CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of International Studies

Department of Russian and East European Studies

Bachelor's Thesis

2022   **Michal Ostrý**

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Understanding active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bachelor's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Michal Ostrý

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Supervisor: PhDr. Ondřej Žíla, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2022

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 4.1.2021   Michal Ostrý

References

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Abstract

With the help of field research, this thesis focuses on active young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whom the work attempts to understand in two contexts. First, there is the complicated backdrop of a country after Dayton peace that is still characterized by its post-war state. At the same time, it is vital to consider the context of the current understanding of participatory trends studied in Western democracies. Especially then the departure from formal participation towards single-issue activism. The results suggest that active young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina participate for three main reasons: identification with like-minded community and development of friendships; the desire to contribute to a positive change; and the need for self-development. These reasons are indicational of the attitudes of studied young people. They perceive nationalism negatively, value the social aspects of their activities and realize the need to develop themselves. The latest aspect is stronger for women and may be behind their predominance in the active youth community. Except for that, participation does not differ much from what is studied in Western democracies. Only the tendency towards authoritarianism persists. Some actively participating young people see it as a solution to Bosnia and Herzegovina's problems. It is suggested that the difference in frustrations could explain this. Either way, even if active young people consider emigrating to study or work abroad, they share a strong connection to their country; they want to help it and ideally continue to live in it.

Abstrakt

S pomocí terénního výzkumu se tato práce zaměřuje na aktivní mladé v Bosně a Hercegovině, kterým se snaží porozumět ve dvou kontextech. Předně jde o komplikované pozadí v zemi po daytonském míru, ke které stále přísluší její poválečné přízvisko. Zároveň je však důležité vzít v potaz kontext současného porozumění participačních trendů, které jsou studovány v západních demokratických zemích. Zejména se jedná o odklon od formální participace směrem k aktivismu konkrétního problému. Výsledky naznačují, že aktivní mladí v Bosně a Hercegovině participují ze tří hlavních důvodů: identifikace s podobně smýšlející komunitou a rozvoj přátelství, touha přispět k pozitivní změně a potřeba seberozvoje. Tyto důvody jsou indikací postojů, které studovaní mladí zastávají. Zejména vnímají negativně nacionalismus, cení si sociálních aspektů svých aktivit a uvědomují si potřebu se rozvíjet. Poslední zmíněný aspekt je silnější u žen a

možná stojí i za jejich převahou v participujících komunitách. Až na toto hledisko se však participace aktivních mladých příliš neliší od té studované v západních demokraciích. Z řady významně vystupuje jen přetrvávající tendence k autoritářství, ve kterém někteří aktivně participující mladí vidí řešení problémů Bosny a Hercegoviny. Nabízí se, že rozdílná frustrace jednotlivých mladých by toto mohla vysvětlovat. Tak i tak ale všichni, ať už uvažují o emigraci za studiem anebo prací, cítí silné spojení se svojí zemí a v budoucnu chtějí své zemi pomoci a ideálně v ní i nadále žít.

Keywords

Klíčová slova

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Understanding active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Název práce

Porozumění aktivní mládeži v Bosně a Hercegovině

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1. Introduction

In 2016, a secondary school in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, was supposed to split in two. Even though both new schools would still occupy the same building, one would be for Bosniaks and follow Bosniak curriculum and the other for Croats with Croatian curriculum. It was another example of ethnic separation under the so-called "two schools under one roof" system, which is not uncommon in Bosnia and Herzegovina (further referred to also as BiH). According to a report from OSCE, 56 similar schools that physically separate students based on ethnicities existed in 2018 (OSCE, 2018). But the high school in Jajce is not one of them. After protests from the students, the local government gave up.

Current young people in BiH are the first generation that did not experience the 1992-1995 war between Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks and grew up in a relatively stable and peaceful environment. But that does not mean their situation is ideal. Hromadžić (2015) describes the emptiness, lack of vision, and possibilities that young people face in BiH after the Dayton peace, often resulting in their emigration abroad. Looking at the Jajce example, can active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina find the missing filling and give BiH vision in its post-war state dominated by nationalism? And eventually, bring much-needed reforms if BiH seriously wants to join the EU? Youth participation can be a way to develop both the youth as well as their communities. It can also foster cooperation and understanding between ethnicities and help to build a stable democracy. But is active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards this goal?

To propose an answer to this question, this thesis presents fieldwork that uses qualitative insight into the experiences, opinions, and aspirations of active youth in different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Amongst interview participants are young people who volunteer in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), participate at local active youth groups, organize protests or petitions, and generally do more than is expected.

However, the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the only important backdrop against which youth participation should be examined. At the beginning of 21. century, new trends in democratic participation were identified: decreasing formal political participation (voting, political party membership) and the emergence of new forms of participation, for example on the internet (Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2001). To

understand the changes and possibility of increased disengagement from politics, the participation of young people is studied extensively in established democracies (Cammaerts et al., 2015; Martyn & Dimitra, 2019). Less is known about the situation elsewhere. This thesis follows Robertson (2009) and Saltman (2014) who examined youth participation in post-communist countries. By focusing on already active youth in BiH, this thesis attempts to bring more depth to understanding youth participation in post-communistic, post-war, or developing countries in general.

1.1. Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organized into six parts. After the introduction, the chapter on youth participation theory follows. It introduces a broader topic of participation in democracy and current academic understanding of trends in youth participation and its importance. The context of Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented in the next part. It mainly explains the uniqueness of its situation resulting from the Dayton peace and relevant findings about current youth. The fourth part introduces the research itself, from methodology to details of the fieldwork, interviews, and research participants to the process of data analysis. The analytical part follows with a presentation of the fieldwork findings and their understanding compared to youth participation theory and context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The last part concludes the thesis and discusses the limitations of its findings.

2.   Youth participation theory

This part introduces the topic of youth participation and participation in general. Recent scholarly research on youth participation is reviewed, and the importance of youth participation in democracy and developing countries is also discussed. This analysis is used both as a foundation for field research methodology and subsequent analysis.

It is not the ambition of this chapter to offer a full scope of the role of participation in democracies. For that, see Robertson (2009), that served as an inspiration for this thesis or other literature mentioned in this section.

2.1. Participation in democracy

In western democratic countries, interest in political participation research has recently increased with the identification of new trends. These sparked concerns about the future of democracy, as young people were often seen as being right next to the center of these trends (Berman, 1997; Hoskins, 2003; Norris, 2002; Putnam, 2001; Topf, 1995). Their voting levels were declining, and they paid little interest to party membership. Since then, research has shown that many changes are indeed happening, but it doesn't necessarily mean complete disengagement of young people from political and other issues (Martyn & Dimitra, 2019). The rise of single-issue activism was reported, and new agencies like the internet (A. J. Martin, 2012) are being examined. Maybe, young people nowadays only perceive formal politics as no longer the proper way to change things that concern them (Cammaerts et al., 2013) and there is no need to call for a crisis of liberal democracy straight away.

But that doesn't change anything because changes are happening, and democratic institutions need to find a way to accommodate them. Norris (2002) called for research to understand the new *repertoire* of actions, *agencies* through which participation is happening, and *targets* of this participation. These changes are studied in detailed in established democracies (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b; A. Martin, 2012; Ødegård & Berglund, 2008; Prati et al., 2020; van Deth et al., 2006) and less so in developing democracies in countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Focusing on other regions helps uncover whether the changes are happening across nations and societies. Looking especially beyond data on voting or party membership and extending findings from sociological surveys like World Values Survey might subsequently help understand how

the trends are shaping, for example, the prospects of democratization in developing countries.

Martyn and Dimitra (2019, p. 9) summarize the current understanding of youth participation in established democracies in four main points:

1. Youth are far from apathetic when it comes to political and civic engagement.
2. They experience the conventional political arena as one that marginalizes and excludes them and perceive politicians as having very little interest in the views or needs of young people.
3. They regard voting as one of the least effective ways of achieving change.
4. They view civic and non-conventional political forms of engagement as being much more effective for having an impact in the world.

Unfortunately, with changes in participation and increased research interest came a problem with terminology. Many different terms are used in the literature, often with competing definitions. That's why this thesis builds on Ekman and Amnå (2012), who present a framework dividing participation between **manifest *political participation*** and **latent form of *civil participation***. Former includes all actions of *formal political participation* (voting, membership in parties or unions) of ordinary people with a goal to influence political outcomes, *membership activities* in parties or organizations with a political goal, but also different forms of *activism* (signing a petition, joining protests or strikes, boycotting products, involvement in social movements or organizations) and other activities. Latter contains both *civic engagement* in a community (without a clear political goal) and general *social involvement* or interest of people in politics and social issues. The authors also differentiate between individual and collective levels of participation.

