of Serbs, which could only be resolved through recentralisation.

⁴⁹ As explained above, the Presidency included one representative from each republic plus one from Vojvodina and Kosovo. By controlling three governments, Milošević enjoyed a comfortable majority of 4 against 3 votes in this institution.

armed struggle had come (Monnesland 1997: 323). According to Milošević's narrative, Serbs should be united in one home nation. Put in theoretical terms, he thus aimed to make state borders overlap with ethnic boundaries so as to render the *demos* coterminous with the ethnic nation. "This unification was represented as the main, if not the sole, objective to the realisation of which – 'from time immemorial', or at least since the legendary 'fall of the Serbian kingdom' on the Kosovo battlefield in 1389 – the entire Serbian culture, popular or elite, spiritual or secular, had been dedicated" (Colovic 2009: 131).

As may be expected, scepticism in the remaining republics mounted. While criticism from Vojvodina, Montenegro and (partly) Kosovo had been silenced by use of local pro-Serb protests and pressure in the Federal Presidency, Croat and Slovene politicians insisted upon the devolvement of powers to the republics. As the Yugoslav economy receded into its most severe crisis since the establishment of the federation (Ramet 1999: 48ff), Slovenian and Croatian politicians disentangled their republics' financial affairs from the heavily indebted federal budget (administered in Belgrade). On the symbolic front, too, "the regional elites in Slovenia and Croatia, and later Macedonia and Bosnia, increasingly felt the need to defend themselves against Serbian pretensions, whether ideological, political, or territorial" (ibid. 49). Ethnic mobilisation intensified throughout the territory and social classes.

Throughout the whole of Yugoslavia, the quest to regain legitimacy was used to redefine the *demos* in terms of ethnicity/religion. In Slovenia (Figa 1997: 178) the alternative musical and arts scene, which I have described above, was infused with anti-centralism (anti-Serbianism) and provided the pool for rising nationalist politicians. On June 26, 1991, Slovenia gained independence, followed by a ten-day war initiated, and then lost, by the Yugoslav People's Army. In Croatia, a similar quest for independence culminated in bloody disagreements over borders and citizenship between Croats and the Serb minority within Croatia (Petricusic 2011: 43ff). Mounting tensions led to an electoral victory of the conservative-nationalist Democratic People's Party (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, HDZ). The narrative of Croat nationalists focused on myths of subordination by Croats under Serb domination during the pre-World-War-II kingdom and then Yugoslav communism. The dissolution of Yugoslavia was thus conceived as a means of rectifying this injustice. "Without a consensus over identity, the formation of a new social contract could not be achieved, and thus all three post-communist federations – the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia – collapsed" (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010: 122). Nationalism had turned into "the last word of communism" (Michnik 1991: 759). It coopted earlier non-nationalist expressions of grass-

roots activism and won over pro-multi-party, liberal and pro-democratic tendencies – which were gaining ground at the same time in other parts of the post-Soviet communist world.

We may conclude that the reason for the rise of ethno-nationalism and the decline of pro-democratic alternatives in late Yugoslavia and the early 1990s is to be found in a combination of events leading up to a failure of systemic legitimacy (Ramet 2006: 13 & 598). As has been discussed up to this point, this legitimacy vacuum had been engendered by a) the peculiar federal structure of Yugoslavia, b) the weakness of its few federal institutions and c) the increasing difficulties to yield economic success. These structural factors shaped c) the relatively strong opportunities for grass-roots activism and d) the severe ideological tabooisation of pluralistic democratic ideas, which – together with e) populist engineering by local elites – equally served to undermine the federal system's legitimacy.

II.2.ii Fighting War and the Regime During the 1990s

What came to be known as the 'wars of Yugoslav succession' entailed the ten-day war in Slovenia (1991), the war in Croatia (1991-1995), the war in Bosnia (1992-1995), the Kosovo War and the NATO bombings against the rump state Yugoslavia (1998-1999) and the violent conflict in Macedonia (2001). Countless articles and monographs⁵⁰ have been written about the disintegration of and post-war reconstruction in former Yugoslavia – and this is not the place to revise them all. For an introductory overview consult Sabrina Ramet's (2005) discussion of approaches to the analysis of the Yugoslav break-up. What I will attempt here is to recount the story with a focus on activities below and aside the officially elected regimes in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia and the rump state Yugoslavia (which included today's Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, cf. Ramet 2006).

The 1990s was a decade of ethno-nationalism, genocide, war, sanctions, authoritarianism, media propaganda and traumata of all sorts. But it was also a decade of alternative thinking, solidarity and revolts. The successor countries of Yugoslavia were differently affected by direct war activities, although all societies were shaped by the climate

⁵⁰ As preeminent examples I would like to mention here (in alphabetical order): Allcock J B 2000. *Explaining Yugoslavia*, New York: Columbia University Press; Bideleux, R & Jeffries, I 2007. *The Balkans. A Post-Communist History*, New York: Routledge; Blitz, B (ed.) 2006. *War and Change in the Balkans. Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; Djokic, D & Ker-Lindsay, J (eds.) 2011. *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Contronversies*, London: Routledge; Gagnon, V P 2004. *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Magas, B 1993. *The Destruction of Yugoslavia. Tracking the Break-Up 1980-1992*, London: Verso; Monnesland, S 1997. *Land ohne Wiederkehr. Ex-Jugoslawien: Die Wurzeln des Krieges*, Klagenfurt: Wieser Verlag; Pridham, G & Gallagher, T (eds.) 2000. *Experimenting with Democracy. Regime Change in the Balkans*, London: Routledge; Ramet, S 1999. *Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo*, 3rd edn. Boulder: Westview Press; Woodward, S L 1995. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington: Brookings Institution.

of violence and repression. The war-induced state of political, economic and social emergency added to this. Political and economic elites around the region, but in particular the newly elected Croat President Franjo Tuđman and Serb president Slobodan Milošević pursued nationalist policies (Ramet 2011a: 265-267). For both, nationalism was a means to arouse willingness to go to war. Luckily, nationalism also deflected attention away from these crimes of corruption and cronyism (Boduszynski 2010: 175f; Ramet 2011b: 9f).

When speaking of activities from below or aside official structures, one should not fail to mention the augmented significance of the ‘shadow state’ in the successor countries of Yugoslavia. The exigencies of the war economy positioned “mafia-security cooperative structures” (Ramet 2011a: 269) at the heart of the regimes. These partly fed upon “underground societies” (Bianchini 2000, 66), i.e. informal collectivist networks that had expanded already during communist times. Policies introduced by Franjo Tuđman in Croatia and Slobodan Milošević in Serbia exacerbated the negative side effects of parallel structures (such as kinship and clan structures, family loyalties and other social networks: Sampson 2002: 3) that had already been present during communist times. “[T]he ‘winners’ [of transition] were for the most part predetermined; the leaders of the communist regimes themselves initiated and managed the transformation for their own benefits, with the goal being control, not reform” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010, 125).

In Serbia, part of the strategy was to create and/or accommodate para-governmental, regime-supportive, radical (some would say fascist) and violent networks. Football/hooligan clubs were amongst these groups (Savkovic 2010; Dzihic 2012). The football clubs *Dinamo* in Croatia and *Crvena Zvezda* (Red Star) in Serbia flourished upon a mixture of violence, Turbo-Folk music, mafiotic war-crime networks and a more or less implicit endorsement by (some of the) politicians. “The field of football or of sports in general (...) was one of the most effective instruments to activate and nurture we-connections as well as to create a collective imagination of the nation. Thanks to football, nationalism assumed a popular character” (Dzihic 2012: 4). The person of Željko Ražnatović (also known as Arkan) is emblematic for the intermeddling between sports, music, politics and crime. Ražnatović recruited *Crvena Zvezda* fans for his paramilitary troop *Tiger*, accused of committing war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Shortly after the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, he married the most popular Serb *Turbo-Folk* singer, Svetlana Veličković (known as Ceca). Their wedding ceremony was screened live on national TV RTS.

Turbo Folk is a peculiar type of Folk Music that rose to prominence during the 1990s. Milošević (but also politicians from other post-Yugoslav countries) sponsored Turbo Folk

music as a means to infuse the listeners with proto-nationalist *Kitsch* and divert them from daily hardship and sorrows (cf. Baker 2007; Kronja 2004; Mursic 2011). While Turbo Folk, which stood in contrast to Rock music as a symbol of pro-European anti-nationalism, changed its political connotation after 2000, football clubs and right-extremist initiatives – which sprang from the criminal/fascist networks of the 1990s – are still active in Serbia (and partly Croatia today). Amongst such right-extremist initiatives we could count *Obraz* (Cheek), *Nacionalni Stroj* (National Alignment) or *Pokret 1389* (Movement of 1389). Amongst others, these groups are suspected of committing brutal assaults against Pride Parades/LGBT organisations, which they perceive as tarnishing the pure orthodox/catholic, Serb/Croat patriotic culture (see for homophobia in the Balkans: Plazonic 2005; Pearce & Cooper 2010; shadow report on Serbia: Regional Center for Minorities et al. 2010).

Contemporary potentials for right-wing violence thus have their roots in the 1990s when networks of corruption, war mafia, hooligans and Turbo-Folk *aficionados* were crafted and/or endorsed by nationalist politicians. “There are preconditions for nationalism in the habits and culture of a people. (...) [But t]he extent to which uncivic values have found an audience in Serbia is not primarily because of deep historical factors (...), but above all because of the strategies and tactics of Serbian elites” (Ramet 2011b: 10). Serb elites’ tactics, however, were not always without contradictions. Contrary to what one might expect, nationalist ideology amongst Serb elites was never monolithic. Militia leader and later president of Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić in Bosnia as well as opposition party leader Vojislav Šešelj (head of the *Srpska Radikalna Stranka*, Serb Radical Party), for instance, espoused a much more expressive nationalism than populist Milošević. This partly explains Milošević’s wavering positioning over time (cf. Ramet 2006: 404-407; Ramet 2011a: 272).

Milošević could not rely only on nationalism and nationalist mobilisations. Other tactics of ensuring regime stability included media orchestration, collaboration with the Orthodox Church, building up a network of dependent cronies in financial and industrial institutions, control over the police and secret services and an emblematic personality cult (Ramet 2006: 345-359). As in Croatia, the regime used nominally democratic elections to gain popular support. But the criminalisation of politics and economics under the impression of war and social hardship went further in Serbia than in Croatia – leaving behind a legacy of lawlessness and corruption when Milošević departed (ibid. 527).

In Croatia, the *domovinski rat* served as a template to buy acquiescence to Tuđman’s rule. “[T]he Homeland War (...) was used by [Tuđman’s] HDZ as the key component of a larger myth about the founding of the post-Yugoslav Croatian state (...). (...) In the late 1990s,

as the economy failed and Croatia was left out of [Western] integration, the doctrine of the Homeland War arguably became the HDZ's *only* source of political capital” (Boduszynski 2010: 211, emphasis in original). Stirring up xenophobia and patriotism while casting himself in the role of a “good shepherd” (Ramet 1999: 162; idem: Ramet & Soberg 2008), Tuđman entertained a policy of corrupt privatisations and cronyism. “Tudjman, as Father of this country, could preside over a system in which he (and his inner circle) could be exempt from the rules and laws which applied to other people” (Ramet 2008: 33). Corrupted privatisations provide a basis of grievances for socially inspired workers’ strikes still in contemporary Croatia (cf. Loncar 2013).

One particularly central steering wheel for both Tuđman and Milošević was media policy (cf. Kurspahic 2003). Controlling the media meant controlling images of the enemy. A “media war” (ibid. 68) enfolded between pro-regime media in Croatia and Serbia, through which antagonistic identities were continuously formed and fortified. “What once was the Communist-controlled media became nationalist-controlled media. Milošević simply renamed his party – from Communist to Socialist – and switched chops in the party-programmed media from ‘brotherhood and unity’ to ‘hatred toward neighbors’” (ibid. 59). At the heart of media politics was repression against independent, and control over pro-regime media. State-controlled TV stations (HRT in Croatia and RTS in Serbia) were particularly good in bending reality to their nationalist agenda, as the following example demonstrates:

“On the 6 p.m. news [of June 1994], viewers could see original footage of [Tuđman] in Sarajevo, with some people screaming ‘Murderer’ (...). The same day [Tuđman] visited the Croatian community (...) with applause and cheering. That evening, on the prime-time news, the soundtracks had been switched with applause and cheering accompanying [Tuđmans] visit to Sarajevo” (ibid. 134).

The degree of pressure on independent media varied over time, reaching a peak after mass protests in Croatia and Serbia in 1996 (see for numerous examples: Kurspahic: 2003). In Croatia, Tuđman’s practice of limiting media pluralism took many forms, ranging from forced privatisations, to hostile takeovers, libel suits,⁵¹ bureaucratic harassments and even forced drafts of journalists to the army. In Croatia, islands of relatively independent journalism were the newspapers *Novi List*, *Feral Tribune*, *Nacional* and *Globus*. Pro-federal TV station *YUTEL* in Bosnia struggled with bureaucratic, financial and privatisation harassments until it

⁵¹ According to Kurspahic (2003: 180), there were more than 900 ongoing libel suits in 1999, 70 of which were directed against journalists from the *Feral Tribune*.

closed down in 1992. In Serbia the remaining independent media included *Vreme* (from 1990), *Radio B92* and *Borba*.

These media nurtured alternative narratives against nationalism and the use of war as a political means. Alternative networks flourished primarily in urban areas – i.e. in the cities of Belgrade and Zagreb as well as (though understandably weaker) in the besieged city of Sarajevo.⁵² They were inspired by and drew many participants from earlier communist grass-roots pacifism, anarchism and (partly) feminism. Most of them consisted of young people and students, intellectuals and artists. In Serbia, alternative thinking crystallised around the radio *B92*. “B 92 had become much more than a little student radio station playing noisy rock records. It was now the centre of a social movement: anti-war, anti-nationalism; pro-democracy, pro-human rights” (Collin, 2001: 56). Early anti-war contention was often organised with the help of, or directly by, activists from *B92*. The most memorable waves of protest around the region occurred in March 1991 and June-July 1992. In Croatia, protests against the closure of the student *Radio 101* in Zagreb in 1996⁵³ were very significant. All of these instances of contention were not born out of ‘thin air’, but rather rooted in “dormant social networks” (Stubbs 2012: 15) of student, pacifist, feminist and ecologist activism that I have described in the preceding chapters.

Anti-war contention occurred in two stages. The first phase lasted until the mid-1990s, while the second phase culminated in the anti-regime contention in Belgrade in 2000. The first wave attacked the cultural authority of war/nationalism. But only the second wave of contention interlaced with an oppositional anti-regime orientation. Early anti-war contention took off around 1989 (cf. Bilic 2012; Fridman 2006; Stojkovic 2009). It challenged the ideology espoused by Tuđman, Milošević, local political and army leaders such as Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić, Mate Boban a.o, according to which the territories had to be rearranged according to ethno-nationalist criteria. This early contention staged an alternative to separation and exclusion through mostly transnationally (i.e. pan-Yugoslav) organised activities. Demonstrations included peace walks in Belgrade and Sarajevo, peace cordons by the *Žene u Crnom* (Women in Black)⁵⁴ against mass conscriptions or concerts under the motto

⁵² The fates of Slovenia and Macedonia were different after 1991, hence events unfolded independently from the wars in the remaining republics (cf. Ramet 1999: 174-201; Ramet & Fink-Hafner 2006).

⁵³ Compare the account on the Global Non-violent Action Database published by the Swarthmore College, USA: <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/croatians-protest-closure-radio-station-radio-101-1996> [26/12/13]

⁵⁴ This feminist organisation, founded in 1991, drew together women who opposed the war as a patriarchal institution and fought against forced mass conscriptions. Having been inspired by analogous initiatives in Italy and Israel, the *Žene u Crnom* are still active today, see: <http://zeneucrn.org/> [26/12/13]

“*S.O.S mir ili ne računajte na nas*” (SOS Peace or Do Not Count on Us).⁵⁵ Various pro-peace organisations were founded, such as the *Centar Za Anti-Ratnu Akciju* (Center for Anti-War Action), the above-mentioned *Žene u Crnom* or the *Gradjanske Akcije Za Mir* (Citizens’ Action for Peace; see for more examples from Serbia: Susak 2000: 491ff). The crucial aspect to consider here is not whether many or few people took to the streets but the very fact that non-nationalist ideas were alive (cf. Stojkovic 2011). Not “all political mobilisation stem[med] from ethnicity and the allegedly universal desire of people to live in separate and ethnically homogeneous states” (Bilic 2011: 87f). The sheer existence of another Serbia (*druga Srbija*) throughout the wars was “symbolically important” since it “challenged the seeming homogeneity of elites” (Bieber 2003b: 83). Another scholar notes with respect to Croatian anti-war contention that it was a “kind of defensive act, an attempt to preserve certain values and to resist an overwhelming nationalist homogenisation” (Stubbs 2012: 17).

The Dayton Peace Agreements of 1995 that ended the war in Bosnia heralded the second phase of anti-war contention. This time around, contention widened into fully-fledged anti-regime opposition. The period was marked by an influx of foreign donors into Bosnia, and gradually into Croatia and Serbia too. Ever rising funding from abroad fuelled the NGO-isation of contention (Stubbs 2012: 20f). Aid dependency, particularly in newly dubbed Bosnia and Herzegovina, resulted in parallel NGO structures. While some NGOs certainly were inherently altruistic and achieved positive results, an NGO elite developed, which was alienated from the people they were supposed to represent and empower (cf. Bieber 2002). This “project [society]” (Sampson 2002: 5) was a mostly urban, multilingual and mobile class with customised talents, interests and a curious closeness to the very politics it had been designed to counterbalance.

In Serbia, the situation was not much different. The *Otpor!* movement, which toppled Milošević’s regime, is widely known and internationally acclaimed as an innovative and authentic initiative from the bottom up. Its tactics are exported to rebellions worldwide.⁵⁶ But in Serbia the verdict is much more tainted, since the decision of some *Otpor!* leaders to join the new ruling *Demokratska Stranka* (Democratic Party) under Boris Tadić in 2004 were seen as betraying the movement’s original cause. As in Croatia, “[e]mpowerment through civil

⁵⁵ An emblematic song during this time was *Slušaj vamo* (Listen Up) by the Rock band *Rimtukituki*. The second paragraph of this song, for instance, translates to: “We’re not going to let folk music [*narodna musika*] win us over. I prefer you, youngster, over the rifle they give us. Peace, brother, peace.” Available from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mo5Yj_oBoUo [26/12/13]

⁵⁶ Reports about involvement by *CANVAS* activists are known around the so-called colour revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004). One of the more recent examples dates from the Arab Spring, where *CANVAS* leaders’ involvement was equally witnessed: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/proteste-in-der-arabischen-welt-die-umsturz-gmbh-1.1061251> [28/12/13].

society projects has not consolidated an autonomous ‘third sector’, (...) but has increased the range of possible relationships across sectors, and created a new space for existing and new local elites to consolidate their position” (Vetta 2009: 46). “Croatian [NGOs] (...) [were] less concerned with direct political goals than their own position as brokers smoothing access to grants and to other tangible resources of influence. (...) The NGO shape (...) reflect[s] clientelistic and elitistic processes within Croatian society as much, if not more, than democratising ones” (Sampson 2002: 22). Flagging democratisation from below, such civil society projects in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia served as stepping-stones for subsequent political careers rather than as points for truly grass-roots emancipation.

The second phase of anti-war and anti-regime contention also coincided with increased repression against the media, political stalemate and economic and acute social consequences of the wars. In November 1996, for instance, the Croat government cancelled the broadcasting licence of the critical student *Radio 101*. Shortly after the proclamation of this decision, around 100.000 people gathered in the main square of Zagreb. Mounting local and international pressure eventually prompted the government to revoke its decision. In Serbia, protests against the regime erupted with force when a) war did not lure the public’s mind any longer after the Dayton Peace Accords for Bosnia had been signed, b) corruption and economic hardship had reached an intolerable degree, and c) the regime stole elections at the local level, thus calling into question the populist source of its legitimacy. “The question for the Milosevic regime in the late 1990s was one that arose for the Tudman regime in Croatia: how long could the manipulation of fear as a basis of popular support be sustained? The answer proved to be the same: until the costs of a failing economy outweighed the ‘benefits’ of the prevailing form of radical populism” (Boduszynski 2010: 175).

Internationally – and particularly within the US – demonstrations against electoral fraud shifted the image of Slobodan Milošević from being a peacemaker (i.e. one of the signatories to the Dayton Peace Accord) to being a factor of instability (Nadjivan 2008: 122). In the winter of 1996/1997, protesters took to the streets of Belgrade. After heated protests, Milošević acknowledged the electoral success by opposition parties in a few provincial towns. But it is worth to linger on to show some novelties that were introduced to the repertoire of contention by these protests: Confronted with the prohibition of mass gatherings in public spaces, activists invented new forms of disobedience: walking (*šetati se*), dancing, making noise and singing helped to re-appropriate space for the public. “The crowds occupied space and thereby claimed it, physically and politically, with their bodies, their noise, their banners and so on (...). [T]he protesters seized the initiative and re-articulated the ‘given’ order of the

urban landscape by inscribing deviant political meanings into it” (Jansen 2001: 40). Using methods of humour, theatre and ridicule, and unspecific messaging, activists attracted more and more participants. The Orthodox Church, some journalists and intellectuals also joined in. Thanks to this “fusion of contrasting ideological orientations, amongst which clerical-nationalist, liberal-democratic and marginalised pacifist and feminist ideologies, [protests] could grow to such an extent”⁵⁷ (Nadjivan, 2008: 120). The movement was internally structured into legislative and executive organs and headed by male leaders. Their charismatic leadership is typical for the paternalist culture shaping Serbian politics at large (ibid. 117f).

The years following 1997 were marked by increasing economic hardship, soaring inflation and sanctions (re-installed by the US in 1998 due to war in Kosovo). The immediate trigger for contention had fallen away. Any further attempt at democratisation was stalled. The failure of the “tenacious, but ineffective” (Ramet 2006: 495) 1996/1997 protests to bring lasting change relates to aspects of the movement and the context. Thus, the diversity of voices within the movement contributed to the comprehensiveness but to its flabbiness. A second factor relates to the fragmentation of opposition parties (Bieber 2003b: 67ff), who had partially co-opted the protests, trying to manipulate them to their own advantage. Linked to this was the above-mentioned ambiguousness within and between the opposition and the regime over the composition and the meaning of the nation. Each side attempted to ‘own’ nationalism, but eventually failed to do so. The third aspect is the division between self-proclaimed civilised urban participants and those that were disdained by the former as *seljački* (farmers). This urban-rural divide was symbolic rather than geographical (Jansen 2001: 48) and significantly weakened contentious action until *Otpor!* managed to unite these two sides in one camp in October 2000. “There was public willingness to resist the Milosevic regime. The difficulty was that, among Serbs, such opposition to Milosevic was largely concentrated in the larger cities (...). Milosevic’s rule opened a chasm between city and countryside and deepened the mutual distrust between them” (Ramet 2006: 495).

Otpor!’s eventual success in overturning the Milošević regime in October 2000 drew upon two sources: first, activists learned from the above-discussed mistakes of 1996/1997; second, they benefited from submerged networks of resistance that had been preserved amongst students during repression following the 1996/1997 contention. As for the context, rising disaffection of an impoverished population and anger about the NATO bombardments and the Kosovo War provided the flint to mobilisation. Disappointment with the socio-

⁵⁷ My translation from: “Erst durch den Zusammenschluss gegensätzlicher ideologischer Richtungen, darunter klerikal-nationalistischer, bürgerlich-demokratischer und marginalisierter pazifistischer und feministischer, konnten der Studierendenprotest und der BürgerInnenprotest zu derartiger Größe anwachsen.”

economic performance of the regime and the immediate impression of the NATO bombings, however, did not necessarily mean that people opposed nationalism per se. It was rather that war mongering in Kosovo had undermined the charismatic legitimacy of Milošević to the point where a new movement seemed necessary and possible (Nadjivan 2008: 142-146). *Otpor!* was new in many respects. “It combined youth culture and political action – officially avoiding being close to opposition parties. Hence it could win over young people of Serbia”⁵⁸ (ibid. 139). The movement presented itself as an initiative without ideology and leadership but with many possibilities for individual engagement. Civil disobedience atomised into small acts of spraying graffiti on the walls or wearing T-Shirts with the symbol of *Otpor!* – the clenched fist. Winning in part also became a war of pictures.



Figure 4: Otpor logo on a man's shirt at a march in Belgrade

An underground trade with protest artefacts flourished. It had become cool and sexy to be part of protests. Similar to the early 1990s and in 1996/1997, cultural events were used on purpose to mobilise participants. For instance, *Otpor!*, together with the opposition coalition DOS (*Demokratska Opozijica Srbije*) and the radio station *B92*, organised a rock tour under the slogan *Vreme je* (It's Time [for Milošević to go]) just before the elections in 2000. Selected collaborative projects with media stations, such as the above-cited *B92*, were crucial for spreading *Otpor!*'s messages and ideas (Collin 2001: 190ff). Significantly, support was provided not only in moral, structural and judicial terms, but also financially. More and more international donors (from the US, but also the Soros Foundation etc.) joined in to fund the movement (Nadjivan 2008: 140).

⁵⁸ My translation from: “Die Otpor-Bewegung vereinte Jugendkultur und politisches Handeln - ohne offizielle Nähe zu Oppositionsparteien - und konnte dadurch vor allem junge Menschen in Serbien für sich gewinnen.”

Last but not least the movement grew as soon as it began to include – rather than ridicule – rural populations. “On the one hand the demonstrations in Belgrade seemed to have reached a ‘dead point’. This made an injection of energy ‘from outside’ necessary. On the other hand, one could not build up a ‘critical mass’ (in quantitative terms) only by relying on the intellectual, bourgeois and student circles”⁵⁹ (ibid. 171). The immediate trigger of contention in 2000 was when Milošević denied the electoral victory of Vojislav Koštunica’s DOS coalition at the snap presidential elections in September. Protests erupted up in Belgrade and in rural parts (including strikes by workers in factories). Due to secret deals between the opposition coalition and the secret service, the army did not intervene and thus signalled its withdrawal of support from Milošević. On October 5, 2000, unrest culminated in a symbolically memorable event. One of the protesters drove into the building of the public TV station RTS – thus giving the revolution its name of the Bulldozer Revolution (*bager revolucija*). The “propaganda bastille” (Collin 2001: 222) of the regime had collapsed. The “power of the street corners”⁶⁰ (Nadjivan 2008: 90f) – which Milošević in person had conjured up in the 1980s – had won him over. The new president Vojislav Koštunica and the pro-European liberal Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić introduced another phase of democratisation in Serbia. In parallel, pro-European Stjepan Mesić and Iвица Račan headed the first post-Tuđman oppositional government in Croatia. The ‘victory for democracy’ was of partial nature, especially in Serbia. Further developments will be shortly discussed in the next chapter.

At this point it seems paramount to highlight a couple of features of *Otpor!*, which resulted in its partial (retrospective) loss of legitimacy. *Otpor!* in some respects developed in ways similar to other NGOs in the region after 2000. First of all, it proved to be a catalyst for political careers. Thus, in 2003 – after the assassination of Zoran Đinđić – some *Otpor!* activists entered snap elections as a political party and then joined with the Democratic Party (*Demokratska Stranka*), which had arisen from the disintegrated rumbles of the DOS coalition. Many others simply left the country. In the public, *Otpor!* became conflated with the political establishment (Grodland 2006: 232ff). Second, although *Otpor!* promoted itself as a group with horizontal decision-making structures; leaders did emerge. Their activities were marked by a similar political culture as the very elite (i.e. the regime and opposition!),

⁵⁹ My translation from: “Zum einen schienen sich in Belgrad selbst Demonstrationen ‘tot gelaufen’ zu haben, was ‘Energie von außerhalb’ notwendig machte. Zum anderen konnte eine ‘kritische Masse’ (zahlenmäßig) nicht allein aus intellektuellen, gutbürgerlichen und studentischen Kreisen bestehen.”

⁶⁰ Nadjivan calls it “Straßeneckenmacht” in German.

which activists publicly criticised. “Officially, OTPOR neither had leaders nor organisation (...), but in reality it was an organisation that harnessed power rules such as masculinity and secrecy to its own advantage. At the same time, it was a (...) para-governmental formation, since it could not be registered by the state as non-governmental organisation”⁶¹ (Nadjivan 2008: 142). The third weakness of *Otpor!* was its ideological confusion. While some sympathised with the RSS (*Radikalna Stranka Srbije*), others were inspired by Zoran Đinđić’s orientation towards Europe as an emblem of civilisation and modernisation (compare: Vuletic 2009). Disagreements within the movement mirrored the sort of intra-elite polarisation that had and would dominate Serbia for the next times to come (see: Cohen and Lampe 2011: 103f; Bochsler 2010: 117; Dvornik 2009: 136). In the end, getting rid of the regime proved easier than to eliminate the ideological ground it was erected upon. “As the Milosevic regime did not fall due to its aggressive use of nationalism, the ideology it used and instrumentalized did not become as discredited as the regime itself (...). As has become clear in recent years in Serbia, coming to terms with the legacy of the Milosevic regime’s use of extreme nationalism to wage war is a process which is at least as difficult as deposing the regime itself” (Bieber 2011: 173). Finally, the fact that *Otpor!* was funded by external donors was not approved by all observers – even more so, since the founding of the follower organisation *CANVAS* (Centre for Non-violent Action and Strategies) is a sign for the NGOisation of the movement. The following verdict could thus also be taken to fit the case of *Otpor!*: “[O]ne could say that in many ways we wanted civil society and got NGOs” (Dvornik 2009: 128).

In conclusion, contention expressed itself in the form of anti-war protests in the early 1990s and clustered around some non-nationalist media and student networks (as *B92* in Serbia, and *Radio 101* in Croatia). Disturbances for contention included a) the contravening influence of nationalist mobilisation and b) the marginalisation of alternative ideas. Alternative ideas remained at the margins of society, because they could not (with the exception of the *Otpor!* movement) connect to rural populations and were riddled with internal contradictions. The regimes’ unwillingness to acknowledge and respond to alternative initiatives weakened the sustainability of contention.

⁶¹ My translation from: “Offiziell gab es [bei OTPOR] weder Führungspersönlichkeiten noch eine Organisation (...), [r]ealpolitisch war OTPOR eine Organisation, die sich machtpolitische Regeln wie Maskulinismus und Geheimhaltung zunutze machte. Zugleich stellte sie eine (...) parastaatliche [] Formation dar, weil sie als Nichtregierungsorganisation staatliche nicht registriert werden konnte.”

II.2.iii Peculiarities of Change in Former Yugoslavia after 2000

In the preceding chapter, I sought to carve out forms of participation initiated and/or carried out by ordinary people. It became clear that, contrary to common expectations, the space for commitment and involvement was never fully closed – neither during Yugoslav times nor during the war-riddled period of the 1990s. Yugoslavia and the countries succeeding it were authoritarian to different degrees. Nevertheless, they were never monolithic. Starting in the 1980s, political elites increasingly recognised the potential of the street corners and utilised their power for their own nationalist/populist ends. The strength of the people could not be finally harnessed. As demonstrated, spreading opportunities for involvement not only strengthened grass-roots activism *in support of* politics but also widened possibilities for anti-war and then contention *against* the regime. Especially in Serbia, inner polarisations and fragmentations stifled the contentious successes until the *Otpor!* movement introduced some important innovations which resulted in the revolution against Slobodan Milošević.

In this section, I will sketch the most pertinent lines of development after 2000. At first glance, post-Yugoslav countries fit neatly into the third wave of post-communist democratisation. And indeed, West Balkans trajectories share many features of democratisation in East Europe: A specific communist culture (cf. Gross 2002: 15ff; Boduszynski 2010: 22), the structural legacies of a non-democratic predecessor regime (cf. Bokovoy 1997; Djilas 1997) and a dilemma of simultaneous economic and political reforms (cf. Offe 1991a & 1991b). Indeed, as Offe had pointed out “the very simultaneity of the three transformations generates decision loads of unprecedented magnitude. (...) [T]here is no time for slow maturation, experience, and learning” (Offe 1991b: 871).

But the post-Yugoslav countries stand out from the post-communist region for a couple of reasons. First of all, the socialist regime of Yugoslavia was different from the USSR. Its peculiar ideology of self-management and decentralisation had, as I have shown, laid the foundations for grass-roots activism. Second, after initial democratic breakthroughs in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia in 1991 and 1992, the war of Yugoslav secession delayed further democratic efforts (Džihic & Segert 2012: 241). “Across the post-communist world, war appears to have had a dramatic negative impact on democratization and market reform. This impact appears greater in initially democratic post-communist countries. (...) [M]any post-communist countries were caught in a tragic political trap, in which the ideological glue necessary to mobilize for political and economic reforms tended to produce conflicts which in turn rendered reforms far more difficult to sustain” (Horowitz 2003: 45). And with the violent

demise of Yugoslavia came the last significant factor that aggravated the above-mentioned dilemma of simultaneity for Yugoslav successor countries. Namely, these countries not only had to change politics and economics, but they were confronted with solving the problems of stateness and national unity (Kuzio 2001) to a much larger extent than most post-Soviet countries (with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia).

As I have discussed in the section on nationalism, democracy can be linked with nationalism. If left in doubt (or if being pushed into doubt) about the limits of the political community (i.e. the *demos*), people may search for how ‘a’ state that could truly be ‘their’ state. Nationalism can provide the imagination needed to provide such belonging and integration. “Nationalism [is] crucial to collective democratic subjectivity, providing a basis for the capacity to speak as ‘we the people’” (Calhoun 2007: 153). As the Yugoslav federation began to show signs of disintegration and decay, insecurity arose as to who was part of a politically sovereign community and what this community should stand in for. In the period to follow, the answer to this question was given violently. Identity and spatial claims (cf. Özkirimli 2010: 208f) seemed realisable only through resettling, expulsing and/or killing the people who did not fit within the proposed category. The perceived need to make rule within the state concordant with an ethnically defined nation and a territory continued into the phase after 2000.

Around the area of former Yugoslavia, but especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia via the Dayton and Ohrid Peace Accords, ethnicity was institutionalised at all levels of government. Designed to “manage change in deeply divided societies” (Bieber 2004), these mechanisms actually served to reinforce and legitimise ethnicity (ibid. 8ff) as the overriding criterion for participation in government. Many aspects were restructured along ethnic or nationalist concerns. One example is language (Allcock 2000: 337), another are subjective identifications (next page). Countless political advances to distinguish the Croat, Serb, Bosnian and Montenegrin variants from the formerly known Serbo-Croat language bear witness to the significance of language as a nationalist political tool.⁶² As a consequence of homogenisation efforts, the ‘East’ variety *ekavica* and the Cyrillic alphabet are seen as defining the Serb language whereas the ‘Western’ variety *ijekavica* and the use of the Latin alphabet count as Croatian. Whereas these usage patterns previously did not necessarily coincide with state borders, wartime ethnic cleansing and forced evictions have contributed to

⁶² To give just one example (with no prejudice implied against the country from which the example was chosen...): In January 2012, I stumbled upon an article on the web portal *H-Alter* that ridiculed a politico-academic controversy over the question whether *sport* [pronounced as in English] or *šport* [pronounced SHport as in German] was the ‘original Croatian’ way of expressing the phenomenon of human physical training: <http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/kultura/sport-ili-sport-u-ministarstvu/print:true> [19/01/2012]

making them overlap. Thus *ijekavica* is today employed in most of Croatia, with some lexical variations in Bosnia. The *ijekavica* dominates Montenegro as well (although citizens who identify as Serbs rather than as Montenegrins usually prefer the *ekavica*).

Ethnic identification is also strong today and follows much closer state (in the case of Bosnia: sub-state) borders than before, especially, but not only, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Džihic 2009). As the following picture shows, identification with the respective nationality is remarkable, ranging from roughly half to two thirds of the respondents feeling strongly connected to their nationality.

