

Navigating Rules and Wills: Healthcare and Social Protection in a
Bosnian Border Town

Čarna Brković

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of PhD in Social
Anthropology in the Faculty of Humanities

2012

School of Social Sciences

Contents

A note on pseudonyms, language, and translations	5
List of images and figures	6
Abstract	7
Acknowledgments	8
Declaration	11
Copyright statement	11
Introduction	12
Navigating relations	12
The state and ‘that which is not the state’ as a bit more than one and a bit less than two separate things	16
Polities and the organisation of spatiality	20
‘Big Woman’	23
Structure of the thesis	24
Chapter 1: Positioning the field, and the researcher	26
1. Anthropology at home in a post-Yugoslav town	27
2. Learning through contrivance versus producing self-knowledge?	31
3. Domains and actors	33
4. From the SFRY to the contemporary political configuration of BiH	35
5. Bijeljina	44
Chapter 2: Where does the state end and that which is not the state begin?	51
1. Introduction	51
2. Navigation: How to find a way through a rampart	56
3. The ‘state’ and ‘civil society’	61
4. Mysterious social protection between personal humanitarianism and responsibility of the state	66
5. The forms and reaches of social protection	73
6. Conclusion	77
Chapter 3: Where is the border located? The coordination of borderwork through occasionally personalised and occasionally institutionalised relations	79
1. Introduction	80
2. The argument	81

3. Where is the border?	86
4. Borderwork of personal knowledges	93
5. Pursuit of health protection across the border	97
6. Conclusion	102
Chapter 4: Negotiating access to welfare. The pursuit of relations as a constitutive part of biological citizenship	104
1. Introduction	104
2. Local knowledge about other people: ‘the world of people’	105
2.1. You never know when you might need someone	105
2.2. Knowing from seeing	107
2.3. Locating effort	108
3. Biological citizenship	113
3.1. Biological citizenship in different citizenship projects	113
3.2. Applying for a passport	119
3.3. Encounters with the municipality	121
3.4. Looking for a job	124
3.5. Getting medical treatment	126
4. Small-scale brokers	129
5. Experiences of stateness and ‘normal life’	132
6. Conclusion	134
Chapter 5: <i>Humanitarne akcije</i>: reproducing the ‘world of people’ through charity	135
1. Introduction	135
2. Where does the term <i>humanitarne akcije</i> come from?	136
3. The system of ‘someone knows someone else’	142
4. The shape of the ‘world of people’	148
5. Personal-institutional entanglement	154
6. Conclusion	156
Chapter 6: Moral reasoning and the pursuit of moral selves through humanitarian actions	159
1. Introduction	159
2. Producing moral subjectivity through moral reasoning	161

3. Charity as the context of moral reasoning	165
4. Imperfect perfect moral decisions	168
5. Becoming a moral person through the formalised pursuit of attachment	174
6. Becoming a particular moral person as a pragmatic and moral choice	177
7. Conclusion	182
Chapter 7: Bending rules and wills: the ‘Big Woman’ modality of power	185
1. Introduction	185
2. Biopolitics in social care	186
2.1. ‘Categorisation’ at the Centre for Social Work	186
2.2. Discipline: individualisation of subjects	191
2.3. Biopolitics: the management of the population	192
2.4. Biopower = discipline+biopolitics	193
2.5. Sovereignty	194
2.6. Topologies of power	195
2.7. Governmentality as one possible topology of power	196
2.8. Post-Fordist and Soviet topologies of power	198
2.9. Biopolitics in Bijeljina	204
3. The ‘Big Woman’ in social care	206
3.1. Helping others to bend rules and wills	206
3.2. Big Man	209
3.3. Similarities and differences of the Big Man modality of power with Ratka’s position	211
3.4. Ratka as a ‘Big Woman’	213
3.5. The merging of domains	216
4. Conclusion	221
Conclusion	224
Bibliography	230
Word count: 80110	

A note on pseudonyms, language, and translations

Throughout the thesis I use pseudonyms to refer to people with whom I worked, and I occasionally changed some of their biographical details in order to preserve their anonymity. I use real names to refer to those people who explicitly asked me to do so, but in those cases I do not mention the surname.

Every translation of my interlocutors' words, or citations from the literature published in Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language, is mine. In some cases, the translations of citations from the literature are followed by the original text in the footnote.

I have used letters with diacritical signs for the names of people and places throughout the thesis. Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language is phonetical, which means that each letter of the alphabet represents one sound.

Basic rules for pronunciation are as follows.

The letter *c* is pronounced as “ts” or “tz”.

The letter *j* is pronounced as a *y* (*Jugoslavija* is “Yugoslavia” or “Yugoslaviya”).

The letters with diacritical marks are:

ć is pronounced as soft ‘ch’, or as ‘tj’, like the ‘ci’ in Italian word *ciao*

č is pronounced ‘tch’ like the ‘ch’ in *check* (harder than ć)

š is pronounced ‘sch’ like the ‘sh’ in *she*

ž is pronounced ‘zh’ like the ‘s’ in *leisure*

đ is pronounced ‘dj’ like the ‘g’ in an Italian name *Giorgio*

dž is pronounced ‘d3’ like the ‘j’ in *joy*.

I use anglicised forms for place names as these are in common usage (Belgrade instead of *Beograd*, Bosnia and Herzegovina instead of *Bosna i Hercegovina*). For persons and relatively unknown places I use the original spelling, including the use of diacritics.

List of images and figures

Image 1	26
Image 2	27
Image 3	35
Image 4	37
Image 5	45
Image 6	46
Image 7	47
Image 8	88
Image 9	89
Image 10	91
Image 11	94
Figure 1	152

Abstract

This thesis follows a variety of practices in the field of social and health protection in Bijeljina, a border town in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where I completed a year of fieldwork during 2009 and 2010. I explored how people gained access to public services and provisions, and also considered how they pursued social and healthcare protection beyond state-funded institutions. Throughout the thesis, I treat these practices as a form of navigation through what I refer to as social and political space. I argue that navigating one's way through the fields of social and health protection in Bijeljina encompassed the pursuit of personalised relations as well as attempts to fit into institutionalised rules and categories. Instead of assuming what the proper 'state' roles were, and consequently approaching the ethnographic material in terms of how well it fits in to a certain model, I explore in what way the boundary between the 'state' and 'that which is not the state' was constituted through these practices of navigation. In several examples I demonstrate that the boundary between domains was movable and not very neat. These examples include an analysis of an organisation which was sometimes more like an NGO and sometimes more like a state-run centre for children with developmental needs; the way in which the state border was sometimes irrelevant, and at other times very important; the way in which the pursuit of various kinds of personalised relations was hard to separate from the pursuit of institutionalised ones; a charity practice (*humanitarne akcije*) which consisted of raising money for a single person's health protection from numerous charitable donors – municipalities, high school pupils, neighbours, and pop singers being counted among them. I also argue that this mode of navigating one's way through social and health protection, or this way of reconstituting the boundary between the 'state' and 'that which is not the state', enabled certain people to build up a very personalised mode of power which also worked through various institutions. Ethnographically situating this argument in the discussion of the social position and the life of one woman politician in Bijeljina, I suggest that a combination of the concepts of biopolitics and the Melanesian concept of 'Big Man' is useful for thinking about this personalised modality of power which works through institutions.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is part of the research project “Transforming Borders: a Comparative Anthropology of Post-Yugoslav 'Home'”, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, and led by Stef Jansen. I am very grateful for having had an opportunity to be a part of it. Part of my funding was secured by the Global Supplementary Grant Program, of the Open Society Institute, and I am thankful for having received this grant as well.

Many people have helped, encouraged, taught, and guided me during the four years I have been working on this thesis, and I will not be able to mention all of them.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my first supervisor, Dr Stef Jansen, for his strict yet unconditional help, and for giving me the space to pursue my research interests within the framework of the project. Without his ideas, concepts, and thoughts regarding the post-Yugoslav region and social anthropology, which enabled me to understand many things which had previously seemed incomprehensible to me, and without his encouragement and support, I would not have been able to finish this thesis.

I am also extremely grateful to my second supervisor, Professor Sarah Green, for her intellectual guidance and generosity, for knowing where this project might go months ahead of me, and for asking questions which I had to carefully unravel for weeks and months afterward. I cannot express how much I appreciate how she always found the time and the will to help me out from the very beginning of this research, to its final stage.

I want to sincerely and deeply thank my friend and colleague, Vanja Čelebičić, whose PhD research is also part of the “Transforming Borders: a Comparative Anthropology of Post-Yugoslav 'Home'” project. Having someone who worked on similar issues, from a different angle, and who was going through the same, or highly similar things, as I have in the past four years was very helpful, and I was extremely lucky to work alongside Vanja Čelebičić. Our discussions, and her ability to care without imposition, have helped me intellectually and personally more than I can describe.

I also owe special gratitude to Dr Soumhya Venkatesan, for her advice, interest, and help with my work. I thank her for always having a reference that I needed at that particular moment, and for pushing me to think about various conceptual problems raised by the anthropology of morality.

I am extremely grateful to Kaća, Slavica, Dada, Mira, Emira, Vera, Rada, Sneža, Sladjana, and many others from whom I have learned a lot and alongside whom I worked during my fieldwork. I thank Jelena Jurošević for her help, patience, love, and support.

I am very grateful to my friends and colleagues: Andrew Hodges, for teaching me about the political importance of activism and helping me to think about the everyday use of anthropological knowledge, and for proofreading the major part of this thesis; Ivan Rajković, for endless discussions in which disagreements and struggles were as productive and enjoyable as agreements; to Dr Marina Simić, for helping me to reflect on my fieldwork experiences in a way that enabled me to learn from them, and for giving me the opportunity to present parts of my work, and thus to articulate the initial form of the arguments of chapters two and three of this thesis at the Belgrade Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, Petnica Science Centre, and the journal *Genero*; to Dr Dunja Njaradi, for her friendship, comments, and interest in my life and work.

I had an opportunity to present an earlier version of chapter four at the seminar of the Department of Global Health and Development, at the London School of Medicine and Tropical Hygiene, and I am very grateful for the comments and the feedback I received.

I am very grateful to Dr Frances Pine and Dr Jonathan Mair, the examiners of this thesis, for their criticism, probing questions, and stimulating comments.

I am grateful to Goran Dokić, Laura Jordan, Lisa Riedner, Deana Jovanović, and Patricia Scalco for their support, comments, and friendship, and to Goran especially for being a great housemate whose kindness cannot fail to create a sense of home, which I really appreciated in the final months of writing-up. I also wish to thank Catherine Harte for proofreading a part of this thesis.

I am grateful to my friends Jelena Lazarević, Ana Martinović, Pedja Martinović, Danijel Kalezić, Vladan Bošković, Marko Marković, Nebo Franz Raspopović, Adnan Decević, and Ivan Staničić for being, in a fashion, my personal ‘Queer Brigade’ and for helping me in various ways throughout my research.

People without whom this research would not have been possible at all are: Jovan Batančev, my sister Ksenija Brković, and my parents Dragana Kršenković Brković and Tomislav Brković. They were wholeheartedly there for me from the very beginning, to this day, and I can only hope they will continue to do so in the future.

Declaration: no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright statement

- i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.
- iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=487>), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations>) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.

Introduction

Navigating relations

This is a story about a type of navigation. It tracks where people were (i.e. location), rather than who they were (Green 2005), and how they navigated in order to get somewhere (in terms of relations).

This thesis ethnographically follows attempts to jump queues, to bend rules, to cross state borders, to overcome obstacles, all in order to get through to something. This involved navigating through what often seemed to be a ‘mess’, or ‘chaos’. The idea of navigation implies managing movements through a space in order to get somewhere, as well as a certain understanding of what this ‘space’ is made of. Different navigational devices, such as binoculars, maps, satellites, radars, magnetic compasses, charts, alidades, sextants, and so on, all produce different understandings of space, as well as different imaginings and practices of movement. The navigation that I have ethnographically followed also included different sorts of ‘devices’: knowing people, giving, caring, helping, sharing stories, and so forth. All of these are relational terms, which means that navigation in this thesis refers to pursuing and establishing relations. The relations that people navigated (in order to get somewhere or to something) connected different domains and worked across various scales.

In Bijeljina, a border town in Bosnia and Herzegovina where I completed ethnographic research, people who wanted to get access to public healthcare and social protection, hospitals and services, including those across the border, had to navigate their way through particular sets of relations. In these terms, they were not doing anything particularly different from what people in other parts of the world have to do in order to get access to public healthcare or social protection, within or across state borders. The relations they pursued were, like any relations, complex and recursive (Strathern 1995), for they linked people, as well as concepts and ideas.

In ethnographic terms, navigating such relations could mean forming activist groups, negotiating services with hospital management or with local state officials, organising rallies and protests, acting as a concerned and informed citizen, employing a vocabulary of human rights, and so on. In Bijeljina navigation could include any one of these strategies, but often it did not. Instead, it often included repeated attempts to personalise institutional relations, to find a *veza*¹, a relation that would enable people to jump queues, sidestep ramparts, and cross boundaries of different kinds. Even for people who navigated through the ‘bundle’ of relations constituting the field of healthcare and social protection, this ‘bundle’ sometimes seemed messy and chaotic, disorderly and confusing. The fact that various people employed similar strategies to deal with this ‘bundle’ of relations, and that they more often than not managed to get what they wanted, or where they wanted, at least to some extent, suggests that there was a certain logic to the organisation of this ‘bundle’.

Let us go back to navigation, for a moment. This word has been used to address movement in order to get somewhere. Petryna’s research tracks how “individuals navigate the shock of a nuclear disaster” (1995: 196) in the post-Chernobyl environment of the Ukraine. Petryna analysed the ways in which people in Ukraine navigated their way through complex medical and legal systems in order to obtain necessary healthcare and social provisions (see also: Petryna 2002; 2004). Kierans (2012) talked about navigational work in the context of renal care, in order to address the long and arduous process of looking for kidney transplants in Mexico. Families she worked with had to meander through healthcare institutions and personal relations in complex ways in order to get an organ and surgery. In cultural studies, in an analysis of subjectivities and experiences of the blackness of ‘African diaspora’ scattered throughout the world, Carter used the term to signify a personal movement through an experience of displacement, as well as to address possibilities of claiming the visibility of ‘displaced’ people in the contemporary world. In his work, navigation marks both “the individual experience and the representation of the collective experience of diaspora” (2010: x). Ledeneva argues that in order to define

¹ *Veza* (singular) or *veze* (plural) is an emic term which can be translated as ‘relations’ or ‘connections’. It is used to signify a wide range of relations, from client to romantic relationships. In this thesis, I will use it to signify relationships which were productive and had a pragmatic effect within the domains of social and health protection.

the ‘unwritten rules’ in post-Soviet Russia, one needed to see how they worked, i.e. to focus on “their workings through identifying strategies or regular patterns of ‘navigating’ between formal rules and informal norms” (2006: 15). In other words, following patterns of navigating between formal rules and informal norms shed some light on the ‘unwritten rules’. Ledeneva used the term navigation to mark the movement between the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’, where informal practices “involve the bending of both formal rules and informal norms or navigating between these constraints by following some and breaking others where appropriate” (2006: 22).

In this thesis, I will use the word navigation to mark the movement through networks of relations. By navigation, I understand two things simultaneously: a) it was a way of establishing a productive relation and 2) it was a means of getting somewhere through this (productive) relation. In other words, it implies both the management of a movement, and the movement itself. On a ship, navigation means answering questions such as:

(...) Where are we? and If we proceed in a certain way for a specified time, where will we be? Answering the first question is called ‘fixing the position’ or ‘getting a fix’. Answering the second is called ‘dead reckoning’. It is necessary to answer the first in order to answer the second, and it is necessary to answer the second to keep the ship out of danger. (Hutchins 1993: 39)

There are two reasons why I find the term navigation is useful. *First*, navigation means determining a location – of a ship, of oneself, of others. As we shall see, sharing stories about people and thus getting to know those people ‘from seeing’, or efforts to locate people in a network of the town’s relations at the very beginning of an acquaintanceship, presented endeavours similar to ‘fixing the position’. Knowing people and their histories meant being able to locate them; this knowledge was as dispersed and interpersonal as is the knowledge required for the successful navigation of a ship (Hutchins 1993). These small-scale, dispersed, and interpersonal endeavours to determine a location happened together with another one, that of ‘everyday geopolitics’ (Jansen 2009a). Locating oneself in the social space in

Bijeljina meant both determining one's position within the town (through sharing stories, and knowing from seeing), as well as in sets of broader geopolitical relations. The post-war, post-socialist context of this research meant that people found themselves feeling entrapped in wider geopolitical relations in which their position was that of the European Union's (hereon EU) 'immediate outside' (*ibid.*). Some of the attempts to navigate within the town, like those of the humanitarian actions, were strongly influenced by this sense of entrapped location, and by the wider geopolitical position in which people located themselves and were located by others.

Secondly, navigation is an action pursued in order to make something happen in a (more or less) controlled way – to keep the ship out of danger, to keep it going in a desired direction, or to get access to social provisions, to a particular doctor, to raise money for surgery, and so on. It is a particular kind of a project, a productive activity, which has a pragmatic aim of 'dead reckoning', of answering the question: If we proceed moving in this way for a specified time, will we get to where we want and what we need? Since the ethnographic focus of the thesis is not so much placed on how people perceived themselves and others as nationalised, gendered, racialised, ageing, 'post-socialist' (...) beings, but on what people did in order to make something happen in the field of healthcare and social protection, navigation is useful because it conveys a sense of this pragmatic, goal-oriented pursuit. In other words, following Jansen's argument that anthropological research should reconsider its approaches to the concept of identity and redirect its attention to issues of intensity and regulation (2005a; 2009b; 2010; 2011), instead of focusing on questions of identity and difference, the topic of this thesis is about the management of movement through the systems of healthcare and social protection. This management was not unambiguous, certain, fully predictable and controllable; instead, it was an uncertain, unsecured project which could be controlled only up to a point, just like most navigation attempts are.

The ethnographic argument of this thesis follows how people utilised knowledge about others – issues of 'who' people were in a particular situation and from a particular perspective – in order to make something happen. Therefore, senses of belonging were relevant for navigation through healthcare and social protection, as well as the ways in which people differentiated one another in these fields. However, the focus of the argument is not on the languages and practices of belonging and

differentiation as on the productive, goal-oriented practices of ‘navigation’ – on how people got things done, and the political implications of this. I would like to approach navigation – this pragmatic, goal-oriented attempt to control movement through social space – analytically, as well as metaphorically: what can be learned about politics, healthcare and social protection, and the organisation of space in Bijeljina through it?

I understand the space through which people in Bijeljina navigated as “the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey 2008: 9). Massey further proposes to

understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity (*ibid.*)

and that “we recognise space as always under construction” (*ibid.*). Massey emphasises that all of these propositions have political implications, and enable certain kinds of politics. Navigation through the interrelations which constituted the field of healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina also had political effects.

The state and ‘that which is not the state’ as a bit more than one and a bit less than two separate things

In this thesis I will argue that ethnographically following these navigation attempts reveals that in Bijeljina, domains that were supposed to be neatly separated were not, and that some people had much more success in navigating than others, which brought them political power. Contexts, or orders, which were supposed to be coexisting but separable, became conflated in something that could not be reduced to a single context/order, but that was not necessarily two discrete orders, or contexts of a different kind. People who were extremely successful in their navigation attempts

gained power, and this modality of power mixed official politics with gaining power by deciding about giving and caring.

One ‘device’ involved in navigation was *veze*, relations which enabled people to ‘get things done’. In order to set up a meeting with the town’s mayor to discuss social protection; to get an appointment with a practitioner of one’s choice; to go to a hospital across the state border; to raise money through charity for medical treatments across the state borders; to get a job, etc. people in Bijeljina did a number of things, some of which followed the prescribed protocols and rules, while others did not. Usually, among other things, they attempted to find a *veza* within an institution, i.e. a relation with a person who would make sure they achieved their goal. The personalisation of what were supposed to be institutional relations was ubiquitous. The impression of ‘chaos’ in the state funded system of social protection, summarised in the words of one woman from Bijeljina, was that ‘here, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, and it does not even care’, was partly a consequence of, and partly the reason for, this personalisation. To emphasise once more, successful navigation attempts – for example, finding a *veza* – suggest that there was some sort of an order, or a principle of organisation to relations.

I will argue that the local state institutions and officials were invested in the production of the personalisation of institutional relations as much as any other actor. The state was implicated in relations (*veze*), and the ‘state’ and ‘society’ (or ‘that which is not the state’, in Gupta’s words (1995: 393)) were not easily separable. It was difficult to say clearly whether something was done out of the responsibility of a state institution or of a person, because expectations and responsibilities overflowed across domains that had clearly separate names (‘state’, ‘NGO’, ‘private firm’, ‘friendship’, and so on). Instead of assuming what the state is (and consequently, what exactly ‘that which is not the state’ is), and what their respective responsibilities are, I tried to ethnographically follow navigation through institutions, how this navigation process produced both the state and ‘that which is not the state’ in a certain way, and to analyse the implications this bore for political life. In other words, I looked at how *veze* were involved in the constitution of both the state, and ‘that which is not the state’, and how a particular modality of power emerged from this.

The pursuit of personalised relations (*veze*) within state institutions can be understood and morally evaluated in a variety of ways.

Firstly, *veze* can be morally evaluated as ‘bad’ through an image of a weak state: *veze* would then be understood as inseparable from weak state institutions; as their cause, and their consequence. An implication that follows from this image is that once the state and its institutions are strong enough, this way of relating, and others closely linked to it (patron-client relations, corruption, bribery) will no longer be needed. Since *veze* are used to circumvent presumable bureaucratic disinterestedness in people’s social positions (i.e. assumed blindness towards one’s gender, age, nationality, race, class, sexuality, etc.), their explicit goal is to create unequal access. However, *veze* did not just recreate inequalities, but sometimes enabled them to be overcome. They reproduced solidarities on the one hand, and inequalities on the other, and they were involved in the reproduction of local relations within the town as well as relations within state institutions.

Secondly, *veze* can also be morally evaluated as ‘good’: they could then be seen as a way for people to challenge and overcome state imposed categories and procedures, i.e. as an expression of agency. However, I will try to ethnographically show that when people pursued *veze* they were not trying to ‘beat’ the system, or to circumvent it, but instead they simply tried to navigate it, to work along with it. Therefore, *veze* were not just a form of *metis* (Scott 1998), a local knowledge that helped the official order to function: they were also hard to distinguish from the official order.

Thirdly, *veze* can be understood ‘neutrally’: as a strategy that people who lived in this place employed in order to get something. Since navigation is a goal-oriented practice, *veze* could be understood as a simple strategy, or a practical mechanism, a tool of self-interest. However, this ‘neutral’ look at *veze* would miss a lot of work, emotional as well as social, that was invested in them. *Veze* had social and political implications, and through them people performed personhoods, social positions, and relations other than *veze* (for example, a doctor-patient relation, or a friendship).

In other words, whilst I will try to *not* morally evaluate *veze*, I will neither approach them as a purely instrumental strategy. The pursuit of relations required time and effort as well as a certain emotional investment on the part of those who sought social and health protection. During my fieldwork, I was implicated in this not least

through thinking together with people about who would be the best person to call in order to get what they needed (i.e. which relation to pursue, how to navigate). Furthermore, ethnographic research seems to be implicated in this kind of pursuit by default – what ethnographers do and what my interlocutors did seemed to be very similar activities. Looking for someone who knows someone who knows something or someone in order to achieve a particular goal constituted a large part of my ethnographic exploration, as well as of attempts to gain access to healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina. As in ethnographic research, strategising was only one of the important elements to navigation for my interlocutors.

Veze meant recreating a relation in order to get something done, and this navigation through relations produced solidarities of charitable actions as much as inequalities in access to public resources. Throughout the thesis, I will argue that *veze* should not be understood as simply an informal way of organising relations, as something that was opposed to the formal order and principles, or that constituted a (good or bad) addition to this formal order. Instead, they were part and parcel of the ‘order’. The navigation through the field of social and health protection was done through the pursuit of personalised relations (i.e. the pursuit of *veze*) as well as through official routes and protocols. Knowing someone who knows someone, and sharing stories about one another made it difficult to separate out the responsibilities and expectations of and between different actors and domains. Navigating relations in Bijeljina made the ‘formal’ and the ‘informal’, or the ‘institutional’ and the ‘personal’ in social and health protection a bit more than one and a bit less than two different ‘orders’.

The state, (civil) society and personal interactions were all formally there. However, they merged with one another and disassociated from one another on a daily basis. The boundary between them was stretchy, movable, and context-dependent. The same institutions for social protection easily moved from the domain of civil society to a state service and back. And the same people easily moved from a state official, to a close friend, to a civil society representative. In other words, both ‘state’ and ‘civil sector’ institutions were sometimes a bit more, and sometimes a bit less than indifferent places for the provision of standardised services. Furthermore, ‘personal interactions’ were sometimes more and sometimes less relevant for gaining access to such provision of standardised services.

Politics and the organisation of spatiality

People navigate differently through different politics, and to ethnographically follow how they do this is to map out how a social space is constituted. Tracking navigation attempts through the healthcare and social protection systems shows, for example, the distance between people and institutions, and the routes into institutional categories. What kind of a pile of documents is required in order to gain access to a certain practitioner; is this pile enough or does it have to be backed up by personal relations, or bribes; how does one establish such personal relations; how do personal relations change the choice of a practitioner; where does one have to go in order to get the documents (...) – these questions reveal the ‘distance’ between people and institutions, and how this distance is bridged, or in other words, ways of accessing the state organised welfare systems. *Veze* in Bijeljina were a way of navigating through the ‘space’ of social and health protection. Massey writes that

space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations. More generally, I would argue that identities/entities, the relations ‘between’ them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive. (2008: 10)

In the ‘space’ of social and health protection, entities related to one another in particular ways. These entities included the state-run *Centre for Social Work*²; *The Sun*, an NGO working with children with developmental disabilities; *Holy Mother*, a religious voluntary association; the ruling political party, the *Serbian Democratic Party*; users of social protection services; hospitals, patients, doctors, charity donors and recipients, and so on. Their relations included the overflowing of responsibilities

² Centres for Social Work in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina are state-run institutions which provide services of social protection; simultaneously, since Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex administrative structure, Centres for Social Work are under the jurisdiction of the two entities and relevant ministries. Whenever I mention the adjective ‘state-run’ in the thesis, the state I refer to should be understood as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

and expectations across domains and an entanglement between the ‘personal’ and the ‘institutional’, and they were involved in the recreation of a particular spatiality.

It is important to note that these relations in the fields of social and health protection have been restructured many times throughout the last twenty years in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Aims of such changes included the marketisation of certain services, strengthening civil society, fostering the social inclusion of marginalised groups, and facilitating the return of displaced people (Cain et al. 2002; Stambolieva & Dehnert 2011). Various attempts at changing standards to render them compatible and commensurable with those in the EU were also motivated by the possibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina becoming an EU member (*ibid.*). Furthermore, BiH has an extremely complex structure of state administration³, apparent in the existence of thirteen ministries for health protection (some of which are also ministries for social protection), which has resulted in “a myriad of social, health, and pension systems in BiH” (Maglajlić & Rašidagić 2011: 17). For those people who wanted to, or had to, cross the boundaries of multiple social, health protection, and pension systems, the task of navigation was further complicated.

In the area of the contemporary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the restructuring of relations in the field of social and health protection (and other fields) has happened many times over (Zaviršek 2006; 2008; Zaviršek & Videmšek 2009). For example, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1878-1918), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians/after the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941), socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1992), and Bosnia and Herzegovina, each presented very different forms of political communities. Different states which existed in this area employed different categories and the contemporary ‘bundle’ of relations through which people navigated was partly the result of changing forms of stateness.

In this thesis, I focus specifically on the ways in which the ‘bundle’ of relations within the fields of social and health protection has been reconstituted throughout the last twenty years, the period in which the town of Bijeljina, as indeed the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had undergone massive changes. I will offer a more detailed overview of these changes in chapter one, but here it is worth noting that

³ BiH is an abbreviation of *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Throughout the thesis, I will use the terms ‘Bosnia’, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’, and ‘BiH’ interchangeably.

with the violent dissolution of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, the principles of political organisation also changed. The war ended with the Dayton Agreement in 1995 which serves as the current constitution of the country, and it splits the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities. A massive change of the polity organisation was visible in Bijeljina, not least in the new 'national composition' of its inhabitants, a large number of displaced people who moved to the town, and consequently in the need for new infrastructure. The town of Bijeljina grew almost three times during this period, which meant that most of its infrastructure needed to be built from scratch. The same political party, the Serbian Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, or SDS), has been in power throughout the entire period in which housing, roads, sewage systems, as well as hospitals, schools, kindergartens, day care centres, cafés and cinemas had to be built. This *gridding* (Jansen 2012) was yet to be done in most areas of what is now Bijeljina. Jansen's concept of *gridding* marks contested processes of the construction of grids of welfare, transport, communication or other things for which the state is the primary organiser. Grids are "ad-hoc cumulative results of ongoing processes. They may grow, integrate and intensify, or shrink, disintegrate and drop to a lower intensity" (Jansen 2012: 12). Gridding, the process of constructing grids, is not done solely by the state, but consists "of a variety of practices in different fields, on different scales and with different intensities" (Jansen 2012: 8). Gridding organises political and social spaces in particular ways, and is an activity that people yearn for (*ibid.*). In Bijeljina, the same individuals and the same political party have been in power since 1990. As such, they have had the chance to set up grids of welfare, and thus to redefine possibilities for navigation. Through decisions about gridding, the same people were able to make decisions about the distribution of welfare, and thus both help and prevent others to access it.

This possibility of deciding whether to grant (or not) access to official social and health protection services was intertwined with a possibility to decide whether or not to give help informally, i.e. with *veze* and charity. I argue that this intertwining enabled a modality of power which linked biopolitics to a form of power of 'keeping while giving' (Weiner 1992).

'Big Woman'

Throughout the thesis I will discuss how various people navigated the field of social and health protection in Bijeljina, and point out that even though almost everybody pursued relations, not everybody was equally successful at it. Several of these accounts of navigation reference a reliance on one woman who was an extremely successful navigator. I will argue that the 'topology of power' (Collier 2009) in Bijeljina included the position of a 'Big Woman', who managed to navigate across domains that were supposed to be neatly separated. I will explore the feasibility of using concepts of *biopolitics* and the *Big Man* to interpret a modality of power which emerged from extremely successful navigation attempts. The power of 'Big Woman' worked through the bureaucratic apparatus as well as through personalised giving to other people. As we shall see, stories about her helping others were retold many times during my fieldwork. 'Big Woman' knew, and helped, a large number of people in the town; she was a *veza* who, for many people first came to mind when in a situation of need. Her position somewhat conflated the differences between an official politician, religious volunteer, a member of state committees for social protection, a nationalist public figure, and a teacher. Activities which might be analytically neatly separated into domains of charitable work, parliamentary politics, religious and nationalist proselytising, state-supported projects of social protection, and education, became hard to differentiate in her position. This partial conflation of different roles enabled her to influence both 'the rules' and people's 'wills'.

I want to take seriously Blagojević's (2009) suggestion to look at post-socialist states in their own terms, through the lenses of people who live in them, rather than from the perspective of somewhere else, with conceptual tools made for a different context. By discussing the role and the position of a 'Big Woman', I want to emphasise the importance of not simply transposing concepts, such as *biopolitics*, or *Big Man*, but of using them to a degree and in particular ways. To say that this woman partially conflated differences between domains and roles would imply that such differences were already present. It would be more accurate to say that the difference between, for example, a 'state run day care centre' and an 'NGO' was sometimes present, and at other times not; and that when it was, the domains were

not always different up to the same point. While differences between institutions were noticeable, they could not be easily placed into the ready-made categories of ‘the state’, ‘NGO’, ‘religious voluntary association’, and so on. Many people, including ‘Big Woman’, navigated their way through relations between persons and institutions in a way that could not be, on every occasion, differentiated as either ‘interpersonal’ or ‘institutional’ in character, but sometimes it could. Because of this partiality and dependence on the context and the moment, the ethnographic focus of this thesis is on navigation – on movement across domains, and not so much on the domains themselves, and their differences and similarities. Being very successful at this movement enabled Big Woman to gain power across those domains that were partially separable.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one will introduce the reader to Bijeljina, and some of the changes it has gone through since 1992. It will also discuss methodological issues pertinent to the research.

Chapter two will follow the strategies users of social services used to navigate in order to set up a meeting with the town mayor. It focuses on parents who regularly brought their children to *The Sun*, an organisation working with children with developmental needs. The chapter also shows how *The Sun*, registered as a non-governmental organisation, was something between a state run day care centre and an NGO. State responsibilities sometimes depended on personal goodwill (and *vice versa*), while at other times they did not.

Chapter three follows people’s attempts to navigate through the state border – one of the strongest materialisations of state power – in order to change the position of the border and border crossings in one case, and in order to get health protection across the border in the other.

Chapter four brings together different ethnographic examples of the pursuit of *veze* in order to argue that welfare, understood as the state-organised management of

biologies, was deeply imbued with the personalisation of relations in the context of Bijeljina. Petryna's concept of biological citizenship (2002) suggests that, in post-socialist citizenship projects, people who were formally already members of a political community had to employ a variety of strategies in order to 'survive', i.e. in order to gain access to state-provided welfare.

Chapter five moves the focus of discussion somewhat away from the state and onto a charitable practice which interwove a variety of different relations into a single purpose. Families which started these charitable actions, called *humanitarne akcije*, had to navigate through the most diverse relations in order to collect money for medical treatment abroad. This chapter maps the shape of the collective that was produced through such charitable actions.

Chapter six also follows charitable actions, but puts the emphasis on sociomoral frameworks which influenced people's decisions to give. It will be argued that orientation among these frameworks was partly a consequence of navigation, and partly an attempt to create particular moral selves.

Chapter seven draws upon different strands of argument developed in the previous chapters in order to analyse modalities of power operating in the field of social and health protection in Bijeljina. A review of Foucault's conceptual apparatus for the analysis of power relations provides a background which is complemented with the concept of Big Man developed for the analysis of personalised modalities of power.

Chapter 1

Positioning the field, and the researcher

The acts of navigation through the fields of social and health protection that will be discussed in this thesis took place in Bijeljina, where I lived from September 2009 to September 2010. Bijeljina is a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in further text I will refer to it also as Bosnia, or BiH), on the border with Serbia. In the first part of this chapter, I will position myself as a researcher, and outline relevant methodological issues. In the second part, I will present the major changes the town underwent since the 1992-1995 war.

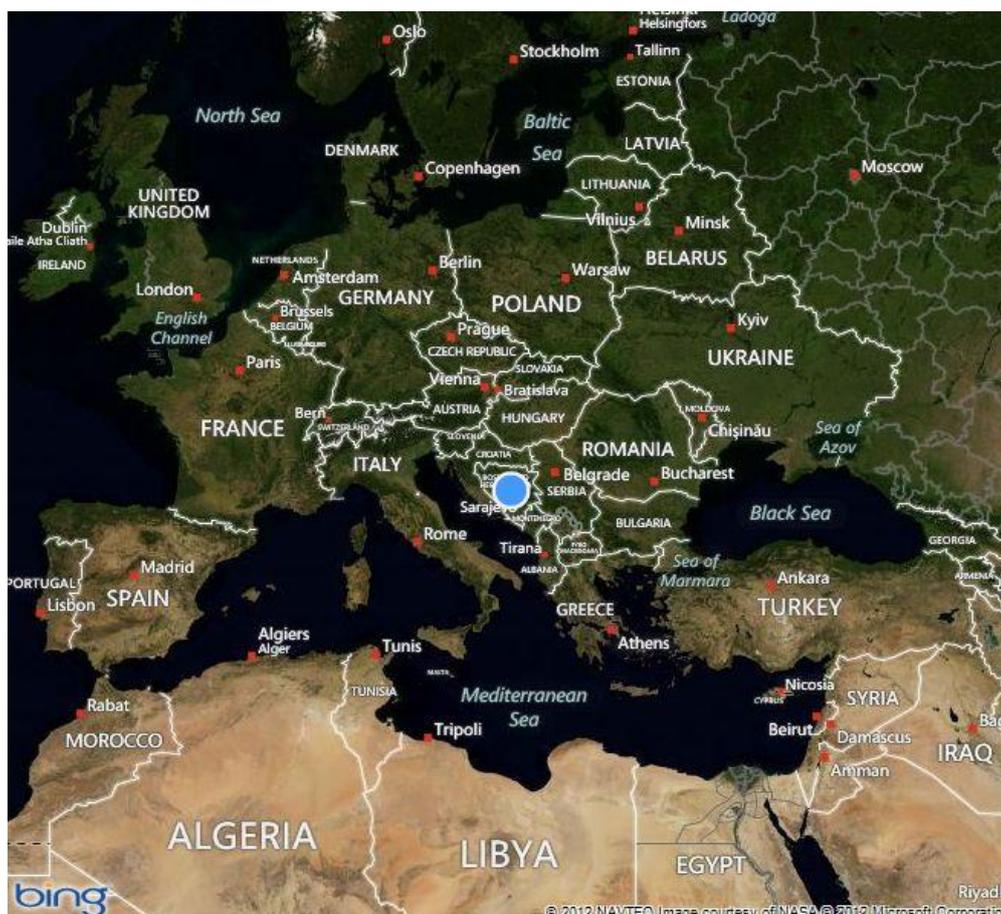


Image one: Bosnia and Herzegovina is represented by the large blue dot on this map, adapted from: <http://www.bihtimes.com/karta-bosna-i-hercegovina> [accessed on 25/07/2012]



Image two: Bijeljina's location on this map is highlighted by the red ellipse in the upper right corner, adapted from: http://www.uino.gov.ba/b/Mapa_BiH.html [accessed on 25/07/2012]

1. *Anthropology at home in a post-Yugoslav town*

The question of whether or not I was doing native anthropology or to what degree, will help me to address some of the methodological issues of the research, as well as some of the specificities of 'the field'.

The concepts of 'native anthropology' and 'anthropology at home' immediately raise an issue of a frame of reference: native to what? What kind of home is in question?

These concepts have their roots in the historical development of the discipline in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, namely, in the relocation of anthropological interests towards the western countries in Europe and the North America (Peirano 1998). This relocation of intellectual interests was partly a consequence of wider socio- and geo-political changes, such as the end of colonial governance and the waves of migration to the Western Europe and North America (Ryang 1997). Although the concepts of 'native anthropology' and 'anthropology at home' illuminate some relations between a particular researcher and the people she worked with, they cannot be used as a straightforward explanation of a researcher's position, since they require further determination of a frame of reference. For this reason, I will explain in what sense this research presents native anthropology/anthropology at home.

As Ryang shows, anthropologists are never simply "native", but can be native to something (*ibid.*). While the 'native anthropologists' "are believed to write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity" (Narayan 1993: 671), strong anthropological criticisms of the notion of culture as a discrete, homogeneous whole (Wright 1998; Abu Lughod 1991; Kuper 1999) opened up many problematisations of this idea. For example, Abu Lughod wrote about *halfies*: "people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage" (1991: 137). Narayan goes a step further and claims that "two halves cannot adequately account for the complexity of an identity in which multiple countries, regions, religions, and classes may come together" (1993: 673). Instead, she argues for viewing "each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (Narayan 1993: 671).

In terms of my research, if the two terms mark only a position of "intimate affinity" with the field, the research presented anthropology at home/native anthropology. This "intimate affinity" does not mean that the relevant frame of reference is shared citizenship, or national belonging, since this was not the case with my research. Furthermore, the two categories must be separable from one's place of origin, as 'home', or 'nativity', are categories of practice, rather than essentialist possessions.

To state it briefly, in terms of the citizenship, I was not a native: I am not a Bosnian but a Montenegrin citizen, and before my fieldwork I had not spent more than two weeks in total in Bosnia. However, I did spend my childhood in Serbia, and later on

in Montenegro. I used to be a citizen of the same country as many contemporary inhabitants of Bosnia were before the 1992-1995 war: Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Today, I share with them a sort of a parallel post-Yugoslav citizenship, and a long-term experience of living in a post-Yugoslav country. This already points to an important characteristic of the 'field' – the changing forms of stateness. Bugarel writes that “restructuring of state facts and state legitimacies is at the very centre of the Yugoslav crisis and the wars that followed it” (Bugarel 2004: 25).

In terms of nationality, I was also not a native for two reasons: I do not feel a sense of belonging to a nation, and I was not working with nationally defined communities. While the majority of current inhabitants of Bijeljina would describe themselves as Serbs, I worked with people who navigated through the state systems of health and social protection. The majority of these people were Serbs, but some were Bosniaks, or Croats, and there were also people who did not see themselves as belonging to any particular nation, just like me. Nationality was not *the* most important 'power vector' for the practice of navigation: sometimes it became relevant, but like gender, age, profession, or other 'power vectors', it was sometimes relevant and sometimes not. Following Jansen's direction (2005a), I took nationality into account as much as it was relevant for practices that shaped people's lives, such as the practice of navigation: when it became ethnographically important, I included it into the description and analysis. When it was not, I focused on other issues.

Except for the citizenship and nationality, I perceived myself as a native in many other ways. I am a native speaker of the language spoken in Bijeljina (Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language, or BCMS). My experiences with the health protection system, or education, before the fieldwork, were similar to theirs. Most people I encountered in Bijeljina positioned me at the very beginning of our acquaintanceship as someone who was Montenegrin, highly educated in Serbia and the UK, and often as someone who was a sort of a local. Furthermore, they located me within the town's network of relations through people I spent my time with and the part of Bijeljina I lived in. That I did ethnographic research in Bijeljina for a PhD abroad was the source of some confusion, for two reasons. Firstly, most people were not familiar with the practice of long-term ethnographic research, since short-term repeated visits (most often, but not only, to villages) were a characteristic

of ethnological/anthropological research during SFRY, and remained an important approach to ethnographic research in post-Yugoslav anthropologies. Additionally, obtaining a PhD degree was conceptually linked with an image of an older man, not a young woman, and this was again because of the academic practices during SFRY, and later on. Whenever I was introduced as a PhD student, people would often use the formal *you* until they heard how old I was, then they would switch to the informal *you*. In other words, I shared a lot of implicit discourses of the people I worked with during my fieldwork (cf. Simić 2010), and I shared the same sense of cultural intimacy (cf. Herzfeld 2005). As Simić notes, being perceived as a sort of a local in a post-Yugoslav context (and probably in many others) often means that people expect the researcher to share implicit discourses:

People also expected that I should be able to understand certain situations and accidents by connecting them to a wider and shared discourse about commonly understood ideas about state, culture, or ‘Europe’, to mention a few. (Simić 2010: 35)

I found myself in a similar position. I did not know how a lot of practices I was interested in were organised: particularities of the projects of social and health protection, the town’s local relations, humanitarian actions, and so on. I did not share knowledge about these practices with the people in Bijeljina. However, there were a number of issues, particularly regarding everyday geopolitics – a practice of ‘a routine, non-official mode of representation of one’s collective place in the contemporary world’ (Jansen 2009a: 824) – that I thought I was able to understand without explicit explanations. I tried to resolve the potentially negative implications by conducting a series of formal interviews during the last three months of fieldwork, with the people I had previously worked with – parents who brought their children to *The Sun*, families who raised money through humanitarian actions, several employees of state institutions for social protection, younger people who were involved in the organisation of humanitarian actions, volunteers at *Holy Mother*, and so on. I made it explicit that even though I considered myself able to share certain ‘implicit discourses’, for the purpose of my research and for my studies I would need to ask questions to which I perhaps should know the answers. Thus, in

order to explicate the implicit, I often had to transform a long-lasting relation with an interlocutor into a more formal one, if only for a couple of hours. Almost all of the people I interviewed viewed this as a ‘conversation with a purpose’ – with the purpose of helping me to get as articulate and precise information as possible (*cf.* Brugges, in Mason 1998: 38) – rather than me pretending not to know what they were talking about. The formal framework of an interview helped us to continue our relationship afterwards in more or less the same way as before the interview. Having to explicate the ‘implicit’ comes from a particular positioning: that of the researcher as a sort of a local, whether or not she writes for this particular locale.

2. *Learning through contrivance versus producing self-knowledge?*

Strathern (1987) argues that there is a significant difference between anthropology ‘abroad’ and ‘auto-anthropology’ (or ‘anthropology at home’), and that it has not much to do with intimacy or familiarity of the researcher with the ‘field’. Rather, for Strathern the difference is epistemological: it stems from different approaches to the production and organisation of knowledge. *Anthropology abroad* means trying to make sense of difference, to learn through the strange and the awkward, through contrivance. For Strathern, anthropology abroad means transforming contrivance into something reasonable and logical. Thus, to show that “their” strangeness, awkwardness, and contrivance make sense in a specific context is to reveal the inherent contrivance and contextual dependence of all concepts. Anthropological thought developed in a particular (modernist) setting – that of Anglo-American and French intellectual traditions – and, therefore, as long as anthropologists are doing anthropology, i.e. as long as they utilise anthropological analytical apparatuses and forms of thinking, for Strathern it does not really matter where they come from. Strathern writes that

Whether anthropologists are at home *qua* anthropologists, is not to be decided by whether they call themselves Malay, belong to the Travellers or have been born in

Essex; it is decided by the relationship between their techniques of organizing knowledge and how people organize knowledge about themselves. (1987: 31)

On the other hand, she argues that auto-anthropology requires a different approach to creating knowledge: trying to reveal the familiar as different, to generate contrivance in the known and the intimate, to make one's own concepts awkward (with the same goal: in order to show the inherent contrivance and contextual dependence of all concepts). This approach Strathern puts on the side of 'western' anthropologists working in the 'west' – social setting which produced the very apparatuses and forms of thinking used in anthropology. She argues this puts auto-anthropologists in a position different from, for example, Malay anthropologists working in a Malay society. A Malay anthropologist would employ analytical apparatuses and forms of thinking which did not stem from 'Malay' intellectual traditions, while auto-anthropologist produces self-knowledge because she would use knowledge practices generated from the social setting that she studies.

The distinction between auto-anthropology and anthropology abroad raises an issue of knowledge practices of European ethnological traditions: how did ethnologists working at 'home' and utilising analytical apparatuses and forms of thinking which combine intellectual traditions of Eastern European ethnologies with Anglo-American and French anthropologies, engage with contrivance, if at all? Social anthropology / cultural anthropology / ethnology / ethnography is not a singular body of knowledge, and different intellectual anthropological/ethnological traditions permit researchers to engage with different questions, while leaving aside some others.

I am not sure how much I was trying to inject 'strangeness' into a familiar practice, to present the 'known' concepts as contrived, and how much I was trying to show the 'strange' and the 'contrived' as logical and reasonable. I was definitely not engaging with contrivance 'as a necessary means of access to the unfamiliar', which Strathern suggests is an epistemological move of anthropology abroad (1987: 28).

However, writing this thesis at the University of Manchester, in the UK, meant focusing on a set of questions I would not necessarily have addressed had I been

studying elsewhere. It also meant I did not focus on other questions, for example, the question of the purpose of anthropological knowledge, as posed by the call to represent anthropology to the so-called general public in Serbia – where I studied for my undergraduate degree in ethnology and anthropology – as a “multicultural propaedeutics”, or as an “introduction to multiculturalism” (Milenković 2003).

To summarise, researcher’s positions in the ‘field’ and educational backgrounds create different ways of engaging with contrivance, and thus require specific approaches to the organisation of knowledge in anthropological accounts. However, an invitation to focus on “excessive remainders, or wonders that arise when worlds are (happily, productively) out of joint” (Da Col & Graeber 2011: xviii) is more interesting to me than trying to measure how much auto-anthropological thesis this is. The ‘worlds’ that were productively ‘out of joint’ for this research need not be understood as separate cultural ‘worlds’, as we shall see in chapter four and chapter five where I will discuss a particular emic idea of who constituted a *svijet*, or ‘world’, and some of the ways in which these ‘worlds of people’ were reproduced. In the following section I will briefly outline the actors I worked with in the fields of social and health protection, and I intend to show throughout the thesis that the practice of navigation itself created ‘out of joint’ positions.

3. *Domains and actors*

Thematically, this thesis addresses several domains – the state system of health and social protection, the state border, social relations within the town, charitable activities. I will argue that the choice to address several domains was both conceptually and ethnographically justified. Yanagisako and Delaney write:

people think and act at the *intersection* of discourses (...) To assume that ‘medical discourse’ is what shapes ‘medical practice’, discourse on ‘interpersonal relations’ is what shapes ‘interpersonal relations’, and ‘family discourse’ is what shapes ‘family relations’ is to accept these discursive domains as given, rather than analyze them as the products of historically specific social institutions – thus losing the key

Foucauldian insight regarding the historicity of domains. (1995: 18-19; emphasis in original)

Thus, thinking and analysing across domains – understanding domains in relation to each other rather than as separate units of meaning and practice – shows the contrivance, historicity, and consequently, political character of domains themselves. In other words, the conceptual reason to focus on several domains in this thesis is that “it is productive to read across them” (*ibid.*).

The ethnographic justification is that people who started raising money for humanitarian actions had to navigate through relations within all of these domains. Three families who initiated humanitarian actions in Bijeljina during my fieldwork all had to deal with the state-funded systems of social and health protection, to cross the state border to go to a healthcare institution abroad, to work with different NGOs, to ‘activate’ a network of people who made charitable donations to them, and so on. The choice of the organisations where I volunteered during fieldwork (*The Sun* and *Holy Mother*) was made because at least one of the families was in touch with them. I went to the meetings at *The Sun* twice a week for two hours – which was how often it was opened per week – from December 2009 to September 2010. From September 2009 to January 2010 I accompanied volunteers from *Holy Mother* on a number of birthday visits. Since I was tracking both institutional and personal relations between people, I became a frequent visitor of a number of institutions. Through *The Sun*, I established a number of close contacts with people who worked at the local Centre for Social Work (CSW), and The Public Fund for Children’s Protection. I crossed the border numerous times to go to Serbia, and I attended all the humanitarian events I found out about. I wanted to do part of the fieldwork in the local hospital, but I could not secure access. However, with the help of a medical practitioner I met while trying to gain access to the hospital, I organised focus groups with women about the menopause, and some of the issues raised during those focus groups were similar to the issues that I was tracking through the humanitarian actions, such as the relationship between the ‘public’ and the ‘political’ within the town.

But before I introduce the reader to those ethnographic engagements in more detail, in the following part, I will offer a broad sketch of some of the recent historical

changes that shaped the navigation through the fields of social and health protection in Bijeljina. More specific historical issues relevant for particular practices of navigation are addressed throughout the thesis.

4. From the SFRY to the contemporary political configuration of BiH

The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was created after the Second World War and it consisted of six republics – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.



Image three: Map of the SFRY, available at:

<http://www.cftech.com/BrainBank/GEOGRAPHY/FormerYugoslavia.html> [accessed on 25/07/2012]

SFRY had two other names since the end of Second World War: *Demokratska Federativna Jugoslavija* (DFJ), or Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, was used for a couple of months in 1945, and the name *Federativna narodna republika Jugoslavija* (FNRJ), or Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was used from 1945 to 1963.

For clarity throughout the thesis, I will only use the name ‘SFRY’. Yugoslav socialism was based on the principle of self-management, practiced through “self-managed communities of interest”, which included non-profit making and profit-making organisations. Self-managed communities of interest financed a lot of infrastructural work, such as transportation and communications, housing, as well as education, and health services. Each organisation in the “non-productive social sector” (i.e. hospitals, schools, transport companies, etc) was its own self-managed community, and each self-managed community was supposed to represent both the users and the employees of these services (Lydall 1984). In practice, this meant various things. It meant that a percentage of one’s salary was taken in order to provide for infrastructure, while workers were included, up to a point, in the decisions about redistribution of this contribution (*samodoprinos*). It also meant that workers of a firm gathered together when needed and decided whether to use the organisation's financial resources to buy furniture or a car for a fellow worker as a wedding present, or to decide about the rankings for allocations of apartments, or what amount of money to give to a colleague who needed to travel abroad, and so on. In other words, self-managed communities of interest made decisions about the distribution of financial funds which also officially made up part of the state budget. These state funds were used to provide for the construction of roads, railways, water and electricity distribution systems, as well as to finance the highly intimate needs of a person, through a network of people whom this person knew well. Many forms of provision, including health and social protection systems were “centralised” at the level of the republics (Cain et al. 2002).