In summary, there was fear that the changes in youth participation pose a severe problem for established democracies. However, research has shown that young people are not disinterested in public life but rather that their involvement has changed. Formal membership in parties declined (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b), probably because young people think it is not for them (Cammaerts et al., 2013) and volunteering, local community engagement, and single-issue activism is on the rise (Zukin et al., 2011).

2.2. Youth participation

2.2.1. How to define youth

There are two approaches to defining youth. The constructive social approach sees youth without a clear age boundary as a period of life transitioning from childhood to adult independence (Martyn & Dimitra, 2019). This transition is also culturally dependent and can change even during an economic crisis when young people have harder times moving away from their parents (Cammaerts et al., 2015, p. 3). The other option is to create a strict age boundary. For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines youth as between 15 and 24 years (United Nations, n.d.). In Europe, youth is defined in state policies variously between 13 and 35 years (Youthpolicy.org, n.d.).

Most studies reviewed in this thesis follow either the UN definition, have extended the upper limit to 30 or, if possible, try not to place a strict age limit at all.

2.2.2. What is youth participation

Youth participation as a field of study is broad and addresses many different questions connected to youth. One can focus on two main areas: on the youth itself, which includes the effects of participation on social aspects of young person's life, their educational outcomes, civic abilities, and other effects. The second option is to examine the impact of youth participation on society. This thesis follows Checkoway's (2011) approach to youth participation. He starts with youth participation as a protected right by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which applies in BiH from 1. 9. 1993 after a succession from Yugoslavia (*Treaty Bodies Treaties*, n.d.). Under Article 12, children have the right to express their own views in matters that are affecting them. And their views should be given due weight. The right to assembly and creation of associations is granted under Article 15 (*OHCHR | Convention on the Rights of the Child*, n.d.). Based on that, youth participation can be broadly defined as a practice of involving young people in decisions over issues that are affecting them. The participation initiative can originate both from young people and adults (Checkoway, 2011).

Not all young people are also participating with the same rate. Those that are very active create only a small portion, and they are not a representative sample of the whole population. Youth activity is usually preceded by good socio-economic background, good

education, and other indicators like parents' income. (Checkoway, 2011, p. 342; Zukin et al., 2011, p. 126). But it would be wrong to assume that youth with worse socio-economic background does not participate at all. It can also be argued that the decline of formal participation weakened the importance of good socioeconomic background, as participation is no longer about elite membership in parties, but is happening through new repertoire accessible to everyone (Ødegård & Berglund, 2008).

To measure youth participation is challenging, and different approaches might exclude different types of participation. Large-scale cross-sectional surveys offer a basic comparison of youth participation. In the last wave of the World Value Survey and European Values Study, participants were asked whether they voted, signed a petition, joined in boycotts, attended lawful demonstrations, joined unofficial strikes, and about self-reported interest in politics. Sloam (2016) used data from the European Social Survey and examined youth participation in countries of EU15 in five reported domains: voting, signing a petition, participating at a demonstration, participating at a boycott, or displaying opinion through a badge or a sticker. He generally confirms the trend of transfer to issue-based participation, with voting on a decline compared to the older generations. He also noticed the changing repertoires. For example, electronic petitions helped to make petitioning much more common.

It is harder to understand youth involvement in more activism-oriented activities and engagement in NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and other local activities. Generally, the more informal the activity, the harder it is to understand its functioning. In this context, lower-income youth's participation, which sees voting or party membership as even more meaningless, can be hidden in studies.

2.2.3. Why do young people participate

In a study of youth in America, a single most important variable wasn't found for explaining youth participation. But a combination of a family (engaged parents), school (by opening doors or contributions of individual teachers that encourage students to debate), and friends has together strong explanatory power (Zukin et al., 2011, p. 153). Some studies are trying to understand why some young people still joined political parties, despite the general trend of moving to informal activities. Bruter and Harrison (2009b) surveyed 2919 18-25 years old in six EU countries and found that their reasons for joining a party can be divided into three categories. Some members join for moral

reasons (score high on responses like 'to feel a good citizen' or 'to help others'), social (importance of friends' and other interesting people), and professional reasons (who score highest on factors like positions and honors, or they want to become a politician). Extending this work, the authors also present three routes of how young people join parties (Bruter & Harrison, 2009a). Most often, they continue an ideological reason of one of their family members who are already in the party or utilize one family member employed by the party. After the family route, following friends is another option. The last route is from one organization (like a student union) to the next one. Only 12% of respondents arrive at party membership differently from these three routes (Bruter & Harrison, 2009a, p. 46).

2.2.4. Meaningful participation

The definition of youth participation from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has one main problem. It does not differentiate between participation where young people have real influence and participation that exists solely in the adult world where young people play only tokenized and passive roles. To be present does not automatically mean to participate. For this reason, Hart (1992) constructed a ladder with eight rungs. He draws attention to the difference between the first three rungs, where young people are not participating and can be manipulated, and the higher rungs on the ladder, where young people are meaningfully participating. The last rung, where young people and adults are in a partner-like relation, represents the ideal form of youth participation.

When adults design initiatives and young people are only invited, youth participation can look good on paper but not produce the desired outcome. This might be the case of an initiative to improve youth parliaments in Norway (Ødegård, 2016). Or various agencies observed in Australia (Bessant, 2010).

2.3. Why is youth participation important?

Head (2011) discusses three main rationales for encouraging youth participation. First, young people have the right to their participation. Second, services targeted at young people are improved when young people are not external to their creation and

functioning. Then it can better accommodate their needs. Lastly, young people themselves and society in general can benefit from meaningful youth participation.

Participation can provide a young person a space for personal development in many different areas on an individual level. From self-esteem to understanding own aspirations and life goals. Furthermore, community-based participation can significantly contribute to young persons' social capital. Which is where individual and societal benefits meet. Not only does the whole society benefit from individual development of its members, but scholars argue citizens' social capital is necessary for well-functioning democracy (Putnam, 2001).

Another area where youth participation is also praised is direct democracy teaching, because it is not enough to teach academic disciplines, improve testing or curriculum to have better democracy education (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003). For students to see participation as part of their everyday life, they need to actively experience participating in important issues in their school, during non-formal education, at home and in other activities (Hoskins, 2003, p. 155).

2.3.1. Youth participation, democratization theory, and development

In previous parts, it was mentioned that understanding youth participation might help uncover the prospects of democratization. Why is that so? When researching factors that lead to democratization, there is abundant literature on the influence of geography or culture, effects of extractive or inclusive institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) or shifts in the global environment (Huntington, 1991). It is also interesting to look at different approaches. Gift and Krcmaric (2017) focus on agency of individual leaders. After collecting data on national leaders that were educated in western universities, they found a positive relationship with the democratic level of the country. This might suggest that even though big variables like institutional development play a vital role, individual agencies can significantly contribute to steering the country in the right direction.

But democracy is not created solely from institutions or democratic leaders. It needs engaged citizens, who form the civic society. Youth participation is one of the ways how to build this society. The idea that participation is part of an education towards democracy is present already in John Dewey's work (Dewey, 1916, Chapter 7). And it is also emphasized by Putnam as way to offset the declining levels of participation. (Putnam, 2001). Civic education programs are also used for democratic assistance (Pospieszna &

Galus, 2018). It has been also debated that in specific cases, when extremism and participation are linked, increased civic participation does not lead to democratization (Berman, 1997; Putnam, 2001, p. 392), but parochialism and isolation of like-minded people.

When looking at democratization, another interesting topic is economic development. Throughout history, democracy and development are closely linked together. Improvement of democracy is probably not by itself the source of development. However, subsequent stabilization of the political situation, improvement in education, reduction in corruption and nepotism, and other connected changes usually contribute to economic growth in the long run (Acemoglu et al., 2019). Every country is a bit different, but it could be argued that improvement in youth participation can contribute to development through democratization.

3. Context of Bosnia and Herzegovina

This part of the thesis introduces the information relevant for studying youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is not the purpose of this part to cover and explain the complicated history or administrative arrangement of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor to fully explain the functioning of the whole youth sector. For that, relevant literature is proposed. Where the Southeast Europe (SEE) is mentioned, it means countries of formal Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania.