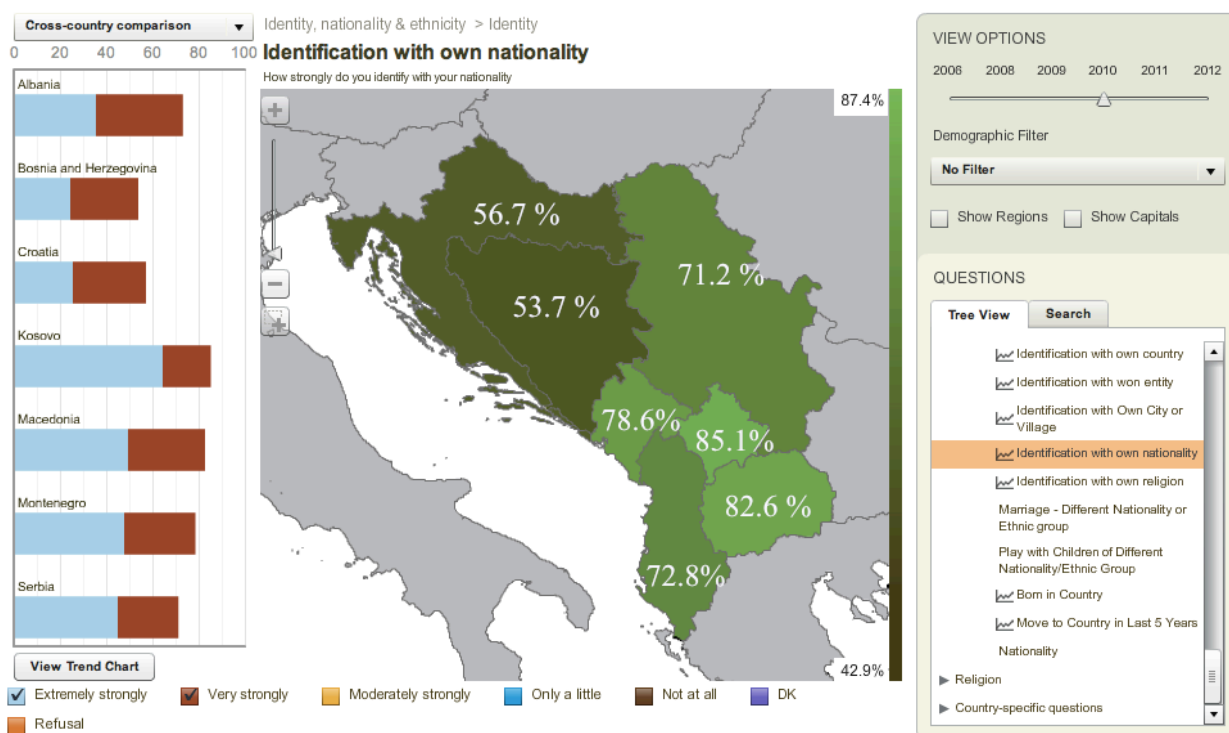


Figure 5: Gallup Monitor 2012 - National Identification, © Gallup Monitor

National considerations affect very intimate decisions such as marriage as well. A considerable majority of people would never marry someone from another nationality, as can be seen from the figure on the next page. Accordingly, between 57% (Montenegro) and 81% (Macedonia) of respondents rule out mixed marriage. This data is difficult to compare with statistics from the Yugoslav Federation, since the categories used in statistical surveys then differ from today's (Botev 1994: 467f). However, it is worth noting that the census from 1989 reported roughly 13% of mixed marriages on average in Yugoslavia. The phenomenon was unevenly distributed around the Federation: thus, it stood at relatively high 28% in the Serb province Vojvodina against only about 5% in Kosovo (numbers drawn from Botev 1994: 469). But the overall average had varied little in two decades (ibid. 468). In regions with relatively high numbers of mixed marriages (Vojvodina, Slavonija in Croatia, some Bosnian territories etc.) the wars induced greater scepticism towards mixed marriages. Part of the

reason for this change lies in the upsurge of nationalist ideologies. Part however is due also to ethnic homogenisation as a consequence of war and ethnic cleansing. To date, there is not much comparative research to back up anecdotal evidence that the decline of mixed marriages has been reversed since 2000.⁶³

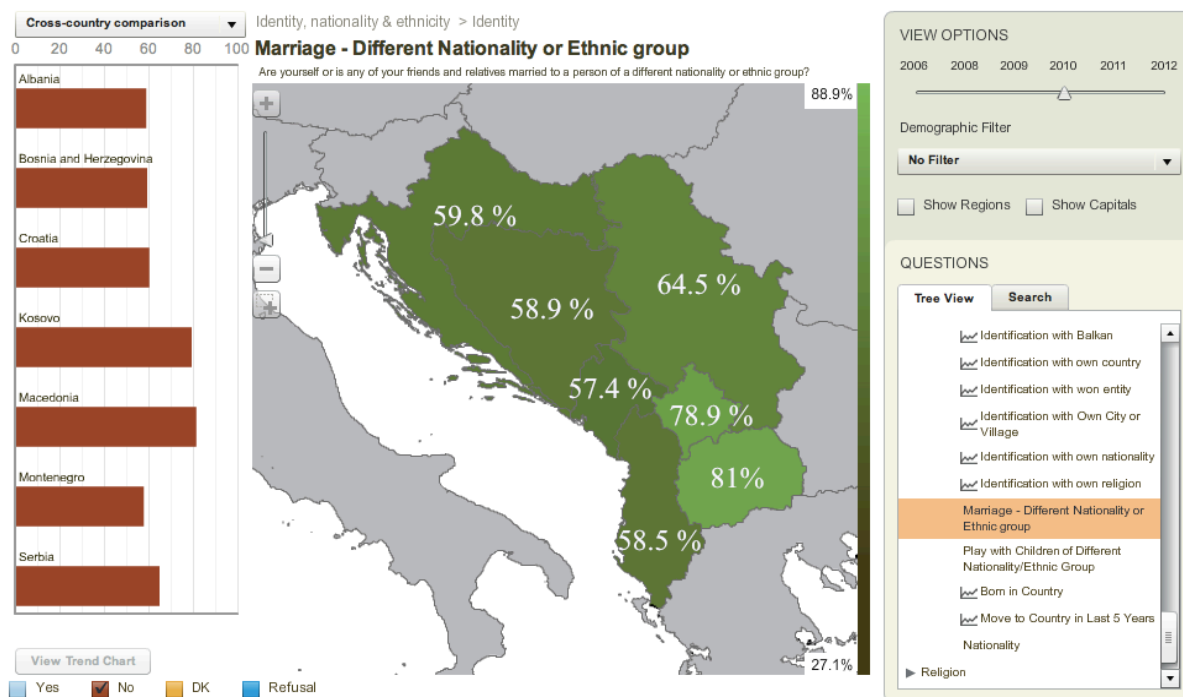


Figure 6: Gallup Balkan Monitor 2012 – Intermarriage, © Gallup Monitor

On the military level, the year 2000 brought peace in most Yugoslav successor states. Macedonia is an exception, since tensions between the Albanian minority and the Macedonian majority there peaked somewhat later in 2001. However, authoritarian regimes around the region gave way to oppositional pro-European democratic governments. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, transition to post-war stability picked up under international leadership. There, as in Kosovo, the international community charged itself directly with bringing about recovery and democracy.

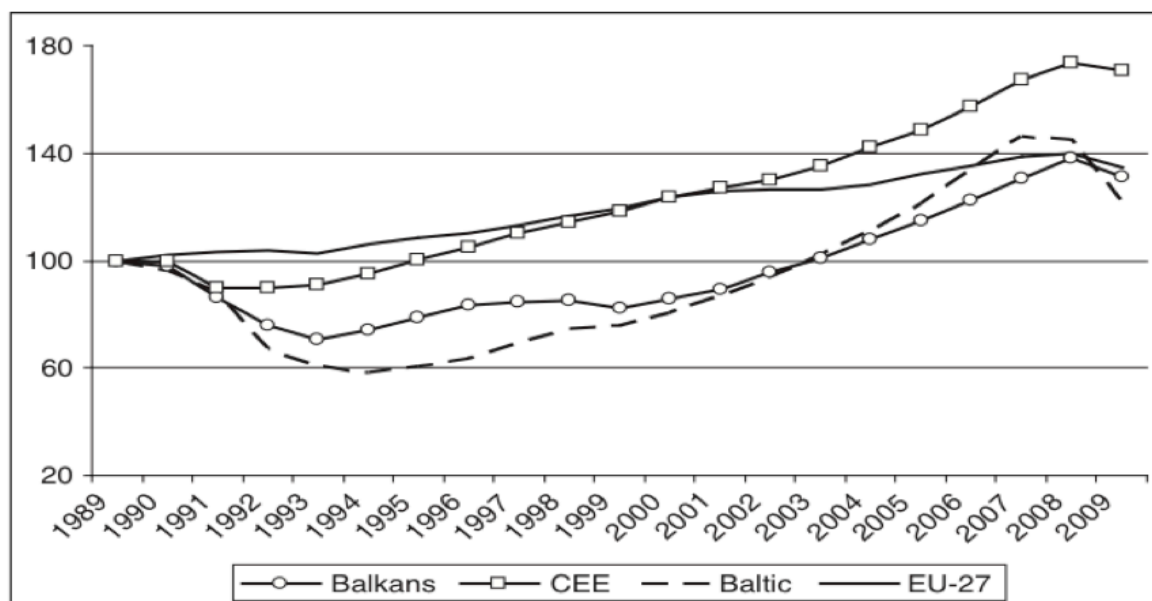
At the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003, European heads of states laid the ground for a “European perspective of the Western Balkans countries”.⁶⁴ They thus indicated their willingness to integrate Yugoslav successor states into the European ‘family’. In spite of some initial progress towards peace, prosperity and democracy, long-term trends towards

⁶³ SETimes (08/04/2013): Inter-ethnic Marriages Signal Change in the Balkans, http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/articles/2013/04/08/reportage-01 [07/11/14]; IPS News (16/06/2006): “Balkans: Mixed Marriages On Rise Again”, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2006/06/balkans-mixed-marriages-on-rise-again/> [07/11/14]; cf. Kandido-Jaksic, Maja 2008. ‘Social Distance and Attitudes Towards Ethnically Mixed Marriages’, In Psihologija, 41 (2), pp. 149-162.

⁶⁴ Press release by the European Commission: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm [29/12/13]

democracy, however, did not turn out as expected. Although multi-party elections had been successfully installed and the main democratic institutions established, the quality of democratic rule did not improve sustainably. As I substantiate below, the new democratic regimes failed to acquire lasting legitimacy for their rule. Hence why former Yugoslav countries (with the possible exception of Slovenia) might be qualified as electoral democracies. As I wrote in the chapter on democratisation, electoral democracy in Yugoslav successor states is characterised by relative stability yet at a “low level and without any ambition to increase the quality of democratic rule” (Dzihić & Sergert 2012: 243). Other elements of these types of democracies are a quasi-two party composition, oligarchic elites, voter disaffection, high citizen disengagement and low input legitimacy (cf. Boduszynski 2010; Ramet 2011; Dzihić & Segert 2012). “The Balkan democracies are regimes in which the voters can change governments far more easily than they can change policies” (Krastev 2002: 51).

On the output legitimacy side, Yugoslav successor states fared not much better. They suffered from EU- and IWF-requested processes of liberalisation and privatisation. Welfare states were thus wound back (ibid. 248).



Source: Own calculations from the Eurostat and *World Development Indicators 2009* databases; data for 2009 are provisional.

Figure 7: GDP per capita – EU27, CEEC and Balkans compared © Monastiriotis & Petrakos, 2010

Evaluating twenty years of transition in the post-Yugoslav area, scholars concluded that “the policy framework devised and applied in the Balkans has been unproductive, as it failed to create a growth model that could support sustainable and socially cohesive development” (Monastiriotis & Petrakos 2010: 166). Their calculations of GDP trends underscore the observation of a weak overall economic performance. Starting from similar

economic levels in 1989, the table above clearly shows how the wars decreased the economic chances of Southeast as compared to Central and Eastern Europe. The gap could not be closed since, and the advent of the global financial crisis further deteriorated the situation.

In conclusion, post-Yugoslav states falter both in responding to their voters' ideas and in providing for their needs (low input and output legitimacy). It is important to stress, though, that this is "not simply an unintended side-effect of reform, but something that significant portions of the new elites have worked to bring about in their drive to use their positions to extract wealth" (Krastev 2002: 50). Change in the Yugoslav successor states thus corresponds well to what Mungiu-Pippidi has termed "the other transition" (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010: 121f), i.e. a relentless fight amongst different elites for social control over people, resources and power. All of this undermines formal transition processes. In sum, transition in Yugoslav successor countries had not only arrived late due to war and violence, but prolonged state weakness (which constitutes the opposite side of state capture) and resulted in an overall low quality of democracy. The inability of the nominally democratic regimes to gain input and/or output legitimacy in the eyes of their voters, ethno-national agitation and/or ethnic institutionalisation, ignoring or misusing contention for populist purposes, a culture of violence, and disenchantment are all but selected expressions for the current state of affairs.

II.3 Student Contention after 2000

II.3.i Overview: Submerged Networking and Transformative Events

Student contention after 2000 was not an evenly distributed phenomenon in the region. It varied in sequencing, strength and features. In the following I present a short overview of student contention. As concerns student contention before 2000 I would just like to briefly refer to the preceding chapters II.2.i through II.2.ii, where I identified some pivotal periods of student contention (1968, 1973 and then 1996/1997). This section is structured around two classes of temporal units: on the one hand, I foreground episodes of submerged networking. These are on the other hand interspersed with occupations. These constituted transformative events for the later course of contention in the respective countries. As I elaborated in the respective chapter on social movements above, networks are embedded within the fabric of every-day life and tie back-door activities of dispersed individuals to visible "moments of madness" (Tarrow 1997: 329). I identify such moments of madness as transformative events, because it is then that cycles (or waves) of protest peak in terms of numbers, strength, publicity and in terms of shifting "the very cultural categories that shape and constrain human

action” (Sewell 1996: 263). With respect to social movements, transformative events often lead to invention of new strategies, tactics, identities and/or frames, which – as Tarrow has argued – can become modular (Tarrow 1997: 337) and thus be widely replicated as routine strategies and tactics.

In Yugoslav successor states, occupations – as mad moments – constitute transformative events. During occupations, a new strategy was invented, which was directly derived from the interpretations (i.e. frames) of the underlying problem at hand. Thus, occupation was designed as a way to fight against the perceived problem of (non- democratic and top-down) commercialisation of education; occupation structurally interrupted the process of capitalist production of knowledge. At the same time, occupation also provided free and (somewhat) safe spaces for direct-democratic deliberation on alternatives to the so-perceived problems of commercialisation and unrepresentative democracy.

The very first occupation done in that fashion was in Serbia in 2006. It was there that the twin tactics of a) interrupting lectures and seminars (while leaving other university functions such as the library, administrative services etc. untouched) and b) setting up direct-democratic assemblies were implemented for the very first time in former Yugoslavia. As we will see in the following chapters, the 2006 occupation in Serbia was transformative because it introduced new strategies to the existing repertoire of contention (focused on street protests and hierarchical leading) and because it re-introduced students as social actors on the “community stage” (Ranciere 1999: 109). But the 2006 occupation in Serbia was also transformative for (potential) activists in other countries of the regions. Activists around the region read the booklet *Borba Za Znanje* (Fight for Knowledge) that Serb occupiers had published in 2007.

The Serb experiences served as an explicit role model for later student contention in Croatia. Croatians, on their turn in 2009, learnt from and transformed the Serb innovation and wrote their own information booklet called *Blokadna Kuharica* (Occupation Cookbook, 2009).⁶⁵ In the end, as a Bosnian activist visiting Belgrade in 2011 put it, “Zagreb was inspired by the protests in Belgrade of 2006, so that now Belgrade could be inspired by the struggles in Zagreb in 2009.”⁶⁶ What we have here is a chain of transformative events (2006 occupation in Serbia, 2009 occupation in Croatia, 2011 occupation in Slovenia) through which a very specific model for contention was spread around the region and became modular.

⁶⁵ There are many language versions available: The Croat version is available from: <http://slobodnifilozofski.org/?p=1915> [24/02/12], the English version can be accessed via: <http://marcbousquet.net/pubs/The-Occupation-Cookbook.pdf> [29/04/14]. In my quotations I will henceforth refer to this English version.

⁶⁶ Personal communication with Igor Štiks on November 3rd, 2011.

The following figure provides a rough scheme of phases of submerged (i.e. non-public) networking, selected (reported) street protests⁶⁷ and occupations. It highlights phases and basic features of mobilisation, it does not, however, say much about the numbers of mobilised persons. The bigger stars mark occupations (as transformative events) where the above-mentioned twin tactics were applied for the first time. These incidents usually drew much larger quantities in participants than subsequent occupations. Besides, these first (transformative) occupations introduced new tactics, frames and actors to the public and subsequently expanded within the country and/or the region. In total, there were seven occupations of different durations in various towns of Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia until January 2012. Each occupation had a minimum length of two nights.

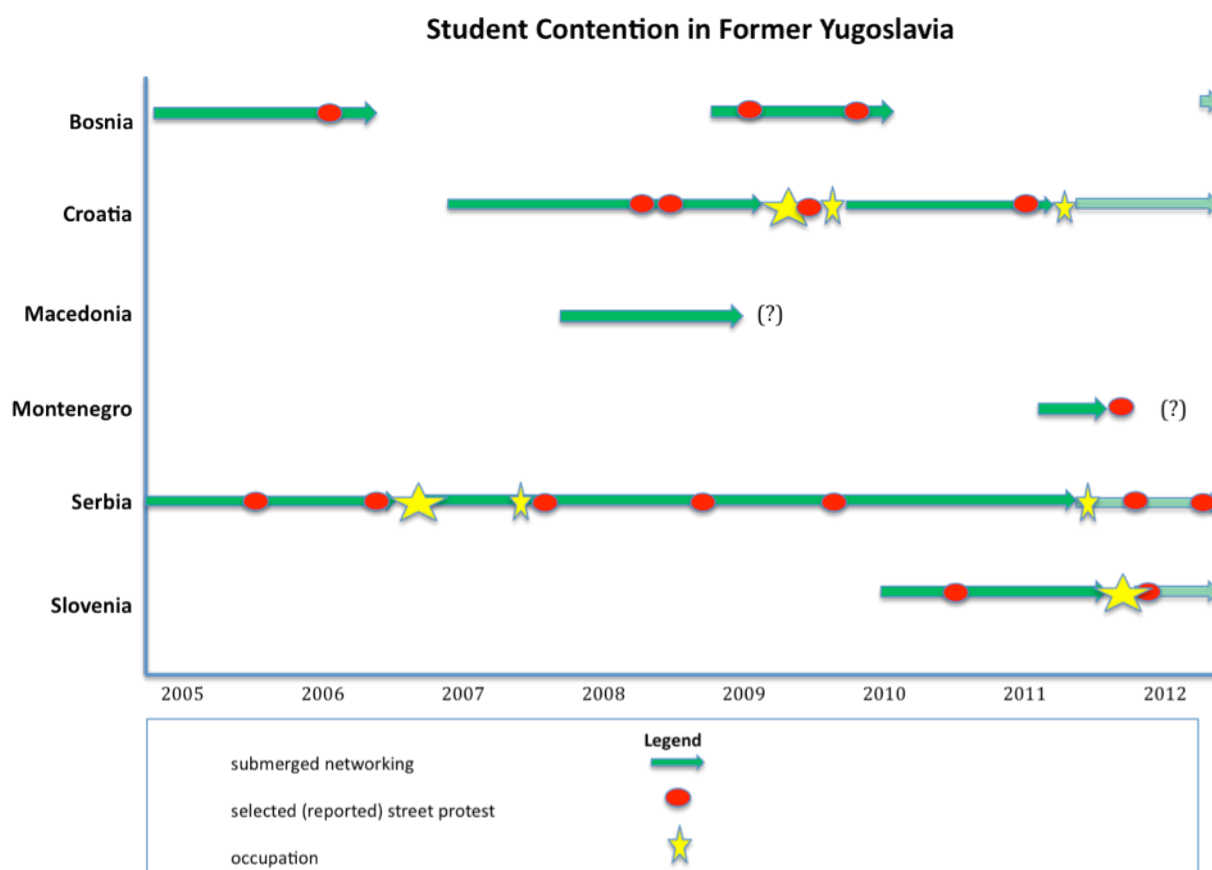


Figure 8: Table with data from own research

⁶⁷ I included street protests that were reported by newspapers and/or repeatedly cited in my interviews.

The following table gives dates and sites of occupations in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia. As becomes obvious, student contention did not start evenly.

	Croatia	Serbia	Slovenia
1st Occupation (BLOK I) Transformative	20/04-24/05/2009 (at Faculty of Philo-sophy in Zagreb plus 6 universities in country)	22/11-28/11/2006 (at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade)	23/11/2011-23/01/2012 (at Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana)
2nd Occupation (BLOK II)	23/11-05/12/2009 (at Faculty of Philosophy in ZG plus 3 universities in country)	19/03-01/04/2007 (at Faculty of Arts in BG) 08/05-15/05/2007 (at Faculties of Archi-tecture & Philosophy in BG)	
3rd Occupation (BLOK III)	23/10-26/10/2011 (at Faculty of Philo-sophy in ZG)	17/10-29/11/2011 (at Faculty of Philology in BG), 20/10-10/11/2011 (at Faculty of Philosophy in BG)	

Figure 9: Table with data from own research

In Serbia, students formed submerged networks of protest discussing various higher education issues around 2005. These networks merged with and eventually fuelled an initiative from 2004 going under the name *Socijalni Front* (Social Front). Activists clustered around this Social Front. They were at the spearhead of the first occupation in 2006. But what was the concrete trigger of heightened contention? Which grievances escalated mobilisation to a point where occupation seemed possible and – indeed – necessary? And how were these incidents embedded within a larger context of worldwide student contention?

As I will further discuss in the following paragraphs on the larger socio-political context of student contention, the region as from roughly the year of 2000 was shaped by two interlacing processes: First, the (continued) process of state-building. Second, the (intensifying) process of market-building. Namely the last process can only be understood in the light of the region's position within a larger context of Europeanisation and globalisation. It implies that student contention in Yugoslav successor states is not a singular or exceptional phenomenon. I discuss how student activists from the region learned from activists in Europe and beyond, as the chapter proceeds. What is crucial to note at this point, however, is that student contention was shaped by the introduction of reforms through the implementation of

the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. All Yugoslav successor states signed this multilateral treaty – which, although not yet part of the EU institutional structure, embodied a consensus on liberalising higher education.

Amongst others, Bologna brought a unified structure for studying, a new system of credits, more autonomy to universities and intensified international collaboration.⁶⁸ With the exception of Slovenia, which signed the treaty in 1999, all other countries became members of the Bologna process as of 2003. It is important to see that joining the Bologna process was part of the conditions for preparing EU membership. Hence, we could argue that Bologna as an externally decided policy spurred Europeanisation (Lemonik: 2011) of higher education in the region. As could be expected, implementation of the Bologna reforms on the ground was fraught with difficulties. The following table gives the dates of signature and approximate on-the-ground implementation, and contrasts these with first significant (i.e. media-reported) protest actions.

	Signature	Implementation from	Occupation/protest
Bosnia	2003	2007	March 2007
Croatia	2003	2005	May 2008
Macedonia	2003	2008	--
Montenegro	2003/2007	2005/2007	November 2011
Serbia	2003	2005	Fall 2005 (hunger strike and street protests)
Slovenia	1999	2000	May 2010

Figure 10: Table with data from own research

As can be deduced from this table, signing the Bologna treaty was hardly the direct trigger for contention. Rather, difficulties with its implementation further decreased the already low quality of studying to a point where students took up the fight. In particular, frequent and erratic alternations to tuition fees and eligibility criteria for public grants provided the most significant trigger for contention. Whereas this trigger was regionally specific, the construction of protest frames was not exceptional to the region, as local activists appropriated symbols and tropes they had picked up from reports on student protests in other countries, for instance in Greece and France.

⁶⁸ Available from: <http://www.ehea.info/> [12/03/14]

Altogether, studying at public (and of course private) universities in the region is fairly expensive compare to average wage levels. According to the most recent national Bologna implementation reports from 2012,⁶⁹ the most commonly paid annual tuition fee for the Bachelor degree stood at about € 800 in Bosnia, at € 3000 in Croatia, € 1500 in Montenegro and at € 3300 in Serbia.⁷⁰ Average nominal wages⁷¹ in these countries were roughly € 400 in Bosnia, € 1000 in Croatia, € 500 in Montenegro and € 450 in Serbia. Statistics (where available) show furthermore that the proportion of self-financed (*samo-finansirani*) students in Serbia reached 55% in 2012.⁷² In Croatia, the percentage of graduates that had studied full-time and had to pay fees was 35.7% in 2012.⁷³ There are no comparable figures available for the other countries – this is not surprising since statistical services in the region (with the notable exceptions of Croatia⁷⁴ and Serbia⁷⁵) are judged as rather defective by the European Commission progress reports.⁷⁶

Widening autonomy of higher education was part of Bologna reforms. This extended public higher education's scope to decide the amount of tuition fees (upon approval by a higher authority) by themselves. In addition, universities became free to determine the

⁶⁹ Available from: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=86> [12/03/14]

⁷⁰ The respective report from Macedonia lacked information on the tuition fees.

⁷¹ Eurostat numbers for 2011: candidate countries and potential candidates: labour market [cpc_pslm] [accessed on 06/06/13]

⁷² Of the total number of students in 2012 (193.255), 107.906 were self-financed, i.e. had to pay tuition fees. This figure is not divided into full-time versus part-time students. Available from the Statistical Office of Serbia: <http://webzrzs.stat.gov/WebSite/public/ReportView.aspx> [12/03/14]

⁷³ There were 36.946 graduates in 2012, of which 75.2% were full-time students, of which 64.3% were subsidised by the state budget and 35.7% were self-financed students. Available from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.dzs.hr> [12/03/14]

⁷⁴ See 2012 monitoring report by the EU commission from before Croatia's accession to EU: "Croatia is meeting the commitments and requirements arising from the accession negotiations in the field of statistics and is in a position to implement the *acquis* as of accession" (2012 Comprehensive Monitoring Report on Croatia, 28); available from: <http://www.delhrv.ec.europa.eu/files/file/articles-Copy%20of%20CROATIA%20-%20SWD%20338%20-%2010.10-1349881631.pdf> [12/03/14]

⁷⁵ See 2013 progress report on Serbia by the EU commission: "Good progress was made in the area of statistics. (...) To fully implement the *acquis* in statistics comprehensively the Statistical Office of Serbia requires more staff. (...) Overall, Serbia is advanced in the area of statistics" (2013 Progress Report, 34); available from: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/brochures/serbia_2013.pdf [12/03/14]

⁷⁶ Evaluation of Macedonia: "Greater efforts are needed to speed up alignment with the *acquis* and to enhance the quality and availability of data, particularly population data" (2013 Progress Report, 35); available from: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/brochures/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia_2013.pdf; Evaluation of Montenegro: "The main issue of concern remains Monstat's inadequate human and financial resources. Montenegro has to ensure further investment in a number of statistical areas and full harmonisation with the EU's statistical standards and methodologies" (2013 Progress Report, 31); available from: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/brochures/montenegro_2013.pdf; Evaluation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The report mentions various areas for which basic statistics are lacking. "Overall, there was some progress in the area of statistics, in particular regarding the preparations for the population and housing census as well as in business statistics. Sectoral statistics such as national accounts, business and agricultural statistics need to be improved. Cooperation, coordination and decision-making processes need to be further improved in the national statistical system" (2013 Progress Report, 48); available from: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/brochures/bosnia_and_herzegovina_2013.pdf [all accessed on 12/03/14]

eligibility criteria for state budget funding. The end result was that fees and grants criteria radically differed from year to year and faculty to faculty. National implementation reports on the Bologna process partly and inadvertently admit the arbitrariness of the criteria. “There are not [sic!] general rules for the amount of tuition fees. (...) In many cases the tuition fee is dependent on the number of potential applicants. The amount of tuition fee is sometimes dependent on the certain subjects of study programme.”⁷⁷ Another report states: “One of criteria which determine status of student related to his/her obligation of paying tuition fee is so called students’ performance. Students financed from the state budget who do not fulfil the criteria (...) may continue as self-financing students. Conversely, self-financing students who pass all exams may become budget-funded students if there are places available on their study programme. Those students are chosen on the basis of the ECTS gained.”⁷⁸

Throughout my interviews, interviewees complained about this situation – even official student representatives agreed that “they took the hardest part of the previous system and the worst of Bologna (...) to make it really hard for students” (RS-O). This confusion about basic studying conditions and frustration about the lack of transparency in determining them are also evident in the texts, leaflets and interviews that are reprinted in the *Borba Za Znanje* booklet. “It is your legal obligation to inform us on our status at faculty. We want to be informed”⁷⁹ (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 75). Sometimes these frustrations were discursively linked to Bologna. Bologna, as a floating signifier (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 113), was often identified in my interviews (i.e. in retrospect) as an essential tool of change in the hands of elites. However, it was hardly ever openly raised during contentious action at the time. The reason was that activists thought ‘Bologna’ was too complicated a term to be effectively used in communication. Thus, for instance, *Borba Za Znanje* does not mention Bologna at all.

Irregularities in education reforms were especially rampant in Bosnia and Macedonia, but also in Serbia and Croatia. In the most recent Serbian 2012 national report regarding the Bologna process, implementation difficulties with the shift from non-Bologna systems were implicitly admitted as follows: “[A]fter a long discussion carried out at all Serbian HEIs [higher education institutions], the National Assembly gave its general interpretation of the problem, leaving at the same time a considerable freedom to the HEIs, having in mind a great

⁷⁷ National Report 2012, available from: http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National_%20reports/Serbia.pdf [12/03/14]

⁷⁸ National Report 2012, available from: http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National_%20reports/Montenegro.pdf [12/03/14]

⁷⁹ My translation from: “Vaša zakonska dužnost je da nas informisete o našem statusu na fakultetu. Želimo da budemo informisani.”

variety of different situations.”⁸⁰ In conclusion, the Bologna reforms themselves were not the trigger to contentious action. Rather, the specific combination of incompetence and localised administrative interests together with the inconsistent appropriation of the Bologna process by university administrations accelerated the decline of studying conditions up to a point where contentious action would flourish. My analysis of documents and interviews consistently shows that subjective grievances derived from payment obligations were highly salient and were constructed as the core injustice at the heart of (‘all’) students’ problems.

In the following paragraphs I narrate the evolvement of student contention, starting with initiating events in Serbia. In autumn 2005, students from the University of Belgrade began to organise protest walks and small performances. Students from the department of arts history staged an eventually unsuccessful hunger strike.⁸¹ Croatian activists later in 2009 learnt from this episode, refusing to conduct hunger strikes because this tactic had previously failed in Serbia.⁸² The immediate trigger, as can be guessed, was adaptations to the requirements for tuition fees and grant regimes. Although contention could have crystallised around the Bologna process, ‘Bologna’ as a symbol or reference could not be found in the texts available from that period. Throughout the following year, direct-democratic plenary assemblies (then called *zbor* instead of *plenum*) were established. In November 2006, students occupied the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade (*BLOK I*, cf. Tomic 2009). Although this was not the very first time an occupation took place in the successor states of Yugoslavia (remember the 1968 events in Belgrad), this occupation was new because it was tied to a novel discourse (i.e. the commercialisation frame) and innovative tactics (i.e. direct democracy). I examine these two innovations in-depth in the chapters II.3.ii.a and II.3.ii.b below. Suffice it to briefly outline how contention emerged here.

Protest slogans and a *communiqué* from 2006 singled out the previous increases in tuition fees as the core injustice against which to wage the struggle.⁸³ The only demand all activists could eventually agree on was a reduction of tuition fees. Many other demands were added to that by various subgroups of student activists. At the beginning, the ideological frames focused on working conditions in Serbia and on the issue of inequality of access to higher education (cf. Borba Za Znanje 2007). As time passed by and activists were informed

⁸⁰ National Report 2012, available from: http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National_%20reports/Serbia.pdf [12/03/14]

⁸¹ Article available from: <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.69.html:177040-Blokadom-do-uslova> [27/02/12]; and: <http://arhiva.glas-javnosti.rs/arhiva/2005/12/05/pisma/srpski/pisma.shtml> [27/02/12]

⁸² See the FAQ on workers on the *Slobodni Filozofski*: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/12/radnicki-faq.html> [24/02/12]

⁸³ The specific demands can be found at: http://komunist.free.fr/arhiva/nov2006/studentski_protest.html [27/02/12]

about student contention in France and above all the ‘Balkan brother country’ Greece, enlarging the frame towards a fight for free education (i.e. free-of-charge education, to be more precise) seemed possible. “Today, we seek a reduction of fees by 50%, and tomorrow we shall demand free [of charge, A.R.] education.”⁸⁴ A YouTube video (uploaded only in August 2010) offers a montage of the 2006 events. It too puts opposition against the “trend to treat knowledge and education like commodities” at the centre of the struggle.⁸⁵ In conclusion, the fundamentals for the diagnostic frame, according to which tuition fees express a general state-led tendency towards commercialising higher education were re-appropriated from abroad and woven into a larger discourse in Serbia around 2005/2006.



Figure 11: "Dole školarine" (Down with tuition fees) © ASI – ACH

The booklet published in spring 2007 *Borba Za Znanje* was a particularly important medium for diffusing this frame. The booklet bundled together reprints of posters, leaflets, photos, interviews and a couple of name-signed articles/commentaries. It is important to note at this point that the diagnostic frame in Serbia steadily evolved from the first occupation in Serbia in 2006 to the third one in 2011 without any fundamental revision of arguments. Already in 2006, activists framed the problem of having tuition fees as a social question and education as a public good (*Borba Za Znanje* 2007: 54 & 61). In spring 2007, some Serb students who had moved from the Faculty of Philosophy went on to start an occupation at the Faculty of Arts (*BLOK II*). However, as we will see in the respective comparison below (chapter II.3.iv.a), disagreements between activist grouplets and sub-initiatives had accelerated to a point where contention disintegrated to the level of submerged networking.

⁸⁴ My translation from: “Danas tražimo smanjenje školarina za 50% a sutra ćemo tražiti besplatno obrazovanje.” The precise translation of “besplatno obrazovanje” actually is not “free education”, but “free of charge” or: “gratis” education. Available from: http://komunist.free.fr/arhiva/nov2006/studentski_protest.html [27/02/12]

⁸⁵ My translation from: “Suprotstavljanje trendu da se znanje i školovanje tretiraju kao roba na tržištu bilo je glavna tema.” See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCx2TnfsFkY&feature=youtu.be> [24/02/12]

According to the memories reconstructed through my interviews, the second blockade has sunk into almost complete oblivion, and if it is remembered, it is judged as non-successful. During 2007/2008 most Serb activists moved their activities to the underground away from public scrutiny. In the meantime, students started mobilising publicly in Croatia. Serb student contention resurfaced in October 2011, when the Faculty of Philology and then the Faculty of Philosophy were occupied in Belgrade (*BLOK III*). According to transcripts from the *Plenum Filozofskog*⁸⁶ (i.e. the *plenum* at the Faculty of Philosophy) there had been roughly ninety persons present at the night of the voting before the occupation (19/10/2011).

The imminence of weak participation was explicitly raised at the plenary sessions. Activists were faced with the daunting example of the occupation at the Faculty of Philology (begun two days earlier), which after two days already was fraught with difficulties in keeping up the personal capacity to block the building.⁸⁷ The problem of scarce mobilisation was never resolved in Serbia. This can be seen also from the fact that Serb contention never spread to the province as it had occurred in 2009 in Croatia. For instance, a demonstration in the Serb provincial town of Niš failed because only around ten activists showed up (instead of the proclaimed 350).⁸⁸ In the regional capital of Vojvodina, Novi Sad activists managed to hold one plenum but were met with violence from members of the representative student body (the *studentski parlament*). After having been shut into the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, the roughly 200 activists did not arrange any second plenum or any other protest activity.⁸⁹

The internal fragmentation between the various groupings in Belgrade can be derived from the (at times contradictory) diversity of available online texts. Various Facebook groups and blogs⁹⁰ exist in Serbia beside the *Plenum Filozofskog*'s website. As I will further elaborate in the comparative chapter on Croatia and Serbia, the reasons for this weak performance of Serb student contention can be explained by the features of Serb contentious action itself and by the more difficult immediate meso-level context at faculties/universities (section II.3.iv.c below).