This changed with the 1992-1995 war. The war ended with the Dayton Agreement, and the consolidation of two separate entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Srpska – in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accordingly, each entity became fully responsible for the organisation, finance and delivery of health and social protection. The Republic of Srpska has one ministry of health and one centralised health-protection system, while the Federation is decentralised and has eleven ministries of health (ten for ten cantons and one for the federation level). In addition to these, there is a ministry for health for the Brčko

District.⁴ Bosnia does not have a state ministry which would encompass these thirteen ministries.

The territories of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation are separated by the inter-entity boundary line (IEBL).

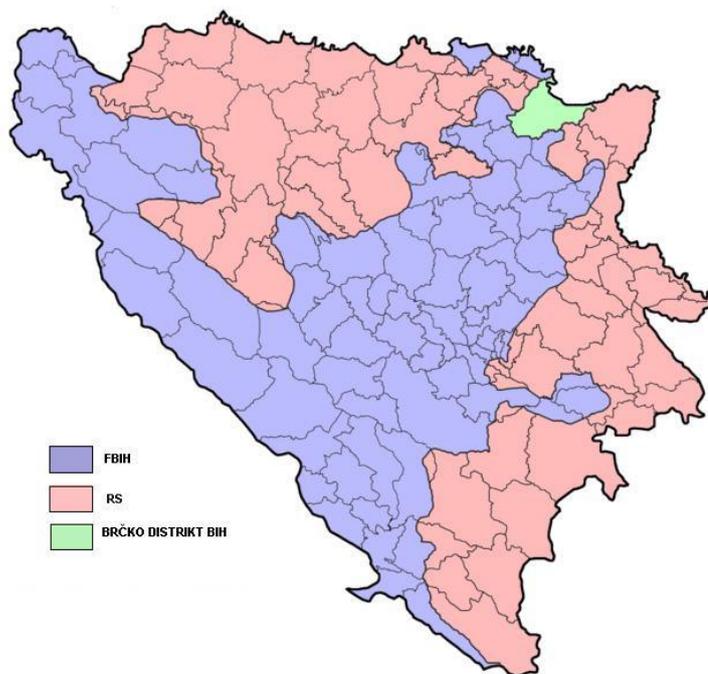


Image four: This map of BiH indicates the location of the IEBL, the two entities, and Brčko district.

Adapted from: <http://bih-x.info/bh-info/mape/> [accessed on 25/07/2012]

The precise establishing of the IEBL was in effect the end of the war. The war in Bosnia could be understood as a monstrous effort to restructure previously existing lines of belonging. Jansen states that ‘the collapse of the Yugoslav federation was embodied in a series of violent endeavours to enforce national order upon a complex reality of terrain and population’ (Jansen 2005b: 46). The ‘national order of things’ (Malkki 1992), or an image of the world divided into discrete units (nation-states), imposes an almost biological link on the relation of people, territory and culture. Jansen (2005b) reveals how this image veils the way belonging was structured in Yugoslavia. Sorabji claims that the international community also used a wide range

⁴ Brčko district is a self-governing, entity-neutral, administrative unit under the sovereignty of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is formally part of both the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

of meanings of national terms (from the idea that Croats, Muslims and Serbs are the same, to the idea that those are three different groups) and that all these versions miss the subtle complexity of pre-war Bosnian understandings of collective identity (Sorabji 1995: 94). How was this subtle complexity of belonging played out in former Yugoslavia?

The structure of belonging in Yugoslavia was different from Western European notions of nationhood and ethnicity, but not directly opposed to it – which is perhaps part of an explanation of why it was so difficult to explain/understand changes in the meaning of these notions for the different parties involved. Yugoslavia had six constitutive groups which were called “*narodi*” – Croat, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Muslim, Serbian and Slovenian. It seems almost seductively easy to assume that six *narodi* lived in six republics, and that with the dissolution of Yugoslav socialism all of them wanted to live in ‘their own’ nation-states.

However, even if feelings of national belonging in Yugoslavia did not straightforwardly follow the ‘national order of things’, this does not imply that pre-war Bosnia, or former Yugoslavia in general, was some kind of post-modernistic haven for playing with identities. A lot of policies in the SFRY were formulated on the basis of nationality, and:

Nationality clearly was an acknowledged and salient factor in former Yugoslav politics and in mundane practice on a variety of levels, such as electoral preference, marriage, and, to a certain extent, residence. (Jansen 2005b: 55)

Feelings of belonging were shaped through several categories including *narod* (usually translated as ‘nation’ or ‘people’), geography (in terms of place of residence) and ‘Yugoslav-ness’. The difference between the official treatment of ethnic/national belonging and the way they were played out in everyday life was also important. In the context of Bosnia, Sorabji writes that the notion *narodi* was

more multifaceted than that of nation and that Bosnian citizens understood it in different ways in different contexts. At least three understandings are evident:

- Muslim, Serb and Croat are separate *narods*
- In as much as *narod* means people or a people, all Bosnians jointly constitute such a people/*narod*
- Even the separate identities of Muslim, Serb and Croat *narods* are implicitly joined through and predicated on organic Yugoslavism, brotherhood and unity. (Sorabji 1995: 95)

In other words, people living in Bosnia could have identified themselves simultaneously as Bosnians and as Croats/Muslims/Serbs and as Yugoslavs. The relation between these ‘labels’ should not be thought of through the image of concentric circles, but rather as an intertwined ‘thread’ of belonging. People could, and often did, at the same time feel belonging to a city, a republic, or a region, where they lived (*ibid.*). This multiplicity created a possibility to tick census boxes for a variety of reasons and with a variety of meanings:

Yes, the label that was picked from the census list could function as an expression of a deep-rooted sense of national self-identification. But it could also be a mere answer to an administrative question, a reflection of a sense of territorial belonging, a claim to a national tradition, an ideological stance, a strategic move, or perhaps nothing more than a joke. Of course, it could also evoke a combination of two or more of these possibilities. (Jansen 2005b: 57)

As already stated, the 1992-1995 war could be understood as a means of creating groups which would fit nicely into a ‘national order of things’ (Bugarel 2004; Sorabji 1995; Jansen 2005a; Jansen 2005b; see also: Hayden 2007). Bugarel writes that from the very beginning of the war, two diametrically opposed interpretations were present: ‘civil war’ (in one state) or ‘aggression’ (of one state against another). However,

the characteristics of Yugoslav space between 1991 and 1995 was precisely the transformation of one united state (Yugoslavia) into several states (five to eight, depending on the point of view), and this restructuration of state facts and state legitimacies is at the very centre of the Yugoslav crisis and the wars that followed it. (Bugarel 2004: 25)

According to the population census carried out in 1991, Bosnia had 4,377,033 inhabitants, of whom 1,902,956 (43.5%) declared themselves as Muslims, 1,366,104 (31.2%) as Serbs, 760,852 (17.4%) as Croats and 242,682 (5.6%) as Yugoslavs.⁵ Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings remind us that the war was the most deadly conflict in Europe since World War II with approximately 100,000 – 150,000 people killed. The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ (*etničko čišćenje*) signifies the violent expulsion of certain populations which became one of the most powerful war strategies of creating ethnically homogenous territories. More than 2,100,000 people, or about half of the pre-war Bosnian population was displaced as the result of ethnic cleansing (Bougarel et al. 2007: 5).

After the war, not only the above numbers, but also their meaning, were changed (Jansen 2005a; 2005b). The ‘constitutive violence’ (Bowman 2003) changed their meaning through the creation and consolidation of new groups. It reconfigured places not only through the expulsion of populations, but also through transforming the old and the familiar into new places of terror:

Personalized terror and violence serve the purposes of frightening people into leaving and frightening them into never wanting to return, even if their homes are still standing for them to return to. But what they may also do is erase old memories and images, creating a blank space in a way that leads some (though not all) victims to reinterpret the past. (...) Old places and old neighbours are not what they used to be and old ideas and images are erased and retrospectively rebuilt and replaced. (Sorabji 1995: 92)

⁵ Data obtained from the Federal Office of Statistics: <http://www.fzs.ba/Dem/Popis/NacStanB.htm> [accessed on: 25/05/2012]

As we saw, the war ended in 1995 with the Dayton Peace Agreement which consolidated two entities in the state of Bosnia – the Federation (with the Bosniak⁶ and Croat population as a majority), and the Republic of Srpska (with the Serb population as a majority). Therefore, the creation of the IEBL and of two entities was simultaneously a confirmation of the ‘national order of things’ and a strategy of overcoming it (two entities jointly form one state – Bosnia), or at least of ending its deadly consequences – the end of the war (Bougarel et al. 2007, 6). Kostovicova argues that in post-Dayton Bosnia “geographical narratives about territory and borders (...) were formative and derivative of the Bosnian Serb national identity that they still inform and mirror” (2004: 268-269).

Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings argue that international intervention in Bosnia had state-like effects, and that the ‘international community’ came to form an inseparable part of Bosnian reality during the last fifteen years (Bougarel et al. 2007: 33). The term ‘international community’ was widely used in everyday talk in Bijeljina, often to refer to ‘the West’ or ‘Western governments’. Helms notes that this term in Bosnia signifies all foreign governments and agencies involved in relief aid and development, but most often it is used to refer to:

more narrowly to the group of supranational bodies and major aid agencies charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the war in late 1995. The latter group in effect represents ‘western’ governments—the United States, Canada, and European Union (EU) states—either directly, through embassies and country aid agencies (USAID, DFID, SIDA, etc.), or indirectly, in the form of private development NGOs which implement governmental projects or UN agencies heavily influenced by western governments. Two specific bodies, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, 2000), act in a quasiprotectorate fashion to monitor and implement the Dayton Agreement. (Helms 2003: 17)

The loosely defined ‘international community’ was an integral part of the war. Bougarel notes that a set of actions (such as peace negotiations, changing peace

⁶ Since 1993, the term Bosniak came to be used for the national category in Bosnia previously labelled ‘Muslim’, while the term Bosnian is used for all residents of Bosnia.

plans, embargos, humanitarian assistance, imposing no-fly zones, turning enclaves into 'safe zones' under UNPROFOR and NATO protection) "gave a rhythm to the development of internal war configurations" (Bugarel 2004: 39), and the effects of these actions on the internal configurations of war power "were mostly unintentional or, at least, poorly controlled" (Bugarel 2004: 40).

In post-war Bosnia, differing actors of the international community remained highly important. Despite internal disputes, the 'international community' in Bosnia converges more or less on one central set of goals: the development of civil society and the return of displaced persons and refugees to their former homes, in order to create a workable, multiethnic state with a pluralistic, democratic, and market-based system. It should be understood that the distance to the 'home' which was left behind (and which one was supposed to 'return to') "should not be measured in kilometres but in years" (Jansen 2008: 189). In other words:

The repatriation of refugees, for example, cannot be equated with return 'home', unless one conceptualises the entire state territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'home' – a problematic suggestion after years of violent attempts to territorialise different national homelands. (Jansen 2006a: 181)

The return of the displaced was promoted through a focus on privatisation and the safe restitution of property. Jansen shows this was "portrayed as a technical human rights issue, [and it] thus effectively established a reliance on market mechanisms for post-war compensation" (Jansen 2006a: 193). In other words, the post-war transformations in Bosnia were realised through the referential framework of post-socialist transformations:

In this context, and to this degree, I believe it is correct to speak of an experience of 'forced transition' amongst the people I worked with, in addition to 'forced displacement'. It is in the double context of post-war reconstruction and socio-political transformation from socialist self-management to capitalist neoliberalism, that we need to understand the small, late wages and pensions, the unreliable health protection and the under-funded schooling system that plague Bosnia- Herzegovina (and, importantly, many other 'transition' states, with or without violent conflict). (Jansen 2006a: 190)

Today, the IEBL has no border controls and is no longer controlled by the military or the police. Nevertheless, it is still important: it marks the limits of encompassment of the governments of the two entities. While some of the displaced people have returned to their pre-war places of residence, the IEBL “reconfigured maps in both practical and imaginative terms” (Jansen 2009b: 56). It changed the positions of the imagined centres on which people rely for health services, education, administration, economic activity, and so on, or in other words, it reorganized the ‘practical geography’ (*ibid.*), in many cases in national terms.

The IEBL is also a marker of a difference read in ‘cultural’ terms. Namely, the whole entity of the Republic of Srpska has a deeply ambivalent status created partly at the official levels in the Republic of Srpska, and in the Federation, partly at the official level of Bosnia, partly by the ‘international community’, and partly by people living in the two entities. Depending on one’s perspective, the Republic of Srpska moves from being a statelet “created through ethnic cleansing or even genocide” (Armakolas 2007: 84), to a certain extension of Serbia, to a homeland, to a constitutive part of Bosnia, to a polity sanctioned by the international community and simultaneously marginalised “by the perception of the war upon which international community policy is based” (Armakolas 2007: 86), and so on. The relation between the Federation and the Republic of Srpska is sometimes also framed in terms of cultural progress. The post-war entity of the Republic of Srpska

exists as a product of the nationalist project, but at the same time it carries the stigma of that project. Although constitutionally equal with the Federation, it is still perceived as the ‘dirty backyard’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a safe heaven for war criminals, and a place where political and economic activity is enmeshed with the criminal underworld. (Armakolas 2007: 84)

In the internal hierarchy of places in Bosnia, from the perspective of Federation and the international community, the Republic of Srpska is often linked with the notion of cultural backwardness and primitivism, exemplified in the sarcastic name ‘the

Republic of Woodland’.⁷ In Bijeljina, the fact that at least once – in May 2009 – EUFOR (European Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina) searched houses in the town looking for Ratko Mladić⁸, and that he remained a fugitive until May 2011, did not help in challenging these notions.

5. *Bijeljina*

The town of Bijeljina is located in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, on a plain called Semberija. It is approximately eleven kilometres away from the border post with Serbia. The river Drina constitutes the border between Bosnia and Serbia in this area. Bijeljina is a regional centre for food production and trade, especially vegetables and grains. The Semberija plain lies on a subterranean thermal lake.

Bijeljina has a large number of Serb refugees, and Janja, the village in the municipality of Bijeljina, has a very high percentage of Bosniak returnees. According to the last census, done in 1991, the town of Bijeljina had 36,414 inhabitants, and the municipality 96,988. The “national percents” of the last census are as follows: Serbs: 59%; Muslims: 34%; Croats: less than one percent; Yugoslavs: less than five percents; Others: less than five percents. Current estimates suggest that today between 80,000 and 100,000 people live in the town, and 150,000 in the municipality. Human Rights Watch estimates from 2000 list that fewer than 2,700 of the original population of Bosniak Muslims remained. Today Bijeljina is the second largest city in the entity of the Republic of Srpska, and one of larger towns in Bosnia.

The history of the town is characterised by several new beginnings. The dynamic of constructions and reconstructions of health protection institutions coincides with large-scale political changes in the region. During the Austro-Hungarian period, at

⁷ The Names ‘Republika Šumska’ (the Republic of Woodland) and ‘Republika Srpska’ (the Republic of Srpska) rhyme.

⁸ Mladić was the highest military commander of the Army of the Republic of Srpska during the war. His trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in Hague has just started. He is accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, and violations of the laws and customs of war, in relation to several war events, including the Sarajevo siege 1992-1995 and the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995. Information about the search of houses in Bijeljina can be found at: <http://mtsmondo.com/news/vesti/text.php?vest=133876> [accessed on 20/05/2012]

the end of the nineteenth century, a number of institutions were opened for the first time, such as the hospital and the pharmacy (1880). The first educated medical doctor in Bijeljina was Luigi Rebba, a military doctor from Italy who came to Bosnia in the mid nineteenth century with the troops of the Ottoman military leader Omer Paša Latas. The second medical doctor was Jakub Kohut, who came from Austria, also as an Ottoman medical military doctor. Jakub Kohut opened the first Bijeljina's hospital in 1880 on a piece of land where the hospital is located today, in a building that belonged to a Muslim trader Ahmed Krpić. The hospital was there until 1931, when a new building was constructed, in the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Today this building is used as a space for the gynaecological department. New hospital buildings were constructed during the first decades of the SFRY, in the mid-1950s. Today's hospital, *Sveti vračevi* ('Holy Sorcerers'), was registered as a new institution during the war, in 1994. A new, larger, hospital complex is being constructed at the moment.

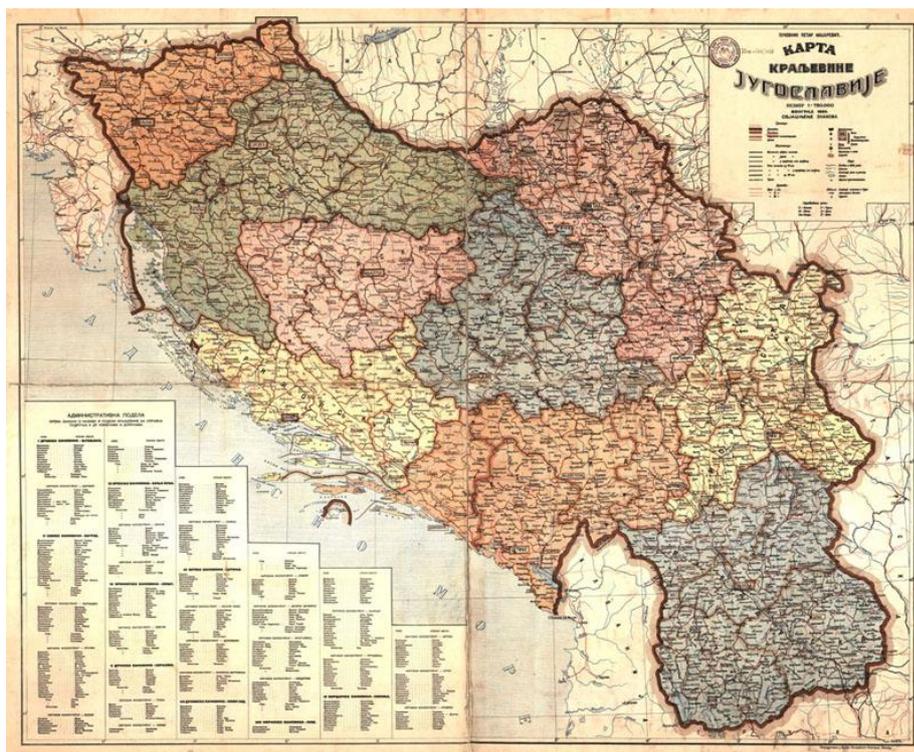


Image five: Map of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, available at:

http://www.arhivyu.gov.rs/active/en/home/glavna_navigacija/izlozbe/izlozbe_arhiva/izl_2009_stalna.html [accessed on 25/07/2012]

The reconstruction of hospital buildings during the twentieth century coincided with major changes in the organisation of political space in the region, and consequently with the succession of different systems of health protection. The new hospital is still under construction (2012), with the intention of it becoming a regional medical centre. Since the number of Bijeljina's inhabitants increased approximately threefold since 1991, the town's authorities represented the construction of the new hospital as one of many projects to transform the town into a 'modern' place for living.

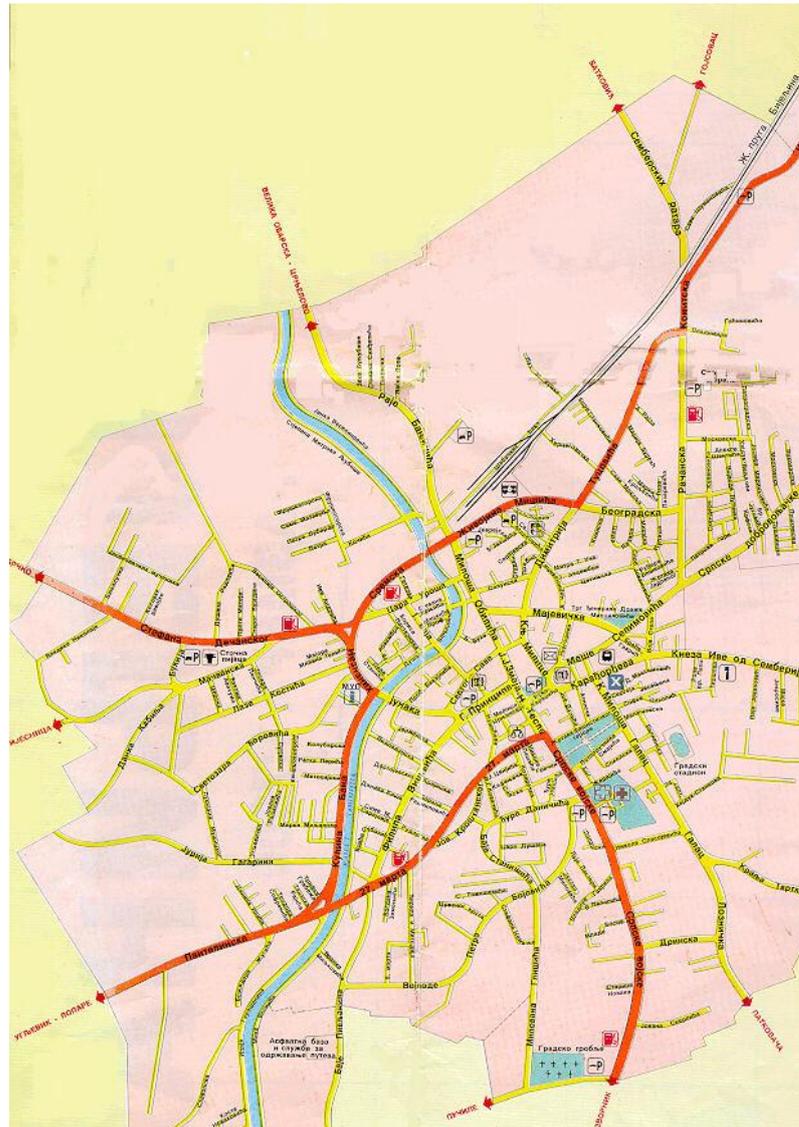


Image six: Street map of contemporary Bijeljina. Taken from: <http://www.oaza.rs/bijeljina/plang-s.htm> [accessed on 25/07/2012]

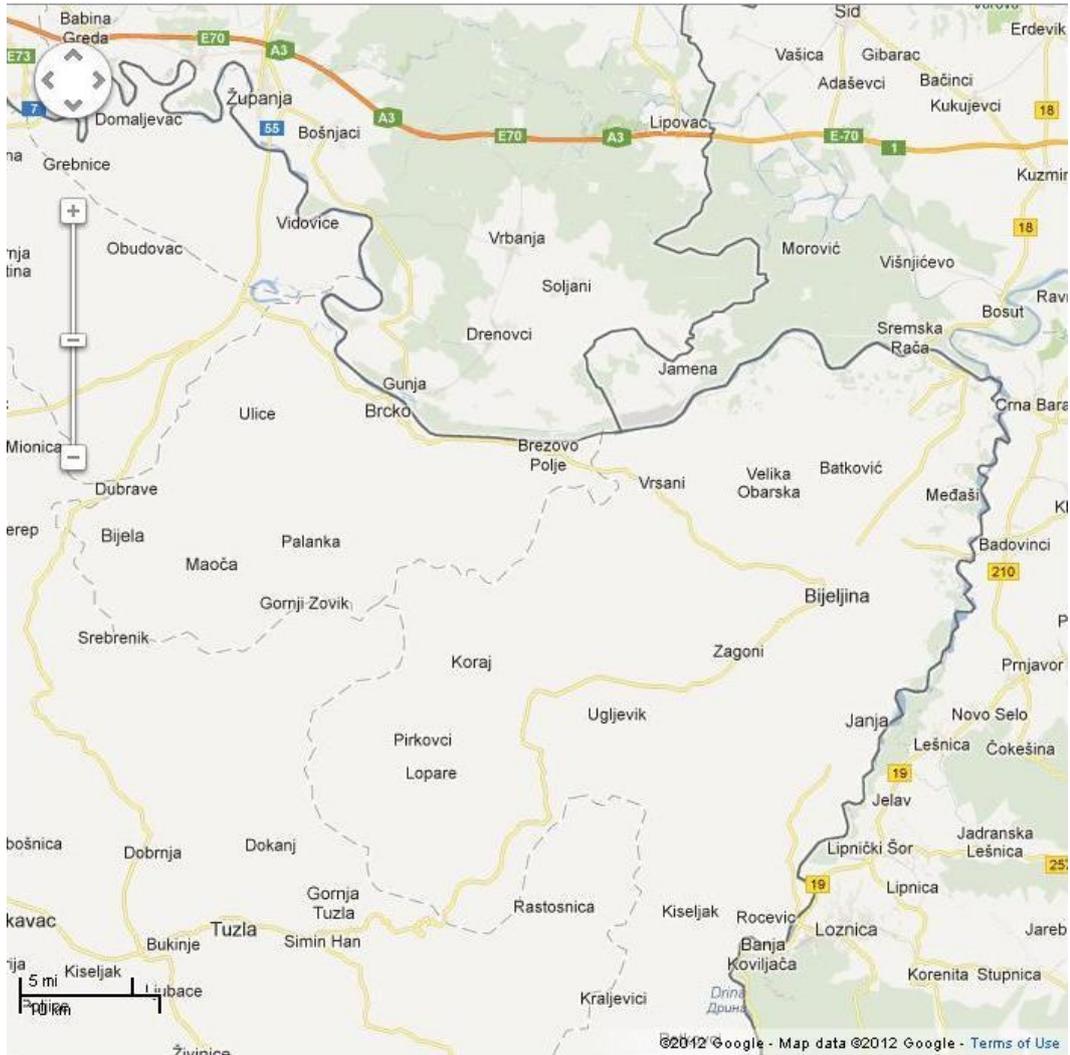


Image seven: Map of the municipality of Bijeljina. The full line on this map indicates the state borders between BiH, Serbia, and Croatia, while the dashed line indicates the IEBL, and the boundaries of the Brčko district. Adapted from: www.maps.google.com [accessed on 25/07/2012]

Indeed, the infrastructure in Bijeljina has been rapidly changing – in 2009 and 2010 there was construction work on the local hospital, a cinema, a university, and a theatre, as well as a sewage system in many neighbourhoods surrounding the centre. The construction of a day care centre for children with developmental needs, and a new building for the Centre for Social Work, were also promised by the town’s authorities. Since Bijeljina still had the infrastructure of a smaller town, almost all of the state run institutions for health and social protection were in the town’s centre. Neighbourhoods built after 1995 were still mostly residential. The political party which has been in power in Bijeljina since the local elections in 1990 is the Serbian

Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, further: SDS).⁹ SDS is a right-wing nationalist populist party which had the leading role during the 1992-1995 war. Without intending to go into the complicated dynamic of party politics in Bosnia at the eve of the war, I think it is important to mention that the leaders of SDS in the 1990s were Biljana Plavšić, convicted of war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in Hague (ICTY), and Radovan Karadžić, currently on trial in the ICTY for war crimes and genocide. In the last chapter, I will argue that the fact that SDS is still in power in Bijeljina, but not in other major municipalities in the entity of The Republic of Srpska, is related to the rapid changes of the town and a specific modality of power crystallised by those changes.

The rapid changes and constructions were frequently portrayed in the local newspaper as a move towards a new, modern Bijeljina. This image implies that ‘old’, or pre-war Bijeljina was somehow not-modern. Even though people did not talk too much about the SFRY period, they sometimes complained that the town’s theatre and cinema were not working in 2009/2010, because of the construction of a new cultural centre. They pointed out that the first film was shown in Bijeljina in 1910, and that the cinema was not working in 2010. The first film projections were organised in 1910 in Hotel *Drina*, as a part of a travelling cinema. Furthermore, in a section dedicated to the reprints of old news, local newspapers published a short piece that appeared in the 1988 issue, about porn films being shown in the local cinema. The argument in favour of the porn films in the newspapers stayed along the lines of ‘freedom of sexuality’ versus ‘double morality’ (*Semblerske novine* 175, May 16th 1988, reprinted in *Semblerske novine* April 22nd 2010).

During my fieldwork, some people also told me a story about a photographer-turned-filmmaker, Musli Aljuš *aka* Hari Džekson (Harry Jackson), who made the first Yugoslav western films in Bijeljina in the 1960s and 1970s. His films followed the conventions of the genre of westerns, and their plots were located in the ‘wild west’. What exactly happened with this ‘Bosnian cowboy’, as he was called, during or after the war was not known. According to one explanation he died in 1999, according to

⁹ The elections in 1990 became (in)famous because three nationalistic parties won the majority of votes in almost all BiH municipalities – with SDS as the ‘Serbian’ representative, SDA (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*, or Party of Democratic Action) as the ‘Muslim’ representative, and HDZ BiH (Hrvatska Demokratska zajednica BiH, or Croatian Democratic Union BiH) as the ‘Croat’ representative.

another he was killed during the massacre and forced expulsion of Muslim people from Bijeljina in the early war years. Only old Bijeljinci of a certain age were familiar with his movies, since they were also somehow lost, or at least not shown anymore.

These film-related stories suggest a similar multiplicity of 'new beginnings' that can be traced through the history of the reconstruction of the local hospital. Both sets of stories convey a sense of repeated opening and closure of possibilities, rather than a sense of linear progression. The last radical transformation of this horizon of possibilities (Jansen 2009b) – the closure of one horizon of possibilities and an opening of another – has been happening since the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia.

To summarise, the massive changes that the town underwent in this period refract wider changes in the organisation of political space in the region. The change of the political principle from socialist self-government to electoral democracy and free market went hand in hand with the war, which in Bijeljina meant a 1992 massacre and the forced expulsion of people marked as Muslims, and a large influx (throughout, and after the war) of displaced persons marked as Serbs. As briefly mentioned, the Human Rights Watch report, published in 2000, lists:

Fewer than 2,700 of the original population of over 30,000 Bosniaks remain in the Bijeljina municipality, less than 9 percent. (...) Admittedly, Bijeljina has had to deal with an enormous influx of Bosnian Serb displaced persons from areas in the Federation, in particular from the Tuzla, Zenica, and Sarajevo cantons. Most international and local sources estimate the number of Bosnian Serb displaced persons and refugees in the Bijeljina area at around 50,000, although UNHCR and the International Management Group (IMG) both estimate the number of Bosnian Serb displaced persons and refugees at around 37,000. Given their direct involvement in the return issue, it is likely that these latter figures are the most accurate.¹⁰

The influx of displaced Bosnian Serbs continued after 2000, although with less intensity, and a lot of displaced Bosniak Muslims returned to the village Janja. As a consequence of the massive population increase, the infrastructure of the town had to

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Unfinished Business: Return of Displaced Persons and Other Human Rights Issues in Bijeljina*, 1 May 2000, D1207, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a87b0.html> [Last accessed on: 03/05/2012]

be built from scratch. The SDS has been in power in the town during all this time of radical changes. Dudwick and De Soto write

In contrast with the stability or ‘stagnancy’ of socialism, citizens of postsocialist countries now find themselves confronting a rapidly mutating ‘past’ and an unpredictable future. (...) They have become deeply and disquietingly aware of the malleability of culture, power, history, states, and state borders. (2000: 4)

In the rest of the thesis, I will try to show how attempts of navigation through the fields of health and social protection were conducted in Bijeljina in the midst of, indeed frequent, awareness of the malleability of great narratives and institutions.

Chapter 2

Where does the state end and that which is not the state begin?

1. Introduction

This chapter tracks the way in which the relationship between the state and, to borrow Gupta's phrase, 'that which is not the state' (1995: 393) was recreated, in the field of social protection.¹¹ It will present multiplicity of relations between 'state' and 'non-state' actors in order to suggest that sometimes they easily slipped from one ('state') to another ('non-state') category, and back. Following how people navigated through the overflow of responsibilities from the 'state' to the 'non state' and back, and from institutional to personalised relations and back, I intend to reveal some of the processes through which the 'state' was sometimes made different from and sometimes uncannily like 'that which is not the state'.

In the introduction, I have mentioned that navigation consists of two things: determining a location ('fixing the position'), and managing movement in order to make something happen ('dead reckoning'). This and the following chapter will deal more with the ways in which people managed movement, that is, with 'dead reckoning'. In chapter four and chapter five I will discuss in more detail how people 'fixed the positions', or in other words, how they located one another in the attempts of navigation.

In this chapter, I will describe the way in which women who regularly used the services of *The Sun*, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to work with children with special needs in Bijeljina, went to the municipality to ask for better

¹¹ Pine and Haukanes (2005) show that the broadness of the term *social security* can capture diverse ways of defining needs and responsibilities in the contemporary context of widespread neoliberalisation and rapid economic change. Since the scope of this thesis is one particular locale, I have decided to use the literal translations of emic terms. Thus, I use the term *social protection*, rather than *social care*, or *social security*, because it is the literal translation of the term *socijalna zaštita*, which is used to name this field in BiH. I also occasionally refer to 'health and social protection' as a single domain, mostly because it was under the jurisdiction of the same Ministry in the entity: *Ministarstvo zdravlja i socijalne zaštite* (the literal translation being 'Ministry of Health and Social Protection').

social protection. I will also address issues which made social protection seem chaotic and mysterious, both from the perspective of its users and of state officials. The boundary between the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’ was shaped through the impossibility to clearly determine whether social protection was a responsibility of the state or a humanitarian activity.¹² In other words, the ‘chaos’ was a result of occasional, and not necessarily predictable, spilling over of responsibilities and expectations between state institutions, civil society initiatives, public programmes, and personal relations of users and officials who were involved in those institutions and programmes. Here, ‘responsibilities and expectations’ should be understood as a socio-historically specific way of defining who, and how, takes care of whose wellbeing. In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss how different kinds of political collectives (including different types of states) organised this care for wellbeing of oneself and others in different ways, which makes it impossible to make a normative list of what it is that the state as such takes care of. Thus, by ‘responsibilities and expectations’ in the field of healthcare and social protection, I refer to a combination of legal, procedural, and everyday definitions of who takes care of whose wellbeing in the context of contemporary Bosnia, and of how this is done. I will argue that the ambivalence of such definition, and of social protection more generally, was reproduced through navigation. Users of social protection and state officials manipulated their movement through the space, and in doing so they manipulated the space itself. Through attempts to jump queues, go through ramparts, or prevent others from going beyond them, the space itself became changeable, ‘contracted’, and ‘elongated’, rather than a stable environment for navigation. In other words, the attempts of navigation show that the spaces of ‘the state’ and of ‘that which is not the state’ were mutually interspersed to a degree that it was impossible to clearly determine where the state ended, and where that which is not the state began. I will ethnographically develop this argument through a discussion of the field of social protection for people with developmental disabilities.

¹²During my fieldwork, activities which would be described as ‘charity’ in the English language were called *humanitarne aktivnosti*, or humanitarian activities. I have decided to keep the term ‘humanitarian’, rather than ‘charity’, because it points to a specific history of solidarity in the region. For the historical contextualisation of the term ‘humanitarian’, see chapter five.

In Bijeljina, there was no day care centre for children with developmental disabilities. Instead, there was *The Sun*, an organisation where parents brought their kids two times per week for two hours to play with each other and work with special pedagogues, and where I volunteered from December 2009 until September 2010. There were between fifteen and twenty parents, all mothers, who took their children to *The Sun* regularly. While the children were working with special pedagogues, we sat in a separate room, drinking coffee, smoking, and talking. The parents of children with developmental disabilities frequently faced big financial difficulties. State provisions were low and the women who regularly came to *The Sun* were unable to enter paid employment because they had to take care of the child. Moreover, many of them had been abandoned by husbands or partners after their child was born. Apart from these predicaments, they shared very few social positions – one had a law degree, one was a trained nurse, others were educated up to secondary level; the majority of them perceived themselves as Serbs, but there were also a few women who perceived themselves as Bosniak Muslims (usually they had been married to a Serbian man), and one perceived herself as a Croat; there were women who were twenty seven or twenty eight years old, and some who were approaching their fifties; some of them were victims of heavy family abuse, while others had harmonious families. Their children also had very different disabilities, and some had more than one.

The Sun was established in the early 2000s, and was the initiative of the Centre for Social Work (CSW). Since the CSW was not able to open a day-protection centre, employees of the CSW registered *The Sun* as a non-governmental organisation. These CSW employees were members of the Governing Board of *The Sun*, and they led the organisation. However, *The Sun* did not function like one would expect from an NGO. *The Sun* only sent project applications for sums up to one thousand five hundred euros once a year, or once in two years. Instead of relying on project funding, regular subventions, provided by the CSW (and consequently the municipality), covered water and electricity bills and salaries for two special pedagogues. The organisation had no permanent employees, and projects that required involvement of the parents were organised once a year, or once in two years. During my fieldwork year, the president of *The Sun* and a social worker at the

CSW, Ivona, attempted to organise a sewing workshop for parents, but this failed and no other project was organised.

Instead, the women who came regularly to *The Sun* organised themselves to go to the municipality to ‘lobby’ for their rights. This attempt of navigation can seem deceptively like an example of the strengthening of civil society: when a group of people organise themselves to go to the mayor to ask for better treatment and better social protection, it sounds like a case of empowerment and of taking things into one’s own hands. However, while there was an element of taking things into one’s own hands in the activities of the women from *The Sun*, the way in which they did this suggests that the ‘(civil) society’ and ‘the state’ merged with one another in complex ways. When politics is understood as a product of multiplicity of relations (Massey 2008), the organisation of the relations reveals a lot about political life. The particular way in which women from *The Sun* engaged in the reorganisation of relations might have seemed like ‘civil society’ up to a point, but the ‘residue’ is worth exploring. This ‘residue’ contains the complexity of their attempts to navigate through the public system of social protection in order to get where they wanted (to the town’s mayor) and what they wanted (a day care centre and increased financial provisions). Paul Stubbs has argued that theoretical tools for addressing multi-level governance require serious readjustment in south-eastern Europe, because

The complex, shifting configuration of actors, agencies, themes, and initiatives found in the region stretches the ‘mainstream’ multi-level governance literature to breaking point. (Stubbs 2005: 67)

Similarly, he argues that within ‘post-communist’ countries, activities which could be labelled as pertaining to ‘civil society’ have to be understood in the context in which they are practiced. Starting from a normative model of what ‘civil society’ should be leads to two things: one, ignoring other social practices which have transformative and/or regulatory potential usually implied by the notion of ‘civil society’, and two, assuming that civil society does not (yet) exist in ‘post-communist’ countries:

‘post-communist countries in transition’ (the phrase itself, of course, already smells of neo-colonialist patronising) have no ‘civil society’ and, therefore, need ‘capacity building’, presumably from the Western countries who possess such a civil society in abundance. (Stubbs 2007: 222)

Stubbs also quotes a guide to civil society building, according to which ‘civil society’ in Bosnia was perceived in the following way: “what it is – nobody knows but it sounds good (...)” (Stubbs 2007: 227). The very idea that ‘civil society’ needs yet to be *built* positions existing non-state actors and relations as outside and/or below the ‘proper’ civil society actors and relations. Verdery (1996) shows that in post-socialist Romania the notion of ‘civil society’, along with notions of ‘democracy’, ‘private property’, and ‘Europe’, was among the most powerful symbolic elements of political life. The idea that civil society is a unified, moral, apolitical, realm which somehow proves that Romania is a civilised, proper European country was more important for people than an idea of civil society as “the forms and practices of pluralist politics” (Verdery 1996: 129). This suggests that the forms and practices of pluralist politics, thus, cannot necessarily be encapsulated by the term ‘civil society’. Gupta argues that the notion of ‘civil society’ has a specific normative conceptual baggage:

Rather than begin with the notions of state and civil society that were forged on the anvil of European history, I focus on the modalities that enable the state (and, simultaneously, that which is not the state) to be discursively constructed. (1995: 393)

Following Gupta, throughout the thesis I use the term ‘that which is not the state’, rather than ‘civil society’ to talk about non-state entities involved in the organisation of health and social protection. The phrase ‘that which is not the state’ could potentially mark each and every actor, practice, event, or rule that is not part of the state apparatus. In the thesis, I do not use the term to refer to everything but the state. Instead, I use it to refer to actors, practices, events, or rules which officially were not

part of the state apparatus, but were important for the health and social protection, both state- and otherwise-run. By using the term, I try to preserve the looseness of this category (even though not all actors, practices, events, or rules were relevant for health and social protection, almost any of them could become important, as I will show in several chapters, and especially in chapter five), and to avoid the conceptual anvil Gupta talks about.

In the next section, I will describe an attempt of navigation undertaken by the women from *The Sun*. A comparison between *setting up a meeting with the mayor* and *an attempt to find a way through a rampart*, made by one of the women, reveals that domains that were supposed to be clearly separable were not. It also suggests that navigating through this occasional separation and occasional connectedness of domains required strategies and mechanisms which are not necessarily seen as belonging to civil society in its normative definitions. Let us look at how this visit to the municipality was organised.

2. *Navigation: How to find a way through a rampart*

During a regular meeting at *The Sun*, one of the women said: “There is a real rampart to get to Mićo”. Mićo Mićić was the mayor of Bijeljina, whom people regularly talked about on a first-name basis.¹³ To the women, he seemed to be the only person capable of restructuring the budget in a way that would increase social welfare payments and more general rights¹⁴, and at the same time, an almost unreachable one.

A group of women who regularly came to *The Sun* briefly managed to find their way through this ‘rampart’: they managed to overcome obstacles separating them from the mayor. In a few words, the navigation in their case looked like this: they found a

¹³ Using first names when talking about politicians is a common practice in many post-Yugoslav contexts, and perhaps it can be understood as an example of an attempt to personalise institutional relations.

¹⁴ Social welfare had been localised, since almost all provisions ‘belonged’ to the municipal budgets. The Entity’s Parliament decided about legal regulations, but municipalities decided about the amount of the obligatory provisions and the number of recipients of obligatory provision. Municipalities even had a legal right to introduce, or to deny introduction of, special provisions, and to decide about the amount of the special provisions and the number of recipients of special provisions.

connection to a potential ‘gatekeeper’, but without much success, and after the intervention of a ‘goddess’, they were able to discuss their problems of low provisions and mysterious social protection with the mayor/‘god’. They left hoping that next year's budget would give them what they thought they deserved. In the following pages, I will describe these encounters in much more detail.

On Sunday, Katja called me and asked me to join a group of women from *The Sun* to go to the municipality the following week. During our regular Monday meeting, we discussed this in detail in order to decide what the most important issues were to raise at the municipality. Problems of the existing programme of state provided social protection for children with developmental disabilities were numerous, but two or three things were (and are) pressing: a lack of a day care centre for children with developmental disabilities, the ridiculously low general welfare payment (*socijalna pomoć*)¹⁵, and the small number of families who could get specific financial support for a child with developmental difficulties.

Women at *The Sun* also commented extensively on the way the meeting was scheduled. On Saturday, Vera's husband had called Mr Vuković, his acquaintance and the vice president of the municipal parliament, and set up a meeting with him for Tuesday. So, even though we wanted to discuss problems of the existing social protection, we were going to meet with someone who had never worked in a ‘social sector’ of the municipality. An officially scheduled appointment with what would seem to be the relevant official – the head of the municipal social sector – seemed like a waste of time to these women. Katja said that Vuković was very “strong”. She also explained to me that without Vera's husband, or some other kind of a connection, they wouldn't have been able to schedule a meeting. Thus, in order to navigate through the field of social protection, they pursued a *veza*. A meeting scheduled without a strong *veza* would have been with “someone unimportant, someone who does not decide about a thing” (like the head of the social sector). This shows that, just because someone is working in the municipal social sector, he or she

¹⁵ The social help amounted to thirty euros per month, while the average salary was between three hundred fifty and four hundred euros. The information available at: http://www.rzs.rs.ba/Publikacije/MesecniStatPregled/2010/Mesecni_Pregled_Jul_2010.pdf [Last accessed on 25/05/2012]

is not necessarily perceived as a person responsible for social support. Being officially in charge of a domain, and being perceived as a person with any actual influence over it, were not necessarily the same things. This presents an example of how responsibilities and expectations overflowed across domains in a particular way.

On Tuesday morning, the six of us met in front of the municipality building at 8:45am. The women had called Ivona, the director of *The Sun* and an employee of the Centre for Social Work, to inform her about the meeting on Monday. Katja was late, and Vuković's assistant telephoned us at 8:55 to ask where we were. Vera said she was very scared, but also very excited. Rada was angry because Katja was late and she said: "What are we to him? It would be very bad to miss this opportunity". Once Katja arrived, at 9:05, we went to Vuković's office. What first attracted my attention in the office were images of Orthodox saints on the walls and a yearly calendar with a reproduction of Jesus' face on the top of a black shelf. This coloured the impression of the office in a way that also points to the overflow between the 'personal', the 'religious', 'the humanitarian' on the one hand, and the 'institutional' and the 'municipal' on the other.

We didn't introduce ourselves, and the conversation started with Vuković's question: "How are you doing?". This opened a subtle negotiation process among the women and Vuković. Katja replied: "As one has to be. We do not want to complain, but it could be better. It could be much better." Vuković continued talking in the same between-the-lines manner: "Fine, that's good, one shouldn't complain, but have faith and optimism. Problems seem to be much more difficult when one complains. When he has hope and faith, problems lessen."

To this, the women responded with a brief description of some of their everyday problems, and continued with a detailed account of things that could be improved in the legal and practical organisation of the municipality's social protection programme. In other words, they came prepared with excerpts from the existing state legal acts which confirmed their position and with proposals as to how to harmonise the municipality's legal and practical regulations with those laws.

However, they did not use only legal language. Sneža, an unemployed lawyer, described the existing system of social protection as mysterious, because information and services seemed to be randomly distributed among the users, without any visible

order. Other women agreed and described their own experiences when the social protection they received, or not, depended on the mood and goodwill of a social worker.

By the end of the meeting, every one of those women in the room had said at least once that they were not asking for charity, but for things they were *legally* entitled to. This repeated attempt to purify and separate the institutional (i.e. the domain of legality) from the personal (i.e. the domain of charity) lost some of its strength when Vuković addressed the women as heroes, because of all the troubles they had to deal with on a daily level. The meeting lasted for one hour, throughout which Vuković kept reassuring us that the mayor knew all of their problems. He concluded by saying that:

“Well, now I am here, I work here and I am familiar with how things work around here – the mayor is god. He has many things to solve, but this is also one of his problems.”

Since Vuković was not fully familiar with the social protection issues, he promised to set up a meeting for us with Mićo, the mayor of Bijeljina. It seemed like the women were about to go through the rampart.

A week later, Vera came to the association with bad news – Vuković has informed her husband (not her) that the mayor refused to meet with us. This failed attempt of navigation through the municipal relations and the field of social protection confirmed the position of the mayor as an almost unreachable person, but the only one able to help. Even though the women managed to go into the municipality to meet with Vuković, this did not change anything. They needed to meet with the mayor.

The women decided to pursue another route into the municipality, i.e. another *veza*. Sneža decided to call her friend Ratka ‘from seeing’ (see chapter four). Ratka was a language teacher, the director of a prominent Orthodox charity organisation in the town, a member of the aforementioned party SDS, a member of the municipal parliament, and one of the closest associates of the mayor. Ratka met with Sneža a

couple of days later, and the meeting with ‘god’ was scheduled. Ratka claimed that the mayor had never been asked about the meeting with us, because he would never have said no. This provoked a set of assumptions and possible explanations as to why the meeting was not scheduled the first time around – both Vuković and the mayor, and perhaps even Vera’s husband, could have lied. However, after some discussion, the agreement was that Vuković was the only responsible person.

This meeting was again scheduled for Tuesday, three weeks after our first meeting. This time three women who went to the meeting with Vuković couldn’t come, but two others joined us. Ivona (the director of *The Sun* and an employee of the Centre for Social Work) was not there, which I will address later. We met on time, entered the building and were escorted to a meeting room. The mayor’s assistant told us where to sit, because, surprisingly for us, the media were going to be present at the beginning of the meeting. After nervously waiting for fifteen minutes, Katja started making sexual jokes, and they asked me to take photographs of them in the mayor’s chair. The tension waned, and ten minutes later, the mayor and a woman working in the social sector of the municipality entered the room. Television crews came as well, shot some footage, and left. The first issue to arise was a disagreement over figures: Ivona had previously told us that the municipality’s 2010 budget for social protection was four percents effectively; the official budget guidelines on the municipality’s website listed eight percents, while the mayor claimed it was between eleven and twelve percents. After we disagreed with this percentage, he admitted that these numbers depended on “the way one calculates”. He said that *socijala* (users of the social protection programmes) is always in the worst position, and that he had to listen to differing needs of different poor people. By this, he expressed his understanding of the women’s position, while simultaneously asking for understanding of his position. Such an evocation of ‘understanding’ presents an attempt to verbally shape responsibilities and expectations in a way that mixes personal with standardised (institutional) commitments.

The mayor was keen to talk about the day care centre, and we insisted on the almost equal importance of the construction of a day care centre *and* of the increase of social provisions. The meeting ended with his promise to see how much they – the people in the municipality – could do for next year’s budget and to speed up the planning and construction of a day protection centre.

In the hallway, we met Ratka. The mayor and Sneža went to give press statements, and the mayor invited Ratka to go with them and give a statement too, even though she was not present at the meeting. The fact that she was Ratka, and that she helped to set up the meeting, was obviously enough to consider her involvement relevant. This shows the relevance of navigation: as a person important for the navigation of these women, Ratka was considered to constitute an important enough part of the meeting itself. While we were waiting, I asked the women about their private relationships with Ratka. Rada said that she was ‘a goddess’ – some time ago, Rada had needed a favour with sorting out medical issues for her daughter, and as soon as she called Ratka to ask for help, this woman, ‘the goddess’, had called a medical practitioner and thus helped Rada. Katja and Olivera nodded and described Ratka as a wonderful person. Katja started talking about a porter in the municipality’s building who could help her to get to Vuković, but not to the mayor. Another woman said that Ratka could help with setting up both meetings.

Afterwards we went for coffee, and the women agreed that even though the mayor was not sweet-spoken at the meeting, “he is able to do what no one else can”. A husband of one of them joined us and said that the requests we made were completely justified, because: “there is law, there is morality, there is god, there are facts”. In other words, all these different orders have confirmed that these women and their families were entitled to better protection.

This attempt to get through a rampart crystallises a number of processes and relationships which will be discussed in more detail in the rest of the chapter.

3. *The ‘state’ and ‘civil society’*

In the previous ethnographic vignette I discussed attempts to navigate through the field of social protection. What was the space produced through this navigation like? And what do these attempts of navigation tell us about the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’?

One way of imagining the political space operates with three spheres, or circles which are mutually tangent, or which partially intersect: the sphere of the state, the sphere of 'civil society' and the sphere of 'private' interactions (for example: Gellner 1994). These three 'spheres' are often imagined as clearly distinct from one another. Sometimes, especially in the context of Eastern Europe, their relation is thought of in terms of an irreversible change away from oppressive statehood, whereby 'civil society' takes over some of the (former) responsibilities of the state.