3.1.1. Before and after Dayton

After the breaking of communist regimes in Europe in the 1990s, while some countries quickly gained international recognition and soon after started their European integration, other experienced periods of conflicts and changing political regimes. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands in the context of the breakup of Yugoslavia and subsequent conflict. But because of the separation tendencies of its regions, it also bears comparison with places like Kosovo or South Ossetia and other areas of "frozen conflicts" in Europe (Bebler, 2015).

In ethnically diverse Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito was pursuing a unifying policy of brotherhood and unity (Mills, 2010). But after his death in 1980, ethnic nationalism was used as a tool by political elites to mobilize different parts of the multicultural entity (Funk et al., 2020). This caused problems particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where three ethnicities live together: Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Serbs. Religion and ethnicity are closely connected among these three groups. Croats profess Catholic Christianity, Serbs Orthodox Christianity and Bosniaks Islam. It is also important to distinguish between Bosnians (Bosanci) and Bosniaks (Bošnjaci). While the former term includes all three so-called constituent people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the latter is used solely for the ethnic group of Muslim Bosniaks living now predominantly in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before the 1990s, these three groups were generally mixed. But after the war, that resulted in death of around 200 000 Bosnians, and many more displaced, large portion of the population migrated. Which created today's ethnically separated regions (Bieber, 2006, p. 3).

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina started in 1992 and was ended by Dayton Peace in 1995. It erupted a month after the independence referendum, which was

supported by a majority of Bosniaks and Croats but was boycotted by Serbs, who wanted to remain part of Yugoslavia. At one point, all three sides (Bosniak, Croat, and Serbian) were at war against each other. Important was also the involvement of many outside actors, apart from NATO, United Nations, and others, also mainly the Yugoslav People's Army that supported Bosnian Serbs. The whole conflict is characterized by many atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and its deep-rooted reasons (Bennett, 2016, p. 2). To go into more details would require much more space, but for the purpose of this thesis it is important to understand mainly two consequences. First, Dayton peace ended the war, but it did not resolve all the reasons for why it erupted (Bennett, 2016, p. 266). Second is the current administrative arrangement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is separated into two semiautonomous entities. Mainly Bosnian Serbian Republika Srpska (refer to as RS or simply Republika, not to be mistaken with the neighboring Republic of Serbia) and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (referred as FBiH or simply Federation), that consists of 10 autonomous cantons that have their governments. Cantons in the Federation are divided so that in most of them, either Croats or Bosniaks have a strong majority (map of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the ethnicities and cantons, can be seen in **Appendix no. 2**). Special case is the self-governing Brčko district, with the main city Brčko, that neighbors Federation and Croatia and stands between two parts of RS. According to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (which is an annex to the Dayton Agreement) the head of state is composed of a three-member presidency: one Bosnian Croat, Serbian and Bosniak president. Serb member is elected only in Republika, Croat and Bosniak together in the Federation.

On top of that is the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (OHR). The high Representative has veto powers, and his role is to oversee the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. After 2005 the OHR was reduced, and more responsibilities were transferred to the Bosnian governance. BiH was supposed to be on a trajectory to integration with European Union, but the stability of its democracy and state affairs has been deteriorating ever since (Bennett, 2016). Twenty-five years after the end of the war, BiH is still in a post-war state. The much-needed reforms seem to be impossible within the current power-sharing and administrative division. Bosnia and Herzegovina also need to confront external influences, for example from Serbia. One example of nationalistic cooperation between RS and Serbia is the new celebration (since 2020) of the Day of Serb Unity, Freedom, and the National Flag. The celebrations take place only in RS and not in the Federation. Following separation tendencies of RS

incumbent High Representative Christian Schmidt warned in November 2021 of danger of collapse of BiH and undoing of the whole peace agreement (Borger, 2021). Which only speaks of an even more complicated situation in BiH amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

3.1.2. Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As well as almost everything in BiH, also the youth operate in a complicated situation. Some insight to the youth sector can be drawn from The Contribution of non-program countries to EU Youth Wiki (Youth Partnership, n.d.). It paints the picture of two different approaches to youth in RS and FBiH. Policies in both entities do not even operate within the same youth age range, and on cantonal levels in FBiH web of different stakeholders is involved.

The Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016) gives another insight. It ranks 183 countries in five domains: levels of education, health and wellbeing, employment and opportunity, political participation, and civic participation. Overall, Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks 80th. But indexes offer only a limited information when compared with broad range of countries with different culture. Thus, from the SEE region, only Montenegro and Bulgarian are around the same place; others rank higher (there are no data on Kosovo). Looking at political and civic participation domains, only Slovenia stands out and places much higher. This suggests a similarly burdensome situation for youth participation in the whole region.

Sociological research offers another perspective on young person's live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Interesting results come from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), one of many nonprofit organizations involved in the region. They sampled 1000 young people aged 14 to 29 representative of BiH, thus coming from different entities, sizes of communities, and identifying with different religions and ethnicities. Relevant is the finding that only 38.2% of young people do not intend to emigrate and those who want, 40% of them plan to stay abroad for good. Young people also mention the improvement of the standard of living and better employment possibilities with higher salaries as the predominant reasons for emigration. Preferred country of emigration is then Germany (47.6%), followed by Austria (12.5%) and Switzerland (7%) (Turčilo et al., 2018). Another interesting trend is the strong incline to authoritarian and populist leaders. The latest European Values Study reported that when asked about a strong leader who does

not have to bother with parliament and elections, 59.7% of young people aged 15 to 24 answered it is very or fairly good way of governing their country(*European Values Study 2017-2020*, n.d.). Apart from Slovenia, this percentage is high in the FES research in the whole Southeast Europe region (Lavrič et al., 2018). Youth in BiH and the whole region also show low trust in political institutions and high support for membership in the EU. In BiH, only 21% percent are willing to take a political function or consider it (Lavrič et al., 2018).

To sum up, these three findings about youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina are important for this thesis:

1. Young people heavily incline to strong leadership.
2. Most of the young people in BiH intend to emigrate to German-speaking countries in Europe to seek better living conditions and employment opportunities.
3. Young people do not trust their political institutions, but they trust the EU and want their country to join it.

4. Research introduction and methodology

The fieldwork was designed in a way to meet three main requirements. First, to fit in the existing literature and compare general trends in youth participation and previous fieldwork studies (Bruter & Harrison, 2009a; Cammaerts et al., 2013; Pospieszna & Galus, 2018; Robertson, 2009; Saltman, 2014). Second to utilize the concepts and theory discussed in the theoretical part. And third to accommodate for the specific context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As explained previously, the three ethnicities, religions, and post-war experience of BiH provide a great environment to study the effects of youth participation and a great challenge to eliminating possible selection biases.

Following Ekman and Amna (2012), this thesis avoids the division of participation between conventional and unconventional. The difference is harder and harder to distinguish, and young people see the boundaries differently than previous generations (Norris, 2002). But it is still important to make a difference between manifest political participation and latent forms of civil participation. The research participants always participate more than on a level of mere attention or interest in topics studied; their participation stands somewhere between latent and manifest forms of involvement. They usually avoid formal and membership types of participation and incline to activism. Participants are members or leaders of the organization ASuBih (see **Appendix no. 4**), volunteers in organizations like Red Cross, members, and board members in Youth Council (Vijeće mladih) and other youth councils or local youth centers. In summary, they participate on more than on an individual level. They usually have experience with many different activist groups and NGOs that work with the youth or are lead by the youth themselves.

4.1. Fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The fieldwork lasted in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 22 days in September 2021. September proved to be an ideal month for meeting active young people because those studying at high school have returned from summer holidays but not yet experienced high time demands from their school. Those studying or preparing to study at university also had more free time than during the summer holidays. They have not yet moved away from their communities to dormitories (or to study abroad). At the same time, the summer

weather allowed to meet young people outside and spend with them much more time during their activities and meetings.

The final data consist of 22 semi-structured interviews collected in 10 different places around Bosnia and Herzegovina. To control for administrative entity, ethnicity, religion, as well as the size of the youth community, these places were chosen in different cantons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Mostar, Visoko, Konjic, Tuzla, Bihač, Gradačac), Republika Srpska (Modriča, Banja Luka) and Distrikt Brčko. Rural areas were excluded because of a lack of active youth communities and inconvenient transportation. Map of the places and overview of interviews location can be seen in **Appendix no. 1 and 2**.