⁸⁶ http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/2011_10_16_archive.html [27/02/12]

⁸⁷ The transcript states: "If we are not enough people, we might be running into problems worse than our colleagues at the Faculty of Philology" (my translation from: "Ako nas nema dovoljno da blokiramo možemo da se ukopamo u problemima gorim od onih sa kojima su suočene naše kolegice i kolege sa Filološkog"), http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/2011_10_16_archive.html [27/02/12]

⁸⁸ <https://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/2011/10/11/u-nisu-protest-bez-protesta/> [28/01/12]

⁸⁹ See the respective account at the blog of the Novi Sad Plenum: <http://plenumnovisad.blogspot.com/> [20/02/12]

⁹⁰ Beside the *Plenum Filozofskog* (<http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/>), there exist in Belgrade: Studentske Borbe (<https://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/>) and the Sindikat Obrazovanje (<http://inicijativa.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=SindObrBG>); as well as a couple of Facebook Groups such as: *Odbrani Filozofski* (set up in February 2011), *Studentske Borbe* (set up in October 2011), and *Odblokirajte Nam Filozofski* (set up in late October 2011) [27/02/12]

After this first account of student contention in Serbia, I turn to a depiction of events in Croatia. Beginning in late 2007, students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb set up the initiative *antiNATO ffzg* against Croatia's accession to NATO. In due course, these pre-mobilised students formed a *Bologna group* to address the consequences of Bologna higher education reforms at Croatian universities. Together with students of the Faculty of Science, a major street demonstration against the increase of tuition fees was organised on May 7, 2008, at which around 3.500⁹¹ students participated. According to Mate Kapović, an early participant and outspokenly critical professor today, this was the highest number of demonstrators ever seen on Croatia's streets since the early 1990s.⁹² During subsequent rallies in Zagreb and Pula on November 5, 2008 at the occasion of the "International Day against Commercialisation of Education", students stipulated free and publicly financed higher education for all.⁹³ It is important, here, to emphasise how this choice of date proves Croat activists' deliberate attempt to align with international student contention.

The "International Day against Commercialisation of Education" was an event organised by the self-proclaimed *International Student Movement For Free and Emancipating Education*.⁹⁴ This initiative roots in contentious action by students from the University of Marburg in Germany, with Marburg student representative Mo Schmidt acting as the website administrator.⁹⁵ The related Facebook group was established on the cited day of action in 2008.⁹⁶ According to its website, the "International Student Movement (ISM) is an open platform for cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration between different individuals and groups involved with the struggle against the increasing commercialisation of education as well as for free emancipatory education".⁹⁷ Thus Croat activists at once appropriated prior framing from Serbia and hooked this onto an international process of student contention against the 'sell-out' of education.

⁹¹<http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Hrvatska/tabid/66/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/6524/Default.aspx> [25/01/12]

⁹²<http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2010/11/mate-kapovic-dvije-godine-borbe-za.html> [25/01/12]

⁹³ See formulation at: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2010/03/prosvjedni-faq.html> [26/01/12]

⁹⁴<http://ism-global.net/blog> [09/11/14]

⁹⁵ See articles on: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/is-the-international-student-movement-the-future-of-global-organizing/> and <http://www.dw.de/students-protest-across-germany-against-education-reforms/a-4328767> [09/11/14]

⁹⁶https://www.facebook.com/ism.global/info?ref=page_internal [09/11/14]

⁹⁷http://ism-global.net/ism_en [09/11/14]

The slogan *Znanje nije roba* (Knowledge is not a commodity) expresses the main message behind this frame nicely.



Figure 12: *Znanje Nije Roba* © H-Alter

Croat activists occupied the Faculty of Philosophy on April 20, 2009, and installed the direct democratic assembly *Slobodni Filozofski* as their main decision-making body (*BLOK I*).⁹⁸ The beginning of the occupation was carefully chosen to coincide with the ‘Reclaim Your Education’ week of action. This action week was also embedded within the framework of the above-mentioned *International Student Movement*. One of my interviewees told me that linking local contention to a global agenda had been a conscious decision to demonstrate legitimacy in front of state authorities (HR-J). The occupation lasted for 35 days, and spread to other faculties⁹⁹ within Zagreb, and to other Croatian cities (Osijek,¹⁰⁰ Pula,¹⁰¹ Rijeka,¹⁰² Slavonski Brod, Split,¹⁰³ Varaždin and Zadar¹⁰⁴). Student activists around the *Slobodni Filozofski* remained at the heart of the movement, however. The *Slobodni Filozofski* administers the richest website¹⁰⁵ among all student movements’ blogs I reviewed around the

⁹⁸ See: <http://www.zamirzine.net/spip.php?article7600> [25/01/12]

⁹⁹ See for example the plenum at the faculty of architecture: <http://www.slobodnaarhitektura.blogger.hr/> [25/01/12]

¹⁰⁰ See their website at <http://www.osjecki.studenti.blogger.hr/> [25/01/12]

¹⁰¹ See their website at: <http://drustvoznanja.org/> [25/01/12]

¹⁰² See their website at: <http://blog.autonomnistudenti.com/> [25/01/12]

¹⁰³ See their website at: <http://nsist.blog.hr> [25/01/12]

¹⁰⁴ See their website at: <http://www.nekomercijalizacijiunizd.blog.hr/> [25/01/12]

¹⁰⁵ The Croatian version of the website: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/>, English version: <http://slobodnifilozofski.org/> [25/01/12] – the English version had been removed by 29/04/14, but the Croat version lives on.

region. It is continuously put up to date and even boasts a proper English version. Although the Croatian and English versions diverge on the amount and variety of published materials, translations are generally of high quality (an exception rather than the rule for the other blogs I reviewed). According to estimates by the Croatian daily *Jutarnji List*, participation at the plenum varied markedly from only thirty up to 800 people.¹⁰⁶ Students abandoned the occupation over the summer without reaching their ultimate goal of installing free education. A second occupation (*BLOK II*) was taken up in fall, but with less faculties and towns and smaller participation. Activists at the *Slobodni Filozofski* officially justified the second occupation towards the public and the media with reference to the complexity of the issue at hand. “It should be a known fact that these are enduring political actions and the little can be reached within just a few weeks. The result can only come after a row of long-term battles.”¹⁰⁷ This occupation lasted for eleven days and was finally abandoned for other strategies involving collaboration with Croat farmers and workers, and opposition against Croatia’s EU accession.

Students mobilised again against a couple of new laws for higher education reforms in January 2011. They were then joined by the initiative *Akadska Solidarnost*¹⁰⁸ (Academic Solidarity). This initiative was founded in 2010 by a group of professors and university employees.¹⁰⁹ In 2012, students at the Faculty of Philosophy succeeded in entering the administrative bodies of the university when it substituted the *Studentski Zbor* with the *Slobodni Filozofski* plenum and its working groups. All in all, we can conclude that Croat activists built upon but substantially refined the contentious model provided by Serb activists from 2006 and (to a lesser degree) international contentious instances. As will become clear in the comparative chapter on Serbia and Croatia below, Croatian student contention was able to withstand tendencies of demobilisation as it diversified its ideological reach (i.e. the frames) and progressively expanded its constituency.

Serbia and Croatia were not the only countries with student contention. Around 2009, students mobilised in Macedonia and – significantly less in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see below). At the Faculty of Philosophy of the SS Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, a students’ initiative was established under the name *Sloboden Indeks* (Free Index) in 2009.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ <http://globus.jutarnji.hr/hrvatska/cetrnaest-saveznika-za-rusenje-vlade?onpage=1> [27/01/12]

¹⁰⁷ My translation from: “Treba biti svjestan činjenice da su ovakve političke akcije dugotrajne i da se malo što može riješiti u svega nekoliko tjedana. Rezultat može doći tek kao posljedica dugotrajne borbe.” <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/11/novoblokadni-faq.html#2> [27/01/12]

¹⁰⁸ <http://sites.google.com/site/akadsolid/tko-smo> [25/01/12]

¹⁰⁹ <http://globus.jutarnji.hr/hrvatska/cetrnaest-saveznika-za-rusenje-vlade?onpage=1> [27/01/12]

¹¹⁰ <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/> [24/02/12]

The initiative had grown from the justice initiative *Lenka*,¹¹¹ which had previously led campaigns for the abolition of tuition fees in June 2008. *Sloboden Indeks* is one of the founding members of the *Balkan Student*, a striving-to-be Balkan-wide coalition for student movements in the region (see below), and hosted its first regional meeting in Skopje.¹¹² Its Facebook page¹¹³ is up to date with at least one entry per week and boasts a relatively high number of members (4.357 members on 29/04/14).

Bosnia's situation is different from most of its neighbours. At first glance, there are no Bosnian contentious student groups at universities in the capital Sarajevo and at the national (all-country) level. The same is true for the level of its two constituent entities (Bosnian-Croat Federation and the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska). The only student initiative until 2013 went under the name *Studentski Pokret Bosne i Hercegovine* (Bosnian students' movement). But it is not a national, nor even a regional initiative. It is settled at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla (being the third biggest town situated in the northeast part of the Bosnian-Croat Federation). The initiative operates a blog¹¹⁴ and a Facebook page.¹¹⁵ The first entry on the blog dates back to June 2009. The Facebook page has five registered members and only sporadic entries (about one or two every month). Status messages circle around questions such as where to find scholarships and language courses or how to access exchange programmes (the last entry dating from February 2012). All in all this presence, as well as a letter of support sent to the *Slobodni Filozofski* in Zagreb in May 2009,¹¹⁶ indicate some temporal continuity but very low mobilisation levels within a geographically small area. In addition, the Facebook group was deactivated by November 2014. With the exception of this – already negligible – example of student contention in Tuzla, the country has not yet seen any other major street protests waged primarily by students and/or against higher education reforms. Even in tiny neighbouring country Montenegro, where students' activism developed late, students eventually entered the streets in much greater numbers (see below page 142).

The statement by a Bosnian student from Sarajevo that “it is really an unbelievable phenomenon that students in Bosnia are the most inactive part of society”¹¹⁷ succinctly sums up the state of affairs. There could be many reasons to explain this. At first hindsight one might be tempted to think that contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina is lacking altogether.

¹¹¹ See their website at: <http://lenka.mk/> [24/02/12]

¹¹² See: <http://balkan-student.site90.net/platform-sh/> [24/01/12]

¹¹³ See: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/sloboden.indeks/> [29/04/14]

¹¹⁴ <http://studentskiplenum.blogger.ba/> [22/02/12]

¹¹⁵ See: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/83046283378/> [22/02/12]

¹¹⁶ <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/06/podrska-studentskog-pokreta-bih.html> [24/01/12]

¹¹⁷ Personal communication with film student Aziz Ceho on November 3, 2011 in Sarajevo.

But to the contrary, contentious politics did and still does play a role in Bosnia. Contention was, however, never linked to issues of education or primarily to student groups.

As early as in 2005, activists established the initiative *Dosta* (Enough). Together with other initiatives, *Dosta* staged major protests from February to May 2008, after public outrage over politicians' inability to fight underage criminality.¹¹⁸ In 2009, *Dosta* spearheaded anti-corruption upheavals against the then Federal Prime Minister. Although protests were concentrated in the capital Sarajevo, *Dosta* managed to mobilise people around the country, for example, when it organised a countrywide tour with famous bands (such as: *Dubioza Kolektiv*, *Edo Maajka* and others) to call voters to participate at elections in 2006.¹¹⁹ *Dosta* never crystallised into an NGO, but many of its activists got involved in its successor initiative *Zašto Ne* (Why Not).¹²⁰ Since the assumption of a general lack of contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not correct, there must be other reasons why students have mobilised so little. My preliminary hypothesis is that the opportunity structure in Bosnia circumvents powerful and enduring students' activities.

First, there has been nobody to fight against. There are fourteen (!) ministries for education and science in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²¹ This does not only lead to a splitting of agendas and overlaps in responsibilities. But students probably find it hard to pinpoint their antagonist. Even if dissatisfied with their situation, and even if students might perceive similarities at various universities around the country, they will find it hard to identify the relevant institution and/or personified adversary (for example a minister of education) against whom to direct their anger. Second, there has been nothing to fight for. Identifying a common aim to rally behind was obstructed by the fact that Bosnia is gravely behind and confusedly approaches the implementation of the so-called Bologna process. To begin with, following the signature of the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area in 2003, consultations on the national framework law on higher education lasted for four years. This created a long period of legal uncertainty. After its final adoption in 2007, some parts of the country harmonised their laws while others were still in the process of doing so by 2010.¹²²

¹¹⁸ See account in: "Izvan Etnopolisa [Outside Ethnopolis]" by Heleen Touquet, 18/12/08. Available from: <http://www.pulsdemokratije.net/index.php?a=print&l=bs&id=1243> [03/11/11]

¹¹⁹ See article: "Iskzivanje nezadovoljstva i kroz muziku [Expressions of Discontent through Music]." In: *Oslobodjenje*, to be found at the Media Centar Sarajevo, <http://www.idoconline.info/digitalarchive/public/index.cf.m?fuseaction=serve&ElementId=236504> [03/11/11]

¹²⁰ <http://www.zastone.ba/> [03/11/11]

¹²¹ See 2012 National Report Regarding the Bologna Process Implementation: <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina.pdf> [12/03/14]

¹²² See page 43 in the 2010 Progress Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina by the EU Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/ba_rapport_2010_en.pdf [22/02/12]

While thus awaiting that the Bologna Declaration could be implemented nation-wide,¹²³ some departments took matters in their own hands, and started with (sometimes not even Bologna-related) reforms. This confusion around the implementation of Bologna forestalled an identification of Bologna as a symbol of all grievances while leaving students powerless in the face of administrative incompetence.

In addition to Croatia and Serbia, there is one more country where the capital's university was blocked: Slovenia. While blogs point towards earlier activism,¹²⁴ Slovenian students visibly raised their stakes on May 18, 2010, when around 8.000 activists gathered to protest against an education bill.¹²⁵ Compared to a population of two million Slovenians, this rate of participation is impressive. Protests turned violent, however, and yielded no results in the eyes of many activists.¹²⁶ Roughly a year later, in spring 2011, therefore, a new students' initiative established under the name *Mi Smo Univerza* (We Are the University). *Mi Smo Univerza* (together with the initiative *Pokreta 15.0*) blocked the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. The occupation was upheld for two months from November 23, 2011 until January 2012.¹²⁷ During this period, *Mi Smo Univerza* activists also organised protests against scholarships cuts for foreigners studying at Slovenian universities.¹²⁸ The initiative's website and Facebook page are continuously updated.¹²⁹ The immediate goals of the occupation, including the lowering of tuition fees and free education, were missed in Slovenia as well.

The last country to see its own student contention grow was Montenegro. In spring 2011, the *Studentski Pokret Crne Gore* (Students' Movement of Montenegro) was founded.¹³⁰ Some smaller activities were organised in the capital Podgorica, yet without much success. Student activists lamented this passivity. "Our students are not organised, and they are passive. They watch events in Montenegro pass by as if on a 'stage', without trying to be actively participating."¹³¹ Finally, activists from the *Studentski Pokret Crne Gore*, in

¹²³ Page 10 of the 2011 Working Program of the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, available from: <http://www.heg.gov.ba/Aktivnosti/progr/?id=2780> [22/02/12]

¹²⁴ See the blog *univerza ni naprodaj* (university is not for sale) at: <http://univerzaninaprodaj.blogspot.com/> [24/02/12]

¹²⁵ See: <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9FQ09683.htm> [24/02/12]

¹²⁶ See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CN8ZevN6yYw> [24/02/12]

¹²⁷ See newspaper article at: <http://www.zurnal24.si/okupacija-ff-koncana-clanek-146765> [24/02/12]

¹²⁸ <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/foreign-students-protest-over-loss-of-scholarships> [24/02/12]

¹²⁹ Website at: <http://mismouniverza.org/>; Facebook page at: <http://sl-si.facebook.com/mismouniverza> [24/02/12]

¹³⁰ The first entry on the Facebook page dates from March 2011 – the group has 495 members as of February 2012, see: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/162332757155125/> [24/02/12]

¹³¹ My translation from: "Naši studenti su neorganizovani i neaktivni, događaji u Crnoj Gori prolaze a studenti ih gledaju 'sa tribina', ne pokušavajući da budu aktivni učesnici." See entry of April 7, 2011: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/162332757155125/> [24/02/12]

cooperation with official student representatives¹³² from various universities and cities organised the biggest demonstration ever seen in Montenegro in over twenty years. With 4.000 participants,¹³³ about one fifth of the total student population in Montenegro is estimated to have walked the streets on this November 17, 2011. The demonstration seems to have been meticulously planned. A brilliant marketing video on YouTube bears testimony to this.¹³⁴ The video is professionally filmed and produced – just as a commercial film. It depicts a group of students at their work who stop their respective occupations and start clapping their hands. The video then shows a lecture hall full of students who clap their hands. It ends with the rhetoric question: How many of us are necessary so that we will be heard? This make-up might either point towards substantial sponsoring or to linkage with previously established organisations or student bodies. And – indeed – contention in Montenegro was largely co-sponsored by the official student representative organisations.

All around the region, the choice of street protests correlates with the inclusion of student representatives at the activist basis but mostly also at the leading level. Only in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, (some) activists emancipated themselves from existing representative fora of decision-making – and transgressed to something new: to different frames (commercialisation and anti-representative democracy) and different strategy (occupation plus direct democratic assemblies). Where decisions remained in the responsibility of representative student organisations, struggles were less disruptive. The contentious character of the protests escalated as soon as ties with existing representative structures at universities were cut. Thus, new organisational routines, collective identities and frames were constructed, which all fortified students’ “precarious” (McAdam & Snow 1997: xxi) position vis-à-vis authorities. Student contention may have started at different points in time around the region. However, different instances of contentious action taken together must be understood as a cumulative chain of episodes, shaped by the contingent transformative event of the first Serb occupation in 2006. Serb activists were the first to introduce claims and strategies (see below II.3.iv.a) that diffused to Croatia and from there back to additional countries in the region. Mobilisation was most intense (in terms of members, events and public impact) in Croatia; with Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia following in that order. Student contention was less intense in Montenegro and virtually absent in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹³² See: <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/ako-im-se-ne-ispune-zahtjevi-studenti-ce-nastaviti-okupljanja-clanak-47372> [24/02/12]

¹³³ See: http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2011/11/21/feature-03 [24/02/12]

¹³⁴ Available from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zjQTOdQBBAw [24/02/12]

II.3.ii Regional Commonalities of Contention

In the theory chapter I suggested ways through which activists negotiate their collective identities. I described how through addressing insiders and outsiders, they simultaneously create and recreate who they are (not) and what they stand in for (or against). I presented framing as a way to ignite collective identification. In the following two sub-sections, I examine two frames present throughout the region: one framing the aim and antagonists of the struggles, and the second framing the chosen strategies.

II.3.ii.a Education Is Not For Sale: Diffusing the Commercialisation Frame

Frames entail the ideological skeleton of contentious action. Frames describe, diagnose and evaluate reality, marking similarities or differences between actors. Like any other innovation, they may diffuse across time and space. In the region under scrutiny here, student activists (except Montenegrin and, partly, Bosnian activists) frame their activism as a fight against what they see as a global trend of neoliberal commercialisation of universities. They express a local problem (remodelling higher education after communism and war) in internationally available terminology. According to Tarrow (2005: 166-175), this is one mechanism of transnational contention. The commercialisation frame as constructed by student contention in Yugoslav successor states...

- defines the obligation to pay tuition fees as a grave injustice;
- explains this injustice to be a consequence of an erroneous ‘neoliberalist’ worldview that dominates worldwide;
- identifies local reforms as embedded within a general policy trend towards scaling down public responsibility for higher education;
- distinguishes the actors culpable for this state of affairs (international institutions and elites, and weak local elites) from the actors suffering from it (students, university employees, and citizens).

Although there are slight modifications, this frame is distributed throughout the whole region (except in Montenegro and partly Bosnia). Having to pay tuition fees is interpreted as an injustice. According to this problem definition, fees stem from and are a symbol for the transformation of public education into private commodities. In contrast to this, activists conceive of knowledge as a social product. “Knowledge is not a product that can be sold. (...) My idea is not only my idea. It is the product of all my thoughts and the thoughts many other people before me have spoken and written about. My idea is a social product. Knowledge is a

public good. It cannot be owned privately.”¹³⁵ Activists understand universities as public goods because they are financed by public taxes. “In our view the question of education concerns everybody, and not just students, professors and experts. The reason is that education is actually paid for by all citizens through their taxes.”¹³⁶ Consequently, students acknowledge all citizens paying taxes as their constituency, i.e. as those people whose interests they represent. This interpretation is crucial since it resurfaces in students’ discussions on the degree of openness/closeness of ‘their’ direct-democratic plenary assemblies towards participants from the general public. Dismantling the public good character of universities is regarded as an outcome of “contemporary capitalist ideologies”.¹³⁷ The slogans *Znanje/obrazovanje nije na prodaju* (Slovene: *Znanje ni naprodaj*, Macedonian: *Образованието не е за продажба* – Knowledge/education is not for sale), or *Znanje nije roba* (Knowledge is not a commodity) condense this interpretation.

But who, according to this frame, is actually to blame for the transposition of capitalist ideologies onto local societies? The frame positions ‘the markets’ and the institutions incorporating ‘market logic’ such as the EU, the IMF, the OECD etc. in opposition to students, professors, experts and – generally – citizens. In Croatia specifically, the European Union is accused of being at the heart of bringing free education down. “In Europe today, wherever people resist in the name of the old social rights, they become the enemies of progress and prosperity, freedom and democracy; in short: they become the enemies of Europe whose acquired social rights, such as the right to education, appear as the privileges of the social parasites, which are to be abolished on the road to better future” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 13f). Free education is not only defined as being in the interest of some random students but as an acquired social right of the majority.

The concept of rights here makes use of a discursive trope that reaches deeper and sounds more legitimate than mere interests. Rights are connected to claims of naturalness and legality, whereas interests count as malleable, manipulative and egocentric. Yet, since the “historical-social processes” (HR-C) operating world-wide do not lend themselves as targets of concrete opposition, students direct their anger towards their own economic, political and

¹³⁵ My translation from Macedonian: “Знаењето не е продукт кој може да се продаде. (...) Мојата идеја не е само моја идеја – таа е продукт на сите мои размислувања и на размислувањата на многу луѓе пред мене, кои за неа пишуваат и говореле. Мојата идеја е продукт на целото општество. Знаењето е јавно добро, и не може да биде приватна сопственост.” See the entry from November 27, 2011 at: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/> [24/02/12]

¹³⁶ My translation from: “Smatramo da je pitanje obrazovanja pitanje koje se tiče svih, a ne samo studenata, profesora i stručnjaka, jer obrazovanje upravo finansiraju svi građani kroz porez koji plaćaju” Material for press release by the plenum of the Serb *Plenum Filozofskog* from November 1, 2011, at: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/search/label/Naslovna> [27/02/12]

¹³⁷ <http://mismouniverza.org/the-condition-and-the-continuation-of-the-faculty-occupation/> [24/02/12]

academic elites. The “local comprador bourgeoisie” (RS-D) is accused of being neither able nor willing to withstand the pressures emanating from above. In his work on transnational contention, Tarrow expects that such internalisation would occur, where the international institution or culprit being ‘responsible’ for a problem was subjectively too remote for direct action (Tarrow 2005: 143-160). “[P]olitical elites have surrendered to the pressure exerted by OECD, EU and international economic and financial organisations, and [] the academic elites were unable to analyse critically the ideologies of innovativeness, competitiveness, flexibility, human capital and knowledge society and [] both of them have, shedding crocodile tears, accepted the imperatives of flexible labour market, increased competitiveness and ‘entrepreneurialisation’ of the university.”¹³⁸ Politicians (parties, and also state administration) are seen as working hand in hand with economic tycoons and capitalist interests. This framing has an effect on the strategies of cooperation or non-cooperation with official structures (see below section II.3.iii). The sense of have been put at the mercy of the markets provides the motivation to mobilise in the name of the whole society as constituency. “[T]he student fight for the right to free education should be understood as part of a more comprehensive struggle to defend the interests of the majority, and not as a particular and selfish aberration, as some media and politicians are trying to present it” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 78).

Besides having identified the main problem as well as the culprits and victims to the problem, activists found it necessary to frame themselves as serious actors. This required not only portraying antagonists as weak but also boosting their own potency. “[W]e, the students and university workers took the task of political resistance and critical reflection into our own hands.”¹³⁹ One part of signalling this capacity lay in emphasising rational and good behaviour. “Our fight is a fight of intelligent and lucid young people with righteous and clear ideals” (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 94). Student activists in the whole region expressed the experience that students are not being heard nor taken seriously by the older generation.¹⁴⁰ One example from Macedonia: “We are not naïve; we know what we have put ourselves up to. We know what the chances and risks, and what our system is like. (...) We know about our potential, and that’s why we’re here!”¹⁴¹ The *Borba Za Znanje* documents non-drinking policies during

¹³⁸ *Mi Smo Univerza*: <http://mismouniverza.org/public-statement-march-23-2011/> [24/02/12]

¹³⁹ See website at: <http://mismouniverza.org/public-statement-march-23-2011/> [24/02/12]

¹⁴⁰ “How many do we have to be until we will be heard?” (“Koliko nas treba da bi čuli?” – minute 0:46) was the rallying cry in Montenegro: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zjQTOdQBBAw [24/02/12]

¹⁴¹ My translation from: “Не сме наивни, знаеме од каде тргнуваме, знаеме кои се ризиците и можностите, наши и на системот. Знаеме дека е долг (...) и градење на студентско движење. Знаеме исто (...) во нашиот потенцијал како студент(к)и, ете затоа сме тука!” Available from: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/about/> [24/02/12]

the Serb 2006 occupation is a concrete outflow of this attempt to signal seriousness and capacity (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 91). Activists from the Zagreb *Slobodni Filozofski* counteracted charges of naivety by drawing up a behavioural code. Thus the first issue of the *Slobodni Filozofski*'s own newsletter *Skripta*¹⁴² brought a "codex of student behaviour during student control at the Faculty of Philosophy".¹⁴³ Occupation "was neither a theatrical acting out, staged for the gaze of others, nor a passage à l'acte, the heroic leap into the chasm of radical negation. It was humbly called: 'the student control over the faculty'. (...) Student protest in Zagreb was completely post-hysterical, there was no Oedipal drama, no authority crush, no collective hormonal outburst, and no generational clash" (Occupation Cookbook, 2009: 14). Creating free spaces through occupying buildings was also taken as an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to remain disciplined over a substantial period of time.

Against this background, claiming free and accessible tertiary education for all¹⁴⁴ is the core demand of all student movements, with the exception of Montenegro and partly Bosnia. In the latter countries, students are content with demanding lower tuition fees¹⁴⁵ rather than their complete abolition. The commercialisation frame is dominant in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. The fact that student activists from Yugoslav successor states connect themselves to the *International Student Movement*, and the "International Joint Statement on Free Education", additionally demonstrates the dispersion of the commercialisation frame from the global to the local level. The International Joint Statement (published on September 27, 2009) was effectively endorsed by a couple of student movements from the region, including the *Slobodni Filozofski* (Croatia), the *Sloboden Indeks* (Macedonia), the *Odbrani Filozofski* (Serbia) and *Mi Smo Univerza* (Slovenia).¹⁴⁶ The statement claims, amongst others, that students "struggle against the privatization of public education, and for free and emancipatory education."¹⁴⁷ In the chapter on coalition-building

¹⁴² The newsletter *Skripta* was published from the first day of the first Croat occupation in 2009 until 2012. It relayed translated versions of theoretical texts of interest (such as by Immanuel Wallerstein or Etienne Balibar), press releases (those were signed with: Plenum of the Faculty of Philosophy) or reprinted articles from other newspapers (*Zarez*, for instance). Editions can be found at: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/04/arhiva-skripta.html> (Croatian only) [19/08/13]

¹⁴³ "Kodek ponašanja za vrijeme studentske kontrole nad Filozofskim Fakultetom." See *Skripta* no. 1 from 20/04/09, available from: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/04/arhiva-skripta.html> [24/02/12]

¹⁴⁴ See for Bosnia: entry from 04/06/09, available from: <http://studentskiplenum.blogger.ba/> [22/02/12]; Croatia: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2010/03/prosvjedni-faq.html> [26/01/12]; in Serbia, this demand was formed around spring of 2009 – see notes of plenum: http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/2011_10_16_archive.html [26/01/12]; Macedonia: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/about/> [24/02/12]

¹⁴⁵ See demands put forward by Montenegrin students: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/162332757155125/> [24/02/12]

¹⁴⁶ Neither Montenegrin nor Bosnian student activists have yet to date [February 2012] signed the declaration, see: http://ism-global.net/international_joint_statement [29/04/14]

¹⁴⁷ The statement was drawn up on September 27, 2009: http://ism-global.net/international_joint_statement [24/02/12]

below (II.3.v), I note how the commercialisation frame historically first appeared in the UK before spreading to France, Greece and other countries such as Serbia, from where it was diffused to the *Slobodni Filozofski* activists in Croatia.

II.3.ii.b Acting Together As Others Did: Diffusing Direct Democracy

Mass demonstrations on the streets have been a firm element of social movements' contentious repertoire in Yugoslavia. As set forth in the historical chapter, the "power of the street corners" (Nadjivan 2008: 90) had grown into a modular strategy of opposition from the late 1980s right through the war period. Occupations had already occurred at the university of Belgrad in 1986. Occupying faculties based on decisions taken at direct democratic plenary assemblies, however, was new. In this section, I expand on the tactics of occupation and deliberation at plenary assemblies developed by student activists from after 2000 and how it was woven into a frame of direct democracy. In the preceding paragraphs I have shown that student activists constituted the sell-out of universities to private market forces as the core problem. But so far I have only briefly touched upon another crucial point of criticism by student activists: namely the failure of representation (or representative democracy).

Student activists conceptualised the above-discussed ideology of neoliberalism as resulting from distorted governing structures. Accordingly, neoliberalism tilts policies to the interests of a few rich while omitting the interests of the (non-represented) majority. By choosing to install plenary assemblies as their core strategy, student activists framed themselves as defending 'true democracy' at a substantial (through their criticism of commercialisation of higher education) and procedural level (direct democratic deliberation based on inclusivity and equality). Through framing their struggle as a fight for the rights of the majority, they established not only their capacity to act but their legitimacy to do so as well. The prognostic and motivational frame of direct democracy in sum proposed the tactics to solve the problem at hand: the solution lay in creating free spaces where students (and interested persons) could meet, join together ideas and discuss as equals. This framing was, as mentioned above, already visible in the communications by Serb students in 2006. Slovene students later stated also that they opted for a "time and space where a new higher education policy could be formed. (...) [This can] bridge the separation between isolated critiques (...) and the production of critical theory (which cannot exist within a corporate-administrative

university).”¹⁴⁸ The principle according to which these free spaces should function was non-coercive deliberation and majority decision-making in inclusive and egalitarian *plenums*.

Blocking the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade in 2006 was meant to signal resolve and create a free space for “spreading the truth about the student protests.”¹⁴⁹ As I have mentioned, occupation in reality meant that only lectures and seminars were disturbed. Other university services (such as library, administration, supervision etc.) were left unhindered. The logic behind this was that the capitalist process of knowledge production should be discontinued. This is what we have discussed as structural disruption of an institution earlier (Gonzalez-Vaillant & Schwartz 2012: 1). As one interviewee from Croatia formulated it: “We wanted to put a wedge into the system (...) not to be just a one-day headline” (HR-E).

The perceived failure of representative democracy necessitated a solution – this was found in the establishment of direct democratic plenary assemblies. This particular dimension of students’ strategy was productive (or: creative) rather than disruptive. It puts into practice the verdict of Oliver Machart, who postulated that radical democratic activism “performatively realises what must in spite of everything remain unrealised”¹⁵⁰ (Machart 2002: 300). Direct democratic plenary assemblies can be found around the region in capitals and provincial cities, except in Montenegro. In some places (such as in Macedonia, Bosnia or in Novi Sad, Serbia), plenums were established without occupying the faculty. On the other hand, the exact opposite (i.e. occupation without direct democratic deliberation) never occurred. Direct democracy was the guiding strategy upon which the tactic of occupation could be chosen, if perceived necessary.

According to the frame, direct democracy is a logical consequence of a failure of 1) students’ representation at universities¹⁵¹ and 2) national parliamentary representation more generally. “The principle of direct democracy referred back to the broken promises of the representative democracy in capitalism”¹⁵² (Curkovic 2013: 255). With respect to their immediate meso-level context at universities, activists from the *Slobodni Filozofski* explained their choice of direct democratic occupation in 2009 with its superiority to representative students’ structures. A second reason was the argument that, contrary to street manifestations,

¹⁴⁸ English statement on the “Condition and continuation of faculty occupation”: <http://mismouniverza.org/the-condition-and-the-continuation-of-the-faculty-occupation/> [24/02/12]

¹⁴⁹ My translation from: “saopštiti istinu o studentskom protestu” See: http://komunist.free.fr/arhiva/nov2006/studentski_protest.html [24/02/12]

¹⁵⁰ My translation from: “die performative Effektivierung dessen, was trotz alledem unverwirklicht bleibt”

¹⁵¹ FAQ part 2 of *Slobodni Filozofski*: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/04/cesto-postavljana-pitanja-drugi-dio.html#1> [20/02/12]

¹⁵² My translation from: “Das Prinzip der direkten Demokratie übernahm die Rolle einer Rückkehr zu den gebrochenen Versprechen der repräsentativen Demokratie im Kapitalismus.”

occupation was less in danger to be ridiculed “by the media as a short unfruitful spectacle”.¹⁵³ According to *Slobodni Filozofski* activists from Zagreb, who – through the *Blokadna Kuharica*– were the most vocal in this framing exercise, representative democracy did not just fail voters but corrupted the true nature of democracy.

“As has been said already, the historically acquired social rights constitute the minimal institutionally defined interests of the majority. The attack on those rights is an unequivocal decision against democracy. That is, if we take democracy to really mean the rule of the majority in favour of common good, and not an empty ritual of choosing among members of the political elite, which differ only by the names of the parties of which they are candidates” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 78).

The inability of student parliaments at universities and national political structures to represent the (perceived) interests of students, and tax-paying citizens hence widened into broad criticism of representative democracy.

If changes in higher education are diagnosed as an attack against the interests of the majority, the question of legitimacy arises automatically. From the argument on fighting for the majority follows that this majority should be involved in the collective action, too. Thus, the open-door-policy for plenary assemblies was considered “the only consistently democratic [option]” (ibid. 25). Opening up the plenums for everybody (inclusivity principle), insisting on non-hierarchical structures (equality principle), rejecting force in decision-making (deliberation principle) and instituting strict majority voting (majority principle) provided the student movements with the procedural legitimacy they needed. “The plenum is the place where everybody participates on par in reasoned discussions and in voting to reach decisions. The plenum is legitimate because it is completely inclusive.”¹⁵⁴ [*Plenum Filozofskog*] “The basis of this manner of decision-making is that anybody may take part in it. It must be noted that the plenum does not use force to implement its decisions, but the power of reasoned arguments – those that do not participate in plenary sessions are not obliged to except (sic!) a decision that is made, but they are nonetheless informed about it” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 25; [*Slobodni Filozofski*])

¹⁵³ My translation from: “Prosvjed (...) prelako se apsorbira medijski kao jednokratni spektakl bez konzekvenci.” FAQ part 2 of *Slobodni Filozofski*: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/04/cesto-postavljana-pitanja-drugi-dio.html#1> [20/02/12]

¹⁵⁴ My translation from: “Plenum je dakle mesto na kom svako učestvuje ravnopravno, u argumentovanoj raspravi, i glasanjem učestvuje u donošenju odluka. Plenum je upravo legitiman zato što je u potpunosti inkluzivan.” Material for press release by the plenum of the Serb *Plenum Filozofskog* from November 1, 2011, at: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/search/label/Naslovna> [27/02/12]

Surely, these principles were surely not always adhered to in practice. As an interviewee from Serbia remembers: “[On the night before the occupation,] we at the Faculty of Philosophy had a general assembly that started off with around two hundred people. But because of splits between the left groups (...), the occupation was voted with only twenty persons present. But it was presented as a direct democratic decision by ‘heroic’ students who had endured four hours of intensive debates” (RS-B). This criticism shall not be dismissed easily. Student activists involved in occupations continuously struggled with doubts as to their legitimacy. However, their proclaimed representativeness (‘authentic voice of students’) is a claim, not a fact. This encapsulates a sensitive point, which social movements – such as other bottom-up participatory initiatives – have to deal with in general. In this respect, student activists in Yugoslav successor states differ little from student activists worldwide. They struggle with proving their legitimacy just as students elsewhere.

