“My Friends Are My Safety Net”: Friendship Amongst Young Adults in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

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“My Friends Are My Safety Net”
Friendship Amongst Young Adults in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

A Master Thesis by Ann-Marie Karcsics

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Abstract

In the unique post-war and post-socialist arena several recent studies on former Yugoslavian countries indicate that young people confronted by challenges of risk and uncertainty are turning away from the national and political sphere. Instead, they often seek trust and opportunities in their networks and relationships on a personal level. This thesis explores the narratives and everyday practices of young adults in Sarajevo regarding their friendship sociabilities. The aim is to provide an insight on how friendships are characterised, experienced and related to the specific social and economic organisations that influences them.

Based on fieldwork carried out in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina my project wants to present how young adults are reflecting and developing aspirations in the light of their available choices and opportunities in life and how they are using their friends in order to access various types of benefits and support. It is argued that in specific contexts friendships constitute the main social capitals and orientation points for young people. In order to explore and navigate through the different interests and agendas present in their community when it comes to personal education, career development and housing young people necessarily choose to favour the reliance on their informal solidarities in form of friendships.

Keywords: friendship, young adults, sociability, social identity, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, social capital.

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## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>Dayton Peace Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHR</td>
<td>Office of High Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Srpska Demokratska Stranka (Serb Democratic Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSOJ</td>
<td>Savez socijalističke omladine Jugoslavije (League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPROFOR</td>
<td>United Nations Protection Force</td>
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Acknowledgments

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1 Introduction

The contemporary available research made on Bosnia-Herzegovina has mainly focussed on the war, the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) and its aftermath in political and legal perspectives (Bougarel 2007:13). Few authors have taken the task of looking into the citizens’ everyday-life after the war beyond the ethnic bias, and even fewer have focussed on giving voice to young people. In the rare cases where it has happened, the youth was figured as static and passive victims by the circumstances (Freedman & Abazovic 2006, Božić 2007). Young people, however, are not a homogenous group, neither should their role in the society be reduced to look at as passive bystanders. The title of my thesis “My friends are my safety net” is a semi-quote from one of my informants. It symbolises the view many of my informants shared of how the relationship between friends could provide them with a “safety net” based on comfort and understanding of the expectations they encounter in their daily social engagements.

Ethnographic work can contribute with snapshots from the local social dynamics through the experiences of young people and reveal some of the complexities of practices in their everyday life. An anthropological approach can therefore give a nuanced picture of the contemporary Bosnian local realities in the eyes of the Sarajevan youth by moving beyond top-down historical and political analysis of categories like conflict, transition and ethnicity (Bougarel 2007:14). This ethnographic work will take on addressing the on-going transformations of economical and social conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the perspective of friendship sociabilities. Friendship in anthropology has often been connected to the circumstances of fieldwork, focussing on the relation between the anthropologist and informants (see Powdermaker 1966, Kumar 1992, Grindal & Salamone 1995). This work will instead focus on exploring the understandings of friendship locally, with the mediation of ethnography (Bell & Coleman 1999:3).
1.1 Purpose and Aim

The overall purpose with my work has been to show different patterns of friendship sociability amongst young urban middle class adults in Sarajevo in their everyday life. Locating the stories and experiences of young adults in a larger social context, I will argue that friendship patterns are reflecting the ongoing processes of social, economical and political transformations in contemporary Bosnian society as well as providing space to develop strategies in order to cope with these dynamics through social and emotional support from friends. The aim of my study has been to unpack the notion of friendship in order to understand the different components that create the unique bond between friends and brings about different processes of sociability. The study suggests that friendships need to be placed within a context where interactive factors such as age, class and geographical locality can influence the way people form their ties. The thesis focuses on how friendship dynamics are promoting, negotiating and interpreting these divisions when moving between different contexts. Furthermore, the study investigates how the exchanges of material and verbal values between friends also play part in the process of interactional identification within a specific context. It is shown that these exchanges are strengthened by certain attributes attached to the context, which brings about who one can be in a social situation. Patterns of sociability are also framed by social values and practices in where struggles over common identification take place. The study investigates how my informants are moving between and negotiating different individual and collective identities according to these norms. It is argued that friendship sociabilities can provide a space of dealing with these identification processes by creating similarities and distance through certain attributes. The study shows how friendship sociability can act as emotional, social and also economical resources for young adults in Sarajevo in order to cope with the demands deriving from their surroundings in forms of social norms.
The study discusses how the significant power structures in form of political agendas and international organisations are interacting to create a situation in which young adults have to orientate themselves. It is shown how friendships are part of the individual strategies in order to direct and position themselves towards these often contradicted standards imposed from above. It is also suggested that friendships constitute a significant part of a larger network where they are instrumentalised in order to get access to means that are not available otherwise. My work discusses how social life amongst young adults in Sarajevo can be seen as both fragmented and integrative at the same time. The thesis is based on 18 weeks of anthropological fieldwork in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It investigates the patterns of friendship sociability amongst young adults in their everyday life in order to show the underlying value systems that constitute the uniqueness of the bond, and how these value systems are part of a larger dynamics of social context where several processes, such as identification, social norms and power relations are continuously interplaying. My main research questions that have framed my work have been the following:

- What are the components of the bonds that are characterising specific friendships?
- How do my informants differentiate between their friends in terms of sociability and the dynamic of their relationships?
- How are the qualities and values that form the specific bond framed in different contexts?
- How are identification processes within sociability related to larger power structures?
- What functions does instrumentalisation fulfil in friendship relations?
- In which contexts can friendship ties be transformed into forms of social capital?
1.2 A Working Definition of Friendship

As several researchers (Paine 1969, Firth 1999, Desai & Killick 2010) have pointed out, friendship has received little attention compared to kin in anthropological research, especially in relation to economical and social transformations in the society. To a certain extent, the reason can be found in its challenge of finding an adequate definition of the concept (Firth 1999:xiv). This brief section is not aiming at giving an abstract and universal definition of friendship that can be applied in every real situation, but rather at describing the definition of friendship in terms of how it has been used in my work.

First of all, I have considered friendship as a fluid relationship, in the sense that it can be incorporated in other forms of personal relationships, such as kin, spouses or classmates. People can be both friends and spouses for instance, without having to give up the characteristics of the other relationships. What differentiates friendship from other forms of personal relations is the relative freedom in the sense of implicit worth of the fixation of the relationship. Whilst the individual choices in kin relations are characterised by a relatively presupposed worth of compelled embedded-ness, friendship can offer further choices for self-identification for the individual (Evans 2010:193). Personal relationships such as kin and professional relationships are also often formalised through institutionalisation and regulated by law in terms of commitment and processes of exchange (Paine 1969). I have therefore defined friendship as a form of personal relationship that is both fluid and flexible in terms of fixation of the relationship itself, as well as in the dynamics of values that are involved.

Secondly, in my study, each friendship has been considered as unique by the systems of values that come into play between the individuals involved (cf. Evans 2010, Hruschka 2010). These value systems are constructed by visible and non-visible qualities that are attributed to the specific friendship, and they bring about the particular bond that characterises it (Hruschka 2010). The dy-
The dynamics of these value systems come into play in the interactions between friends through socialisation, where they can be exchanged and transformed according to the specific situation (Evans 2010). Friendships are interactional processes that involve identification according to the available conditions in a social context. These continuous processes involve individual choice to the degree that a person can define and evaluate his or her position in relation to others within the context (Evans 2010, Adams & Allan 1998).

This points out the third and last component of my working definition, namely that friendships should be considered as both private and public relationships. Even though friendships are not formalised in public in the sense in which, for instance, amicable relationships can be through marriage, they should not be seen as isolated social entities solely based on individual choices. Friendships are shaped by and operating within different interactive social forces of geographical location, class, ethnicity, age and gender (Allan 1989). Friendships are part of a larger structure of social practices that are framed by wider institutional and ideological frameworks (Adams & Allan 1998). The activities involved in friendship sociabilities can on one hand reveal cultural scripts of how friendships should be structured within specific contexts (Allan 1989, Paine 1969). On the other hand, they can also be interpreted by their consequences in terms of interpreting transformations and nuances within social structures (Desai & Killick 2010).