Once in the chosen place, following Robertson (2009) a purposive sample was used to pick interview participants to fir a pre-selected criteria (Novotna, 2020a, p. 293). Mainly the interview participants had to be active and young. The literature allows for flexible definitions of youth, so only a technical upper boundary of 25 years and lover boundary of 16 years was selected. However, participants around 20 were preferred. Having the participant and researcher around the same age made the interview more informative and open. Participants were also sharing similar experiences, which allowed to use successful approaches from one interview in the others. Participants younger than 16 were not sampled for two more reasons. They did not have enough experience with the active community, and the language barrier often started appearing because the interviews were conducted in English. Apart from two interviews that were conducted in participant's language with the help of a research assistant. Language did not prove to be a barrier, nor a source of sampling bias, as through the research much active youth spoke English on a good level.

To approach active youth for the interview, purposeful and snowball techniques were used (Novotna, 2020a, p. 295). In every destination, the researcher got in touch with the local active youth community thanks to previous contacts and the help of the local research assistant, who has experience with active youth as a former board member of youth organization ASuBiH (more information about ASuBiH in **Appendix no. 4** or chapter 5 of the EU Youth Wiki (Youth Partnership, n.d.)). The researcher then selected whom to interview to balance the sample. Members of the community also recommended whom to approach next.

4.2. Interview

A semi-structured interview was chosen because it allows to follow pre-selected topics. However, it also leaves a lot of space for a specific view of the participant and subsequent adjustment of the questions (Novotna, 2020b, p. 322). Interviews were conducted face to face, mainly outside or at the offices of local youth organizations. The interview was recorded and during transcription anonymized. Throughout this thesis, only anonymous names are used. All participants have given signed consent and understood the purpose of the research and all the measures taken to achieve anonymity. They were offered an option to withdraw their consent later, but no one did. Special care was taken during interviews with underage participants.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 66 minutes, with an average of around 45 minutes. The youngest participant was 16 and the oldest 24, the average age was close to 19. Out of 22, only five participants identified as males. Reasons for this unbalance are discussed in detail later, but it is mainly because significantly more girls were present in all the active youth communities. Nine participants studied at Gymnasium (Gymnazia), five at High school with specialization (Srednja stručna škola sa specijalizacijom), five at university in BiH and three were studying at university abroad. Perspectives of all major ethnicities and religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina were included. For an overview of the interview participants, see **Appendix no. 3**.

The interview revolves around five pre-selected areas. These are:
1. Aspiration
2. Activities
3. School student parliament at participant's school
4. Political views
5. Ethnicity and religion

In each area, a participant was asked about their own experience, perceived perspective of other young people around them, and perceived view of their parents.

Examination of school student parliaments was selected as a unique case of youth participation under individual high schools, which is mostly neglected in the literature. But in the end, it is not examined in this thesis, as it was too different and would require a different approach.

4.3. Data analysis

During the whole fieldwork, and especially after every interview, the researcher wrote down notes. This allowed to develop interpretations during the research and accordingly adjust later interviews. After the end of fieldwork, recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed in the program *Atlas.ti* by segmentation and coding (Heřmanský, 2020; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both deductive and inductive coding approaches were used (Heřmanský, 2020, p. 431) as codes followed both pre-selected areas and literature theory and continuously evolving themes in the collected data.

Based on the analysis, interpretations in five areas are presented in the following part as answers to the research questions. They are also compared to the existing research and theories from literature.

These areas are:
1. Why are young people in BiH active?
   a. How did young people start being active, and what keeps them active?
2. What are the aspirations of active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
   a. Do they want to study/work abroad?
3. What are the political views of active youth in BiH, what do they think about democracy?
   a. Do they incline to authoritarianism like their peers?
4. What are the position of active youth in BiH towards voting, protesting, and other actions?
   a. Do they follow identified trends from literature?
5. How do active young people in BiH understand ethnicity, nationalism, and religion?

5.   Analytical part

Interviews are analyzed in this part of the thesis. Findings are presented in five sections: Reasons for activity; Aspirations; Political views, opinion about democracy and frustration; Voting, protesting and other actions; Ethnicity and religion. A short summary follows at the end of each section. The conclusion of all findings and attempt to evaluate the meaningfulness of active youth participation is presented in the next part.

5.1.   Reasons for activity

Before directly asking respondents why they joined the organization where they were active, they were asked when they heard about it for the first time and in what context. Together with other responses, this helped to reveal to what degree the stated purpose of joining a youth organization corresponds with the general values and other responses.

This resulted in the identification of three main reasons for their activity:

1.   Identification with like-minded community and development of friendships
2.   Desire to contribute to a positive change
3.   Need for self-development

These reasons often evolve and, in all cases, eventually include developing friendships because of like-minded people they meet in the community. For Ejna, the initial input was to contribute to a change:

"One day I was watching the news with my mom. And on the news was a report about protests, secondary school students protested in Travnik. It was hundreds of secondary school students in one place protesting because they didn't want another school with the phenomenon two schools under one roof opened in Jajce. They were like: we want to go to school together. We don't want you to divide us. And in the end, the school wasn't opened. And that's a beautiful thing and that kind of inspired me to join the local team after I learned that there exists one in my town." (Ejna. 20)

Interestingly, the reason of self-development was overwhelmingly mentioned by girls, with boys saying it only marginally as a side effect. This is what Lana and Karlo answered to the question of why they started being active:

"Because it was a platform for me to grow. I was really shy when I joined, I couldn't talk in public. I didn't have a problem with friends and family. But if there was a bigger group of people that was a problem for me and I basically had to break that. That sort of barrier for me." (Lana, 19)

"When I was 15, I saw photo of my friend on Instagram story and she posted a group of people laying on each other, having fun. And I was like, OK, they are hanging out. They have really good time. I want to be part of this. [...] I was a member for year and a half, and, in that year, I was on some events, and I met a lot of people who motivated me to do more. To learn more stuff too." (Karlo, 19)

These results can be compared with social, moral, and professional reasons for active participation that Bruter and Harrison (2009b) identified when studying young party and youth political organization members in the EU. For active youth in BiH, the social aspect seems to be much more important. Most young people joined because of some preexisting friendship or quickly developed them and started spending a lot of time in the community. The reason to contribute to a positive change originates more from a personal view about politics and ethnicity than from moral obligation. Self-development is an aspect not mentioned in the literature, but in BiH very important, especially for girls. They speak about it openly with a full realization of the dire situation of youth employment in BiH and the possibility of moving abroad for work.

But how much are participants active because of the encouraging environment? Support from family is mixed. For some, parents were initially hesitant or didn't care much:

"I think at some point, they got sick of telling me no. And they allowed me I don't know, go to a meeting every Saturday. And they got used to that. And when it started getting bigger when I started doing some activities and projects, they, I think, started to trust me more." (Lana, 19)

Others describe an encouraging environment at their home:

"My parents are very supportive of everything I do. My biggest support actually. And they see how much this work and working like this actually contributed to my growth and how much how many things I learned and how many opportunities I've received." (Ejna, 20)

But no one spoke of problems or disagreements that their activity sparked in their family. Which also speaks of the political opinions and values of their parents. Active youth communities are often more diverse regarding ethnicity, religion, and inclusion of sexual and other minorities. Which is an important aspect for the participating young people and apparently it is mostly not a problem for their parents. This is also a finding that contradicts a worry of Berman (1997) that participation can lead to radicalization and closing of minds. Quite the contrary, the community of active youth in BiH is diverse when looking at their local membership. Many have experiences from youth events all around the country and sometimes even abroad.