This way of imagining the space, relationships between individuals, their organised groupings, and state institutions has been questioned and criticised for numerous reasons. Gupta and Ferguson (2002) claim that, while modern states do appear to be *above* the society (verticality) and to *encompass* it (horizontality), this is the result of various social processes, rather than a given. They analyse multiple, and simultaneous, processes of construction of spatial and scalar hierarchies in India's government-run program for the social protection of children. Through surveillance, control, and bureaucratic protocols the state was produced as being above and encompassing smaller and lower localities, or the 'society'. They also show that forms of state spatialisation change as the responsibilities of the state become delegated to non-state actors, such as 'grassroots' organisations, the IMF, the WTO, and so on. Offering a 'macrological overview of Africa' (Gupta & Ferguson 2002: 991), they claim that today a sort of transnational governmentality is changing the spatialisation of the states. Similarly, Trouillot (2001) argues that in 'fragmented globality' – new ways of perceiving temporal, spatial, social and cultural distance – various actors take over responsibilities and roles which during the first half of the twentieth century were solely in the domain of the 'nation-state'. Nowadays, the boundary between the state, the (not only civil) society and international actors can become almost surprisingly blurred. Trouillot emphasises that:

statelike processes and practices also obtain increasingly in nongovernmental sites such as NGOs or trans-state institutions such as the World Bank. These practices, in turn, produce state effects as powerful as those of national governments. (Trouillot 2001: 130)

Non-state actors can be as responsible for the regulation of life as states are, and they can often be understood as state agents. These non-state actors could be NGOs, trans-state institutions, as well as supra-state organisations such as the European Union. Dunn (2004; 2005) analysed the way in which the introduction of new standards for food production in Poland, required by the European Union, can be seen as an introduction of a particular neoliberal normative governmentality, characteristic of the EU. Furthermore, even diseases can be understood as the product of a particular configuration of relations between the state and ‘that which is not the state’. Dunn (2008) addressed the configuration of relations which produced the rate of botulism in the Republic of Georgia (which was the highest in the entire world). Dunn showed that botulism affected people consuming food canned at home. Industrially canned food was extensively used during the Soviet state period. After the collapse of the state, many factories were shut down, and canning was done more and more in the privacy of homes, without following the basic techniques of safe canning. Therefore, botulism was caused by a particular, historically contingent configuration of knowledge and practices in Georgia. This configuration was a result of the withdrawal of a modernist socialist state from certain spaces and of the insertion of a new neoliberal state into some other spaces. The assembled infrastructure – the cans, the pasteurisers, the factories, people’s tastes, and the workers – no longer resembled a coherent whole. As Dunn reminds us, this did not mean that all parts of the structure had disappeared, but that they were reorganised in a new way. Botulism appeared in spaces where miscellaneous pieces of both the old and the new state were present:

The Georgian case suggests that, rather than assuming the ubiquity of the neoliberal state and proceeding to index it by pointing out the bits and pieces of state assemblages as they intrude into everyday life, it is important to see different kinds of state assemblages and their movements in and out of particular social spaces. (Dunn 2008: 254-255)

A further, very important line of criticism addresses the process through which some practices are produced as ‘local’ while some others as “concerned with ‘larger’

issues that traverse[d] geographical and political space” (Ferguson & Gupta 2002: 988). Hansen and Stepputat argue that the state needs to be disaggregated “into the multitude of discrete operations, procedures and representations in which it appears in the everyday life of ordinary people” (2001: 14), because:

By treating the state as a dispersed ensemble of institutional practices and techniques of governance we can also produce multiple ethnographic sites from where the state can be studied and comprehended in terms of its effects, as well as in terms of the processes that shape bureaucratic routines and the designs of policies. (*ibid.*)

Speaking broadly, anthropological approaches to the state argue that the state appears in multiple and sometimes unexpected forms and spaces (Abrams 1988; Mitchell 1999; Dunn 2008; Aretxaga 2003; Jansen 2011; Jansen 2012; Navaro Yashin 2002). They point to practices through which the relationship and the distinction between the ‘state’ and the ‘society’ comes into being, and argue that the opposition and the boundaries between state and communities have to be ethnographically explored, rather than taken as a given. As Gupta argues about the notion of civil society:

There is no reason to assume that there is, or should be, a unitary entity that stands apart from, and in opposition to, ‘the state’, one that is mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of the social space. (1995: 393)

The spatiality and the organisation of ‘that which is not the state’ in a number of contexts can hardly be subsumed under the concept of a civil society without a ‘residue’, or without twisting ethnographic realities. Strong anthropological criticism of the notion poses civil society as “riddled with contradictions and the current vogue predicated on a fundamental ethnocentricity” (Hann & Dunn 1996: 1). Instead of taking it as an analytical tool, Hann and Dunn suggest approaching it as a point of ethnographic interest:

(...) perhaps the most obvious agenda for anthropological contributions to the civil society debates would be precisely to particularise and to make concrete: to show how an idea with its origins in European intellectual discourse has very different referents, varying significantly even within European societies. (Hann & Dunn 1996: 2)

When civil society is taken as a normative and conceptual tool rather than a point of ethnographic interest, there are a number of different ideas that it refers to. In the Anglo-American liberal tradition, civil society refers to free and unrestricted production, exchange, and consumption, and is placed in opposition to the state; a European continental tradition linked it with the ideas of voluntary associations, separate from, but not necessarily opposed to the state and its government (de Dijn 2007).

Kaldor's (2003) short history of the use of the concept of civil society shows that different ideas about roles and spaces that civil society takes imply different ideas about roles and spaces of the state. She distinguishes between three different versions in contemporary usage of the term 'civil society'.

The first would be an 'activist' version, developed in Eastern Europe and Latin America as a part of an attempt to create "a realm outside political parties where individuals and groups aimed to democratise the state, to re-distribute power, rather than to capture power in a traditional sense" (Kaldor 2003: 8).

The second would be a 'neoliberal' version, which signifies "a group of organizations that are neither controlled by the state nor the market, but which play an essential role in facilitating the operation of both" (Kaldor 2003: 9). In this version, the civil society serves as a point of control of the state and the market.

The third version, which she calls 'post-modern', stresses the almost mythical character of the notion of civil society, which "in the sense of individual rights and voluntary associations, never extended much beyond a few capital cities" (Kaldor 2003: 10). This version emphasises the importance of "traditional and neo-traditional organisations, based on kinship or religion, that remain autonomous from the state and offer alternative sites of power or autonomous spaces" (*ibid.*).

Gal and Kligman write that in Eastern Europe the notion of ‘civil society’ is more of a ‘utopian imaginary’ than a ‘concrete program derived from theory’ (2000: 93). The notion has had a significant impact on political life in Eastern Europe; however, it does not account for “gaps, slippages, and difference” (*ibid.*) between the ways in which political actions were enacted in various countries, and the normative idea of what ‘civil society’ is.

In order to capture these gaps and slippages produced by the notion of civil society in a post-colonial context, Chatterjee (2004) differentiates it from a ‘political society’ in India: while the former describes relations of the citizens with the state, as they are envisaged by the classic idea of state sovereignty, the constitution, and international legal-political documents about human rights, the latter describes relations which are also *political*, albeit in a different way. If civil society is “restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens” (Chatterjee 2004: 41), political society captures the relations between the subalterns and the state which were political, but not conforming to the standards of the civil society. The distinction between civil society ‘proper’ and political relations which do not conform to its normative dimension is relevant in the case of BiH as well, as Stubbs (2007) shows.

In the previous ethnographic vignette, I argued that the attempt to find a way through the rampart revealed that the boundary between the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’ was movable, and that people moved it in order to pursue their goals. In the following part, I will offer ethnographic descriptions which will aim to show relations within the field of social protection that were politically imbued, even though they could not be neatly separated into ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’ categories. The actors of ‘that which is not the state’ were not always easy to differentiate from ‘state’ actors in Bijeljina.

4. Mysterious social protection between personal humanitarianism and responsibility of the state

One of the mothers from *The Sun*, Sneža, frequently portrayed the system of social protection as mysterious. Other women agreed with this description. Even the

personnel of such institutions sometimes commented in similar terms: as mentioned earlier, Ana, an employee of the state institution Public Fund for Children's Protection, once said to me: "Here, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, and it doesn't even care". The reason for this sense of mystery, indifference and overall chaos was to be found in the seemingly random distribution of information and services among the users of the social protection, and in what these women felt to be a dependence on the goodwill and mood of social workers.

During our meetings, women in *The Sun* recounted several stories about bad encounters with social workers. These stories usually described ways in which institutional programmes, services and relations were intertwined with individual motivations, involvements and decisions. For example, the social worker 'in charge' of Katja's family stopped making obligatory visits to her home. This was a couple of years ago, after an argument he had with Katja. The people I spoke to at the Centre for Social Work (CSW) knew about this, and it did not appear to be much of a problem. Sneža was also perplexed by the fact that a social worker has not once come to visit her family in almost ten years. In addition, she had found out that she had a right to apply for additional financial support almost by accident. Namely, two years ago she went to the CSW to ask them to stop paying her general welfare provision (because, as she said, such a small amount of money did not make any difference in her life). Ivona – the director of *The Sun* and an employee of the CSW – refused Sneža's plea, and advised her to apply for a new kind of additional financial help. This was one of the main examples Sneža cited when she talked about 'mysterious' social protection. Ana's comment about the lack of communication and protection between the 'left hand' and the 'right hand' was made when she recalled a similar event. She had met a woman who had been receiving one kind of financial help for five years, and she realised that this woman, during the entire period, had not been informed about her right to another provision. In Ana's words, when this woman had initially brought her child to the CSW to apply for general welfare provision, the CSW people could have just told her to go to a next door office and apply for another provision, but they had not done so.

Behind-closed-doors conversations about social protection were not the only contexts for comments about its randomness. During a seminar called *Partnership and Community Services*, held in the public library, the image the lecturer described

seemed to be in stark contrast with people's everyday experiences and thoughts. The seminar was organised for employees of the CSW, the Public Fund for Children's Protection, and for people working in NGOs, while the lecturer was the director of the CSW in another town. The lecturer claimed that "the way to do things today" involved formally joined forces, signed contracts, cooperation among different state institutions, and between 'the state', 'the civil' and 'the private' sector. However, many people in the audience complained. An older man in a leather jacket, sitting near me, murmured: "I give you, you give me". A woman from the audience asked the lecturer whether signed contracts were necessary, and whether the informal cooperation they had been practicing for a long time was not better. The lecturer was strongly in favour of signed contracts, since this would prevent ambiguities over work responsibilities. Towards the end, even the chair of the seminar said to the lecturer: "It seems to me that there is no distinct system and model; it is rather a motto of 'sort it out on your own'".

This sentiment was expressed among the employees of the CSW, too. Ivona complained because the Centre did not have a unified database about its users. Each user had her or his file, but only on paper. These paper files were kept in folders which were kept in boxes, which were set aside in closed rooms. A couple of years ago, all of the files were digitised, through a foreign donation. However, Ivona and other employees claimed that the software they got was not functioning properly, so they stopped using it after two weeks.

The responsibilities of the institutions and people involved in social protection were continually placed somewhere between individual humanitarianism and an obligation of the state. Indeed, a tablet on the wall of the conference room of the Centre for Social Work represented a Golden Medal which the municipality of Bijeljina awarded to the CSW in 2001, for:

“Renowned work and activities of special significance for the municipality in the area
of:

Social Work, and especially for 40 successful years and the overall efforts in an
organised humanitarian work and assistance to the deprived population” (emphasis
added)

The idea that a public institution for social protection is carrying out work that has a humanitarian character reveals that expectations and responsibilities were not neatly divided between ‘the state’ and ‘that which is not the state’.

Even though these stories may convey chaos and randomness in social protection, there was a logic behind it which fostered an ambiguity between (personal) humanitarianism and (institutionalised) obligations. Jon P. Mitchell has argued that part of the political culture in Malta was a notion of a ‘systemless system’, produced through interconnections between patronage, clientelism, and bureaucracy and that “this systemless system is not without its systemic effects” (2002: 50). This is very similar to the situation in Bijeljina: people saw their reliance on personal relationships, and consequently, on motivations, moods, and wills of other people, as an integral part of social protection. There were apparent systemic effects of the absence of consistent respect for official rules, and of the dependence on interpersonal relationships. In Bijeljina, people’s movement through the field of social protection produced the boundary between the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’ as movable and unstable, rather than ambiguous. ‘Ambiguity’ was apparent to anyone who was involved with the state system of social protection, but it is not necessarily an analytically productive notion for this discussion. What I think is more productive is to look for systemic effects, in Mitchell’s words, and a particular logic which formed the foundation of this sense of ambiguity, and which I will explore through Ivona’s role.

Ivona volunteered at *The Sun* for a couple of years, before she got a permanent job at the CSW. Her role towards the mothers was double. When she came to *The Sun*, she was a representative of the state, a source of information about future decisions of the CSW and the municipality. Simultaneously, she was a person who kept *The Sun* going, through securing finances from the CSW and occasionally writing projects. Her visits to *The Sun* were irregular and infrequent. The women in the organisation sometimes criticised this and disapproved of it, and sometimes they expressed gratitude and complimented Ivona. They understood the existence of *The Sun* partly as something they were entitled to have by law, and partly as something that was given to them through a goodness of Ivona’s heart. Since *The Sun* would not have

existed without the CSW and people from the CSW, it was a state-led initiative. At the same time, since *The Sun* would not have existed without Ivona and other social workers, it was a personal humanitarian initiative of social workers. Thus, some ‘non-state’ actors had responsibility for the regulation of life (cf. Dunn 2008), because sometimes they were also ‘state’ actors. Rabo reminds us that ‘civil society’ and the ‘state’ are mutually constitutive:

Any notion of civil society is coloured by notions and understandings of the state, and issues concerning the public and private spheres, and how notions of ‘family’ act as links between them, are a central case in point. (Rabo 1996: 157)

The mutual constitutedness of ‘civil society’ and the ‘state’ can be understood in two ways. Firstly, even if ‘that which is not the state’ is clearly autonomous and outside of the ‘state’, one still influences the organisation of the other, and *vice versa*. Secondly, if the boundary between the two is unstable, as I am arguing was the case in Bijeljina, they affect both the shape and the organisation of each other. The ‘ambiguity’ of social protection services – or, rather, their constant *move* from something people are legally entitled to have and something the state ought to provide, to a humanitarian (or charity) activity which depends on the goodwill of individuals – was reproduced through the manipulation of space. People ‘contracted’ and ‘elongated’ space in order to get things done, and to emphasise the state-like or humanitarian-like character of social protection services.

Ivona’s infrequent visits to *The Sun* present an illustration of this. When women from *The Sun* needed her, they had to call her, or to go to her workplace at the CSW. She was the director of the organisation, and someone who decided about almost everything regarding *The Sun*. However, by not coming regularly to the organisation's venue, she ‘elongated’ the space in order to emphasise her role as a state official. In other words, by manipulating the space, Ivona was also able to control how much of a state official she was, and how much she was the friendly director of an NGO. This can be understood as an example of gaps and slippages which Gal and Kligman note between political life more generally and the notion of civil society in Eastern Europe (2000).

An explicit effort to preserve the 'state' side of *The Sun* through a strong 'elongation' of space happened when one of the mothers asked to become a member of the Governing Board, i.e. to be allowed to write project applications, organise things, and so on. She received a negative reply from the board members (all employees at the CSW). This shows that not everyone was equally able to manipulate space: it was the CSW workers who chose when to 'contract' the space between themselves and the women, and when to 'elongate' it.

In a similar vein, both the mayor and Mr Vuković accepted a meeting organised through a private contact – a husband of one of the women, and 'the goddess', Ratka. They willingly 'contracted' the space between themselves and these women – and through that, they confirmed their power. Both men were simultaneously highly influential representatives of municipal government *and* people who had enough goodwill to meet with the women from *The Sun* and talk about their problems. Furthermore, Ratka, and even to a degree Vera's husband, also expressed the willingness, and thus, the power to help others to go beyond the ramparts. Being able to help meant being in a position of power to manipulate the space as one wished, and consequently, to manipulate the tension between social protection as a state obligation and as a humanitarian activity.

I understand the notion of the space here as 'the product of interrelations (...), the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality (...), as always under construction' (Massey 2008: 9). Massey argued for imagining space as produced through multiple and unequal relations which coexist and overlap in complex ways. If both politics and space are the products of multiplicities of relations, the organisation of relating needs to be explored: possibilities of establishing relations, navigating through them, imaginings of various scales through which relations operate, manipulations of and navigations through the scales of relations, and so on. Massey emphasises that the multiplicity and heterogeneity of relations which produce both space and politics do not imply that "everything is (already) related to everything else" (2008: 11). As we have seen, the multitude of relations which constitute spaces and politics does not necessarily imply equal and open access to positions of power, or an even distribution of resources, or democratic potential.

The state and ‘that which is not the state’ are both imagined and experienced as particular spatial entities: “spatial and statist orders (...) produce each other” (Gupta & Ferguson 2002: 984). The multitude of relations which produce the ‘state’ as being above and encompassing ‘that which is not the state’ are hierarchically ordered through, among other things, bureaucracy. Nuijten (2004) has analysed modes of governmentality in Mexico where uniform procedures and standardised administrative techniques of bureaucracy were regularly supplemented by personalised relationships, brokerage, even though formal rules and the official order have been constantly spoken of as effective and relevant. In the case Nuijten analyses, bureaucracy complicated the experience of spatialisation of the ‘state’ as above and encompassing ‘that which is not the state’. Bureaucratic apparatus itself reproduced fantasies and various forms of affect – fears, pleasures, enjoyments – which, as Nuijten argues, interwove the ‘regular’ and the ‘personalised’ system. There was no single actor responsible for such a ‘systemless system’, because “officials as well as ‘clients’ try to ‘personalize’ relationships as this is considered to be the only form of meaningful and useful interaction” (Nuijten 2004: 226).

This is similar to the situation in Bijeljina, where users of social protection sometimes could also manipulate space, albeit for different reasons from the state officials. Even though there was an official protocol for setting up meetings at the municipality, women from *The Sun* decided to engage in navigation, or, in the words of one of them, to overcome the rampart. Since they perfectly understood the way in which the municipal government was entangled in personal relationships, the alternative of following the protocol seemed like a waste of time. I have mentioned that the practice of navigation this thesis follows was always relational: this is obvious in the fact that the women needed the help of others to get to the mayor. While Mr Vuković effectively ended up ‘elongating’ the space, Ratka, ‘the goddess’, ‘contracted’ it for them. Both moves – ‘contraction’ as well as ‘elongation’ – could show one’s power to decide about others’ attempts of navigation. I use ‘contraction’ and ‘elongation’ here as descriptions of the procedure of gaining access: ‘contraction’ means making the procedure easier and shorter, most frequently by personalising an institutional relationship; ‘elongation’ means making the procedure longer and more difficult, by refusing personalisation of an institutional relationship, and/or by ‘proceduralising’ it: strictly applying all of the formal rules.

Katja, Sneža, Rada, and others also ‘elongated’ the space between themselves and Ivona, by only telling her about the first meeting one day in advance, and by not inviting her to join them for the second meeting. It seemed to me they did this partly to avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation for Ivona, since their criticism of the CSW during the meetings was strong. However, more importantly, this way they were able to ‘cut-off’ a sense of ambiguity produced by the constant move of responsibilities from state-obligation to humanitarianism and back. As Stubbs (2007) semi-jokingly comments, in contemporary BiH there is a sense that nobody really knows what ‘civil society’ is, or should be. Aware of this, the women from *The Sun* avoided inviting Ivona in order to address their requests to the municipality not as poor protégées of the CSW, or as members of another dubious NGO, but as concerned citizens who had a strong *veza* (the ‘goddess’ Ratka).

Here, the relation between citizens as state-subjects and the state was based on the interpersonal contact, or the decline of it, as much as it was based on bureaucratic regulations. If a social worker could simply stop his obligatory work visits because of a personal argument with a mother, and if *The Sun* was a matter of individual goodwill as much as it was a state service, it became very difficult to say where the state ended and ‘that which is not the state’ began. Navigation, done through the ‘contraction’ and ‘elongation’ of space, complicated the tri-partite image presented earlier in this chapter and added ‘personal’ moments to social protection.

5. *The forms and reaches of social protection*

Administering social protection through bureaucratic apparatus is a way of framing care which is characteristic of modern states. The care for others has been framed differently in different historical moments, and different parts of the world (de Swaan 1988). A case in point is the transformation of this field in post-socialist states. Read and Thelen argue that post-socialist states did not simply ‘withdraw’ from the field of social security and protection, but that “neoliberal reforms reconfigured pre-existing divisions between public and private (...) old and new notions of public and private overlap and emerge within struggles over new policies

and reforms” (2007: 4). Privatisation, decentralisation, and neoliberal reform changed the way in which social security and protection are understood and delivered in post-socialism.

In the category of ‘post-socialist states’ there is another difference – not all socialist states understood social work in the same way. Zaviršek writes that in many communist regimes social work was disparaged as “an activity for petite-bourgeois women in the early twentieth century”, and that behind this perception was the belief that “socialism would be able to eradicate the need for social work interventions and would ensure the wellbeing of every ‘human being’” (2008: 734). This belief was very different from the situation in SFR Yugoslavia, where education of social workers was established in the 1950s, and social welfare institutions developed with the help of experts from the USA (*ibid.*). Zaviršek notes that in SFR Yugoslavia “the development of schools of social work was, to a large extent, a product of the cold war equilibrium” (2008: 738). In other words, the place of social work in the SFRY was linked with its geopolitical position of a mostly visa-free socialist country, and one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with an official ideology not of state socialism but of workers' self-management. The first Centres for Social Work were opened in 1956, assuming some of the responsibilities for social protection from the municipalities, and the CSWs across the country got full administrative responsibility for social protection in early 1970s.¹⁶ In practice, a large portion of care for others in SFRY and in post-Yugoslav countries has been done within the framework of family and kin groups. Even today, with separation of ‘public’ and ‘private’ sector, state services and family remain important, while privately owned enterprises for social protection (such as kindergartens, day care centres, or elderly homes) are not widely used.

To summarise, the organisation of social welfare is directly related to the organisation of a political community. As Thelen, Leutloff-Grandits, and Peleikis write:

¹⁶ The report of European Commission: *Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2008. Available at: http://www.feantsa.org/files/press_and_communication/bosnia_herzegovina_en.pdf [accessed on: 20/05/2012]

This and other studies have likewise shown that social security is not merely a matter of providing tangible material resources, such as food, shelter, or health care to people in need, but also contains important social as well as emotional and spiritual aspects. Very often it is not the material outcome that makes people secure, but rather a network of social relations to which they can relate and refer in times of crisis and need. (2009: 3)

Social protection always presupposes collective concerns, but what this collective entity actually is – including, among other things, its shape, its organisation, its boundaries, and its logic of establishing and negotiating relations – has to be ethnographically and historically situated. Different states present different kinds of collective entities, and social welfare has an important role in defining the type of polity a particular state is (de Swaan 1988). Particular systems of distribution of responsibilities, obligations, and expectations regarding social welfare are tightly linked with the organisation of polities more broadly. De Swaan argues that, at least since the Middle Ages, in places where today there are Western European states, health, education and social protection have not only been a matter of collective concern, but that collectives have been forged through these activities: “The [medieval] notion of a collective good presupposes a collective to which such a good is collective” (de Swaan 1988: 5). The meaning and scope of this ‘collective’ has changed with the construction of complex and standardised bureaucratic apparatuses of the nation-state. Medieval poor relief

could persist only if one could trust one’s peers to be equally charitable, that one would not remain alone – ineffective and destitute in the end – but that others would join in the effort. (de Swaan 1998: 6)

The ‘peers’ and ‘others’, in the ideal model that de Swaan creates, signify members of one’s parish, village or town, which became a collective through charity activities. Nation-states in Western Europe emerged when responsibility for the collective goods was replaced in-between multiple villages and towns, simultaneously with the introduction of a number of techniques of standardisation of people, categories and

places – through, for example, passports (Torpey 2000; Torpey 1998), prisons (Foucault 1995), surnames (Scott & Tehranian & Jeremy 2002), units of measure (Porter 1995), statistics and political economy (Porter 1995; Arendt 1998), and so on. Senses of belonging to a nation-state, imagined as a single collective with a shared past and joint future, have been constructed through these techniques, as well as through mass circulation of printed texts and, closely related, transformation of the vernaculars into standardised national languages (Anderson 1998). De Swaan writes that the “contemporary state is very much the *product* of the collectivization of health protection, education and income maintenance” (1988: 11; emphasis added).

This historical development was linked with the conceptual placing of activities of pure sustaining of life at the very centre of politics (Arendt 1998). As will be discussed in chapter seven, Foucault addressed this change as a move from the logic of sovereignty to the logic of governmentality (for example 2003, 2007). Wellbeing, feeding, clothing, housing – all those practices which had been placed in the domain of individual households – became a matter of collective concern, and this

emergence of society (...) has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen. (Arendt 1998: 38)

The politicisation of labour, understood as protection for the ‘life process itself’ (Arendt 1998: 45) reconfigured the spaces of politics. In Western Europe, this reconfiguration was undertaken through the form of a nation-state, with its categories of bureaucratic state apparatuses, and civil society (which could include both the market and voluntary associations).

Changing the encompassment and the organisation of social protection has been a constitutive part of the production of several new polities (post-Yugoslav states) in a region that is today known as the ‘western Balkans’¹⁷. That the SFR Yugoslavia had a well developed system of social protection, unlike the Soviet Union (Zaviršek

¹⁷ This term includes Albania and post-Yugoslav states which are not part of the EU.

2008), and that the concept of a ‘civil society’ was introduced only from the early 1990s, suggest that the types of collective entities developed in this area were somewhat different from, and somewhat similar to, both those developed in Western Europe and in (what today are) the post-Soviet spaces.

6. *Conclusion*

The multiplicity of ‘orders’ which were involved in the production of space (and politics) in Bijeljina during my fieldwork was perhaps summarised by the comment: “there is law, there is morality, there is god, there are facts”. This comment suggests that different orders – of legality, morality, religion, everyday commonsense knowledge (and I would add nationality) – were at play in shaping the collective entity in this case. The way to work across and among these orders included manipulation of space/relations in the form of ‘contraction’ and ‘elongation’. This manipulation of the space (re)created a possibility to personalise a number of entities, a possibility which will be further explored in the following chapters.

The ethnographic vignettes presented in this chapter suggest that the multiplicity of relations was actively manipulated through ‘elongation’ and ‘contraction’ by people in various positions. In this case, power was not exercised only through the making and remaking of categories of people and places as legible and simple (Scott 1998), or knowable in impersonal, institutionalised, bureaucratic ways (this is very obvious in the fact that the CSW had no unified database about its users, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven). Sometimes, power was deeply personalised and exercised through acting outside the rules: stopping obligatory work visits, accidentally informing a woman who was in the CSW, but not informing all of the potential beneficiaries, about a new right; allowing meetings to be set up through connections, and so on. Chapter seven will deal with this personalisation of power in more detail. This sort of *personalisation* of (what are supposed to be) administrative relationships was a part of the attempts of navigation through the field of social protection. This personalisation was produced through occasional ‘contraction’ and occasional ‘elongation’ of relations. In this way, the

boundary between the state and that which is not the state was produced as movable, malleable, and context-dependent.

Chapter 3

Where is the border located? The coordination of borderwork through occasionally personalised and occasionally institutionalised relations

Why did you choose Bijeljina? I mean, if borders are important to you and if that's what you are interested in, why didn't you go to a town where they are more important? Bijeljina is not a proper border place, that's not it. You should have gone to Subotica, there are Hungarians there, and the border is important, or someplace like that, but not here.

Dragutin, 22 year old student

There were five or six of us... Six women were in the same room. Everybody was from a different place; no one was from the centre of Belgrade, they were from Šabac, Loznica, and so on, from nearby towns in Serbia. And they were... I cannot say, they were nice – practitioners, nurses (...) There was this chief nurse who... oh, we had many problems with her. She asked us to bring all these papers for Nikola, to bring the documents since the child needed to be discharged and to go home. And the social [insurance] from Banja Luka [the capital of the entity Republic of Sprska]... it takes a lot of time (...) we waited for four months for them to send approval for the hospital stay in Serbia (...) they would send an approval for seven days and put a wrong date. She kept saying, like, if you do not bring it [the approval], you will have to pay, one hundred euros per day, for me and for the child, that means two hundred euros per day for as long as we stayed there. And me, my child is there, he is going to stay there, if I have to go home, I am not going to forget my child in a hospital. We were going to come back, repeatedly. I had a lot of problems with her. In the end, I told her, leave me alone, I already have all of my other issues, now this. It's not a problem, we will pay, we will leave a deposit, as much as needed. And in the end it turned out we did not have to pay for anything.

Ana Ilić, 27 year old salesperson

1. *Introduction*

This chapter tracks attempts of navigation undertaken by managing the movement of oneself across the border between Bosnia and Serbia, and the movements of the border itself. This border did not produce a difference which could be understood in Westphalian terms: people living on its two sides were citizens of the two states, but the majority perceived themselves nationally as Serbs, and as not mutually different in any significant way. However, this did not mean that the border did not produce any kind of a difference. The citations at the beginning of this chapter map out its main theme: the way in which the border sometimes seemed irrelevant (like for Dragutin), and sometimes as very relevant (like for Ana). They point to the lack of importance of the border, which existed alongside its importance in creating a difference for people navigating across it. The difference that the border produced in Bijeljina was difficult to express in terms of Westphalian categories. I will argue that ‘dead reckoning’ – the management of movement in order to get somewhere or to get something – reveals in what way this border produced differences for people living with it. The differences produced through navigating the border were the result of a kind of ‘miscoordination’. Actors and scales related to the border were not always well-coordinated. Their coordination depended on the partially predictable entanglement of institutionalised and personalised relations.

Thus, the argument of this chapter is that the border between Bosnia and Serbia produced occasional differences for (and among) the people living with it, because the coordination of actors and domains related to the border depended on the interweaving of personalised and institutionalised relations in partially regular ways. I approached this ethnographically by following attempts to navigate the border. Since navigation often requires movement across domains, ethnographically following attempts of navigation means turning one’s attention to multiple domains and actors. Let me introduce this argument in a bit more detail in the next section.

2. *The argument*

Dragutin's remark poses the question of how to describe the lack of interest in the border. Or perhaps the lack of relevance? One strategy would be to cite examples of what people did *not* do. People did not dress differently on the two sides of the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, nor differently to most people who lived in the capitals of BiH and Serbia. They did not speak incomprehensible languages, but rather a language which in this region was often called Serbian, and only sometimes Bosnian. What the language would be called did not depend on the location of a speaker with regard to the border.¹⁸ People from Bijeljina crossed the border to Serbia for all sorts of reasons – for education, healthcare, for love, for the night life, to name just a few – and complained only that the control of ID cards usually added ten to fifteen minutes to their travel time.

The comparison between 'proper' and 'improper' border places made by Dragutin assumes a specific idea of what borders are. The relevant units of Dragutin's comparison are nation-states: hence the presence of 'Hungarians' makes Subotica¹⁹ more of a 'proper' border place. A 'proper' border in this case can be understood as a border constructed by the Westphalian logic. This logic

has dominated the idea of what constitutes a political border, at least in Europe, for centuries: peoples, territories and sovereignty are ideally brought together and circumscribed by clearly marked, and internationally recognized, borders. (Green 2012: 577)

Westphalian logic was part of a wider form of knowledge practice which differentiated between entities in a historically and socially specific way, and with regard to borders it "generates the idea of an ideally homogeneous state that clearly and cleanly comes to an abrupt end at its neatly defined edges" (Green 2012: 578). The Westphalian logic of classification assumes an almost organic link between places, people, and their practices, and within it, borders seem to be a natural

¹⁸ The language had two additional names – Croatian and Montenegrin, which were very rarely used in Bijeljina

¹⁹ A town in Serbia on the border with Hungary.

outcome of the already-existing differences among clearly separable territories and people (Green 2012; see also: Brunet-Jailly 2005; Alvarez 1995).

Borders in Bosnia, and in other post-Yugoslav countries, have been constructed through violent attempts to inscribe the Westphalian logic, and its 'national order of things' (Malkki 1995), onto the relation between people, territories, and states (Jansen 2005b: 46). These endeavours reconfigured senses of belonging as much as organisations of political spaces; they closed off a certain 'horizon of possibilities' (Jansen 2009b), and opened another one. Jansen proposes the notion of 'horizon of possibilities' as a 'conceptual anchor point for an investigative prism that explicitly focuses on the intersection of the spatiality and the temporality of border practices' (Jansen 2009b: 2). The attempts of navigation within the town, or across the border, were enabled, and shaped, by the existing horizon of possibilities. The horizon of possibilities encompasses what becomes possible to do across, or near, the border, and is created by the joint work of state apparatuses and people's imaginaries, desires, and practices. The reconfiguration of political spaces in the post-Yugoslav region meant a radical change of what one could do across, or near, the border. The construction of new state apparatuses meant that the encompassment of the state changed, creating a new horizon of possibilities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ferguson and Gupta argue that states appear to people as real through construction of images of the state's verticality and encompassment (Ferguson & Gupta 2002). The spatialisation of the state makes bundles of locally situated social practices look like a stable, single, overarching generator of organisation and order – the state. However, even if "(t)here is obviously no Archimedean point from which to visualize 'the state,' only numerous situated knowledges" (Gupta 1995: 392), the state and its borders shape people's practices in very powerful and material ways. The fact that the state and its borders are historically contingent, continually reproduced and reconstructed by a wide variety of actors and through a range of domains, does not mean that they do not have a very real, material power. A case in point is Bosnia's internal border, the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL), which did not exist in any form or shape before the 1992-1995 war. Today it splits the territory of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities, as mentioned in chapter one. Even though the IEBL is not policed or controlled, it has strong implications for the practices of governmentality: since it is literally running in the middle of a street

in Sarajevo, whether one lives on the left or the right side of the street impacts where one would make claims to welfare provisions (or go to the police, healthcare institutions, or do other administrative procedures) via the entity of the Republic of Srpska, or the entity of the Federation of BiH (Jansen 2010).²⁰

A large body of anthropological literature deals with (state) borders, and a variety of approaches and topics related to borders have been intensively explored. The variety is such that Donnan and Wilson argue that, in spite of a growing body of anthropological literature about borders, it is not quite clear “what it is that might be theorised” (Wilson & Donnan 2000: 7). Borders can be understood as places or lines (Alvarez 1995), complex phenomena which shape economics and intra- and international relations (Nugent 1999; Driessen 1999), distinct cultural areas (Alvarez 1999), a metaphor for the most divergent range of practices (Behar 2003; Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006; Anzaldúa 1987), or as that which defines the state (Torpey 1998), and so forth. This theoretical variability is, at least in part, shaped by variability of the ways in which borders are constituted:

even state borders, which are still the most familiar and recognisable sort of border around the world, are capable of taking different forms in almost every respect: in their material existence; in the way they are monitored and controlled; in their officially intended purpose and meaning; in the types of unofficial and informal practices that gather around them; and in the way they engage with, and are at least partly defined by, historically changing transnational political and economic conditions. (Green 2012: 575)

Anthropological literature on borders suggests that a border should not be understood as a self-evident object/space/entity, but as a product of *borderwork* (Rumford 2006) – different (official, institutionalised, bureaucratic and personal, mundane, individual) practices, stories, and feelings. So a border is, amongst other things, constituted through everyday practices, and the everydayness of people is constituted by, amongst other things, the border. In terms of statehood, Mitchell

²⁰ Furthermore, the IEBL might not be policed or controlled, but its location is still visible for people who live with it, at least in the choice of Latin or Cyrillic script, and blue or green colours of street signs.

writes that the border is a *product* of state processes of regulation, rather than a line signifying an end of those processes:

The power to regulate and control is not simply a capacity stored within the state, from where it extends out into society. The apparent boundary of the state does not mark the limit of the processes of regulation. It is itself a product of those processes. (1999: 90)

The border between Bosnia and Serbia might have seemed inconsequential from one perspective, but from another perspective there were many practices and stories affected by this border. The two quotations at the beginning of the chapter summarise this: while Dragutin's comment points to the lack of interest in this border for the people living with it, Ana's comment about organising medical treatment for her child across the border in Serbia, reveals that this lack of interest existed alongside problems, negotiations, struggles, and stories related to the border.

Starting from the argument that "there is little that could be called inherent about their characteristics as *borders*" (Green 2012: 575), instead of assuming that there is an intrinsic quality of a border that needs to be explored, the focus of this chapter will be on what people did around the border, and how different practices, primarily those of navigation, produced this border in particular ways. In order to describe the lack of interest and lack of relevance that is indicated by Dragutin's remark, I will also use a comparison. However, rather than making a comparison with an imagined form of a 'proper' or 'normal' border, I will refer to attempts of navigation across the border or, in other words, to practices which were affected by the same border that Dragutin considered to be of no importance.

Green writes that 'there are many kinds of where' (2005: 16), and that this multiplicity of scales through which people and places were constituted around the Greek-Albanian border made them simultaneously the same and different, occasionally appearing in particular ways, and occasionally disappearing in some other ways. Green argues that in order to see borders as simultaneously appearing and disappearing (*ibid.*), the attention needs to be turned to the existence of, and relations between divergent spatial and temporary (Konstantinov 1996;

Konstantinov, Gideon & Thuen 1998; Berdahl 1999), political (Löfgren 1999; Cohen 1965), and other scales. In order to understand how borders can at the same time be important and irrelevant, it is useful to ask *how* and *from where* borders are being produced: “It depends on the scale, and the moment, at which you are looking at them” (Green 2005: 142). In other words, issues of who, where, what, from what place, to whom, are all involved in the production of locations of both the border and people living with it. This approach takes as relevant the multiplicity of locations in which the border itself, and people living with it, become constituted in certain ways. Because of this joint work on the production of the border in multiple locations, the border between Bosnia and Serbia was simultaneously relevant for structuring people’s practices, and disappeared from the horizon of possibilities as irrelevant.

In this chapter I want to relate this to the discussion of the previous chapter. I will argue that this simultaneous relevance and irrelevance stemmed from a particular manner of coordination among multiple actors located in unequal positions along the axes of the “personal” and the “institutional”. By ethnographically tracking attempts of navigation, I will try to show that both personalised and institutionalised relations were relevant for the coordination of borderwork.

As mentioned before, navigation marks two things: determining a location (‘fixing the position’), and managing movement in order to get somewhere or to something (‘dead reckoning’). This chapter follows attempts to change the location of the border, and to get free access to healthcare across the border – both of which fall more within the ‘dead reckoning’ part of navigation. Managing movement – of the border, or of oneself – depended on institutionalised, as well as personalised relations. The ways in which these institutionalised and personalised relations became entangled across the border produced different results in different situations.

Bijeljina’s closest border post is a bridge across the river Drina, called Pavlovića Bridge. The bridge was built in 1990-91, before the war. Through the process of dissolution of the SFRY and the creation of the independent states of Bosnia and Serbia²¹, this inter-republican border was changed into an inter-state border. Border

²¹Firstly, it was the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The FRY was a state that consisted of the republic of Serbia and the republic of Montenegro. Its internal constitution kept changing until 2005, when Montenegro and Serbia split into two independent states.

posts on both sides of the bridge became official inter-state crossing spots and, later, the international community invested lots of money and effort into the organisation of this border. As a consequence, it was controlled by highly trained and educated border officers and the border posts were new and well equipped. The post-Yugoslav change of encompassment meant the creation of new boundaries of public systems of education, health and social protection, and all of this affected people's movement and created new kinds of border encounters. Crossing the border post located eleven kilometres from Bijeljina was extremely easy, since people could cross it with either IDs or passports, and it was often perceived as nothing more than a ten to fifteen minute prolongation of a journey. However, this does not necessarily mean that the border was not relevant, or that it did not make a difference. As already mentioned, this chapter focuses on different ways in which the border made a difference for people living with it.

In order ethnographically to situate the differences produced by the border near Bijeljina, I will firstly present how certain groups of people wanted to move the border in accordance with logics of experience, memories, and practicalities. Then I will show in what way crossing the border for healthcare occasionally threw people into the role of being a communication link between state healthcare institutions. The two ethnographic examples will suggest that coordination across scales involved in the production of the border depended on personal as well as institutional engagements. The partially predictable coordination across scales opened up spaces which made the difference around the border.

3. *Where is the border?*

One evening in March 2010, I went with a couple of friends to a restaurant on the bank of the river Drina, which was located a couple of hundred metres before the border post. While we were driving towards the restaurant, and consequently towards the border, we noticed a big sign saying 'Municipality of Bogatić. Welcome'. Bogatić was a municipality in Serbia located right across the border, and yet we had not reached the border post yet. My friends, Marijana, a law student in

Bijeljina, and Dragutin, her best friend who studied economy in Vienna, laughed and commented ironically because something was again ‘wrong’ with the state. In the restaurant, we asked the waiter when and why the border sign was put up. He did not know who placed it there and why, but he claimed that, at that moment, we were in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. He recounted what he had heard from older men who took care of the restaurant’s garden: the recently placed border sign marked the correct spot of the border, i.e. a spot where the border post should actually have been located. Since the riverbed of the Drina has been moving towards Serbia – ‘eating away’ arable land on the Serbian side and leaving ever increasing parts of land on the Bosnian side – the border sign was supposed to correct the current marked location of the borderline on the Drina.

This uncertainty of the location of the border, or rather, multiple ideas of where exactly the border is, were a consequence of ‘miscoordination’ between different actors and practices involved in the production of the border. The multiplicity of places in which the border was produced was not coordinated as “the exercise of control on the basis of [expert] knowledge”, as a Weberian model of bureaucracy might have described it (Weber 1947: 311). “Borderwork” (Rumford 2006) was done on the levels of maps and inter-state agreements, as much as through embodied memories, and everyday border crossings. These different ‘levels’, or ‘actors’, were all entangled in the production of the border, in not quite predictable ways.

Coordination means “the organization of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively”.²² The origin of the word (in the sense of ‘placing in the same rank’) comes from the Latin word for “order”.²³ It marks a particular organisation of the activities of several actors – effective, regulated, orchestrated, synchronised and joint work towards the same goal. ‘Miscoordination’ thus means that the attempt of regulating activities of several actors in a certain way is ineffective – it marks practices which are supposed to be orchestrated, but are not. From the perspective of Weberian bureaucracy, the activities around the Bosnian-Serbian border were, indeed, miscoordinated. The

²² "Coordination *noun*" *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Edited by Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. University of Manchester. 2 May 2012

<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0177900>>

²³ “ORIGIN **mid 17th cent.** (in the sense ‘placing in the same rank’): from French or from late Latin *coordinatio(n)-*, based on Latin *ordo*, *ordin-* ‘order’” *Ibid.*

order in which the actors navigated around the border was not fully hierarchical, impersonal, technical, and predictable. However, these different actors involved in the production of the border were ‘miscoordinated’ only from the perspective of Weberian rational bureaucracy. Rather than understanding their joint borderwork as miscoordinated, I try to understand the principles of regulation of this joint borderwork – the ways in which coordination *did* occur, which included the entanglement of personalised and institutionalised relations. Thus, I am arguing that knowledges and practices which produced the border between Bosnia and Serbia were in a sense ‘miscoordinated’, i.e. coordinated by both personalised and institutionalised relations. Personalised and embodied knowledges and practices shaped expert and technical ones, and were in turn shaped by them.

This (mis)coordination became materialised in three border signs welcoming travellers to the same municipality.



Image eight: The new border sign. If one continues walking down the road, after approximately two hundred metres there is a bridge with two border posts, and after it there is another border sign which looks exactly the same as this one. Photo taken by Č. Brković.

As we saw, when approaching the border from Bijeljina in a car, by bus, or by foot, one would pass a border sign saying ‘Municipality of Bogatić. Welcome’ approximately 200m before the border post (see Image 1). Then one would pass border controls on both sides of the bridge, and, just after crossing the river, one would encounter another border sign saying the exact same thing.²⁴

A little distance away, there was yet another, older border sign. If one stepped off the main road and walked for ten minutes on an unpaved road (used much more frequently before 1990, when there was no bridge across the Drina at this spot), one found a third border sign saying ‘Municipality of Bogatić. K.O. Badovinci’ (see Image 2). People living in the area told me this border sign was placed here in the 1980s, marking the administrative boundary between the municipality of Bijeljina and the municipality of Bogatić, and therefore, the boundary between the two Yugoslav republics.



Image nine: a 1980s border sign saying “Municipality of Bogatić. K.O. Badovinci“. Photo taken by Č. Brković.

²⁴ I wanted to take a picture of this table as well, but since it is located a couple of metres after the border post and it is forbidden to take pictures at the border, border officers did not permit me to take it.

People from Badovinci – the village on the eastern bank of the Drina in the Bogatić municipality in Serbia – claimed that the border should have been located two hundred metres to the west of the Drina, because that was the spot where the old administrative SFRY border had been, before the river moved. Their main problem was the Drina – a river whose riverbed continuously changes. In principle, according to international jurisprudence, the middle of the Drina is considered to mark the border, but the shifting riverbed moves the border along. People from Badovinci were generally worried because parts of their arable land were located on the western side of the river Drina, behind the border post. It was very inconvenient for them to go through Serbian and Bosnian border controls several times per day and to move their produce across the border.

A symmetrical confusion over the location of the border happened in Janja, a village in the municipality of Bijeljina. Like people from Badovinci, Janjarci claimed the Drina had moved and eaten away parts of Janja's bank. This had left some of their land on the eastern bank of the Drina. Janja is a village with over 10,000 inhabitants and the only community with a Bosniak majority in the municipality of Bijeljina. Before the war, people who lived in Janja used a small ferry to cross the Drina in order to get to their land. Before the introduction of an official state border, ferries were a convenient way to cross the river. During the war this changed. In 1994, during the war, all Bosniaks were forced to leave Janja.

After 2000, Janja became one of the 'success stories' of refugee return. However, as Jansen suggests, presumably 'successful returns' conceal the fact that war reorganised in a novel, nationally defined, way the worlds in which people lived. Forcibly expelled persons were not only displaced, but distimed, as well (Jansen 2008). After returning to Janja, people could not use the ferry anymore. Not only did it disappear during the war years, but also now the Drina constituted an official inter-state border. In order to get to their land right across the river, they had to travel approximately thirty kilometres south to the nearest official border crossing (a bridge) and then again thirty kilometres in the opposite direction. Some of them crossed the river illegally, in their private boats, hoping that the border police would not catch them.



Image ten: A view from Janja's Drina bank. Photo taken by Č. Brković

Members of the *mjesna zajednica* (local community)²⁵ in Janja asked the authorities to allow the opening of a local border crossing point, and received a positive reply during the summer of 2010. They also tried to push the authorities to move the border a couple of hundred metres into the territory of Serbia, so that it would encompass their land. They will have to wait for the decision of an inter-state Commission established by Bosnia and Serbia, whose task is to solve all of the disputes along the border, but whose members have hardly met over the years. In the meantime, people from various border municipalities like Janja (that is, Bijeljina) and Badovinci (that is, Bogatić) became invested in the production of the border through questioning and attempting to move the present location of the border in accordance with certain patterns which will be discussed shortly.

²⁵ *Mjesna zajednica*, or a 'local community', presents an official organ of local self-government.

4. *Borderwork of personal knowledges*

A couple of days after seeing the border sign welcoming us to Bogatić in what is formally Bosnian territory, I talked about this with another group of people: one of them came from Belgrade, and two from Bijeljina. The issue that arose was – to which country do the disappearing river banks belong? Zoran, an ‘old Bijeljina’ explained that the Drina is constantly moving, eating away parts of the Bosnian side and, consequently, widening the Serbian bank. He recounted his memories of a beach on the Bosnian side where he used to swim as a boy and celebrate Mayday (May 1st).²⁶ This beach no longer existed, as it had been ‘eaten away’ by the Drina. Nikola, from Belgrade, claimed that the Drina was taking away parts of the Serbian side, and that the Coriolis force²⁷ made it impossible for the Drina to take away land on the Bosnian side. Zoran replied:

“Fine, it is possible that it is different in different places, maybe somewhere it moved on one side, and somewhere else on the other. I know for sure that this beach was there, and now it is gone, taken away by the river, which means the river moved towards this [Bosnian] side.”

This same reliance on personal knowledge and embodied memories of the border area led people from Badovinci, a village in the municipality of Bogatić, to put the border sign in the ‘correct’ spot, two hundred metres to the west of the current border post. It also led people from Janja to ask the authorities to open a small border post:

²⁶ May 1st, International Workers’ Day, was a national holiday in the SFRY, which marked the international labour movement.

²⁷ The Coriolis force has been described in the following way in the *Encyclopedia of Climate and Weather*: “An apparent force is exerted on circulating air and water (or any other moving object) when the motion is evaluated relative to the rotating Earth as a frame of reference. (...) The orientation of Coriolis force has the effect of deflecting motion to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere, with the observer facing the direction of the original motion. (...) For a simple illustration of the Coriolis force, consider that an object leaves the North Pole and travels toward the equator parallel to the Earth’s surface. As the object moves southward, the tangential speed of the rotating Earth becomes faster and faster, spinning away from the object from west to east. (...) Relative to the moving Earth, the object has been deflected toward the west by a Coriolis force acting from east to west. (...) The Coriolis Force exerts very significant influences on the general circulation of the Earth’s atmosphere and oceans. (...) The Coriolis Force also acts on ships at sea, aircraft in flight, and ballistic missiles.” (Druyan 1996: 205-207)

Janjarci remembered the time when they could simply cross the river rather than having to go round for sixty kilometres in order to get to their land located right across the river.

A man who worked in the *mjesna zajednica* in Badovinci told me he knew where the old Yugoslav administrative border was, with up to one metre's precision, even though there were no formal landmarks suggesting the exact place of the border (except the 1980s sign on Image 2). He recalled a hunting event when he crossed the administrative inter-republican SFRY border by two metres, and continued walking while being acutely aware that he was in a different hunting county (whose boundaries matched the administrative border). Very soon, he was stopped by hunting police and he had to justify his crossing, even though the border was not marked in any visible way for people from outside the area. In other words, just like Zoran knew about the beach that had disappeared, so other people living around the border seemed to know the location of the border at one particular piece of the river bank, usually the one where they or their parents had houses and land, or where they had spent much time hunting or walking.

With a change of focus and angle, the location of the border changed. “Zooming out” gave a perspective of a perfectly identifiable river-border on a map. “Zooming in” gave a different perspective: it showed strict but polite border officers in their border posts on the two sides of a bridge across the river Drina, as well as the border which appeared to be two hundred metres to the west of the river. “Zooming in” and turning a little to the side allowed one to see people who crossed the river several times a day to get to their land, and who knew the exact place of the old administrative border between the Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Serbia through their embodied memories. Green writes that “the imposition of administrative and state boundaries” can be experienced in embodied terms (Green 2005: 112), and that this link between states and individuals, bodies and boundaries, emotions and geopolitics (Jansen 2009a) suggests how the border (and states) produce, and at the same time are being produced through individual practices. The question of *how* a border is produced is deeply related to *where* it is being produced. There were multiple points at which the state ended, shaped by international agreements as much as by personal embodied memories. This is what zooming out, zooming in, or

zooming to the side reveals: places in which borderwork was done did not work on the same scale, and yet they all affected the border together.

On one scale, the scale of maps, the border appeared as a clear line following the river Drina.



Image eleven: The border represented as a line, adapted from:
<http://maps.nationmaster.com/country/mk/1> [accessed on 25/07/2012]

On another scale, for some of the regular border crossers, the border appeared in multiple administrative border spots existing before the Drina moved – marked by hunting expeditions, knowledge of missing beaches, houses and pieces of arable land. At the scale of regulation of citizens’ movement by a state, the border was located at the official border post where people had to present personal identification documents for themselves, their vehicles and their goods.

A ‘bottom up’ attempt to intervene into the state regulation of movement produced yet another border’s location. The multiplicity of spots from people’s memories had to be unified by the new border sign welcoming people to Bogatić municipality in

order for these local knowledges to be recognisable by the state apparatus, as can be seen on images nine and ten. These multiple spots were condensed in this one sign in order to present personal memories and senses of entitlement in a way that would be recognised in higher official state levels, both in Bosnia and in Serbia, and beyond.

Where exactly is the border, if the neighbouring municipality – part of another state – starts in, at least, two or three different places? Around the border near Bijeljina, the official, state classifications of places, and personalised relationships with places became intertwined. Across the border was another state. However, one state began in the spot where another state ended on the scale marked by maps and international agreements. On a different scale, ‘that which is not the state’ (Gupta 1995) was constituted in terms of personal knowledge of people and places. Had the decision to put the border sign been made on high official state levels in Serbia, or Bosnia, the border sign would have been a part of an inter-state (mis)communication. However, decisions to ‘correct’ the location of the border were made by villagers who relied on their personal relationships with places. Since their relationships with places were reshaped by the continuous movement of the river, by the introduction of the state border during the 1990s, and by their own war-related movement out of and into the area, they attempted to move the border in accordance with their embodied memories. This highly personal and embodied knowledge on the one hand, and the state on the other, performed borderwork jointly.