This question regarding legitimacy-qua-representativeness of social movements harks back to a long-standing debate within academia on democracy about the representativeness of civil society in general. Underlying this is a sensitive issue for democratic theory, which I have outlined in the respective chapters on theories of democracy above but will briefly discuss here too. The issue concerns the question how to realise the rule (*kratein*) of the people (*demos*). Proponents of liberal or thin models of democracy (such as the previously-quoted Samuel P. Huntington) hold that elections are sufficient for putting democracy into practice, because democratic elections assure that representatives stand in for their voters. Advocates of strong/thick/deep/communicative democracy theories (compare the above chapters on critical and radical theories of democracy) however, argue that democratic rule needs more than representation through elections (compare the juxtaposition in Barber 1984).

Using different terminologies such scholars (cf. an overview in: Little & Lloyd 2009: 1-12) in some or other way argue that democracy would be emptied of its meaning if it was reduced to representation. If ruling meant bestowing power onto few representatives only, democracy would boil down to “what politicians do; what citizens do (when they do anything) is vote for politicians” (Barber 1984: 148). In contrast to this, democracy should mean a constant process of reclaiming politics by the *demos*. Accordingly, the task of people would be to take politics into their own hands and reconstitute a “community stage” (Ranciere 1999: 109) through acts of participation. In practice this requires widening avenues for participation (cf. Pateman 1970; Young 2000). “There is democracy if there is a specific sphere where the people appear. There is democracy if there are specific political performers who are neither agents of the state apparatus nor parts of society, if there are groups that

displace identities (...). Lastly, there is democracy if there is a dispute conducted by a non-identary subject on the state where the people emerge. The forms of democracy are the forms taken by the emergence of this appearance” (Ranciere 1999: 100).

Student activists in Yugoslav successor states attempted just this: to unsettle prevailing understandings according to which the status quo democratic regimes in the region embody the ‘European’ ideal of democracy. And they probed alternative ways of living democracy through creative reinvention (Machart 2002: 300). The yardstick to evaluate such activities is not legitimacy-aka-representativeness. Social movements could never be ‘legitimate’ in a strictly procedural sense because they will hardly ever reach the quantitative representativeness parties (in theory) acquire in elections. Nevertheless, social movements *can be relevant* in democratic terms, *if* their actions/ discourses open up unprecedented and innovative ways for thinking, discussing and acting about and in democracy. As stated in my concluding chapter, Croat student activists most probably achieved this. The reader will learn, however, that Serb student activists’ achievement in that regard is much more dubious.

In this chapter, I dissected how – in order to fight against the injustice of paying obligation – the frame on direct democracy suggests a solution (creating free spaces for deliberation and decision-making) and the principles according to which these spaces should be arranged. The frame states that the fight against commercialisation of higher education should be waged through direct democratic means. I also discussed that occupation was perceived as an effective measure of last resort, after street protests had failed in yielding results, were being co-opted by representative student organisations and/or ridiculed as spectacles. Underlying this shared frame are perceptions of similarities amongst student activists around the region. In the following chapter, I concentrate on the differences existing between student activities in Yugoslav successor countries.

II.3.iii We Are Different: Varieties of Contention

I dedicated the preceding sections to commonalities of student activists’ ideologies and strategies present in the region. Henceforth I emphasise varieties. Differences can be found in the decision to occupy faculties, in the institution of direct democratic plenary assemblies, in the degree of opposition towards the political establishment, in the refusal to cooperate with existing student representative organisations and in the degree to which student activists supported collective action waged by other segments of society. Let me address all of these points one by one.

Occupation was chosen in Serbia (in Belgrade), Croatia (in Zagreb and provincial cities) and Slovenia (in Ljubljana). In Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia, there were no

occupations. Montenegro and Bosnia are special cases also, because there the calls for lower tuition fees were not embedded in the commercialisation frame. Thus, in Montenegro, tuition fees are diagnosed as unfair with view to the extent of local poverty, not with view to the dismantling of public-good universities.¹⁵⁵ In Bosnia (i.e. the provincial town Tuzla), too, the problem of tuition fees is linked to corruption and bribery at universities rather than to a neoliberal sell-out of education.¹⁵⁶ In the remaining countries, the commercialisation frame dominated the reasoning of why struggles were waged. This divergence can be explained in part by the differences in the extent to which and the quality with which higher education reforms were conducted.

As I set forth in the chapter on transformative events above (see II.3.i), Bologna was unevenly implemented in the region, but worst of all in Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro. A second reason can be found in the degree to which students were confronted with and became interested in globalised discourses on higher education. As I briefly mentioned above and return to later again, Serb and Croat activists were particularly well informed about events elsewhere. Third, personalities mattered. In Croatia specifically, those activists in the (informal) driver seats had a strong appetite for theory. Reading and discussing Marxist literature in reading circles had brought many of the core activists together to begin with. In Serbia, for instance, theoretical preparation had not proceeded as far. “We never stopped to think what those slogans meant that we yelled, (...) we didn’t think what were the implications of our demands, we didn’t think about which measures would be needed to meet the demands” (RS-E).

Another dimension along which contention differed concerned how activists practically dealt with student representative councils at universities and faculties (*studentski parlament* in Serbia, *studentski zbor* in Croatia). As should be clear by now, there is a recognition shared by all student activists in the region that the existing structures of student representation are working insufficiently. Student representatives were conceptualised as very real and very close antagonistic figures. They were accused of working against the interests of the majority of students not because they did not reap concessions from politicians, but because activists thought they did not listen to students. “Our students’ parliament [in Zagreb] has also been forever linked to youth party structures. The so-called students’ representatives have never represented the interests of the majority of students, but have actually worked

¹⁵⁵ See entry of April 7, 2011 on tuition fees (*školarine*): <http://www.facebook.com/groups/162332757155125/> [24/02/12]

¹⁵⁶ Entry from 04/09/09, available from: <http://studentskiplenum.blogger.ba/> [22/02/12]

against their interests.”¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, this prompted only some of them to cut off ties with these representatives. In the beginning of 2009, the tactic by activists from the Zagreb *Slobodni Filozofski* was to involve as many of the representatives from the faculty level into the discussions leading up to and preparing the first occupation (*BLOK I*). As time passed on and all student representatives that could be integrated were part of the movement, activists at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb switched tactics. Now they headed for substituting the (faculty level) students’ council with the *plenum*. This choice was eventually crowned with success. Thus, the plenary assembly of the *Slobodni Filozofski* took over the *studentski zbor*’s functions in 2011.

In Serbia, activists totally refused to cooperate with student representatives at all levels, also at the faculty level. As in Croatia, the basis for the challenge was a perceived lack in input legitimacy. The Serb tactic of confrontation resulted in mutual obstructions and even violence. For example, student representatives came to disturb the plenum in Belgrade.¹⁵⁸ In the Serbian regional capital Novi Sad, members of the *studentski parlament* of the Faculty of Philosophy shut in around 200 activists, who had planned to hold a plenum. Lecture halls and doors were sealed and toilets capped for a couple of hours. This closure lasted until the police arrived.¹⁵⁹ This violent reaction by student representatives was successful in barring any further attempt at occupation in Novi Sad.

In the remaining countries, the ideological criticism of student representation did not result in an end to cooperation. For example, the major demonstration in Montenegro on November 17, 2011, was strongly supported by and co-organised by student parliament representatives from the capital Podgorica and the provincial town Nikšić. Student representatives assumed a vital role during the manifestation.¹⁶⁰ In Bosnia, activists from Tuzla equally share the criticism of student representation. But there, student representative councils were not working at all. Consequently, there was a picture of perpetrators or enemies but no clearly institutionalised target (with identifiable functionaries) against which concrete actions could be directed.

¹⁵⁷ My translation from: “I naš studentski parlament oduvijek je bio poligon za mladež političkih stranaka. Takozvani studentski predstavnici nisu predstavljali mišljenje većine studenata, engo su radili upravo protiv njihovih interesa.” Letter of support by students from the *Slobodni Filozofski* in Zagreb to students at the *Plenum Filozofskog* in Belgrade, available from: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2010/11/podrska-studentima-filozofskog.html> [27/02/12]

¹⁵⁸ As stated in the material prepared for the press conference on November 1, 2011: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/search/label/Naslovna> [27/02/12]

¹⁵⁹ See the respective account at the blog of the *Novi Sad Plenum*: <http://plenumnovisad.blogspot.com/> [20/02/12]

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/ako-im-se-ne-ispune-zahitjevi-studenti-ce-nastaviti-okupljanja-clanak-47372> [20/02/12]

The student movements also diverged according to the degree to which activists actively (and not just ideologically) obstructed negotiations with politicians and/or the university administration. At the *Slobodni Filozofski* in Zagreb, activists completely refused to negotiate with higher authorities. This tactic relied at once on lessons learnt from the past. Activists bemoaned that previous student contention (already during the 1990s) had suffered from the commitment trap of negotiations: once a deal was struck, not sticking to the compromises would mean that one lost the little reputation and standing one possessed. Besides, Croat activists consequently constructed the prohibition to negotiate as a result of the direct democratic strategy. Since the process of negotiation required representatives who would talk on behalf of the others, but the principles were that everybody should be able to participate in decision-making, negotiation was inconceivable ideologically. Thus, “we did not loose legitimacy. (...) Plus our struggle was (...) a transparent thing” (HR-F). This tactic was not always replicated in other Croat towns. Interviewees cited this as one of the reasons why occupations in the provinces in 2009 lasted shorter than in Zagreb.

The Serb activist from the third occupation (*BLOK III*) at the Faculties of Philology and Philosophy were less coherent in this respect. At the beginning (based on the Croat example), activists refused negotiation. Some of my interviewees criticised this in retrospect as a futile hope. “We were sitting down and waiting for them to come to us. Which was insane (...) because we were never strong enough to be in a position to have them come to us” (RS-E). Others, however (such as RS-D and RS-N) espoused the attitude that striking deals was a sign of weakness and reformism. This split in retrospective evaluations is replicated in inconsistencies in concrete demands in Serbia. Both disagreements can be traced back to fundamental disunity at the (informal) core of the activist basis in Serbia. I will expand on this significant observation at length in the section II.3.iv.b below. The failure to reach internal consensus on negotiating tactics in Serbia eventually ended in a turnaround of the position.

An additional distinction between instances of student contention in the region lies in their (non)involvement for other social actors’ struggles. Again, the Zagreb activists gathering around the *Slobodni Filozofski* were the most active in extending their concerns and consequently their field of involvements. Throughout the *Blokadna Kuharica*, but also in other texts (such as in the FAQ section on workers¹⁶¹) activists portrayed their collective action as a role model for virtually all topics. This process started during 2009 already, as activists from the *Slobodni Filozofski* joined a demonstration by farmers against the

¹⁶¹ <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/12/radnicki-faq.html> [27/02/12]

deterioration of working conditions in agriculture.¹⁶² In a region where the word for farmers (*seljački*) is commonly used in an abusive manner, this urban-rural coalition was innovative and reminded only of *Otpor!*'s attempt to bring in rural populations during the October 5 revolution. I did not find any other incident around the region where this constellation was copied. In addition, the *Slobodni Filozofski*'s plenum took up the fight for workers' rights. This incorporation of workers' issues into the student's movement continued and intensified during 2010. In contrast to the cooperation with farmers, however, this engagement can be more easily couched in terms of the left ideology and historic experiences in Yugoslavia. Most recently, the *Slobodni Filozofski* marked yet another involvement. On the occasion of the referendum on EU accession in Croatia in January 2012, activists propagated the platform *Demokratska Inicijativa Protiv Europske Unije* (Democratic Initiative against the EU).¹⁶³

Overall, (the Croat version of) the *Slobodni Filozofski*'s website is growing into a web portal for social movements in Croatia in general. Beside this, student initiatives such as, for example, the Slovene *Mi Smo Univerza* provides information on other issues than higher education, such as precarious labour and the EU crisis. They partly also include wider social issues in their demands.¹⁶⁴ But only the *Slobodni Filozofski* seems to have incorporated the shifting, and widening, concerns into concrete issue coalitions with other segments of Croat society. As I recount in the comparative chapter on Croatia and Serbia below, the *Slobodni Filozofski*'s widening agenda did not provoke unequivocal praise amongst students. "In order to be for free education today you must be anti-capitalist, euro-sceptic, an enthusiast of direct democratic decision-making and a visitor to the Subversive Film Festival."¹⁶⁵ However, from an analytical point of view, it shows an unparalleled expansion of contention upon an ever-growing part of society. As I argue in the next chapter, this is indicative of the fact that Croat contention succeeded in establishing relatively stable networking and organisational structures, upon which inclusive and open counterpublics can enfold.

¹⁶² Compare the documentary by Igor Bezinovic: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZX8m-G4LQU> [25/01/12]

¹⁶³ See the respective Q&A section regarding the initiative at the *Slobodni Filozofski*: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2012/01/demokratska-inicijativa-protiv-europske.html> [25/01/12]

¹⁶⁴ See the list of demands in Serbo-Croat at: <http://mismouniverza.org/srbohrvatski/> [25/01/12]

¹⁶⁵ My translation from: "Da bi bio za besplatno školstvo danas moraš biti antikapitalist, euroskeptik, entuzijast direktno-demokratskog načina odlučivanja i posjetitelj Subversive Film Festivala." Essay accessible at: <http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/hrvatska/quo-vadis-plenum> [25/01/12]

II.3.iv Comparing Student Contention in Croatia and Serbia

In the introduction, I stated a descriptive and an explanatory question: I sought to analyse what happens when collective actors join forces in confrontation with elites. In addition, I purported to explain why between two countries marked by substantial macro-level socio-political similarities (democratisation, marketisation, state-building), there were differences as to the eventual implications of (student) social movements. In the following chapter, I first compare the emergence and course of student contention in Serbia and Croatia, focusing on its context and proper features. As mentioned before, I examine the dimensions of 1) framing and identification, 2) organising, 3) context and 4) collaboration. The first two elements provide a picture of contentious action, and the last two offer insights into its interactive dimension. As a second step, I attempt to clarify the differences in the course and character of the movements. This analysis links back to my argument, which was that student movements articulate alternatives to and (possibly) transform cultural authorities.

II.3.iv.a Crafting Contention Through Framing and Identification

Frames give clues as to how social movements define the problem, who they perceive as victims (adherents) and perpetrators (targets), which solution they identify as alleviating the problem and which concrete tactics they therefore see as possible. Finally, frames function also to motivate activists cognitively and emotionally (cf. Benford & Snow 2000: 615ff). Stating a problem lies at the heart of framing, since it gives direction, purpose and meaning to social contention. As Melucci states “objective problems don’t exist in themselves. They come to exist as problems because people are capable of perceiving and defining them as such within processes of interaction” (Melucci 1989: 193). The demands brought forward by social movements contain such frames. But (retrospective) accounts of success and failure by key informants also enlighten us as about how activists frame their identity and activism.

The diagnostic frames in Croatia and Serbia resemble each other very much. In terms of diagnosing the problem, student activists put capitalism (or, the term most often used by the interviewees, “neoliberalism”) at the heart of the flawed picture. They oppose capitalism because they see it as propagating norms (market liberty and individualism) and enforcing mechanisms (exchange of goods and strife for individual improvement combined with personalised responsibility for success or failure) that they interpret as unjust and unfit. “This system was seriously wrong and far-reaching into the social fabric of society” (HR-E). The introduction of the Bologna treaties from 2005 was seen as a concrete policy couched within a

general trend towards reducing “education [to] its exchange value” (HR-E). Interviewees highlighted the following points to underline the negative consequences of this trend:

- HR/RS: economic discrimination. Introducing tuition fees for all with Bologna meant that already advantaged persons would get easier access to education. “It was a struggle against an educational system which puts the focus first on your ability to pay” (HR-J).
- HR/RS: shifting responsibility from the state to universities, and ultimately to individuals. In both countries, interviewees underlined that it was in the genuine responsibility of the state to provide sufficient funds for education. As part of a trend of neoliberalism, states had established the autonomy of universities and left for them to decide whether to levy tuition fees and at which amount. According to the students, this shifted state responsibilities to universities. And since the latter often decided to cash in fees irrespective of a students’ economic status, studying became an egoistic competition between the less and more fortunate. “Capitalism turns everybody against everybody” (RS-N).

Two additional effects were specific to the frames narrated by activists:

- RS: destroying solidarity between professors and students. Accordingly, the autonomy of universities and self-management by professors had turned professors against students. Student activists thought professors were preoccupied with advancing their own careers at the expense of solidarity with students. This point was mentioned more often by Serb than by Croat students – the latter even pointed out that in the beginning of the first occupation in spring 2009, support by professors and the faculty was actually quite high. This distinction is due to a difference in tactic (to which I will return to under II.3.iv.b).
- HR: loss of social rights. In Croatia especially, activists bemoaned the diminution of the social right to education. In their public discourse, they actively pushed the link between their fight and the human rights agenda, referring back to Article 66 of the Croatian constitution, which states that “everyone shall have access to education under equal conditions and in accordance with his/her aptitudes.”¹⁶⁶ This tactic of linking contention to an already existing and legitimate text (the constitution) was a successful way of “making [our struggle] intelligible” (HR-E). What Croatian activists did was to “find niches in the current discourse” (HR-E).

¹⁶⁶ See the Croatian constitution: <http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=2408> [19/08/13]

In theoretical terms, this means they tried to construct a master frame that would matter beyond the confines of their own particular cause.

The strong focus on capitalism and capitalists as culprits of the mishap in higher education does invite the assumption that the main lines of the frames were borrowed from somewhere else, i.e. that they diffused from other countries and other students to Croatia and Serbia. In fact, activists in both countries conceded they were influenced by each other. Thus Croats conceded to have been inspired by the protests in Serbia in 2006 (they mentioned reading the *Borba Za Znanje*), while Serb activists said that they had all studied the *Blokadna Kuharica* published by activists after the first occupation in Croatia in spring 2009.

But the lines of diffusion reach further across geography: Going back to the original publication so many interviewees referred to – the *Borba Za Znanje* – one reads that France and Greece particularly inspired activists in Serbia to take up the issue of tuition fees and higher education. Thus, a discussion on April 18, 2006 ran under the title “Sorbonne in flames”. This event had been organised by a group identified as the *Socijalni Front*, a left-marxist formation founded in 2004. This initiative would take on the lead in organising the first occupation in Serbia in autumn 2006 (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 135). Greece is cited as another positive example, since students there succeeded in occupation in a country which was identified as both Balkan and inside the European Union. As evident from the last example, diffusion relies upon “attribution[s] of similarity” (Soule et al. 2010: 6). Similarities between the struggles outside the region were linked to the global spreading of capitalism. “If capitalism is international, the struggle also has to be international” (HR-B).

Within the region, this overarching discourse was adapted to local realities, as perceived by the activists. Because, as Soule et al. rightly noted, “diffusion (...) does not simply mean that (...) frames are transplanted in whole cloth (...); creative borrowing, adaption (...) are often vital to its success” (Soule et al. 2010: 2). Since Croatia and Serbia are both semi-peripheries to the developed countries at the core,¹⁶⁷ as the reconstructed frame goes, “shock austerity policies” (HR-B) were particularly harmful. Incapable elites joined up with outside forces (above all the European Union) to force privatisation policies upon the countries that went under the false promise of progress and normalisation. Croat activists were very eloquent in explicating this background of national elites juxtaposing European civilisation against Balkan inferiority (socialism, authoritarianism, nationalism etc.). Many of

¹⁶⁷ This argument is elaborated extensively by the authors of a special edition of the Croat alternative magazine *Zarez*. Three of the authors were also my interviewees; the remaining authors have been identified to me as participants to the occupations in Croatia in 2009. See: “Sa Onu Stranu Schengena” (On the Other Side of Schengen), *Zarez*, xiii/302, from 03/02/11.

the activists had already been part of various reading groups (including a Marxist reading group). Interviewees could readily point out to me who was “strong in theory” (HR-G). Most certainly, Croat activists of 2009 and later compared with earlier waves of contention during the 1980s and 1990s had developed a “fetishisation of theory” (Stubbs 2012: 24). During my interviews, I was impressed by the congruence and theoretical complexity of their ideas – at times I felt as if I was talking to university tutors. This complexity of argument is partly due to the fact that many of the Croat activists were interested in theoretical reflection. But it also invokes the fact that (as written before) there had been an intense phase of reflection and preparation ahead of the first occupation in 2009. This phase had been the opportunity to straighten out ideological and terminological differences. “We had quibbled over every single detail during these six weeks” (HR-C). Following from this intellectual involvement, it was logical that some of the activists subsequently dedicated themselves to journalism (via *Zarez*, the Croatian *Le Monde* etc.) and essay-writing. They thus transformed (cf. Koopmans 2011: 28ff) their mode of social activism while remaining within the confines of their basic framing.

While the diagnostic frames in Croatia and Serbia were very much alike, this does not hold true for the so-called prognostic frame. According to the theory presented in chapter I.2.ii.b above, social movements not only care to specify what they think is wrong but also how to change it. Hence, they propose a remedy for the problem and/or hatch out routes of action that should be taken. In short, Croatia and Serbia differed in the consistency with which they formulated demands and tactics. At first sight, activists from both countries concur that the solution would be to simply reverse the capitalist trend in education (i.e. to end the privatisation/ commodification of education).

The difference is that activists in Croatia managed fairly soon (way before the first occupation of spring 2009) to agree on one demand that would solve the problem. During public protests in December 2008 already, activists called for free education (*besplatno obrazovanje* i.e. publicly financed education). In my interviews, none of the interviewees (even though from different faculties) failed to remember this single demand. Also, there was no confusion as to when and by whom the demands had been formulated: the demand had been raised ahead of the protest in December 2008 by some activists who later became the core organisers of the first occupation in 2009. The decision to adopt this wide-reaching demand was taken deliberately, because it was “our guess [...] that a lot of people could relate” (HR-D). Activists thought that it would be too difficult to publicly argue against Bologna, because nobody really understood what these policies were about. None of the interviewees (even though from different faculties) failed to remember the demand “free

education”. Also, there was no confusion as to when and by whom the demands had been formulated: prior to a protest in December 2008 by some activists that later became the core organisers of the occupation in 2009. In addition, the demand of free education focused on the social dimension of education. “We were not about doing politics [per se] (...) but we wanted to make certain connections explicit” (HR-C). Activists cited privatisation trends in health, lower education, public spaces and industry as examples for such connections. It was believed that after having abolished all tuition fees and re-introduced free education for all on all levels, other difficulties (such as for example: bad quality of teaching, student representatives etc.) could be resolved. In conclusion, Croat activists chose the demand “free education” a) because activists related the problem to a wider array of processes of social issues, b) because they thought solving the overarching problem would help fixing the particulars, and c) because they expected more students could relate to it and thus be motivated to join.

The picture is different for Serbia. Disagreement on the concrete measures to be taken to remedy for the difficulties in education appeared during the first occupation in 2006 and lived on until today. Demands changed over the time of the occupation (*BLOK I*), varied from faculty to faculty and seem not to have been based on much general analysis but rather on practical and localised concerns. For example, activists from the Faculty of Philosophy claimed that 1) tuition fees should be pegged to four minimal wages a year, and 2) all other administrative fees be reduced to 50% (demands from October 5, 2006: *Borba Za Znanje*, 2007: 48). In contrast, activists from the Faculty of Architecture demanded on December 13, 2006 that 1) diploma and master degrees should be made equal, 2) tuition fees be reduced and students be accorded the right to inspect the criteria for tuition fees, 3) various studying conditions (for example the definition of quotas, the criteria for inscription to master studies etc.) be made public.

Activists in Serbia also failed in formulating one overarching demand during the third occupation (*BLOK III*). For instance, demands brought forward at the Faculty of Philosophy in 2011 included: 1) to lower tuition fee to three minimum wages, 2) to reduce the threshold for staying on state budget funding, 3) to abolish the ranking of student exams according to marks to further delimit the number of publicly funded students, 4) to extend deadlines for taking exams to finish the last year. Not all of my interviewees from the Faculty of Philosophy could recall these demands. This points less to a general amnesia than to confusion during the process of generating the demands. As one of the interviewees (RS-E) admitted, the demand of lowering tuition fees to three minimum wages was the maximum compromise one could come up with. Besides, hopes were “that linking tuition fees to the

minimum wage could help connect the students to workers and other [social] sectors”. In my analysis, the attempt to extend the frame in order to make it relevant to other potential segments of society failed.

Confusion was also noticeable in answers about the timing of decision-making. Interviewees could not recall or seriously dissented from each other when asked at what point in time and by whom the decision to occupy the Faculty of Philology and then Philosophy had been taken. This is curious, since (at least) the transcript on the blog of the *Plenum Filozofskog* recounts in a straightforward tone what happened on the eve of the occupation BLOK III at the Faculty of Philosophy.¹⁶⁸ This contradiction points to a deep conflict between different factions within the Serb activist base. Basically, this conflict put advocates of a general demand (such as the singular demand of free education) versus proponents of varied and localised demands. Each side accused the respective other to be revolutionist or reformist in settling for bigger or smaller demands. Thus, the radical faction within the Serb contentious camp argued that the single demand of free education would have been better because it could have 1) opened up larger social questions, 2) drawn more activists, 3) enabled the solution of particular problems afterwards (RS-D and RS-N, partly also RS-K and RS-O). The reformist faction in Serbia – on the contrary – thought that one could better use particular issues as entry points for large-scale reforms. This disagreement about the timing of change and content of demand may seem benign, but it is an expression of strong internal disunity and a heterogeneous collective identity of the Serb student movement.

Social movements are not “characters moving on an historical stage” (Melucci 1989: 24). Their character changes with mobilisation. In other words, collective identities are not pre-given fixed realities, but they are perceived, negotiated and constructed through collective practices of framing. Participants feel cognitively, morally and emotionally attached to a certain group when and after having established similarities within, and differences to, other groups (Polletta & Jasper 2001: 298; idem: Hunt & Benford 2011: 440 & 450). More often than not, the process of reaching that point of inner unity and homogeneity is cumbersome. In Croatia, this process culminated during a one-and-a-half-month preparation phase ahead of the first occupation (*BLOK I*). Bringing together people from various grouplets and associations in a row of daily intense meetings, activists managed to solve internal quarrels and initial disagreements about goals, principles and strategies before the first occupation finally took off. At that point, direct democracy was employed, because activists saw it as the

¹⁶⁸ See transcript from 19/10/1, available from: http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/2011_10_16_archive.html [27/02/12]

only means to include activists. Besides, this strategy should avoid that the pre-existing left grouplets or the official students' representatives (the *studentski zbor*) would capture the process of preparation. "That's why everything seemed so homogenous and well-organised at the start of the occupation" (HR-C). The pre-established unity provided for agency and strength at the beginning of the occupation – yet difficulties started to arise the more people joined that had not partaken in the initial preparations. As diversity grew and some participants felt less emotionally and socially connected to each other than the original bunch of roughly forty people, rifts and fights developed. Interviewees, who had joined shortly before or during the second occupation (23/11/09-05/12/09), complained about the implicit hierarchy between younger and older generations of activists. The surplus in experiences and social capital lead to a situation in which "veterans" (HR-C) of the first occupation came to dominate all processes, including the direct democratic assemblies.

Divisions between different generations of activists and between official student representatives of the university levels versus marred Croatian student contention. The division between the official student representatives flows from the fact that politicians lend recognition (and thereby legitimacy) only to the category of representative student officials while essentially disregarding other activists. Historically, professional student organisations were set up under HDZ-rule in the 1990s. They got hence associated with this party, but were also dependent its wavering electoral success after 1999. In Serbia, the picture is similar only that various parties espoused different professional student organisations. This resulted in rivalries between student organisations and weakened their overall success. In sum, student representatives do not fall into the category of social movement; their luck may be changing with electoral success of respective parties. Their more or less direct connection with parties and their dependence on the core players in government exemplifies that they do not occupy precarious positions as student activists. Their inclination towards adopting non-disruptive strategies of conventional politics makes them comparable to NGOs, not to social movements.

In Serbia, disarray shaped student contention from the very start. The reasons for these divisions either lie in the context, in the history and/or in personal frictions and experiences of disloyalty. Besides animosities between the official representative student council (the *studentski parlament*) and activists as well as between different generations of activists, the activists' basis was partitioned into numerous factions. There were and still are disagreements a) between initiatives espousing varying degrees of radicalism and between activists from

different faculties.¹⁶⁹ The division between students from different faculties and between different generations of students in Serbia can be explained by the fact that faculties – due to their legally secured autonomy – can freely decide on the conditions for studying: thus, the level of tuition fees, entry exams, requirements for being able to receive state funding, deadlines for final exams etc. all vary from place to place and year to year. Lack of information was an acute problem in 2006 but also during later occupations. “Do you know that students who are funded by the state [i.e. who are on so-called budget support, A.R.] don’t even know the requirements according to which they could uphold their status?”¹⁷⁰ (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 70). The legal status and duties of students are often not clear to students themselves, leading to widespread confusion and low inter-generational, as well as inter-faculty solidarity.

Within the Serb activists’ basis proper, the line of division runs between groups with similar left-wing ideologies. The differences are rather to be found in opposite self-recognition, personal animosities and contrasting framing. Thus, some activists align to a so-called “Anarchist/Stalinists” camp; other activists define themselves as “Marxists”. The frictions between activists of these camps are based not on ideological differences (as their names would suggest: Anarchism vs. Stalinism vs. Marxism). “[T]hey are two sides of the same coin which is not going to solve anything. (...) [The biggest problem is] the prehistory of relations” (RS-E). Thus, the “Anarchist/Stalinists” blame the “Marxists” for being too theoretical, soft, career-oriented, opportunist, dominant etc. while the latter accuse the former of radicalism, manipulation, laziness, sexism and dominance.

The roots for this opposition lie in the first occupation (22/11/06-28/11/06) at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. This occupation had been organised by activists, who were united under the umbrella of the *Socijalni Front*. But documents in the booklet *Borba Za Znanje* reveal that this activists felt only partially unified, since from the beginning right to the last page of this book one finds a majority of leaflets, posters and newsletters signed by singular initiatives rather than by a *Socijalni Front*. Disagreements over the best tactics (rather than over the problems and the goals as such), experiences of disloyalty and personal fights finally led to the official breakdown of the *Socijalni Front* shortly after the first occupation in spring 2007. Since then, divisions have escalated to a point that two of my Serb interviewees (without links or sympathy to official student representatives in the *studentski parlament*)

¹⁶⁹ For instance, interviewees recounted bitter clashes between students of history vs. students of sociology/philosophy at the plenum of the Faculty of Philosophy.

¹⁷⁰ My translation from: “Znate li da niko ko se finansira iz budžeta ne zna koji su uslovi da bi taj status zadržao?”

denied that a student social movement exists in Serbia. “It’s absurd. (...) They created this alternative reality (...) involving themselves in internal quarrels, never going out of their own environment to do something [real] for the whole society” (RS-I).

This cynicism I could not find in Croatia: there, all activists (though not, as I expected, the students sympathetic or active in official student structures / the *studentski zbor*) supported the idea that a student movement had existed at some point in time at least. The internal quarrels between more or less radical initiatives in Serbia might explain why four out of thirteen activists stressed their independence from such groups (RS-F, RS-J, RS-K, RS-O). These quarrels also partially explain why the direct democratic assembly was marred by many heated and one-sided debates (see also my discussion of the direct democratic organising below II.3.iv.b). The cliques “set the grounds for discussions” (RS-B). In contrast to this, interviewees from Croatia were mostly satisfied with the quality of most of the plenary sessions during the (first) occupation, underlining that left splinter groups accepted the plenary assembly as the ultimate decision-making body already during the preparation phase before the first occupation. This was designed to prevent that any small group’s interests captured the process of deliberating upon and preparing the occupation.

Identification requires not only marking similarities between (actual and potential) adherents of a social movement. Contentious actors also need to build up “frontier-effects” (Hall 1996: 3) vis-à-vis the Other, who is held responsible for causing the problem. This Other is usually seen in negative or contrasting light (the enemy or perpetrator). Sometimes yet not necessarily it is the same instance against which the activists’ actions are directed in reality (the adversary or target). One might think of a situation, for example, where the perpetrator is an international actor (e.g. the WTO), but the movement confines itself to directly targeting the national government. The hopes would be, naturally, that by addressing the government, this pressure would indirectly impact upon the WTO. In the cases analysed here, answers given by Croatian interviewees were very consistent. “Historical-social processes” (HR-C) were identified as culpable for the current mess, or, as another activist put it: “I do not feel I fought against this or that minister. I was struggling against fifty years of various ministers. (...) It was not against a particular person or a specific party” (HR-I).

Identifiable targets were specified as proxies to the designated perpetrators: the ministry of education, university (the university rector), the respective faculty (i.e. the vice chancellor or the faculty’s administration), and professors. Which target was to be attacked when depended on the choice of tactic since all of them were thought as being part of the same historical-social capitalist process. In Serbia, answers to the same questions were much

more confusing. In contrast to Croatia, where activists obviously have deliberately reflected upon this question (see my account in chapter II.3.iv.b on how the occupation was prepared in Croatia), Serbian interviewees were either astonished or embarrassed by my inquiries about targets. “That’s a good question [laughs]. At that moment we did not know (...). We were totally confused” (RS-G). The nature, interests and strengths of potential targets were not really thought through. “[We] did not even know who to address with [our] demands. [We] just thought that (...) by occupying and screaming the demands, somebody would hear [us]” (RS-C). The inability to clearly identify a target does not imply that activists in Serbia did not have an idea of the perpetrator. But as with the question of targets, answers were very diverse. One interviewee mentioned the “whole capitalist conglomerate of privatising higher education” (RS-I). But other interviewees subsumed different primary actors under the title of perpetrator such as the national ruling class, the system, the government, Bologna policies, university, faculty administration, the official student representatives or the “local comprador bourgeoisie” (RS-D).

When talking about perpetrators and targets, one also comes to ponder about the victim as well as the constituency or beneficiary of social activism. Framing means reflecting upon those that are supposed to profit from the struggle (beneficiaries), those who have an interest in the struggle (constituency) and those who would suffer should such struggle fail (victims) (McAdam & Snow 1997: xxiii-xxiv). As with all the other actors of relevance to social movements (including the targets but also the initially or eventually neutral bystanders), constituencies are imagined communities (cf. Gamson 2011: 247).

In both countries, students were defined as constituency, but were also considered to be the prime victims. Both in Croatia and Serbia, a particular challenge was to construct solidarity between those students who were lucky enough to be paid by the state (*po budžeti*) and those students who were self-financed (*samo-finansirani*). One essential part of framing was thus the attempt to construct all students (disregarding their status as being self-financed or budget-supported) as potential victims. As early as 2006, Serb students had to appeal to the “solidarity of all colleagues who are financed out of the state budget”¹⁷¹ (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 49). Their attempts were crowned with some success as mobilisation increased with the decline in budget support for students. However, student activists were rather disconnected from the non-active students (potential adherents). “We were bigot. We were not always open for communication with people [meaning students, A.R.] that were not on our side” (RS-J). In contrast to Croatians, then, Serb activists did not succeed in constructing an even slightly

¹⁷¹ My translation from: “Solidarnost svih kolegница i kolega koji još uvek se finansiraju iz budžeta.”

salient frame that would extend to the whole Serb society as constituency. As interviewee RS-E admitted, they didn't make their message "clear to the outside population. [laughs] It's symptomatic that I say the outside population. It explains best in which situation we were in."