When examining the environment, what about school and local authorities? At school, they usually do not care much. Occasionally participants describe support from school, for example, when they need to miss classes because of their activities. Some participants described having problems in Republica when their activity exceeds the borders of RS or when it appears to be associated with Federation – even only in a name:

"I remember when I first started doing activities with Association of Secondary High School Students of Bosnia and Herzegovina [ASuBiH], everyone looked at me like I was some kind of monster or some kind of, you know, not normal person. Because I was working with organization that has in name 'of Bosnia and Herzegovina'. Because I'm from Republica Srpska, so 'how can you do that? Like, that's not your country.' Because, you know, Serbs in Republic, they think that we are different country. I had a lot of problems in my school because headmaster of our school. He was offensive. He kept talking about like, that he's gonna draw me out from the school because of all the stuff that's not legal here. How can I do that? And so it is really hard. But I guess for me,

support from my parents and my friends was at the moment, the main thing that helped me." (Nejra, 22)

5.1.1. Majority of girls

During meetings with active youth communities in BiH, it was apparent that girls create a clear majority. That is why girls also make a strong majority of respondents. This was surprising. The theory does not suggest any youth participatory gender gap outside formal activities. There are explanations though. Self-development was identified as one of the main reasons for participation, and all girls in the sample think of it in some way, contrary to boys that mention it only as a side effect. This aspect of youth participation thus probably appeals more to girls. There is also the general trend of the gender gap in educational outcomes and enrollment at universities, which could suggest a subsequent gender gap in participation.

When brought up during the interviews, participants introduced an idea that boys are less pushed to do something more:

"Boys have more freedom from parents, and they accept a lot of bad behavior. Because that is just 'boys will be boys' type of mentality here. So, they aren't really pushed to do anything to improve themselves." (Ajlin, 17)

Other girls describe they feel that boys are often less mature, and they are pushed more towards playing sports than being good at school or doing extra activities. During interviews, girls often brought up the topic of toxic masculinity and stereotypes that lay on both girls and boys:

"It was pretty late at night, and we were sitting in this big hall. And at the meeting, there were like six boys, four girls, it was the first time there were more boys on the meeting. All the girls left to go somewhere, you know, to bring something and I stayed with the boys. Some of them were playing chess, the others, they were all talking about the football. The whole conversation. I was there. I was thinking like, this is like, the stereotype is correct. They were mainly talking about football. And I just sat there, and I laughed." (Tajra, 18)

From boys' perspective, they mention they can be pushed more towards activities that can earn money or start a job. And volunteering can be seen as not serious and beneficial, as Nejra puts it:

"I realized that there a lot more girls everywhere, even in my university. But I don't know why that is. I think because boys are especially here pushed like: Why are you doing that? It's not serious, why are you doing that? Are you really that bored?" (Nejra, 22)

5.1.2. Summary

Three reasons for participatory activity amongst the sample stand out: identification with like-minded community and development of friendships, desire to contribute to a positive change, and need for self-development. With self-development being much more important for girls, maybe resulting also in their majority amongst the active community. Overall, the social aspect of their participation is probably the strongest reason, which is in line with literature findings of declining formal participation, which can offer much fewer opportunities for socialization. Those who are participating for reasons completely different from a desire to contribute to a positive change are far from apathetic about political issues. This is also in line with theory suggesting that changes in participation do not necessarily mean disengagement simultaneously.

5.2. Aspirations

The question of what to do next is always on the horizon for active youth in BiH. They realize that they have lower prospects of finding a desired job and quality education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And they see a lot of peers leaving the country. For those studying at high school, because they all want to continue studying, university represents a decision whether to leave BiH or not. Plans on studying abroad or in their country are equally represented. But when speaking to older participants, it becomes apparent that many emigrational factors are only introduced later (for example, need to find a good job). What those that plan and don't plan to emigrate have in common is a strong sense to help Bosnia and Herzegovina in some way and, if possible, to come back, as Tajra puts it:

"I would love to study abroad. But I do see myself coming back to Bosnia. I want to mix; I want to see something different. And that's my main motivation. Because if everyone leaves, Bosnia stays the same. I want to leave; I want to study somewhere else. But eventually I want to come back. Help." (Tajra, 18)

The desire to come back and contribute to helping BiH stands in direct contrast to FES findings (Turčilo et al., 2018) that young people that want to emigrate, 40% do not plan to come back at all. Even older active youth who already study abroad do not think about staying abroad for good. This difference can be explained in many ways. Because the FES sample includes older respondents (14 to 29), it is possible that the sampled active youth will eventually also increase their desire to stay abroad for good. It can also suggest big differences among socio-economic backgrounds between the general population and sampled active youth. There is also a possibility that active young people share a strong value in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the end, motivation to contribute to a change is one of the identified reasons for their participation.

Countries mentioned as possible destinations are mostly German-speaking, in line with the FES findings. Croatia is another possible destination for those with Croatian citizenship, which is common amongst Bosnian Croats.

5.2.1. Summary

Sampled active young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina plan to stay in the country or leave abroad almost equally. But they share a strong desire to come back and help BiH in some way. This contrasts with general findings, where a significant percentage of youth does not plan on coming back at all after emigration. Those who study at high school all plan to continue the university.

5.3. Political views, opinion about democracy, and frustration

During the research it was interesting to observe how active young people cope with the general Bosnian situation that offers many possible sources of frustration. One can imagine just when listening about their day-to-day struggles at school. Oftentimes due to inadequate space requirements, high schools operate in two shifts. One half of the

class starts in the morning, the other in the afternoon. Despite that, sometimes there are not enough free classrooms, and they must study at the school canteen. It is also not uncommon that some classes in their schedule have not even taken place yet at the end of September because the teacher is still missing. And during the covid-19 pandemic, at some places, students did not have school classes at all for most of their school year. One of the participants also described that their final university exam had to be written on the last two pages ripped out from the textbook written by the lecturer. He was at the same time the one that was selling this textbook.

Another source of frustration can arise from the administrative division of BiH, making, for example, the mundane process of submitting a high school diploma complicated. Because while universities in FBiH prefer documents in Latin, Cyrillic script is preferred in Republika. Furthermore, just a few years ago, the original of documents was required, making it impossible to apply for more universities simultaneously. Thus, if the application was unsuccessful, one had to wait one year to submit another. Another example of complications arising from the three ethnicities division can be seen on cigarette boxes that are always on the table when active youth meet. The warning of bad health consequences of smoking is written there three times. Once in Cyrillic and twice in Latin in Bosnian and Croatian versions, even though these look identical.

These are just a few of the examples mentioned by participants. Everyone experienced similar issues, but when politics was discussed during the interview, it was apparent that frustration was not the only consequence. Some participants tended to start explaining the situation, they were reconciled, and they understood the debated issues as they are. Others got much more emotional and talked about the topic with a personal perspective and often started using strong emotional words. As is the case in excerpts from interviews with Selma and Iva:

"I hate politics, I mean, I hate politics in this country. I don't like the government at all. I don't like the people working there. I don't see them doing good for the people. And I think that it is visible in our country's economy, and how we progress as people. People always go where they think they will get the most out of it. A lot of people just go for the money." (Selma, 17)

"Well, we have three presidents, and they are always fighting. And it's ridiculous to see on the news. Instead of sharing great news, let's say, new road or something. We have a drama: 'This President was talking about this President'. It is funny." (Iva, 16)

This division offers one of the possible reasons for differences in other political views. It will be pointed out later, but more frustrated participants also tend to trust democracy less and see more authoritarian rule as a possible solution.

Where can the difference originate from? It doesn't seem to be because of a different understanding of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Knowledge about voter fraud or nepotism practice is widespread among all the active young people. And those speaking about issues in BiH with more hope are far from being naive. Maybe those that experienced the consequences personally are more frustrated, but that also does not seem to be true. Many participants were describing personal problems they encountered and not everyone was speaking about them with frustration. Family situation, their prospects of going abroad and many other aspects can be important too, but to examine that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

General understanding of politics among active youth is closely connected to power and nationalism. When asked about the term politics, they often start naming what does not work and what works differently than it should be. Only after being prompted to think about something positive, they remember for example, an acceptable local politician. But oftentimes, nothing positive comes to their mind. Political parties and politicians themselves are probably connected to most negative views. Armin mentions the problem of nepotism, a term well known to research participants:

"So, there's the Social Democratic Party which is not social democratic. It's just you know; all the political parties are just businesses. You know, it's like a company." (Armin, 20)

Right after nepotism, participants mention the practice of paying for votes, as Maid explains:

"But most of the people that vote are influenced or bought by the parties. And the other people that could change something don't want to vote. Let's say my parents have never

voted, because they just don't want to get in it, because they just don't understand it."
(Maid, 17)

When asked about what they would change in BiH, young people speak of division between ethnicities and education apart from the above-mentioned issues. At the same time, they refuse any ambition to be a politician themselves, which is not surprising considering their negative views on formal politics. All this is in line with the theory prediction and trend observed in western democracies.