To make a comparison with other anthropological studies, the situation I encountered is different from the situation around another river-border, in the Yoruba speaking Shabe region of West Africa (Flynn 1997). The Okpara river constitutes the border between Benin and Nigeria. Flynn shows how people living around it forged “a collective ‘border identity’ based on their territorial claims to the region and their perceived right to participate in, and profit from, transborder trade” (Flynn 1997: 312). The creation of a particular ‘border identity’ became a relevant economic and political act as it enabled people living around the border to insert themselves between traders and the state, and to articulate dissatisfaction with the state’s representatives in the area. By stating ‘we are the border’, people claimed the right to uninhibited movement within their group (i.e. across the state border), and by extension, to be important members of trade networks. In such border-studies, the concept of hybridity has been extensively explored. It formed a basis of the notion of

‘border-culture’, and ‘border-subjectivities’, which join elements of different cultures and different senses of self in awkward and unpredictable ways (Anzaldúa 1987; Alvarez 1995). It also enabled understanding people and their senses of belonging around the border as both firmly articulated and fluid (Berdahl 1999). This theorisation of practices and senses of belonging which do not neatly follow Westphalian logic placed an emphasis on borders as historical and social products, and thus offered an opportunity to develop practices which were politically challenging from the perspective of Westphalian logic. However, danger and subversion are not inherent characteristics of borders (Heyman 1994), nor of hybridity (Ballinger 2004).

People around the border between Bosnia and Serbia did not forge a collective, hybrid, border-identity through which they could make claims from the state. Rather, they tried to achieve a particular form of coordination in which the border on a map, and the border from their memories, would be synchronised. Let me explain this a bit more. A lot of people living on both sides of this border perceived themselves as Serbian. This sense of national belonging was not forged as a type of border-identity discussed by Flynn, and it was not hybrid in any meaningful way. Senses of national belonging were rather strongly disambiguated in former Yugoslav countries (cf. Jansen 2005b). Thus, the ‘Serbiannes’ was a disambiguated, firm, stable sense of belonging, frequently cited as a criticism of the very existence of the border. Dragutin’s remark summarises this: using the Westphalian understanding of the borders, the border between Serbia and Bosnia was ‘irregular’, or ‘improper’. However, on another scale, that of making claims on the state, and its bureaucratic apparatus, people did not criticise the border, but rather tried to achieve a particular form of coordination with it, and across it. As a consequence of these attempts, the personal and the institutional were firmly intertwined. The joint borderwork of various actors produced a situation which was not perfectly clear, neat, and predictable. The coordination of their borderwork was done through the personal as much as through the institutional relations and procedures.

I do not want to suggest that the border between Bosnia and Serbia generated border-identities, in the same way as the border between Benin and Nigeria in Flynn’s discussion. The suggestion that it was a place where people could enact hybrid senses of belonging would be in stark contradiction with everyday realities. To look

for subversive re-enactments which would challenge and probe the boundaries of the existing orders from within could also not be ethnographically justified in this area, in my opinion. However, this does not mean that the border was a place which neatly fitted in with the Westphalian logic. Borderwork was done from different positions, and relations across these different positions generated the multiplicity of locations of the border. The relations between people and places around the border were complex, even though they may not have been marked by hybridity.

As mentioned before, this chapter tracks some of these complex relations which were involved in the production of the border. The idea that this is not a ‘proper’ border existed simultaneously with inter-municipal and inter-republic disputes, and with problems it raised for some people who crossed it. This means that its relevance for some people, in some situations, existed alongside a lack of interest by those same, or other people, in some other situations. The story of three border signs welcoming people to the same municipality reveals that the multiple actors, and multiple levels, involved in the reproduction of the border and its location were not perfectly coordinated, or were coordinated in a specific way. A very similar ‘miscoordination’ across scales is indicated by Ana’s words, quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Which problems emerged for people who wished to cross the state border for medical treatment? Let us turn to Ana's story now.

5. *Pursuit of health protection across the border*

Ana and Marko Ilić, a young couple living in Bijeljina, were expecting a baby in three months, when Ana’s waters broke. Ana thought that a dispute with her employer who wanted to fire her was the main reason for prematurely giving birth. She had an excellent *veza* in a hospital in Bijeljina: a cousin who was a medical practitioner at the gynaecology department. Yet since this hospital was not fully equipped to deal with such a complicated delivery, Ana wanted to give birth in Belgrade. She stayed at the hospital in Bijeljina for five days, during which Marko and Ana’s cousin tried as hard as they could to get a referral for Belgrade.

Officially, the hospital in Banja Luka, the capital of the entity Republic of Srpska (RS), had the required equipment, and since it was located within the boundaries of the same healthcare system, Ana was supposed to go to Banja Luka. In other words, the Fund for the Healthcare Insurance of the Republic of Srpska, a public institution whose activities ‘covered’ the entity’s territory, was not supposed to pay for health protection treatments abroad if they could be performed within its boundaries. In order to go to Belgrade, Ana thus needed a referral from the hospital in Bijeljina which would confirm that delivery could not be performed anywhere within the existing health protection system of the entity of RS and that she needed to be sent elsewhere. Belgrade was only one and a half to two hours away (much closer than Banja Luka, which was a five hour drive away), and with its two million inhabitants, and almost two dozen hospitals, it was most people's preferred choice when compared to other cities and towns larger than Bijeljina. Belgrade was also the city which many people used to go to for healthcare and education during the SFRY period, which might also have influenced its position of being a preferred choice compared to other towns and cities.

After five days, Ana’s cousin doctor and Marko managed to obtain a referral partly through a *veza*, and partly officially. Namely, Ana’s cousin scheduled a *konzilijum* (lat. *consilium*), i.e. a meeting of medical specialists working in the hospital in Bijeljina, who decided to give the permission for the referral, even though Ana did not fully qualify according to the rules. Consequently, Ana got the referral through official channels, through the route prescribed for highly specific cases – which meant setting up the *konzilijum*. However, at the same time, without her cousin’s willingness to schedule the *konzilijum* and his personalised *veze* with other doctors, she most probably would not qualify for the referral.

Ana went to Belgrade, but the struggles the Ilićs had with the two healthcare systems – the entity’s system in the state of Bosnia, and the healthcare system in the state of Serbia – were not over. Ana wanted to have a Caesarean section but people at the hospital advised her that a ‘natural’ birth would be better. Complications occurred, requiring a vacuum assisted delivery. This meant that Ana and baby Nikola had to stay in the hospital in Belgrade longer than planned. Their referral was valid for a ten day stay in the hospital. However, Ana stayed in the hospital for two weeks, and the baby for more than a month. Upon their return to Bijeljina, in order to be able to

receive expenses for more than ten days, they needed paperwork, i.e. confirmation that the Fund for Healthcare Insurance of the Republic of Srpska would cover the price of the full length of their stay.

The Fund for Healthcare Insurance in the Republic of Srpska needed a discharge sheet and a special report from the hospital in Belgrade. Since there was no institutional channel of communication across the border between the health institutions, the communication between the Fund and the hospital went through Marko. Due to an administrative mistake Marko had to take the discharge sheet and the report to the Fund in Banja Luka three times, in person. He could have sent the documents by post from Bijeljina, or through a friend, but to him these seemed like less secure options than physically going to the Fund himself. The documents listed that the baby stayed from June 3rd to July 15th, but employees of the Fund probably did not see the months, so they kept issuing approval for paying for a stay of twelve days (June 3rd – June 15th), instead of for forty three days. The Belgrade hospital called the Ilić family once a week to check when the Fund for Healthcare Insurance in the Republic of Srpska would pay their bill, for which Marko was calling, and going to the Fund offices almost every week. Finally, after many complications, the Fund issued proper approval of payment in September.

After a couple of months, it turned out that Nikola had retinopathy, a form of damage to the retina of the eye, due to prematurity. After initial treatment in Belgrade, the Ilić family decided to go to a specialised eye clinic near Moscow for diagnosis and treatment, which meant that they had to start a charity action to raise money to travel there (this will be discussed in chapter five).

The position of the Ilić family in terms of their expectations of the state, and the expectations put upon them by the states' institutions, was far from simple. For the Ilić family, and for many others in similar situations, the border became immensely important, even though the physical experience of travelling from Bosnia to Serbia, and back, might have been unremarkable. The Ilić family was located in between two bordering systems of healthcare which, again, were not well coordinated. Rules for the cooperation of the two healthcare systems sounded good on paper. Formally, the Fund for Healthcare Insurance in the Republic of Srpska was supposed to give refunds (at least thirty percents of all medical costs) for every healthcare treatment

which could not be performed within the boundaries of its encompassment. However, in practice, a number of clashes and mismatches happened. The coordination of healthcare systems across the border almost required people to become personally involved in it; to look for *veze*, to personally make sure the institutions had the documents they needed, to actively work on issues which supposedly had a clear and well-defined procedure. The administrative mistake only aggravated the complexity of the situation, which had already included personalisation of institutional relations (i.e. Marko had to take the documents to the Fund in person with or without the administrative mistake, and Ana pursued *veza* to go to Belgrade days before the mistake occurred).

As a consequence, the border became one among many entities relevant for navigation. As people worked their way through doctors, nurses, institutions, rules, procedures, friendships and family relations, the border surfaced as a very important element shaping their journey.

In both ethnographic vignettes the problems for people around the border arose because personal and state knowledges and practices became intertwined in non-standardised, partially predictable ways. Thus, the border emerged as relevant for some people, in some situations, from the particular coordination between personalised and institutionalised relations. This meant that, rather than assuming what kind of difference was reproduced through the state border (in other words, what the border separated, and in what way), the focus of this chapter has been on how people practically engaged with borders, on how the border emerged as relevant for their journey, or sunk into background as a not particularly important part of everyday life. The state border was one element shaping people's horizon of possibilities (Jansen 2009b), which articulated where people (might) go, and what they (might) do at the border. The notion of the *horizon of possibilities* traces "how people create points from where to approach and understand the world and assess possibilities of action in it" (Jansen 2009b: 5). Thus, the border was one of the things shaping the horizon of possibilities for people in Bijeljina. The way in which other entities became involved in the production of the border, and of the horizon of possibilities, points to the 'miscoordination' that I have tracked in this chapter. Jansen argues:

An unfortunate effect of border-terminology is that it sometimes tends to take the existence of two ‘sides’ for granted, and, even more importantly, the particular basis on which they are distinguished. The practical and temporal emphasis of the notion of horizon of possibility does not start from two (here: national) sides as independent variables but instead pushes us to research rather than assume the salience, relevance and intensity of divisions, taking into account the asymmetry and inequality that may characterise them. (2009b: 15)

These points of approaching, understanding, and acting within the world were not always well coordinated, and frequently, they brought the personal and the institutional together in unexpected ways.

For Badovinci villagers, these points included their memories of the border’s location, which they claimed were more accurate than the location of the official state border post. Localised and personalised knowledge of the Drina’s fluctuations became a factor as important for defining the location of the border as was the knowledge produced by and within state institutions.

The points of approaching, understanding, and acting within the world also included personalised relations, such as *veze*. Ana Ilić looked for a *veza* in order to get access to preferable medical treatment. Her cousin, who worked in Bijeljina’s hospital, also used *veze* to help Ana to sidestep the rules of the health protection system and to get a referral to Belgrade. Furthermore, the two healthcare systems became coordinated through the Ilić family, by placing Marko in the role of the mediating communication between the two institutions.

These two vignettes suggest that personal connections, knowledge, and desires became intertwined with institutional knowledge, routes of communication, and rules. All of these were involved in the production of the border in ways which were not always well coordinated.

6. Conclusion

The assumption that there is an inherent quality of borders (as Westphalian lines marking clear national separations, or as places which generate hybrids, or as something else) has been criticised by Green (2005; 2009; 2012). The way in which a diverse range of people's practices produces a border, and the way in which those practices are simultaneously produced by borders have been the topic of much recent research. In this paper, I followed several actors involved in the production of the border, and I tried to show that the border appeared and disappeared (cf. Green 2005) a bit differently for actors positioned in different locations – just like the quotes at the beginning of the chapter suggest. If Dragutin did not think the border was relevant, for Ana it did become relevant. The border was produced at the border crossing post as well as at the state healthcare institutions. The 'personal' and the 'institutional' were relevant for the borderwork, in a 'miscoordinated' way.

The state shaped movement of the people who looked for health protection, and hence, it was highly relevant for structuring the 'horizon of possibility' in the field of health protection. Banja Luka was part of the same healthcare system, while Belgrade (in Serbia), Sarajevo or Tuzla (in the other entity of BiH: the Federation of BiH) were not. Whether one would go to Banja Luka, or Sarajevo, or Belgrade, or Tuzla, to look for healthcare was a matter of the boundaries of healthcare systems, as well as of people's personal desires and trust. The Ilić family's problems suggest that the horizon of possibility was shaped by a number of factors, such as the state's administrative boundaries and borders, as well as *veze*, and the physical proximity of a good medical centre or a recommended practitioner. Some people from Bijeljina went to Tuzla for haematological issues, whilst the majority went to Belgrade for all sorts of medical problems, and occasionally travelled to other places as well. People used personal connections to bend the rules and look for free and trustworthy healthcare beyond the boundaries of the existing system.

The state also shaped the practices of Badovinci villagers. The location of the official border post not only affected, but almost determined the organisation of their agricultural work, livelihood, and everyday lives. However, their horizon of possibilities was also shaped by personal memories: the very idea that the border can

be moved, and the corresponding act of putting the border sign across the border, suggests that possibilities for these people were shaped by intimate and personal factors as much as by state knowledge. The points from which they could approach, understand, and act within the world, came from an interplay of multiple actors, practices, and knowledges, which were coordinated partly formally, through written procedures and institutions, and partly through personalised relations.

Chapter 4

Negotiating access to welfare: the pursuit of relations as a constitutive part of biological citizenship

1. Introduction

This chapter tracks the ways in which people in Bijeljina negotiated their access to various public services in the fields of health and social protection. It focuses on the intersections between knowledge of people and professional knowledge in order to argue that a biological aspect of citizenship (cf. Petryna 2002) meant that social relations and bureaucratic procedures were only occasionally separable from one another. The social positions of people – issues of ‘who’ people were – shaped their possibilities to access state services, thus making citizenship (i.e. formal membership of a political community) not quite sufficient in order to obtain desired medical treatments and social services.

In order to make this argument, I will first discuss local knowledge practices: the ways in which people in Bijeljina got to know each other. I will take a closer look at the ways in which people located themselves and others in social terms, that is, at how they engaged with the ‘fixing the position’ aspect of navigation. Second, I will discuss how this knowledge affected people’s navigation through the state health and social protection services; that is, one biological aspect of citizenship. I will discuss the ways in which bureaucratic disinterestedness in people’s social positions, and the personalised importance of these social positions, were interwoven into little more than one and little less than two separate systems.

2. Local knowledge about other people: 'the world of people'

2.1. You never know when you might need someone

One December evening I was having coffee with Maja, a student who was very worried about her job prospects. While we were walking towards the café, we met Vlatko, her friend and fellow student at the university, and as soon as we sat down and ordered drinks, she started telling me about him. Vlatko had come to her place a month ago. He had coincidentally picked a day when Maja's friend, who lived in a village near Zvornik, and who had been infatuated with Vlatko for some time, was there. This friend told Vlatko that there was a job opening in a company run by her acquaintance. Maja said to me: "If he hadn't been there, the same day she slept over at my place, nothing would have happened."

As a matter of fact, nothing did happen, since Vlatko was told that he could not get the job before finishing his degree. However, the fact was that for Maja something had happened that day: Vlatko had found a new *veza*, which confirmed her belief that 'you never know when you might need someone'.

Maja was also close to graduation and she was considering her options. She was convinced she needed to pursue relations in order to find employment. She said to me that she "did not know anyone in Bijeljina", which meant she did not have any kind of *veza* that could secure her a job afterwards. Maja was frustrated with the 'old' Bijeljinci, since she thought they all "had someone", and that they all "knew people". However, even though her job prospects did not look good because of a lack of relevant relations, coincidences and surprises could happen. She repeated that you never know when you might need someone, and when I asked what she meant by it, she gave me an example from her own experience.

Maja finished elementary and high school in Foča, another town in Bosnia. When she was in the final grade of secondary school, she met a family in the street carrying suitcases. They asked her for help, and she took them to her cousin's place who rented them a cheap room. They were from Bijeljina, and they gave Maja their phone number and address in Bijeljina before they left. When Maja went to Bijeljina to start her studies at the university, she stayed with them for the first couple of days,

before she found a room for herself. In Foča, she had helped them before she had even thought of going to Bijeljina to study, and as a consequence, when she needed someone in Bijeljina, she could count on them. If she had not helped them that day, if she had chosen to walk down a different street, she would not have met them and she would not have had anyone to help her during her first few days in Bijeljina. The fact that she was useful for them before she could possibly know they might be useful for her was a proof that you really can never know when you might need someone.

This need for other people did not stem from existentialist fears of loneliness, but from practical necessities when attempting to get proper medical protection or financial social support, to obtain ID cards and passports, to find a job, and so on. In other words, navigation included both personal and institutional relationships and it provided some security that one's small individual project would be finished successfully.

The idea that 'you never know when you might need someone' makes a link between knowing and needing people: since one cannot tell when someone's help might be needed, it seemed sensible to know a large number of people. 'To know people' also meant having a large network of potential *veze*, i.e. a large network of relations which could be useful and productive. Once they became useful and productive, these relations were described as *veza* (singular) or *veze* (plural).²⁸ As I explained earlier, *veze* can be translated as 'relations', or 'connections'. The word is related to the verb *povezati*, which can be translated as 'to relate to', but also as 'to link', 'to tie into a knot', or 'to put together'.

The pursuit of relations was an important activity which was part of what has been termed a biological aspect of citizenship (e.g. Petryna 2004). People in Bijeljina asked for help from other people for many things related to the care of 'life itself' (Rose 2006). As we saw in chapter two, *veze* were pursued in order to 'contract' the space between people and state institutions. This made the biological aspect of citizenship sometimes highly personalised, and sometimes bureaucratised. In other

²⁸ Sometimes, it was also described as *štela*, coming from the word *štelovati*, which means ordering, or setting up something or someone.

words, an attempt to personalise the state (Alexander 2002) was often made through a pursuit of relations.

2.2. Knowing from seeing

In order to ‘know’ someone, an actual meeting was not necessary. The much-used phrase *znati iz vidjenja* literally means *knowing from seeing*. Yet this did not necessarily mean that one had actually laid eyes on the person in question. ‘Knowing from seeing’ implied knowing someone’s personal stories and being able to contact her/him, rather than actually being introduced to this person, or even knowing what she/he looked like. Often, on at least one occasion, people saw people they knew *iz vidjenja* – on a street, on a photo, and so on. However, actual ‘seeing’ was not necessary.²⁹ What was necessary was to be connected through a person, or a group of people, who would tell your stories to one another, and who could also introduce you to one another. This did not mean that you had to be ‘of’ the ‘same’ nationality, age group, or gender (even though some of these vectors of power would increase your chances of knowing someone). To know a person ‘from seeing’, it was enough to have an acquaintance, who, for example, went to school with you, who had lived in the same refugee settlement as her, and who told you her stories.

I myself got to know several people in this way through *The Sun*, the organisation discussed in chapter two. During our regular meetings at *The Sun*, I learned not only about the marital statuses, education and workplaces of the participants, but also about Dragana’s complicated abortion, Milica’s strange taste in men, Selma’s problems with her mother-in-law, Ivana’s medical history, colourful clothes, and choice of thong underwear, and so on. I never met Dragana, Milica, Selma, Ivana, or many other women mentioned in these conversations, but after some time, I felt as if I knew them. I learnt bits and pieces of their personal histories, and I had a way to get in touch with them, if I needed to (through women who regularly came to *The Sun*). In addition, these stories travelled in both directions. After a couple of

²⁹ Examples of knowing someone ‘iz vidjenja’ included: if she/he went to your school, but was not in the same class; if she/he had lived in the same refugee settlement as you, but wasn’t close to you; if you had worked at the same place, but in different shifts, and so on.

encounters outside of *The Sun*, I realised at least some of these women, whom I had never met, must have heard bits and pieces of my own personal history, and that they had a way to contact me, if needed. Therefore, *knowing people* required the sharing of stories about other people, and a possibility to get in touch with them if needed, rather than actually meeting them. To know someone from seeing meant that a relationship with this person could potentially be turned into something useful, if needed.

When people actually met new people, they often tried to ‘locate’ them. The knowledge gained in this way revealed something which was considered to be important – the social position of the new acquaintance in one’s own network of relations. Such locating efforts, described in the following section, also enabled people to expand their pool of potential *veze*.

2.3. Locating efforts

When the sofa in my apartment was ripped I asked an upholsterer named Nikola, who had a small shop close to my building, to repair it. He stayed approximately one hour, during which we talked a lot. We continued over coffee after he finished the repair.

When he started working on the sofa, Nikola asked me whether I was from Slovenia. This was not unusual; the first questions people normally asked me were where I was from and what my last name was. I replied with my standard answers – I said I was born in Belgrade, which is where I lived until I was seven, when I moved to Podgorica. Ten years later, after finishing high school in Podgorica, I went to study in Belgrade. To this, he replied that there were many people from Montenegro (of which Podgorica is the capital) in Bijeljina, and he started talking about them. After he told the first story, I turned my voice recorder on:

“Oh, there were, there were many Montenegrins. My friend and colleague, Slobodan, who was a carpenter, and his wife who worked in a department store. They moved back to Montenegro in the early nineties, and he died a couple of years later.

Then, it was... where... we call him Ćiro, I can't remember his name... His house is right there, his wife was a teacher. He was married to a woman from Crnjelovo [a village in Bijeljina's municipality]. He lived here for a long time. His last name was Božović, he was from Cetinje. Božović. ... he had a brother, Drago, a doctor. He died too... there are probably many more, young people, it's just that I don't know them. I know the ones who came before, older people...

A time has come when a man does not know 'the world' (*svijet*), some left, others came. Time has to pass for a man to get to know these new ones.

I have a neighbour right here, Rade, who works in Germany; he built a big house in Perast [a small town on the Montenegrin coast]. Now he would like to sell it. Some Russians offered him 1,5 million euros for the house, and now he would sell it for 800 000, if he could find someone to sell it to. He and his wife are retired now, they used to work in Germany, in Bremen. His children do not want to go to Igalo, they go to Spain, Italy, Turkey. He says they don't want to go to Igalo. He wanted to leave it to his children, and they don't want it, so he says, well, what can I do?"

Nikola continued describing the lives of older Montenegrins in Bijeljina, and after some time, the years he spent working in Germany. He came back to Bijeljina after the war, in 1996, a couple of months before his wife died. He asked whether I was married and whether I had children. After I said no, he told me about a couple who had lived in my building.

“Nidžo, they had one son, he and Mara. And they got him married with Nina's daughter. Miro and Selma. And they [Miro and Selma] could not be together; they argued, fought, here-there, and in the end, he [Miro] killed himself. He took a gun. And all of it because of his parents.

- When did this happen?

- This was in '83. Miro did not have kids with this daughter. He had a house, and, what happened, the daughter went back to her parents. Mara, and Nidžo, since they couldn't be together, they sold the house and split the money. Mara separated from Nidžo. There, right before the hospital, those old buildings, across from the Chinese shops- she owns the first floor now. Mara is there. And Nidžo, he married a woman from Amajlije [another village in Bijeljina's municipality], here-there, he sold it all out, he kept only the cattle. He took things and an apartment for himself, Mara for herself, and so... no children... He was in Serbia, he used to work in transport. Mara worked in a store, now she is retired. Both are retired.”

During our conversation, he told several stories about various people. After he left, I realised that I had not explicitly provoked him into talking about these people. Throughout his talk, I asked him to clarify relations between certain people, or when some event happened, but his willingness to tell me about them came from him. It seemed as if the talk was intended to locate me (as a ‘Montenegrin’, as a ‘newcomer to Bijeljina’, as a ‘childless woman’) and, simultaneously, to introduce me to the social fabric of Bijeljina with which he was familiar – a world of people aged sixty or over, who had been living in Bijeljina before the war.

He used the word ‘world’ (*svijet*) to indicate ‘people’. This word was frequently used to describe a ‘social world’ someone inhabited – for example, if a funeral was visited by many people, it would be described as ‘There was a lot of world’ there (in English the phrase is ‘the world and his friend’) (*bilo je puno svijeta*). The same expression would be used to describe events which were ‘full of life’ such as people watching a pre-prom walk of high school graduates on the main town square, or a wedding ceremony, for example.

This fleeting encounter introduced me to personal stories of older Montenegrins in Bijeljina, but I do not think this kind of knowledge constituted knowing someone ‘from seeing’. The fact that the contact with the upholsterer was brief and professional – he was there because of his job – would count as sufficient to say that I have heard about, for example, Nidžo, Mara, or Selma. But, in order to know them ‘from seeing’, I would also need to have some kind of direct connection to them, and to know how to contact them, if needed.

Rather, it seemed that the upholsterer was trying to locate me, as many people would, soon after meeting someone new, into their own network/world of friends, family and acquaintances. This presented an attempt to ‘fix the position’ – to find out where one was in relation to the new acquaintance, and simultaneously where this other person ‘was’ in relation to oneself and one’s world of people. I was present on numerous occasions when this happened, sometimes as a participant, sometimes as an observer. Once, it happened during the meetings of the focus/support groups for women experiencing the menopause. Bosiljka, who attended one of the two groups, joined the second group after a couple of weeks. It was not on the first, but on our second joint meeting that the women tried to locate one another. Once it turned out that Bosiljka’s world/network of people intersected with the worlds/networks of people of other women from the second group, the atmosphere became more relaxed and open.

Bosiljka: I know that my mother had a cousin in Zagreb, he worked in the military. She used to go there every year for ten days to have tests done on her glands. She went to Belgrade too. ... to do tests at that time, whatever they knew about the glands...

Čarna: Did her cousin work in the hospital, or did he just live in Zagreb?

Bosiljka: He lived in Zagreb, but he knew those military doctors, it was easier for her that way.

Mira: And where are you from?

Bosiljka: From Velino selo [a village in Bijeljina’s municipality]. And so, everything happened so fast that I cannot recall it all.

Mira: You went to school, didn’t you?

Bosiljka: Well yes, I went to school, I went about my own business actually.

Ljilja: (...talks about her sisters and brothers). I am the oldest, born in ’52. My sister was born in ’53 and my brother in ’55.

Bosiljka: So was I.

Mira: You were born in ’55? Then you must have gone to school together with Slaviša.

Bosiljka: Slaviša who?

Mira: Dragić.

Bosiljka: In grammar school?

Mira: Well yes.

Bosiljka: He must have been in some other class...

Mira: There was Ivana Božić, they are the same generation, Marica Džinkić? Pera Borić?

Ljilja: You must know him, he is a vet.

Mira: Pera Borić, Rašo Popović - my brother who used to work in the SUP³⁰. Everybody went to this school. Slavica Rajić Božić.

Bosa: It was a grammar school, maybe she didn't go to the grammar school.

Bosiljka: Yes, I did, I graduated from the grammar school, I am trying to remember, they weren't in my class, that's why I don't know them.

Mira: 4A

Ljilja: Angela was the class-leader.

Bosiljka: I think I was in C class, my class leader used to be... that... wife of the late Miro Perović.

Mira: Aha! Aunty Nevenka.

Ljilja: Nevenka. She and my mum are cousins.

Mira: I was born in '57. I was in the grammar school too. When I was in the second grade, they were in the fourth.

Bosiljka: Well, there you go, you are younger. The director used to be great, then, Budo.

Mira: Amalija was my class leader.

Bosiljka: Well, Amalija was nice too, a bit sick – she took insulin – but really nice.”

³⁰The local administrative and police unit in SFRY.

Mira interrupted the conversation about their mothers' experiences of menopause, as soon as she saw a chance to find out who Bosiljka 'was'. Once they found a point of intersection, our talk continued. Almost all of the women in the group participated in this 'locating effort'; the only one who did not say a word was Marta, who moved to Bijeljina after getting married. Her silence might be understood as an echo of differences between the 'newcomers' and 'old Bijeljinci', articulated in the upholsterer's words quoted earlier.

These sorts of semi-obvious, sometimes effective, sometimes unimportant, efforts to locate were part of the partial (im)personalisation of institutional encounters in the fields of health, social protection, and employment. Rivkin-Fish (2011) writes that ethnographic analysis of the Soviet and post-Soviet practices of "citizenship", "publics", bureaucratic and professional forms of power and authority, opens up a space for redefining these concepts, as well as Western political experts' and policy makers' assumptions about the Soviet and post-Soviet world. The same kind of an argument can be made for the post-Yugoslav 'worlds'. Locating people within one's own 'world of people' in Bijeljina meant socially positioning them on a scale which intersected and overlapped with scales of sex/gender, ethnicity/nationality, age, or profession but which cannot be fully subsumed under them. Personal histories of people – where they had lived; where they went to school; whether they moved out during the war, and if so, where and how, with whose help; who their friends were – revealed aspects of one's social position which were considered to be important. This knowledge was part of attempts to navigate: it revealed who people 'were', and it was utilised to gain access to health and social protection or other types of services.

3. Biological citizenship

3.1. Biological citizenship in different citizenship projects

Knowledge about other people – gained 'from seeing', or from 'locating efforts', or in other ways – can be understood as a resource used to navigate through the state's

system of caring for ‘life itself’. In other words, it was part and parcel of a biological aspect of citizenship. This is very similar to what Adriana Petryna (2002) found in 1990s Ukraine. Petryna writes that ‘informal procedures’ and ‘informal networks’, considered to be typical characteristics of socialist distributions of power, were still present and active in the Ukraine during the time of her research:

Access to clinics, diagnoses, and entitlements continue to be influenced by traditional socialist informal procedures. In many cases, that process is lent, borrowed, or exchanged between persons of unequal experience and resources within informal networks. (Petryna 2002: 118)

Petryna analyses the way in which biological citizenship was formulated in the Ukraine when it came to be perceived as a post-socialist, Eastern European state. This practice of citizenship was strongly shaped by the developments of the systems for social protection and healthcare after the Chernobyl catastrophe in the Ukraine. Petryna’s articulation of this notion relates to a biological *aspect* of citizenship, or rather different ways of ‘being a citizen’ on a variety of levels. Biological citizenship refers to claims about one’s own biology that can be made to the state; for example, expectations and senses of entitlement to state support that one can articulate. It also addresses ways of defining the state’s responsibility, ways of fulfilling or disfiguring this entitlement, and historically shaped practices of providing healthcare and social protection.

In the Ukraine, a wide variety of medical, scientific, political, legal and personal factors shaped biological citizenship. Petryna researched clinical and laboratory settings, the public social welfare apparatus, and governmental and non-governmental framings of individual and collective claims to biological damage. This configuration led to an idea expressed by one of her interlocutors that, ‘here, the worst is to be healthy’. Petryna sees in this a desire to be included in the public system of social support, since:

being 'healthy' today means being left alone, abandoned by the state, left exposed to the market and without social support. 'Illness' provides some measure of protection against the vagaries of joblessness and social disorientation. (Petryna 2002: 85)

Instead of attempting to convert themselves into subjects who are responsible for their own health, people actively attempted to transform their biological condition into claims which would fit into social definitions and understandings of health, illness and human biology (*organika*). They thus attempted to be included into a system of distributing the material benefits of social organisation around illnesses induced by radiation injuries.

So if the notion of 'biocitizenship' addresses one aspect of citizenship – the relation between 'life itself' and its management on the level of institutions, citizens, and the state, in the Ukraine it marked senses of entitlement to state social support, which were constantly reconfigured and reordered after the Chernobyl catastrophe. Categories and thresholds related to post-Chernobyl radiation were never entirely standardised, and this created a particular 'economy of the unknown'. Three different governments, or three different organisations of the state – Soviet, post-Soviet nationalist, and democratic – deployed different measures, understandings, and norms of sickness and health. This, in turn, led to a particular configuration of expectations about the state's responsibilities towards its citizens that could not be understood through what Petryna calls 'the traditional concept of citizenship' (Petryna 2002: 6). At the time of independence, these 'traditional' rights and obligations of citizens were formally extended to all inhabitants of the Ukraine. Yet biological citizenship there also included something else: a sense of entitlement to survival.

Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas later used Petryna's term 'biological citizenship' to encompass:

all those citizenship projects that have linked their conceptions of citizens to beliefs about the biological existence of human beings, as individuals, as families and lineages, as communities, as populations and races, and as a species. (Rose and Novas 2007: 440)

By biological citizenship, or biocitizenship, Rose and Novas understand different ideas of who and what constitutes ‘actual, potential, troublesome, and impossible citizens’ based on biological criteria (*ibid.*). Citizenship projects in Western European states in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century incorporated ideas of human worth in terms of racial hygiene, eugenics, and the purity of the nation. Rose and Novas notice a change in the meaning of biological citizenship during the second half of the twentieth century in what they call the ‘western nations’ (2007: 458). It became characterised by a demand to know, decide on, intervene in and reshape individual biologies on genetic and molecular levels:

As aspects of life once placed on the side of fate become subjects of deliberation and decision, a new space of hope and fear is being established around genetic and somatic individuality. In Western nations – Europe, Australia and the United States – this is not taking the form of fatalism and passivity, nor are we seeing a revival of genetic or biological determinism. Whilst in the residual social states in the post-Soviet era, biological citizenship may focus on the demand for financial support from state authorities, in the West novel practices of biological choice are taking place within a ‘regime of the self’ as a prudent yet enterprising individual, actively shaping his or her life course through acts of choice. (Rose and Novas 2007: 458)

Rose writes that “the ethical principles of informed consent, autonomy, voluntary action and choice, and nondirectiveness” (2006: 29), as well as flexibility, self-monitoring, continuous training, life-long learning, risk management, and consumerism are the key traits of biological citizenship in “advanced liberal democracies” (2006: 30). He also emphasises the importance of a specific type of sociality (biosociality) enacted by activist groups which are formed around particular genetic conditions, or illnesses.³¹

Bio-citizenship in advanced liberal democracies thus seems to be very different from the biological citizenship of the post-socialist Ukraine. In both cases, the key issues are public management of biology, and the distribution of responsibilities and entitlements regarding the management of biology. However, while postsocialist

³¹ Plows and Boddington argue that the notion of biocitizenship obscures the complexity of social relations involved in definitions of what counts as a medical condition, and the inequalities created through new biotechnologies which make some activist groups more powerful than others (Plows & Boddington 2006).

biocitizenship is formulated through a relationship between the state and its citizens, the biocitizenship of advanced liberal democracies is posed as more transnationalised, more involved in capitalist market relations, and less connected to the state.

Moreover, even though both the bio-citizenship project of postsocialism and the project of ‘national purity’ are framed in terms of a relation between the state and its citizens, they have very different foci. In particular, the locus of struggle and indecision is different in these two projects. In projects of ‘national purity’, the locus of indecision and struggle was entry into a political community, or a biologically framed (im)possibility of becoming a citizen. After this point, entitlements, duties, and responsibilities of the state towards its citizens, and of the citizens towards the state, were presumably standardised and known.³²

In ‘postsocialist projects’, in contrast, biological citizenship meant a struggle by people who were formally already members of a state, in order to get what they felt the state owed them, and a state’s definition of what it owed to its members, given a situation of scarce resources and nonstandard distribution. In other words, I think that the locus of indecision and struggle was placed *amongst* members of a political community. It concerned a particular desirable set of entitlements, duties, and responsibilities, since becoming a citizen on its own did not necessarily mean one would get access to desirable state support. Watson argues that in the case of healthcare reform in Poland: “(...) relative equality and universal citizenship are the starting point rather than the stated goal of change” (2006: 1081). This does not mean that rights linked with the ‘traditional’ concept of citizenship (which were the focus of the reform of the healthcare system) were universally and equally distributed to all citizens of Poland. What it does mean is that the basic assumptions about the relationship between the state and its citizens, the ‘political’ and the ‘social’ community, were constructed in a way which did not follow the sequence of

³² Entry into a political community was also a locus of struggle in biomedical citizenship as it was practiced in the colonial context of the New Hebrides (contemporary Vanuatu). Biomedical citizenship in the New Hebrides referred to a process of framing people’s healthcare practices in a particular, ‘civilised’, ‘self-responsible’ way, which was inextricably linked with the process of the restructuring of the political community in this context (Widmer 2010). Even if ‘civilised’ healthcare practices did not necessarily bring formal inclusion into a political community in a form of citizenship, they were involved in the creation of a specific civic subject, who fitted in well with the colonial system of governance.

historical development in the ‘West’, which suggests that “the transition to liberal democracy after communism cannot be framed in terms of the equalisation of rights as it was historically in the West” (*ibid.*).

Petryna shows that in the case of post-socialist Ukraine, biological citizenship did not concern biological criteria which would determine who could be a citizen and who not; it was rather about who could survive (or ‘maintain’ biology) through state welfare mechanisms. It was not about establishing the ‘purity of a nation’, or about rules of inclusion in, or exclusion from, a political community, but about mobilisation of the state’s resources and its *body politic* in order to achieve the desired maintenance of individual biologies. Petryna writes that an ethnographic approach can:

reveal a fundamental reconfiguration of human conditions and conditions of citizenship. The traditional concept of citizenship casts citizens as bearers of natural and legal rights that are (and must be) protected as a matter of birthright. Such rights were indeed extended to all inhabitants of the Ukraine, regardless of nationality, at the time of independence. Yet the issue of birthright as it relates to state legal protection remains vexed, particularly given the fact that persons born in some parts of Ukraine are arguably disadvantaged on the basis of intractable environmental and health threats. For these groups, the very idea of citizenship is now charged with the superadded burden of survival. (Petryna 2002: 6-7)

There are many similarities, and certain differences, between the situation in the Ukraine and in Bijeljina. Not only was there no immediate threat of radiation in Bijeljina, but also the project of national purity had been forcefully and violently implemented in Bosnia during the 1992-1995 war. Almost twenty years later, being a Bosnian citizen did not necessarily mean one would get access to preferred state support. People employed different mechanisms of navigation in order to make sure they would gain access to state services. As Pine and Bridger argue, struggles to survive in post-socialist contexts do not necessarily follow models of economic self-interest; nevertheless “within the context of social relationships and networks, they are often the best and most sensible responses people can make” (1998: 11). One of these strategies of survival was the deployment of *veze*, or productive, useful relations which were pursued in order to get things done.

In the following pages I will describe how people utilised *veze* in their attempts to navigate through the fields of health and social protection, in order to show that the occasional personalisation and occasional impersonalisation achieved through *veze* were part and parcel of the distribution of state services related to ‘life itself’.

3.2. Applying for a passport

The Božović family had to take their child to a healthcare institution in Serbia. To cross the border with a child, they needed a passport.³³ To get a passport, Milena and Pedja Božović, the parents, had to submit an application at the municipality. The procedure of obtaining a passport seemed pretty straightforward and easy. However, the way in which the Božović family navigated through the municipal services in order to submit the application for a passport, points to the importance of *veze*.

Milena Božović, who was a music teacher, asked Branko, the parent of one of her students, for help. Branko worked in the municipality, but not in the department for issuing personal identification documents. Branko told Milena’s husband Pedja when to come to apply. The help meant that when Pedja went to apply for the passports, he also visited Branko. Branko then approached his colleagues from the department for issuing personal identification documents and asked them to ‘take care’ of Pedja’s application.

The word he used was *srediti*, which means ‘to take care of something’ or ‘to arrange something’. It comes from the root *red* (‘order’), so *srediti*, also means ‘to put in order,’ or ‘to make something ordered’. This ‘putting in order’ gave the Božović family a sense of security, knowing that the process of issuing the documents would be quick and easy.

In this particular attempt to navigate, the importance of being able to ‘fix the position’ was clear: the people who worked at the department for issuing documents were able to locate Pedja through Branko, as Branko’s friend. Branko, on the other

³³ Only an ID (lična karta) was required for adults crossing the border. However, in order to take a child across the border, both the parents and the child had to have a passport.

hand, was able to locate Pedja through the teacher-student relationship between Milena and his child. ‘Putting in order’ thus concretely meant pursuing a set of relations.

This ‘ordering’ of people and things was not that of a high modernist state attempting to make entities legible without consideration for anything else but its own plans (*cf.* Scott 1998). However, neither was it an ‘order’ of *metis* – of the practical, highly localised, experiential knowledge of one particular activity. Scott articulates a strong criticism of the state-initiated social engineering, arguing that, in order to avoid tragic outcomes, the state’s engineering and the ordering of people’s lives has to take into account “practical skills, variously called know-how (*savoir faire* or *arts de faire*), common sense, experience, a knack, or *metis*” (1998: 311). The main difference of the ‘order’, or ‘systemless system’ in Bijeljina compared to the two orders that Scott developed – that of a state of high modernism, and that of *metis* – is that it occasionally included formal and occasionally informal practices. “Knowing how things work around here” in Bijeljina meant being adept in navigating sometimes through institutional procedures, and sometimes through personalised relations. Scott writes that: “Officials of the modern state are, of necessity, at least one step – and often several steps – removed from the society they are charged with governing” (1998: 76). Several ethnographic examples presented thus far suggest that state officials in Bijeljina were sometimes one step removed from ‘society’, and sometimes not, and that they most often decided about when they would be removed, and by how much. This fully supports Scott’s idea that “formal schemes of order are untenable without some elements of the practical knowledge that they tend to dismiss” (1998: 7). However, it does not necessarily support his argument in favour of ‘metis-friendly institutions’. These institutions are “multifunctional, plastic, diverse, and adaptable” (Scott 1998: 353), and their advantage lies in their attempts to “enhance the skills, the knowledge, and responsibility of those who are a part of it” (Scott 1998: 355). Ethnographically situating his argument in Bosnia, Jansen (2012) claims that the exact opposite is the case: people yearn for order, predictability, and legibility, rather than for the adaptability and flexibility of institutions (because in BiH they already have these in abundance). Whether predictability and order have to be created within the framework of (nation-)states is another question. I will discuss Jansen’s argument in

more detail in the conclusion of the thesis. At the moment, following Jansen, I want to emphasise that the state institutions in Bijeljina can be understood as imbued with metis, multifunctional, plastic, and diverse, but they were not perceived as advantageous because of this.

In the following part I will describe in what way attempts to navigate through this 'systemless system' reproduced people's positions. Almost everybody who could find a *veza* within the municipality used it when applying for passports and ID cards – there was an official way to do it, but people often mobilised their relations – i.e. navigated through institutions – to get it done more quickly and easily. After seven months of living in Bijeljina, I also pursued one particular *veza*. I will describe this in more detail, in order to capture the importance of subtle acts which the *veza* implied.

3.3. Encounters with the municipality

When I went to the municipality to ask for information about the work of the Committee for One-off Support (*Komisija za jednokratnu pomoć*), I asked Petra, a woman whom I had met a couple of months before, to help me. The Committee for One-off Support was not well known in the town, and potential applicants had to obtain information about it 'on the grapevine'. People submitted applications to the Committee for One-off Support to ask for up to two hundred euros to buy medicine, food, or sometimes even to pay the rent or the bills. The committee was a municipal body which distributed money from state funds, but it was perceived as a charity.

Petra, who worked for the municipality, told me to come at 10am. She waited for me at the entrance to the municipal office, and told me she did not really know who the members of the Committee were, or which department was 'in charge' of it, but she was not worried. First, she took me to the Department of Culture, Sport and Youth, where her high school teacher worked. Petra introduced me, I briefly explained what I was looking for, and the three of us talked for forty five minutes. I learned a great deal of useful information about youth issues and NGOs, but nothing about the committee. The teacher told us to go to the office in charge of NGOs. When we got

there, Petra first said who she was and who sent us there (Petra's former teacher), and then she introduced me. We stayed there for twenty minutes but did not learn anything about the committee. After this, Petra asked me to come back the following day.

I did, and we went to an office dealing with health and social protection issues where the worker spent more than an hour explaining to me how an association of deaf people in Bijeljina worked (she cooperated with them closely) and how social protection was organised on a general level. This time Petra had to go back to her work duties, and she came over to pick me up once the conversation had finished. The woman from this office told us whom to visit in order to find out about the committee. We went downstairs, then across the back yard and to the basement, to one of the most secluded parts of the building. There we found a man and a woman, talking and typing. Petra introduced herself, then me. The man told us to wait a bit, while he checked whether he was legally allowed to give us information about the Committee. He returned saying that because of 'this freedom of information' and the right of access to information of public importance he could help us. He spent a couple of minutes trying to 'locate' Petra in the same way that the upholsterer had located me, or Mira had located Bosiljka. He asked her about her department colleagues, and when they found a mutual acquaintance, he started talking with me.

During our conversation, a woman entered the office and asked where and how she was supposed to get a healthcare ID. The woman retold her experience of navigating (which in her case sounded more like meandering) through state institutions, which brought her to this office. As many other Roma women, she was officially unemployed and therefore she could not pay for public health insurance through her workplace. She had been told to go from one institution and one office to the next, without success. The man told her that he was not able to help her and that she should go back to the beginning of her pursuit to ask for more information from one particular institution. When she left the office, I asked whether she would get the ID, and he said: "There is nothing I can do. We send people to them, they send people to us, and people suffer".

Our conversation lasted almost two hours. After they had made sure our discussion was appropriate, both the man and the woman were very pleasant, talkative, open,

and willing to help me. When Petra saw this, she went back to her workplace. We called her when we finished the conversation. Petra came, took me to see her office, and meet her colleagues, and afterwards she escorted me out of the municipal office.

My two day visit to the municipality would have turned out very differently had Petra not been there. She always spoke first to the people we went to visit, she introduced me, and she left the office only when she saw that I had been taken care of. The woman who entered the office to ask about the healthcare ID did not have this kind of *veza* — someone who would go with her from one place to the next and make sure that her pursuit was successful; someone who would help her to literally navigate through the offices, and people within the buildings of the municipality. Even with Petra's help, it took a lot of time to get the information I was looking for. Petra knew 'how things worked here' and by staying with me throughout the pursuit she made sure I would get what I needed. The Freedom of Information Act was adopted in 2001 across Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it specified that both requests for information and the information itself had to be in written form. Therefore, neither I nor the people in the municipality followed the official procedure.

On the other hand, the woman who entered the office in the middle of our talk followed the route she was told to follow. I do not think that she faced great difficulties, and meandered through the state institutions for weeks for the sole reason that she was a Roma, but rather because she did not have the right *veza* within the institutions. However, her ability to pursue relations, or the world of people that she came to know was shaped by her social position. Categories such as age, nationality or ethnicity, a newcomer or an 'old' Bijeljina, citizenship, gender, and so on, had implications for who people got to know and in what capacity. In other words, relations that this woman could pursue *recreated* her social position as a Roma, as a woman, as a newcomer to Bijeljina, and so on. The lack of relations within the municipality and healthcare offices was part of the reason she could not even find out for sure where she was supposed to apply for the healthcare ID and which documents she was supposed to collect for the application.

The phenomenon I describe here can be understood as an example of the 'enchantment' and social-embeddedness of bureaucracy (Herzfeld 1993). Bureaucracy in this context was inextricably linked with personal relations. The

‘two’ functioned as ‘one’ – a single system which was not only socially made to be indifferent, but which was *partially* indifferent; sometimes it pushed towards impersonalisation and indifference, and sometimes towards personalisation. Who the person was and where they were located made the difference. The fact that Petra walked from one office to the next one with me, that she never left the office before it became obvious that the person we went to visit was free and willing to talk with me, combined with the fact that she always came back to pick me up was the sort of help people needed from their *veze* in public institutions.

3.4. Looking for a job

Zoran, an ‘old Bijeljina’, got his BA in Librarian studies in December 2009. He started looking for a job in January. He talked with the director of the main town library about the prospects of getting a job there. The director told him to be patient, because he was willing to employ him, but couldn’t at the moment. Zoran decided to pursue a relation, i.e. to find someone who would put pressure on the director to employ him. Since his father had been a soldier in the 1992-1995 war, Zoran went to an association of former soldiers, which refused to help him. They said they did not have any power, because as far as those looking for work in state/municipal institutions were concerned, everything depended on one man: the mayor. (There were people who got jobs in state and municipal institutions for social protection without a *veza*, and especially without a direct link with the mayor, yet they admitted it would have been easier and quicker to get a job with someone’s help. One woman said to me she did not want to look for a *veza* or to join a party, because she did not want to “sell her soul to the devil”.)

Whilst describing the encounter at the military association, Zoran told me a story someone had told him about a young man who graduated with honours from the Faculty of Medicine a couple of years earlier. Allegedly, this man could not find a job, so he made a press release which stated: “If my state does not need me, I don’t need it”, and announced he would leave the country. He got a job a day later. Zoran

made a joke and said he would do the same, only he would say: “If my state does not need me, I need it”.

Zoran did not issue a press release. Instead, he pursued relations. He returned repeatedly to the library, befriended several people who worked there, he waited for the governmental program of support for the probationary employment of young people, and he asked for help from his girlfriend, whose best friend’s mother was Ratka (‘the goddess’/‘big woman’, mentioned in chapter two, whose mode of accumulating power will be addressed in chapter seven). On one occasion, Zoran and I went together to the library, and ended up talking with the newest employee for an hour. This woman told Zoran who the members of the ‘board of governors’ of the library were, so that he could see whether he might be able to find a *veza* connecting him with one of them. She advised him to find someone who would convince the director that he needed to ask for more job-posts from the governmental program of support for probationary employment, and she told him: “Ask Ratka to push it. If someone can, she can”.

Under the programme, the government would pay salaries for one year for young people who would work on a trial basis in state- and public- institutions. The institutions would submit applications for the job-postings they needed the most, and the government would decide the actual number of these jobs to sponsor. Young people would apply directly to the institutions, and the institutions would select employees from these applicants.

The government opened a new round of the programme in April/May 2010, the library announced new job-postings, and Zoran got the job in July. He told me he got it as a part of the program, but also thanks to Ratka. Ratka might have influenced the director of the library to ask for new job-posts, or she might have recommended Zoran directly. I don’t know whether Ratka made one or ten phone calls, or whether she went to the library herself, and perhaps Zoran does not know either. All he told me after he got the job was that Ratka “took care of it”, and that he was happy he did not have to join a party. Again, ‘*srediti*’, or ‘to put in order’, meant activating a series of relations which were supposed to ensure that a formal job application would be accepted.

These two vignettes suggest that the pursuit of relations personalised people's encounters with institutions. Instead of dealing with a 'faceless bureaucracy', whose rules would be standardised and known, people tried to find a personal relation within this 'official system'. The last vignette will address how people used knowledge of other people to get access to desirable medical treatment.

3.5. Getting medical treatment

Rada had a daughter with multiple learning difficulties. She wanted to enrol her daughter in a specialised school in another town, and to do this she needed a number of approvals from healthcare organisations. One evening at *The Sun*, Rada told us about this process.

A family practitioner gave Rada's daughter a referral for a psychiatric evaluation. Rada called the hospital. She wanted to go to 'the best psychiatrist': the head of the department in a local hospital. She was told to call the following day. The next day she was told to call again in two days. After two days, she was simply told to wait at home, and that the doctor would visit her on a home visit when he found the time. When the head of the department finally came to her home, Rada found him incredibly unpleasant, and even rude. He decided to take the daughter to hospital, and Rada went with them. This trip to the hospital seemed pointless to her, since: "He did not do a single test, he simply prescribed her medications", as she said.