Croatian activists in contrast to this increasingly – and rather successfully – included other social groups in their constituency as well. Not only did they actively join protests staged by other segments initially unrelated to their struggles (as farmers on the day of the so-called *Traktor-Revolucija* on June 10, 2009), but they also thought everybody (i.e. all the citizens) had a say in their struggle. The way Croatian activists defined their direct democratic general assembly (the plenum) as a place for all bears witness to that. "The plenum was not just a students' plenum, but a plenum for citizens" (HR-F). The underlying reasoning was that higher education was paid for by taxpayers, hence 'everybody' had a stake in the matter. In theoretical terms, this meant that Croatian activists constructed similarities between the plight of students and other segments of society. They constructed, as Della Porta has termed it, tolerant identities (Della Porta 2005a: 186-191). Faced with disunity, activists rendered their collective identity as inclusive and receptive for diversity as possible. In Serbia, some activists also argued that they sought to connect their cause with others, such as the working class (for example, RS-D). Yet, as one activist self-critically noted, these links were never made clear (RS-E). Statements such as the following thus were not only appellative in nature but in addition far from reflecting an overarching consensus. "The protest by students does not have a particular character, but it is an authentic social protest that reacts to one dimension of other social problems"¹⁷² (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 50).

In conclusion, Croatian students had succeeded in building up a tight core of heavily committed activists, who managed to well prepare the first occupation at the Faculty of Philosophy and to spread this struggle to a point where twenty faculties at six universities were occupied all around Croatia. However, the inner solidarity, strong commitment and discursive coherence that triggered so much initial enthusiasm and mobilisation compromised the quality of direct democratic organising when the madness of the moment at the first occupation was over and activists set out to enter the second occupation. Still, it remains a fact that an impressive first occupation had taken place (impressive in terms of numbers and reach) and that many of the activists socialised into the movement stuck to social activism and transgressed onto other issues and initiatives (see chapter II.3.iv.d below).

¹⁷² My translation from: "Studentski protest nema stranački karakter, već je autentičan socijalni protest koji reaguje na jedan segment opštih društvenih problema."

II.3.iv.b Organising the Movement: Choosing Principles and Strategies

Social movements channel contentious action into organisational structures in various ways. This (plus their framing and collective identification) is what distinguishes them from elusive events such as shopping crowds, mobs or – indeed – public spheres. Remember the following definition of social movements. They are “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture of world order of which they are part” (Snow, Kriesi & Soule 2011: 11). I mentioned that routinisation ensures longevity, enables efficient use of scarce emotional, human, financial, time and technical resources, eases the transmission of knowledge from earlier to later instances of contention and can lend purpose and meaning to a social movement. To approach organisation in this way helps understand why choosing the ‘right’ strategy or the ‘just’ principle of organisation may become a matter of splits and deaths of social movements.

Direct democratic principles of organisation have become fairly fashionable for new social movements. Della Porta is amongst scholars who analysed how more and more social movements “prefigure various models of democracy within their own organizations” (Della Porta & Rucht 2013: 3). All around the region of former Yugoslavia, social movements today experiment with various direct forms of democracy. This is a direct result of students’ construction of direct democratic principles as the only (correct) solution to the problem of representation. With Serb students of 2006 taking the lead, students around the region adopted this innovation, thus distinguishing their struggles from previous protests of the 1980s and 1990s (Mesic 2009: 89). As with the diagnostic frames’ focus on commercialisation here, too, the question must be raised, whether direct democracy was a result of diffusion from other contentious incidents outside of the region.

The initial innovation occurred in Serbia during the first occupation of 2006 with some influence from outside, as I have concluded earlier on. During the first occupation (*BLOK I*) in 2006, direct democracy simply meant conducting daily plenary assemblies (*zborovi*). There were not yet any explicit rules on moderation, speaking order or public relations. The degree of routinisation during this first occupation was thus still weak. But the initiation of a direct democratic imaginary had begun. Expressed in terms of discourse theory, this imaginary constituted a floating signifier (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 113f; Torfing 1999: 176). Direct democracy could not be linked beyond doubt to one content – it was at once fungous in that its shape was imprecise but also spongy in that it could be filled with different meanings.

Croat activists took upon themselves the task to momentarily arrest this free floating of the signifier into a nodal point (Laclau & Mouffe 2011: 112f). Through writing down detailed rules for occupation in the *Blokadna Kuharica*, they constructed a powerful if not hegemonic way of doing direct democracy that turned into a bible for contention in the region. These rules included, amongst other things, instructions on how working groups should be set up, how moderators should be elected or how complete anonymity could and should be maintained (for example vis-à-vis the press).

In 2006 Serbia, direct democracy was chosen less because of ideology but out of practical concerns. “We realised that we did not have traditional organisations and networks we could count on to mobilise people” (RS-B). The assumption was that if people felt included, they would be more pro-active, motivated and responsible for the struggle (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 15). The second and third reasons were of symbolic nature. The plenary assembly should visibly differentiate the activists from student representatives (the *studentski parlament*) – or the “bureaucratic structures”,¹⁷³ as one activist put it (ibid. 212). Although only established very shortly before the occupation of 2006, the *studentski parlament* was blamed for corrupting representative democracy. This criticism did not change during the second occupation of 2011. Besides, direct democracy was supposed signal that activists were independent from political parties, and thus from the student protests of 1996/1997. Activists of 2006 denounced these earlier protests as opportunist and politicised (ibid. 218, 269 & 275). Hence, relying on direct democracy was a way of establishing a symbolic boundary (i.e. identity frontier-effect) against historically earlier protests.

In 2009 Croatia, direct democracy was chosen to bring together pre-existing left grouplets to one table during the preparation phase of the first occupation. The model was subsequently widened during the period of the first and second occupations. Reasons for this extended usage included mobilisation and motivation, ideology, positive experiences with the initial use of direct democracy during the preparation phase, learning from Serbia and demarcation against the *studentski zbor*. Drawing from the Serb booklet *Borba Za Znanje*, Croatian activists significantly expanded and refined the direct democratic model of contention. In their manual *Blokadna Kuharica*¹⁷⁴, more than thirty pages are devoted to describing how the plenary assembly (the *plenum*) is structured. Beside the obvious principle that any participating person was allowed to participate at the debates and vote on any decision, Croat activists added the following tactics to the decision by simple majority:

¹⁷³ My translation from: “birokratsku strukturu”.

¹⁷⁴ The English version can be accessed via: <http://www.minorcompositions.info/?p=50> [20/08/13]

rotating moderators and recording clerks, refusal of personalisation and leaders, division of labour between the *plenum* (for decision-making) and working groups (designed to present alternatives to the plenum and implement the *plenum*'s decisions), no-negotiation policy, strictly rotating (and anonymous) media representatives, and complete openness to all participants (including journalists, politicians or student representatives, provided they participated as 'citizens' and not in their respective functions). Equality, inclusiveness, anonymity, horizontality in decision-making and transparency were thus the principles guiding the set-up of the plenary assemblies. Activists hoped that this would improve the deliberative process through which – as prefigured by the theory on the public sphere (see my theory section above I.1.iii.b) – “individual preferences [could be transformed]” and “decisions oriented to the public good” could be taken (Della Porta 2005b: 340).

Some interviewees admitted that they had been nervous initially because they were not sure how deliberation would work out. But the *plenum* at which the decision for occupation was taken (16/04/09) proved to them that it could succeed. “There I understood for the first time – personally, not intellectually – that you cannot control this process [of deliberation]. And that you should not control it. Your only obligation is to counter criticism with founded arguments” (HR-C). For this to happen, one must – as one activist aptly described it – “put yourself into [the other's] skin, so that I can correct myself and we could both be satisfied” (HR-G). Reciprocity and empathy are the cognitive and emotional efforts underlying such processes. In the interviewees' opinion, the plenary assemblies during the first occupation at the Faculty of Philosophy had functioned accordingly. One reason for the relative quality of deliberation during the first occupation (*BLOK I*) was the deliberate attempt in Croatia to avoid leading figures.

An important tactic taken in this regard was to rotate moderators of the plenum and to do away with media representatives. In addition, no single text produced during the two occupations (such as press releases or the texts published in the newsletter *Skripta*) was signed off by name. Activists refused to be cited by name when giving statements to the press. One activist who appeared on the main Croat TV station HRT 1 on April 20, 2009 (and whose name was consequently known) was at the point of his appearance not presented as an active occupier but as a mere “supporter of the occupation” (HR-D). Thus, activists expected to counter – as they saw it – “media instrumentalisation” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 34) and the “imposition of leaders” (ibid.). Choosing not to have leaders strengthened identification. It was about forming a “new political subjectivity” (HR-F) in the sense of “an abstract student subject. It could be this guy with the dreadlocks, or that guy with the nice tie. Visually, there

was no clear demarcation” (HR-E). But the choice was also a matter of learning. From earlier instances of student protests, activists had learnt that as soon as the media had identified leaders, it was easier to put these leaders under pressure or to denigrate them. According to the *Blokadna Kuharica* (ibid. 33) and to many of my interviewees, the fact of avoiding public naming of leaders was one of the core strengths of the movement. In spite of this, informal leading figures emerged over time. However – and here again Croat activists showed remarkable self-awareness – these veterans of the first occupation collectively decided to stop all activities in the direct democratic assembly. “You cannot have direct democracy with a-priori authoritative figures. (...) We were idolised. The whole younger generation sat awestruck without saying a word. Then we understood that we were distorting the process” (HR-C). No comparable decision (nor even reflection) has ever been taken in Serbia, where a few male leading figures (interviewees RS-B, RS-D, RS-N) have come to virtually dominate any student-related activity [as of the time of my last interviews in May 2013].

Occupation was chosen carefully after long debates amongst Croat activists during the preparation phase in January, February and March 2009. Interviewees cited the following reasons for starting an occupation at the Faculty of Philosophy on April 20, 2009: low number of participants at prior street protests in 2008, weak or non-existent reactions by politicians and the sensational and elusive character of street protests. “There was a need for something bigger. (...) We wanted to put a wedge into the system (...) not to be just a one-day headline” (HR-E). Protests on the streets had lost their disruptive quality both in the perception of authorities and in the perception of activists. “We had to do something that would force the government to notice [us]. We wanted to make ourselves into a problem” (HR-G). Activists selected a strategy of escalation to achieve more concessions from authorities, but also because they hoped it would broaden the struggle (i.e. mobilise more people). Several interviewees recounted to me in great detail how and when the decision to occupy the building was taken during the already-mentioned preparation phase before the first occupation.

The second occupation in autumn 2009 was a consequence of the first; towards the end of the first occupation in May 2009, activists had found themselves with few supporters and without having reached the self-proclaimed goal of reaching free education. In addition, the faculty management at the Faculty of Philosophy had found an effective way of circumventing the blocked building; it simply shifted regular classes to other buildings. “Like this we only occupied the building, but not the educational process any more” (HR-F). With this, one of the foundations for occupying – disturbing the education process – had fallen

away. Therefore, activists pondered about how to best end the occupation. Finally, it was decided to publicly “suspend” the occupation in order to leave the possibility of continuing the struggle open. After the summer, undertaking a second occupation (23/11/09-05/12/09) presented itself as a matter of credibility to the activists. Thus, it was started not because the opportunity seemed ripe or because activists wished to radicalise their actions but because activists hoped not to lose their face. But the occupation was not a novelty any more. It was less well prepared and had fewer participants than the first. Contention only spread to faculties in three other cities (Pula, Rijeka, Split) and was not replicated at any other faculty in Zagreb than the Faculty of Philosophy.

Additional problems surfaced, when occupation continued into autumn 2009; as the affective enthusiasm and excitement over the novelty of the experiment subsided, activists got more and more physically exhausted. The day-to-day routine of direct democracy “is not necessarily pleasant. No decision-making process is pleasant. [It requires more] than loving each other and singing songs” (HR-G). With exhaustion came an increasing loss of participants. The more people left, the faster the activist core melted down to roughly the same 40-50 persons, which had been committed since the start. The more people left, the more the deliberative process diverged from the ideal.

Scholars point to the fact that direct democracy does not necessarily work in the idealised equal and horizontal fashion but that experience, social capital, age and other personality traits (such as rhetorical skills) matter. “Imagine you’re 18, coming to another town to study, and you have 700 people before you [at the plenum]. You’re not going to speak. You would be afraid to speak out” (HR-I). Such inequalities between participants developed and/or were recognised more acutely than before. Activists were conscious of discrepancies all along, as can be seen in the *Blokadna Kuharica* where it says: “The plenary model of decision-making is often criticized because (...) more skilled orators have a disproportionally higher influence on it. (...) / We have to honestly say that we have not resolved this problem; the only solution is to constantly appeal to those who speak often to be responsible, not to repeat themselves and not to privatize the plenum” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 34f).

Still, even the best rules could not avoid a general decline in quality of deliberation as the actual number of participants shrunk to the (more experienced and emotionally close) core. The ironic label of younger activists towards this inner circle of activists as the “central committee” (HR-N) bears testimony to this. The activist basis converged with friendship boundaries. What had once been a positive gain from occupation – emotional attachment,

solidarity and a feeling of being close to each other – increasingly undermined the ideals of direct democracy starting with the end of the first occupation in spring 2009. “Then you get stuck with a group (...) [whose members] know each other. Then (...) [i]t burns down to a group of friends or acquaintances who (...) could sort things out over coffee. Then you do not actually have the need for a plenum” (HR-I). All in all, nevertheless, interviewees in retrospect evaluate the experience of occupation positively. Occupation built awareness on the issue of privatising education and stopped daily academic routine: It “gave [students] the chance to make a pause. Even if they just made love, they put the neoliberal dynamics on hold and had time to deal with themselves” (HR-E). As a “side-track social benefit” (HR-N), friendship, solidarity and even love relationships developed. With respect to my theoretical outlook, the most interesting outcome in Croatia, however, is the following: Student contention in Croatia grew from a tiny so-called “Bologna Section” at the Faculty of Philosophy in 2007 through various street protests in 2007 and 2008 to the occupations in 2009 and further activities up until 2013 and successfully established what I would argue a counterpublic. I will expand this argument in chapters II.3.iv.d and II.3.iv.e below.

In Serbia, such emotional gains were seen as the most important if not only success of contention. Occupations had brought together people and created social connections (networking, comradeship, friendships). Serb activists also pointed out that occupation created a space for free thinking. “Occupation as a [space] apart from everything else is a nice way of building something completely different from everything else. When you start experiencing freedom (...) you have people who start to think without restraints, without pressures from outside. They start to depend on themselves and each other” (RS-J). As far as other concrete results are concerned, Croats in 2009 achieved that the first year of the BA and all Master degrees would henceforth be free of charge. The only palpable change after the occupations in Serbia were that the credits needed for a student to receive state funding were reduced. But this gain was achieved through negotiations by the highest representative student organ in Serbia, not the activists (who, as I have written above, refused to negotiate). Thus, activists perceived that the main success in Serbia was that they had managed to organise “any kind of social struggle” (RS-C) at all.

While occupation in Croatia achieved symbolic and (some) palpable success, Serb contention was fraught with problems of identification and framing right from the start. Choices were made in a much less coherent way not only concerning ideology but also regarding tactics. Choosing occupation as a tactic in 2006 was intended to attract students and visibility. However, little debate seems to have taken place during the first plenary session

during occupation on November 22, 2006. In the *Borba Za Znanje* one student is quoted as saying that “consensus [about the occupation] was virtually wavering in the air. We all wanted the same thing”¹⁷⁵ (Borba Za Znanje 2007: 223). In 2011, the situation appears not to have been any more reflected. Interviewee RS-J even admitted that activists never sat down to strategically reflect upon why they should choose occupation over any other strategy (street protests, petitions etc.).

Reconstructing the events from the interviews, it becomes clear that activists at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade started to block the building because they found themselves in what I would call a “moral commitment trap”. On October 17, 2011, “a relatively small number of students” (RS-L) entered the building of the Faculty of Philology (which is just across the street from the Faculty of Philosophy) and motivated some students to start a plenary assembly. Interviewees from the Faculty of Philosophy, who did not actively participate at this meeting, judged the meeting as being “almost like a coup d’état” (RS-E). But even inside, informants such as interviewee RS-I from the Faculty of Philology could not recall when or by whom the decision to occupy was taken. According to her, there was “much confusion” (RS-I). Even though some interviewees thought that evaluated the start of the occupation at the Faculty of Philology positively (such as RS-D and RS-N, for example), all of my interviewees agreed that it was badly organised. Observing their colleagues at the Faculty of Philology, activists at the Faculty of Philosophy felt compelled to join in. “Guys here at the Faculty of Philosophy felt threatened of being pointed at as showing no solidarity. (...) We just joined [them] because we had too” (RS-C). In retrospect, some interviewees found diverging explanations for the occupation, for instance, scaling up the degree of radicalism, the futility of street protests etc. But even strong proponents of the occupations in 2011 could not clearly retrace the exact course of events but asserted that “[w]e blocked [the Faculty of Philology] because people wanted it” (RS-D).

Occupation at the Faculty of Philology died down after twelve days. In addition, occupation failed to spread to any other faculty within Belgrade or to any city outside other than the Faculty of Philosophy. In order to keep up motivation at the Faculty of Philosophy, *Filzofski* activists tried to copy the more complex rules from Croatia. Thus, they organised alternative lectures, rotated media spokespersons (only with partial success) and refused to negotiate with authorities. In contrast to Croatia, however, these tactics were either not followed through or not successful. Reasons include internal quarrels and personal acquaintances (media spokespersons were not rotated evenly, because some activists

¹⁷⁵ My translation from: “jedan konsenzus koji je leteo u vazduhu, strujao. Svi su hteli isto.”

exploited their personal contacts to the press) and the inability to summon up power. “We were sitting down and waiting for them to come to us. Which was insane (...) because we were never strong enough to be in a position to have them come to us” (RS-E). Here again we see how disunity and a weak collective identity prevented activists from defining common strategies and/or sticking to them as soon as some tactic was implemented. The weakly developed collective identity furthermore diminished the quality of deliberation at plenary assemblies right from the start. The various factions bent the plenary assemblies to their advantage. Meetings appear to have ended up with the same ‘camps’ they had started off with. “There [was] always somebody who [was] loud enough or could force himself to be leader. (...) It [was] not necessarily the best argument that would win” (RS-F). It comes as no surprise then that evaluations in my interviews of the plenums diverge significantly.

With view to academic transparency, I should point out here that it was very difficult for me to get hold of voices for the radical camp (the self-identified “Anarchists/Stalinists”). Only after repeated attempts at contact did one activist speak to me, and even then he appeared very cautious in his answers. At the end of the interview he informed me that “I did not give you any information that could be used in a negative way” (RS-D). I therefore assume that what he told me was only a conscious selection of his ‘real’ opinions. While I am aware that any interview – as any narrative – includes and highlights certain aspects, while excluding or downplaying others (compare the above discussed scholarship on qualitative interviews, II.1.iii.a), it is obvious that this interviewee’s remark is a warning sign that his interview should be interpreted even with more diligence. Cross-reading RS-D’s interview with texts published on websites¹⁷⁶ associated with the radical camp and with other interviews (conducted with RS-N and additional sympathisers) leads me to conclude that RS-D’s statements are typical for the radical camp. As for the reformist (i.e. the self-identified “Marxist”) camp, I interviewed seven persons that were either part of that initiative or sympathetic to it.

The reformist faction liked the occupation at the Faculty of Philosophy in 2011 much more. They said occupation survived longer because it was well organised. The radical faction on the other hand claimed that the plenary assemblies at the Faculty of Philology were much more authentic and “combative” (RS-D). Both camps complained of polarisation and the obstructive behaviour of the respective other faction. “We [at the Faculty of Philosophy] had a general assembly that started off with around two hundred people. But because of splits between the left groups (...), the occupation was voted with only twenty persons present. But

¹⁷⁶ See: <http://asiobrazovanje.wordpress.com/> and <http://studentskeborbe.info/> [04/06/13]

it was presented as a direct democratic decision by heroic students who had endured four hours of intensive debates” (RS-B). After what I learnt about the composition and the dynamics between student activists in Serbia, I would conclude that the power balance between the radical and reformist groups is very volatile. At times, the radical camp became more dominant within Serbia, at other times the reformist camp. The outside the picture of Serb contention, however, is very much shaped by reformist frames and narratives. The reason is – simply – that some of their most active proponents repeatedly travel to the *Subversive Festival* in Zagreb.

Against the above-painted background of quarrels in Serbia, advantages in social capital, experience and personal talents acquired even more weight than in Croatia. Rules that should prohibit such distortions were either not available or not followed. “Those that were loudest and could talk better, talked most” (RS-L). A last differentiation, which had not been talked about by any (female or male) Croat interviewee, seems to have been sexism at the plenary assemblies in Serbia. One (female) respondent recounted an incident when one male participant at a *plenum* called his female colleague a ‘fat cow’. Only few people reacted (...) [most] did not even see it as a problem” (RS-L). Sexism was apparent in the informal division of labour. Accordingly – and contrary to the Croat principle of anonymity – public press statements were signed by men, even if they had been written up by women. Also, women seem to have been most active in doing the “hard groundwork” (RS-L) of organising alternative lectures, designing banners and formulating texts. This is congruent with my reconstruction of the distribution of women versus men at the core of the activist base in Serbia in 2013. As it seems, around 30-50 people are still active, amongst which the four informal leaders are all men (including RS-B, RS-D and RS-N). There is no single female figure I was able to identify as having inspired or substantially impacted on the movement. In Croatia, conversely, around a third of the “central committee” were women. Male respondents even pointed at two women (my interviewee HR-A and another woman I know by name) as the “most capable activists of all times” (HR-C).

In sum, the lack of preparation and weak collective identification disaggregated Serb contention. It prevented that resources and frames needed for thriving counterpublics were built up. The ideal of direct democratic participation was disturbed by a variety of factors: by experience, talent and social capital, but also by gender. Low mobilisation and confusion around tactics, demands and retrospective evaluations resulted from this. The conclusion is different regarding Croatia. Plenary assemblies there were not only more inclusive in theory,

but the direct democratic strategy transformed into a model for action that served as an exemplar for many later instances of contention.

II.3.iv.c Macro- and Meso-Level Contexts: From Politicians to the Faculties

Let us be reminded of the following phrase: “Social protest movements make history (...) albeit not in circumstances they choose” (Meyer 2004: 125). In the countries under scrutiny here, the general context was a similar one of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, from a state-orchestrated economy to free-market capitalism, from a closed to an open society and from a transnational federation to separate nation states (see above chapter II.2.iii). In his conceptualisation of political opportunity structures, Kriesi pertains that political opportunities are made up of structures, configurations of actors and the strategies (or: signals) assumed by authorities (cf. Kriesi 1991 & 2011). Comparing Croatia and Serbia, student contention was embedded within similar macro-level politico-economic structures; both instances shared the international context of Europeanisation and an economic status of peripheries, formally democratic representative institutions within electoral democracies (Dzihić & Segert 2012), quasi-two-party systems and similar discursive opportunity structures that tabooed left ideas on workers’ issues and public goods.

Both countries are weak in that they offer little goods – such as state services, legal protection etc – to their citizens. They are closed in that the elites (businesspeople, politicians, media owners etc.) form oligarchic systems, which are hard to pierce from below (Sterbling 2003: 15f). The most relevant cleavage is culturalist: it opposes a pro-European, i.e. modernist versus a nationalist camp. This cleavage correlates with a strong divide between rural and urban dwellers (Boduszynski 2010: 174 & 194). According to the literature (and my observations) the Serbo-Croat term *seljak* (farmer, plural *seljački*) is still commonly used in a pejorative tone to denote primitive and uneducated rude people (Jansen 2001: 48). The classical left/right cleavage, typically present in Western Europe, never was evident in Croatia and Serbia. Neither do we find post-materialist values, which Inglehart (2008) proposed were gaining ground through the rise of Green parties.

The alliance structures (Kriesi 2011: 73ff) in both countries are fairly stable. There are very little real changes in the composition of political elites, even if parties change in elections. In addition, there are no ideological allies available for student activists in either Croatia or Serbia. At the meso-level (i.e. the immediate institutional) level, the context for student contention differed between Croatia and Serbia. In particular, Croat activists experienced relatively more support from their faculty/administrative and teaching staff than students in Serbia. I will discuss each of these contextual factors in turn.

After 1999 in Croatia and 2000 in Serbia, tensions arose from the partly contradictory imperatives of remodelling higher education after the wars (i.e. endow universities with the necessary financial means, recruit partially new academic staff, re-design the curriculum etc.) and relinquishing the higher education sector from the grip of the state (i.e. introduce autonomy for universities, ensure independence of academic decision-making and research, privatise services for students etc.). Two processes interlaced and partially offset each other: these were state-building and marketisation. In Croatia, where some forms of tuition fees had already been introduced with the creation of the country in 1992, the implementation of the Bologna reforms from 2005 was pretty erratic in the beginning but less confusing than in Serbia. In Serbia, all interviewees (including official student representatives) concurred that Bologna had rendered the lives of students much harder.

At the outset of chapter II.3.i. I outlined how a specific combination of administrative incompetence, localised interests and inconsistent appropriation of Bologna policies by university administrations spurred contention. Official student representatives both in Croatia and Serbia also pointed out the patchy implementation of Bologna. The difference being that the activists criticised the – as they saw it – capitalist logic behind the policies, while student representatives merely complained about its flawed realisation. In Serbia this contextual factor weighed heavily on the already weakly developed collective identity. In Croatia, the Bologna factor rather had a positive mobilisatory effect. Thus, in 2007 students named the first initiative preoccupied with higher-education *Bologna Sekcija*. The underlying reason was that situations of studying were more comparable and did not change every single year (even though there, too, tuition fees partially differed from one faculty to the other). As a consequence, it was easier for activists to find a common ground and build up emotional and cognitive solidarity as well as mutual commitment.

Capitalism shaped both student contention in Croatia and Serbia. Its impact was felt acutely, once the initial feelings of energy and enthusiasm (compare interviews in: Borba Za Znanje 2007: 214ff) were fading away. This context was a context in which students were expected to fulfil their duties of studying and/or were forced to earn money, to care for families etc. “[I]t’s naïve to expect that people commit themselves all the time. (...) We should strive towards constant commitment but not presuppose it” (HR-E). Although there were some attempts of reforming the plenary assembly, fetishism with direct democracy made its way up. “Some people did not let go of this form of organisation” (HR-D). Interviewees pointed out that the lack of professionalisation and a preoccupation with horizontality “in the wrong instances” (HR-G) accelerated the decline of the *plenum*. At the time of the interviews

[May 2013], the *plenum* still existed at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. There, it had substituted the faculty-level *studentski zbor* (i.e. the former representative students' body). Activists judge this to be a huge success. "Zagreb was the only place (...) where a revolutionary force swept away false political relationships at the faculty. [We] swept away the official representative body." (HR-F) This view was shared by another interviewee who was (at the time of the interview: May 2013) a student representative at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Her list had won faculty level elections on the promise to abolish the *studentski zbor* and to let the *plenum* take over all its functions as from autumn 2013. "At the Faculty of Philosophy, there are five to six thousand students. It would be immature of us to let only fifteen people have the right to decide [for all the others]." (HR-M) A few moments later, the interviewee admitted, however, that as of speaking, roughly fifteen to twenty people participated at the *plenum* (which convened *in parallel* to the *studentski zbor*). Interviewee HR-M expressed optimism as to the possibility of motivating more students to participate at the *plenum*. Other activists I spoke to were less enthusiastic. A few even denied that a *plenum* existed at all at their faculty.

Another macro-level contextual factor – the discursive opportunity structure – was similar in both countries but affected contention differently in Croatia than in Serbia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, communist ideas were ideologically discredited first by the turn towards ethno-nationalism and then, from 1999/2000, by a rising pro-European consensus. Both in Croatia and Serbia, higher education policies were repeatedly revised, first in an attempt to re-nationalise education (under Tuđman and Milošević respectively), then in the objective to liberalise the sector according to EU conditionality. As Maria Todorova (1999) demonstrated in her book "Imagining the Balkans", the discourse on the Balkans as the dark Alter Ego of the West has a long history.

There are, however, variations in this discourse on the Balkans to be discovered in the region. Thus, Bakic-Hayden refined Todorova's hypothesis by showing that "those who have themselves been designated as [the other]" have "appropriated and manipulated (...) the orientalist discourse (Bakic-Hayden 1995: 922). Moving from the Northwest to the Southeast, each country refers to its respective southeast neighbour as ultimately Balkan and itself as definitely European. In Croatia, everything tied to the former Yugoslav regime is identified with the "Balkan burden" (ibid. 924).

Two consequences resulted from this. First, a thorough de-politicisation of the political agenda. Certain assumptions – such as the a-priori superiority of pro-European reforms – became unchallengeable. Second, any idea with even a remotely socialist flair got

stigmatised as Yugonostalgic.¹⁷⁷ This holds true for Serbia as well. “Any kind of social struggle (...) is totally demonised. (...) When we come out with [social] demands, it looks like a thing of the past” (RS-C). In media reports and political statements, condemning the commemoration of ‘real socialism’ has become “mandatory” (Todorova 2010: 4). Yugonostalgia (as a sub-form of post-communist nostalgia) is associated with an attitude that is stuck in a past which history has already overtaken. In Croatia, interviewees told me that politicians denied any positive heritage from the “apparently failed self-management socialism” (HR-C). European ideals are the yardstick for evaluating problems in Croatia today; corruption, nationalism, particularism etc. are all interpreted through this lens. “This fatalism of mentalities (...) [is] auto-racist at its core. From there stems the subordination to the phantom of European normality and rationality” (HR-C).

In Serbia, too, liberalising education had become part of the post-war consensus. In particular, the protests that had swept away former authoritarian ruler Slobodan Milošević on October 5, 2000, had brought the “other Serbia” (Bieber 2003a: 83) to the fore. This other Serbia was not only opposed to nationalism, but also inclined towards Europe. And Europe stood for representative democracy and capitalism. Elites (reformed communists, but above all proponents of the pro-democracy camp) developed a strong, and increasingly unquestioned, liking for pro-European reforms – no matter what such policy reforms entailed (cf. Džihic et al. 2006). “‘Europe’ developed to be the ultimate instrument in advocating one’s own politics and dismiss arguments of others. European agendas, perspectives, values and standards not only serve as rationale for reform, but rather as instrument for distinction towards political opponents. The dichotomy between Europe on the one hand and the Balkans on the other, summarized by the term ‘Balkanism’, becomes an inherent concept in the internal political debates of the states of Former Yugoslavia as well as between them” (Džihic & Wieser 2008b: 87). In conclusion, the discursive opportunity structure (cf. Gamson & Meyer 1996) in both Croatia and Serbia is unfavourable for the articulation of social ideas and demands; they are a thing of the past, to be forgotten. Talking about free education or capitalism was therefore something unheard of until student activists first raised such issues in 2006 in Serbia and 2009 in Croatia.

Student activists seized different tactics to deal with this discursive context – and this difference in strategies explains why activists in Croatia were more successful in positioning their frame in the public than in Serbia. As discussed above, activists from the *Slobodni Filozofski* in Zagreb presented their demand in the widely accepted language of human rights.

¹⁷⁷ See: <http://slobodnifilozofski.org/?p=1915> [24/02/12]

“If you want to do something mainstream, you have to find niches in the current discourse and find ways to cling onto that” (HR-E). Free education was rephrased as part of the so-called second generation of social and economic rights, as protected by the Croatian constitution. In Serbia, the demand of 2011 to lower tuition fees to three minimum wages was intended to integrate student contention into a larger discontent with de-industrialisation and privatisations (especially in the production industries). “The idea was that linking tuition fees to the minimum wage could help connect the students to workers and other [social] sectors” (RS-L). The problem with this tactic was, however, that the workers’ movement in Serbia was as much at the margins of society as student activists (cf. Music 2013). Thus, rather than seeking discursive niches within the mainstream to cloak their radical criticism, student activists in Serbia linked themselves to a defunct and depreciated terminology (ibid. 141). In conclusion, their contention had to remain incomprehensible to the (widest possible) public.

The stigma clinging to socialism/communism outplayed itself also besides the discursive field. Activists in both Croatia and Serbia admitted having troubles with finding allies from the political mainstream. The party landscapes certainly offered no allies for left-oriented activism. Research into electoral systems and their impact on party systems in the Western Balkans seem to confirm this observation. The choice of electoral system originally produced a wide variety of parties but led to a reduction of parties eventually (cf. Emerson & Sedo 2010; idem: Casal Bertoa & Mair 2010). Democracy turned into an empty phrase for a primacy of neoliberal reforms realised by an oligarchy of identical parties and politicians, who act from within formally democratic institutions. Basically, interviewees had the impression that they could not influence policy choices with their votes. “It’s all just an illusion of choice” (RS-L). The enormous frustration with democracy is also well expressed in the following quote: “[Democracy] is a nice idea. I can’t wait to see it happen. Ah, democracy. Democracy is like an optical illusion. It’s not that I don’t believe, but I don’t see it” (RS-J).

Such lamentations are expressive of a low input legitimacy (cf. Scharpf 1999) in Serbia. Serb activists bemoan that this pro-EU consensus has resulted in an empty ritual of adoption and adaption. “Mainstream politics has become reduced to the level of policies” (RS-B). Interviewees expressed enormous disappointment in the state of political affairs, including the way democracy had developed in Serbia. “[People] struggled for a multi-party system and against the one-party system but ended up with no politics at all” (RS-C). The reduced opportunities for people to partake in their own government through voting is mirrored in an unstable party system that shows continuities in personalities and uniformity as

regards the contents of party programmes (cf. Bochsler 2010). The latter point is crucial, since the principle of representation is widely perceived as a broken promise. “The Balkan democracies are regimes in which voters can change governments far more easily than they can change policies” (Krastev 2002: 51). One of my interviewees in Serbia put it as follows: “The difference between ‘left’ and ‘right’ is not always necessarily on socio-economic issues, but [in the area of] human rights” (RS-J). In scholarly terms, one could describe this as a culturalist polarisation of parties juxtaposing modernist against nationalist parties (cf. Stojarova 2010).

In Croatia, too, parties tend towards a two-party system at the centre (ibid.). Student activists do not recognise differences between party programmes. They blame parties for being uniform and offering no choices. “I don’t think there is a democratic system in Croatia. (...) I have a problem with politics that does not take into consideration that they have to do with human beings” (HR-I). The following table puts numbers onto these subjective feelings of not being represented by the political system. Accordingly, about two thirds of voters in both Croatia (62%) and Serbia (68%) feel not represented by politicians.

As of today, is there a political party or a politician in [COUNTRY/ENTITY] that represents your political views?

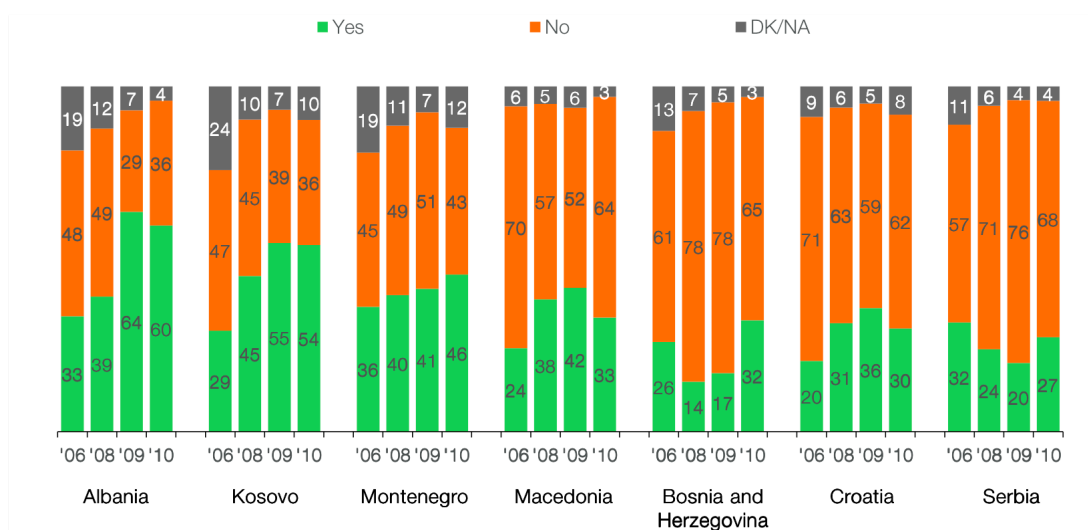


Figure 13: Input legitimacy in FY: Question on representativeness, © Balkan Monitor, 2010

Output legitimacy, i.e. the capacity of the state to produce outcomes for its citizens, however, is on the decline as well. Growing poverty coupled with elites that have captured the state (Dzihic & Wieser 2008b: 86) and the on-set of the global economic crisis have hit Yugoslav successor states hard. These processes resulted in a widening gap between the peoples’ expectations of Europe and dire economic realities. The following table presents some statistical data for 2013. It comes at no surprise that activists in both Croatia and Serbia

expressed their wish to establish parties after the (so-perceived) successful models of *Syriza* in Greece or *Die Linke* in Germany.