In sum, I have been working with a definition of friendships as personal and unique as well as private and public relationships based on specific bonds involving value systems that are coming into play with different attributes through sociability in specific contexts. The contextualisation, dynamics and instrumentalisation of friendships will be elaborated further on in my theoretical framework, as well as exemplified in the analysis of my material.
1.3 Limitations of the Thesis

One of the challenges of my work has been my lack of knowledge of the local language. This did not constitute a major barrier during my interviews, since most of my informants spoke a high level of English and could also explain local words and their meanings for me easily. It was only during one interview where I chose to have a translator and where I noticed the immediate difference between the personal connections during the interview. However, during the participant observations a number of the observed interactions between informants were conducted in the local language. Here I had to rely on my informants’ interpretations and summaries of the actual situations and verbal communication, which was challenging both for me and for my informants. In an attempt to understand a broader picture and not fall into the trap of generalisations, I had to make use of the strategy of being aware of the small details, such as non-verbal communication and the shifts between different statements (Spradley 1980:55, Bernard 2011:273).

Another challenge was my own position in the field, where I was trying to negotiate the role of being a researcher conducting research about friendships and the private role of being a friend. Due to the topic of my research, I sometimes had hard times to leave the role of the researcher in informal settings such as when hanging out with my informants, because I realised that it could lead me to valuable data as well as new insights regarding my work. As Bernard (2011:277) argues, hanging out generates trust and can open up for ordinary conversations that would otherwise be hard to reach within the frame of interviews for instance. On the other hand, it also created an ethical dilemma in the sense of what information could be used as data. I chose not to include data in form of comments or reflections without the consent of informants. I also explained that these comments would not figure in my work in their original form,
rather used as a part of creating an overall picture of the contemporary social context of my informants.

My position as a young researcher in the same age span as my informants opened up several discussions about similarities and differences in ways of socialising. We did often discuss about other topics such as relation with parents, education systems and employment. My research topic was often met with curiosity, but sometimes also with scepticism. Some people regarded my topic about friendships as less important compared to the current research made about genocide, ethnicity and post-war political systems. Others expressed recognition of moving beyond these topics to create a more nuanced picture of the contemporary Bosnian society. My own subjective biases from the experiences and the narratives I have been told have shaped my work in terms of the theoretical framework, research questions and my approach during the fieldwork. As Sterk (1989:99, 1999 in Bernard 2011:279) describes it: “[...] One cannot remain neutral and uninvolved: even as an outsider, the researcher is part of the community”. Despite the awareness of this limitation, my goal has been to adapt an objective approach towards the descriptions and analysis of the subjective realities of my informants (cf. Bernard 2011:279).

Finally, I feel it is important to point out the background of my informants. All of my informants, except one, were either enrolled in or had finished university studies. Most of them were either brought up in Sarajevo or have spent most of their adult lives in the city. Through the contacts I made before entering the field and also during my fieldwork, I got in touch with informants who all except one had a good command of the English language. Many of them were active in larger international voluntary or student networks or had work experience in NGOs or international organisations within the country or abroad. These factors have certainly contributed to shaping their opinions and values which should not be taken as representative for the whole group of young adults in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo as the political and cultural
capital is also different in many aspects from other areas in the country, which will be elaborated in further chapters. Having informants with different socio-economic or geographical backgrounds would have contributed to shape the qualitative data about friendship amongst young adults. Nonetheless, due to their personal knowledge, opinions and experiences, my informants could motivate their answers from different standpoints without falling into generalisations. Through the discipline of anthropological analysis and reflection this work will aim to contribute with new insights to the anthropological knowledge of friendship as well as to nuancing the picture of everyday life sociability amongst young adults in Sarajevo.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The first chapter serves as an introductory chapter of my thesis and contains the section of purpose and aim, as well as the working definition of friendship and the limitations of my work. Chapter two presents the methodology in form of the process of preparation, conduct and reflections before, during and after my fieldwork. Chapter three presents the background of my field where the sections cover the historical as well as the contemporary political and economical context that frame the everyday life of my informants in my field. In Chapter four my theoretical framework is presented through the examination of friendship as a part of a context as well as the dynamics and instrumentalisation of friendship. The focus of Chapter five is on the nature of friendship where I examine the qualities of the specific bond that binds friends together, as well as how these qualities are changing through the course of life and being transformed between different contexts. Chapter six places friendship within the interactional process of identification, where certain attributes of sociability such as economic and aesthetics contribute to who you can be in a specific context. It is also shown that identification processes within the frame of sociability can reveal power structures and existing norms within a larger social structure. The
focus of Chapter seven lies in showing how friendships can provide different forms of support in my informants everyday life in both private and public aspects of sociability. Chapter eight analyses how friendships as part of the entities in the micro social world can be valuable in claiming access to certain means that are hard to obtain otherwise. In the conclusion, the thesis will link together concluding remarks regarding how friendship sociabilities and support can provide both private and professional fulfilment and orientation between contradicted social norms in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina.
2 Methodology