Understanding the opinions of participants on democracy is not straightforward. When directly asked it is not clear what aspects of democracy they do or don't welcome. In the end, active youth comments on democracy in the context of BiH, mostly mentioning that they don't see the system working there. This appears to impact the participants in two directions, which seems to correspond to a degree with the frustration division. When speaking about the flaws in the Bosnian system, some tend to start explaining them and mention space for improvement. Accountability of leaders seems to be important for them too. On the other hand, those more frustrated seem to connect the issues with an inclination to strong rule or undemocratic measures that they think would solve some issues.

These are opposite views of Sajra and Ajlin, both the same age:

"I want to ban people who are older than 65 to vote, and further I don't believe it is smart to give people who are younger than 25 power to vote. It is easy to manipulate people who are younger than 25 with money. Every year, probably in any city, there are parties who buy votes with money. […] And its 50 marks, which is not much. Some people just take money and don't vote for no one." (Sajra, 17)

"I mean, democracy is, I think, the best way to organize a country. Like Switzerland or US, because for everything they decide, they ask everybody. Unlike democracies, where you just pick a leader, and then you let them do whatever they want." (Ajlin, 17)

Throughout the research it became interesting to talk with the participants about Yugoslavia and observe what aspects they talked about. Their sentiment is generally positive, with the majority mentioning good community amongst people back then and

emphasizing social policy. But frequently, it also revealed participants' opinions on the strong rule of a central figure.

"I think that we are a type of people that need someone to be really powerful. We like at the Balkans. Because you know, we are wild. We are crazy. We need someone who will just show us some kind of control. […] it is maybe true that people back then in Yugoslavia didn't have huge, how to say it, freedom? But on the other hand, you had someone who took care of you. […] A lot of people right now work in Germany, and you have also rules that you have to listen there. […] My opinion is that they are trying to sell us democracy here. It's not democracy. Not only in Bosnia, but in the whole Balkans." *(Nejra, 22)*

Nejra's example is perfectly in line with the sociological findings saying that there is a big support for authoritarian leaders amongst youth in the SEE region (*European Values Study 2017-2020*, n.d.; Lavrič et al., 2018). But the support for strong leaders appears to be much lower and not a majority opinion.

5.3.1. Summary

Sampled active young people have a strongly negative view of politics in BiH. Because of that, they do not want to be involved in the formal political structures themselves, which corresponds to what the theory suggests. Even though most of the participants have a similar understanding of nepotism and voter fraud, the most often mentioned negative practices, two groups seem to emerge. One talks about the issues from a personal perspective and often uses emotional words. The other is more describing the situation as it is. The second group appears to be much more frustrated with the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Views on democracy seem to correspond to a degree with this difference. Those more frustrated inclined to strong rule, and they would welcome a decrease in freedom if it would mean more stability and functioning of the country. This corresponds to the general opinion of youth in BiH, though in a smaller proportion.

5.4. Voting, protesting, and other

Let's look at the typical questions about political participation that can be found in sociological surveys: voting, protesting, petitioning, and other actions, including online repertoire.

All the participants vote or plan to do so when they get older. But their reasons are different. The moral obligation 'it is a right thing to do' dominates. But many will not vote seriously or go voting mainly so their vote will not be misused, which is Vedad's case:

"Yes, but I just go. I go out on elections and just cross anything on paper. So, it doesn't count. I don't want to vote for anyone on that list. [...] Well, because the first time I ever got the chance to go on elections when I turned 18. I got called to be in the committee and I was counting votes. When I saw what kind of criminal that is. I understand. Because let me ask you, if you have non-valid votes, they should all go into one bag. Right? Yeah. But they take the blank ones, and they put it in separate bags. So, what do you think happens to those blank papers? There was a lot of stolen votes. A lot of them." (Vedad, 22)

Knowledge about voter fraud seems to be common among active youth, but some still believe voting can change something and they plan on voting seriously:

"I think I'm going to vote. Because there is another thing they do, if you don't vote. They will just take your vote and give it to the party they want. So that's like, it's a crime. But they do it. But I want to vote because I'm not into politics now. But when I'm 18, I kind of want to make sure that my vote matters. And that if I can, I can help this country go better and do better." (Selma, 17)

Weaker believe in meaning of voting and positive view on protesting is perfectly in line with what the theory is suggesting. Active youth in BiH thus follows the general findings about youth in established democracies. Most of the participants have participated at protests and some have even organized them. But with second breath they add that protests can change something only if they are peaceful. Which is not always the

case. Marta experienced that in Mostar in 2014 during the unrest in Tuzla and other cities in BiH:

"I was there during the peaceful part of the protests. The day they put buildings on fire I was supposed to go. But I was held up in school. I think we had like a little break or something. I went outside and I saw all these people protesting and somebody, I don't know who it was, told me that we should go home earlier. That he heard it's going to turn violent. So, we went back inside, and we talked to our teachers, and they let us go. So, we all went home. And as soon as I got home, I was watching the news, and I saw people like torching up the buildings and setting stuff on fire. But it all started in Tuzla, and it went through like Sarajevo and Mostar." (Marta, 24)

Opinion that protest can contribute to change only if it creates some damage to attract attention was almost not present amongst the community.

Most of the participants have also experience with signing online petitions. But otherwise, contrary to the theory, their political activity on the internet ends there. They tend not to share, discuss, or comment political content on social media. They often follow politics abroad (USA and Russia) or cause related content, which is mostly international (climate change). Otherwise, they use social media mainly for personal needs.

Younger participants were often mentioning they are not interested in politics and that they need to learn more about politics before their first voting. But from the conversation, it was apparent that they follow what is happening and have general understanding that is far from apathy.

Who do young people discuss politics with? Politics is not a thing participants discuss often with their parents. They want to, but parents are usually not interested. Same goes with discussing the war. School is also not a place where they would talk and discuss politics, often mentioning that teachers are not happy about students discussing politics, because it often involves talking about the war or division amongst ethnicities. They discuss politics with friends from the active community, but not often with classmates, as they tend to be more nationalistic.

5.4.1. Summary

All sampled participants vote or plan to do so. But some will go voting mainly to prevent their vote from being misused. The knowledge about voter fraud and paying for votes seems to be common amongst the active youth. Peaceful protests are seen positively amongst the participants, as well as petitions. They tend not to use social media to actively comment on politics, nor to passively follow domestic politics, which is the only finding contradicting the theory, that suggests increased participation in new agencies.

5.5. Ethnicity and religion

Discussing ethnicity and religion can be sensitive in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But participants felt comfortable both when being interviewed but also when the topic was brought up during meetings with the local active community. After all, common openness to different ethnicities, religions and minorities is yet another example of the reasons for their activity and involvement, as is described previously.

The ethnical and religious openness was overwhelming. Participants were mentioning nationalism as one of the main reasons for negative views on politics, as a source of disagreement with classmates that were not members of the active community, as a reason for leaving the country, and lack of nationalism in Yugoslavia as it's positive aspect. They have different experience with nationalism in different parts of BiH though. In Tuzla, Bihać or Brčko, participants were mentioning that their cities are different and there are less problems than in other places. But for example, Marta's experience is different. This is her description of nationalism amongst the school students connected to support of sport clubs in the city:

„So there are two local soccer clubs. One is associated with one colour and it has mostly Bosniak fans. The other club is Croatian and it has different colour. Every time there's a game, there are also fights in the city. And in my school, we were banned from dressing up in either of the clubs jerseys. You could only wear the jerseys from the national team. And students would actually fight at the school if you had a shirt with colour of one of these clubs. But it was much bigger issue in different school. That's why the whole rule was kind of brought up in the entire city that you're not allowed to show at school in sports jerseys. People would get beaten up for, let's say it's a game day, and you're a guy

who just ends up wearing a shirt with wrong colour. And you go to the wrong section of the city. [...] And we couldn't even discuss soccer, for example, when you say that you like one of the clubs. People would start throwing in different comments." (Marta, 24)

This is how Berina speaks about her experience with nationalism amongst her classmates:

"Yes, many people around me are like that. It is a bad thing that doesn't have any sense because we all are humans. But people aren't going to change their mind really quicky. I think their parents told them, okay, because before my parents told me, some very Islamophobic things, and I didn't know that was bad." (Berina, 16)

Berina's case is interesting, because throughout the interview, some conflicting views appeared. She was part of a local active youth community that included more ethnicities, she was also mentioning that she wants to treat everybody the same. But at the same time, it was important for her to distinguish her ethnic background from the others, which was uncommon amongst the participants. She was also the youngest respondent and new member of the community, which opens the question of the direction of possible causality. It is possible that the active youth community attracts young people that are already less nationalistic or that the experience of participating in diverse community eventually change their opinions.