	<i>GDP Change</i> 2012-2013	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>Average Wage</i>	<i>Public Debt</i>
Croatia	- 1 %	17.2 %	1,048 €	67.1 %
BiH	0.8 %	27.5 %	660 €	43 %
Macedonia	3.1 %	29 %	504 €	36 %
Serbia	2.5 %	23.6 %	537 €	62.2 %
Slovenia	- 1.1 %	10.1 %	1,523 €	71.7 %

Figure 14: Economic Data on FY for 2013, Data from the WIIW.

Besides lacking allies in parties, student activists actively sought to differentiate themselves from earlier generations of activists or other civil actors (NGOs). In Serbia, student activists felt betrayed by protesters, who had been at the forefront of anti-Milošević upheavals. “They looked at [us] as unpatriotic. Because the patriotic thing now is to shut up (...) and swallow. (...) That’s the biggest obstacles [that we] don’t have the support of older generations [of activists]” (RS-J). In Croatia, my interviewees distanced themselves from earlier generations of protesters active during the 1990s, because they considered previous protesters to be part of the (neoliberal, pseudo-democratic) system they fought against. The evaluation of the 1968 protests was equally mixed. On the one hand, Serb activists in an analysis of “previously unsuccessful student protests” stated: “[T]he most famous activists from 1968 (...) today find themselves at the crown of the same Western economic and political system that implements the exact same policies against which they had once fought.”¹⁷⁸ There was only some positive reference to the protests from 1968 in Croatia. Activists argued that students then had also struggled for social rights and used some sort of direct democratic method of decision-making. The appropriation of the one slogan from 1968 demonstrates how activists from 2009 framed 1968 protests in a positive light. The phrase “Let’s be real, let’s ask for the impossible”¹⁷⁹ from 1968 was converted into “Let’s be impossible, let’s ask for the real [thing]”¹⁸⁰. According to interviewee HR-G, this inversion was intended to signal that what the activists demanded (i.e. free education) had already existed before in Yugoslavia and was therefore neither unreal nor utopian but very normal and

¹⁷⁸ My translation from: “[N]ajpoznatijih učesnika studentskog pokreta iz 1968. godine (...) se danas nalaze u samom vrhu zapadnog ekonomskog i političkog sistema, gde sprovode politiku koja je čak i gora od one protiv koje su se oni borili.” Available from: [http://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/2012/02/24/studentska-jesen-2011/\[24/02/12\]](http://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/2012/02/24/studentska-jesen-2011/[24/02/12])

¹⁷⁹ My translation from: “Budimo realni, tražimo nemoguće.”

¹⁸⁰ My translation from: “Budimo nemoguće, tražimo realno.”

just. Activists underlined the fact that they merely asked for something their own parents had once enjoyed.

In the theoretical chapter on social movements, I distinguished various strategies that political elites assume in reacting to social movements. Using terms such as repression versus facilitation, however, scholars remained within a dichotomy of either purely positive or negative signals to social movements. Now, I would argue that abstention from (any) action can also constitute a kind of reaction. Thus, there was no direct or indirect repression in Croatia and Serbia towards contentious activists. Police never interfered in any of the occupied buildings in Croatia nor in Serbia. But neither do we witness any accommodation of activists' demands. Rather I would say that authorities adhered to a twin strategy, which entailed a) discursive denigration of left ideas as outdated Yugonostalgia and b) indifference towards student contention. The respective state authorities did not wield any kind of direct repression. But the signals of indifference, I would argue, typically implied that responsible ministers did not actively engage with students' arguments and that executive institutions closed their eyes whenever violence against student activists did occur (in Serbia).

According to Croatian laws, police deployment is prohibited on university premises. When, despite of that, police entered the Faculty of Philosophy approximately one week before the start of the first occupation in April 2009 in Zagreb at the occasion of the visit of then Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, activists recorded this. They also recorded a statement by then Vice-Chancellor Miljenko Jurković denouncing police deployment as inappropriate. With this statement at hand, activists had an advantage over the Vice-Chancellor, who had created a credibility trap for himself. In sum, it was inconceivable for the state and the university to allow or order police into the occupied Faculty building.

Based on my interviews in Serbia and online texts,¹⁸¹ I was able to reconstruct four violent attacks on the building of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade during the third occupation (*BLOK III*). In addition, there was one violent encounter with official student representatives, when activists tried to hold the first direct democratic assembly in northern provincial town of Novi Sad. The incidents at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade included:

- throwing burning torches into the building;
- beating up activists with metal bars and smashing the door with rocks;
- stabbing one activist with a knife;

¹⁸¹ Websites: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.co.at/2011/12/saopstenje-povodom-cetvrtog-napada-na.html>; <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.co.at/2011/11/protest-i-peticija-protiv-nasilja-nad.html> [17/08/13], <http://plenumnovisad.blogspot.com/> [20/02/12], <http://studentskeborbe.info/page/3/> [17/08/13],

- private security guards (ostensibly paid by the Faculty of Philosophy) kicking activists out of the occupied building on November 3, 2011.

The faculty sued three activists for violence against private security guards.¹⁸² Interviewees could not tell me what has become of these legal charges. Upon my question whether a public administrative office or complaints body at the university had undertaken anything to support students in pressing charges or seeking redress for the incident with private security, my interviewees (being the three activists that had been sued) reacted with astonishment. “We were at the receiving end of the stick” (RS-E). It seems as if the state simply delegated responsibility to the universities – and these relegated the task to the faculties, who on their turn passed on the pressure to students. One interviewee compared this to a food chain. “Big fish–smaller fish–smallest fish” (RS-F). I would like to emphasise, though, that the severity of these incidents is less related to the aggressiveness or the damage outplayed during the events themselves but rather to the fact that it was possible for them to happen at all. Nobody was persecuted, and the perpetrators (except for the security guards) could never be ‘identified’. It seems that the reactions by the states’ public authorities were less marked by accommodation or repression than by outright indifference and ignorance.

Croat activists complained about comparable indifference by politicians. Whether this inertia was due to unwillingness or inability to deal with the students’ demands is less relevant than the fact that authorities were absent. The difference is that this absence did not result in violent attacks in Croatia, while in Serbia, it did. The reason seems to have been that in Croatia the first occupation in 2009 was novel. The public was still surprised and overwhelmed. In contrast, the attacks in Serbia occurred during the second occupation in 2011. At that point in time, observers already knew roughly what to expect from occupation. In that sense, Ruud Koopmans’s argument about expanding protest waves holds true (cf. Koopmans 2011). Where one party to the “web of social relations” (ibid. 23) (namely the state) is absent or only reacts faintly, social movements cannot grow. If there are no “patterns of interaction” (ibid. 22) between targets and challengers, then there is literally nothing for challengers to destabilise. Faced with inertia and closedness by political elites, by depoliticisation and disaffection of the bigger populace, absence of allies within the system and a hostile discourse, activists had to find creative ways to wage their struggle.

In sum, Croatian activists were decidedly more innovative in using what little opportunities they perceived. First, they meticulously planned their adventure of occupation,

¹⁸² See the petition on violence against students on: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.co.at/2011/11/protest-i-peticija-protiv-nasilja-nad.html>; compare video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrgOpmAjhS0>; <http://plenumfiloloskog.blogspot.co.at/> [17/08/13]

creating a stable activists base within. They formed a coherent collective identity, promoted emotional commitment and solidarity within before being confronted with the exhaustive task of occupation. As regards their framing, long and fruitful discussions produced firm worldviews and cognitive homogeneity before being confronted by public media scrutiny. Second, activists in Croatia succeeded in creating a frame that could hook onto a hegemonic discourse. As mentioned before, activists used the Croatian constitution to legitimise their demand for free education. Thus, they made their frame resonant for a large constituency and reached a high degree of salience. In addition, framing education as a public good helped turning it into a fairly inclusive frame, so as to be potentially transferable to other segments of society: to health employees, professors, school pupils and teachers, farmers, workers etc. Activists actively sought to construct similarities between their plight and others, assuming an interest for and partly actively getting involved for increasingly diverse issues.¹⁸³

Third, activists planning the occupation at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb capitalised on globalisation to expand what little opportunities they had. Within a globalised world, social movements increasingly make use of international discourses and events to legitimise their struggle before the national audience (cf. Della Porta & Kriesi 2002: 6ff). Since in 2009, the international students' week of activism against the commercialisation of education began on April 20, Croat activists chose this day as a starting date for their occupation. "We claimed: if it's a global struggle it's something that needs to be resisted all over the world to be successful" (HR-J). The final relative advantage of Croat activists relates to the meso-level institutional context at universities. Starting before the first occupation in spring 2009 at the Faculty of Philosophy, activists actively sought to ensure they had support or at least tacit backing by the Vice-Chancellor and the faculty's staff. Thus, they established good relations with gatekeepers, gardeners, cleaning ladies and lower administration clerks. Besides, activists designed a support note, which they presented to the Vice-Dean Damir Boros for signature. According to interviewee HR-A, Vice-Dean Boros wrote on this paper that he supported the demands (even if he did not sustain the method). Within the professorship, many assistant professors were on the side of the activists. Some professors even demonstrated their approval during the occupation as they provided alternative lectures (i.e. lectures taking place at the blocked premise outside of the normal curriculum). The sympathy of many higher and lower ranking academic staff members became evident shortly after the second occupation of autumn 2009. That was when professors and assistants founded

¹⁸³ The website *Slobodni Filozofski* currently lists the following sections: society, education, economy, workers' rights, European Union, politics, human rights, global topics. See: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/> [17/08/13]

the union *Akadska Solidarnost*, explicitly basing it upon the direct democratic model of student contention. This union still exists today [May 2013].¹⁸⁴

Last but not least activists attempted to get the *studentski zbor* from the Faculty of Philosophy on their side. While the student representatives proved to be very hostile in Serbia at both faculty and university levels, activists in Zagreb could at the minimum count on the acquiescence by the faculty level *studentski zbor* at the Faculty of Philosophy. This does imply that activists had the backing by the university level student representatives. A university level representative told me: “We cannot support [them], because (...) we don’t share this ideology” (HR-K). But since these representatives had no competencies over the Faculty of Philosophy (due to the legal independence of faculties from the central university), their obstruction was only symbolic and had no real effects on the ground.

Turning to Serbia, it becomes clear that activists did not expand on or use the little opportunities they disposed of. On the contrary, activists lacked the ability to form a strong collective identity and a coherent frame. Evidently, there was very little (if at all) consistent discussion and reflection about the theoretical ramifications of their contention. Interviewees in Serbia suggested that they hardly “stopped to think what those slogans meant that we yelled, (...) we didn’t think what were the implications of our demands, we didn’t think about which measures would be needed to meet the demands” (RS-E). While the one side complained about the “fetish of revolution” (RS-J), the others found that the “plenary assemblies were too philosophical” (RS-K). Without any exception my interviewees deplored the very low level of preparation and evaluation of the occupation in 2011 (yet could not recall longer preparatory phases before the first occupation in 2006).

Reasons for this can be found in the inability in developing a strong collective identity, disagreements over tactics and in general over the amount of necessary praxis versus theory. The confusion over tactics was reflected in a confusing process of finding and articulating demands. Also, Serb activists did not think through why and how their contentious action should be connected to other segments of society. In contrast to Croats, then, they did not manage to establish the similarities between themselves and other socially misfortunate people. “The connections to other social groups were never made clear to ourselves” (RS-E). Regarding the meso-level context at universities, activists in 2006 and 2011 failed to win the respective administrative and academic staff as well as student representatives over to their side. On the contrary, all these proved to be either hostile and repressive (compare the private security incident recounted above) or joined into the strategy of indifference prefigured by the

¹⁸⁴ Compare their website at <http://www.akadsolid.hr/> [17/08/13]

state authorities. As interviewee RS-H from one of the professional student organisations¹⁸⁵ told me, his organisation struck an informal deal with the ministry during the occupation in 2011 to completely ignore the protests. According to him, that was the best strategy, because “in Serbia, any reaction just escalates the situation” (RS-H). Another interviewee representing the *studentski parlament* at university level agreed with this negative assessment of the occupation. “If it’s a real demand, but if it’s an unreal demand [we] don’t support them. These are problems that don’t affect everybody, these are particular problems” (RS-M). And finally, there were only about five professors from the Sociology department at the Faculty of Philosophy who supported the activists’ cause.

Serb activists had failed to win the support of all relevant players of their immediate academic context. Since they had not won over student representatives (at least at their occupied Faculty) it was easy for their adversaries to deny activists’ recognition. University members, the faculty or the ministry could always point to the *studentski parlament* as the only legitimate voice of students. The question of legitimacy is highly contested between all sides. All the student representatives and professional student activists I talked to in Serbia (and Croatia) affirmed their complete independence from politics. With this my respondents meant that there were no links whatsoever to political parties. The history of how these organisations were founded, their varying fortunes depending on the growth and demise of certain parties and the mode of financing signal that their ‘apolitical’ orientation (as they called it in Croatia and Serbia) was more a matter of rhetoric than of reality.

The regularity of student elections for the representatives at university and faculty levels is doubtful. For Serbia, interviewee RS-K told me his personal story. According to his own narrative, he received thirty votes out of around 300 students from his department, while he was the only candidate on the list. He asked: “What is legitimate? What is not?” (RS-K). For Croatia, interviewee HR-M (faculty-level student representative) contradicted the assertion of university-level student representative HR-K, who claimed: “We have real elections.” For the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, interviewee HR-M told me, however, that the last elections for faculty-level representatives from March 2013 had been marred by irregularities. Students had voted multiple times, handed in wrong names etc. Counting was still going on as of May 2013. As regards the financial independence of student representatives, I should note that interviewee RS-M (from the highest level of the *studentski parlament* in Serbia) conceded as a sort of side information that the Ministry of Education

¹⁸⁵ These ‘professional’ student organisations draw up the lists for four-year elections to the representative student body, i.e. the *studentski parlament* both a university and faculty levels.

directly paid his office space. This, of course, puts at a question mark behind his assertion of being “totally independent” (RS-M). In the end, student representatives in Croatia and Serbia have one decisive advantage over activists: Their roles and functions are legally prescribed. This fact played itself out in the difference of legitimacy bestowed to these two groups of actors by state authorities. Hence, the strategy of indifference I mentioned above concurs with the refusal to recognise the activists as legitimate student voices. This lack of acceptance (cf. Amenta & Caren 2011: 463) affected both Croat and Serb activists; only the latter (because of their tactics I already mentioned) handled it better.

II.3.iv.d Fellow Travellers: Expanding Collaboration to Sympathetic Actors

Talking about the context of social movements, one should not fail to analyse the conjunctions with potentially sympathetic actors of civil society at large: national or local non-governmental organisations, unions, associations and companies but also the international civil society and business actors. In Serbia, very few NGOs lent very concrete and sporadic support; for example, some agricultural workers supplied activists at the Faculty of Philology with food. Then there were some NGOs, amongst them the *Žene u Crnom* and the rail workers’ and teachers’ union, who assisted with material such as food. All of these signs of encouragement remained, however, hidden, i.e. these actors’ endorsement of the students struggle was never publicised. The networking was based on pre-established personal links but not strategically planned by either side.

Students’ unpreparedness to sustainably cooperate with like-minded or sympathetic actors is also reflected in their inability to truly formulate a frame that could connect the students’ issue with other social issues. As I have said above, the idea to include other actors’ concerns in their discourse and/or in their actions was largely rhetorical. Serb student activists failed in spreading the occupations to other cities within Serbia. The lack of infrastructure and good preparation, paired with outside repression and differences in the implementation of Bologna policies prevented expansion. Serb students were variably active in taking up and sustaining contacts with student activists from neighbouring countries. Again, what contacts existed did so due to prior personal or organisational connections. The “Anarchist/Stalinists” faction, for instance, relied on pre-established lines of communication with Anarchist groups in Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia etc. Together they set up the transnational forum *Balkan Student* (see the following chapter for more details II.3.v.b). Some of the “Marxist” activists, on the other hand, forged and subsequently intensified contact with activists from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Today, these are all clustered around the yearly event of the *Subversive Festival* in Zagreb. Due to internal disunity even at the level of the Faculty of

Philosophy in Belgrade all attempts at establishing transnational forms of collaboration within the region appealed to different factions.

My Serb interviewees also diverged in their assessment of whether such collaboration was actually needed. Some argued that it was, others found that international cooperation should override regional concerns. While the first group considered regional similarities (in tradition, history, language, economic condition etc.) as beneficiaries for specifically regional collaboration, the second group did not think that such similarities should cancel out international collaboration. Instead, they relied upon a discourse of international solidarity at large to defend their preference of international collaboration. In summary, even though the wish to expand “the social front (...) in which the student question [is just one issue amongst others]” (RS-N) may have existed, Serb students did little in terms of conscious framing (discourse), collective identity construction or – finally – organisation (such as establishing strategic points of communication and meeting with other social actors, nationally and regionally) to realise such wish. Student activism virtually exploded at two points in history (in 2006 and 2011) but imploded fairly rapidly again. It contracted (Koopmans 2011: 36-39), leaving the patterns of interaction in the Serb polity fairly intact.

In Croatia, student contention expanded and got transformed through expansion. This was due to the internal factors I deciphered above – such as a strong collective identity and coherent framing – but also to the fact that student activists regarded collaboration as vital to their struggle. Thus, during both occupations (but especially the first) activists from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb deliberately forged relations with faculties around Zagreb and in other cities. Interviewee HR-F was the mastermind and organiser in that respect. Although unexpected, the diffusion of the occupation model around Croatian faculties was successful; during the first occupation of spring 2009, twenty faculties at six universities in eight cities were occupied. During the second occupation in fall 2009, the struggle diffused only to four cities; but this resonance was still greater than in Serbia where no other faculty beyond Belgrade could be occupied.

We saw above how there was a diffusion chain, i.e. a learning cycle from the first transformative event in 2006 to the occupations in Croatia in 2009 and back to Serbia. What is crucial to understand, however, is that direct democracy and occupation was not only the model by which Croatian activists had organised themselves. But more importantly student activism expanded and transformed i.e. it gradually attached other issues and struggles to its frame and integrated other social actors and groups into its activist basis. Within Croatia, there are many ‘fellow travellers’, i.e. initiative that were directly or indirectly inspired by

student activists (the *Akadska Solidarnost* being an example for explicit copying). Indeed, over two thirds of the Croatian student activists I interviewed mentioned that they were involved in initiatives such as:

- the *Pravo Na Grad*¹⁸⁶ initiative in Zagreb, which revolved around the commercialisation of public space at the pedestrian street Varsavska, as well as the *Srd' je naš*¹⁸⁷ initiative revolving around the privatisation of coastal areas;
- the *Direktna Demokratija U Školi* initiative focusing on direct democracy at schools;
- the *Demokratska Inicijativa Protiv Europe* initiative mobilising against the European Union referendum in Croatia;
- the *Akadska Solidarnost*¹⁸⁸: a direct democratic union for academic staff and professors; the *Centar za Radničke Studije*¹⁸⁹ – centre for workers' studies;
- the *BRID Baza za Radničku Inicijativu i Demokratizaciju*¹⁹⁰ – Base for Workers' Initiative and Democratisation;
- the *Subversive Festival*¹⁹¹ – a yearly festival for progressive films, leftist political philosophy and activism;
- *Le Monde Diplomatique*¹⁹² – Croatian edition; this newspaper is edited in Croatia by some of the most committed student activists, continuing to “build awareness [for our agenda]” (HR-J).

As for regional collaboration originating from Croat student contention, the *Subversive Festival* constituted the only structured attempt at collaboration. Croat interviewees accept the idea that regional collaboration is important, because they generally see that the region suffers from similar difficulties while offering some resources (again: history, language etc.) that could facilitate exchange. “Against this background, if there's no cooperation, it's not possible to simply focus on the national level” (HR-B). Thus, in 2012, a *Balkan Forum* symposium was institutionalised at the Subversive Festival. This forum structured regional networking to some extent. Still, informal contacts and personalised exchanges dominate. Students acknowledge that lack of resources is the most important obstacle for keeping regional collaboration dense. In this context it is also important to say that only three Croat

¹⁸⁶ See: <http://pravonagrad.org/>, idem: http://zelena-akcija.hr/hr/tagovi/pravo_na_grad [27/07/13]

¹⁸⁷ See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/srdj.je.nas/> [27/07/13]

¹⁸⁸ See: <http://www.akadsolid.hr/> [27/07/13]

¹⁸⁹ See: <http://radnickistudiji.org/> [27/07/13]

¹⁹⁰ See: <http://www.brid.coop/> [27/07/13]

¹⁹¹ See: <http://www.subversivefestival.com/> [27/07/13]

¹⁹² See: <http://lemondediplomatique.hr/> [27/07/13]

interviewees touched the issue of regional collaboration on their own accord. All the others answered only to my purposive question targeting the usefulness of such collaboration.

In sum, both Croatian and Serbian activists to a certain degree succeeded in “transcending the limits of the possible”, as Koopmans aptly put it (Koopmans 2011: 23). They startled the usual state of affairs in their respective countries by the simple fact of introducing a novel model of protest: direct democracy coupled with the tactic of occupation. But only in Croatia, student contention expanded to other social sectors. It thus triggered recurring waves of outrage that poked the regime, or as Koopmans says, “destabilise[d] social relations within the polity” (ibid.). “The student movement”, said interviewee (HR-B), “was a sort of education and deepening of the struggles.” The inclusive and coherent framing, the construction of similarities with other actors, the large constituency (‘citizens’) and the strong orientation towards the public and the common good prepared Croatian students ideologically for the necessity to organisationally expand contention – and so they did.

II.3.v Interacting at Regional Level: Transnational Collaboration

In the introduction, I hypothesised that through creating structures of collaboration at the regional level, student activists could contribute towards developing a transnational Yugosphere and thus breed an ethos of engagement devoid of ethnic and state nationalism (see chapter I.1.iv.a). All in all, if my hypothesis is plausible, transnational activism should allow the formation of those values via the joint constitution and experience of a-national identity concepts and practices. Transnational activism should unclothe a regional counterpublic that floats above and in opposition to the nationalised and state-compartmentalised public spheres in the countries.

II.3.v.a Networking: Exchanging Information and Signs of Solidarity

Networking between student activists in the region is common. Student activists are informally linked to each other to a great extent. Personal exchanges, direct visits and communication are flourishing, which indicates intensive informal networking. Networking was achieved through the following mechanisms: through 1) staying informed (and informing the constituency) about student activism in neighbouring countries in the region, 2) sending letters of support to signal solidarity, 3) pro-active diffusion of models of contention through the booklets *Borba Za Znanje* (from Serbia) and *Blokadna Kuharica* (from Croatia) and 4) through the symposium *Balkan Forum* at the *Subversive Festival*, starting in 2012. I discuss each mechanism in turn:

Ad 1) Numerous examples exist for how student movements follow and inform their own adherents and constituencies about events in their neighbour societies. On all blogs and Facebook pages I reviewed (including websites in Slovenian and Macedonian¹⁹³), activists copied statements, articles or pamphlets produced in other countries for their own purposes or informed about conferences/meetings taking place outside of their own countries. Thus, for example, Montenegrin students stated that they witnessed “how students in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia promote their rights through peaceful and massive protests, raising their voice against problems in their countries. They do not shut up when confronted with all those abnormalities, which result from the typical Balkan way of plundering philosophy behind a mask of all kinds of chauvinism.”¹⁹⁴

Ad 2) Mutual letters of support are a widespread ritual across the region. An analysis of the letters of support has to acknowledge the specific intentions with which they are conceptualised: activists of one initiative formulate a letter to signal their solidarity with another initiative. The letters are primarily intended for the activists themselves; neither for the targets nor the constituency. Expressing (feelings of) solidarity implies understanding the plight of the others and openly communicating this understanding. Thus, controversies or differences are likely to be suppressed, while congruencies and similarities get emphasised. Even though such statements do not indicate enduring collaboration, they bear witness to the degree to which students want to have their interest in other struggles known. Taken together, the letters show coherence as to how student activists from the region frame the aim of their collective action and how they frame the choice of action strategies. We can see how national framings are consistently expanded onto the transnational level through highlighting similarities and glossing over or ignoring distinctions in local protests:

- The letters of support express a perception, according to which students in the region share similar circumstances, an identical aim (free of charge education) and that they could learn from each other. “Today it is clear that students’ struggles know no boundaries. We share one goal: free and accessible education for all. (...) You are today inspiring us all. The battle that is currently being fought in Croatia will soon

¹⁹³ See for Macedonia: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/2011/10/17/blokiran-filoloski-bgd/> [24/02/12]; in Slovenia the *Mi Smo Univerza* website has a direct news feed from the *Slobodni Filozofski* on the starting page: <http://mismouniverza.org/> [24/02/12]

¹⁹⁴ My translation from: “Svjedoci smo da studenti u Bosni, Srbiji i Hrvatskoj svoja prava ostvaruju mirnim i masovnim protestima, da dižu glas protiv problema u njihovim zemljama, da ne ćute na sve one anomalije koje proizvodi tipična balkanska pljačkaška filozofija maskirana u šovinizme svih vrsta.” See entry of April 7, 2011: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/162332757155125/> [24/02/12]

spill over into the whole Balkans.”¹⁹⁵ Even with regard to Slovenia, which could be objectively considered a special case amongst the Former Yugoslav successor states due to its rapid development after the war and its politically advanced position as EU member, activists claimed: “The situation in Slovenia is similar.”¹⁹⁶ Explanations as to why the situations in the countries are similar are hardly ever provided. Similarities are presented as uncontested and incontestable matters of fact. They are expressive of a denial of differences or a refusal to address issues such as nationalist policies and war memories. It is also part of a self-understanding as left-wing and anti-fascist. This dates back to the heritage of grass-roots activism during the Yugoslavian Communist regime and to anti-war contention in the early 1990s.

- Student contention is framed as a defence of the public good of higher education against global commercialisation processes. “What your struggle against the commercialisation of education shows (...) is that this is not about the question of money, but about the fundamental question of the public sphere and the democratic society we live in. The commercialisation [of tertiary education, A.R.] is just one, though maybe the most harmful, expression of a wider process towards privatising and monopolising the public sphere.”¹⁹⁷ The introduction (and/or raise) of tuition fees at universities is seen as resulting from this commodification of education and knowledge. Hence, the core claim is to seek for either a diminution or an abolition of tuition fees.
- Strategies mentioned in the letters of support are direct democracy, occupation and public protests.¹⁹⁸ Student activists bemoan that official student representation has failed, hence why direct democracy through plenary assemblies (outside of existing

¹⁹⁵ My translation from: “Danas je jasno da studentska borba ne zna za granice. Naš cilj je jedan: slobodno, svima dostupno obrazovanje. (...) Vi ste danas inspiracija svima nama. Borba koja se danas vodi u Hrvatskoj, uskoro će zahvatiti ceo Balkan.” Letter of support by Belgrade students to students at the *Slobodni Filozofski* in Zagreb in May 2009, long before the Faculty of Philosophy was occupied in Belgrade in 2011. Available from: http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/05/podrska-od-studentata-i-studentkinja_04.html [24/01/11]

¹⁹⁶ My translation from: “Situacija u Sloveniji je slična.” See letter of support by Slovenian students to Serb students at: <http://mismouniverza.org/podrska-pokreta-mi-smo-univerza-studentskoj-pobuni-u-beogradu/> [24/01/12]

¹⁹⁷ My translation from: “Ono što vaša borba protiv komercijalizacije obrazovanja (...) jeste da se ovde ne radi o prostom pitanju novca, već o jednom temeljnijem pitanju javnog dobra i demokratičnosti društva u kome živimo. Komercijalizacija je samo jedan, možda najštetniji izraz šireg procesa privatizacije i monopolizacije javne sfere.” Letter of support by Belgrade students to students in Ljubljana: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/2012/01/podrska-kolegama-sa-univerziteta-u.html> [24/01/12]

¹⁹⁸ Letter of support by Zagreb students (and activists of the Akademaska Solidarnost initiative) to Belgrade students, available from: <http://blog.autonomnistudenti.com/?p=3733> [24/01/12]

representative students' councils) is presented as the only remaining acceptable tactic.

- The targets of the struggle for free education are politicians (the local governments, parties and administrations). These are considered to be liaising with capitalist elites worldwide. The latter constitute the ultimate enemy, since they, according to the letters of support, put into practice unjust, and globally operating, market laws. "The geographic spread and parallel institutionalisation of identical processes clearly demonstrate the presence of global tendencies openly advanced in the agendas of international political-economic elites."¹⁹⁹
- Topics of collective national belonging or linguistic differences are generally avoided. All sides (including Slovenians and Macedonians) write in some or other version of Serbo-Croat, expecting that they could (or should) be understood. Thus, Serb students type their letters in the *ekavica*, while Croat students use the *ijekavica* variety of 'Serbo-Croat' in their letters. Lexical and grammatical distinctions are not usually foregrounded except in one letter of support from students in Tuzla (which is situated in the Bosnian-Croatian Federation, where the *ijekavica* is predominant) to students in Zagreb:

The text starts by praising the historical contributions of students from around the region. Now, there exist three ways of expressing *history* in Serbo-Croat: *povijest* (Croat version), *istorija* (Serb version) and *historija* (preferred by some Bosnian and some Montenegrin speakers). Now, by explicitly listing all three terms in one chain (*povijesti – istoriji – historiji*²⁰⁰) the authors signal that they share the same language (that all terms signify the same 'thing'). Simultaneously however, the authors – by citing all three terms rather than simply choosing one – rectify linguistic distinctions. A similar operation is performed in the last sentence, where a Croat version of students in plural (*studenata*) is juxtaposed with the Serb version (*studeneta*) in an attempt to join 'your' struggle with 'our' struggle. The complete quote goes as follows: "Today, every success by students 'here' [*studenata*] is a success by students

¹⁹⁹ My translation from: "Geografska rasprostranjenost i institucionalni paralelizam identičnih procesa jasno nam ukazuju na prisutnost globalnih tendencija oje predstavljaju otvorenu agendu internacionalnih političko-ekonomskih elita." Letter of support by Zagreb students to students in Ljubljana, available from: <http://mismouniverza.org/podrska-plenuma-filozofskog-fakulteta-u-zagrebu/> [24/01/12]

²⁰⁰ The complete quotation runs: "Uvjereni da je do sada u povijesti – istoriji – historiji svaka promjena koju su studenti iznijeli imala samo pozitivne efekte" (the letter of support is written in the *ijekavica* idiom). See: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/06/podrska-studentskog-pokreta-bih.html> [24/01/12]

‘there’ [studeneta]; so that your success is our success. This is why we are with you, why we are together, why we support you, and this is why you may count on our support.”²⁰¹ The letter thus makes evident the double-sidedness of language. It uses language to bridge differences, but at the same time, reinforces them.

Ad 3) Serb activists in 2006/2007 and Croats in 2009 took on an exceptional role in diffusing their models of contention through their booklets *Borba Za Znanje* and the *Blokadna Kuharica*. As I have written above the *Borba Za Znanje* contains commentaries and articles by authors mentioned by name, but also reprints of newsletters, posters, photos and anonymised interviews with activists. It was published in early 2007 and, according to my Serb interviewees, has been predominantly put together by the Anarchist/Stalinists faction of Serb activists. The intention behind the booklet was to actively keep the vision of the 2006 occupation alive but also to promote the direct democratic strategy. The texts in the booklet are written in a detached manner. They profess to express the consensus view of the occupation. From my fieldwork in Serbia it became clear, however, that the period, during which the *Borba Za Znanje* was put together and published, overlapped with rising tensions within the *Socijalni Front*, which collapsed in that same period of early to mid-2007. The *Blokadna Kuharica* (published between the first and the second occupation in 2009) not only cleverly packages the narrative behind the occupation in Zagreb. It also testifies how confident Croat students were that their model of contention was fit for adoption by students in other countries and by non-student actors within Croatia. “The purpose of this manual is twofold. The first one, the less important one, is historical – a wish to record what happened. The other purpose, the main one, is to present our experiences in this way so that they might be of use to students at other universities (and perhaps members of other collectives, like factories etc.) who decide to undertake a similar action” (Occupation Cookbook 2009: 17). The *Blokadna Kuharica* assumes a straightforward and dry tone. This demonstrates how much the (purportedly collective) authors were keen to avoid an impression of ideological preaching and of insincerity. Tips and tricks provided in the booklet are exceptionally detailed. They address everything from how the decision to start an occupation could (or

²⁰¹ My translation from: “Danas, sada, svaki uspjeh studenata je uspjeh studeneta, shodno tome vaš uspjeh je i naš uspjeh, zato smo uz vas, zato smo zajedno, zato vas podržavamo, zato možete računati na našu podršku.” See: <http://www.slobodnifilozofski.com/2009/06/podrska-studentskog-pokreta-bih.html> [24/01/12]

should?) be taken to how the plenums and working groups should be organised. Activists around the region, but definitely in Belgrade,²⁰² directly drew from this booklet.

Ad 4) From 2012, informal networking in student contention crystallised around the *Balkan Forum*. The *Balkan Forum* is a sub-conference or symposium under the umbrella of the Subversive Festival in Zagreb. According to its co-founder Igor Šticks, it was designed to counter particularist divisions between resistance initiatives in the region by establishing a platform of regularised dialogue and encounter (quoted in Kraft 2013a: 78). In 2012, the festival offered discussion sessions about the privatisation of common goods such as water, infrastructure, health and education. Regional strategies of collaboration were also discussed. The Forum at once expressed the rationale that similarities in the context of privatisation trends in the region made a regionalised search for new ideas and solutions necessary. The topics discussed were in the line with the way Croat student contention had expanded onto new issues and social concerns beyond higher education. But the Forum is a networking event, not a coalition of any kind. This means that activists meet and discuss together but do not hatch out any collaborative action or agenda beyond what action is taken at country level. Also, activists travel there as adherents of their respective country-level initiatives, and leave as such. In other words, there are no efforts taking place at forging a coherent group – a collective identity – out of the activists present there. With regard to organisers, it must be said that the idea-givers to the *Balkan Forum* identify with and/or have intensively engaged at the *Slobodni Filozofski* occupations in Zagreb in 2009. As for participants from Serbia, I learnt in my interviews that they all come from, or identify with, the ‘Marxist’ activist faction in Serbia.

As a conclusion, I would underline that networking seems to have furthered the production and expression of similarities. Networking spurred processes of constituting similarities and of defining (the same) antagonists and targets. It also incited students to recognise each other’s activism as oriented towards the same common good: public education. Until 2011, however, these processes did not prompt students to put networking on a more stable organisational basis. In 2011, the *Balkan Student* was founded. Student activists first had to experience the limits and (actual) failure of their nationalised struggles before even considering that the time could be ripe for regional collaboration.

²⁰² There is a direct link to the Cookbook under the title *Blokadna KuVarica* (instead of the Croat wording *Blokadna KuHarica*) on the blog *Plenum Filozofskog*: <http://plenumfilozofskog.blogspot.com/> [24/02/12]

II.3.v.b Institutionalising Transnational Activism: Coalition-Building

Forming coalitions necessitates considerably more investments by social activists, than linking up through informal networks. Considering the symbolic dimension, coalitions incite more emotional involvement and thus help activists to build up trust and inclusive self-recognition. Long-term coalitions fuel processes of collective identification in addition (or even in contrast) to collective identifications within the countries. In successor states of Yugoslavia, the first attempt at forming a transnational coalition happened with the birth of the *Balkan Student* in 2011.²⁰³ Student initiatives from Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Kosovo were involved from the start. Over time, more initiatives joined (from Sarajevo and from Rijeka), but there are some important ones apparently missing (for example, the Zagreb initiative *Slobodni Filozofski*). Internationally, the *Balkan Student* is linked as a sub-platform to the International Students Movement. According to transcripts published on the website, four conferences have been organised within the framework of the *Balkan Student*. The last convened in Skopje in December 2012, which is also the date of the last online post²⁰⁴.