Rada thought these medications were far too strong for her daughter, so she brought them to *The Sun* to discuss them with the other women. And, in the next hour and a half, this group of women annulled the advice and prescriptions of the head of the department, formed a pool of other doctors that Rada could visit, and offered her several courses of action. These courses of action included:

- to go to Miloš, another practitioner in Bijeljina, and immediately show him what the head of the department had prescribed;
- to go to Miloš, but wait for his prescription and advice, and only then show him what the head of the department had prescribed. This way, Rada would make

sure that the prescriptions and the advice of Miloš were solely his, and not influenced by personal relations between the doctors;

- to go to Loznica, a small town across the border in Serbia, to see Sladjana, a practitioner with whom many of the women had had very positive experiences;
- to give her daughter a half-dose of the medications which the head of the department had prescribed.

The relevance of personal relations was present here in several ways. First, it was present in the perceived rudeness of the head of the department. His personal attitude towards Rada was the main reason to quickly discard his prescriptions. Second, personal and collegial relations between doctors were perceived as a potential problem and the women worked together to get around this in a way that would assure Rada that her child's benefit was the doctor's only concern. This shows that the personalisation of 'official' relations was not always desirable. After 'entry' had been gained, preferably through *veze*, a sort of professional indifference was sought. Last of all, the personal encounters of the women with other doctors helped Rada to gain access to a pool of other, acceptable practitioners. Women from the 'Sun' were friends and they had much more trust in each other than in the public healthcare system. This trust in friends' knowledge and judgement about doctors' behaviours and expertise was a way of personalising their relations to the healthcare system. This sort of personalisation was widespread.

One of the most prominent topics of conversation among people who had recently undergone medical treatments was the doctors and nurses who had performed these treatments – not diseases, procedures, or hospitals, but persons. People discussed all of those, but the most vivid and the longest conversations were about doctors. People always seemed to remember doctors' names, their overall attitude towards patients, their educational histories, sometimes even the names of their professors.

Most of the people with whom I talked throughout my research had two strategies for dealing with the healthcare system. They either pursued a *vezza*, or they tried to avoid going to a doctor. Some of them gave money to practitioners in order to get desirable medical treatment. Jašarević's analysis of medical pluralism in Bosnia shows that "Bosnian commonsense that health naturally concerns the state and that medicine ought to be submitted to scrutiny, scientific and experiential, contemporary

medical pluralism cannot be adequately understood within the rubric of —cosmology (...)” (2011: 112). Pursuing an alternative treatment, or going to a state healthcare institution had something important in common: attempts to personalise institutionalised relations and knowledges. Reliance on friends’ opinions and experiences meant that in their encounters with ‘official’ as well as ‘unofficial’ medical practices, people were comparing “different medical practices against the expectations of a gift exchange and evaluating efficacy claims by means of experiential evidence narrated in informal and intimate networks” (Jašarević 2011: 113).

The attempts to personalise the relations within the healthcare system were reflected in Stan’s argument that the informal exchanges practiced within the healthcare system in Romania were neither equivalent to buying nor giving, but were located somewhere in between (2012). Stan implies that the informal exchanges which helped people to personalise the relation with the healthcare system should not be seen as “pathological deviations (...) from the ideal of a transparent market” (2012: 65), but rather as practices involved in the reproduction of power relations. Similarly, Rivkin-Fish (2005) shows that in post-Soviet Russia giving to the medical practitioners was framed as a gift, or as a bribe, depending on how it was played out. Gifts reaffirmed the (recent) understanding that experts, and especially doctors, should be reasonably remunerated for their knowledge and work, as well as appreciated and respected, and thus gifts were perceived as an ethical thing to offer. When the offerings were perceived as bribes, they negated the appreciation and care between the practitioner and the user. Even though these offerings were also accepted, they transformed the social relationship into something that was perceived as less ethical, something that was linked with corruption and ingratitude.

An act of giving offerings for healthcare could transform the relationship between a user and a provider of healthcare services in several directions. Money could both be used to personalise the relationship (to make the provider offer a special treatment to the user) and/or to make it impersonal (to turn personalised care into professionalised disinterest). Rivkin-Fish writes that in post-Soviet Russia people thought that the best approach was “to continue the familiar strategy of accessing healthcare through personal acquaintances, while paying these acquaintances unofficially for their work” (2005: 51).

This is similar to Bijeljina, where gifts were perceived as acceptable, but bribes were not quite as acceptable. Bribes were generally perceived as an unethical requirement posed by some doctors. That which guaranteed access to desirable healthcare was not money *per se*, or giving, but the personalisation of institutionalised relationships. In order to personalise what was supposed to be an institutionalised relation, the people in Bijeljina with whom I worked attempted to ‘contract’ the space between themselves and an institution. Those who did not have a strong personal relationship with a doctor, very often ‘elongated’ the space between themselves and the healthcare system by avoiding any contact, except in extremely serious situations. I met many people who claimed that they stopped visiting doctors because they did not believe they could get the appropriate medical treatment without alternative strategies of access. One woman said, “*veze* or money, there is no other way”. In other words, many people believed that the public healthcare system could not work on its own, without the ‘contraction’ of the space between an individual and an institution achieved through personal contacts, or less preferably, through bribery.

4. *Small-scale brokers*

These relations – *veze* – were not the only available option to pursue the biological aspect of citizenship. There was a regular, official way to get healthcare treatments, jobs, obtain information, set up meetings, apply for documents and so forth. However, this regular way was firmly intertwined with personal relationships. The ‘two’ ways – an ‘official way’ and ‘through *veze*’ were not parallel, but intertwined.

Alexander (2002) has analysed the ways in which people attempted to ‘personalise’ the state in Turkey, by attempting to use the knowledge and skills of a broker, an individual who was adept in a variety of conflicting forms of order. The brokering role was institutionalised, in the sense that this person was nominally a salaried state official, as well as a person appointed by village election whose payment came from contributions of villagers. The broker’s role was to enable links across different orders: that of the centralised state, that of the state in the periphery, and the local order of a village. Namely, for the villagers in Erzurum, a village in the east of

Turkey, the state 'was elsewhere'. Through talk about the state 'as such', they attempted to re-position distances and proximities between themselves and the state, by sometimes inscribing themselves within the perceived 'order' of the state, and sometimes emphasising their locality and difference from the state. For state officials who looked at the state from within, it appeared as a cluster of relations between persons, departments, and institutions, and they only talked about the state 'as such' when discussing parts of the bureaucracy to which they were not linked. In Alexander's account, the positions assumed by a state official in Ankara, assumed by a state official in the eastern provinces, and by a farmer in the east belonged to three distinct orders. The connections, separations and comings together between orders of the state, both in its local and more centralised manifestations, and of society were unpredictable and complex, and occurred in a variety of ways. The concept of brokering then refers to the practice of coordinating between these different orders in a way that would secure the highest benefits for one of the actors:

Systems of meaning in villages coexist with central and local state constructions. Without a broker adept in making each system of meaning understandable to the others, villagers risk being caught in the interstices rather than the intersections of networks of communications that might connect them to the state. (Alexander 2002: 150)

In order to realise collective village projects, the villagers have to bridge the gaps and to be at the 'intersections'. However, they themselves do not have to be knowledgeable about these different orders, nor skilful in creating connections, since the broker is the one who:

plays the part of an entrepreneur, bridging groups of persons who do not ordinarily have contact with each other, bringing strangers together, allowing timely access to information. (Alexander 2002: 159)

In the term I used earlier, then, Alexander shows how the broker has to widen his (almost never hers) 'world of people' and to recreate strong links across different levels.

Brokering seems to be the right word to describe the ways in which people in Bijeljina tried to locate themselves at the intersections rather than interstices of information about and access to municipal and state support. However, the difference is that no single person was appointed to do the brokering. Instead, many, perhaps most, people tried to become small-scale 'brokers' themselves. Everybody seemed to pursue relations because, as Maja said, 'you never know when you might need someone'. Because of this, I do not think that, in Bijeljina, it is possible to separate different orders. There were not multiple, conflicting orders whose separations and distances had to be bridged. However, this did not mean that people faced a single order, whose rules and procedures were known.

Rather, there was a bit more than one and a bit less than two orders. Zoran's job was a result of his successful application to the government funded programme, *as much as* of his pursuit of relations. Had Zoran been successful in one (for example, having Ratka as a strong *veza*), but not the other (failed application), he would probably not have been given the job. The man at the Committee for One-off Support wanted to make sure that I was legally allowed to get the information, as much as he needed to locate Petra within the municipality's world of people. Rada's story of her encounter with the psychiatrist was a brief description of disappointment with the 'official' way of doing things. The discussion that evening at *The Sun* led to a plan to 'contract' the space and to personalise encounters within institutions.

People tried to 'contract' the space, or in other words, to personalise their relations with public institutions. Occasionally, at some institutions, a number of people were successful. At other times, in different institutions, those same people were unsuccessful. Since there was no single 'broker', the right sort of relation was dependent on the context. This dependence on the context – a contingent, and yet socially embedded (in)ability to 'get things done' – created a peculiar sense that 'everything' was potentially possible, while at the same time remaining potentially impossible.

Of course, people's varying social positions and differentiation influenced the directions in which they could create their own 'worlds of people'. Zoran was an 'old Bijeljina', whose girlfriend had a strong *veza* to Ratka. The Roma woman who entered the office could not find a *veza* at the municipality. This kind of (lack of) a relation was partly a consequence of those people's differing social positions. At the

same time, relations people were able to pursue shaped their social positions. The fact that, as an 'old Bijeljina', he got a job a couple of months after graduation reconfirmed Zoran's social position. Rada's unpleasant encounter with the head of the psychiatric department, and her plan for the personalisation of access to treatment developed at *The Sun*, recreated her position as the mother of a child with developmental difficulties.

5. *Experiences of stateness and 'normal life'*

Petryna writes that the Ukrainian state perpetuated 'its paternalistic role as the giver and taker of social resources and as life insurer' (Petryna 2002: 118). Biological citizenship in the Ukraine, thus, did not require a Weberian type of indifference of the bureaucratic apparatus (Weber 1947). Rather, forms of bureaucratic dependency familiar from Soviet times were reproduced in post-Soviet forms of organisation. This was paired with citizens' active attempts to 'silently' fit into public categories of social support, or to adapt those categories to themselves. In order to become part of the state system of social support, people had to be

both invisible and part of the productive fabric. The readiness to be cut also suggested a readiness to merge one's identity into the system as a form of self-preservation. One had to disappear. (...) One rural woman with a second-grade education told me that she thought it was necessary, as she put it, 'to stay silent and to act aggressively'. (Petryna 2002: 155-156)

People I encountered in Bijeljina did not quite try 'to stay silent and to act aggressively'. If this metaphor of voice and attitude is adopted, they tried instead to find relations that would enable them to speak with another person in a regular voice and act 'normally', rather than to speak to a generalised 'system' in a silent, or very loud voice, and to act 'extraordinarily'. The notion of 'normality' and 'normal life' in the post-Yugoslav context was a morally saturated description of how people wanted to live and what they considered to be acceptable (Maček 2007). Jansen

(2012) shows that ‘yearnings for normal life’ included a desire for the state to do ‘its job’, and therefore for some degree of order in one’s life. The link between normality, and making a claim on the state, was shaped by the fact that people had a profound and pervasive experience of ‘stateness’ in this area, even though the exact forms that this ‘stateness’ took were a matter of frequent dispute. In other words, the idea that ‘normal life’ meant having ‘a state do its job’ (i.e. providing services in the domains of education, health and social protection, etc.) was shaped by the previous experience of (some form of) ‘stateness’. The desire to retain some sense of ‘normality’ and the very concept of ‘normal life’ were infused with meanings and memories coming from the period of the SFRY. Even in the situation of war (directly opposed to the state of ‘normality’) in a neighbourhood in Sarajevo people organised themselves in order to enable schooling by *gridding* – by trying to create predictability on different scales – in time, space, and the distribution of expectations and responsibilities (*ibid.*). As Jansen explains, this included a desire to be incorporated into the ordering frameworks of an (embryonic) state project, which points to the importance of order in yearnings for normal life.

Veze in Bijeljina, up to a degree, offered a way to navigate the healthcare system in order to establish what was perceived as a normal relation within it. They were a way to find one’s way through the world “moving sideways and backwards, simultaneously and often skewed” (Pine 2002: 98). The relationship between “old” and “new” social processes and experiences in many post-socialist contexts is semi-predictable and difficult to express in terms of clear-cut models. Pine argues that in post-socialist Poland

Any discussion of continuity and change is complicated by the fact that many social and economic processes, which appear to be quite new, demonstrate under closer scrutiny a marked similarity to older relations and practices, while others which appear to be continuities are taking place in contexts which are drastically different from any which previously existed. (2002: 98)

Similarly, ‘yearning for normal life’ in Bosnia was shaped by the experience of living in a socialist Yugoslavia, as well as by the particularities of post-war and post-

socialist transformation. The configuration of parts of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ social relationships, the variety of places where bits and pieces of the old and the new state came together, was affected by different ways of knowing people, and relations within the ‘world of people’, as well as by previous experiences of ‘stateness’.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the practices involved in ‘fixing the position’ – understood as gaining knowledge about people’s personal histories, and knowledge about someone’s position with regard to one’s own ‘world of people’ – was relevant in various ways. First, the knowledge of where a person was in relation to one’s ‘world of people’ suggested *who* this person was, in a particular way. Second, knowing a fixed (if only temporarily) position was used for ‘dead reckoning’ – understood as gaining access to the state system of social support, both for those who were attempting to gain access, and for those who were enabling or declining this access. This meant that navigation through the fields of health and social protection required engagement with ‘personal’ and ‘institutional’ relations, which interplayed in complex ways. Being a Bosnian citizen was not a straightforward indicator that one would get the care and protection one desired; one also had to be a small-scale broker, a successful navigator and ultimately able to utilise a variety of relations. Thus, the biological aspect of citizenship almost always required navigating practices.

Such navigation through the state system of health and social protection was usually conducted through the personalisation achieved by *veze*. Whether these attempts were successful was largely dependent on one’s ‘world of people’, and one’s social position as it was recreated in that world. Therefore, gaining access to health and social protection was the locus of struggle in this context too, and this struggle was dependent on ‘personal’ as much as ‘institutional’ relations. The biological aspect of citizenship in Bijeljina was not about determining who came to be recognised as a citizen, but about attempts to obtain what was perceived as the proper care for ‘life itself’, through various historically and socially shaped possibilities of navigation.

Chapter 5

Humanitarne akcije: reproducing the ‘world of people’ through charity

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will address a charity practice called *humanitarne akcije* (humanitarian actions). Humanitarian actions in Bijeljina brought together individuals, public actors, private firms, the municipality, and other state institutions into an amalgam of personalised and institutionalised relations. Hundreds, if not thousands, of actors gave donations, largely through the ‘who knows whom’ system.

I have ethnographically tracked how three families navigated their way through institutionalised and personalised relations in order to raise money for medical treatments across the border which one family member needed. The members of the three families engaged in ‘fixing the position’ kinds of activities – in getting to know a large number of people and pursuing all potential *veze* they could think of – as well as ‘dead reckoning’ – that is, attempts to proceed in a certain way for a period long enough to get their loved one to the required medical treatment. Humanitarian actions which these families initiated outline the contours of the ‘world of people’, a community reproduced by their attempts to navigate.

I will argue that just like the term *humanitarian* can be contextualised into an idea of a population and a family of nations, so *humanitarna akcija* can be contextualised into an idea of the ‘world of people’ (*svijet*), which I introduced in chapter four. The ‘world of people’ marks a multitude of heterogeneous relations, within and through which knowledge, responsibilities, and expectations were distributed. Relations of the ‘world of people’ imbued state institutions, private companies, NGOs, and other actors with local knowledge of histories of people and places. They also enabled the overflow of responsibilities and expectations which was discussed in previous chapters. *Humanitarne akcije* reproduced these ‘worlds of people’ and presented cases in which the characteristics of a ‘world’ became clearly interlinked and visible.

Three families started *humanitarne akcije* in the town during the year when I conducted fieldwork. The Božović, the Ilić, and the Žarković family initiated humanitarian actions in order to raise money to send one of their family members for health treatment beyond the borders of Bosnia. The Božović family raised money for repeated visits to a clinic near Belgrade (Serbia) with their five year old son with autism, and they wanted to go to an experimental clinic in Moscow (Russia). The Ilić family raised money and went to an eye clinic near Moscow to check whether it was possible to surgically improve their baby son's premature retinopathy. The Žarković family collected donations to send their sister and daughter to a hospital in Vienna (Austria) for a bone marrow transplant.

The *humanitarne akcije* presented a mobilisation of relations that spread in multiple directions and on different scales – across old friendships, state institutions, workplaces, etc. – in order to raise charitable donations. The 'worlds of people' the Božovići, the Ilići, and the Žarkovići were in a position to mobilise were mutually different. Nevertheless, in all three situations, the 'world of people' implied sharing knowledge (stories about oneself and other people), it had 'real-life' consequences, and it presented a framework where multiple and diverse relations operated at the same time across various domains.

2. *Where does the term humanitarne akcije come from?*

The most accurate contemporary translation of the phrase *humanitarna akcija* into English is not *humanitarian action* but *charity action*. The difference which exists in English between charitable, philanthropic, and humanitarian activities is not fully translatable into the BCMS languages. This is because the histories of the meaning of the words *milosrdje* or *merhamet* (literally: charity), *filantropija* (literally: philanthropy), and *humanitarnost* (literally: humanitarianism) had their own paths in former Yugoslav spaces.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the adjective 'humanitarian' as 'concerned with or seeking to promote human welfare', or 'denoting an event or situation which causes or involves widespread human suffering, especially one which requires the

large-scale provision of aid. (...) In the Oxford English Corpus the second most common collocation of **humanitarian** is **crisis**.³⁴

Therefore, in English, ‘humanitarian aid’ is meant to be a response to a ‘humanitarian crisis’. It denotes help directed towards a *population*, rather than *individuals*. It is most often directed across state borders, and it “emphasizes the physical (and increasingly the psychological) condition of suffering people above all else. (...) its institutionalized form defines itself primarily through exceptional states of misfortune” (Bornstein & Redfield 2011: 6). Bornstein and Redfield emphasise that ‘structures of moral feeling’ (2011: 7) of contemporary humanitarian concerns are often situated in “the current framework of nation-states and international organisations” (*ibid.*). In other words, conceptually, humanitarianism is closely related to the idea of a ‘family of nations’ (Malkki 1995), in which one member of a family (i.e. one nation) needs the help of other members to survive.

The words *humanitarna akcija* in post-Yugoslav spaces signify something different. *Humanitarna akcija* does not denote help directed towards a population, but rather towards individuals, or, occasionally, a group of people. Conceptually, it can be part of a number of ideas. Sometimes it carries **national connotations** as help directed to fellow-nationals. At other times, it has connotations of a **religious duty** to give to those who need help. Often, it is linked with a notion of **universal humanness**, whereby those who give help are understood to be *ljudi* – humans – as opposed to those who do not give help and who are not considered to be (decent) human beings. Within this universalistic idea of humanness, it is irrelevant whether the amount given is one convertible mark³⁵ or thousands times more, since money is a token of willingness to help, in accordance with one’s abilities. Perhaps most frequently, *humanitarna akcija* is understood as constituting in part **local relations** between people, whereby, as we shall see, it is understood as help to friends and acquaintances in need.

Nowadays in the BCMS languages ‘humanitarian *action*’ is used to mark charitable events which include the active involvement of donors as participants, and recipients

³⁴ "Humanitarian" *Oxford Dictionary of English*. Edited by Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0391240> [accessed on: 07/05/2012]. Emphasis in original.

³⁵ Convertible mark is the official currency in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

as organisers. ‘Humanitarian *aid*’, on the other hand, is used to mark goods which would be called ‘charitable help’ in the English language. This has its origins in two historical moments:

1. The charitable giving by the better-off people to the poorer ones was not common during socialist Yugoslavia. Charitable organisations which existed prior to the Second World War were considered to be unnecessary with the formation of the SFRY, since the state often acted as a provider of specific aid. However, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were active in many parts of the SFRY, including in Bijeljina. The kind of help that the local Red Cross and Red Crescent provided was called ‘humanitarian aid’. Bijeljina’s local Red Cross office had many activists before the 1992-1995 war. After the harvesting season, they went to peasants’ homes who gave small donations of grain (*mjerica žita*), which activists then distributed to people in need. The food that was not given away was placed in a barn and later sold. The money raised in this way was used to finance various actions, such as short trips and vacations for poorer people, blood donors, money donors or Red Cross activists to attractive places such as Bled (Slovenia), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Sutomore (Montenegro), Zlatibor or Tara (Serbia), and so on.
2. During the 1992-1995 war, very large volumes of humanitarian aid were delivered to Bosnia from abroad and a number of international humanitarian organisations directed their work to people living in Bosnia at the time. Many of them remain active in the country today.

Both the Red Cross and Red Crescent aid during the SFRY period, and international aid during the war, were referred to as *humanitarian*. In the latter case, once this aid arrived in Bosnia, it was distributed to individuals according to a variety of criteria, and in more than a few cases, one such criterion was religion, or nationality. Maček writes that

Sarajevans’ attitudes toward Islamic organizations were similar to their attitudes toward the Catholic *Caritas*: some felt grateful, some had a pragmatic attitude, while others disliked religiously based assistance from foreign countries and saw it as

removed from Sarajevo traditions. However conflicting these attitudes were, in wartime most people could actually hold several of them simultaneously. (2009: 160)

Simultaneously, people living in Bosnia received humanitarian aid from UNHCR, and similar organisations, which was perceived as a “religiously and politically neutral party”, and therefore, its aid was at first “longed for and welcomed” until it turned out “its quality was poor and quantities meagre” (Maček 2009: 67).

Since humanitarian aid came from a variety of places, with a variety of intentions, people associated with all three nationally defined groups living in Bosnia received humanitarian help – even though not always from the same sources. This fact might have something to do with the de-linking of notions of ‘population’ and ‘humanitarian help’ in the BCMS languages. The specific configuration of national relations in pre-war Bosnia (Sorabji 1995; Jansen 2005b) along with the war-related movement of people (Jansen 2007a; 2007b) led to this decoupling. The meaning of these very terms – population, Bosnia, Bosnian population – was redefined through the war in Bosnia. Generally speaking, humanitarian aid received in Bosnia during the war was not aid directed in a time of crisis towards one (nationalised) population, or towards one member of a ‘family of nations’. Specific humanitarian activities might have been conceptualised in such terms, since there were many organisations helping exclusively members of one nationally defined group (for example *Kolo srpskih sestara*, i.e. ‘Kolo of Serbian sisters’), but as there were such organisations helping Bosniak Muslims, Croats, and Serbs, humanitarian aid in fact addressed most people in Bosnia.

The contemporary meanings and practices of *humanitarne akcije* were shaped by these two moments. Recalling the Red Cross and Red Crescent activities of the SFRY period, the word ‘humanitarian’ continues today to denote situations in which certain people organise themselves to help certain other people living in their vicinity with matters of health and social security. The war-related humanitarian activities shaped the meaning of ‘humanitarian aid’ into objects of small value; they were also responsible for the contemporary sense that more or less anyone can find herself or

himself in need of charitable aid. Today *humanitarna akcija* marks a number of diverse practices of charitable giving which started happening along with post-socialist transformation. In Bijeljina, ‘humanitarian action’ was the term used to describe what happened when

- a group of students organised a football game in order to raise money for their friend’s travel to a hospital abroad;
- an NGO, or a religious charity, opened a ‘humanitarian number’ for a family. The humanitarian number was a service provided by the phone company. Every call to a humanitarian number had the same price (usually 2KM+VAT). After one month, the money collected from the calls would be paid to the account of the institution which opened the number. Only legal entities were allowed to open a humanitarian number.
- employees of a firm were asked to collectively make a donation to a certain family;
- high school students were asked by the school’s headteacher to collectively make a donation to a certain family;
- a political party organised a concert to raise money for a family;
- a municipality gave one-off financial support to a family with a specific need; and so forth.

Clearly, *humanitarne akcije* involved all kinds of different forms of helping. People could choose whether to become involved in a charitable action by going to a music concert, a party, through donations at their work place, or by calling a humanitarian number, or by making a direct payment to someone’s account, by offering a service rather than financial help, and so on. *Humanitarna akcija* signifies both a single action (organised for example, in one school), and a number of actions organised to help one family over the course of a few months.

Humanitarne akcije presented a form of charity, but did not correspond to the idea of a ‘humanitarian response’ organised across borders. Nor were they a clear example of a local civil society initiative, or a local civil society response to a local need. *Humanitarna akcija* was a charitable practice which could not be fully

comprehended through the concept of ‘civil society’. There are at least two reasons for this.

Firstly, they were a form of charity in which a (frequently large) sum of money was raised for a single family, or a single person. This suggests a specific distribution of trust. Instead of raising money for *a group* of people with the same condition or in the same problematic situation, or for *an institution* which works with such a group of people, humanitarian actions were frequently organised around the need of *an individual*. This meant that trust did not necessarily have to be gained through institutional channels. The assumption was that if the person whose family asks for help did not really need the treatment, one would hear about it in the same way as one heard about the call for help. Additionally, people considered the donations to be small enough such that a lack of final proof regarding what happened with the donated money was acceptable. Stories which spread throughout the ‘world of people’ were a sufficient ‘mechanism’ of insurance that the individual really needed help, and thus of generating trust. Story-telling as a ‘mechanism’ of insurance against frauds cannot be easily translated into the language of accountability, signed documents, registered organisations, and lawsuits which are all part of the idea of ‘civil society’, as it has been introduced in Bosnia since the early 1990s (Stubbs 2007).

Secondly, in humanitarian actions, *the municipality* was one among many donors who gave municipal or state money to an individual. The municipality of Bijeljina, or more precisely, the mayor, decided to make a charitable donation of seven hundred and fifty euros to the Božović family, but they refused to help the Ilić family claiming that the funds for that year had already been spent. Another municipality and another mayor – that of Brčko – helped Vana Žarković by covering almost two thirds of the bill for her bone marrow transplantation in Vienna. In humanitarian actions, municipalities, as much as other state and non-state institutions, occasionally acted like charitable institutions, and occasionally as a disinterested system for the equal distribution of resources, depending on personal entanglements, ways of knowing people, or the time of the year.

Let us now explore how the process of mobilisation of a ‘world of people’ was organised through humanitarian actions.

3. *The system of 'someone knows someone else'*

One evening, I went to a bank, and was waiting in a queue to pay my bills. A conversation between an employee behind the counter and a woman who came to make a payment for the Božović family caught my attention.

Woman: Hi, I want to make a payment to a humanitarian account. This is the name of the account holder and here is the account number [*she gave a piece of paper to the worker*]

Bank Clerk: Who is making the payment?

Woman: Class 3LJ, Vuk Karadžić school.

Bank Clerk: And to whom is the payment addressed?

Woman: For Božo... Božo... Could you please take a look at the name on the paper?

Bank Clerk: For Božović Slavko... I know about this boy.

Woman: Yes, my class collected money for him.”

They briefly discussed the boy, the sorrow his family must be feeling, and other humanitarian events organized for the Božović family about which they had heard. A few days later, I saw a poster asking for help for Slavko Božović at the town's main bus station, and then throughout the town: on walls, bus stops, street lights, in shop windows, and so on. There were also advertisements in newspapers and on local TV stations.

Pedja and Milena Božović had two children – a daughter Danica and a younger son Slavko. Five year old Slavko had been categorised as a child with autism at the Centre for Social Work a couple of years before. He stopped talking when he was two years old, he had problems walking, and he had hearing difficulties. His parents claimed he had a rare type of fungus which caused most of his problems, and they said that more

than one doctor had told them Slavko was not a child with autism. They took Slavko once a month for ten to fifteen days to an institution for psycho-physiological disabilities and speech pathology in Serbia. Additionally, they wanted to try an experimental treatment at a clinic in Moscow.

Two months before the described chat in the bank, Pedja went to the local Red Cross office. Djole, the president of the Red Cross, turned out to be immensely helpful, and Pedja described to me the help he provided as a system of “someone who knows someone else”³⁶:

“[Djole] contacted people. That’s what he did, that’s the only way. Unfortunately, we can’t do it another way. (...) And other people helped us in the same way. (...) it’s a system of ‘someone knows someone else’ in a way. There you go.”

Through this system of “someone knows someone else”, Djole put Pedja in touch with different schools and firms. The woman I overheard in the bank was one actor involved in this particular humanitarian action taking place in schools. Since many of the schools in the town came to be involved, the number of people who had heard about the action was large: not only were all school pupils informed about it, but many also told their parents about it, and the information about the problems of the family of Slavko Božović and the humanitarian action travelled further afield. The Božović family raised twenty four thousand convertible marks (twelve thousand euros) solely through the humanitarian phone number. This means that approximately twenty four thousand calls were made to this number.

Some of those hundreds, if not thousands, of people who helped the Božović family did not know for whom exactly the money was raised – just like the woman in the bank. A high school student and a friend of mine, Marija, organised a humanitarian action in her high school even though she misunderstood for whom the collected

³⁶ The similar English phrase would be ‘friend of a friend’.

money was designated.³⁷ The school director asked Marija to collect money from other pupils for a sick child. Marija thought the sick child was a pupil of another high school, and she even told others that the money was being raised for a high school pupil. She only found out that the humanitarian action was for the Božović family when she managed to raise one hundred and fifty euros from her classmates. Marija did not make any kind of list of givers and she did not make a note of how much each student gave, because ‘everyone gave as much as they could, and making a list would create unequals’, as she said.

This reveals the scope and productiveness of the ‘who knows whom’ system for practices of navigating the health and social protection system.³⁸ The ‘world’ entangled a large number of people one knew ‘from seeing’. One was part of a particular ‘world of people’ if there were stories about her or him continuously travelling throughout this ‘world’. Different ways of knowing histories of people and places strongly shaped charitable giving. This local knowledge of people and places, of their histories and their positions within the town produced particular ‘worlds’ of people. These ‘worlds’ raised thousands of euros for single families, and their *modus operandi* were information shared in passing – through café talks, phone calls, posters, announcements at workplaces or in newspapers, etc. However, the information about a family and about an action, often half-heard, or half-remembered, was not sufficient to make someone donate. Instead, a push to give came from knowing someone who was somehow involved in the action: from knowing her or his history and position within the town, and finding it acceptable and trustworthy.

Vana Žarković was a student of pedagogy in Bijeljina, whose family – parents and a sister – lived in Brčko. Vana had leukaemia and needed a bone marrow transplant for

³⁷ This means that a long-term, larger *humanitarna akcija* for a family consisted of a number of smaller, one-off events which were also called *humanitarne akcije*.

³⁸ The Internet, and especially Facebook, has been used to spread the information about a humanitarian action, and a particular one-off event (for example a humanitarian concert), mostly among younger people. However, online relations did not turn out to be very productive in terms of raising money.

which she planned to go to Vienna. Her sister Milica started a humanitarian action in Brčko and Bijeljina in order to raise fifty thousand euros. The bone marrow transplant would cost two hundred thousand euros, but the mayor of Brčko promised that the municipality would cover the difference if the Žarković family could raise the sum that had to be paid before surgery. The humanitarian action consisted mostly of parties: Milica organised more than twenty events during five months, as well as two big pop concerts, in Brčko and in Bijeljina. She also managed to open a humanitarian number and to get some direct payments to their account.

For example, Milica wanted to organise a concert for her sister. Milica asked Sanja, her friend, to go to Sanja's friend who was the director of a hotel in Brčko. Sanja asked the hotel director whether they could use the hotel's stage for free. The director agreed. A couple of weeks later, Sanja got a call from Ana Bekuta, a famous pop singer. It turned out that Bekuta frequently stayed at this hotel, and that the hotel director had called her and asked her to sing for Vana free of charge. In this case then, a person who did *not* know Milica or her sister Vana directly helped them by giving them use of the hotel stage for free, and also by connecting them to Bekuta. The hotel's director had a personal relationship with Sanja, and that was enough for her to become involved.

This action further expanded in scope. Bekuta asked her colleagues to join her. As a result of the calls made by Ana Bekuta on behalf of the Žarković sisters, a huge concert of ten famous pop singers was held in Bijeljina, including the ex-Yugoslav pop stars Neda Ukraden and Željko Samardžić from Serbia.

Local knowledge of who did what, with whom, when, and so forth (...) was something that one could only gain through years of living in the town. The director

got involved in the action because she had a relationship with Sanja, which implied knowing and approving of Sanja's position within the town, and of bits and pieces of Sanja's personal history. Thus, belonging to a 'world of people' implied knowledge produced through experience; it meant that one person was quickly able to locate another person in a complex constellation of personal and institutional relations. This knowledge led people to decide to give help, like in this example, or to not become involved in a humanitarian action, as I will discuss in chapter six. People in Bijeljina invested a lot of time and effort into generating this kind of knowledge about places, people, their businesses and their histories, in a way very similar to the one employed in Corsica, or other places. Candea writes that

mapping, making, and remaking connections in conversation with a group of friends and neighbours was an activity which people in Crucetta appreciated in itself and were prepared to spend a great amount of time and effort doing. (2010: 127)

Candea analysed the way in which knowledge, and belonging, in Corsica was a matter of possession. He approached senses of belonging – to Corsica, to the village of Crucetta, to other people – not as produced through an opposition with an Other, but through generating relations in many directions, and thus attaching oneself to many others: "The shift from 'being' to 'having' makes entities open-ended, since every question of possession leads to another question of possession" (2010: 126). I think that, in a similar way, senses of belonging in Bijeljina, like in other places, depended on time, experience, and the stories people told, among other things. However, I did not engage much with the question of whether these senses of belonging were an issue of being, having, or doing. While Candea's focus is on belonging and difference as recreated through relations, mine is on the shape of a community forged in this way and on the implications that this had for goal-oriented practices of navigation. There are many similarities in the ways in which people living in these two places got to know one another, and made attachments of various kinds, but there were also some differences which will be discussed in the following section. Following how knowledge about other people was utilised for the practice of navigation in Bijeljina reveals the contours of a community (the 'world of people') which entangled different 'orders' and linked people across different scales.

Ana and Marko Ilić had their baby Nikola in 2009. Complications regarding Ana's delivery were addressed in chapter three. Nikola was born with premature retinopathy, which his first doctor in Belgrade did not notice until it was in an advanced phase. Ana and Marko 'googled' the doctor's name, and discovered a story of a family from Niš (Serbia) who had been in a situation similar to theirs. This family took their child to a specialist eye clinic near Moscow. The clinic had a branch in Novi Sad, and many people from the region used its resources. After consultations in Novi Sad's branch, the Ilić family decided to raise money to go to Russia. They needed eleven thousand convertible marks (five thousand five hundred euros) for the whole trip.

All of the ethnographic examples presented so far suggest that donors did not have a particularly close relationship with the family who raised the money. I chose those examples because they emphasise the relevance of the system of 'someone who knows someone else', knowledge produced through shared stories, and the multiplicity of scales across which people established relations. This does not mean that people close to the families did not donate. For example, the Ilić's friends and family lived in various locations scattered throughout Bosnia and the rest of Europe, and because of that a lot of donations to the Ilić family were made from a number of different cities. Marko's family lived in Sarajevo before the war, but they moved several times during and after the war. The Ilić's pattern of moving is a part of the 'refuchess' story, or "the strategic deployment and movement of nationalised persons across nationalised places" (Jansen 2011: 140). Marko described the people who had lived in the same towns and refugee settlements, as he had, as 'practically my relatives'. One of those 'relatives', a woman in her late fifties who made a donation, told me over the phone:

“It is the same circle of people who help one another, the same. My daughter had a similar problem and Marko’s parents helped them. Of course I am going to help them as much as I can now. It’s little, I would do more if I could, but it is as much as I can.”

Her words reveal a sense of indebtedness which was present in one of her ‘circles of people’. The fact that Marko called these people his relatives makes sense if understood as an expression of closeness established through lived experience. So, in addition to people one knew ‘from seeing’, the ‘world of people’ included intimate, kinship-like relations of people considered ‘practically relatives’. The ‘world of people’ had the ability to entangle these intimate relations within its interior. It was made out of kin-like relations, among other kinds of relations. Some of the people who were part of the same ‘world of people’ would do things for one another that family and kin would be expected to do.

From what I have described so far, the ‘world of people’ might seem a lot like a contextually specific way of establishing relations ‘outside’ of the state and its structures. However, the ‘world’ is not simply another word for a ‘community’, since institutions were a constitutive part of it. Even state institutions, such as the municipality of Bijeljina, and the municipality of Brčko, became donors of charitable help to individuals. Both the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’ had their role in *humanitarne akcije*. In other words, the *svijet* did not include only interpersonal relations; it also had the ability to entangle institutions. People who were connected through institutions could constitute the ‘world’, and the ‘world’ had a bearing on how institutional relations worked.

4. *The shape of the ‘world of people’*

While trying to track a network of people who donated small amounts of money to particular families for surgeries abroad, the *svijet* that people talked about did not seem to be a circle. The woman who was ‘practically a relative’ of the Ilić family

described it as a circle (*krug*), but I want to argue that the ‘world of people’ rather had a tree-like form. Each family mobilised its own ‘world of people’. The ‘world’ of the Ilićs mainly included family, the father’s former work colleagues, cousins living in various diaspora, acquaintances from the neighbourhood, and so on. The ‘world’ of the Božović family predominantly consisted of people older than thirty five years, work colleagues, local classical musicians and artists. The ‘world’ of the Žarković sisters mainly comprised young people, university students, and pop singers. The world of all three families included municipal authorities, who chose when and whom to help, and how much.

However, while we can see some general tendencies in those three 'worlds', it was by no means clear-cut *who* belonged to *whose* world. ‘Membership’ was not confirmed in any formalised way: there was no customary or state ritual through which one would become a member of a particular world of people, no number of drinks that needed to be drunk, no documents to be signed, no special food or verbal formulas that needed to be used. Being a part of the ‘world of people’ came from continuous, repeated practices: of being there regularly, of exchanging greetings in the same places, of exchanging stories about people, of helping each other out in small ways.

On one occasion, I asked Milica, who gathered money for her sister's bone marrow transplant, to draw a picture describing the beginnings of the humanitarian action. She firstly marked her own name, and linked it with her aunt and her boyfriend, Darko, since they were the people with whom she had made a decision to start the humanitarian action:

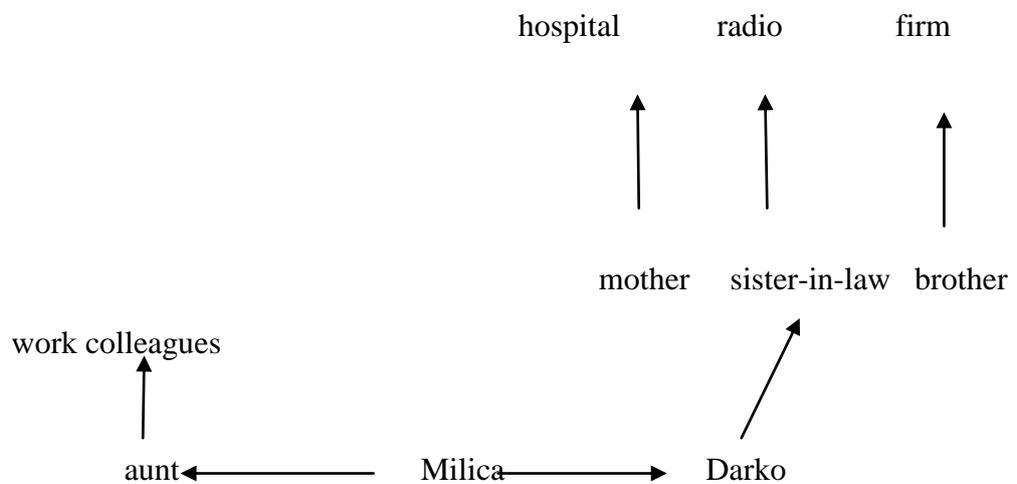


The aunt told the people from the store where she worked about the action, so Milica continued drawing:

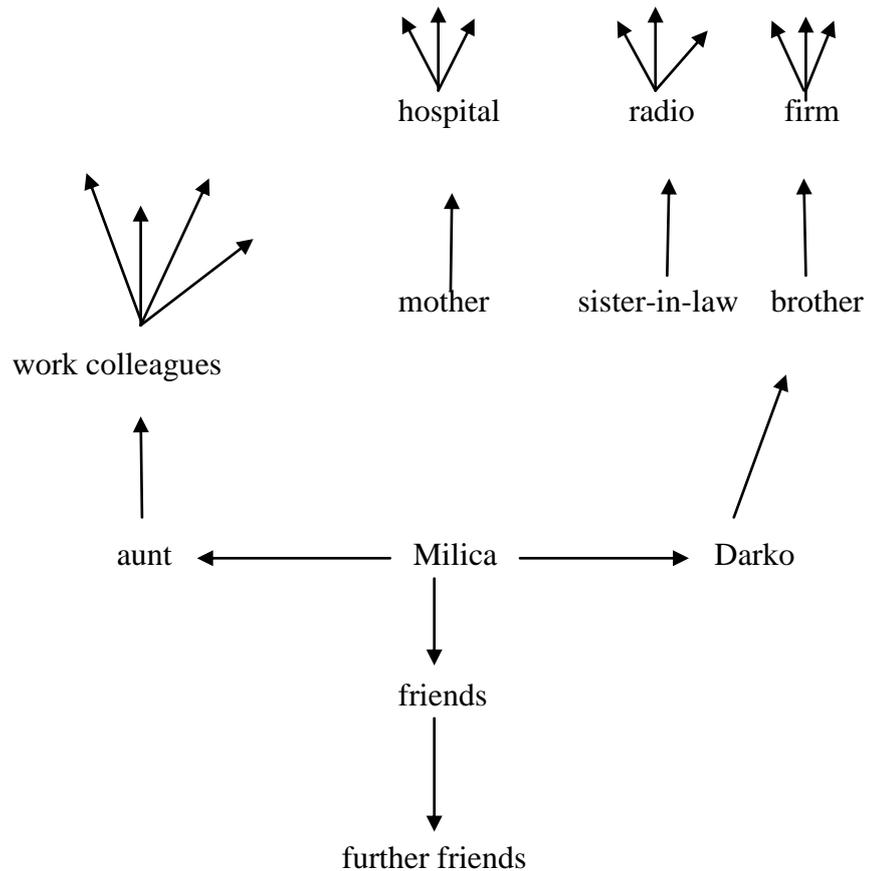
work colleagues



The mother of Milica’s boyfriend worked in a technical department at the hospital and she got support from her colleagues. The spouse of Darko’s brother worked in a local radio broadcasting company, and in addition to telling her colleagues about the humanitarian action, they broadcast information about the action regularly. Darko’s brother worked in a firm and he told his colleagues there about the action. As Milica was explaining these relations, she also drew them this way:



Milica also added ‘friends’, and ‘further friends’ below her name. Many of these people – friends and colleagues from the hospital, the firm, the radio – told their friends and families about the action, and the drawing extended further:



Milica's drawing reveals the shape that the *svijet* had – the 'world of people' cannot be represented as a circle, but rather through a set of lines multiplying and branching off in different directions. In this scheme, it looks as if 'nodes' are both people (Milica, her aunt, her boyfriend) and institutions (the radio, hospital, firm, municipality, etc.). However, the category of 'work colleagues' suggest that an institution cannot itself be part of the 'world'. Rather, only people constituted the 'world', but they could be *related through an institution* (store, municipality, transport company, school, etc.) *or through personal links* (friendships, acquaintanceships, love relationships, etc.).

The drawing that Milica made looks somewhat like a beginning of a bifurcation tree, with certain differences. A bifurcation tree implies a perfect division of a line in two halves, and further perfect division of each part into two, and so on:

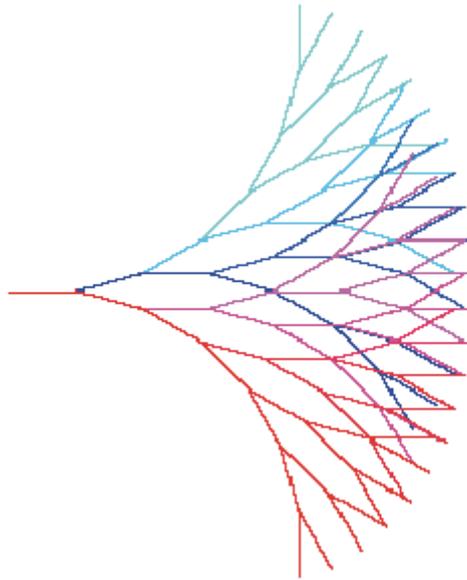


Figure one, available at: <http://www.upscale.utoronto.ca/PVB/Harrison/Chaos/Dimension.html>
[accessed on 24/05/2012]

However, Milica's drawing at the very beginning shows that the 'world' was not neatly divided into halves which were further divided into halves, but rather branched in a less ordered way, as a simple tree might be. This 'world' was composed of relations, which were repeated over and over again, in slightly different ways. Relations among family members, relations among neighbours, relations among work colleagues, relations between citizens and state institutions – all were reproduced along the way. To repeat Massey's words, this does not mean that within a space "everything is (already) related to everything else" (2008: 11). However, it does mean that any segment of a humanitarian action would include a relation which was, in a slightly different way, repeated elsewhere. This fractal-like, 'not-quite-replication' (cf. Green 2005) means that a change in the quantity of relations did not necessarily mean a change in their quality.³⁹ It would be wrong to think about the

³⁹ I hope that the discussion so far suggests why I did not use the notion of a rhizome, as was developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988), to think about the 'world of people'. Briefly, the reasons are the following: within a rhizome everything is connected to everything else, it presents a unity of multiplicity, and it is flat. None of these characteristics can be applied to the 'worlds of people' in Bijeljina as they were recreated through *humanitarne akcije*. While the 'world' presented a multitude of relations, these relations were not equally and evenly spread. Rather, power relations, and different types of need, shaped the 'world of people' in a way that makes it impossible to imagine it as a rhizome. The 'world' was more like a fractal characterised by not-quite-replication (cf. Green 2005). Deleuze and Guattari oppose the notion of a rhizome to an image of a tree, because a tree bears implications of genealogical links, and a single centre. For me, there is a difference between the

‘world of people’ as encompassing ‘close’ relations (for example, family and friendships), but not ‘far’ ones (i.e. the state, and other institutions). It would also be wrong to think about the ‘world of people’ as evenly encompassing heterogeneous relations. Instead, the ‘world of people’ unevenly and awkwardly interwove state institutions, friendships, unknown people, printing companies, NGOs, and pop singers for the Žarković family, and a number of other actors for the other two families.

What does this tell us about the way in which relations were acknowledged and reproduced through the ‘world of people’ in Bijeljina? As previously mentioned, in many places, the amount of attention, time, and effort invested in discussions of other people, their business and their histories, reveals that this kind of knowledge was important. Candea (2010) addressed a practice of ‘anonymous introductions’ in Corsica, which meant starting an acquaintance with other people without initially stating your name (or asking for another person’s name) but instead, searching for a possible mutual acquaintance. These anonymous introductions, Candea argues, ‘bracket the difference’ between people, allowing them to make a connection before acknowledging the separation. To offer one’s name at the beginning of a conversation would mean acknowledging the lack of an already existing relation among speakers; locating a mutual acquaintance first creates a relation between the speakers before the separation was acknowledged by them. Avoiding saying one’s own name to an unknown interlocutor enables both interlocutors to get to know each other’s position within Corsica through talk about other people (friends, relatives, acquaintances, and so on), and thus to know ‘who’ the other person is, or where she/he is within this particular network of relations.

‘worlds of people’ in Bijeljina and the tree as Deleuze and Guattari framed it. While different ‘worlds of people’ intersected, they had to have a single centre (if only temporarily), because it would not be possible to raise money without this centre. The money had to be directed towards a ‘centre’ in order for the ‘world’ to be productive. In other words, each humanitarian action had its own ‘centre’ – a person, or a family, for whom the money was raised. However, since, potentially, any person in Bijeljina was able to build his or her ‘world of people’, and many people did, especially while dealing with health and social care issues, this is not the same kind of centre that Deleuze and Guattari talk about while discussing the differences between rhizomes and trees. Furthermore, the implications of genealogical links also do not apply, in my opinion, because the ‘world of people’ was produced through practice: through everyday experience of being among people, telling stories, generating knowledge, i.e. actively investing oneself into kinship relations, friendships, acquaintanceships, *veze*, etc.

In other words, if a rhizome marks a unity of multiplicity, the ‘world of people’ should be seen as occasionally a single entity, and occasionally a multiplicity, depending on the scale and the moment of looking at it (cf. Green 2005: 142).

However, Candea found that this way of ‘doing personhood’ (Candea 2010: 131) coexisted with others, and anonymous introductions served to allow “one way of ‘doing’ personhood to be bracketed in favour of another” (*ibid.*). This means that a way of ‘doing personhood’ which is materialised through passports (exemplified in having a known name and ID number) is being ‘bracketed’ in Corsica by anonymous introductions in favour of ‘doing personhood’ in a way which is part of local ways of knowing people. These ways of knowing people “could effortlessly and silently stretch to include Continentals” (Candea 2010: 129). The core difference with the ‘world of people’ in Bijeljina was that they could not include institutions. This means that in Corsica there were multiple, but clearly separable, bracketed, ways of ‘doing personhood’ – the one employed by the state was not enmeshed within the one employed through anonymous introductions. In Bijeljina, just like in many other places, ‘where’ the person was in the network of local relations was inextricably linked with ‘who’ the person was, but these local relations were also enmeshed with state institutions. One’s position was recreated through the relations of both the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’. Let me explain this in more detail in the next section.

5. *Personal-institutional entanglement*

One of the main characteristics of the humanitarian actions in Bijeljina was an uneven and awkward entanglement of relations which, from one perspective, could be separated as ‘personal’ and ‘institutional’, and from another perspective become fused into one’s world of people. People looked for relations that could be helpful for raising money in a variety of places – municipal committees as well as transportation companies, or schools.

For example, Ranko **Ilić**, the father of Ana Ilić, went to the three firms where he used to be an employee: an accounting firm, a firm which monitored parking spots, and a transportation company. He asked for help from the directors of those firms; people who used to be his co-workers. They agreed to help his daughter. The directors told their current employees about the action, and then the employees made

the donations. Ranko thus went to three institutions but he did not go to institutions specialised in working with children, but to the ones with which he had personal links. Without these links, Ranko would not necessarily have convinced the directors to organise a donation. This humanitarian action was not conducted by ‘word of mouth’: it was organised in a workplace and among co-workers. However, it was not institutional help in the full sense either, since companies which take care of transport, parking, and finances are not intended to help families with ill children. Another example was a school action for **the Božović family**. Pedja Božović went to the Red Cross (an institution) whose director, Djole, he already knew (a personal connection). Djole called his own friends, who were employed in schools (personal connections). Djole’s friends then issued an announcement informing school staff and students that they should collect money for the Božović family (an institutional channel). Finally, children and teachers in those schools told people beyond the schools about the action (personal connections again). The action in schools points to the ways in which “personal” connections and “institutional” channels intertwined. The actions of raising money were dependent both on informal talk between people and on formal hierarchies between school directors and pupils, or directors of firms and their employees. Yet another example is the entanglement of state institutions: all three families asked for financial help from the municipalities. **The Žarković family** got great financial help in this way: three quarters of the total price of surgery were covered by municipal funds. Additionally, even the information about the hospital in Vienna came from the mayor, rather than from doctors. These types of services are not in the mayor’s job description, but people didn’t find it strange.