Probably the most revealing was to discuss what the answer of participants would be, if asked about their religion and ethnicity during the official state census. Concerning religion, most of them had already an answer ready and did not have to think about it. Majority associates with religion practiced in the family, but their belief is not that important to them, and few would declare themselves not religious or agnostic. With those that see religion as important part of their life, they understand the connection religion has to nationalism in Bosnia.

Question about ethnicity was much more diverse. Following their opinion about unimportance of ethnicity, many would prefer to not answer this question or declare themselves as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Armin's answer seems to sum up reasons for doing so even if they associate their heritage with one of the ethnicities:

"I would much rather prefer the label Bosnian because it's not an ethnic label. If you ask me for my ethnicity, and if grabbed my arm and started twisting it, I will say that I'm a Bosniak. But that's not a label that I'm going to put out myself. Yeah. But when it comes to my parents, they would describe us as Bosniaks." (Armin, 20)

Tajra is one of the more religious participants and she has arrived at the similar conclusion during the interview:

"At the time they were doing the last census counting, they were saying on the news that there are three major constituent people. You know Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Croats. So I heard on the news, you know, if you are Bosniak, you should say Bosniak, but everyone's Bosnian. And when the woman came in our house to do the count, I remember it very clearly, my parents were like: we're Bosnians. Like, they don't belong to any ethnicity, you know, any ethnic group. And me with my, I don't know, 12 years. I said, No, I'm Bosniak! Because I heard it on the news. We are joking about it, I'm a minority in our house, technically. Now I would say that I am Bosnian. […] Actually, no, I would still say Bosniak, because I'm a Bosniak, Bosnian Bosniak. I am a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but I do belong to a constituent people. I would still say I'm Bosniak. And religion Islam. […] If there would be an option to leave it blank I think I would leave it blank. Because I think we should stop looking at the nationalities so much. Wait! No! I would also say I'm a Bosnian! I would, I would say I'm Bosnian. Because I said the nationalities shouldn't be that important. I did a little introspective. I think I would say Bosnian." (Tajra, 18)

But Esma explains that the dicision can affect other things too and even though she would declare herself as Bosnian, she understands it might cause a problem for her:

"My parents come from a mixed background, but when it comes to choosing etnicity, for them, it's beneficial to put Bosniak because, for example, my mother works in a court and she got that position because she declared herself Bosniak. But also, there is another nonsense. In some parts of the government, you have to fulfill the quotas lets say. And then, for example, there is so many examples of Bosniaks declaring themselves as Croats. Just to get the position." (Esma, 24)

5.5.1. Summary

Participants share a common openness towards different ethnicities, religions, and minorities, which is by itself another reason why they stay active. But it is unclear if they developed this value during their participation or before joining. Participants associate themselves with religion practiced in their family, but for the majority, faith is not an important part of their lives. When discussing ethnicity, they mostly mention the negativity of nationalism. Because of that, many do not like the ethnic labels and would rather associate with Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole or prefer not to answer such questions at all.

Conclusion and research limitations

This thesis starts with the example of the successful protest of students in Jajce against ethnic separation. Ejna, one of the interview participants, watched a TV report about it at that time. And as she describes, this experience alone was enough to seek a similar group of young people that she could join in her community. It can be said that the fieldwork focused on finding those like Ejna, those that would join their peers in Jajce in 2016 or even start organizing similar actions. In this, the fieldwork succeeded, and it can conclude that many young people in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina would not hesitate and join their peers.

This finding alone gives some hope to BiH against the backdrop of ethnic nationalism that dominates it. But that is not the only context in which participating youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be understood. This thesis presents many findings from the literature describing a shift of young people in developed democracies away from formal participation towards single-issue activism and other means of participation. The following part presents the understanding of active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina relevant to both BiH and the study of youth participation in general.

Three main reasons for participation emerged: identification with like-minded community and development of friendships; desire to contribute to a positive change; and need for self-development. All three speak of wider opinions of actively participating young people. The social aspect is probably the most important. The active community shares a strong negative view on ethnic nationalism, which is not always the case with their classmates and the public. This also contradicts any worries from the literature that participation can result in parochialism. Quite the contrary, their communities are diverse and they either have or willl develop friendships, which holds them participating even if the other two reasons are not present. But they usually go hand in hand. The need for self-development is unique to active youth in BiH and is not mentioned in literature. It is predominantly important for girls, which creates the majority in most communities visited during the fieldwork. It also shows the dire situation of youth in BiH. They see nepotism and corruption around them, a barely functioning state, with many young people leaving to study or work abroad. This probably makes them soon realize that if they want a desired job or quality education, they must start working on it themselves. The desire to contribute to a positive change speaks of another set of shared values. Around half of the actively

participating youth in the sample want to study or work abroad, but most of them want to come back at one point and help Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is not the case amongst their peers. Though in a smaller proportion, what they share with them is an inclination to authoritarian leaders. Frustration was identified amongst some of the participants and subsequent support for measures that would decrease freedom, but in their view, could help with stability and functioning of the country. Formal politics, in general, is seen negatively by all participants. And it is not surprising against the theory that they don't want to be involved in it and see activism and protesting as more effective than voting. Despite that, they plan to vote, even though some only to prevent their vote from being misused.

In general, the active youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina seems to share the same trends in participation with their peers in developed democracies, deviating notably only in the strong importance of the social aspect of their participation, need for self-development as a reason for their participation and still present inclination to authoritarian leaders that they share with their peers from the whole SEE region. It is proposed that frustration stands behind this difference.

Does the examined youth participation appear to be meaningful? In many aspects, yes. At least when looking at the development of the youth itself. Most of the young people interviewd are capable, aware, and ready to take their future in their hands. The impact on the surrounding society is much more unclear. They value cooperation and understanding between ethnicities, but it is hard to say whether they developed that thanks to participation or whether that is one of the reasons that got them together in the first place. Their activities interact with political institutions, but it would need a closer look to differentiate to what degree they can influence them. But comparing with the Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992) one thing stands out. Their activities are primarily youth-led and thus do not appear to be victims of tokenization from adults.

The impact of their participation on democracy is similarly hard to call. More data about their activities would be needed, but in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it might be enough that a group of young people with anti-nationalistic views, that is participating voluntarily and outside of the corrupted networks, simply exist.

The limitations of this thesis mainly originate in the fieldwork design, which focused only on a narrow group of actively participating youth outside of formal structures. Thus, all findings must be understood in this context. Furthermore, the qualitative approach leaves a lot of space for sampling biases. Even though the research design tried to compensate for them, some were out of control. Probably the most impactful bias can originate from the specific socio-economic background of the participants that might be different not only from the general youth population but also from other participating youth. Many of the final claims thus leave space for further quantitative research.

Generalizing the findings towards other countries also needs to be done carefully because Bosnia and Herzegovina represent such a unique case. But that does not mean that youth in other developing, post-communist or post-war countries cannot share similar characteristics.

Summary

With the help of field research, this thesis focuses on active young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whom the work attempts to understand in two contexts. First, there is the complicated backdrop of a country after Dayton peace that is still characterized by its post-war state. At the same time, it is vital to consider the context of the current understanding of participatory trends studied in Western democracies. Especially then the departure from formal participation towards single-issue activism. The results suggest that active young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina participate for three main reasons: identification with like-minded community and development of friendships; the desire to contribute to a positive change; and the need for self-development. These reasons are indicational of the attitudes of studied young people. They perceive nationalism negatively, value the social aspects of their activities and realize the need to develop. The latest aspect is stronger for women and may be behind their predominance in the active youth community. Except for that, participation does not differ much from what is studied in Western democracies. Only the tendency towards authoritarianism persists. Some actively participating young people see it as a solution to Bosnia and Herzegovina's problems. It is suggested that the difference in frustrations could explain this. Either way, even if active young people consider emigrating to study or work abroad, they share a strong connection to their country; they want to help it and ideally continue to live in it.