During the *Balkan Student*'s short time of existence, there have been attempts to forge collective belonging and to formulate jointly agreeable claims. "One important goal of the [first regional, A.R.] meeting was to create an integrative platform with which all individuals and groups could identify, in order to enable them to join in the common struggle."²⁰⁵ According to a press release by the host movement of the first meeting in Skopje, *Sloboden Indeks*, the *Balkan Student* constitutes the "first serious attempt to coordinate the groups, which include coordination of activities, exchange of information and important collaboration based on the same ideology and complete mutual solidarity".²⁰⁶ The reason for the perceived necessity of this form of cross-border collaboration is given in an invitation to the second regional meeting (in Belgrade in November 2011). "[W]e came to the conclusion that we could enhance the local struggle by uniting in solidarity with other Balkan progressive independent groups, which face similar conditions."²⁰⁷ The following indicators of similarity are provided: a strong tendency in all Balkan countries to increase tuition fees and

²⁰³ See: <http://balkan-student.site90.net/> [24/01/12]

²⁰⁴ Available from: <http://balkan-student.site90.net/2012/priopcenje-iv-sastanak-mreze-bs-skopje-2-i-3-12-2012/> [24/03/14]

²⁰⁵ My translation from: "Важна цел на средбата беше да се создаде унифицирана платформа која сите поединци и групи кои се идентификуваат со неа, можат да се придружи во заедничката борба." Press release to be found as an entry on April 24, 2011 at: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/page/4/> [24/02/12]

²⁰⁶ My translation from: "Ова е прв сериозен обид за координација меѓу групите, што значи координација на активности, размена на информации и најважно работа според иста идеологија на целосна меѓусебна солидарност. Важна цел на средбата беше да се создаде унифицирана платформа која сите поединци и групи кои се идентификуваат со неа, можат да се придружи во заедничката борба." Press release to be found as an entry on April 24, 2011 at: <http://slobodenindeks.noblogs.org/page/4/> [24/02/12]

²⁰⁷ Original English version: <http://balkan-student.site90.net/> [26/01/12]

administrative taxes, a long-term reduction of budget funds allocated to education and the lowering of education standards.²⁰⁸

In the following, I will present results from a documents analysis of the *Balkan Student* website, pointing out identification processes for constructing equivalences and distinctions. “Balkan Student – One Balkan – One Struggle”: thus runs the rallying cry of this instrumental coalition, which, according to its website, is open to “all progressive groups from any Balkan country that struggle against capitalist repression and neoliberal reforms, for equality and freedom of all peoples, and, above all for free and gratis education”.²⁰⁹ The slogan is instructive as it serves to introduce a range of topics to be discussed here. First of all, the phrase exemplifies how social activists use language to signal inner unity. Consider the initiative’s name; it is formulated in singular (not in plural). The emphasis on one-ness is furthermore bolstered by the reiterated use of the number one. In addition, the slogan refers to a territorially coined concept (the ‘Balkans’, not ‘Europe’, nor the ‘World’). This should ostensibly specify the origin of activists participating in the initiative, but it remains in fact unclear where this region lies. The term is thus simultaneously restrictive and vague. It illustrates the construction of a homogenous collective through implying a common sense supposedly shared by the currently mobilised and the (potential) activists.

Second, the slogan seeks to establish an authoritative claim to taking collective action: thus, the *Balkan Student* (the subject) is the platform where activists from around the Balkans (qualification of the acting subject) convene to collaborate and to wage a social struggle (the object) together. Third, the phrase expresses the need and opportunities (some) student activists must have perceived in connection with joining together at a distinctly regional level. Interestingly enough, the wording is an adaptation from “One world – One struggle”. This version figures on the website of the *International Student Movement*, to which the *Balkan Student* is attached as a sub-platform.²¹⁰ The slogan “Balkan Student – One Balkan – One Struggle” thus hints at processes of scaling down innovations from a higher level to lower levels and at processes of assembling action above the national country level from below. Fourth, the *Balkan Students’* online self-presentation reveals the creation of frontier-effects.

²⁰⁸ See: <https://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/2011/11/20/saopstenje-za-javnost-sa-drugog-sastanka-medunarodne-mreze-balkan-student/> [27/01/12]

²⁰⁹ My translation from: “Pozivamo sve progresivne grupe iz bilo koje balkanske zemlje, koje se bore protiv kapitalističke represije i neoliberalnih reformi, za jednakost i slobodu svih ljudi i, iznad svega, koje se bore za besplatno i slobodno obrazovanje, da nam se pridruže u borbi.” <http://balkan-student.site90.net/platform-sh/> [26/01/12]

²¹⁰ The *International Student Movement* was founded in November 2008 at the University of Marburg. The informational brochure is available from: <http://ia700400.us.archive.org/20/items/EAMW-Booklet-SoR/EecBooklet-Sor2011.pdf> [12/02/12]

According to the platform, all progressive groups from any Balkan country are called upon to join the initiative. By inversion, all actors not joining or counteracting this initiative must be categorised as non-progressive. What we have here, then, is a positive self-description and an implicit disrespect of activists outside of or against the *Balkan Student*'s agenda. Interpreting this against the interviews, I concluded that the term progressive serves to actively differentiate revolutionist Anarchist/Stalinist orientations from reformist Marxist attitudes. In conclusion, The *Balkan Student*'s website signals completeness through language without this completeness actually having been achieved.

The website furthermore demonstrates processes of mutual infection of frames and slogans. Scale-shifting, as Tarrow (2005: 120-140) defined it, is about coordinating action at a different level and with a different number of actors than from where it began. The *Balkan Student* is an instance of down- and up-shifting of slogans, frames and claims. First of all, the slogan *Jedan Balkan, jedna borba* is an appropriation of the International Students' Movement slogan: "One World, One Struggle". The slogan was adapted to local circumstances through substituting the 'World' with 'Balkan'. Here we have an incidence of down-shifting. Besides seeping through from the international (or: European) level down to the region, free education seems to have been shifted from the local to the regional level.

In fact, the self-proclaimed fight for free education had spread from Serbia in 2005/2006 over Croatia in 2009 to the whole region. But originally, this fight had started in the United Kingdom. Activists at a conference of the *UK National Union of Students* in April 2005 were the first to campaign for free and accessible education.²¹¹ The campaign ran under the slogan "Education Is Not For Sale" and was eventually dropped by the National Union of Students three years later.²¹² Still, numerous other student movements around Europe replicated this agenda, including, as we have seen, Belgrade activists in their first occupation in fall 2006. According to the *Balkan Student* online texts, student activists clearly recognised the need, and the opportunity, to gain strength as local initiatives through joining their collective action(s) in an enduring and formalised fashion at a regional level. Through the *Balkan Student*, they aim at terminating the Bologna process and substitute it with "emancipative education, based on progressive and rational ideas, and critical thinking".²¹³

²¹¹ See the blog by Daniel Randall, member of the network, elected into the Union as a representative in April 2005: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/mortarboard/2006/mar/24/danielrandalleducationnotf> [24/02/12]

²¹² See the article in the Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/apr/02/highereducation.uk2> [24/02/12]

²¹³ My translation from: "emancipatorskim obrazovanjem, utemeljenim na progresivnim i racionalnim idejama, kritičkom mišljenju". Available from: <https://studentskeborbe.wordpress.com/2011/11/20/saopštenje-za-javnost-sa-drugog-sastanka-medunarodne-mreze-balkan-student/> [27/01/12]

They want to abolish representative students' bodies and replace them with direct democratic student self-organisation, achieve free and publicly financed higher education, increase public funds for education and recuperate universities' political autonomy from the state and markets.

The *Balkan Student*'s short existence and the relatively low intensity of common activities could be taken to define it as an instrumental coalition (cf. Tarrow 2005: 164). As I have described in the theory chapter above, instrumental coalitions are formed over a short period of time for a specific issue campaign. This attempt at forging a transnational coalition was short and not inclusive. Talking to interviewees in Croatia and Serbia, however, I realised that supporters of the *Balkan Student* would not support the *Balkan Forum* and vice versa. My interviews revealed much less enthusiasm than documented on the website. Only interviewees RS-N and RS-D emphasised that "a wide social front is needed [in the region]" (RS-N). RS-D (with the leftist initiatives he leads) appears to be one of the masterminds of the *Balkan Student*. Apart from them, there was little appreciation for the advantages of regional as opposed to international collaboration in Serbia. Interviewees, who identified themselves as "Marxists", claimed they were neither connected to nor interested in the *Balkan Student*. In Croatia, some activists conceded that regional collaboration should be undertaken but realistically concluded "coordination is the most difficult practical problem because resources are not endless" (HR-B).

Activists disagreed as to whether it would be good to have a regional substructure of the *International Student Movement*. It must be clarified that the *Balkan Forum* is not bringing together all possible sides and factions of Serbia. At both occasions when I attended the *Balkan Forum* in Croatia (in 2012 and 2013), there were no activists from the radical camp of Serb student activists, who identify themselves as "Anarchist/Stalinist". This does not imply that Croat organisers manifestly excluded these factions, but it reveals that disunity amongst activists in Serbia (as outlined above, I.I.3.iv.a) gets transposed to the transnational level. In conclusion, networking through the *Balkan Forum* and instrumental coalition-building through the *Balkan Student* provide kernels of a specifically regional activism. As I showed in my in-depth analysis of the *Balkan Student* website, the constitution of similarities included the definition of outsiders, which might eventually fortify a binary opposition between 'good' and 'bad' actors.

All in all, sub-national internal features of student contention (particularly the disunity amongst Serb activists) torpedo regional attempts at structuring collaboration. In my interviews, I also checked the possibility that a strong identification with their ethnic nation

could be at the heart of this weakly developed collaboration. I addressed this complex issue through an ensemble of three blocks of interview questions. First, I asked all of my respondents who they saw they were struggling against. In most cases, students did not mention nationalist leaders or nationalist ideas, nor even nationalist counter-movements. Just in a couple of cases in Serbia, student activists, referring to the violent attacks they suffered during the second occupation in 2011, spoke of “neo-nazis”, “fascists” or “right-wing perpetrators”. My respondents were not able (or not willing) to specify who such individuals were, whether they belonged to any specific group and which ideology they held up. One person even denied that the perpetrators entertained any intelligible orientation, claiming: “They are just brainless kids” (RS-I). All in all, my Serb respondents acknowledged that right-extremist violence exists but seemed to believe that it had lost in appeal over the years. This is paradox given that the impression outside of the region – primarily but not only transported by the media – is that nationalist mobilisation (variably attributed to the groups of soccer hooligans or war veterans) is highly salient in both Croatia and Serbia.

According to *Reuters*, for instance, fourteen ambassadors to Serbia have expressed their concern over the possibility to hold another peaceful Pride Parade in Belgrade in 2013,²¹⁴ the last Parade in 2011 having been banned due to concerns about violence by “far-right extremists”²¹⁵. In Serbia, *Obraz* (Cheek)²¹⁶ and *Nacionalni Stroj* (National Alignment)²¹⁷, both forbidden by the constitutional court but the latter being reborn²¹⁸ under the name *Srpska Akcija* (Serbian Action)²¹⁹, are two of the most notorious examples of right-extremist mobilisation in post-war Serbia. Regional scholars have also pointed out connections between right-wing extremism, religion, nationalism, war mafia clans and sport hooligans (cf. Colovic 2000; Dzihic 2012).

Even international organisations, though much more subdued, express concern about the weak protection of (sexual) minorities. Thus, in its progress report on Serbia from 2012, the European Commission states that “the groups most discriminated against are Romani people, persons with disabilities and sexual minorities, who, together with human rights defenders, often face hate speech and threats”²²⁰. Concerning Croatia, war veteran movements

²¹⁴ Available from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/04/us-serbia-gaypride-idUSBRE9830L020130904> [26/09/13]

²¹⁵ Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15134182> [26/09/13]

²¹⁶ See an article about *Obraz* in: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/obraz-young-face-of-rightwing-violence-in-serbia> [26/09/13]

²¹⁷ Available from: <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t245784/> [26/09/13]

²¹⁸ <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/srbija-tema/64258-Novi-nacionalni-stroj.html> [26/09/13]

²¹⁹ See: <http://www.srb-akcija.org/> [26/09/13]

²²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/sr_rapport_2012_en.pdf [26/09/13]

are considered to be at the heart of nationalist mobilisation (Fisher 2003). Here again, recent events seem to accord truth to that statement. In 2011, international media reported that around 15.000 participants had protested in Zagreb against the arrest of a veteran.²²¹ In 2013, around 20.000 people gathered in the partially Serb-populated town of Vukovar to voice their anger over the erection of Cyrillic street signs.²²² In its 2012 “Comprehensive Monitoring Report” on Croatia (the last one before Croatia’s accession to the EU) the European Commission underlined that the “protection of minorities requires continuous attention”.²²³ Under “minorities” the Commission subsumed the Serb minority, Romani but also lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender (LGBT) people, who – according to the report – still face discrimination and even threats and attacks.

In short, media and NGOs but also international organisations and academics emphasise the potential for nationalist/right-wing extremist mobilisation both in Croatia and Serbia. Yet, my respondents only spoke of nationalism or fascist attackers when explicitly asked what role nationalism played in their respective societies. In around two thirds of the interviews, students, when asked directly, claimed that nationalism had lost its potency. The couple of Serbs who mentioned that nationalist protests still occur, called these manifestations “polished” and “civilised” (RS-E). In Croatia, too, students observed that nationalism today was disorganised as a movement. Some even judged that the fading of nationalism posed a new problem of student activism; that in the 1980s/90s in Serbia and the 1970s in Croatia, stronger nationalist enemies had made it easier for students to gather strength. “We have to act against the whole system now. It’s not just one [nationalist] person, or one [nationalist] party anymore” (HR-H). All in all, the students believed that – even though nationalist views might still be held in private – nationalism had lost its radiance and attractiveness as mobilisatory force. Student activists might be afraid of violent “brainless kids”, but not of potentially nationalist counter-movements. This finding is curious when juxtaposed with a quote from the first declaration of the *Balkan Forum* in 2012: “In many countries of the Balkans, organising successful resistances is marred by potent nationalism, both in form of a conservative and discriminating ideology, as well as a mobilisatory force”²²⁴ (quoted in: Kraft, 2013a: 82). Contrasting my respondents’ suggestion of weakening nationalism with claims

²²¹ Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/02/201122741520528656.html> [26/09/13]

²²² Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vukovar-war-veteran-s-protest-turned-violent> [26/09/13]

²²³ Page 33, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/hr_analytical_2012_en.pdf [26/09/13]

²²⁴ My translation from: “Der Organisation eines erfolgreichen Widerstandes steht in vielen Ländern des Balkans immer noch ein ausgeprägter Nationalismus im Weg, sowohl in Form einer konservativen und diskriminierenden Ideologie als auch einer mobilisierenden Kraft.”

that nationalism is well alive is paradoxical, if one believes – as my respondents seemed – that nationalism is salient only when it is hot.

As I have discussed in the chapter on nationalism, however, hot nationalism is merely one side of the coin. The other side is so banal that it goes largely unnoticed. In my case, answers to my third path of inquiry (concerning regional cooperation) revealed how much student activists unwittingly reproduced their nation states through their banal act of studying at, and protesting against, Croatian or Serb universities. It is important to underline that also the act of protest remains within the parameters of nation states' higher education system. In this sense, one could conclude that the attempt at (more or less successfully) building up an alternative discourse against the commercialisation of education in both countries, some tenets of the hegemonic discourse are implicitly unchallenged: namely the idea that education is something which can and ought to be organised by a nation state. This clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of hegemonic discourses. "A hegemonic formation also embraces what opposes it, insofar as the opposing force accepts the system of basic articulations of that formation as something it negates, but the place of the negation is defined by the internal parameters of the formation itself" (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 139).

Only one Croat interviewee highlighted the necessity and virtue of regional cooperation without an explicit prior question. Pointing out similarities in the context (privatisation, shock austerity policies, de-industrialisation) this respondent asserted: "Against this background, if there's no cooperation, it's not possible to focus only on the national level" (HR-B). All the other respondents only came to talk about regional cooperation when asked. Some would give examples of regional contacts and exchanges during the occupations, of which most had ended with the end of occupation. Others would agree that regional cooperation was good but difficult to achieve with limited resources. In Croatia, the virtue of regional cooperation was appreciated more than in Serbia. No wonder that it was in Croatia that the founders of the *Subversive Festival* established the regional sub-conference *Balkan Forum* in 2012. But both the *Balkan Forum* and the *Balkan Student* are too weak a basis for an overarching Yugosphere to develop, which would at once integrate sub-national counterpublics populated and fed by student activists, and surpass nationalised public spheres.

CONCLUSION

My thesis started off with a blunt promise: I professed to sketch alternative ways to evaluate the state of democracy in Yugoslav successor countries. Discomforted by explanatory models put forward by some area studies scholars, I warned against an overemphasis of the region's purported exceptionalism. I suggested there was more to societies in the successor states of Yugoslavia than primordial hatred, corruptive particularism and bloody ethno-nationalism. Area scholars have looked too closely at the region and thereupon failed to relativise their findings through comparative work. But my unease also extended to the other side, namely to those scholars of democracy who easily discard the region as just another sunken ship along the third wave of democratisation. In my view they did not appreciate the particularities of countries in transformation. They had used restricted conceptual frameworks, which were not adapt to understand the multiple shifts and rambles of new democracies beneath elites' and foreign donors' policy tools. To the address of social movement scholars I directed my criticism that they had mostly shied away from probing their theories in the context of other than either fully developed democratic or authoritarian regimes. This three-fold depiction was, of course, a venturesome statement. Life is much more complex than we often think, and so too, academia is more refined and wields better analytical instruments than can be sensibly discussed within the confines of a single doctoral thesis. But for all that, I hope my readers followed my account beyond the first couple of pages to discover that all I sought was to 1) diversify available academic approaches on the region's socio-political (and especially democratic) realities and 2) to contribute how I could to the afore-mentioned bodies of scholarship. What I was interested in was not to discharge the academic choir altogether. I rather hoped to add one conclusive string to the timbre of science by bringing together existing voices of research, which had seldom sounded together.

Departing from the hunch that democracy in the successor states of Yugoslavia is all too easily depreciated; I examined participation as one mechanism undergirding input legitimacy of democracy. I proposed that using the participatory concept of contentious politics could be fruitful for research on the transformative region of former Yugoslavia in two respects. First, I expected it to contribute to the literatures of social movements and to democratisation theoretically. Second, it was supposed to help grasp this something, which was moving out there in the residual space between the state and economy, empirically. With regard to the first point, my contribution to social movements' literature should illuminate cases of contention within transforming societies instead of 'consolidated' democracies –

which constitute the historical starting point for the bulk of work on social movements. Focusing on transition democracies would allow, so I held, analysing how the values, processes and voices (i.e. the conditions) for democracy are being determined and continuously re-determined ‘from below’. In times of transformation, where everything is in flux, social movements not only put conflicts ‘on the table’, but they also have a role to play in determining who sits at the table and how the issues are being discussed and decided upon. With respect to democratisation literature, my thesis should help rectify an overemphasis on institutions and elites, stability as core elements of democratic transition. In sum, I suggested to refocus attention upon the participatory dimension of democracy – or, differently put, upon the question of how people (the *demos*) in the region under scrutiny are taking and could take part in democratic rule (*kratein*).

Of course, this would not reinvent the academic wheel. My endeavour built upon established intellectual currents and academic approaches. They inspired me as I constructed my own lines of thoughts. And they guided me as I confronted my argument with observations gathered through my empirical work. Epistemologically, my thesis is couched within post-positivist or post-foundationalist theory. Shortly put, this framework invites the researcher to look at the meaning(s) social actors attach to reality rather than at quantities and distributions of occurrences. Examining meanings implies accepting the idea that we live in an intertextually constructed reality and that all a researcher may hope to achieve is to build a coherent, reflexive and open interpretation of (social actors’) interpretations. Whether this (my) account is persuasive (or valid) is to be judged by the intersubjective re-evaluation(s) of my readers and the scientific community. Building on this background, I chose to approach my research topic with the help of qualitative methodologies. I investigated my sources (printed and online documents and semi-structured interviews) based on an interpretative grid of analytical categories for qualitative content analysis.

My theoretic matrix draws from the various strands of work on democratisation and social movements. With regard to democratisation literature, I emphasised Carothers’ criticism of the transition paradigm, according to which there is no linear automaticity in the move from authoritarian to democratic regimes. Rather than reaching democratic stability once the ‘imagined’ stage of consolidation is successfully passed, transformations are inherently uncertain. Starting from this critical break with classical democratisation literature, I progressed to insights suggested by radical democratic theorists. Authors such as Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière, Oliver Machart and others concur that democratic theory should accept democracy’s precariousness. Democracy is no endpoint of history. At most, it can

periodically stabilize into a hegemonic formation which is – however – eternally prone to re-enactment and reinvention. This insight invites calls for the democratisation of democracy through continuous conflicts over the meaning and practice of democracy. Hence why, rather than shunning conflicts, radical democracy theorists value conflicts as participatory avenues to contest hegemonies.

Social movements are uniquely predisposed to bundle people in this gesture of saying ‘No’. Dissenting from hegemonic ways of seeing and acting in the world constitutes the negative (or deconstructive) dimension of participation. Besides, social movements may incite people to provide inputs for the so-called black box of government, infusing it with alternative images, discourses and policy proposals. In this second sense, activists wield positive (or reconstructive) participatory power. Admittedly, other civil-society actors such as NGOs or associations also assume such tasks. However, social movements’ fragile position vis-à-vis the state and their preference of unconventional (or even illegal) tactics and strategies lends them exceptional capacities and the identity basis for organising and expressing contentious politics. Social movements drive a wedge into ‘the system’. Depending on the combination of outside contextual factors and internal contentious features such as orientations, framings, principles and identities, these spaces will transform into isolationist enclaves of resistance or – to the contrary – swell into deliberative counterpublics. Only the latter provide a training ground for agitation toward the wider society. It is in this sense that contentious politics can be a most valuable contribution to the constant democratisation of democracy.

This thesis examines contemporary contentious politics in successor states of Yugoslavia after the year 2000. My first question encapsulates a descriptive-comparative agenda: How and why does contentious politics vary between ostensibly similar countries? Contentious politics provided the conceptual angle point to answer this question. I defined contentious politics as episodic, public and collective action that touches upon the interests of social actors and potentially disrupts existing cultural authorities and/or relations of power and ruling. Since I took an interest in long-term implications of contentious politics, I introduced social movements as acting units of contentious politics. Social movements are collectives that achieve a certain degree of sustainability thanks to their mechanisms of identification, framing and organisation (or routinisation). The context I referred to is a region marked by features of European transition, democratisation, marketisation and nation-state building. In order to guide my analysis, I identified four interpretive dimensions with which I could deconstruct the empirical material and then reconstruct my arguments. These four

dimensions pertain to the subjective (identification and framing), strategic (organising), contextual (context) and interactive (collaboration) aspects of contention.

My second question is normative in nature. It professes to illuminate which role contentious politics can and could play for democracy. Democracy in this picture is defined as something non-accomplishable, a *démocratie à venir*. I chose to narrow down my empirical study of student contention and student movements as an example of contentious politics in Yugoslav successor states more broadly. I did so having in mind the availability of material. But my decision was also grounded in systematic reasoning. Because the higher education sector is uniquely situated at the crossroads of, and restrained by, processes of marketisation, Europeanisation, state and nation building, it constitutes an exemplary study area for the regional context at large. I chose to focus on the time period after 2000, since this year had been a turning point in the more recent history of the region. Events in 2000 reshuffled the basic contours for both conventional and contentious politics. Notably, it was around that time that (almost all) wars and violent insurrections were brought to an end. Also, this was the time when the successor states of Yugoslavia experienced a strong push towards multi-party democracies and towards Europe.

In a first step, I examined instances of student contention from around the whole of region. The data for this analysis came from documents by student activists published online. In total, I reviewed over thirty websites, Facebook groups and blogs. In a second step, I confronted my preliminary findings with an in-depth analysis of instances of student contention from a reduced sample coming from Croatia and Serbia only. Here the bulk of material stemmed from thirty semi-structured interviews I conducted in Zagreb in 2012 and 2013, and in Belgrade in 2013. The relatively high number of interviews should allow for a diversity of opinions and experiences while keeping the data to a manageable amount. In addition, I interpreted printed handbooks/leaflets/newspapers, which I had collected during my fieldwork.

Before plunging into fieldwork, I expected that, due to the mostly analogous socio-political contexts and the largely shared histories in the region, student contention would concur in all respects. My hypothesis was – at the bottom line – that student contention had opened up the horizon for formulating and living alternative political identities and practices all around the region. Student activists, I suggested, transcend the symbolic boundaries of ethno-nationalism. Thus they conceive and repeatedly recreate non-nationalist and non-state-defined identities as a consequence of transnational collaboration within an emerging Yugosphere that would knit together the contentious hotspots at country level. My second

hypothesis was that student contention in the region brought about counter-hegemonic practices of democracy that contested the existing model of representative democracy. Organising themselves on the basis of direct democratic principles, student activists staged new actors in the public and demonstrated that democratic variants exist and can be tried out. Student activists poked the status quo of relations of power and democratic rule, thus setting 'democracy' on the move. This expectation was, however, partially corrected as I confronted it with interpretations I had extracted my empiric material. In the chapter on methodology, I retraced how my first ventures into the empirical field of research revealed the limits of my overall study design. This experience served as a wake-up call to reconsider my previous knowledge and approach. It drove me to re-enter both theoretical and methodological literatures. Adapting and refining my overall endeavour, I did not, however, bend my initial hypotheses to suit my observations. In other words, rather than taking in only what was concordant with my initial arguments, I appreciated observations, which ran counter to my intuition. By consequence my first hypothesis was essentially disproved. In contrast, my second hypothesis well captured what I had learnt was happening on the ground. I now recapitulate these results and conclude in which aspects they call for improvements of my theoretical framework and/or where they point to new research angles prospective scholars on similar topics may wish to endorse.

My empirical work illustrates two important points. The first is that people did and still fight for their voices and opinions to be heard by politicians. The residual public spaces between economy and state in the region are neither 'dark' nor 'empty'. Participation is alive in the successor states of Yugoslavia – and it reaches well beyond established and known avenues of non-governmental organisations. However, my analysis shows as well that these fights are not waged everywhere in the same way and that – despite the macro-contextual similarities – the implications of these fights differ markedly. The whole region witnessed (some kind of) student contention: whether it happened as in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, where student activists occupied university faculties, sometimes repeatedly, and sometimes for considerable periods of time (maximum of two months); or whether it happened as in Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina where students simply marched the streets. Student activists mobilised and expressed their discontent aside of official student representative structures. Occupations in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia were 'mad moments' of exception, through which frames, strategies and tactics of contention were diffused and became modular.

The first of these transformative events was the occupation of 2006 in Serbia. It was then that the twin tactics of a) interrupting lectures and seminars (while leaving other university functions such as the library, administrative services etc. untouched) and b) setting up direct-democratic assemblies were implemented for the very first time. These tactics were parcels of an overall strategy of disruptive direct democracy. And they were embedded in two ideological frameworks (frames). These frames streamlined activities and bestowed meaning upon contentious action. These frames were present throughout the region, with the exception of Montenegro and partly Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The first frame addressed the aims, underlying problems and antagonists of the struggles. The second frame provided a prognosis as to the solutions and action strategies. The first frame – which I named the frame of commercialisation – diagnoses students' contention as a struggle against a global trend of neoliberal commercialisation of universities. It expressed a local problem (remodelling higher education after communism and war) in internationally available terminology. To this frame students attached further criticism about the failure of existing representative democracy in the countries at large, and at universities more specifically. Student activists constructed neoliberalism as resulting from distorted governing structures, which in their view tilted policies to the interests of a few rich while omitting the interests of the (non-represented) majority. By putting plenary assemblies at the core of their strategy, student activists framed themselves as defenders of true democracy on a substantial (through their criticism of commercialisation of higher education) and a procedural level (direct democratic deliberation based on inclusivity and equality). The second frame of direct democracy thus complemented the first frame because it defines the strategy and tactics to solve the problems raised in the commercialisation frame: accordingly, the solution lies in creating free spaces where students (and interested persons) could meet, join together ideas and discuss as equals.

Besides pointing at similarities, I also carved out differences existing between contentious actions in the region. Differences could be found in the decision to occupy faculties and install direct democratic plenary assemblies, in the degree of opposition towards the political establishment, in the refusal or approval to cooperate with official student representative organisations, and in the degree to which student activists supported collective action waged by other segments of society and/or collaboration at the transnational level. The last aspect (transnational cooperation) needs further clarification. My thesis uncovers diffusion chains between movements around the region and between the region and international student contention. Thus, the innovation first developed by Serb activists in 2006

was diffused to many other student initiatives and even other non-higher-education-related instances of contentious action throughout the region. But, this innovation had been influenced by international examples from France, Germany, Greece and the United Kingdom. The fight against the “commercialisation of education” had originally been kick-started in the United Kingdom. The discursive linking of education with neoliberalism in this part of industrialised Europe was taken up in former Yugoslav region as well. This illustrates the firm – even if peripheric – embedding of the region within globalised capitalism.

My detailed comparison of student contention in Croatia and Serbia yielded unexpected insights. Even though student activists in both countries had adopted the above-cited model for contention (i.e. occupation plus direct democracy), there were differences as to the eventual course and implications of (student) social movements. The tables below summarise the gist of my empirical analysis, rearranging the results around the internal (framing, identification and organising) and external (context and collaboration) features of student contention.

As to the first cluster we see how inclusive framing and identification in Croatia sustained contentious action, while internal personal disagreements and rivalries at the activists’ basis in Serbia forestalled further expansion of contention.

<i>INTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Frames	
Croatia	Serbia
Coherent diagnosis of problem	Coherent diagnosis of problem
Coherent prognosis of solution	Incoherent prognosis of solution
One demand	Many demands
Clear evaluation of strategies	Unclear evaluation of strategies
Inclusive of non-education issues	Exclusive
Construction of similarities w. other actors	No construction of similarities
Well-defined targets & large constituency (“all citizens”)	Loosely defined targets & small constituency (“students”)
Strong orientation towards public & common good	Weak orientation towards public & common good

Figure 15: Summary from own research

Framing by Croat student activists included a coherent diagnosis of the problem and a coherent prognosis of possible solutions. This was matched with one single demand and sound evaluation of alternatively available strategies. Also, the frames got increasingly

inclusive over time, merging with new issues and actors. Student activists constructed ‘all citizens’ as their constituency and posed against very clearly perceived targets / antagonists. Thanks to these framing activities, students were strongly oriented towards the public and the common good. In Serbia, problem definitions were coherent but the proposed solutions differed across various activist subgroups. This becomes evident also in the incoherent formulation of many – partly contradictory – demands. Besides, the frames in Serbia were less inclusive of other than higher education issues and lacked signals of similarity to other civil society actors. Targets remained unclear and the constituency small. All in all, Serb activists constructed a weak orientation towards the public through their frames.

The diagnostic frame of commercialisation was very much alike in Croatia and Serbia, even if activists in Croatia acquired a higher degree of theoretical sophistication. As for the prognostic frame, the basic tenets of direct democratic action and occupation were alike, but the decision on and formulation of demands, tactics and strategies in Serbia were much more contradictory than in Croatia.

<i>INTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Identification	
Croatia	Serbia
Strong collective identity	Weak collective identity
Unity	Disunity
Pre-existing sub-groups accept plenum as overarching decision-making body	Binary factions (radical vs. reformist) dominate in plenum
Pre-existing networks of friendships often transcend subgroups	Friendships hardly transcend factions
Inter-generational conflict (first => second occupation)	Inter-generational conflict (first => second occupation)
No conflicts btw. activists from different faculties	Inter-faculty conflicts
Clear self-identification as “political” actors	No clear self-identification as “political”

Figure 16: Summary from own research

I explain this with the different degrees of success in forging a sound collective identity. While in Croatia an intensive phase of preparation was used to bring together various pre-existing sub-groups, contentious action in Serbia was fraught with deep internal division and rivalries right after the overarching bracket initiative *Socijalni Front* had collapsed in early 2007. In Croatia, as the next table reveals, student activists benefited from the fact that

networks of friendships cut across previously existing factions and that these factions could be integrated into a new overarching collectivity (the plenum). In addition, activists clearly identified themselves as political actors. In Serbia on the other hand, heterogeneity of pre-existing perpetuated disunity, as previously existing sub-groups could not be integrated through a plenum. Conflicts between generations of student activists and faculties further weakened attempts at forging commonalities. Besides, Serb activists disagreed on their self-identified role: some argued that they were a political actor of relevance to the Serb political system. Others, however, insisted that student activists should not be thought of as political actors since they perceived this as weakening their radicalism.

The following tables highlight differences in how Croat and Serb activists organised their contentious action. We see that the overall frame of direct democracy strategy was effectively realised in the same tactics.

<i>INTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Direct Democratic Decision-Making	
Croatia	Serbia
Partially horizontal decision-making	Partially horizontal decision-making
Inclusivity & openness towards all potentially interested participants	Exclusivity & closedness
Rotation of functions (moderators, media spokespersons etc.)	Partial rotation
Anonymity: Policy of “no faces, no names”	Partial anonymity
Inequality in terms of social capital, experience & talents addressed by strict rules	No rules to deal with inequalities in social capital
No sexism raised by female activists	Sexism raised

Figure 17: Summary from own research

For instance, Croats stuck to a strict rotation of functions as part of putting their direct democratic frame into effect. This was only partially realised in Serbia. Also, Serb activists did not follow through with the policy of anonymity, whereas it was overall adhered to in Croatia. Good planning and preparation of occupation was mirrored with patchy planning and almost no preparation in Serbia. Croat activists used their resources better than Serb activists, also through a more rigorous division of labour. The lack of pre-established rules for the plenum as well as a lack in consensus on the right starting moment of occupation weakened the subsequent course of events in Serbia. In Croatia, also, activists continuously evaluated their tactics, even if these discussions might not have been always inclusive of all potential

activists. In Serbia, activists hardly ever evaluated their activities and the reasons for which they used or chose not to use various tactics.

<i>INTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Organising Occupation	
Croatia	Serbia
Well planned start of occupation	Bad planning of occupation
Good use of resources (experiences, knowledge, administrative skills)	Weak use of resources
Division of labour between administrators, organisers, analysts and communicators	No division of labour
Preparation phase of 1-2 months (before first occupation)	Preparation phase of few days (before first occupation)
Pre-established rules for plenum	No pre-established rules for plenum
Consensus on start of occupation	'Coup d'état' start of occupation
Continuous evaluation	Little evaluation

Figure 18: Summary from own research

These identified differences in the internal features of contention – framing, identification and organising – were replicated in the varying fortunes of activists in dealing with their macro-level and meso-level contexts and in their propensity to cooperate with potentially sympathetic actors of civil society. As the below table illustrates, the socio-political contexts for contention in those two countries were identical. Elites met student contention with indifference – they did not recognise them as serious actors. Both student movements faced similar discursive opportunity structures and few, if any, allies from the political system (parties, politicians).

<i>EXTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Context	
Croatia	Serbia
Macro-level Context	
Elite indifference	Elite indifference
No recognition as “voice of students”	No recognition as “voice of students”
No police repression	No police repression
Economic crisis => low output legitimacy	Economic crisis => low output legitimacy
Europeanisation of higher education sector	Europeanisation of higher education sector

Electoral democracy => low input legitimacy & depoliticisation	Electoral democracy => low input legitimacy & depoliticisation
Cleavage: modernist vs. nationalist	Cleavage: modernist vs. nationalist
Discursive context: pro-Europe elite consensus, anti-socialism (“Yugonostalgia”)	Discursive context: pro-Europe elite consensus, anti-socialism (“Yugonostalgia”)
No allied party, few allied NGOs	No allied party, no allied NGOs

Figure 19: Summary from own research

However, the further we go down to the immediate meso-level, the more opportunities of contention diverge. While university did not support them as such, Croat activists experienced some support by faculty management and professors. In Serbia, this was altogether lacking. Besides, Serb activists had to deal with much more diversified and outspoken professional student organisations. In contrast to Croatia, there was hardly any debate between student representatives and activists. Violent acts against student activists from private (or partly unidentified) sources points to an altogether polarised atmosphere at universities and in Serbia.