The personalisation of institutional relations, or the ‘contraction’ of the space between people and institutions, was dependent on one’s position within the town’s network of relations, among other things. For example, the municipality of Bijeljina had a “Committee for One-off Support”, but the Ilić’s plea for financial assistance was declined, because the funds for that year had been spent. Marko Ilić thought that his family would have gotten the support from the Committee, had he had a *veza* within the municipality. He compared the sense of relief he felt after the phone call to Ratka to the huge sense of disappointment experienced when the municipality refused to grant financial help to his family. Namely, Marko went to the local phone company office to open a humanitarian number. He was told that he needed an

organisation, a legal entity, which would open the number for him. Marko remembered that Ratka was the president of the religious charity *Holy Mother*. Both Marko and Ratka had lived in Sarajevo before 1992, and, after having moved to different cities during the war, had both settled in Bijeljina afterwards. Marko did not know Ratka personally, but as he described it, ‘from seeing’. Marko went to the monastery at the centre of Bijeljina, went into its shop and asked about *Holy Mother*. A boy working in the shop gave him Ratka’s phone number. Marko told me he would be eternally grateful to her because of her reaction. Ratka had said: “Wait, don’t move, I’ll be there in a minute”. She came to meet with him right away, and opened a humanitarian number for the Ilić family. Through the humanitarian number they raised around six thousand eight hundred convertible marks (three thousand four hundred euros). Ratka was a person who was able to navigate her way through the personal-institutional entanglement with great success. Through helping others, she became a part of the ‘world of people’ for many in the town.

6. Conclusion

Humanitarne akcije presented a mobilisation of and navigation through the multiplicity of relations that were heterogeneous, and spread across different scales (across old friendships, state institutions, workplaces, and so on) with the aim of raising charitable donations. In this sense, the ‘world of people’ can be understood as a space organised through relations of, for example, charitable giving. Navigation through the ‘world of people’ was an activity which helped to orient oneself both pragmatically, towards a certain goal, and socially, within the town’s interrelations. Thus, for example, Milica navigated her way through her ‘world of people’ with the aim of raising money for her sister’s surgery, and along the way she recreated existing relations, and established a variety of new ones. She also shaped herself into a particular person – one that everybody knows – which will be discussed in the following chapter.

By initiating the humanitarian actions, the three families started navigating through different ‘worlds of people’ living in the same town. These worlds shared certain characteristics.

Firstly, a ‘world of people’ implied sharing stories with other people, about other people. In the case of *humanitarne akcije* this meant that information travelled throughout the town through the system of ‘someone who knows someone else’. Secondly, the fact that hundreds, if not thousands, of people got involved, and that thousands of euros were raised in this way, suggests that the ‘world of people’ was not simply about gossiping and storytelling, but sometimes also produced very material consequences. Put bluntly, if Milica had not gathered a ‘world of people’ around her to raise fifty thousand euros, her sister Vana would have died. Thirdly, a ‘world of people’ entangled personal and institutional relations. For humanitarian actions this meant that there was no particular institution to which people who needed to raise money would turn for help. However, institutions became important actors. The actions depended on personal relations as much as on institutional channels. These two ‘modes’ of relating were intertwined, rather than parallel or strictly hierarchically ordered.

These specific ways of relating made possible the form of charitable giving discussed in this chapter – many people donating small amounts of money to a single family for medical treatment abroad. The idea that ‘everybody knows everybody else’ and the personalisation of institutional relations shaped *humanitarne akcije* into this particular form. Of course there were other factors involved too: ways of relating were also shaped by the state border, the history of the town, and people’s war-related movement. There were many more Serbs than Bosniaks involved in humanitarian actions – because there were many more Serbs than Bosniaks living in Bijeljina as a consequence of forced expulsions of Bosniak Muslims from the town which happened during the 1992-1995 war. And there were many more citizens of Bosnia than citizens of Serbia involved – because humanitarian numbers could only be called from numbers registered in Bosnia and because ways of knowing people were shaped by the state border.

Humanitarne akcije recreated the ‘world of people’ and used its productiveness to make things happen that otherwise would not have happened, at least not in this

particular form. The ‘world of people’ reproduced through humanitarian actions should not be imagined as a discrete entity, but as a form of branching which entangled people with one another in a specific way. Milica’s drawing of the beginnings of *humanitarna akcija* shows that the ‘world’ was not neatly divided into halves which were further divided into halves. Rather, the ‘world of people’ branched in a less ordered way, as a simple tree might. These characteristics rendered humanitarian actions as something rather different from the notion of ‘humanitarian response’ as it is usually employed in the English language. As we saw, this evokes a ‘population’ and a ‘family of nations’ and denotes help directed towards a clearly defined ‘other’ – a group of people hit by a large-scale misfortune such as a war, or an environmental catastrophe. In contrast, the three *humanitarne akcije* traced in this chapter represented the organisation of help directed towards the improvement of the health condition of one person. Their humanitarian character was constituted through a variety of ways of establishing relations within the ‘world of people’. The pursuit of relations of *humanitarne akcije* was partly moral and partly pragmatic endeavour, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Moral reasoning and the pursuit of moral selves through humanitarian actions

1. Introduction

Humanitarne akcije in Bijeljina typically lasted for a couple of months and presented a way to bring hundreds, if not thousands, of actors together around the same initiative. These were large-scale, long-lasting, and partly formally, partly informally organised charitable actions. In the previous chapter, I followed how people navigated local relations within the town, as well as state institutions, in order to raise money for medical treatments abroad, through humanitarian actions. I have argued that navigation was a productive activity which was almost always necessary to ‘get things done’: to organise humanitarian actions, to raise money, to get desirable treatment, to obtain documents, and so on. In this chapter, I will ethnographically focus on the ways in which actors involved in humanitarian actions engaged in a process of moral reasoning, albeit frequently in a partial manner. These actors include a voluntary Orthodox religious organisation that I have called *Holy Mother*, two individuals who reasoned about whether to get involved in a humanitarian action or not and who made opposite decisions, and a woman who initiated and organised a humanitarian action for her sister. I will take a closer look at how these actors decided upon what counts as moral in their pragmatic attempts to achieve a certain goal. I will argue that, in their attempts to navigate local relations and various institutions, people also had to navigate different moral frameworks. In other words, I will address their reasoning around various moral issues, and attempts of ‘dead reckoning’, which meant answering the question: “how should we proceed moving, and for how long, in order to get where/who we want to be?”.

Humanitarne akcije interwove a variety of reasons to give a donation into a single, if complex, charitable practice. Nationality, religion, universal humanness, professional

ethics, local relations and so forth, presented (some of) the frameworks through which people reasoned through whether to give charitable help, and how much. There was no clear-cut separation between, for example, people who fulfilled their obligation to give charitable help to fellow-nationals, and people who fulfilled their obligation to give charitable help to their neighbours and friends. These were often one and the same people, since, as a consequence of the 1992-1995 war, neighbours were often fellow nationals. The same people thus sometimes chose one and at other times another framework as relevant. As a country in which legacies of socialism, nationalism, and democratic and market-based values of transition ‘coexist and operate in uneasy combinations’ (Gilbert 2006: 15), it is not surprising that we find multiple ways in which people understood the content of the obligation to give.

In addition to multiple understandings of morality coexisting in contemporary Bosnia, I will show that reasoning concerning what counted as moral was affected by other things, such as pragmatic issues, and the form which moral practices took.

First, I will offer a brief summary of some of the arguments developed in anthropological studies of morality, and focus on charity as a practice through which moral projects are enacted. I will then present three vignettes which illuminate different, but related, issues raised by moral reasoning around humanitarian actions. The first vignette will show that people could make decisions about moral issues in a partial, or “imperfect perfect” way (cf. Venkatesan 2012). It will point out how the multiplicity of actors, values, and goals involved in the organisation of humanitarian actions frequently required people to reason in this partial way – to actively pursue some attachments, and to ignore other ones. Moreover, refusing attachment towards some aspects of the action meant having to refuse attachment to other aspects too. The second vignette will suggest that the form through which moral attachment was pursued affected whether and how it would be enacted. Attachment is not only about reciprocal relations between persons, but also about institutionalised possibilities of continuous relating. The third vignette will suggest that sometimes a certain moral project was pursued for more pragmatic reasons. The woman who raised money for her sister pragmatically invested herself into a particular project of becoming a certain kind of moral subject, in order to achieve the goal of helping her sister.

2. *Producing moral subjectivity through moral reasoning*

The pursuit of relations in humanitarian actions can be understood as an attempt to produce attachment in order to get something done. Attachment and detachment “are not virtues in and of themselves,” because “the desire to make lasting relationships of give and take or temporary connections based on lack of reciprocity with others need to be situated within wider social and moral contexts” (Venkatesan 2012: 13). Thus, by the term ‘attachment’ I will refer to the long-term investment in a reciprocal relationship, which could be inter-personal or institutional. By ‘detachment’ I will refer to a sort of stepping away from this investment, and refusal of reciprocity, which again could be directed towards persons, or institutions. Both terms have a performative dimension, since specific moral subjectivities, or moral selves, can be reproduced through both attachment and detachment (*ibid.*). If there is no possibility “to distinguish between the restrained and the liberated, but instead between the well and the poorly attached” (Latour 1999: 23), I understand the pursuit of attachments and detachments as a repeated, contextually specific, attempt of occupying a contextually available subject position.

Laidlaw (2002) has sought to develop a way of separating morality from sociality by taking into account freedom. In his work on Jain ascetic and confessional practices in India, freedom is not understood as agency, but as a socially and historically grounded possibility to choose and work on a preferred project of creating oneself through a particular personhood. Thus, Laidlaw presents the concept of freedom as a tool to think about moral projects beyond the opposition between moral relativism and universally applicable morality. This concept of freedom does not mean that one can be whatever one wants to be. It is more of an acknowledgement that “society” is not a discrete homogeneous whole with a singular morality, and that people perform, i.e. actively engage with and reproduce, socially and historically grounded possibilities of selfhood:

Actively answering the ethical question of how or as what one ought to live is to exercise this self-constituting freedom (...) [B]y describing the different techniques of

the self, one can tell the story of different ways in which people have purposefully made themselves into certain kinds of persons, and therefore of the historically specific and definite (and of course always limited) forms which that ethical freedom has taken. (Laidlaw 2002: 324)

Here, the *intention* of making oneself into a certain kind of a person, *purposeful work* in appropriating and performing socially and historically grounded possibilities of selfhood, becomes the key aspect of freedom.

Likewise, Sykes (2009) has argued that the concept of *moral reasoning* enables anthropologists to approach people's practices without subsuming them under universalistic rational judgement or culturally relative logics. Moral reasoning, for her, is a practice of dealing with contradictions and moral ambiguities which are "part of the human condition" (Sykes 2009: 8). In other words, moral reasoning is an activity of working through the contradictions arising from different projects of personhood. Sykes argues that universalistic rational explanations do not pay enough attention to forms of affect which influence moral reasoning. Universalistic rational analysis cannot take seriously into account people's wishes and passions without relegating them to some form of false consciousness or strategic essentialisms. On the other hand, to make a culturalist argument in approaching people's decisions about moral issues – to say that people make certain moral choices 'because' of their culture – is analytically impoverished. It conflates morality with sociality, and it approaches 'culture' as a "fluffy notion" (Douglas, in Weiner 1995: 18) which does not explain how people make moral choices. Additionally, Sykes emphasises that it leaves very little space for mutual comprehension across 'cultures'.

A variety of other terminologies and conceptual distinctions has been developed in the blooming field of anthropology of morality (Faubion 2001; Zigon 2009; Lambek 2008). However dissimilar they might seem, there are some assumptions they share, not least an emphasis placed on an individual as the locus of moral reasoning.⁴⁰ This

⁴⁰ Several contemporary feminist political philosophers (albeit in mutually very different ways) develop a perspective which puts the emphasis not on an individual as the centre of the ethical, but on the link between issues of ethics, justice, and political *collectives*. Benhabib (1997) develops a (normative) project of communicative ethics which cannot be fully subsumed under an individual and her reasoning, but is formulated as a relation between oneself and others established through a particular form of communication; Fraser (2010) articulates strong criticism of the imaginings and

emphasis is partly the result of an attempt to separate the social from the moral. Laidlaw argues that the conflation between sociality and morality came out of Durkheimian notions of moral facts *as* social facts:

Durkheim's conception of the social so completely identifies the collective with the good that an independent understanding of ethics appears neither necessary nor possible. There is no conceptual space for it. (2002: 312)

If, following Durkheim, abstract ideas of what is good, or how to understand God, present a way for a collective to present itself to itself, then projects of making a particular kind of self become reflections of a society. On this view, the moral self becomes inseparable from the socially grounded self. Additionally, Durkheim's notions of mechanic and organic solidarity scale back morality to sociality in matters of determining the boundaries of a moral community, or the reach of relevant others with whom a moral relationship is maintained.⁴¹

As mentioned, Laidlaw suggests taking into account freedom as a way to overcome this conflation. If possibilities of selfhood are socially shaped, morality becomes a matter of the freedom to decide which particular self to pursue. Or, in Foucauldian terms, freedom implies the ability to choose which of the available "technologies of self" one will pursue. Through the concept of "technologies of self" Foucault (1984) investigated processes by which certain practices and beliefs become moral, while others fade away. "Technologies of self" include four aspects: a) *the ethical substance*; the 'material' that is going to be worked over by ethics, such as flesh, pleasure and desire, feelings, etc. b) *the mode of subjection*, that is, the way in which

practices of justice which follow the framework of a nation-state, arguing that a number of contemporary relations that go beyond it require an adequate response: thinking about and practicing justice beyond the framework of a nation-state.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that the first known use of the word 'amoral' was recorded in 1779 (according to the Merriam Webster dictionary), which coincides with the period of invention of political economy (Foucault 2003; 2007), and of 'the invention of society' (Arendt 1998). Both 'moral' and 'immoral' imply direct investment into the field of morality, a (good or bad) relationship with the Other. The point of view suggested by the term 'amoral' implies being outside of social and moral relations, a certain bird's-eye-view, which seems similar to those of political economy and biopolitics. Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/amoral> [last accessed on 15/05/2012]

people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations; it can be posed as a divine law; natural law; a cosmological order; a rational rule; pursuit of beauty, etc. c) *the self-forming activity*, or asceticism in a broad sense; the means by which people change themselves in order to become ethical subjects; d) *the kind of being to which people aspire* when they behave in a moral way.

Thus, the “self” for Foucault is the product of relations in which it is implicated; the “moral self” is the result of the combined work of these four aspects. In considering “technologies of self”, Foucault traces the historical changes of “technologies”, rather than possibilities for individual action. Analysing modes of subjectivation, and their transformations, in ancient Greece and Middle Age Christianity, he argues: “(...) that there is a whole rich and complex field of historicity in the way the individual is summoned to recognize himself as an ethical subject of sexual conduct” (Foucault 1990: 32).

When one is “summoned” to recognise oneself as an ethical subject, this requires active work and participation, or the third aspect of the technologies of self. One such self-forming activity consists of establishing attachment, or pursuing detachment; attachment and detachment are thus understood as means by which people shape themselves into particular ethical subjects (Venkatesan 2012). The production of ethical subjectivity is inseparable from relations with others, i.e. from the pursuit of and detraction from certain reciprocal relations. Work on selfhood implies the production of contextually specific attachments, as well as detachments:

Being inappropriately attached or detached has context-specific moral implications for ideas about the self and the striving for a good life and a virtuous self. (Venkatesan 2012: 1)

Charitable practices present one of the avenues of the pursuit of attachments and detachments. Choosing how to become involved in a charitable practice – whom to give a donation, in what way, what constitutes the donation, etc. – partly is a matter of socio-historical context, and partly of personal strivings towards specific moral projects. In her analysis of the politics of caring for the poor in the US, based on an

ethnographic research at two voluntary charitable organisations, Allahyari explores the ways in which volunteering intersects with “situationally available moral rhetorics and emotions” (2000: 6). Working within and through such situationally available discursive practices of morality, volunteers engaged in the process of *moral selving* understood “as shaping, striving, creating, building, and sculpting” (*ibid.*) oneself into a virtuous person. Let us take a closer look at morality as practiced through charity.

3. *Charity as the context of moral reasoning*

Addressing the question of how people choose which moral projects to pursue, Venkatesan (2012) articulates the notion of the *imperfect perfect* obligation. While a *perfect obligation* is one that “tells us precisely what we must do, with no option of putting it off until some other occasion” (Greenspan 2010: 181), the *imperfect obligation* “leaves open crucial features of the required act” (*ibid.*). Venkatesan shows that between these two, there is an *imperfect perfect* obligation. The imperfect perfect obligation integrates the strictly determined content of a perfect obligation with an uncertainty and leeway for choice of an imperfect obligation. As an example of this she refers to the obligation of Muslim fathers living in a South Indian town to ensure their daughters marry. These men chose different means to raise the money required to fulfil this obligation: through charity trips, or by borrowing money. If their decision is to turn themselves into charitable recipients, they go on a *dasagam* trip to Singapore or Malaysia, where they ask rich Tamil Muslims to fulfil their religious obligation to give to the less fortunate, by helping them to raise money for the wedding. If their decision is to turn themselves into money-borrowers, they frequently end up with a long-term debt, which sometimes leads them to losing their homes. Both decisions were motivated by the same obligation: to pay for the daughter’s wedding. Depending on their choice of how to do this, they were then confronted with the consequences of shame and humiliation (if asking for charity), or large debts (if borrowing money):

Like the perfect obligation, the content of the obligation is clearly laid out however, like the imperfect obligation, there is some leeway in terms of deciding exactly when or how to go about fulfilling the obligation. (2012: 3)

I suggest that charity can also be understood as an example of an imperfect perfect obligation. The logic of charitable giving comes from the concept of private property: I give away a portion of *my* labour (property) to someone who needs it more than I do. Thus, the content of the obligation is clear – giving a part of one's labour to someone who is in need – and constitutes the perfect part of the *imperfect perfect* obligation.

Everything else in this relation is open to negotiation and dependent on the socio-historical context, and on personal choice within this context: who constitute givers, who are receivers, what sort of need is in question, what sort of property, how giving is organised, and so on. Thus, the imperfect part of the *imperfect perfect* obligation depends on two things: 1) socio-historical context, i.e. the situationally available discursive practices of morality and charity, and 2) personal choice, or reasoning through these available discursive practices.

For example, whilst being involved in *humanitarne akcije* in Bijeljina and sponsoring someone in another part of the world both present cases of charity, their specific forms of giving are shaped by larger socio-historical contexts. Many people in Bijeljina were involved in *humanitarne akcije*, but I have not met anyone who sponsored a child on another continent. The sponsorship form of charity stems from post-colonial geopolitical relations (Bornstein 2001b), both conceptually and practically. However they might have reasoned about it, people in Bijeljina in 2009 and 2010 did not have access to mechanisms required for this type of charity: there were no organisations like *World Vision* which linked people across continents (cf. Bornstein 2001a: 622).

On the other hand, the work on the production of ethical selfhood could mean active engagement with the available options of charitable giving, and deciding which of the available options to pursue. This implies active work producing attachments, as well as detachments. Thus, the freedom to make a moral choice about something

includes the possibility of deciding which of the charitable relations within one's "horizon of possibility" (Jansen 2009b) to pursue, or from which point to approach, understand, and engage with the world, as I will ethnographically discuss in the rest of the chapter.

Since charity is partly well defined (the perfect part), and partly very open (the imperfect part), it has been addressed in the anthropological literature in several different ways— as a set of practices involved in the reproduction of senses of national belonging (Leutloff-Grandits 2009; Stevenson and Manning 2010), class relations (Derrida 1992), or the intersections of class/status and religion (Bowie 1998; Heilman 1975); as challenging religious moral frameworks (Feldman 2007; Caldwell 2008); as challenging and reproducing existing relations between the "first" and the "third" world (Bornstein 2001a; Bornstein 2001b; Geissler et al. 2008; Mindry 2001), as involved in the production of specific subjectivities and their relation to various levels of politics (Bakalaki 2008; Allahyari 2000; Venkatesan 2009). Voluntarily given entities include money, time, body parts, food, various goods, and so on.

Bakalaki argues that charity resists definition: since it can link different people in various ways, and since people engage with it for a variety of reasons, what falls within, and what outside the 'charity' is ambiguous. In an analysis of a group of poverty relief volunteers in Greece, she writes:

Students of philanthropy have pointed out that 'philanthropy' resists definition. Its meanings, values and strategies are multiple and flexible. The long lasting power of the ideal of philanthropic altruism has been attributed to the fact that this ideal speaks to different people in different ways and tells them many and variable things. (2008: 91)

This group of poverty relief volunteers tried to affect the 'mind/soul/self' of the help recipients through material help in the form of food, and so called 'psychological support'. The volunteers struggled to tame both their own and recipients' emotions – theirs, in order to come as close to "authentic altruism" as possible, and the

recipients' in order to enable them to become independent and self-sufficient. Bakalaki writes that volunteers realised that "try as they may, they will always be a little behind" (2008: 84), but they nevertheless keep trying to shape themselves into particular moral selves. The rhetoric of altruism, precisely because of its flexibility, "renders struggling with these ambiguities meaningful, necessary and, ultimately, heroic." (Bakalaki 2008: 91). In her analysis of charity appeal cases published in the *New York Times* between 1912 and 1992, Loseke also found that the 'idea of charity' fits into 'multiple vocabularies of moralities' (1997: 438). She shows that charitable giving was discursively interpreted through different moral frameworks: through a sacred morality of religion, an almost sacred morality of a democratic community, an economic morality of individual capitalism, and a human morality of compassion.

As a case of an imperfect perfect obligation, charitable practices in Bijeljina were dependent on the particularities of the socio-historical moment (as I have argued in the previous chapter), and on moral reasoning concerning which available moral project to pursue, and in what way. In the rest of the chapter, I will ethnographically explore three patterns which emerged as relevant during my research: sometimes moral reasoning meant making imperfect perfect decisions; sometimes the form of the pursuit was made less personal and more institutional in order to be moral in a particular way; sometimes people chose particular moral projects in order to get through to something that conjoined pragmatic and moral goals to the point that they were almost inseparable.

4. *Imperfect perfect moral decisions*

Humanitarian actions in Bijeljina were not organised within a single moral framework. Rather, religion, nationality, local knowledge of people's past, personal relations and profession were some of the frameworks that people reasoned through when making decisions about moral issues. In other words, while deciding whether to become involved in a certain humanitarian action, people reasoned through multiple ideas of what was moral.

One such idea was ‘universal humanness’. After a humanitarian concert for the Božović family I went for a drink with a young couple. The woman had been at the concert with me, while the man had not. The woman said she could not imagine *not* going, since she worked with children with autism regularly. She was a practicing Orthodox Christian, and she saw herself as a Serb, but in this case she did not mention religion or nationality as reasons for giving, but her professional occupation. The man decided not to go since the concert was organised by a political party. Further, the president of this party had done despicable things towards the non-Serbian population of this town during the war – he said the president refused to give a glass of water to a woman who needed it. He said he could not attend a humanitarian concert knowing that it was organised by someone who was not a *čovjek* (literally: human), meaning a *decent* human being.

In Bijeljina, as in many other post-Yugoslav places, the notion of (not) being a ‘human’ was part of a wider set of ideas about ‘universal humanness’. This set of ideas was frequently evoked in everyday conversations during my fieldwork, very often in the form of a negation (“That is inhuman”, or “She is not human”, phrases which expressed that an act, or a person, was not morally worthy, rather than not being a member of the human race). I will use ‘universal humanness’ as an emic concept, and not as an analytical tool. To not be a *čovjek* (pronounced as *chovyek*, meaning ‘human’) meant that, in one's actions and judgments, one was not able to go beyond socio-political vectors of power, such as nationality, gender, age, or class. These socio-political vectors of power were imagined as layers wrapping the human essence. Thus, within the local idea of a ‘human’, there was supposed to be a shared, universal, core of humanity beneath these layers. The degree to which this core directed one's actions and judgments was decisive as to whether someone was a *čovjek* (a good, decent human being), or not (a bad, selfish, nonhuman). This *čovjek* did not have to be morally perfect, since making mistakes was considered to be a fully human characteristic, as long as the mistakes were small.

Furthermore, being a ‘human’ was understood as a *project* that needed to be achieved throughout one's life. One was not simply born as a *čovjek* (even though some people might have been born with more ‘humanness’ in them than others). It was something that could be learnt from one's mistakes and from life experience. But in the after-concert conversation addressed here, the man judged the president of

the political party that organised the humanitarian concert to have acted below any standards of humanness when he had refused a glass of water to a non-Serb during the war.

This ethics of who and what constitutes a ‘human’ potentially could be stretched to include all of the people in the world, thus purporting to be universal, even though it was firmly situated within the SFRY and post-Yugoslav contexts. It seems to me it was closely related to *Praxis*, a Marxist humanist philosophical movement which developed in the SFRY from the 1960s. Some of the Praxis members, such as a philosopher of ethics from Croatia, Milan Kangrga, articulated a moral relation between nationality and an idea of a ‘human’ in the following way:

Biti samo Hrvat – znači još ne biti čovjek. (To be just a Croat – means to not yet be human).⁴²

This saying does not suggest that Croats are not humans, but that to be *just* a nationally defined being is not enough in order to be a fully developed human being. The word **yet** implies that being a ‘human’ is a moral project – something that needs to be developed, or discovered, or achieved. Becoming a ‘human’ is “a hard process that takes a lifetime” (*ibid.*). If one stays at the “layer” of nationality, or any other of that kind, one cannot reveal, or learn, or achieve one’s humanity properly.⁴³

On the basis of his post-war research in 2000-2001 amongst Muslim (Bosniak) returnees to Stolac, a small Bosnian town, Kolind shows that an idea of *poštteni ljudi* (decent, respectable people) was used as a one of “the building blocks of Muslim counterdiscourse” (2008: 140). This ‘counterdiscourse’ was developed in opposition

⁴² <http://pescanik.net/2010/06/o-nacionalizmu-2/>

⁴³ Developing a strong criticism of nationalism, Kangrga continues his reasoning: being a good member of a national collective means being kind to oneself, one’s fellow nationals, and hence to one’s nation. In order to be a good national, one can even do evil to members of other nations, and still remain a good national: “This is why overall we should not particularly brag about our ‘good Croatness’, but why we have to put a lot of effort and work into becoming as soon as possible – good people, if we can do that at all! (...) A nationalist is an immature human being”. Since being a human is a project and a process, rather a given state, Kangrga also suggests that instead of saying ‘a good human’ it should be enough to say simply ‘human’. Available at: <http://pescanik.net/2010/06/o-nacionalizmu-2/> [Last accessed on 15/05/2012]

to the overwhelming nationalist propaganda and the actual practices of ethno-national separation between Croats and Bosniaks (see also Kolind 2007). In addition to the idea of decency, people in Stolac used a specific understanding of politics (*politika*) and cultured, civilised behaviour (*nekultura*) “to disapprove of actions and people without resorting to the dominant ideology of ethnicity as an explanatory framework” (Kolind 2008: 140). In other words, the idea of what it means to be a ‘human’ – a decent, morally worthy person – was used to interpret people’s actions and various events in terms other than ethno-national: it was argued that someone behaved in a certain way not because she was a Bosniak/Croat/Serb, but because she was (not) a decent person. It should be noted that there might be a structural reason for using the discourse of ‘good people’ rather than an ethno-nationalist framework of interpretation: Jansen (2002; 2006b) shows that the structural position of Serbian returnees to villages in Croatia was weak, and that they employed various ways of legitimating their presence as returnees. Similarly, the people who Kolind worked with were Bosniak returnees and therefore in a structurally weak position vis-à-vis new local governance structures in the town, which were dominated by Croatian nationalist parties. Using this discourse they legitimised ‘national coexistence’ and thereby their presence in Stolac.

Leutloff Grandits, on the other hand, has shown that ethnonationality can be a salient motivation for charitable giving in post-Yugoslav contexts (2009). In 2001, a charity campaign for ‘hungry Croats’ was organised and led by Catholic Caritas in Knin (Croatia). The creation of a translocal charity network was based on the powerful image of a hungry fellow national, which blended together differences between native Croat inhabitants of Knin and Croat refugees from BiH, and erased native Serbian inhabitants of Knin from the story of national solidarity. This action received large support and it “was successful because it appealed to a sense of Croatian solidarity, attracting donors nationwide and beyond the state borders” (Leutloff-Grandits 2009: 58). Even though it was started by a local religious charity, a sense of responsibility and solidarity spread throughout towns in Croatia.

Let us return to the situation in which a young couple in Bijeljina explained their mutually opposed choices about whether to go to the humanitarian concert for the Božović family discussed above. The concert was organised by the youth club of a political party, for a young boy who needed healthcare treatments outside of

Bijeljina. People could make one of two decisions: to go to the concert, or not to. Both of these decisions could be moral – the woman and the man in the conversation above made different choices, but they understood and supported the choice of the other one. This conversation suggests that navigating different ideas of morality was a matter of thought and reasoning, rational elaboration and conscious decision, rather than of moral feelings (cf. Sykes 2009). Zigon (2008) calls this ethics, and places it in opposition to morality. He ethnographically analysed possibilities of orientation among different moralities which jointly shaped people's lives in contemporary Moscow. Focusing on the individual as the locus of morality, Zigon creates a distinction between a "conscious process of ethics" (2009: 252) which marks moments of negotiation between different ideas of moral and active thinking about how to act or to be morally appropriate, and "nonconsciously enacted morality" (*ibid.*) which is formulated by three related aspects: the workings of institutions, public discourse, and embodied dispositions. Thus, morality becomes "one's everyday being in the world" (Zigon 2009: 260) and ethics a "kind of stepping-away to question and work on any of the three aspects of morality" (Zigon 2009: 261).⁴⁴

This sort of stepping-away while reasoning about whether to pursue a particular relation, or not, and if so in what way, shaped the after-concert conversation in a pub. The two people said they made their decisions beforehand, but our conversation after the concert provided a forum in which they could reflect on this. During the conversation they were explaining to me, and to each other, how and why they made those decisions. The woman decided to put aside the issue of who organised the concert and to focus on the person who needed help. Thus, making a decision about moral issues for her was a matter of putting aside certain factors (local knowledge about war-related events), and focusing on some others (the boy who needed the healthcare treatment). The man also explained his moral reasoning. He focused on the people who organised the concert and their war related activities, and put aside

⁴⁴ Zigon also claims that the anthropology of morality can be developed only with regard to moments of 'moral breakdown', rather than to 'unreflective moral dispositions' (Zigon 2007: 140). By this, I think he means that, during a 'moral breakdown', a person is pushed to verbally articulate and reflect on multiple moral frameworks, with the result of choosing one moral framework as appropriate for the future. Methodological tools of social anthropology are, therefore, well suited for studying these moments. Zigon's 'unreflective moral dispositions' refer to an unconscious, intimate, embodied sense of being morally appropriate, rather than to a need to articulate and define this sense in any particular way. Even phenomenological anthropology, which has developed methodological tools for exploring bodily experiences, asks in what way human bodies shape *consciousness* (Csordas 1994). Therefore, anthropology has no tools to access "nonconsciously enacted morality" (Zigon 2009: 252).

the fact that Slavko needed help. His moral choice meant refusing an attachment with both Slavko and the party president. Thus both of them had to make decisions about moral issues in a partial or imperfect perfect way.

The notion of ‘imperfect perfect obligation’ can easily be extended to include the decisions people make about their obligations. Venkatesan’s analysis (2012) shows that Muslim fathers engaged with their imperfect perfect obligation (to find money to finance the wedding) by making imperfect perfect decisions: they had to accept consequences of shame and humiliation (if they made charity trips) or large debts which deepened their financial insecurities (if they decided to stay). They reached their decisions knowing that they would not necessarily want all of the consequences of those decisions.⁴⁵

Similarly, in Bijeljina the obligations and ways of engaging with them were frequently imperfect perfect. The decision of whether or not to go to a humanitarian concert depended on a variety of issues: for whom the humanitarian concert was organised, by whom, who told you about it, where it was organised, etc. This meant there were multiple things to which people could relate, or refuse to relate to, and which, thus, shaped their decisions.

Both people conversing with me that night made moral, imperfect perfect, albeit mutually opposed decisions. They pursued the same idea of what it means to be moral person, a decent human being (‘to be a *čovjek*’), albeit in different ways. In order to pursue the moral project of becoming ‘a *čovjek*’, the man decided to refuse to help Slavko. In order to pursue the moral project of becoming ‘a *čovjek*’, the woman decided to disregard knowledge about war activities of the party president. This is why their decisions were imperfect perfect: in order to fulfil one’s obligation (to give part of one’s labour to those who need it more than one does, for example), they had to accept things they would not have necessarily accepted in different circumstances. The process of moral reasoning for potential donors in Bijeljina often meant deciding whether to pursue this or that obligation – a professional obligation

⁴⁵ Perfect obligation requires simply deciding to do it, since its content, as well as the way of fulfilling it are already determined. Thus, a decision to fulfil the perfect obligation would mean following the prescribed route. Imperfect obligation ‘leaves open certain crucial features of the required act’ (Venkatesan 2012a: 3), and thus the decision to fulfil it depends almost in total on the person – he or she can fully decide how and when to fulfil an imperfect obligation, and thus they can more easily avoid unwanted consequences than is the case with ‘imperfect perfect’ decisions.

to help; friendship with the child's family, or with performers at the concert; loyalty to the party, and so forth – or none at all. Because of the multiplicity of the relations between people involved in the organisation of a humanitarian action, potential donors frequently had to make a partial, imperfect perfect decision: to emphasise the relative relevance of one obligation and one 'entity' (family, friendship, political party, etc.) over another, and to accept its consequences as a whole.

This vignette also suggests that in a context in which the pursuit for war criminals was far from over, and where many people had not served a sentence for war crimes, people had to reason through local relations and local knowledge about the past in order to decide whether and how to make use of the existing institutional possibilities. Very often, people would decide to put aside issues they thought they could do nothing about, and move on towards fulfilling a goal. In some other occasions, they decided to refuse attachment, i.e. to let go of the goal in order to not be 'tainted'.

Furthermore, as the third vignette will also suggest, issues of practicality were also relevant for people's decisions regarding moral choices: since charity is an example of an imperfect perfect obligation, people sometimes would not go to a humanitarian event because they had other things to do, or simply because they were tired.

The following vignette will also discuss how people pursued certain positions of moral selfhood, but with an emphasis on the *form* of this pursuit.

5. *Becoming a moral person through the formalised pursuit of attachment*

The religious charity *Holy Mother* was one of the most visible charitable associations in the town of Bijeljina. Amongst many other things, it became involved with two of the families who started humanitarian actions as discussed in chapter five: *Holy Mother* opened a humanitarian number for the Ilić family, and gave direct financial help to the Božović family. Its members heavily relied on the idea that 'God sees all', and that one should 'love your neighbour as oneself'. Their work was directed towards low-income families with children with developmental problems, and high

school pupils for whom they organised icon-painting classes. There were four women from the association who visited the families with children with special needs once a year, and two or three who occasionally went on birthday visits. During the visits, they always took a cake and small material items of help with them. Their husbands would help out by carrying wood and coal to those families who “were in the worst of situations”, once or twice per year. Additionally, they sometimes intervened to relieve the most urgent needs of the families they visited: for example, they paid a large energy bill debt for one family when their electricity supply in their home was cut off.

The director of the *Holy Mother* organisation was the ‘goddess’ Ratka, and the ‘conceptual father’, in the words of its members, was a local priest. In 2005, the first year of its work, the association organised a free collective Serbian orthodox baptism for the children of families they worked with. People who got in touch with *Holy Mother* did include some persons of other faiths – amongst those they helped there were a few Muslim families – but it was impossible to claim that one was an atheist and to be understood seriously. Their yearly visits of almost a hundred families with children with developmental difficulties, many in the villages around the town of Bijeljina, and the links with official party politics in the town, made the association visible and powerful. I accompanied the women of *Holy Mother* on a number of these charitable visits which were organised at least once a week. Let me now show how, by regularly and repeatedly going on birthday visits, these women recreated a sense of attachment to a category of “the poor”, and simultaneously a degree of detachment from particular persons or families.

These women decided to fulfil their obligations to offer help through a religious voluntary organisation. Almost all of the regular birthday goers said that they did this because it made them feel grateful for the things they had, and less resentful for the wrongs that had been done to them. They portrayed people they went to visit as “poor but full of joy”. They said that those people, who were joyful “despite their situation”, helped them to remember to feel grateful for what they had. This representation went hand in hand with a narrative of the “evil poor”. The women from *Holy Mother* exchanged numerous stories about people who tried to deceive them and who lied to them: one story was about a woman who presented her child as disabled, even though he was not; another story was about a sex worker who locked

her child in a room. By retelling the stories of “worthy” and “unworthy”, “joyful” and “deceiving” charity recipients while driving towards a family for a birthday visit, these women reminded themselves of the moral values they decided to follow, and thereby of the moral order and the moral selves they aspired to. Simultaneously, they made visible the modes of their evaluation – both in terms of values, and of the appropriate form of pursuing those values.

Maintaining a brief yearly contact with a large number of charity recipients meant that members of *Holy Mother* managed to pursue attachment without ever fully establishing it. This was because attachment and detachment are not produced just through personalised decisions and encounters. They are also, in this case, a consequence of institutional organisation – the *form* through which charitable giving is organised. The anthropologist Trundle shows that in a food bank in Florence, the form of charitable action produced investment in a detached engagement, which was understood as ethical:

By focusing on the *form* of charity work [...] and configuring it as the most important moral domain through which compassion could be enacted, volunteers came to value an ethic of disinterested equality. (2012: 286)

The volunteers in the food bank in Florence articulated an ethos of disinterested equality, very similar to an ethos of bureaucracy, as a device of practicing compassion. Members of *Holy Mother* did not treat all charity-recipients as equal: birthday presents were taken to everybody, but other forms of help were framed in accord with urgent needs of the family. However, the *form* of their work – visiting a family once a year for the birthday of a child with a disability – meant that not much was invested into a personalised relationship with any particular family, while the possibility of getting in touch if needed was maintained. Five or six women who were regular birthday visitors did not have to invest a lot of time and effort into the problem of a single family. At the beginning, they told me, they had tried to do this, but later on they decided to stop. Marija, one of the birthday visitors, said: “when you get involved very deeply in the problems of these people, you see how complicated it all becomes, how they themselves are complicated sometimes”. She

added that they had tried to “solve the life problems of a couple of families, but it was just too complicated (...) it is not all up to you and there are other parties involved”. Thus, making a deep attachment to a single family created unpredictable complications, and it was decided that it was better to prevent this by establishing a degree of detachment through visiting every family once a year.

The fact that the members of *Holy Mother* went on birthday visits every week meant that they continuously and actively worked on the production of the attachment to the category of “poor”, which was conceptualised as both “joyous” and “evil”. The form of work enabled these women to continuously pursue attachment, and to never establish it with particular people. The continuous dedication to this ‘formalised’ attachment, further, enabled them to pursue particular moral selves.

The last vignette follows a young woman who decided to put aside many things in order to move towards fulfilling a goal of raising money for her sister, and to become a particular moral person in this process, a person worthy of charitable help.

6. *Becoming a particular moral person as a pragmatic and moral choice*

One day I was coming back from Brčko to Bijeljina and Milica was walking with me to the bus station. Throughout this fifteen minute walk, she greeted and chatted with at least ten people we met along the way. I told her I was amazed by this, and she replied:

“Everybody knows me here, I don’t know how or why, but I simply know people. At least from seeing. And when someone looks me in the eyes, I simply cannot ignore them.”

Maybe Milica knew so many people because of the humanitarian action for her sister Vana's bone marrow transplant, or maybe the humanitarian action was so successful because she knew many people. In either case, her ‘world of people’ was huge, but

not uncontroversial. Milica often complained because she did not like the way people perceived her:

“I really don’t know anymore what to wear and how to dress, or how to behave, or what to do. I like taking care of myself, and there are a lot of people who say ‘she has an ill sister, but look at how she dresses up’. Brčko is a small town, and everybody knows each other, and everybody knows everything about everybody else.”

She told me that a couple of days previously she received a big donation directly into her bank account. That night, she went out with two friends to celebrate. She got a bit drunk, sang loudly, and laughed ‘like crazy’, and she could ‘feel the gaze of others’:

“I knew what some of them were thinking: ‘Look at her, she is laughing and drinking, and yet she has a sick sister and asks for money...’”

This uncomfortable feeling of being looked at and judged, and the idea that “everybody in town knows everybody else”, was continuously repeated not only by members of the three families, but also by many other people I met. Of course, it could hardly be literally true if a town has tens of thousands of inhabitants. What this sentence expressed was more of a sense that a person you are not very close to can, and indeed often does, know different sorts of information about yourself. As we saw in chapter four, the stories I learned at *The Sun* about Dragana, Milica, Selma, or Ivana, or the ones about Ruška and Pera from the upholsterer, meant that if I was ever to be introduced to these people I would have known much more about them than an acquaintance would be expected to know. Since people could never be sure when they might need this person or that person, and since different ways of knowing people included sharing stories about highly intimate matters, there was a real possibility of people you did not know sharing stories about you.

Milica positioned herself in the midst of these stories; she actively worked on making a relation, and creating attachment with the greatest possible number of people, in order to secure as many small (or larger) donations for her sister as possible. From the perspective of Milica, and other people who started humanitarian actions, the pursuit of relations was a full-time job, which required a continuous investment of time, energy, and emotions.

Charity recipients did not necessarily want to pursue attachment in this particular way, simply because they did not want to be in this situation. However, they needed the productive, goal-oriented, pragmatic side of navigation – to get things done – and they did this through pursuing attachments. Therefore, they worked full-time on recreating relations in as many directions as possible and they left aside many questions, problems, and (dis)satisfactions. Milica's sense of the "gaze of others" suggests that, by pursuing relations within her 'world of people' (and beyond, since she was actively trying to expand it as much as she could), she was exposed to continuous evaluation and judgement. The pursuit of attachment was both productive, and tiresome.

Here, again, Milica's moral reasoning (to help her sister and carve herself into a particular person along the way) meant making an imperfect perfect decision: emphasising and pursuing one value, and putting aside others. Milica became a particular person through this pursuit: one that 'everybody knows' and that greets someone on the street every couple of minutes, one 'with a problem but smiling', i.e. one worthy of charitable help. Milica had to choose whether to help her sister and become this person, or not. This might not seem like much of a choice, but she still had to make a decision at the moment of a 'moral breakdown' (Zigon 2009), *and* to keep the pursuit going for months. She had to repeatedly, actively, and purposefully work on positioning herself within the 'worlds' of an almost enormous amount of people, and to engage with their sympathies as well as antipathies, dedications and suspicions. Venkatesan writes that

Hostility and antipathy and harmony and suspicion can (...) exist in the same place between the same people at different times and are a result of ways in which

individuals or groups respond or resonate to concerns, needs or ideas that seem proximal at any given point in time. (2012b: 31)

Explaining in what way seemingly contradictory ideas and acts can be uttered by the same people in different circumstances, and in order to capture nuances of communication that happens beyond words, Venkatesan articulates the notion of resonance: an effect that people and their practices *around you* have on yourself, your thoughts, senses, and actions. In music, resonance is what happens: “when several strings are tuned to harmonically related pitches, all strings vibrate when only one of the strings is struck” (2012b: 18). In her analysis of the interactions of a Muslim mat seller in Pattamadai, India, with people around him, she shows that whatever was proximal at any given point in time could affect what was considered to be appropriate and moral, and that later on, as the interaction ended and entities departed, these considerations of morality and appropriateness could sink into the background. I want to use this idea of resonance, and the stress it puts on proximity, to understand Milica’s actions of carving herself into a particular kind of person as partly pragmatic, need-based actions, shaped by people and practices which were close by at a given moment in time.

Milica did not *actually* receive any negative remarks or criticism during her evening out, but she was nevertheless uncomfortable. This was, in one sense, an example of self-discipline (cf. Foucault 1995): she felt she was being watched and judged, and was expected to adjust her behaviour, even though there was no explicit reason for that. However, we should remember that Milica was in a night club, dancing with her friends, rather than dealing with a state institution. She also chose to continue having fun, rather than to change her behaviour that evening. Her previous encounters with people who were nearby that evening, and the local idea that ‘everybody knows everything about everybody else’ made tenuous her position of a morally worthy charity recipient, probably only for an evening. This, I think, can be understood as an example of resonance: Milica was deemed ‘inappropriate’ that evening, by herself and quite possibly by others who were close to her. Resonance means that the moral appropriateness of her actions was affected by the presence of people who were around her. Milica continued her *humanitarna akcija* after that

night without any difficulty, which also meant that her annoyance with the ‘gaze of the others’ continued. In other words, the tensions inscribed in the position of a morally worthy charity recipient continued. Whether these tensions would be played out, and if so, when, how, and why – was dependent on resonance, i.e. on the effect of people who were near Milica at a particular moment.

These tensions can be better understood if the relationship between ‘pragmatic’ and ‘social’ aspects of Milica’s practices is considered. Was Milica uncomfortable because she felt like she was deceiving people? If she did not want to pursue this moral self of a charity recipient, was her deep and long dedication to it a matter of rational calculation and pragmatic self-interest? Does that mean that her pursuit of a particular moral self was somehow not moral? I argue that that was not the case, but that rather, Milica’s actions point to the impossibility of being able to clearly separate pragmatic from moral concerns.

Foucault’s notion of ‘technologies of the self’ treats the “moral self” as the product of the (socio-historically specific) relations in which it is implicated. Laidlaw suggests that there is a certain freedom, a possibility to choose what kind of ‘moral self’ one will pursue, and that this choice differentiates moral from social concerns. Milica, indeed, chose to pursue a particular moral self of a worthy charity recipient, but this choice was an imperfect perfect one. Just like the two people deciding whether to go to a humanitarian concert, in order to pursue her moral project, Milica had to accept parts of it that she did not necessarily want or deem necessary. And she decided to pursue this moral project of a worthy charity recipient in order to help her sister, i.e. in order to achieve a goal that conflates the pragmatic and the moral to a large degree. The way in which she did this – by navigating her way through her world of people and enlarging it as much as possible – meant that she was in contact with a large number of people and that their interactions, or their resonations, were not always harmonious.

In other words, Milica’s actions – of helping her sister by pursuing a particular moral self – were both moral and pragmatic. She made a (moral and pragmatic) choice to help her sister, which required her to become a particular moral person. She did not necessarily pursue this moral personhood because she valued its position. She pursued it for more pragmatic reasons: she had to carve herself into a particular

person *in order* to be able to achieve her (both moral and pragmatic) goal of raising money for her sister. The sense of the ‘gaze of the others’ was thus, for Milica, a reminder of ‘who’ she needed to be in order to be able to raise money through humanitarian actions.

Thus, an act of moral reasoning, or rather the choice of which particular moral self to pursue, can conjoin pragmatic and moral concerns to the degree that it becomes impossible to clearly separate them. Working with and through whatever was available in the moment in order to achieve a certain moral self can be understood as a moral as much as a pragmatic pursuit. This echoes somewhat Mauss’s (1967) classic argument on the character of the gift: the gift has an inscribed expectation of reciprocity within it, a coercive element which reproduces the social relation between people. This coerciveness is not simply a matter of pragmatics or of rational calculations. Even though these are relevant elements of gifts, coerciveness is also something that generates and sustains social relationships, and through that personhoods.

7. *Conclusion*

In previous chapters I tried to show that the pursuit of relations was productive and had political effects: it recreated a particular ‘way in which things work around here’, along with people’s locations and senses of self. Particular subject positions were recreated by the practice of navigation through the fields of health and social protection. In this chapter I have focused more closely on how people thought about and pursued certain moral positions and moral selves. I followed actors who actively and continuously worked on producing themselves as specific kinds of moral persons through the pursuit of relations.

The first vignette presented the moral reasoning of the woman and the man who talked about (not) attending the humanitarian concert. As two potential charity donors, they had to reason through the complexities of humanitarian actions, and they pursued the same project of being moral persons (a human being, or *čovjek*) by

making mutually opposed decisions. Both made partial, imperfect perfect decisions: in order to do one thing, they also had to do another thing, which they did not necessarily want to or fully agree with.

In the second vignette, I discussed how members of *Holy Mother* practiced a form of charity which enabled them to pursue attachment without ever reaching it with particular persons. Their work suggests that the form, or the institutionalised organisation of giving, shapes attachment in particular ways, which supports the arguments of Laidlaw (2000) and Trundle (2012). The institutional framework of their charitable giving provided them with a certain degree of detachment from interpersonal relations. Furthermore, members of *Holy Mother* did not have to reason through multiple ideas of morality; they rather had to decide about the best organisational way to pursue the moral selves they aspired to. They did not have to reason about and through multiple moral frameworks, but about the best *form* of pursuit of their preferred moral (Orthodox Christian) framework.

The third vignette revealed that people who initiated *humanitarne akcije* actively engaged with these different ideas of what was moral in order to achieve practical goals, and in the process, they carved themselves into particular persons. The form of *humanitarne akcije* required Milica to constantly work on as many interpersonal relations as possible. While attachment – lasting relations of give and take – was productive, it also required constant work. The effect of this work, a particular moral self, enmeshed in particular kinds of relations to numerous other people, was not necessarily always and everywhere desirable. Sometimes people pursued this self not because of moral, but pragmatic reasons: Milica chose to work towards becoming a particular subject (worthy of charitable help) not because she particularly valued its position, but because it enabled her to work towards the other, both pragmatic and moral, goal of helping her sister.

The sense of being known and knowable to other people was relevant for moral reasoning, as well as for getting practical things done. Frameworks which influenced people's decisions to be involved in charitable projects were linked with local relations within the town, as well as with nationality, religion, the idea of universal humanness, professional ethics, and so on. The complexity and durability of *humanitarne akcije* interwove these multiple frameworks towards the same goal.

They opened up the possibility for people to reason through the ambiguities of different conceptions of morality, and to pursue some, while leaving aside others, in order to work towards becoming moral persons.

Chapter 7

Bending rules and wills: the ‘Big Woman’ modality of power

1. Introduction

Navigating a path through the fields of healthcare and social protection was a form of goal-oriented practice which included official procedures, rules and positions, as well as sharing localised knowledge about people and the personalisation of institutional relations. In chapter four, I have argued that people were trying to become small-scale brokers (cf. Alexander 2002) in order to successfully achieve their goals of caring for ‘life itself’ (cf. Rose 2001). I have also mentioned how some people were much more successful than others in this pursuit, and that this success was intertwined with the political life of the town. As mentioned in chapter two, care of ‘life itself’ during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in Western European states became the responsibility of impersonal, bureaucratised systems of ‘nation-states’ (de Swaan 1988). Foucault analysed this change in terms of the synchronised production of collectives and individualities through the workings of several modalities of power, such as discipline, biopolitics, and sovereignty, which I will discuss in this chapter.

Several techniques of discipline and biopolitics were regularly exercised in Bijeljina. Despite the fact that no population census has been held in Bosnia since 1991, the entities’ governments employed other techniques to learn about the population’s routines and habits, in order to help it improve. Indeed, ‘the will to improve’ (Murray Li 2007) – embodied in various projects and reforms aimed at changing and advancing the life of the population – was ubiquitous.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, people did not think that their situation had significantly improved. Initiated by the entities’

⁴⁶ See, for example, a draft document “Social Inclusion Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, produced by the BiH Council of Ministers, available at: http://www.wbif.eu/uploads/lib_document/attachment/98/Draft_Social_Inclusion_Strategy_BiH.pdf [Last accessed on 15/05/2012]

governments, as well as by the ‘international community’ in Bosnia, these projects have reformed the ways in which health and social care services were delivered so many times that no one I talked with was able to explain to me the more general patterns by which such reforms were introduced. What I was able to grasp was a change of categories used to classify disabilities.

I will describe this change of classifying systems, and the way in which new categories were assigned to people, in order to argue that the concept of biopolitics was not fully suited to an ethnographic understanding of the relationship between power and care in Bijeljina.

In the second part of the chapter, I will argue that the analytical lenses of biopolitics, or discipline, taken on their own, would leave out a number of relations which shaped the organisation of the care of ‘life itself’ and which were ethnographically traceable. As indicated earlier, these relations crossed domains that were only separated from one another up to a point. A consequence of the impossibility to separate domains in any sustained manner was a kind of personalised power which operated through and across institutions. I will discuss how Ratka, the ‘goddess’, occupied a position which could not be captured through the lens of biopolitics. Instead I propose to analyse her place in Bijeljina in terms of the well-known anthropological phenomenon of the Big Man. As a ‘powerful person who cared’, Ratka was a sort of ‘Big Woman’ who gained official political power through successful navigation across domains, as practiced through helping and giving. As a result, she was able to bend the “rules” as well as “wills”. Before a discussion of Ratka’s ‘Big Woman’ position, let us explore up to what point the concept of biopolitics is useful in an analysis of social care and politics in Bijeljina.