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List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Overview of the places of the interviews (table)

Number of interviews	Place	Entity
2	Banja Luka	Republika Srpska
2	Bihać	Federation, Una-Sana Canton
3	Brčko	Brčko distrikt
2	Gradačac	Federation, Tuzla Canton
1	Konjic	Federation, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
1	Modriča	Republika Srpska
2	Mostar	Federation, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
4	Sarajevo	Federation, Sarajevo Canton
3	Tuzla	Federation, Tuzla Canton
2	Visoko	Federation, Zenica-Doboj Canton

Appendix no. 2: Overview of the places of the interviews and administrative division of Bosnia and Herzegovina (map)

Map corresponds to the situation in 2003. Brčko district is not differentiated on the map. Marked spots correspond to the interview places.
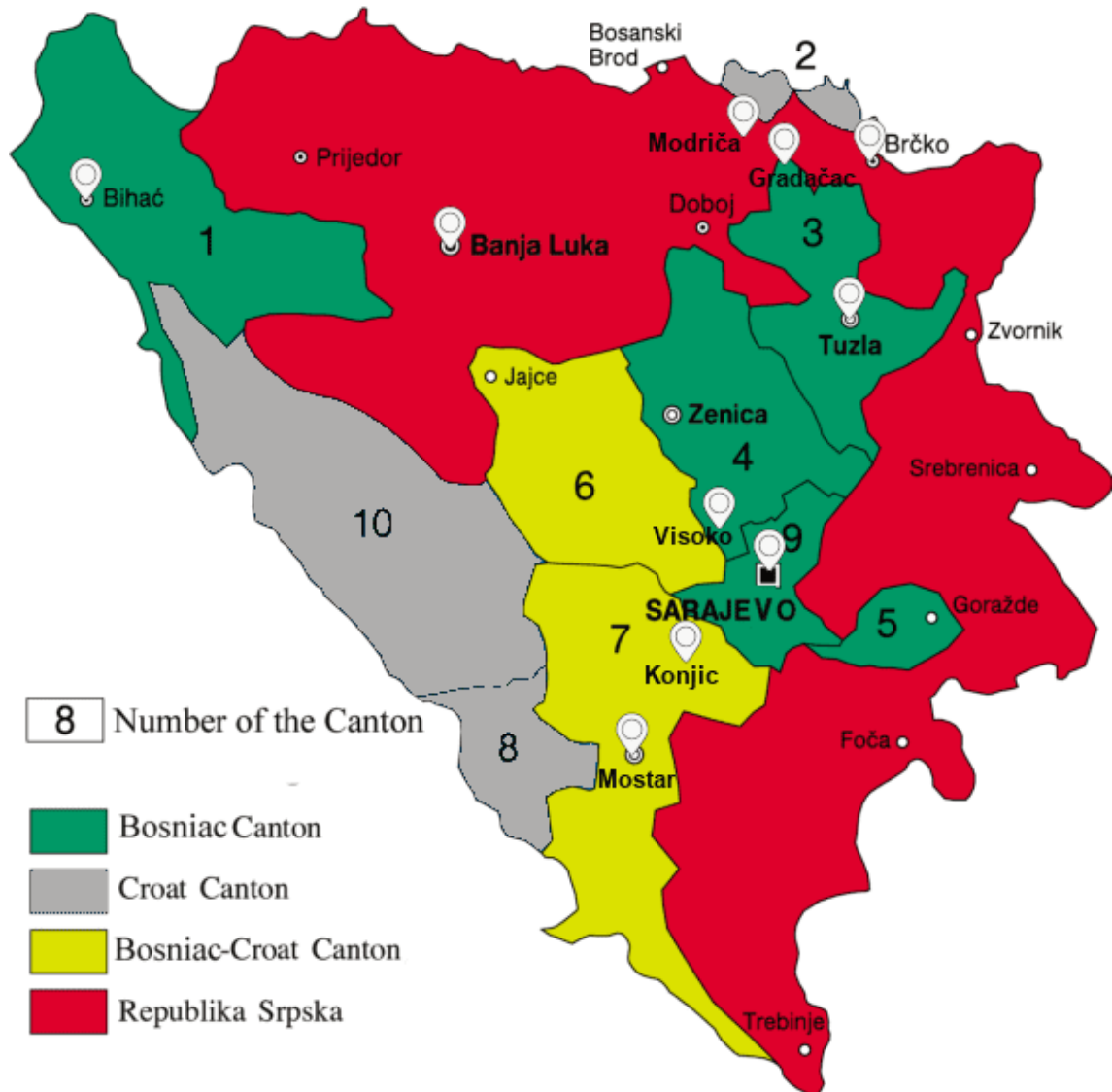
Source: Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2003). Relief Web. Retrieved January 3, 2022, from https://reliefweb.int/map/bosnia-and-herzegovina/federation-bosnia-and-herzegovina

Appendix no. 3: Overview of the interview participants (table)

Anonymized name	Age	Gender	School type
Ajlin	17	F	Gymnasium
Alina	17	F	Gymnasium
Armin	20	M	Gymnasium
Berina	16	F	High school
Ejna	20	F	University in BiH
Ema	17	F	Gymnasium
Esma	24	F	University in BiH
Ilhana	24	F	University in BiH
Ilma	18	F	High school
Iva	16	F	Gymnasium
Karlo	19	M	University in BiH
Lana	19	F	University in BiH
Maid	17	M	Gymnasium
Majra	17	F	Gymnasium
Marta	24	F	University abroad
Matej	21	M	University abroad
Nejra	22	F	University abroad
Petra	17	F	High school
Sajra	17	F	High school
Selma	17	F	Gymnasium
Tajra	18	F	Gymnasium
Vedad	22	M	Finished high school

Appendix no. 4: The Association of Secondary School Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina (overview)

The Association of Secondary School Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Asocijacija Srednjoškolaca u Bosni i Herzegovini - ASuBiH) was founded in 2007 with the help of Schüler Helfen Leben (SHF) foundation as non-governmental and non-partisan organization. Its goal is to organize and represent high school students from all parts of BiH and not to be separated by different ethnicities. ASuBiH organizes non-formal educational events, influences educational and other youth related policy.

ASuBiH has around 2000 members in approximately 70 local teams. Members can be only high school students. Each team has its coordinator, who has a vote in the board elections and only members can be elected.

Source: O nama. Asocijacija Srednjoškolaca u BiH. (2021). Retrieved January 3, 2022, from https://asubih.ba/o-nama/

TEZE BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Jméno:
Michal Ostrý
E-mail:
14028494@fsv.cuni.cz
Studijní obor:
Teritoriální studia
Semestr a školní rok zahájení práce:
LS 2019/2020
Semestr a školní rok ukončení práce:
ZS 2021/2022
Vedoucí bakalářského semináře:
doc. PhDr. Jiří Vykoukal, CSc.
Vedoucí práce:
PhDr. Ondřej Žíla, Ph.D.
Název práce:
Understanding active youth in Bosnia and Hercegovina

Charakteristika tématu práce (max. 10 řádek):
Participace mládeže je nezbytná pro fungující demokracii. V posledních 20 letech však prochází novými trendy: odklon od formální stranické politiky a růst aktivismu, který se zaměřuje na jeden konkrétní problém. Dopady těchto změn jsou detailně studovány v západních demokraciích. V rozvojových zemích je toto porozumění mnohem chudší. Práce se proto zaměřuje na Bosnu a Hercegovinu a výzkumem aktivní mládeže se snaží nejenom v kontextu západních trendů porozumět jejich samotné participaci, ale také zjistit její dopady na budování demokracie.

Zdůvodnění úprav a změn tématu od zadání projektu do odevzdání práce (max. 10 řádek):
Oproti původnímu projektu se práce zaměřuje pouze na Bosnu a Hercegovinu. Tato změna vychází ze snahy o konkretizaci a ponoření se hlouběji do zkoumané problematiky. Díky možnosti provést terénní výzkum byla poté upřesněna metoda výzkumu na kódovou analýzu polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se samotnou aktivní mládeží.

Struktura práce (hlavní kapitoly obsahu):
Úvod
Teorie participace mládeže
Kontext Bosny a Hercegoviny
Představení výzkumu a metodologie
Analytická část - analýza rozhovorů
Závěr

Prameny a literatura (výběrová bibliografie, max. 30 hlavních titulů):
Bieber, F. (2005). Post-war Bosnia: Ethnicity, inequality and public sector governance. Springer.

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Robertson, F. M. (2009). A Study of Youth Political Participation in Poland and Romania.

Podpis studenta a datum
Michal Ostrý 22.12.2021

Schváleno	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí bakalářského semináře		
Garant oboru		