<i>EXTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Context	
Croatia	Serbia
Meso-level Context	
No support by university	No support by university
Partial support by faculty management, support by faculty staff	No support by faculty (neither management, nor staff)
Partial support by professors, support by assistant professors	Little support by academic staff
Bifurcated student body: student activists vs. <i>studentski zbor</i>	Fragmented student body: student activists (radical vs. reformist) vs. <i>studentski parlament</i> vs. professional student organisations
No violent repression	Violent repression by private persons (security personnel, unidentified perpetrators, <i>studentski parlament</i>)

Figure 20: Summary from own research

The last analytical dimension, namely interactive aspects of contention (collaboration within and beyond borders) replicated the differences related to the internal features of

student contention. Thus we see more regular interaction of student activists with other civil society actors during and after occupations in Croatia than in Serbia. However, regional – and international – collaboration is equally weakly institutionalised in both countries. Contacts are limited mostly to informal networking rather than to transnational coalition-building.

<i>EXTERNAL FEATURES OF STUDENT CONTENTION</i>	
Collaboration	
Croatia	Serbia
During the Occupations	
Regular contact & collaboration with other faculties in Croatia	Sporadic contact with other faculties in Serbia (Novi Sad)
Regular international contacts & letters of support	Some international contacts & letters of support
Public contact with NGOs & unions	Hidden contact with NGOs & unions
Between & After the Occupations	
Weak international & regional collaboration	Weak international & regional collaboration
International collaboration via the international students movement	International collaboration via the international students movement
Regional collaboration via the <i>Subversive Festival</i>	Reformist faction collaborates through the <i>Subversive Festival</i> , radical faction via the <i>Balkan Student Platform</i>
Strong national collaboration with other social groups, initiatives and protests	Weak national collaboration

Figure 21: Summary from own research

In conclusion, I suggest that Croatia saw a student social movement emerge and stabilise, while the underlying personal networks as well as the motivational shocks provided by the moments of madness during occupations did not suffice for the rise of a student movement in Serbia. The main factors explaining this distinction lay not in the macro-level socio-political realities, as these were largely akin to each other, but can be traced back to differences in internal features of contention. I had to revoke my initial expectation that student contention would not vary much between the countries due to similarities of the larger socio-political context. According to my comparative work, internal features of student contention had led student activists upon partially diverging paths.

Let me now re-evaluate my two hypotheses. In the introduction I hypothesised that student activists drive forward a transnational Yugosphere. With this I meant that they would

not – in their student activism – primarily identify as Croats or Serbs but as committed public non-state actors. I assumed that students transgressed the hot nationalism, which had shaped the wars of the 1990s. Instead I expected them to create a civic understanding of identity of a regional flavour. Yet, as we have seen in the chapter on regional collaboration, student activists in Croatia and Serbia were divided as to the necessity or virtue of regional cooperation. Few fancied it could be achieved, and even fewer actually believed it should be done. Fundamental distinctions of contention at the sub-national and national levels (weak collective identification, incoherent framing) extended to the transnational sphere, dividing activists along essentially the same lines as within the country.

Most importantly hardly any of my interviewees identified as ‘Yugoslav’ / ‘Balkan’ student activist rather than as Croat or Serb activist. The non-emergence of the Yugosphere has to do more with the fact that student activists, even though mostly opposed to a ‘hot’ ethno-nationalism, implicitly subscribed to the idea of the primacy of a state. And the primacy of the state means that the state is first and foremost responsible for dealing with social issues such as higher education policy. In view of this conclusion, I must refute the assumption I harboured as I started my research. Notwithstanding common historical legacies, economic similarities, mutual intelligibility in language and culture and broadly congruent diagnostic frames, student activists on the ground are far from having achieved (or wanting to achieve) an a-nationally defined counterpublic at the regional level. While the Yugosphere might exist in the realms of culture and economy, as Judah claims, the political realm (even in the form of grass-roots and bottom-up contentious politics) remains untouched by such development.

Regarding my second hypothesis, my verdict is different. Student activists in the region did succeed in devising and enacting alternative practices of democracy. However, they showed differing success in widening their contentious politics to a point where it could sustain (a) counterpublics. Serb students were at the beginning of this innovative chain in that they first came up with, and partly readopted, occupation strategies learnt from the 1968 occupation of the Belgrade University. Inspired by international examples of student contention, Serb students completed occupation with direct democratic tactics to create a new model for contention. This model was taken up and developed further by student activists in Croatia, and – via Croatia – in Serbia and Slovenia. Serb activists triggered a chain of transformative events (i.e. various occupations) along which an alternative conception of democracy could be repeatedly performed and re-enacted. Serb student activists said ‘No’. They began their path from being subjects of power (Balibar 2013: 47) to becoming deliberative participants to their country’s rule. Over time, however, Serb student contention

degenerated into a variety of rival subgroups, spiralling into the direction of isolated and isolationist enclaves of resistance. These enclaves did not effectively agitate in the sense of a common and generalised good. Instead activists turned onto themselves and their own particular woes.

In Croatia, student contention evolved further. Thanks to connections with other contentious issues and social actors, Croatian student activists initiated the growth of an ever-enlarging counterpublic. This counterpublic eventually incorporated many different aspects from around Croatian society. Croat students not only said ‘No’, but they planted an emancipative seed within society (and the region). That seed sprouted into many different unexpected directions and eventually benefited many more beneficiaries than those originally intended. Croat activists enacted an alternative democratic model, supplied this model to different projects of contentious politics and provided ideological, identitarian and temporal sustainability to a rising country-level counterpublic. To put it briefly, Croat activists put democracy on the move again in Croatia. They verify the statement according to which contention can be a “democratizing force. It creates space in civic life for ideas and actions that exist nowhere else, encouraging people to envision how the world can be transformed into something better” (Blee 2012: 134).

Student contention in the region has not bred non-nationalist and non-state-defined identities. But it has brought about alternative democratic practices and ideologies with the potential to relentlessly democratise the systems of rule in the region. And it has created a contentious model (occupation plus direct democratic decision-making), which subsequently spread throughout the region. The frames and slogans guiding contention, as I have shown, were partly adopted from international examples of contention. In that respect “Balkan” student contention is not exceptional. What distinguishes this region’s contention, however, is the specific context of transformation. This context made it easier for student activists to pinpoint democratic flaws and weaknesses in how representative democracy was being put into practice than it appears to be for their homologues in Western European democracies.

A last word on the possible theoretic contribution of my research to existing literatures: Democratisation of democracy, as I proposed, requires the reconstitution of the ‘people’ as bearers and enactors of democratic life. In periods of transformation, where everything is in flux, social movements put conflicts ‘on the table’. But they also have a role to play in determining who sits at the table and how the issues are being discussed, judged and decided upon. Social movements – acting from the precarious edges of transforming societies – not only challenge and rebalance protracted social power-relations but they help to

determine the very stage upon which such challenges are being played out. Social movements bring together previously separated and excluded actors. They streamline and frame their collective action and inject it with contentious *raison d'être*. Pushing activists onto the community (i.e. public) stage social movements simultaneously reconstitute and reassemble the *demos*. This is an achievement that should not be overlooked nor feared in later 'phases' of transformation. Rather, this participatory mechanism for contesting and re-defining the very conditions and contours of democracy lies at the core of any *démocratie à venir*.

Post-script on Bosnia and Herzegovina

On February 2, 2014 observers witnessed the birth of a new contentious initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the *Plenum Građanska i Građana Tuzlanskog Kantona*²²⁵ (plenum of citizens of the canton of Tuzla) issued a declaration,²²⁶ in which it declared the participants' "wish to direct the anger and rage into the building of a productive and useful system of government". Shortly afterwards on February 13, 2014 the first *plenumSA* (plenum in Sarajevo) demanded "for those in power to urgently make available an adequate space to the citizens".²²⁷ These texts unveil the attempt to determine the actors and the very stage upon which challenges to power are being played out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is remarkable how well these activists' wishes, demands, and – indeed aspirations – fit my ascribed role of social movements in transformation democracies. Besides, it is fascinating to see that the plenary assembly *plenumSA* largely replicates the strategies and tactics invented by student activists in Serbia in 2006 and Croat activists in 2009. While the specific diagnosis of the problem had shifted from education to other issues (economic downturn and corruption, in this case), a core element of earlier students' model for contention – namely decision-making through direct democratic assemblies – had spread to Tuzla, Sarajevo and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As I shown in my analysis of (student and other) protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this particular model for contention is new to this country. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most recent example for how much Serb – and Croat – student activists inspire potential and actual activists around the region with their direct democracy frame. Part of their contentious model has become modular, thus lastingly changing previously used repertoires of contention in the region. Even in Bosnia and Herzegovina contentious politics now has opened a stage for the re-invention of and bottom-up enactment of democracy.

²²⁵ See website at: <http://www.plenumtk.org/index.php>; Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/plenumTK> [06/05/14]

²²⁶ English version available from: <http://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/declaration-tuzla/> [06/05/14]

²²⁷ <https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/2014/02/13/the-first-plenum-of-the-citizens-of-sarajevo-has-taken-place/> [06/05/14], see website of Plenumsa at: <http://plenumsa.org/> [06/05/14]

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Figures, Tables and Pictures

Figure 1: Democracy Scorecard 2013, © Freedom House. Available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/blog/democratic-scorecard-western-balkans#.U2iOIShmtao> [06/05/14]

Figure 2: My table from sources of the Balkan Gallup Monitor: Gallup Institute for the Balkans. Available from: <http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/index.php/dashboard> [06/05/14]

Figure 3: My table compiled from various sources:

- The Nation in Transit score is an average of ratings for Electoral Process; Civil Society; Independent Media; National Democratic Governance; Local Democratic

Governance; Judicial Framework and Independence; and Corruption. It ranges from 7 to 1, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress. The Democracy Score is measured by Freedom House in its “Nations in Transit 2012” report. Available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2012#.U2iwnihmtao> [06/05/14]

- Civil society score as measured by Freedom House in its “Nations in Transit 2012” report. Available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2012%20%20NIT%20Tables.pdf> [06/05/14].
- Country reports from the Bertelsmann Transformations Index 2014. The Democracy Status ranges between 1 and 10, with 10 representing perfect democracy. Available from: <http://www.bti-project.de/reports/laenderberichte/ecse/index.nc> [06/05/14]
- The Democracy Index 2012 by the Economist Intelligence Unit rates Croatia and Serbia as “Flawed Democracies”. The Overall Score ranges between 0 and 10, with 10 being the highest mark; flawed democracies are placed between 6 and 7.9. Available from: https://portoncv.gov.cv/dhub/porton.por_global.open_file?p_doc_id=1034 [06/05/14]
- The score for Political Participation combines, amongst others, measures on “citizens’ engagement with politics” and the “preparedness of population to take part in lawful demonstrations”. Available from: https://portoncv.gov.cv/dhub/porton.por_global.open_file?p_doc_id=1034 [06/05/14]
- Mean Level of Party Openness, data from: Casal Bértoa, F & Mair, P 2010. ‘Two Decades On: How Institutionalized Are the Post-communist Party Systems?’ *EUI Working Papers*, SPS 3. Fiesole: European University Institute. Explanation: the indicator ‘level of openness’ measures the weight new parties in a particular cabinet and the weight those governments have in the party system as a whole. Time periods: ime periods: Croatia (1992-2008), Serbia (2001-2008), Slovenia (1993-2008).
- Data from the Freedom of the Press Report 2014 of the Freedom House: Score out of 100. The lower the score, the better the press freedom status. Available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/reports#.U2iWjihmtap> [06/05/14]
- Corruption Perception Index 2013 of Transparency International. The index ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. A country or territory’s score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 - 100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100 means it is perceived as very clean. A country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries and territories included in the index. This year’s index includes 177 countries and territories. Available from: <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/> [06/05/14]

Figure 4: Picture found at Tavaana.org – an Iranian civil society website. Available from: <https://tavaana.org/en/content/year-life-won-serbia-otpor-movement-against-milosevic-0> [06/05/14]

Figure 5: Gallup Balkan Monitor 2012 - National Identification, © Gallup Monitor. Available from: <http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/index.php/dashboard> [06/05/14]

Figure 6: Gallup Balkan Monitor 2012 - Inter-marriage, © Gallup Monitor. Available from: <http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/index.php/dashboard> [06/05/14]

Figure 7: GDP per capita in EU 27, CEEC and Balkans compared. Table from: Monastiriotis & Petrakos, 2010: 152.

Figures 8-10: Data from own research.

Figure 11: Picture with slogan “Dole skolarine” © ASI – АСИ. Available from: http://inicijativa.org/tiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=1364 [06/05/14]

Figure 12: Picture with slogan “Znanje Nije Roba” © H-Alter. Available from: <http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/kultura/znanje-je-ipak-roba> [22/02/14]

Figure 13: The question “As of today, is there a political party or a politician in [country/entity] that represents your political views?” touches the issue of subjective representativeness, which is one crucial dimension of input legitimacy. © Balkan Monitor 2010. *Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans, 2010 Summary of Findings*. Gallup Inc, p. 27, available from: http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/BalkanMonitor-2010_Summary_of_Findings.pdf [06/05/14]

Figure 14: Real GDP change in percent; average unemployment rate in percent; average gross monthly wage in EUR; public debt in % of GDP – all data for 2013 available from the WIIW Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies at: <http://wiiw.ac.at/countries.html> [06/05/14]

Figures 15-21: Present summarised findings from own research.

ANNEX

Annex 1: Questionnaire – Template for Questions and Form

QUESTIONNAIRE – QUESTIONS		
Country:		
Interviewee:	Date:	Track:

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

1. What were the **biggest successes** and **failures** of for student activism in your country?
2. What were the **results** of student activism?
3. What **role** did student activism play **for** (your) **society**?

FRAMING

4. What were your initiative's **demands**?
 - i. **Why** were these your demands?
 - ii. What were the basic **principles** of your struggle(s)?
 - iii. **What would be** the **ideal** state of affairs / your goal?

TARGET AND CONSTITUENCY

5. **Who** was your struggle **directed against**?
6. **For whom** where you fighting?
7. How many people were **actively involved** (estimation)
 - i. During protests?
 - ii. During the occupation?

STRATEGIES & ORGANISATION

8. **When and why did you choose to...**
 - i. **Protest** on the streets?
 - ii. **Occupy** buildings?
 - iii. **End** street protests / occupations?
9. **How** did your **activities function**? How did you organise your activities?
 - i. Were you **satisfied** with the way all happened?
 - ii. What **could** have **been done better**?

- iii. How did your group **deal with critique**?

CONTEXT

- 10. Thinking about the larger context: What were **difficulties** for your struggle?
- 11. Was there any **support**? **From who** / which side(s)?
- 12. How were your initiative's **relations** / **contact** with...
 - i. Your **university** / faculty / department...
 - ii. Official **student representatives**...
 - iii. **Politics**...
 - iv. **The media**...
 - v. **Other** social groups / **activists**?
 - vi. Other **student initiatives outside** of your country (international/regional)?

COMPARISON

- 13. Do you see **similarities** / **differences** with
 - i. **Current student activism** in Serbia / Croatia?
 - ii. **Historical student activism** in earlier times (FY / 90s)?

PERSONAL ROLE

- 14. What **role** did you **personally play** for student activism?
- 15. How **well** did you **feel connected** with your co-activists?
- 16. Were you ever **afraid about** / **angry with** / **happy about** student activism in your country?

IDEOLOGY

- 17. What **do you think** about....
 - i. Politics in your country...
 - ii. EU...
 - iii. Democracy...
- 18. **Any comment**?

QUESTIONNAIRE – FORM

Country:

Interviewee: **Date:** **Track:**

To be filled out by the interviewee

Gender: **Occupation:** **Age:**

I started my involvement for student politics in: (year)

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

1) (name)
(approx. time)

2) (name)
(approx. time)

3) (name)
(approx. time)

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much: Medium: A little:

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily: Weekly: Monthly:

How often did you participate DURING INTENSIVE TIMES at activities?

Daily: Weekly: Monthly:

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

.....
.....
.....

Were you part of a student social movement? (YES / NO)

.....

Annex 2: Questionnaire – Forms Filled out by Interviewees

Interviewees from Croatia

Country:	HR	Interviewee:	A	Date:	18.05.12
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Linguist/ Indologist, freelancer journalist, (publisher at Le Monde Diplomatique Croatia), Coordinator at Subversive Festival

Age: 30

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2007

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Zbor (faculty level)**

2007-2009

2) Anti Nato FFZG

One year: 2008

3) Anti EU

Half year 2011

4) Studentski Pokret

2008-2011

5) New Left

2011- now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Organisation, planning, political discussions, text production (during blokada: media WG), ...

Were you part of a student social movement? Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: B	Date: 19.05.12
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Semiology & philosophy, theoretician, director & founder of Subversive Festival,

Age: 29

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Pokret**
2008-2011

2) Subversive Festival
2008-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Text production, organisation, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: C	Date: 18.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA German Language / Comparative Literature, journalist (chief editor of Le Monde Diplomatique Croatia)

Age: 35

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Pokret**

2008-2010

2) Demokratska Inicijativa Protiv EU

autumn 2011-spring 2012

3) Baza za Radnicku Inicijativu I Democratizaciju

2013-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Organisation, text production, ideological wing, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: D	Date: 17.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: University professor of Linguistics

Age: 31

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentske Prosvijede**

May 2008, Nov. 2008

2) Anti Nato FFZG

2008

3) Blokada I

April-May 2009

4) Blokada II

December 2009

5) Demokratska Inicijativa Protiv EU

2010-2011

6) Akademska Solidarnost

2009-2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Ideological wing, texts, media, discussions, organisation, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	HR	Interviewee:	E	Date:	19.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: Unemployed, unpaid work at Subversive Festival, MA Student of Philosophy & Linguistics (not finished)

Age: 28

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2007

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Anti Nato FFZG**
2007 /2008

3) Blokada I

April-May 2009

4) Blokada II

December 2009

5) Blokada III

Autumn 2011

6) Studentski Pokret

2008-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Occupation, edited the Skripta (paper edition) & Skripta TV, working on Slobodnifilzofski.com, student cinema, agitating, material distribution, organisation, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: F	Date: 17.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student of History & Archaeology

Age: 26

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Nezavisna Studentska Inicijativa**
2009

2) Blokada I

April-May 2009

3) Blokada II

December 2009

4) Plenum

2009-now

5) Akademska Solidarnost

2010-2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Communication with other student groups around Croatia (for example Split), groundwork on the halls of the faculty building

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: G	Date: 16.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: Activist, Student of Philosophy & Anthropology

Age: 38

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2002

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Udruzenje Studenata Filozofije**
2002-2008

2) Klub Studenata Antropologie
2003-2007

3) Klub Studenata Filozofskog Fakulteta
2002-now

4) Nezavisna Studentska Inicijativa (Studentski Pokret)
2008-now

5) Akademska Solidarnost
2010-now

6) Direkta Demokracija u Skoli
2010-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

During blokada: organisation, logistics, security, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: H	Date: 17.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: PHD Chemist, Assistant Professor / Tutor

Age: 38

I started my involvement for student politics in: 1995

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Attack**

1995-2008 (medium)

2) MLAZ (Mreza Mladnih Znanstvenika, founded in 2003)

2003-2005 (little)

3) Akademska Solidarnost

2010-now (very much)

4) Pravo na Grad

June / July 2010 (including arrest!)

5) Zelena Akcija

2006-2013

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

See above

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Monthly

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Organisation of meetings, participation at conferences and other discussions, tried to organise students at faculty of chemistry, demonstrations, strikes, wrote comments to law on science...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: I	Date: 18.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Student of Anthropology

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada I Filozofskog Fakulteta**
April-May 2009

2) Blokada II

October-November 2009

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Stopped

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

6x times a week

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Organising alternative lectures etc. programme, patrolling / security

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: J	Date: 15.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student of Sociology, part of the journalist team of Le Monde
Diplomatique Croatia

Age: 27

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada I Filozofskog Fakulteta**
April-May 2009

2) Blokada II

October-November 2009

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Plenum, working groups (all kinds during and after the Blokada)

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: HR	Interviewee: K	Date: 16.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student Medicine

Age: 25

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2010

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Zbor (Faculty Level)**

2010

2) Studentski Zbor (University Level, Vice-President)

2011-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Various

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country:	HR	Interviewee:	L	Date:	17.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: PHD Student Civil Engineering, Assistant Professor / Tutor

Age: 29

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Zbor (Faculty Level)**
2009-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Little

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Representative of faculty level

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country: HR	Interviewee: M	Date: 18.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Student Sociology

Age: 24

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2012

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Studentski Zbor (Faculty Level)**
March 2013-now
- 2) Plenum Filozofskog**
Autumn 2012
- 3) Working Groups of Plenum**
Autumn 2012

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Studentski Zbor representative at faculty level, discussion in plenum / working groups

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country:	HR	Interviewee: N	Date: 19.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Student Philosophy & Croatian Language

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008 / 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Studentski Zbor (Faculty Level)**
2010-now
- 2) Blokada I and Blokada II at FF**
2009
- 3) Blokada of Student Administration**
Autumn 2010
- 4) Pravo na Grad**
June / July 2011 (strikes, incl. arrest!)

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

3-4 times a week

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Studentski Zbor representative at faculty level, discussion in plenum / working groups

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Interviewees from Serbia

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	A	Date:	18.05.12
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Student Ethnology & Anthropology (not finished), Employed at NGO
Ignorant Schoolmaster

Age: 29

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2005

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Diploma = Master**
end 2005-beg. 2007
- 2) Student Vice-Dean**
beg. 2007-end 2009
- 3) Studentski Parlament at faculty level**
2007-2010
- 4) Odbrani Filozofski**
2010
- 5) Blokada na Filozofskog**
autumn 2006 and autumn 2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Depends on period: sometimes every day, sometimes nothing for months

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

2005 protests at FF against, fees, 2006-2007 blokada of FF & lobbying for diplom=master, 2007-2010 student parliament / student vice dean; street protests against increasing fees in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010; Odbrani Filozofski 2010- for autonomy of University, 2011- blokada

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	B	Date:	18.05.12
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student of Sociology

Age: 27

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2006

I was involved in the following initiative(s): 1) Socijalni Front

2005-2007

2) Marks 21

2008-now

3) Blokada I and II at Filozofski

2006 and 2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Writing and handing out leaflets, working on posters, speaking at meetings, PR, editing website / FB pages, writing and designing newspapers, organising protest events

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	C	Date:	21.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student Philosophy

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2010

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada I of Filozofski**

Autumn 2011

2) Informal discussions

2011-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Monthly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Occupation, organisation of alternative lectures, plenum discussions, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: D	Date: 30.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: Film Directing Student at University of Dramatic Art

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Blokada II of Filozofski**
Autumn 2011
- 2) Blokada Filoloski**
Autumn 2011
- 3) Sindikat Obrazovanja, Anaraho**

Sindikalisticki Inicijativa (ASI)

2010-now
- 4) Inicijativa za Studentski Sindikat**
2011-now
- 5) Blokada Univerzitet Likovnih**

Umjetnosti

2012

6) Blokada Rektorata

16.05.13

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Protests, protest organisation, propaganda activities, websites, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: E	Date: 21.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: BA Student Sociology

Age: 22

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Blokada II of Filozofski**
Autumn 2011
- 2) Odbrani Filozofski**
2010-2011
- 3) Marks 21**
2009-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Protests, protest organisation, propaganda activities, reading groups, writing articles, direct actions, taking part at conferences / festivals, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	F	Date:	22.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student Sociology

Age: 29

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2005

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Socialni Front**
2005-2006
- 2) Blokada I of Filozofski**
late October 2006
- 3) Cruzok (reading circle)**
2007-2009
- 4) Centar za Politike Emancipacije (NGO!)**
2012-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Protests, occupation, logistics, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: G	Date: 21.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: BA Student Sociology

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2011

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada II of Filzofski**
20 Oct.-7 November

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Monthly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Occupation, organising alternative classes - feminism

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: H	Date: 22.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student Mechanical Engineering

Age: 25

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2007

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Savez Studenata (Students Alliance)**
Masinskog Fakulteta

2007-2011

2) Savez Studenata Beograda (President)

2009-now

3) Studentska Tehnicka Takmicenje

2010-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Representing SAB (Savez Studenata Beograda), Subteam leader at Formula Team "Road Arrow"

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	I	Date:	22.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: MA Student of Literature at Filoloski

Age: 26

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada II Filozofski**

Autumn 2011

2) Blokada Filoloski

Autumn 2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Monthly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Groundwork at the blokada at Filoloski, organisation of alternative lectures & discussions

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	J	Date:	20.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: BA Student of Sociology, Translator

Age: 26

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2006

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada I Filozofski**

Autumn 2006

2) Blokada II Filozofski

Autumn 2011

3) Student Protests

2007-2010

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Everyday work, maintaining the blokada, communication with public via internet, social networking, writing for papers, blogs, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	K	Date:	22.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student of Anthropology

Age: 24

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2008

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) Blokada II Filozofski**
Autumn 2011 (20 days)
- 2) Blokada of Arts Faculty**
Autumn 2012
- 3) Student Protests**
2010, 2011, 2012
- 4) Member of Studentski Parlament**

(Faculty Level)

one year 2009

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Weekly

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Video propaganda, activism, agitation propaganda, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	L	Date:	22.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: Student of Textile Design & Clothing at College of Design

Age: 21

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2011

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada II Filozofski**

Autumn 2011 (20 days)

2) Feminist Front

Since May 2013

3) Marks 21

2011 now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Organising protests, blocking faculty, plenum discussions, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: M	Date: 23.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: MA Student of Medicine

Age: 25

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2006

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) SKONUS (President)**
2011- now
- 2) Studentski Parlament (Faculty Lev.)**
2006-2011
- 3) Studentski Parlament (University L.)**
2007-2011

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

President of students of Serbia, ...

Were you part of a student social movement?

No

Country:	RS	Interviewee:	N	Date:	24.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: BA Student of Anthropology

Age: 22

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2010

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Studentski Front**
2010-now

2) SKOJ-Savez Komunisticke Mladine Jugoslavije

2006-now

3) NKPJ Nova Komunisticka Partija Jugoslavije

2006-now

4) Blokade Filozofski i Filoloski

20.Oct. 2011 – 21 days / 17 Oct. 2011 – 19 days

5) Blokada Likovnih Umjetnosti

(10.Oct.2012 – 10 days)

6) Student Protests

since 2010

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Very much

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Daily

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Daily

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Blokade in 2011: security & enforcing the house order; Blokada 2012: theoretical work, relations with media, texts

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: O	Date: 24.05.13
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Gender: male

Occupation: BA Student of Sociology

Age: 24

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2009

I was involved in the following initiative(s): **1) Blokada Filozofski & Filoloski**
2011

2) Blokada Rektorata

May 2013

3) Student Protests

since 2009-now

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Monthly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Weekly

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

Producing banners, patrolling building, plenum, working group for technicalities

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Country: RS	Interviewee: P	Date: 24.05.13
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Gender: female

Occupation: BA Student of Economics

Age: 23

I started my involvement for student politics in: 2011

I was involved in the following initiative(s):

- 1) SUS – Student Union of Serbia**
2011- now
- 2) AIESEC**
2011-2013

Please state how intensively YOU think you were involved:

Medium

How often did you ON AVERAGE participate at activities of the initiative(s)?

Weekly

How often did you participate at activities during the BLOKADA?

Did not participate

What kind(s) of activity did you participate in (taxative)?

International officer at SUS representing Serbian students in ESU, organising international student exchanges

Were you part of a student social movement?

Yes

Annex 3: Abstract - English

This thesis deals with the problem of popular participation – through the perspective of contentious politics – in the context of democratisation in former Yugoslavia. The role of contentious politics and social movements for transformation has so far been rather neglected by scholars. The unsettling potential of social movements', their preference of provocative, even at times illegal, methods led many academics to discard contentious politics from the study of democratisation. This thesis seeks to cross-stimulate social movements with democratisation literature and to thereby rectify an empiric and theoretic blank.

At a very basic level, it is assumed that the dire assessment regarding 'civil society' in the Yugoslav successor states needs rectification. The hypothesis is that social movements in the region articulate alternatives to hegemonic ethno-nationalist understandings. In addition it is expected that activists probe modes of participative democracy, thus opening up new ways to define and live democracy.

The present research is limited to the period after 2000. It is furthermore restricted to student contention, as one embodiment of contentious politics. Europeanisation, post-war reconciliation and nation building, a shared political culture and economic fragility shape the region under scrutiny. This context renders the usage of the qualitative comparable-cases method fruitful. The data derives from documents produced by student activists and semi-structured interviews with key informants in two countries, namely Croatia and Serbia.

The thesis yields some important insights: first, that contention in the region is not exceptional, since it was linked to and influenced by student contention internationally. Second that student contention nonetheless exhibited regional particularities. Third it demonstrated that – contrary to preliminary expectations – the course and character of student contention varied between the countries, and notably between the two countries focused on: Croatia and Serbia. In Croatia, student contention expanded and transformed into a larger deliberative 'counterpublic', whereas in Serbia student contention degenerated into isolated enclaves of resistance. This divergence can be explained with internal features of contention. The two most important factors were differing capacities of student activists to discursively frame their struggle and their success in developing cohesive collective identities.

Annex 4: Zusammenfassung - Deutsch

Die Dissertation widmet sich dem Thema demokratischer Partizipation aus dem spezifischen Blickwinkel widerständiger Politik im Transformationskontext der Nachfolgestaaten des ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Den Ausgangspunkt bildet die Einsicht, dass die Rolle widerständiger Politik und sozialer Bewegungen für Demokratisierung in der akademischen Auseinandersetzung bisher eher vernachlässigt worden ist. Das beunruhigende Potential sozialer Bewegungen sowie ihre Bevorzugung provokanter, teils auch illegaler, Methoden führte dazu, dass manche Forschenden das Konzept widerständiger Politik als Konzept gänzlich für das Studium von Demokratisierung verwarfen. Diese Dissertation hat zum Ziel, die Fachliteratur über soziale Bewegungen und Forschungen zu Demokratisierung füreinander fruchtbar zu machen und somit eine empirische wie theoretische Lücke zu füllen.

Grundsätzlich ist der Ansatz dieser Arbeit, dass düstere Einschätzungen betreffend die sogenannte ‚Zivilgesellschaft‘ in den Staaten des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nicht zutreffend sind bzw. einer Richtigstellung bedürfen. Es wird vermutet, dass soziale Bewegungen in der Region Alternativen zu herrschenden ethno-nationalistischen Ansätzen bieten. Die zweite Hypothese besagt, dass AktivistInnen Modelle partizipativer Demokratie üben und hiermit neue definatorische Herangehens- und Lebensweisen von Demokratie eröffnen.

Die vorliegende Forschung ist in zeitlicher Hinsicht auf die Periode nach 2000 beschränkt. Zudem ist sie auf den Fall von Studierendenprotesten – als eine Verkörperung widerständiger Politik – fokussiert. Europäisierung, Nachkriegsversöhnung und Nationalstaatsaufbau, sowie geteilt politische Kultur und wirtschaftliche Unsicherheit prägen die untersuchte Region. Die Verwendung qualitativer vergleichender Methoden ist vor diesem Hintergrund das Mittel der Wahl. Die Daten für die Analyse stammen aus Dokumenten, die von den AktivistInnen produziert worden sind sowie von semi-strukturierten Interviews mit zentralen Auskunftspersonen aus zwei Ländern, nämlich Kroatien und Serbien.

Die Dissertation erbringt bedeutende Einsichten: erstens, Studierendenproteste in der Region sind Ausnahmephänomen, da sie mit internationaler widerständiger Politik von Studierenden verbunden und von ihnen beeinflusst worden sind. Dennoch kann gezeigt werden, dass Studierendenproteste regionale Eigenheiten aufwiesen. Drittens erweist sich, dass sich – im Gegensatz zu vorläufigen Vermutungen – der Ablauf und Charakter der Studierendenproteste zwischen den Ländern, und hier insbesondere zwischen den Fokusfällen Kroatien und Serbien, unterschieden. In Kroatien konnte Studierende ihren Widerstand erweitern und dadurch in eine umfassendere deliberative ‚Gegenöffentlichkeit‘ verwandeln. Demgegenüber verkamen die Studierendenproteste in Serbien zu isolierten

Widerstandsenklaven. Diese Divergenz wurde in Rückgriff auf interne Merkmale der sozialen Bewegungen selbst zurückgeführt. Die wichtigsten Gründe dafür sind gemäß den Ergebnissen der Arbeit die divergierende Fähigkeiten der AktivistInnen, ihre Kämpfe diskursiv einzubetten bzw. übergreifende kollektive Identitäten zu entwickeln.

Annex 5: Curriculum Vitae

ASTRID REINPRECHT

HOCHSCHULBILDUNG

Sept. 2010 – Dez. 2014	Doktoratsstudium der Politikwissenschaft <i>European University Institute Florence und Universität Wien</i>
Okt. 2008 – Sept. 2009	Master of Science in Politics & International Relations <i>University of Oxford, Abschluss: MSc</i>
Okt. 2001 – Dez. 2006	Magisterstudium Politikwissenschaft <i>Universität Wien, Abschluss: Mag.phil.</i>

AKADEMISCHE ARBEIT UND FORSCHUNG

April 2013 – Juli 2013	Forschungspraktikum <i>OIIP, Österreichisches Institut für Außenpolitik in Wien</i>
Mai 2010 – Juli 2010	Forschungsassistentin für Professor Jan Zielonka <i>University of Oxford</i>
Okt. 2005 – Feb. 2006	Studienassistentin von Professor Herbert Gottweis <i>Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Universität Wien</i>

LEHRTÄTIGKEIT UND VORTRÄGE

12-14 Dezember 2013	Vortrag „Contentious Politics in Democratising States: The Case of Student Activism in Croatia and Serbia“ <i>Zentrum für Südosteuropa-Studien, Universität Graz</i>
16-17 September 2013	Zweitätige Lehrtätigkeit im Rahmen der Summerschool des Alpbach Forums Serbien <i>Institut für Philosophie & Gesellschaftstheorie in Belgrad</i>
17-18 September 2012	Zweitätige Lehrtätigkeit im Rahmen der Summerschool des Alpbach Forums Serbien <i>Institut für Philosophie & Gesellschaftstheorie in Belgrad</i>
13. Juni 2012	Vortrag „Generation Next-Yu? Zusammenarbeit zwischen Studentenaktivisten im Ehemaligen Jugoslawien“ <i>Wissenschaftszentrum der Humboldt Universität Berlin</i>

STIPENDIEN

Sept. 2010 – Jan. 2013	Postgraduales Doktorratsstipendium für das EUI Florenz
Jan. 2008 – June 2008	Leistungsstipendium , Universität Wien
Mai 2006 – Juni 2006	Stipendium für Forschungsaufenthalt , Universität Wien
Sept. 2004 – Jan. 2005	Erasmus Stipendium , Europäische Union

FREMDSPRACHEN

Englisch	Ausgezeichnete Kenntnisse
Französisch	Ausgezeichnete Kenntnisse
Italienisch	Sehr gute Kenntnisse
Serbokroatisch	Gute Kenntnisse

PUBLIKATIONEN

Monographien:

„A Bulwark to the East? The Imaginary Topography of Schengen-Borders in the Austrian Media.“ **Master Thesis**, 2009: University of Oxford - Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford.

„Lager- Wartezone- Schubhaft: Heterotopien als biopolitische Instrumente der Ein- und Ausgrenzung von Flüchtlingen. Eine theoretische Auseinandersetzung nach Michel Foucault.“ **Diplomarbeit**, 2006: Universität Wien, Wien.

Buchbeiträge und Policy Papers:

„Legitimacy on the Move.... Contentious Movements and Changes in Global Politics“ In: **ADD ON. 2014/2015 Yearbook**. Viennese Contributions to International Affairs, edited by Cengiz Günay a.o. (forthcoming).

„A ‚Civil Society‘ in the Western Balkans“, In: **Vienna Guidebook on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**, 2014, edited by Manfred Nowak and Ursula Werther-Pietsch: Neuer Wissenschaftlicher Verlag.

„Conclusions“, In: **Vienna Guidebook on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**, 2014, edited by Manfred Nowak and Ursula Werther-Pietsch: Neuer Wissenschaftlicher Verlag.

„Kroatiens Beitritt zur EU. Erwartungen, Euroskeptizismus und regionale Implikationen.“ **Policy Paper** 1/2013: Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik, Wien.

*Alle Referenzen auf Nachfrage
11/2014*