2. Biopolitics in social care

2.1. ‘Categorisation’ at the Centre for Social Work

One early afternoon I went to observe the process of “categorisation” – an organised classification of (dis)abilities of people – at the local Centre for Social Work. It was carried out by the Commission for Categorisation and Assessment of the Abilities of People with Difficulties in their Development (*Komisija za kategorizaciju i procjenu sposobnosti osoba s teškoćama u razvoju*), and was based on legal categories

introduced in 2005 by the Ministry for Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Srpska.

The categories had been changed in 2005 in order to substantively overlap with the International Classification of Diseases (ICD10). Categories used until 2005 included: persons with visual impairment (*lica sa oštećenjem vida*); persons with hearing impairment (*lica sa oštećenjem sluha*); persons with speech impairment (*lica sa oštećenjem govora*) persons with impaired intellectual development/mental retardation (*lica sa zaostajanjem u intelektualnom razvoju/mentalnom retardacijom*); persons with motor/bodily impairment (*lica sa motoričkim/tjelesnim oštećenjem*); and persons with combined difficulties (*lica sa kombinovanim smetnjama*).

According to the 2005 rules, 'combined difficulties' (*kombinovane smetnje*) was renamed 'multiple difficulties' (*višestruke smetnje*), and two new categories were introduced: persons with other difficulties in accordance with the ICD10 (*lica sa drugim smetnjama u skladu sa MKB10*), and persons with autism (*lica sa autizmom*). Along with this classification, categories of 'mild' (*laka*), 'moderate' (*umjerena*), and 'severe' (*teška*) mental retardation were used for people with disabilities in intellectual development. These categories were introduced during the SFRY as a replacement for categories of 'debility' (*debilnost*), 'imbecile-ness' (*imbecilnost*), idiotism (*idiotija*), and 'cretinism' (*kretenizam*) (Munjiza 2007). In the textbooks (from which almost all of the social workers in Bijeljina had studied), mental retardation and categorisation were framed in the following way:

[...] whether one is called mentally retarded, or an idiot, one is classified into a category, one becomes in some way marked and distinguished as different from other people. Has someone remembered to classify overly fat or thin people, is someone classifying people by their physical strength, or beauty, or any other attribute? Of course not. Why do we do this when mental capacities fail? As already mentioned, man's mind is the main instrument for adapting to the environment and if it is sufficiently developed, regardless of other anatomic-physiological abilities, an individual will be able to function within a set limits, he will be able to meet the demands of his environment, irrespective of the strength of his biceps or height.

It has been known throughout history that classification, or categorisation, was created as a result of the need to separate such children from the others, with the goal of helping mentally retarded children. Distinguishing people according to various criteria, labelling and determining characteristics by which labelled people are different from the normal population, is a common trait of disciplines which study people, especially those that study mental abilities. A psychiatrist will divide people

into mentally ill and mentally healthy, a psychologist will distinguish gifted children, a criminologist will distinguish delinquents, a sociologist those that are socially adverse. Each of these cases is about labelling. This can be negative (most often), it can bear no influence, and sometimes it can be positive. However, every labelling means a separation of a smaller group from the majority. (...)

The mentally retarded do not represent a homogeneous group, and borderline mentally retarded persons are not qualitatively much different from the normal population. It would be wrong to argue that mentally retarded are no different from the normal population, although it is impossible to draw a straight line and separate the mentally retarded from the normal population. (Jakulić 1981: 16-17) (**my translation**)

Even though this interpretation suggests that the terms ‘mild’, ‘moderate’, and ‘severe’ mental retardation were introduced in order “to help mentally retarded children”, it also explicitly acknowledges that the main characteristic of ‘labelling’, or categorisation, is a separation of one group from another, and that this cannot be done by drawing a simple ‘straight line’.

New ways of addressing mental disabilities have started to be introduced in the official language in BiH during the last ten years, placing an emphasis on the person rather than on a disability (i.e. speaking of a child with autism, rather than of an autistic child). A number of seminars and workshops were organised in order to launch the new terms in everyday speech, but this endeavour was not particularly successful. This was not a simple consequence of a lack of the understanding of the relevance of terminology. Rather, it happened because this terminology partly immobilised possibilities for action. For example, women from *The Sun* considered their children with mental disabilities to be sick: if the children needed their help to do a simple morning routine and if their mothers had to spend most of their waking time taking care of them, the women considered ridiculous, or plain irrelevant, arguments that a person with a mental disability is not sick but rather has another way of approaching reality. These arguments partly tranquilised the seriousness of their situation and significantly lessened their prospects of gaining further provisions by the state – which was the kind of action they wanted. This resonates somewhat with the idea present in Ukraine that “here, the worst is to be healthy”: it shows that “individuals give greater importance to the material benefits of social organization around illness than to their rights and responsibilities to be ‘healthy citizens’” (Petryna 2002: 85). This refusal is also another illustration of the idea that the social context shapes both the understanding and the practices of what is understood, at any

given moment, as a mental/learning disability (Foucault 2006; Wright 2001). The fact that the parents of children with disabilities did not particularly want to adopt new terminology suggests that the concept of mental disability was dependent on the social framework, which includes the infrastructure of Bijeljina: the lack of functioning day-care centres, free specialised kindergartens, state-paid caregivers, and so on. Furthermore, it suggests that people are actively invested in the reproduction and questioning of practices of biopolitics, in order to achieve certain goals. Following Petryna, I do not understand people's desire to be included into the state's grids of provision (cf. Jansen 2012) through the prism of passivity, or as an illustration of their 'pathological co-dependency' with the state. Jansen (2012) shows that understanding this 'yearning' for the grids (*ibid.*) is important for thinking about the ways in which politics can be done, and political belonging and solidarities organised.

Yearly 'categorisations', as they were usually called, have been carried out in Bijeljina for many decades, with a one or two year break during the 1992-1995 war. The day I went to observe the process, there were between fifteen and twenty people who had to be 'categorised'. They came with their family members. Four state-appointed experts needed to give an opinion about them: a medical doctor, a psychologist, a social worker, and a special pedagogue (or, as she was often called, a 'defectologist'). These experts were being very pragmatic in their understanding of the whole process: they told me that 'categorisation' was organised in order to determine who had a right to special financial benefits. The Public Fund for Children's Protection conducted a number of projects to diminish the sense of shame connected with mental disabilities, and to convince people that 'categorisation' was a necessary requirement to get the help they, or members of their family, needed. As a consequence, for the users the 'categorisation' blended uneasiness (since it was perceived as a labelling of 'abnormality') with pragmatism (because it opened up access to state provisions).

All of the users who came that day had been 'categorised' previously, when their level of disability and the basic rights they qualified for had been determined. The particular 'categorisation' that I attended aimed to establish who had the newly introduced special right to "accommodation in one's own family", and consequently, to more financial benefits. One family after another came into the doctor's office,

and the doctor made inquiries in a detached manner. When one young girl started crying, perhaps out of fear, the doctor changed the colour of her voice and became more relaxed. When a family finished the questioning at the doctor's office, they visited the social worker in her office. Ivona, the president of *The Sun* and an employee of the Centre for Social Work, helped the social worker to collect basic information about the 'social status' of a family, and the two of them swiftly filled in the forms. The next stop for the families was the psychologist, who showed up forty-five minutes after the beginning of the 'categorisation'. The psychologist asked a number of questions, in a calm and reassuring manner. At the end, she informed families about the probability that they would qualify for "accommodation in one's own family", which was very high for almost everybody who came to be 'categorised' that day.

The atmosphere in the hallway was different from the one in the offices: the hallway was crowded and people were openly nervous and loud, not just because they did not know whether they would get financial help, but also because they had to wait. The main reason for waiting was that the special pedagogue, or 'defectologist', showed up late in the afternoon.

The process of 'categorisation' can be interpreted as assigning people to pre-existing categories, or producing them as specific subjects in order for them to be able to get state provisions. It can easily be understood as a technique of biopolitics: it meant creating evidence (i.e. state knowledge) needed to plan and implement successful management of the population: how many people have disabilities which are officially recognised, how many people have which disability, how much money needs to be set aside for them, how many people will need the new service, and so on.

However, the creation of this evidence was far from perfect, as evocations of 'chaos', discussed in chapter two, reveal. People found out about special rights, such as the right to accommodation in one's own family, more or less on the grapevine. The CSW did not have a unified database about its users; paper records were kept in boxes in closed rooms since the attempt to digitalise these data failed. 'Personal' and 'institutional' relations became entangled in order to enable the production of 'state knowledge' and to enable people to gain access to state provisions. The notions of biopolitics and discipline capture only part of the story about the production of

power, political collectives, and individualised subjects in the context of Bijeljina. In the next part, I will present Foucault's concepts of different modalities of power, such as discipline, biopolitics, and sovereignty, and the relation between these modalities of power captured by the notion of governmentality.

2.2 Discipline: individualisation of subjects

Disciplinary power seeks to produce docile and efficient subjects through subtle coercion; it is practiced through endless seemingly irrelevant, repetitive, miniature, meticulously organised bodily movements which are controlled and hierarchically ordered. It has existed for a long time: monasteries, armies, workshops and so forth, employed a disciplinary modality of power throughout the Middle Ages (Foucault 1995: 137). Yet, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France present the historical and socio-geographical point when discipline(s) became the "general formula of domination" (*ibid.*). It became the 'trademark' of prisons, madhouses, workplaces, boarding schools, and so on. Making bodies docile, increasing their productivity, efficiency, and utility simultaneously meant decreasing their disobedience, irregularity, and unpredictability. The increased importance of disciplinary power can be situated in the context of developed capitalism, even though capitalism is not the sole reason for the invention of this new "political anatomy" (Foucault 1995: 138). Rather, Foucault sees the creation of disciplinary power as a consequence of a number of contextually specific, and mutually not strictly related, needs, such as "industrial innovation, a renewed outbreak of certain epidemic diseases, the invention of the rifle or the victories of Prussia" (*ibid.*). The result of these multiple and heterogeneous influences was a capillary distribution of power throughout society. Discipline, as a new technology of power, presents a new way of regulating 'society' as a whole.⁴⁷

During the Enlightenment, as well as under the conditions of Fordism, as Fraser (2003) suggests and as will be discussed shortly, discipline posed the relation between the 'social body' and the 'political body' in a specific way. They are not the same thing, even though they are clearly related: one of them 'works' on the other.

⁴⁷ Foucault poses the relationship between discipline as the new modality of power, and the old(er) modality power, that of sovereignty, in two ways, which will be discussed later on.

Discipline brings about the politicisation of the ‘social body’; it is a modality of power which operates in strict and rigid institutional settings of fields and practices which are not obviously political and related to power, such as education, family, criminality, medicine, sexuality, and so on. It enables an alternative way of imagining power: in addition to an image of a radiating centre, or an image of a swing between two conflicting sides, discipline is a way of imagining power as dispersed throughout the social ‘body’ in a capillary manner, thus making it simultaneously social and political.

2.3. Biopolitics: the management of the population

Biopolitics, as another modality of power proposed by Foucault, has as its object the ‘population’, and its life. As summarised by Collier, biopolitics presents “the attempt to govern a population’s health, welfare, and conditions of existence in the framework of political sovereignty” (Collier 2011: 3).

If discipline centres on the body and presents an effort to calculate power “with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency” (Foucault 2003: 36), biopolitics is not concerned with the individualisation of bodies (and persons). Instead, its focus is on the life and wellbeing of the socio-political unit as a whole, i.e. the ‘population’. It works with projections and estimates such as birth rate, life expectancy, hygiene levels, probabilities of risk and danger, and so on. Biopolitics presents a modality of power which needs to know the behaviours, habits and routines of people living in a certain socio-political unit, in order to allow the bureaucratic apparatus to plan actions that would improve and maintain the life of this particular socio-political unit. ‘People’ thus become a ‘population’ through the working of biopolitics, i.e. a heterogeneous ensemble of humans is transformed into a homogeneous and predictable entity. Biopolitics works in the present in order to address the future: it presents an attempt to predict, and therefore direct, manage, and control events which would, if left unaddressed, affect the life of people very differently.

The change of the meaning of ‘economy’ is part and parcel of biopolitics. The term ‘economy’ used to mean sustaining the life of a household in a great part of Europe at least from the time of ancient Greece (Arendt 1998). With biopolitics, ‘economy’ becomes ‘political economy’: an endeavour to sustain the life of a wider socio-

political community. This means that the scale of relevance has changed: the specific rationale of biopolitical projections can thus judge it acceptable that certain individuals would die (out of hunger during periods of scarcity, for example), as long as the life of the population as a whole could be maintained.

Here, again, the social and political community affected each other and strived towards the same goal, but are nevertheless separable. Biopolitics means the continuous transformation of a group of people into a specific political framework – that of a population. The bureaucratic apparatus needs to know the ‘behaviour of society’ in order to create projects that can help ‘improve’ it, while “society” has to want to be improved. The bureaucratic apparatus needs to know the habits and routines of “society” in order to be able to organise it, and to be able to plan how to manage it during epidemics, shortages, etc. This is why the ‘social’ and the ‘political’ have to be separable, although striving towards the same goal of management and improvement. Foucault suggests that modalities of power in eighteenth century France worked both through the state and through that which the state is supposed to govern, but the two had to be separable, in order to be able to produce individualised subjects and the population in an unambiguous way. In previous chapters, I have argued that the state and ‘that which is not the state’; the political and the social body in Bijeljina, were not clearly separable. This has implications for the modalities of power which were at work, as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

2.4. Biopower = discipline+biopolitics

Foucault writes that biopolitics and discipline present ‘two series’, which operate together:

the body-organism-discipline-institutions series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State. An organic institutional set, or the organo-discipline of the institution, if you like, and on the other hand, a biological and Statist set, or bioregulation by the State. (Foucault 2003: 250)

These two modalities of power working together constitute **biopower**. Biopower implies a dispersion of power, and responsibility for subjugation, from one, central, position of a sovereign to a wide array of actors and techniques. Biopower points to the politicisation of ‘life itself’; it marks a set of mechanisms and relations which transformed biology into a political terrain (Foucault 2007). In other words, biopower marks the power “whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through” (Foucault 1978: 139). Foucault makes a distinction between, on the one hand, **biopower** whose forms of rule are discipline (or the management and improvement of bodies) and biopolitics (or the management and improvement of generalised life/ the population), and on the other hand **sovereign power** which rules by assigning death and allowing life.

2.5. Sovereignty

If biopower is the power to discipline, improve, and maintain life, sovereignty is the power to kill:

Sovereign’s power effect on life is exercised only when the sovereign can kill. The very essence of the right of life and death is actually the right to kill: it is at the moment when the sovereign can kill that he exercises his right over life. (Foucault 2003: 240)

From this perspective, the public display of the torture of prisoners (Foucault 1995) is one of central sites in which sovereignty was performed: it served to recreate the power of the sovereign.⁴⁸ If *discipline* can “calculate power with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency”, *sovereignty* is an attempt to “found absolute power on the absolute expenditure of power” (Foucault 2003: 36).

I understand Foucault’s notion of sovereignty as different from Agamben’s (1998), but not as incompatible with it. Sovereignty in the frameworks of these two thinkers

⁴⁸ According to Foucault, the theory of sovereignty developed during the Late Middle Ages and early Modern Age and was related with political struggles stemming out of the feudal monarchy. It attempted to justify and to make sense of the power mechanism of monarchical administrations (Foucault 2003: 37). During the eighteenth century, theoreticians of sovereignty were engaged in the construction of parliamentary democracies as an alternative model of administering political issues.

is posed on different levels. The sovereignty Agamben writes about has a different scope and exists in a different timeframe: from ancient Athens to contemporary states and supra-state organisations. Agamben's notion of sovereignty captures the logic of inclusion in and exclusion from a political community more generally, and this logic, according to Agamben, forms the ground of the most diverse types of political communities in the West ('the West' is here understood in the broadest possible sense). Hence, the change of the constellation of power modalities, registered and analysed by Foucault, is not necessarily incompatible with Agamben's understanding of sovereignty, but is rather posed on a different scale. Additionally, the two thinkers put the emphasis on different aspects of sovereignty: while Agamben is interested in the rules and the logic regarding inclusion in and exclusion from political collectives, Foucault tracks the change of organisation of political collectives, and puts an emphasis on the dynamic between productiveness and oppression.

2.6. Topologies of power

Foucault seems to be arguing two, not quite compatible, points about the relation between the modalities of power, one of which Collier calls *topological* (2009), and which is more helpful for an analysis of contemporary modalities of power than the other, 'chronological' one. First, chronologically, he argues that different modalities of power are linked with historically and politically different projects: sovereignty with that of feudal monarchies, and discipline and biopolitics with that of capitalist (nation-)states. Second, topologically, he argues that different modes of power coexist and jointly constitute "the general mechanisms of power in our society" (Foucault 2003: 39). Foucault suggests that these 'general mechanisms of power' – sovereignty, discipline, and biopolitics – enter into a complex relation from the eighteenth century. Although they operate simultaneously, objects of their work are different: if "*sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory*", then "*discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population*" (Foucault 2007: 25; emphasis added).

With the creation of the bureaucratic apparatuses of nation-states, sovereignty is not personified in the figure of a monarch anymore; nevertheless, it still operates through

an image of the state. According to Foucault, law is the key technique of “sovereignty that characterizes a state” practiced “within the borders of a territory” (Foucault, in Burchell et al. 1991: 101). When both the borders and the law come to be matters of the state, rather than won, or granted, by a sovereign (i.e. a person), the state becomes an entity within which sovereignty is located.

2.7. Governmentality as one possible topology of power

What, then, is *governmentality*? Governmentality is the name Foucault gives to the specific constellation of different modalities of power which emerged in France from the sixteenth century onwards, and which achieved their full shape in the eighteenth century. It is the logic of rule of Western European (nation-)states during the eighteenth century, based on a specific relation between sovereignty, biopolitics, and discipline. Foucault writes that there are several forms of government “internal to the state or society” (Foucault, in Burchell et al. 1991: 91), all of which are different from the form of rule of the ‘prince’, i.e. from the sovereignty of feudal monarchies.

Governmentality presents a way of managing relations between people and different entities so as to make sure that a certain goal is achieved. Foucault analyses La Perrière’s idea that: “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so to lead to a convenient end” (Foucault, in Burchell et al. 1991: 92), and concludes that

what government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (Burchell et al. 1991: 93)

In other words, governmentality regulates *ways of relating*, and thus articulates an appropriate organisation of sociality. Relations made possible by governmentality operate throughout society, but are organised and ordered through the reasoning of

the state. The goal of the government needs to become the goal of those who are being governed, as Murray Li writes:

Defined succinctly as the ‘conduct of conduct’, government is the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means. (...) government operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs. (Murray Li 2007: 5)

This partial separation and partial connection of the social body and the government as the political body enabled Foucault to claim that the state is just “an episode in governmentality” (2007: 325). What he means by this is that an analysis of modalities of power enables an understanding of the state not as a stable, ontologically self-evident oppressor, which controls and manages creative impulses from ‘civil’ society. Instead, the state can be seen as a contingent product of the ‘history of governmentality’ (*ibid.*), or as an effect of modalities of power (such as discipline, biopolitics, and sovereignty) which became related in an inconsistent and heterogeneous manner:

What if all these relations of power that gradually take shape on the basis of multiple and very diverse processes which gradually coagulate and form an effect, what if these practices of government were precisely the basis on which the state was constituted? Then we would have to say that the state is not that kind of cold monster in history that has continually grown and developed as a sort of threatening organism above civil society. (*ibid.*)

If the state is an effect of, or an episode in, the history of governmentality as a logic of rule, then (civil) society is understood in the same way. Civil society, on Foucault’s reading, ensues from an eighteenth century European (or perhaps rather French) understanding of the responsibilities and roles of the state. It is not a field of ‘natural interactions’, or ‘freedom and creativity’ any more than a state is. Civil society is a socially and historically contextualised way of conceptualising roles and responsibilities within a socio-political unit, which is produced through different modalities of power. Therefore, it is the product of the same governmentality from which the state emerged: “Civil society is what governmental thought, the new form

of governmentality born in the eighteenth century, reveals as the necessary correlate of the state” (Foucault 2007: 449).

Since he is interested in an analysis of the ways in which power operates through persons and institutions, rather than in persons and institutions themselves, Foucault addresses the state and (civil) society in the same way he addresses prisons, medicine, the army, or indeed, prisoners, doctors, patients, soldiers, etc. – as a historically contingent product of the interplay of several modalities of power. These modalities of power are discipline, biopolitics, and sovereignty, and the specific configuration of their relation presents the dominant logic of rule, or governmentality. Thus, the focus of his analysis is not on the state, but on modes of power which flow from a bureaucratic apparatus throughout the social body and back again. By ‘decentering’ the state, by showing that power is productive (i.e. that it creates forms of practice and thought), and that the relation between oppression and productivity is far from simple, Foucault was arguing against interpretations of power and struggle which were fundamentally humanist. Various Marxist and existentialist approaches developed in France during the twentieth century, which included consciousness or will as relevant factors of analysis. In contrast, Foucault’s approach tracked the formation of the concepts and practices through power relations themselves, the relations that provide the very possibility of making a certain statement or an act. Producing intelligibility in his framework does not depend on an individual will or personal preference. On Foucault’s understanding, the “knowing subject” or “psychological individuality” (for example: Foucault 2002: 69-70) are irrelevant for the working of power, and hence for an analysis of it. In such a Foucauldian approach, any effort to individualise actors is erased from an analysis of power. The question then becomes: how can such an approach be pursued *ethnographically*, if “social anthropologists route connections through persons” (Strathern 1995: 11)?

2.8. Post-Fordist and Soviet topologies of power

Other authors have taken up parts of Foucault’s conceptual apparatus to analyse the configurations of power which operated elsewhere, and at other periods. Nancy

Fraser, for example, traces how the topology of power has changed with the move from Fordism to post-Fordism (Fraser 2003), and Stephen Collier argues that the Soviet state developed its own form of biopolitics (Collier 2011). Let us look at both in some more detail.

The early Soviet socialist state, in Collier's interpretation, operated through a modality of power which was "illiberal but biopolitical" (Collier 2011: 61). If the main premise of biopolitics in liberal democracies was that "society should be understood as an autonomous realm, whose natural law was the market" (*ibid.*), then Soviet biopolitics: "'discovered' that the domains of population, political economy, and society were not autonomous domains but fields that could be reshaped by the state through total instrumental intervention" (Collier 2011: 39).

In other words, a society and political economy were foreseen from the central positioning of the government, and then turned into a reality. The problem of liberal democracies was rather to "manage ongoing processes of urbanization and industrialization" (Collier 2011: 38), while the problem with which the Soviet government was dealing with included "backwardness and underdevelopment" (*ibid.*). Namely:

Soviet industrialization was not organized through 'spontaneous' social and economic processes outside the state, but through state initiative. (...) Making virtue out of necessity, Soviet planners tried to avoid the reckless tropism of capitalist urbanization through total planning, advancing the radical biopolitical proposition that the adjustments between processes of population, processes of production, and apparatuses of social welfare could be programmed by the state (...) Government was no longer approached as a problem of modulating the relationship between the state and society. Rather, it functioned as the 'internal logic of an administrative apparatus' (...). (Collier 2011: 38-39)

Such a drive to urbanise, build infrastructure, and industrially develop the country was also present in SFR Yugoslavia. However, there were significant differences (Lydall 1984). After the 1948 split with the USSR, socialist Yugoslavia abandoned five-year plans, collectivisation of agricultural land and other attempts of total planning. The complex organisational and economic principle of the SFRY, known

as ‘socialist self-management’, posed the relation between the state and the individuals in a manner which differed significantly from Soviet state socialism. We could thus say that the ‘topology of power’ was different.

Focusing not on differences between juxtaposed political systems, but on historical changes, Fraser argues that the disciplinary modality of power gained its fully developed form through Fordism, and that *post*-Fordism brought about its change: it was characterised more by flexibility rather than discipline. She shows that Foucault’s conceptual apparatus, and specifically the notion of discipline, is particularly suitable for an analysis of the ‘epoch’ of Fordism. Taking thus Foucault more as a historian than as a philosopher, Fraser re-reads modalities of power in contemporary Western states in a way that follows Foucault’s reasoning, but which is not faithful to his concepts. Fraser notes three characteristics of discipline during *Fordism*.

First, it presented a totalising mode of power: in principle, it aimed to include within its reach all areas of social and political life. There was no subject for whom improvement was not only possible, but also desirable. *Second*, discipline was “socially concentrated within a national frame” (Fraser 2003: 163). In other words, the scale on which discipline operated was one of a nation-state. The social and the political were understood through the prism of the national, and “(i)t was from this zone that Fordist discipline radiated outward, imperceptibly spreading throughout national society” (Fraser 2003: 164). *Third*, individual, internal self-regulation was the dominant technique of Fordist discipline, which required willing subjectification to practices of normalisation and improvement.

Fraser notes that a move from Fordism to post-Fordism is generating a “new type of regulatory structure” (Fraser 2003: 165) whose shape is not fully determined yet. This emerging globalised governmentality differs from Fordism in terms of the abovementioned characteristics. *First*, the national framework has been decentred. A number of practices are increasingly organised across state borders, and even though “national ordering” (*ibid.*) has not disappeared, it has been transformed by cross-border political and economic organisations. *Second*, an aspiration to include *everybody* within the reach of power has vanished. A process of desocialisation delegated responsibilities for a large number of welfare issues to ‘private’ spheres of

the market, or to the family (i.e. women). This means that the improvement of its subjects is no longer considered to be the responsibility of a political community. *Third*, in contexts where self-regulation was the dominant mode of power (for example, prisons and other contexts of overt surveillance), repression and violence tended to replace it. To summarise,

In all these respects, post-Fordist globalization is a far cry from Foucauldian discipline: multi-layered as opposed to nationally bounded, dispersed and marketized as opposed to socially concentrated, increasingly repressive as opposed to self-regulating. (Fraser 2003: 166)

Post-Fordist globalisation thus cast aside the assumption that in principle all behaviour should be normalised, i.e. that power needs to affect all the members of a relevant political community in a consistent manner. Multi-layered, dispersed, marketised, and (selectively) repressive, the governmentality of post-Fordist globalisation is changing the reach, and the structure, of the relevant political community. Fraser argues that even if it is clear that it is no longer an unambiguous nation-state, its shape and organisation are still in the process of formation. This does not mean that discipline has disappeared forever, but rather that it has been sidelined: the socio-political conditions of post-Fordism have created a different topology of power, and a new subject: the “actively responsible agent” (Fraser 2003: 168).

Fraser’s and Collier’s analyses point out the need to situate the relationships between different modalities of power in a particular socio-historical setting. Analysing how the Soviet Union has developed its own form of biopolitical power, Collier argues that biopolitics needs to be disentangled from liberalism and the model of political organisation characteristic of twentieth century Western European nation-states. The basic principle of biopolitics – the regulation of life in the framework of the political sovereignty of the state – was there, but the ways in which biopolitical calculations, prognoses, and the management of bodies operated posed a different relation between ‘state’ and ‘society’, a ‘political’ and a ‘social’ community. In Western Europe, biopolitics was the way to create a ‘population’ which would behave freely, but predictably, which could choose what to do, as long as these choices were knowable and controllable. In the Soviet Union, this ‘predictable freedom’ was not

deemed to be necessary because ‘society’ was invented as a part of the state’s apparatus, and people’s behaviours were integrated into the state’s plans without a mediator. Fraser’s analysis, on the other hand, addresses changes pertaining to precisely the political space for which Foucault’s concepts had been developed. Neoliberal and post-Fordist transformations in Western Europe and North America affected the relation between the ‘state’ and ‘that which is not the state’ in a way that is not yet fully clear, but whose contours are visible. The decentring of the framework of nation-states, the desocialisation (i.e. privatisation) of social protection, and the increase of repression and violence altered the relationship between the state and ‘that which is not the state’ in a way that left a number of previously communal practices up for grabs. These changes simultaneously offered an opportunity to correct the repressions of, in Fraser’s terms, misframing⁴⁹, and opened up a space for new forms of injustices.

Both analyses offer something important for understanding the contemporary topology of power in Bosnia. Collier shows that biopolitics was at work in a form of political organisation different from a nation-state. The relationship between the state and ‘that which is not the state’ in socialist states was regulated through, among other things, biopolitics, but this relationship was not the same as the one in liberal democracies. Furthermore, as I have briefly outlined, the socialisms of the Soviet Union and of the SFRY were significantly different, and they framed the relationship between the ‘political’ and ‘social’ body differently; we could say that different socialisms employed the workings of biopolitics differently.

Fraser’s analysis, on the other hand, illuminates parts of the contemporary post-war, post-socialist situation in Bosnia, which is not post-Fordist, but which does present a particular case of governmentality in neoliberalism. Thus, it shares two of the characteristics of post-Fordism which Fraser lists: the clear-cut national model was not fully applicable, and desocialisation was caused by marketisation and the personalisation of care. Here, again, the relationship between the ‘political’ and the ‘social’, between the state and ‘that which is not the state’ is similar to, but not the same as, the one in Western neoliberal democracies.

⁴⁹ Misframing is a term Fraser coined to capture the situation in which grids (cf. Jansen 2012) of social protection have been constructed through the framework of nation-states, while the repressions happen beyond this framework, on a more global scale, through the economic and political practices that go well beyond nation-states (Fraser 2010).

Radical political-economic changes in Bosnia were frequently experienced as “forced transition”: post-war transformation was simultaneous with a post-socialist transition (Jansen 2006a). Privatisation of formerly public services since the end of the 1992-1995 war is similar to the processes of marketisation and privatisation of care that Fraser notes in post-Fordist contexts (cf. Pine 1994). However, supported by a number of interventions and NGO projects, attempts to create flexible and self-responsible subjects in Bosnia, seem to regularly fail. Instead of an agent who would be proactive and responsible for her/his own wellbeing, political subjectivities are shaped by nationalistic policies (Grandits 2007), gendered expectations (Helms 2003), and a sense of lethargy, especially among young people (Čelebičić, forthcoming).

This failure to create flexible and self-sufficient political subjects might be perceived as a pitfall of a weak state which has not yet managed to establish firm rules which would help the market to flourish. Or it could be seen as a welcomed chance for people to assert their agency over the institutional rules and to rearrange things as they wanted to. However, I do not agree with these two responses: the first one uses a particular notion of how the state ‘should be’; and I do not think the second one was completely ethnographically true. People who discussed social care in terms of ‘mysteriousness’ and ‘chaos’ were complaining about it, rather than praising it. People tried to make the most out of the given circumstances, so the navigation through this ‘chaos’ did indeed open possibilities for action, but these possibilities were constraining and dissatisfying.

As I have argued throughout the thesis, the relationship between the state and ‘that which is not the state’ in Bijeljina was malleable rather than firmly defined, prone to winding, contraction, and elongation, rather than stability and predictability. If at one point it could be defined in one way, at another it appeared differently.

For this reason, Foucault’s notion of biopolitics, when used to understand the situation in the context of healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina is somewhat limiting. This is because in the context of Bijeljina it captures pieces taken separately; chunks of social reality observed in isolation from one another. An example of this is the described situation in which people came to the Centre for Social Work to be ‘categorised’. However, biopolitics cannot fully account for the relationships that I have described so far: the need to navigate, the personalisation of

institutional relations and the spilling over of responsibilities and expectations across domains that were only occasionally separable.

Let me explain a bit more why the notion of biopolitics is relevant, but not sufficient for thinking about healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina.

2.9. Biopolitics in Bijeljina

The notion of biopolitics helps to interpret the political relevance of services provided by the local Centre for Social Work (CSW) in Bijeljina. The CSW accumulated knowledge about people in order to enable improvement and control; it “categorised” people with disabilities (as well as some other people) and thus transformed them into subjects that needed particular, fixed forms of help. In other words, the practices of the CSW were involved in the creation of a framework through which people became legible in a particular way: as ‘persons with a speech impairment’, or as ‘persons with autism’, and so on. Both productive and oppressive, the activities of the CSW demarcated the line between ‘normality’ and ‘deviance’, and offered a framework through which deviance could be known, understood, and improved. However, they did so only to an extent: the personal mixed with the institutional, which created a partially predictable amalgam of relations which people did not necessarily appreciate or want.

For example, the “categorisations”, such as the one described in this chapter, produced files about the users. The files were well-kept, but the information they provided was not transformed into a unified database. Instead, it was scattered in cardboard boxes (see chapter two). An attempt was made to digitalise the data, but software malfunctioning, along with a lack of interest in the social workers prevented this digitalisation taking place. Thus, the personal (a memory of where a file was left, and where the boxes were, or a memory of the user’s case if the file could not be located at that moment) had to accompany the impersonal knowledge regarding the users in order for the CSW to perform its functions.

Furthermore, the users of the CSW services often complained about the ‘mysteriousness’ of the social work (see chapter two). Notions of discipline and biopolitics do not open up a way to understand this ‘mysteriousness’: how and why some people got information about special provisions, while others did not? This

question reveals that personal relations were important in understanding the distribution of state services. In order to understand the importance of personalised relations, biopolitics is insufficient, on its own.

In broader terms, the political sovereignty of the Bosnian state was dispersed amongst the institutions of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the entities' governments and institutions. The 'population', which was supposed to be produced through biopolitics, referred to different groups of people living in Bosnia: which particular group it referred to depended on a variety of factors. In other words, rather than having one, Bosnian, population, whose statistical features could then be uniformly addressed (in terms of, for example, how many men and women live in Bosnia, how many people of which nationality, how many people of a certain age, and so forth), the term 'population' referred to both this, as well as something else. For example, the term 'population' sometimes referred to nationally defined collectives, and not just to the 'population' of the Bosnian state. The fact that the census has not been done since 1991 is a striking example of the limits of biopolitics in this context. If biopolitics is a modality of power which transforms a group of people into a 'population', its mechanisms were only partially successful in Bosnia. State institutions which were supposed to generate knowledge about 'society', in order to control its improvement, were interwoven with that which they were supposed to know (i.e. the 'society') in a seemingly chaotic and mysterious way.

As discussed in chapter two, this 'mysteriousness' and 'chaos' was frequently discussed in Bijeljina. An employee who worked for *The Public Fund for Children's Protection* said that "here, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, and it doesn't even seem to care". In addition, the president of the *Red Cross* said: "rules are made as we go along". This can be understood as an example of the insufficiently developed (biopolitical and disciplinary) apparatus of the state, with the implication that once it is fully developed, these 'imperfections' will disappear. However, I argue that this sense of 'mystery' and 'chaos' can be analytically productive.

In order to follow the modalities of power created by the process of navigating a path through public services dedicated to the maintenance of 'life itself' in the context of Bijeljina, Foucault's concepts are not sufficient. Deeply historically informed, they *are* useful, but only up to a point. They cannot account for the sense of

‘mysteriousness’ and ‘chaos’ in healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina. Instead of understanding this sense as a result of an underdeveloped, weak state, I take it as an analytical entry point into understanding a personalised modality of power which worked through institutions. This modality of power utilised gifts as well as grids, as we will see in the next section.

3. *The ‘Big Woman’ in social care*

3.1. Helping others to bend rules and wills

Members of *The Holy Mother* made birthday visits to more than a hundred families who had children with disabilities, many of which lived in villages in the municipality of Bijeljina. As I have mentioned in chapter six, while the conceptual ‘father’ of the organisation was a priest from a local monastery, all members of *The Holy Mother* were female volunteers who were regular church goers but had no official relation to the church. In addition to the birthday visits, *The Holy Mother* gathered these families twice or three times per year during major Orthodox Christian holidays in the monastery at the centre of the town, and gave children small presents. They would also take charitable help in the form of food and clothes to the families’ houses during Serbian Orthodox Christian holidays. Apart from this, *The Holy Mother* did not engage in work with families or with children, so each family would see someone from the organisation once or twice per year (four or five times at most). There was an obvious element of proselytising in the humanitarian work completed by *The Holy Mother*. At the beginning of its work, *The Holy Mother* organised free baptisms for all children whose families they visited (apart from four or five Bosniak Muslim families who they also occasionally visited). All families accepted this. In every visit in which I participated, several minutes were dedicated to talking about the local church, local priest, or more general religious issues, such as ‘proper’ ways to celebrate religious holidays. However, members of *The Holy Mother* did not preach, or try to persuade people to do this or that. Their influence and power was neither based on belief, nor on a genuine interest in the religion of the people who they helped.

The sort of help that *The Holy Mother* provided to the families was twofold: ‘material’, and ‘relational’. (It should be noted that the two forms of help are

perfectly compatible, since the materiality of gifts recreates social relationships, and *vice versa*.) ‘Material’ help meant that they provided certain small gifts such as cake, basic food supplies, or clothes a couple of times per year. ‘Relational’ help meant that they were an important contact for the families, and through them, for other people. For *The Holy Mother*, birthday visits presented a means to bring small gifts and, perhaps more importantly, to maintain relations with the families. The ‘relational’ mode of helping meant that *The Holy Mother* put itself in the position of being a ‘gateway’ to important people in the town, and therefore to greater financial benefits and various services. It constituted an important *veza* for the families, and through them, for other people.

Ratka, the president of *The Holy Mother*, was the personification of the *veza*/‘relational’ type of help. Ratka seemed to be amazingly skilful in helping others to overcome different types of what people referred to as ‘ramparts’ (*bedemi*), denoting obstacles. She went to every house *The Holy Mother* visited during the first two years of their work. This meant that she had met every single family listed in the files of her organisation. This also meant that her phone number quickly spread throughout the town and municipality. Combined with the fact that the work of *The Holy Mother* was very present in local media, this meant that Ratka was the first person many people thought of in situations in which they had an urgent need for help.

As shown in chapter two, the help she provided to members of *The Sun* consisted of quickly setting up a meeting with the mayor. On another occasion, Sanja, a member of *The Sun*, tried to arrange an appointment with a medical practitioner of her choice. This particular practitioner was very busy, so he put Sanja on a waiting list. Since Sanja wanted to see him as soon as possible, she got in touch with Ratka. Ratka called the practitioner and asked him to agree to Sanja ‘jumping the queue’, which he did. Sanja met with him a couple of days after Ratka’s phone call.

In these two examples of setting up meetings, the ‘rampart’, or obstacle, denoted a time-consuming path through a bureaucratic, administrative order – or simply a queue – which Ratka would help to shorten, to contract, to bend, in order to obtain the desired service. In other words, the help Ratka was able to provide meant ‘bending the rules’, shortening the queue, contracting the space between people

related through institutions: she helped people to navigate through the institutions of the state healthcare and social protection system.

In other examples, the ‘rampart’ denoted a personal unwillingness to do something, which Ratka was able to transform into a personal willingness. An example of this is Zoran’s job application (see chapter four). Formally, Zoran did not need Ratka’s help to get the job. He had all the credentials necessary for it, and the library was in need of new workers. Furthermore, the library needed someone to do the job for which Zoran was qualified, since at the time of Zoran’s application, both this job and another were undertaken by a person with a different educational background to Zoran. Therefore, overcoming ‘the rampart’ in this case meant inducing a personal willingness in the director of the library to open a call for a new job post, and to give the job to Zoran. Even though formally the application procedure was followed ‘by the book’, Zoran needed Ratka’s help to get the job.

In summary, Ratka was able to ‘bend rules’, as much as she was able to bend ‘personal wills’. The official, formal, bureaucratic order, and informal, personal wills were intertwined, and Ratka was in a position of power, which could have a potentially important bearing on this mixture.⁵⁰

In chapter four, I argued that people who made claims for various welfare issues did not encounter ‘institutional’ and ‘personal’, ‘bureaucratic’ and ‘intimate’, ‘official’ and ‘private’ relations as clearly separated. Instead, there was one way of doing things, one ‘order’ which sometimes pulled one more towards personalisation, and sometimes more towards bureaucratisation. Ratka’s ability to help was part and parcel of this. Having shown how people tried to become small-scale brokers in order to navigate through the ever changing networks of relations and to successfully realise their various life-projects, here, I want to emphasise that some people were much better than others at this pursuit, and the successes of certain individuals had an effect on the way politics was done, for it created particular hierarchies. Ratka was not a small-scale broker just for herself, but for a large number of other people as well. She maintained a large number of contacts throughout the town, and she was able to solve burning family and personal issues for a large number of people –

⁵⁰ Another question is whether the mayor would have put the meeting with the members of *The Sun* on his daily agenda without a push from Ratka. Officially, members of *The Sun* should have been able to meet with the mayor without Ratka’s help, only much later. However, they did not believe this would ever happen.

getting a job, paying electricity bills, setting up an appointment at the municipality, obtaining documents of various sorts and so forth.

Ratka's humanitarian work was inseparable from her political work, and the one was dependent on the other. The means by which the process of claiming welfare benefits was pursued, as described in previous chapters, had political effects. Skilfully navigating one's way through a system of sometimes personal-like, and at other times institutional-like relations was of great relevance for the way in which politics was done on a local level. Characterisations such as 'goddess' (chapter two), or 'if anyone can do it, she can' (chapter four), suggest that Ratka was perceived as a powerful person who cared. This 'care' was largely dependent on the personalisation of relationships. Let us now explore certain traits of Ratka's position in Bijeljina through the phenomenon of the 'Big Man', as introduced to us by anthropological studies of Melanesia.

3.2. Big Man

The notion of the Big Man is a Melanesian emic concept around which a large body of ethnographic theory has been built. Big Man theory represents

a conversion of stranger-concepts that does not entail merely trying to establish a correspondence of meaning between two entities or the construction of heteronymous harmony between different worlds, but rather, the generation of a *disjunctive homonimity*, that destruction of any firm sense of place that can only be resolved by the imaginative formulation of novel worldviews. (Da Col & Graeber 2011: vii-viii)

In other words, Big Man presents one of those notions whose conceptual translation could not have been verbatim, nor directly opposed to an existing concept in the 'West'. The notion of Big Man was neither similar to, nor in complete opposition to, concepts in Western political theory. Instead, the process of its conceptual translation entailed "comparability in becoming" (*ibid.*). In this part, I will only briefly indicate the key characteristics of the concept of Big Man.

The modality of power employed by Big Man is the power of creating and using social relations which offer "leverage on others' production and the ability to siphon

off an excess product” (Sahlins 1963: 292). In a classic account of different forms of political authority in Polynesia and Melanesia, Sahlins notes that Big Man has the character of a leader in small Melanesian, mutually competing groups. His power is personalised, and two-sided. On the one hand, the authority of Big Man works among ‘his’ group of people, a cluster of followers who help him to get the resources he needs in order to continue being a part of ceremonial exchanges where he plays the role of being a “prince among men” (Sahlins 1963: 289). On the other hand, his authority is directed outwards, in-between groups:

The political sphere of the big-man divides itself into a small internal sector composed of his personal satellites – rarely over eighty men – and a much larger external sector, the tribal galaxy consisting of many similar constellations. (Sahlins 1963: 290)

In different parts of Melanesia, Big Men employed different strategies and mechanisms of accumulating valuable goods. Furthermore, the ceremonial exchanges of these valuable goods with members of other groups (other ‘constellations’) were not organised in the same way in this area. However, there are certain general traits of Big Men which come out of the tension between cooperation and competition. The power of Big Men was a) personalised; b) generated through inter-personal relations of giving and exchange; c) unofficial; there was no ‘office’ to which a Big Man would be elected:

(...) the indicative quality of big-man authority is everywhere the same: it is *personal power*. Big-men *do not come to office*; they do not succeed to, nor are they installed in, existing positions of leadership over political groups. The attainment of big-man status is rather the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men. It is not accurate to speak of "big-man" as a political title, for it is but *an acknowledged standing in inter-personal relations* - a "prince among men" so to speak as opposed to "The Prince of Danes". (Sahlins 1963: 289; emphasis added)

Sahlins argued that a Big Man was always potentially in danger of taking too much from his followers, and thus endangering his position of power. Andrew Strathern

(2007) has criticised this view, claiming that Big Man developed inter-personal networks outside 'his' group and thus had a wider variety of resources which prevented the over-use of the resources of 'his' group. Furthermore, the status of a Big Man was marked by custom in many ways. As Strathern argues:

It is clear that they are prominent organisers and financiers of ceremonial prestations and that from time to time they emerge as instigators of interpersonal as well as inter-group competition. (2007: 187)

In an analysis of the relevance of the Big Man modality of power in more recent times, Martin (2010) has shown that a strong tension emerged between the bureaucratic apparatus of the state and the social relations required for the achievement of Big Man status. The position of Big Man is not part of everyday life in contemporary Papua New Guinea anymore. Nevertheless, as an analytical tool, I will argue, it is useful if we wish to understand some of the characteristics of Ratka's position in Bijeljina. The concept of Big Man has been used for an analysis of the accumulation of power beyond Melanesia. For example, Bittnerová, Heřmanský, and Novotná (2010) use it to analyse the position of a mayor of a village in Slovakia. They argue that the power of the Big Man in a Slovak village with less than three hundred inhabitants was primarily linked with his ability to juggle interpersonal relationships. In other words, they understand the official political position of a Big Man in Slovakia as just one of his strategies for gaining primarily personal power. I will take an analysis in a slightly different direction. I will claim that Big Woman's power in Bijeljina was part and parcel of both the state and 'that which is not the state': it stemmed from the impossibility to clearly and permanently separate 'official' from the 'unofficial', and 'institutional' from 'personal'. Let us see how Ratka's position relates to the position of Melanesian Big Man.

3.3. Similarities and differences of the Big Man modality of power with Ratka's position

The Big Man presented an unofficial position of power, generated through interpersonal relations of give-and-take. What we could call Ratka's position of

being a 'Big Woman' in Bijeljina has certain similarities with this, because Ratka generated her own political relevance in the town through helping others. She created and recreated social relations in order to gain leverage and to siphon off an "excess product" (cf. Sahlins 1963: 292). An *excess product* in the case of Ratka referred to becoming a broker on a larger scale and for a larger number of people; it implied a political position which enabled ever larger leverage and greater control of access. I think the analogy with the position of Big Man stands for two reasons:

- 1) Ratka's position had a self-made character and was dependent on the pursuit of relations; it was generated through *inter-personal relations* of give-and-take, gained through giving and helping others (or refusing to do so)
- 2) A number of mutually different positions and roles were hard to differentiate because they became mixed within the position of Ratka; this gave Ratka a sort of *personalised power*.

However, the position of Ratka in Bijeljina was definitely not the same as the one of Big Man in Melanesia. The socio-historical contexts of mid twentieth century Melanesia, and early twenty-first century Bosnia, are obviously very different. 'Big Woman' was not part of a system that, as Marilyn Strathern writes, promoted

competitive exchanges, the transfer of women against bridewealth, and war compensation procedures that allow wealth to substitute for homicide. (Strathern 1991: 1)

Even if the 1992-1995 war was a time when "things substitute(d) for human life" (*ibid.*), during my fieldwork this was hardly the case. Notions of "calculated disequilibrium or unequal exchange" (*ibid.*) which marked the economic systems in which Big Men had their place are quite at odds with the variant on a neoliberalising capitalist economy characteristic of BiH.

Another difference was very relevant – the third characteristic of Big Man which Sahlins wrote about was *the lack of an 'office'*. This is very different from Ratka's position. Ratka's power was personal and it was the outcome of a series of acts which elevated her above other 'brokers' (cf. Alexander 2002). However, she was

also an official politician and a member of state committees. She occupied the existing official, elected, political positions. This points to some important traits which characterise the way in which political life was enacted in Bijeljina during my fieldwork.

Andrew Strathern's argument that "it is not the fact of wealth but its *deployment* which is important"⁵¹ for Big Man, and that "the big-man occupies no definite office of headship over specific numbers of subjects" (2007: 187) summarises both the similarities and the difference with Ratka's position. The difference is that 'Big Woman' had a 'definite office', i.e. an official political role. What *is* similar in both cases is the deployment of wealth by 'Big Woman': she deployed the wealth (of others) through charitable endeavours as much as she controlled access to the resources of the state, investing her personal resources and time to do two things simultaneously: help others to find a way through the complicated system of health and social care, and to elevate her position and the position of 'her group'.⁵²

3.4. Ratka as a 'Big Woman'

Ratka's biography reveals how she managed to become a 'Big Woman'. Before the war, Ratka had lived and worked in the field of social protection in a town close to Sarajevo. During the war, she became a displaced person, and she lived in Janja for some time, before moving to Bijeljina. While in Janja, Ratka helped other displaced persons to sort out the documentation they needed to apply for healthcare IDs, wrote legal pleas for women who needed to communicate with institutions across the IEBL, and so on. She told me this was her own "personal, unorganised way of helping people". Soon after moving to Bijeljina, Ratka became the president of the local *Red Cross*, a position she left when she was elected as a member of municipal parliament. This means that after offering personal, unorganised help during the war and during the early post-war years, Ratka gained official legitimacy as a 'caring person' through being a part of a well-established humanitarian organisation. A *Red Cross* office was established for the first time in Bijeljina in 1937. It was closed during the Second World War, and reopened in 1945. During the 1992-1995 war, the

⁵¹ Emphasis added.

⁵² What constituted 'Ratka's group' will be discussed shortly.

office worked mainly with refugees. To be part of the *Red Cross* meant being a part of an already recognised and established organisation. After winning a second mandate in the local parliament, Ratka became involved in founding *The Holy Mother*. A new organisation opened up the possibility of defining new ‘rules of the game’.

During my fieldwork year, Ratka was a language teacher in a primary school, the director of *The Holy Mother*, a member of the local parliament, a very close associate of the mayor of Bijeljina, and the head of the *Coordinating Committee for Social Protection* at the municipality (this municipal body supervised the implementation of the *Strategy for the Development of Social Protection* in the Bijeljina municipality). Both Ratka and the mayor were members of the SDS, the hardcore Serbian nationalist political party which had been in power in Bijeljina since 1990. During our interview, Ratka said:

“I used it [her role as a politician] as a direct advantage, because I think that as a politician I have a duty to work for the people.”

While this might have been the case, the reverse argument can also be made: that Ratka used helping others in navigating their way through the social and political systems in order to increase her own political influence and power, as well as that of her party. Weiner (1992) argues that the principle of *keeping-while-giving* lays behind seemingly reciprocal exchange practices. According to Weiner, the obligation to return the gift – the principle of reciprocity – “only provides the outer manifestation of social interaction” (1992: 64). Exchange creates difference between alienable and inalienable possessions, as well as between people who possess one or the other. Inalienable possessions are objects which are wilfully removed from cycles of exchange: they condense cosmologies, senses of belonging, and social relations into a single object, and thus become too important to be exchanged. Keeping these objects, while giving away others, becomes a way of transforming these differences into hierarchy and rank. Those who can keep inalienable possessions (difference), while reciprocally exchanging other possessions, become those with an elevated status (hierarchy).

A somewhat similar principle was deployed by Ratka: as she was giving away her time and help to other people, she was simultaneously creating a difference (between herself and other, smaller, brokers), and transforming this difference into hierarchy (a position of power). Instead of valuable objects such as cloth, or shells, Ratka was giving and taking access to state resources, and charitable donations. She was giving access to both “rules” and “wills”, while maintaining the (valuable) position of someone who was able to do this, thus creating hierarchy between herself and others. Stories concerning Ratka’s help were numerous, and recounted to me by many people in the town. I heard a story that Ratka had once received a call from one of the families *The Holy Mother* visited. This family did not have the money required to pay an electricity bill. This was especially disturbing since the medicine one of their children was taking needed to be kept in the fridge. Ratka immediately called the accountant of *The Holy Mother*, and made sure that the bill was paid a day later. The immediacy of Ratka’s response was one of the most frequently commented on aspects in these stories.

On another occasion, a man went into a bank and asked the clerks to help him make a charity donation to whomever – he did not care who the recipient was as long as he/she really needed help. The clerks put him in touch with Ratka. The man started making regular monthly donations to the account of *The Holy Mother*, and *The Holy Mother* regularly transferred this money to one of the families on their lists.

The Holy Mother had a regular ‘base’ of people they helped. Because of their visibility and influence, this organisation was often the first one people mentioned when talking about humanitarian issues. The families they visited regularly constituted a ‘core’ through which knowledge about the organisation, and knowledge of how to get in touch with them, flowed through the town. This ‘core’ was actually large and dispersed, which thus increased the visibility and influence of the organisation and other institutions with which it had a firm connection (i.e. the Serbian Orthodox Church and the SDS). As mentioned previously, *The Holy Mother* did not just help families who they visited regularly. Families who raised money for medical treatments abroad received help from them. Nikola Ilić called Ratka to set up a humanitarian number, and she responded quickly and reassuringly. Pedja Božović also contacted Ratka when he wanted to open a humanitarian number. Since each organisation had the legal right to open one humanitarian number per year, *The*

Holy Mother could not do it for the Božović family. Instead, they made a direct payment to Pedja's bank account.

3.5. The merging of domains

The previous discussion has illustrated how the concept of Big Man as an analytical tool is useful for understanding Ratka's position up to a point. Some of the characteristics of the position of being a Big Man were present in Ratka's position; namely personalising power, and generating power through giving and taking. The difference was that Ratka *also* occupied an official political role, unlike Big Man. In the context of contemporary Bosnia, this meant that as an official woman politician Ratka had to combine the ideas and practices of (moral) 'care' and 'humanitarianism' with the ideas and practices of (immoral) 'politics'. Pine and Haukanes (2005) argue that social security throughout Eastern Europe – arrangements of who takes care of whom and in what way – were generally shaped by specific gendered ideologies. Ratka's political success was part and parcel of this. Helms has analysed discursive strategies employed by women who were involved in politics in BiH. She argues that a particular understanding of gender and a particular understanding of politics came together to form a constellation in which women who want to do political work "must continue to be perceived *as women*, and moral women at that" (2007: 237):

Politically active women are caught in a contradiction. They want to retain the moral purity ascribed to women who conform to their roles as passive victims and keepers of the home and family, yet they also seek to be taken seriously as political *actors*. To manoeuvre themselves through this dilemma, women have sought to reshape both the definition of politics, as well as that of respectable womanhood. (Helms 2007: 240)

Helms argues that one strategy that women who worked in the NGO sector employed was to maintain a clear narrative distance from politics. Politics was presented as the domain of men and as dirty, dishonest, 'whore' work (the reference to prostitution evokes ideas of selling what is perceived as unmarketable: morality, in the case of politics). Women in the NGO sector often portrayed their work as

humanitarian, apolitical, and *therefore* moral. Furthermore, their social position as women, and often as mothers, was also drawn upon to maintain a distance between politics and humanitarianism. However,

the NGO sector is a relatively new phenomenon in Bosnia, and considerable confusion exists over the place of NGOs in relation to the state and government. In other words, any consensus on how political NGOs can or should be is still pending. (Helms 2007: 241)

Some of those women, according to Helms, were very aware of the political character of their work. They would walk the line between ‘dirty politics’ and ‘moral humanitarian work’ in order to achieve their goals, and maintain an image of respectability.

Helms also analyses the way in which women who were active politicians struggled to be effective actors and, at the same time, struggled not to be seen as aggressive or un-feminine. In order to do this, they emphasised motherhood and the position of women politicians as caring mothers or teachers who had to step in to improve what men had broken or destroyed. Another discursive strategy, related to this one, was based upon the role of the victim. In this view, doing politics was morally acceptable if done by someone who was a victim of those who had failed to do politics properly (i.e. men).

Ratka used several of these strategies in order to present herself as an influential politician and a respectable woman. During our encounters, she emphasised several times that besides being a Bosnian language teacher (she referred to it as the Serbian language), and the president of *The Holy Mother*, she was the mother of two successful young women, and a wife who cooked meals and took care of the house. At the same time, she was one of the mayor’s closest associates, and third on the list of candidates the SDS supported for the entity of the Republic of Srpska parliamentary elections in 2010 (the two men higher on the list made it to Parliament, but not her). Being a teacher, a mother, and thoroughly involved in charitable/humanitarian work enabled her to take on the role of being a respectable woman in a ‘dirty’ world of politics.

At the same time, this way of doing things – the need to interlink ‘care’ with ‘politics’, and to be able to help others to overcome whatever obstacles they may have been facing in any one particular moment, formed a strategy which she successfully manipulated in order to become influential as a woman politician. This says something important about the way in which political life was organised in this context. Ratka was the person able to help people overcome particular ‘ramparts’, or obstacles, and at the same time, the person whose job it should be to reduce the very existence of ramparts between citizens and their entitlements. In other words, she was both someone in charge of reducing the influence of various power vectors on the distribution of entitlements, *and* someone who reproduced the relevance of these power vectors for the distribution of entitlements.

This overflowing of meanings and practices from the domain of (moral) humanitarianism and care to the domain of (immoral) politics and back was visible with regard to other domains as well. Even though *The Holy Mother* was a voluntary religious association, it was also an organisation under the close protection of the municipality. Ratka said:

“I used it a lot, I can say freely, [her role as a politician], because we received the greatest help from the municipality –official help, directed to organisations and projects, and help from individuals. For example, the largest donations came from the mayor – from his personal resources. He once gave us 4500KM [2250EUR] of his daily allowance, another time he gave us 10% of his salary. Then on another occasion he gave us 2000KM [1000EUR], which was 10% of his salary for six months, I think... and all of the officials on the level of the municipality [gave donations]. It’s all because I promoted the work of the organisation, not just ours, but also of *The Sun* and other humanitarian organisations.”

She briefly mentions ‘official help’, i.e. the resources which the municipality allocates to ‘civil society’ projects, and then jumps straight to the mayor and his ‘personal help’. Here, again, who the person was – or rather, where the person was in the town’s network of relations – made a difference.

The town of Bijeljina might have been particularly conducive to gaining power in this partly personal, partly official way, since it has grown to almost three times its

earlier size during the last twenty years and so infrastructure had to be completely built up from nothing in the majority of neighbourhoods. As I mentioned in chapter one, according to the 1991 census, the town of Bijeljina had around thirty six thousand inhabitants. In contrast, 2010 estimates suggested that between eighty and ninety thousand people lived in the town.

The SDS had been in power throughout that twenty year period, in which housing, roads and sewage systems had to be, and had been built, as well as new hospitals, schools, kindergartens, day care centres, cafés and cinemas, etc. This presented a perfect testing ground in which Ratka and other members of the SDS could define new ‘rules of the game’ in a number of fields. As Bijeljina became larger, they had an opportunity to ‘install’ themselves where needed and to become ‘Big Women and Men’, or ‘powerful people who care’.⁵³ They were in the position to govern the process of gridding (cf. Jansen 2012), or in other words, to organise social and political space in particular ways.

This was possible only because the topology of power came to include both certain traits of biopolitics and discipline, and a modality of power similar to the Big Man. Just like *The Sun* presented a mixture of the form of help offered by NGOs with a form of help offered by a state-run day care centre, as discussed in chapter two, Ratka mixed roles of a personal helper and an official politician. She dedicated her time to accumulate financial and material resources of other people and distribute them to those who were in greatest need of them in the form of charitable help. Through this, she became an influential person, and officially involved in party politics, able to control access to different state resources. She skilfully combined ‘personal’ power with the power of ‘faceless bureaucracy’ in order to achieve personal success. In other words, Ratka’s power was simultaneously ‘institutional’

⁵³ The mayor also exploited a rhetorical strategy of a ‘powerful man who cares’. For example, in a ‘New Year’ interview, he said: “*I go to bed and wake up with municipal problems [in my mind] and that is my choice. (...) I try to be among my people as much as possible and I am glad when others say I am the people’s man (narodni čovjek). While talking with people, I try to get a sense of what their difficulties are. Often a kind word alone can help people. I try to always, as much as possible, help the common man. (...) I have never had a security man or a bodyguard, and I never will. If I ever have to defend myself from my people, I would rather not do this job anymore*” (Semberske novine, 31/12/2009: p. 6-7). The emphasis the mayor put on notions of *help, a kind word*, and being a *people’s man* suggests that he did not want to present his ‘public’ persona as separated from his ‘private’ personhood. He, after all, demagogically claims that he goes to bed and wakes up thinking about municipal issues. Before becoming the town mayor, he used to be the entity’s Minister for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons; then worked as a Minister for Work, War Veterans, and Disabled Persons; as well as a deputy director of the entity’s Pension and Disability Insurance Fund.

and ‘personal’ – she participated in elections, she was an active member of municipal parliament, and simultaneously, behind the scenes, decided on whether to help others (or not) to find employment, pay the rent, buy certain things, and so on.

If the partial analogy between Ratka and Big Man stands – if Ratka was, to a degree, something like a Big Woman – one question that remains is whether she attempted to increase individual or group wealth and power. Furthermore, this begs the question of which group; the wealth and power of the SDS (her political party), of the Serbian Orthodox Church, of ‘her people’ (i.e. the Serbs); or of all Bosnian citizens living in Bijeljina?

Wagner suggests that a dichotomy between helping oneself and helping one’s group in the case of Big Man is false, because “the big man aspires to something that is both at once” (1991: 162). Ratka’s actions could perhaps be understood in the same way. Engagements with state-supported projects of social protection, which might be analytically neatly separated into domains of charitable work, parliamentary politics, religious and nationalist proselytising, affected one another in a way that enabled Ratka to aspire to several things at once. Because the personal and the institutional were interspersed, Ratka’s personal actions (i.e. religious charitable work, helping others to overcome various obstacles) bore the mark of all of her institutional roles, including that of being an SDS party member, and *vice versa*. A couple of weeks before the elections, one of the women from *The Sun* suggested to the others that they vote for Ratka. This was not because she particularly supported, or was even aware of the political programme of the SDS, but because she thought that if Ratka was in the parliament of the entity of the Republic of Srpska, they would have a direct link with the highest political body in the entity, and therefore their situation would have greater chances of improving. This slippage of influence and meaning from charitable work to parliamentary politics, to state-supported projects of social protection, to religious and nationalist proselytising was possible only because the modality of power of ‘Big Woman’ existed within a political and social framework in which domains that seemed to be neatly separated, actually were not.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Foucault's concept of biopolitics on the one hand, and the notion of Big Man from Melanesian anthropology on the other, are useful tools through which to think about modalities of power operating in social and healthcare protection in Bijeljina. I have approached the personalisation of institutional relations and the merging of seemingly separate domains by taking the concepts of discipline and Big Man as far as they allowed me to go in order to argue that the topology of power in this ethnographic context included the position of a 'Big Woman' – someone whose power was generated through her ability to make decisions surrounding the contraction and elongation of space, and surrounding the personalisation and impersonalisation of relations. To conclude, I will summarise in what ways notions of biopolitics and Big Man are helpful in understanding the position of 'Big Woman', and in what ways they are not.

The notion of biopolitics captures how a specific political collective entity – that of a population – is produced through the simultaneous, but separable, workings of the 'political body' and the 'societal body'. Biopolitics presents a way of framing one entity (people's practices regarding 'life itself'; the 'societal body' or 'that which is not the state') through the terms of another entity (that of the 'political body', or the 'state'). The knowledge produced this way, through the standardisation of concepts and the fitting of practices into a particular categorising apparatus, is used for the monitoring, control, improvement, and further fitting of people's practices into the same apparatus. In short, it is used as a mode of population governance.

The notion of biopolitics is a useful tool in my analysis because there were institutions in Bijeljina which generated knowledge about 'society' in order to help improve it; there were strategies for generating this knowledge; there were people who desired improvement, i.e. who were ready to fit into categories in order to gain access to provisions; and overall, there was an "attempt to govern a population's health, welfare, and conditions of existence in the framework of political sovereignty" (Collier 2011: 3). However, this attempt to govern a population was far from perfect. Basic knowledge about Bosnia reveals that political sovereignty was distributed among the top level of the state and the entities' levels; hence the notion

of ‘population’ had several denotations, depending on who, where, and about what one was talking. Institutions which generated knowledge about ‘society’ operated through personalised as well as impersonalised relations. Strategies for generating this knowledge could not always be implemented, as the fact that the census has not been completed since 1991 suggests. People who ‘desired improvement’ often complained because of the particular form of the improvement available to them – they were occasionally ready to fit into existing categories in order to achieve something, but they would have preferred different forms of improvement. Overall, since the notion of biopolitics assumes a clear separation between the ‘societal body’ and the ‘political body’ (although both should work towards the same goal), it cannot be fully applied to the ethnographic material presented in this thesis.

The notion of Big Man captures a personalised modality of power generated through the principle of ‘keeping-while-giving’ (Weiner 1992). The giving of certain entities, while keeping away from exchange others, in particular those that are highly valued, creates differences between those who possess entities of value and those who do not. In this way, a hierarchy is formed between those who can decide whether, when, and to whom to give valuable items, and those who cannot make such decisions. Big Men raise resources through their social networks, and use these resources to raise their power through ceremonial exchanges. A Big Man coordinates the distribution of resources in a way that enables him to increase the political status, prestige, and therefore power – which is simultaneously his, and that of a grouping with which he is associated. By successfully manipulating, or navigating his way through interpersonal relations, he achieves a position of power.

The notion of Big Man is useful because it places an emphasis on interpersonal relations as relevant for generating power. The position of ‘Big Woman’ which I have presented in this chapter also stemmed from the successful manipulation of, or navigation through, relations of give and take between people. She was able to decide whether and whom to help navigate their way through the relations relevant for the field of health and social care: to jump the queues, overcome obstacles, or ‘ramparts’, i.e. to bend rules and wills. However, the notion of Big Man is not fully applicable since his power was unofficial, while the ‘Big Woman’ occupied an office.

The position and the modality of power of ‘Big Woman’ suggests that the ‘offices’ and ‘domains’ which were supposed to be separate, regularly merged with one

another and disassociated from one another. This enabled her to simultaneously occupy an official political position, and to increase her power through personalised relations of give and take.

Finally, I want to suggest that this analysis also points out the difficulty of combining a Foucauldian approach to power with an ethnographic angle on power. If “(r)outing relations through persons became the substance of anthropological empiricism” (Strathern 1995: 12), it means that anthropological empiricism – ethnography – requires taking *people* and their positions as relevant. Even if the emphasis on ‘routing relations through persons’ is placed on learning about *relations*, rather than about *persons*, it still requires taking into account where people were and how relations were generated by their particular positions. Foucault’s conceptual framework makes it difficult to include people and their everyday practices of reasoning and negotiation as relevant factors for the workings of power. By erasing the individual from the processes of constructing the intelligibility of concepts, Foucault also erased the possibility of analysing personalised forms of power. This does not mean that the intelligibility of personalised forms of power is created by a particular individual. Personalised forms of power are also a form of discursive practice: the position of Ratka was produced by the social relations, as much as Ratka was involved in producing these social relations. However, it does mean that individual wills and the possibilities of navigating a path through social relations should be included in an analysis of power. The ways in which “subjects are shaped but not ‘captured’ within discursive formations” (Nuijten 2005: 11) can be captured by addressing how power is practiced in between domains and across various scales.

Conclusion

This thesis has tracked various attempts, in Bijeljina, to navigate a path through the relations of healthcare and social protection system. I have understood relations as “embedded practices” (Massey 2008: 10), and by ‘healthcare and social protection system’ I referred to the range of embedded practices people engaged with in order to take care of their biologies and wellbeing. These embedded practices included attaching oneself to a category of disability (chapter seven), obtaining documents in order to get another document (such as a healthcare ID as in chapter four), pursuing *veze* in order to get another document (a referral to a hospital across the border, for example, as in chapter three), pursuing *veze* in order to get desirable social protection (chapter two), raising money through *humanitarne akcije* (chapters five and six), and so on. I have argued that these attempts to navigate map out the organisation of social and political spaces, and that in Bijeljina their relationship was intricate: manageable, but not fully predictable. The organisation of healthcare and social protection in Bijeljina points to the impossibility of being able to clearly separate out domains of the ‘state’ from those of ‘that which is not the state’, and I argued that there was a particular modality of power which emerged from this. The personalisation of institutional procedures and relations enabled some people, such as the ‘Big Woman’, Ratka, to generate power which was highly personal and which worked through the institutions.

This thesis has also opened up several further questions for me: In what way are Yugoslav socialist legacies present in the form of navigation addressed here? In what way was political space organised during the SFRY? How can we think about initiatives to help and solidarities described in this thesis beyond the model of civil society, and perhaps beyond a claim that the notion of civil society has to be contextualised in contemporary Bosnian realities? Can the mechanisms of the ‘world of people’, such as sharing stories and institutional-personal entanglement, be used for political action?

In the issues that I want to explore in the future, as well as in this research, I do not focus so much on feelings of belonging – to a place, to a nation, to a country, etc. I

am rather interested in procedures, small acts which people undertake in order to achieve something related to healthcare and social protection. This thesis followed the way in which people's practices of navigation recreated the boundary between the 'state' and 'that which is not the state' as movable and not very neat. It also showed that navigation was both reproduced by, and reproducing, social positions and senses of self.

A question the thesis answered for me was what kind of relationships were built among thousands of people who decided to donate money to a single family for medical treatments across the state border, and whether there was any order, or a system, behind what seemed like chaotic practices of taking care of one's biology and wellbeing. These relationships did not fit into categories of 'friendships', 'interests', 'bureaucratic' or 'expert-user' relations, and so on, or at least not as a rule. The 'rule' was, rather, the selective relevance of personalised knowledges and relationships for those relations that were supposed to be procedural, and therefore, the partial suitability of the above mentioned categories to encompass relations between people. Following Petryna (2002), I argued that citizenship was not a criterion which guaranteed access to desirable healthcare and social protection, or that procedures and rules will be equally applicable to all members of a community (i.e. the state). However, this does not mean that some other form of community – national, religious, local, professional etc. – formed the ground for selecting when to apply procedures and rules, and how much they needed to be applied. Rather, all of them occasionally became important and occasionally sunk back into irrelevance. I have also looked at the state border and how it affected people's engagements with healthcare and social protection. As one of the most visible elements of the state as a political community, the border itself was sometimes relevant, and sometimes not, for practices of navigation. I also argued that the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1995), and the vocabulary which poses the state as clearly distinct from 'that which is not the state' cannot fully capture the ways in which the border, bureaucracy, or social protection services had different effects for people located in different positions.

One influential way of thinking about forms of political community beyond the framework of a nation-state has been developed through the notion of the multitude. For example, Virno (2004) developed the concept of the multitude in order to make

it work for a number of social processes which cannot be described through the framework of a (nation-)state. He argues that the seventeenth century opposition between Spinoza's concept of 'the multitude', and Hobbes's concept of 'the people', decided the groundwork for further philosophical and political articulations of the state, the public, economy, and so on. The concept of the people, and closely related concepts of the nation-state and its public, have 'won', which means that differences and similarities became managed in a particular way, through the ideas of the people, nation-state, and the public/private dichotomy. In other words, the 'people' and the 'multitude' point to two ways of framing and managing differences and similarities, understood in the broadest sense. The 'national order of things' has been framing differences and similarities in a particular way since the seventeenth century. Similarly, Hardt and Negri (2001) argue that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a brief chance to think through the possibility of establishing a politics whose main subject would be the 'multitude'. According to them, abandoning the idea that there is a life beside the one we live now (conceived of through God, through a nation, etc.) potentially opens up a 'horizon of immanence': a window for thinking about politics as the bundle of processes of governing and caring for life in terms of its immediate, and very diverse, needs and wants. This potential for linking the 'horizon' of democratic political order with the 'horizon of immanence' was lost with the creation of modern nation-states which reframed sovereignty and reestablished a 'plane of transcendence' (Hardt & Negri 2001: 73).

Virno sees the post-Fordist situation in Europe as an opportunity to rearticulate the notion of the multitude. Since the seventeenth century in a large part of Europe, the concept of 'the people' became the basis of the politics of sovereign nation-states. He argues that 'the multitude' did not disappear, but was relocated through the public/private opposition. The 'many' became part of the 'private sphere' and individual interactions. Since the kind of mutuality and togetherness it brought was directly opposed to the mutuality and togetherness of 'the people', or of 'the nation' – whose voice was to be heard in 'the public', and therefore, to be politically relevant – the multitude was relocated to the 'private sphere':

In liberal thought, the uneasiness provoked by the "many" is toned down by means of having recourse to the pairing of the terms public-private. The multitude, which is the polar opposite of the people, takes on the slightly ghostly and mortifying features of

the so-called *private*. (...) "Private" signifies not only something personal, not only something which concerns the inner life of this person or that; private signifies, above all, *deprived of*: deprived of a voice, deprived of a public presence. In liberal thought, the multitude survives as a private dimension. The many are aphasic and far removed from the sphere of common affairs. (Virno 2004: 24)

Virno argues that the way in which the concept of the multitude would be, or has been, framing differences and similarities is difficult to grasp, because of two things. Firstly, the fully-fledged 'order' that would manage differences and similarities in the way of the 'multitude' has never had a chance to develop. Secondly, the order of 'the people' subsumed the 'multitude' under one of its constitutive mechanisms – the 'individual' or the 'private' – and thus made it difficult, if not impossible, to comb the 'multitude' out of the terminology of the 'order of the people' and to make it politically effective. However, Virno argues that the vocabulary of the nation-state is slowly fracturing. For some time now, the public/private division has been considered to be untenable. Virno argues that the multitude is a concept which is able to capture this change, and he articulates it as a kind of unity established through the generic human ability to speak and think. In other words, he claims that the unity/togetherness presupposed by the concept of the multitude can be found in thoughts and language, shared intellectual responses to various encounters, such as a ubiquitous and pervasive 'sense of not feeling at home':

The multitude does not clash with the One; rather, it redefines it. Even the many need a form of unity, of being a One. But here is the point: this unity is no longer the State; rather, it is language, intellect, the communal faculties of the human race. (Virno 2004: 26)

While the 'multitude' is a provocative and challenging notion, I do not know whether it can be approached ethnographically, at least in this moment, since this partly depends on one's view about whether it has had a chance to be developed in a way Virno has argued it could. The notion of the 'people', as a nationally defined entity under the sovereignty of the state, is not useful for understanding the practices

of taking care of one's biology and wellbeing in Bijeljina, and neither was the notion of the multitude. Entities can be 'ordered' in different ways, just as they can be 'disordered' in different ways. Appropriate healthcare and social protection was not just dependent on citizenship, or on nationality – people did not get access to desirable services simply because they were citizens who followed prescribed procedures, or simply because they were Serbs (or something else). At the same time, there was no singular (potentially global) sense of unity beyond the state, as Virno argues should be the case for the 'multitude'. The 'systemless system' of healthcare and social protection almost regularly required people to navigate through it in a way that combined personal relationships with institutional procedures and rules, making it thus 'disordered' but in a partially predictable way. The 'systemless system' was always a bit different depending on the moment and the point of looking at it, and on the practical needs of people who were engaging with it: who was pursuing what, with whose help, and for what reason; all these were important issues for understanding how it worked. This 'systemless system' is too often understood as an aberration, as a flawed, incomplete, corrupt, and backward version of the dominant way of managing similarities and differences: that of the 'people', and of the 'state'.

Jansen (2012) argues that people in Bosnia did not necessarily enjoy, or want, this partial predictability. The pragmatic, material aspect of enabling life through a 'systemless system' is uncertain: how exactly it was going to be played out depended on *veze*, as well as on the procedures, on the personal as well as on the institutional, as I have argued throughout the thesis. Jansen shows that rather than embracing this uncertainty, as Scott (1998) would expect for example, people instead yearned for 'normality', understood as order and predictability. He shows that the besieged people in war-time Sarajevo yearned for grids which would be functional and working, and which would, therefore, enable living, rather than augment gambling with it:

While sometimes evading 'the state' in some ways, people were also engaged in efforts to see it in the first place, and to be seen by it. Clamouring for legibility, they sought gridding to create conditions in which 'normal lives' could unfold. (Jansen 2012: 13)

In my understanding of Jansen's argument, predictability and certainty provided by fully-functioning grids are separable from the concepts of 'the people', and the 'nation-state'. In other words, predictability and certainty do not have to be created only through the apparatuses of nation-states. While the 'people', and their 'nation-state', have been the dominant forms of ordering differences and similarities, and enabling life, from the 18th century onwards, the process of inscribing order – the gridding – is not 'always already' their part. Keeping the relevance of gridding in mind, paying close attention to yearning for predictability and the certainty it creates, while simultaneously insisting on the separability of gridding from the framework of national sovereignty and the 'people', can, I think, be useful for thinking about alternative forms of political and social community.

It seems to me that in post-war Bijeljina some people, like Ratka, used (and abused) this yearning for grids. By deciding about the gridding (where and what the grids would be, whom and what they would include and whom and what not), and by deciding about whether the grids would be respected, applied and fully-functional (and if so, when, how much, for whom, and for whom they would not), they gained power. This power was constituted through the very ability to move across domains, to reap from both grids and gifts, from the 'state' and from 'that which is not the state'. It seems to me that without fully understanding, in its own terms, this power to move across domains, the ways of challenging it will be deprived and potentially easily subsumed under it.

Bibliography

- Abrams, Philip. 1988. Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, 58-89.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. Writing Against Culture. In: Fox, G. R. (ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 137-154.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. , Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Alexander, Catherine. 2002. *Personal States. Making Connections between People and Bureaucracy in Turkey*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Allahyari, Rebecca, Anne. 2000. *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community*, University of California Press.
- Alvarez, R. J. Robert. 1995. The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 447-470.
- Alvarez, R. J. Robert. 1999. Toward an anthropology of borderlands: The Mexican-US border and the crossing of the 21st century. In: Rösler, M. & Wendl, T. (eds.) *Frontiers and Borderlands: Anthropological Perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 225-238.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books.
- Anderson, Benedikt. 1998. *Nacija: Zamišljena zajednica*. Beograd, Plato.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*, Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press.
- Aretxaga, Begoña. 2003. Maddening States. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32, 393-410.
- Armakolas, Ioannis. 2007. Sarajevo No More? Identity and the Experience of Place among Bosnian Serb Sarajevans in Republika Srpska. In: Bougarel, X., Helms, E. & Duijzings, G. (eds.) *The New Bosnian Mosaic: identities, memories and moral claims in a post-war society*. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate.
- Bakalaki, Alexandra. 2008. On the ambiguities of altruism and the domestication of emotions. *Historiein, a Review of the Past and Other Stories*, 8, 83-93.

- Ballinger, Pamela. 2004. 'Authentic Hybrids' in the Balkan Borderlands. *Current Anthropology*, 45, 31-60.
- Behar, Ruth. 2003. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*, Boston, Beacon Press.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 1997. *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Berdahl, Daphne. 1999. *Where the world ended*, Berkeley, California University Press.
- Bittnerová, Dana., Heřmanský, Martin. & Novotná, Hedvika. 2010. The Big-Man from the "White house." Negotiating Power in a Slovak Post-Rural Community. *Urban People/Lidé Města*, 12, 309-329.
- Blagojević, Marina. 2009. *Knowledge Production at the Semiperiphery. A Gender Perspective.*, Belgrade, Institut za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja.
- Bougarel, X., Duijzings, G. & Helms, E. 2007. *The new Bosnian mosaic: memories, identities and moral claims in a post-war society*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Bugarel, Ksavije. 2004. *Bosna: Anatomija rata*, Beograd, Fabrika knjiga.
- Bornstein, Erica. 2001a. Child Sponsorship, Evangelism, and Belonging in the Work of World Vision Zimbabwe. *American Ethnologist*, 28, 595-622.
- Bornstein, Erica. 2001b. The Verge of Good and Evil: Christian NGOs and Economic Development in Zimbabwe. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 24, 59-77.
- Bornstein, Erica. & Redfield, Peter. 2011. *Forces of Compassion. Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics*, School for Advanced Research.
- Bowie, Katherine. 1998. The alchemy of charity: of class and Bhuddism in Northern Thailand. *American Anthropologist*, 100, 469-481.
- Bowman, Glen. 2003. Constitutive violence and the nationalist imaginary: antagonism and defensive solidarity in 'Palestine' and 'Former Yugoslavia'. *Social Anthropology* 11, 37-58.
- Brunet-Jailly, Emmanuel. 2005. Theorizing Borders: An Interdisciplinary Perspective. *Geopolitics*, 10, 633-649.
- Burchell, Graham. Gordon, Colin. & Miller, Peter. (eds.) 1991. *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality.*, The University of Chicago Press.

- Cain, Jennifer. Duran, Antonio. Fortis, Amya. & Jakubowski, Elke. (eds.) 2002. *Health Care Systems in Transition: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Copenhagen: European Observatory on Health Care Systems.
- Caldwell, L. Melissa. 2008. Social Welfare and Christian Welfare: Who Gets Saved in Post-Soviet Russian Charity Work? In: Steinberg, M., D. & Wanner, C. (eds.) *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 179-214.
- Candea, Matei. 2010. Anonymous introductions: identity and belonging in Corsica. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16, 119-137.
- Carter, M. Donald. 2010. *Navigating the African Diaspora: The Anthropology of Invisibility*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 2004. Populations and Political Society. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. Columbia University Press.
- Cohen, Abner. 1965. *Arab border-villages in Israel*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Collier, J. Stephen. 2009. Topologies of Power. Foucault's Analysis of Political Government beyond 'Governmentality'. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26, 78-108.
- Collier, J. Stephen. 2011. *Post-Soviet Social. Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics.*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- Csordas, J. Thomas. 1994. (ed.) *Embodiment and experience. The existential ground of culture and self*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Čelebičić, Vanja. 2013. forthcoming. *Hope and Entrapment on the border between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. PhD, University of Manchester.
- Da Col, Giovanni. & Graeber, David. 2011. Foreword. The return of ethnographic theory. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 1, vi-xxxv.
- De Dijn, Annelien. 2007. Civil Society in the History of Ideas: The French Tradition. Discussion Paper SP IV 2007-401. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).
- Deleuze, Gilles. & Guattari, Felix. 1988. *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, London, Athlone.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1992. *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

- De Soto, G. Hermine, & Dudwick, Nora. (eds.) 2000. *Fieldwork Dilemmas. Anthropologists in Postsocialist States*: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Driessen, Henk. 1999. Smuggling as a border way of life: A Mediterranean case. In: Rösler, M. & Wendl, T. (eds.) *Frontiers and Borderlands. Anthropological Perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 117-127.
- Druyan, M. Leonard. 1996. Coriolis force. In: Schneider, H. S. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Climate and Weather*. New York&Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dunn, C. Elizabeth. 2004. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Dunn, C. Elizabeth. 2005. Standards and Person-Making in East Central Europe. In: Ong, A. & Colier, S. J. (eds.) *Global assemblages: technology, politics, and ethics as anthropological problems*. Oxford: Blackwell, 173-193.
- Dunn, C. Elizabeth. 2008. Postsocialist spores: Disease, bodies, and the state in the Republic of Georgia. *American Ethnologist*, 35, 243–258.
- Faubion, D. James. 2001. Toward an Anthropology of Ethics: Foucault and the Pedagogies of Autopoiesis. *Representations*, 74, 83-104.
- Feldman, Ilana. 2007. The Quaker way: ethical labour and humanitarian relief. *American Ethnologist*, 34, 689-707.
- Ferguson, James. & Gupta, Akhil. 2002. Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality. *American Ethnologist*, 29, 981 -1002.
- Flynn, K. Donna. 1997. 'we are the border': identity, exchange and the state along the Benin-Nigeria border. *American Ethnologist*, 24, 311-330.
- Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, New York, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984. Practices and Sciences of the Self. In: Rabinow, Paul. (ed.) *The Foucault reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 331-390.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The Use of Pleasure. History of Sexuality Vol. 2*, New York, Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage
- Foucault, Michel. 2002. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 2003. *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the College de France.* , New York, Picador.
- Foucault, Michel. 2006. *History of Madness*, London, Routledge.

- Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2003. From Discipline to Flexibilization? Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization. *Constellations*, 10, 160-171.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2010. *Scales of Justice. Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, New York Columbia University Press.
- Gal, Susan. & Kligman, Gail. 2000. *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*, Princeton, Princeton UP.
- Geissler, P. Wenzel. et al. 2008. He is now like a brother, I can even give him some blood' - Relational ethics and material exchanges in a malaria vaccine 'trial community' in The Gambia. *Social Science and Medicine*, 67, 696-707.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1994. *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, London, Penguin.
- Gilbert, Andrew. 2006. The past in parenthesis: (non)post-socialism in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Anthropology Today*, 22, 14-18.
- Grandits, Hannes. 2007. The Power of 'Armchair Politicians': Ethnic Loyalty and Political Factionalism among Herzegovinian Croats. In: Bougarel, X., Helms, E. & Duijzings, G. (eds.) *The New Bosnian Mosaic. Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 101-122.
- Green, F. Sarah. 2005. *Notes From the Balkans: Locating Marginality and Ambiguity on the Greek-Albanian Border*, Princeton N.J., Princeton University Press.
- Green, F. Sarah. 2009. Lines, Traces and Tidemarks: reflections on forms of borderli-ness. *Borders. EastBordNet*. Nicosia, Cyprus, 1-19.
- Green, F. Sarah. 2012. A Sense of Border. In: Wilson, M. T. & Hastings, D. (eds.) *A Companion to Border Studies (Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Anthropology)*. Chichester: Willey-Blackwell, 573-592.
- Greenspan, Patricia. 2010. Making Room for Options: Moral Reasons, Imperfect Duties, and Choice. *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 27, 181-205.
- Gupta, Akhil. 1995. Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State. *American Ethnologist*, 22, 375-402.
- Hardt, Michael. & Negri, Antonio. 2001. *Empire*, Cambridge, London, Harvard UP.
- Hann, Chris. & Dunn, C. Elizabeth. 1996. *Civil Society. Challenging Western Models.*, London and New York, Routledge.

- Hansen, B. Thomas. & Stepputat, Finn. (eds.) 2001. *States of imagination: ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Haukanes, Haldis. & Pine, Frances. (eds.) 2005. Generations, kinship and care. Gendered provisions of social security in central eastern Europe. *Centre for Women's and Gender Research Series, Vol. 17*. University of Bergen.
- Hayden, M. Robert. 2007. Moral vision and impaired insight: or the imagination of other people's communities in Bosnia. *Current Anthropology*, 48, 105-131.
- Heilman, Samuel. 1975. The Gift of Alms: Face-to-Face Almsgiving Among Orthodox Jews. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 3, 371-395
- Helms, Elissa. 2003. Women as agents of ethnic reconciliation? Women's NGOs and international intervention in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Women's Studies International Forum* 26, 15-34.
- Helms, Elissa. 2007. 'Politics is a Whore': Women, Morality and Victimhood in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina. In: Bougarel, X., Helms, E. & Duijzings, G. (eds.) *The New Bosnian Mosaic*. Ashgate, 235-253.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1993. *The Social Production of Indifference. Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy* Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.
- Herzfeld Michael. 2005. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York&Abingdon, Routledge
- Heyman, Mcc. Josiah. 1994. The Mexico-United States Border in Anthropology: A Critique and Reformulation. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 1, 43-66.
- Hutchins, Edwin. 1993. Learning to Navigate. In: Chaiklin, S. & Lave, J. (eds.) *Understanding Practice. Perspectives on Activity and Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jakulić, Slobodan. 1981. *Mentalna zaostalost*, Beograd, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva.
- Jansen, Stef. 2002. The Violence of Memories. Local narratives of the past after ethnic cleansing in Croatia. *Rethinking History*, 6, 77-94.
- Jansen, Stef. 2005a. *Antinacionalizam. Etnografija otpora u Beogradu i Zagrebu*, Beograd, XX vek.

- Jansen, Stef. 2005b. National numbers in context: maps and stats in representations of the post-Yugoslav wars. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 12, 45-68.
- Jansen, Stef. 2006a. The Privatisation of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 30, 177-199.
- Jansen, Stef. 2006b. The (Dis)Comfort of Conformism. Post-War nationalism and Coping with Powerlessness in Croatian Villages. In: Otto, T., Thrane, H. & Vandkilde, H. (eds.) *Warfare and society: archaeological and social anthropological perspectives*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 433-446.
- Jansen, Stef. 2007a. Remembering with a Difference: Clashing Memories of Bosnian Conflict in Everyday Life. In: Bougarel, X., Duijzings, G. & Helms, E. (eds.) *The new Bosnian mosaic: memories, identities and moral claims in a post-war society*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 193-208.
- Jansen, Stef. 2007b. Troubled locations: return, the life course and transformations of "home" in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 49, 15-30.
- Jansen, Stef. 2008. Misplaced masculinities: status loss and the location of gendered subjectivities amongst "non-transnational" Bosnian refugees. *Anthropological Theory*, 8, 181-200.
- Jansen, Stef. 2009a. After the red passport: towards an anthropology of the everyday geopolitics of entrapment in the EU's immediate outside. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15, 815-832.
- Jansen, Stef. 2009b. borders and horizons of possibility. *Hidden histories and promised lands. Time: Pasts and Futures. EastBordNet*. Belfast, 1-15.
- Jansen, Stef. 2010. practical geography and sovereignty at a very material immaterial border *Borders, materiality and signification. Borders. EastBordNet*. Berlin, 1-23.
- Jansen, Stef. 2011. Refuchess: locating Bosniac repatriates after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Population, Space and Place*, 17, 140-152.
- Jansen, Stef. 2012. Yearnings for 'normal lives' and gridding in a besieged Sarajevo suburb (forthcoming). Manchester: University of Manchester.
- Jašarević, Larisa. 2011. Lucid dreaming: Revisiting medical pluralism in postsocialist Bosnia. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 29, 109-126.

- Kaldor, Mary. 2003. Civil Society and Accountability. *Journal of Human Development*, 4, 5-27.
- Kierans, Ciara. 2012. Organ Transplantation in Mexico: controversies and catastrophies (lecture). *Social Anthropology Seminars*. University of Manchester.
- Kolind, Torsten. 2007. In Search of 'Decent People': Resistance to the Ethnicization of Everyday Life among the Muslims of Stolac. In: Bougarel, X., Helms, E. & Duijzings, G. (eds.) *The new Bosnian mosaic: memories, identities and moral claims in a post-war society*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 123-138
- Kolind, Torsten. 2008. *Post-War Identification: Everyday Muslim Counter-discourse in Bosnia Herzegovina*, Aarhus, Aarhus University Press.
- Konstantinov, Yulian. 1996. Patterns of Reinterpretation: Trader-Tourism in the Balkans (Bulgaria) as a Picaresque Metaphorical Enactment of Post-Totalitarianism. *American Ethnologist*, 23, 762-782.
- Konstantinov, Yulian., Gideon, M. Kressel. & Thuen, Trond. 1998. Outclassed by Former Outcasts: Petty Trading in Varna. *American Ethnologist*, 25, 729-745.
- Kostovicova, Denisa. 2004. Republika Srpska and its Boundaries in Bosnian Serb Geographical Narratives in the Post-Dayton Period. *Space and Polity*, 8, 267-287.
- Kuper, Adam. 1999. *Culture – the anthropologists' account*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, Harvard University Press.
- Laidlaw, James. 2002. For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8, 311-332.
- Laidlaw, James. 2000. A Free Gift Makes No Friends. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6, 617-634.
- Lambek, Michael. 2008. Value and Virtue. *Anthropological Theory*, 8, 133-157.
- Latour, Bruno. 1999. Factures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment. *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 36, 20-31.
- Ledeneva, Alena. 2006. *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*, New York, Cornell University Press.
- Leutloff-Grandits, Caroline. 2009. 'Fight Against Hunger': Ambiguities of a Charity Campaign in Postwar Croatia. In: Leutloff-Grandits, C., Peleikis, A. &

- Thelen, T. (eds.) *Social Security in Religious Networks. Anthropological Perspectives on New Risks and Ambivalences*. Berghahn Books, 43-61.
- Leutloff-Grandits, Caroline., Peleikis, Anja. & Thelen, Tatjana. 2009. Social Security in religious networks: An introduction. *In: Leutloff-Grandits, C., Peleikis, A. & Thelen, T. (eds.) Social Security in Religious Networks. Anthropological Perspectives on New Risks and Ambivalences*. Berghahn Books, 1-19.
- Loseke, R. Donileen. 1997. 'The whole spirit of modern philanthropy': The construction of the idea of charity 1912-1992. *Social Problems* 44, 425-444.
- Löfgren, Orvar. 1999. The Nationalization of Anxiety. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, 29, 5-27.
- Lydall, Harold. 1984. *Yugoslav Socialism. Theory and Practice*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Maček, Ivana. 2007 "Imitation of life": Negotiating Normality in Sarajevo under Siege. *In: Bougarel, X., Helms, E. & Duijzings, G. (eds.) The new Bosnian mosaic: memories, identities and moral claims in a post-war society*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Maček, Ivana. 2009. *Sarajevo Under Siege. Anthropology in Wartime*, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Maglajlić, Reima Ana. & Rašidagić, Ešref Kenan. 2011. Socio-Economic Transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *In: Stambolieva, M. & Dehnert, S. (eds.) Welfare States in Transition – 20 Years after the Yugoslav Welfare Model*. Sofia: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 16-40.
- Malkki, Liisa. 1992. National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, 24-45.
- Malkki, Liisa. 1995. Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 495-523.
- Martin, Keir. 2010. The Death of the Big Men: Depreciation of Elites in New Guinea. *Ethnos*, 75, 1-22.
- Mason, Jennifer. 1998. *Qualitative Researching*, London, Sage.
- Massey, Doreen. 2008. *for space*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Sage.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1967. *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, New York: W.W. Norton & company

- Mignolo, Walter. & Tlostanova, Madina. 2006. Theorizing from the Borders. Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9, 205–221.
- Milenković, Miloš. 2003. Antropologija kao multikulturalna propedeutika u Srbiji. In: Radojičić, D. (ed.) *Tradicionalno i savremeno u kulturi Srba*. Beograd: Etnografski Institut SANU, 133-148.
- Mindry, Deborah. 2001. Nongovernmental organizations, "grassroots," and the politics of virtue. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 26, 1187-1211.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1999. Society, economy, and the state effect. In: Steinmetz, G. (ed.) *State/Culture: state formation after the cultural turn*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Mitchell, P. Jon. 2002. Corruption and Clientelism in a 'Systemless System': The Europeanization of Maltese Political Culture. *South European Society and Politics*, 7, 43-62.
- Murray Li, Tania. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*, Duke University Press.
- Munjiza, Marko. 2007. Najčešći simptomi i sindromi u kliničkoj psihopatologiji. Predavanja za lekare na specijalizaciji iz psihijatrije. Beograd: Institut za mentalno zdravlje, 1-89.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002. *Faces of the state: secularism and public life in Turkey*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist? *American Anthropologist*, 95, 671-686.
- Nugent, Paul. 1999. Power versus knowledge. Smugglers and the state along Ghana's eastern frontier. In: Rösler, M. & Wendl, T. (eds.) *Frontiers and Borderlands. Anthropological Perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 77-99.
- Nuijten, Monique. 2004. Between Fear and Fantasy: Governmentality and the Working of Power in Mexico. *Critique of Anthropology*, 24, 209–230.
- Nuijten, Monique. 2005. Power in Practice: A Force Field Approach to Natural Resource Management. *The Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies*, 4, 1-14.

- Peirano, G. S. Mariza. 1998. When Anthropology is at Home: The Different Contexts of a Single Discipline. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27, 105-128.
- Petryna, Adriana. 1995. Sarcophagus: Chernobyl in Historical Light. *Cultural Anthropology*, 10, 196-220.
- Petryna, Adriana. 2002. *Life Exposed. Biological Citizenship after Chernobyl*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- Petryna, Adriana. 2004. Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations. *Osiris 2nd Series, Vol. 19, Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments* 250-265.
- Pine, Frances. 1994. Privatisation in Post-Socialist Poland: Peasant Women, Work, and the Restructuring of the Public Sphere. *Cambridge Anthropology*, 17, 19-42.
- Pine, Frances. & Bridger, Sue. (eds.) 1998. *Surviving Post-socialism: local strategies and regional responses in post-socialist Europe and the Former Soviet Union*: Routledge.
- Pine, Frances. 2002. Retreat to the household? Gendered domains in post-socialist Poland. In: Hann, C. (ed.) *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and practices in Eurasia*. New York: Routledge.
- Plows, Alexandra. & Boddington, Paula. 2006. Troubles with Biocitizenship? *Genomics, Society and Policy*, 2, 115-135.
- Porter, M. Theodore. 1995. *Trust in Numbers: Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, Princeton, Princeton UP.
- Rabo, Annika. 1996. Gender, state and civil society in Jordan and Syria. In: Hann, C. & Dunn, E., C. (eds.) *Civil Society. Challenging Western Models*. London and New York: Routledge, 155-177.
- Read, Rosie. & Thelen, Tatjana. 2007. Introduction: Social security and care after socialism: Reconfigurations of public and private. *Focaal—European Journal of Anthropology*, 50, 3–18.
- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 2005. Bribes, Gifts and Unofficial Payments: Rethinking Corruption in Post-Soviet Russian Health Care. In: Haller, D. & Shore, C. (eds.) *Corruption: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 2011. Health, Gender, and Care Work: Productive Sites for Thinking Anthropologically about the Aftermaths of Socialism. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 29, 8-15.
- Rose, N. 2001. The Politics of Life Itself. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18, 1-30.
- Rose, Nikolas. 2006. *The Politics of Life Itself*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Rose, Nikolas. & Novas, Carlos. 2007. Biological Citizenship. In: Ong, A. & Collier, S. J. (eds.) *Global Assemblages. Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. Blackwell Publishing, 439-465.
- Rumford, Chris. 2006. Introduction. Theorizing Borders. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9, 155-169.
- Ryang, Sonia. 1997. Native Anthropology and Other Problems. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 22, 23-49.
- Sahlins, D. Marshall. 1963. Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5, 285-303.
- Scott, C. James. 1998. *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
- Scott, C. James., Tehranian, John. & Jeremy, Mathias. 2002. The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname. *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 44, 4-44.
- Simić, Marina. 2010. Fieldwork Dilemmas: Problems of Location, Insiderhood, and Implicit Discourses. *Гласник Етнографског института САНУ LVIII*, 29-42.
- Sorabji, Cornelia. 1995. A very modern war: terror and territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In: Hinde R.A & Watson., H. E. (eds.) *War: a cruel necessity?* . London: Tauris, 80-95
- Stambolieva, Marija. & Dehnert, Stefan. (eds.) 2011. *Welfare States in Transition: 20 Years after the Yugoslav Welfare Model*, Sofia: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Stan, Sabina. 2012. Neither commodities nor gifts: post-socialist informal exchanges in the Romanian healthcare system. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18, 65-82.

- Stevenson, Clifford. & Manning, Rachel. 2010. National Identity and International Giving: Irish Adults' Accounts of Charitable Behaviour. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 249-261.
- Strathern, Andrew. 2007. *The Rope of Moka. Big-men and Ceremonial Exchange in Mount Hagen New Guinea*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1987. The Limits of Auto-Anthropology. In: Jackson, A. (ed.) *Anthropology At Home*. . London, New York: Tavistock Publications, 16-37.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1991. Introduction. In: Godelier, M. & Strathern, M. (eds.) *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1-4.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1995. *The Relation: Issues in Complexity and Scale*, Cambridge, Prickly Pear Press.
- Stubbs, Paul. 2005. Stretching Concepts Too Far? Multi-Level Governance, Policy Transfer and the Politics of Scale in South East Europe. *Southeast European Politics*, VI, 66-87.
- Stubbs, Paul. 2007. Civil Society or Ubleha? Reflections on flexible concepts, meta-NGOs and new social energy in the post-Yugoslav space. In: Al, H. R. E. (ed.) *20 Pieces of Encouragement for Awakening and Change*. Center for Non-Violent Action.
- Sykes, Karen. 2009. Residence: Moral Reasoning in a Common Place - Paradoxes of a Global Age. In: Sykes, K. (ed.) *Ethnographies of Moral Reasoning. Living Paradoxes of a Global Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3-40
- Swaan De, Abraham. 1988. *In Care of the State: Health Care, Education and Welfare in Europe and the USA in the Modern Era*, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Torpey, J. 1998. Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate "Means of Movement". *Sociological Theory*, 16, 239-259.
- Torpey, John. 2000. *The Invention of the Passport*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2001. The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization. *Current Anthropology*, 42, 125-138.
- Trundle, Catherine. 2012. The Transformation of Compassion and the Ethics of Interaction within Charity Practices. In: Yarrow, T. & Venkatesan, S. (eds.) *Differentiating Development: beyond an anthropology of critique*. Berghahn, 285-308

- Venkatesan, Soumhya. 2009. Charity: Conversations about Need and Greed. In: Sykes, K. (ed.) *Ethnographies of Moral Reasoning. Living Paradoxes of a Global Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Venkatesan, Soumhya. 2012a (forthcoming). *Different kinds of freedom, obligation and detachment*. University of Manchester, 1-16.
- Venkatesan, Soumhya. 2012b. Sometimes similar, sometimes dangerously different: exploring resonance, laminations and subject-formation in South India. *Ethnos*, 77, 1-38.
- Verdery, Katherine. 1996. *What was socialism, and what comes next?*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.
- Virno, Paolo. 2004. *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Los Angeles, New York, Semiotext(e).
- Wagner, R. 1991. The Fractal Person. In: Godelier, M. & Strathern, M. (eds.) *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watson, Peggy. 2006. Unequalizing Citizenship: The Politics of Poland's Health Care Change. *Sociology*, 40, 1079-1096.
- Weber, M. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, William Hodge and Company Limited.
- Weiner, Annette. B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions. The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving.*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, University of California Press.
- Weiner, A. 1995. Culture and Our Discontents. *American Anthropologist*, 97, 14-21.
- Widmer, Alexandra. 2010. Native Medical Practitioners, Temporality, and Nascent Biomedical Citizenship in the New Hebrides. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 33, 57-80.
- Wilson, M. Thomas. & Donnan, Hastings. (eds.) 2000. *Border identities: Nation and state at international frontiers*, Cambridge Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, David. 2001. *Mental Disability in Victorian England*, Oxford, New York, Clarendon Press.
- Wright, Susan. 1998. The Politicization of Culture. *Anthropology Today*, 14, 7-15.
- Yanagisako, Y. Sylvia. & Delaney, Carol. 1995. *Naturalizing Power: essays in feminist cultural analysis*, New York, London, Routledge.

- Zaviršek, Darja. 2006. Spol, socijalna skrb i obrazovanje za socijalni rad u početku socijalističke vlasti u Sloveniji. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 13, 63-74.
- Zaviršek, Darja. 2008. Engendering Social Work Education under State Socialism in Yugoslavia. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, 734-750.
- Zaviršek, Darja. & Videmšek, Petra. 2009. Service Users Involvement in Research and Teaching: Is there a Place for it in Eastern European Social Work *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 16, 189-222.
- Zigon, Jarrett. 2007. Moral breakdown and the ethical demand: A theoretical framework for an anthropology of moralities. *Anthropological Theory*, 7, 131-150.
- Zigon, Jarrett. 2008. *Morality: an anthropological perspective*, Oxford, New York, Berg.
- Zigon, Jarrett. 2009. Within a Range of Possibilities: Morality and Ethics in Social Life. *Ethnos*, 74, 251-276.

Sources:

Semberske novine, local weekly magazine in Bijeljina

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0391240>

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/amoral>

<http://www.fzs.ba/Dem/Popis/NacStanB.htm>

<http://mtsmondo.com/news/vesti/text.php?vest=133876>

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a87b0.html>

http://www.rzs.rs.ba/Publikacije/MesecniStatPregled/2010/Mesecni_Pregled_Jul_2010.pdf

http://www.feantsa.org/files/press_and_communication/bosnia_herzegovina_en.pdf

<http://pescanik.net/2010/06/o-nacionalizmu-2/>

http://www.wbif.eu/uploads/lib_document/attachment/98/Draft_Social_Inclusion_Strategy_BiH.pdf