In this chapter I will present the methods I have been using before, during and after my ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter will begin by describing the preparations I made before entering the field in terms of literature reviews and choosing the topic of my research. I will thereafter describe the conduction of my fieldwork with respect to how I found my informants and the structuring of interview questions as well as the execution of interviews and observations. The chapter will continue by describing the process of transcription and emerging of new questions after leaving the field. The chapter will end with the return to the field as well as the reflection of my own role as an anthropologist during fieldwork.

2.1 Preparations Before Entering the Field

My study started with a literature review of contemporary scholarly and non-scholarly work related to the country. I realised that there was a significant amount of research made on ethnicity and post-war setting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which I first believed was to serve my benefit and make me well prepared for the field. My initial thought was to concentrate my research on inter-ethnic friendship, with the focus on how young adults in the post-war setting are dealing with the increasing ethnic tensions on political and social levels (cf. Sekulić et al. 2006). I also took the opportunity to broaden my spectra of literature review and receive input on my own fieldwork by contacting researchers who have contributed with their work to the field, both personally and through email. Lastly, I also reviewed the current on-going co-operation and collaborations between Swedish and Bosnian governmental and non-governmental organisations to get an idea of which areas are focussed on when it comes to development issues. With this background of literature review I felt that I was well prepared for conducting an ethnographic fieldwork that could contribute with
new insights on how the war has shaped my informants’ notions of others and how it is made visible through their social relations.

The closer I came to the departure for my fieldwork, I began to think that I should not narrow down my study to solely concentrate on the ethnic aspect, and instead be open for different inputs and signs in the fieldwork to understand the broader and multifaceted picture. I decided months ahead to make sure that I have enough people to interview, and chose to ask friends who I knew had connections in the country, either through work or studies, to help me find informants. I chose young adults between 18 and 32 as my main target group, because I wanted to conduct interviews with people that did not take active part in the war. Also, already in an early stage I knew that I wanted to conduct my interviews in English, without the use of a translator. I wanted to conduct face-to-face interviews without being affected by the presence of a third party, since I believed that it would affect the answers given by the informants. I was not only interested in their personal experiences and attitudes, but also in their thoughts and interpretations about their surroundings. I believed that a translator would have added an unnecessary degree of formality to the interview situation, which contrasted with my aim of making the scheduled semi-structured interviews rather relaxed and personal. I was, however, aware of the limitation of my data due to the choice of not conducting the interviews in Bosnian. When my friends responded to me with a list of people that would fit my profile, I sent them an email including an introduction of myself and a short presentation of my study and asked them to respond if they would be willing to participate. I did this at a very early stage of my preparation before my fieldwork and felt lucky to already have made arrangements with around ten people to interview.

2.2 Entering the Field

I went to Sarajevo at the end of January 2012 and conducted my fieldwork during one of the coldest winters in several years. I saw an advert through a
Facebook group about a room in a shared flat in Marijin dvor and decided to go for it because I wanted to have company during my stay. This turned out to be a great way of getting in contact with other young people from abroad who where either conducting research, working or doing their internships in Sarajevo. This way I not only had the possibility of meeting and being introduced to new contacts for my own research, but also of updating myself on the variety of research made in different fields by young people from abroad in the city. Already in the first days of my stay, I found myself in situations where I conducted informal and non-planned interviews with people by conversing about my research topic. I was surprised by the reception when I told other people I met what I was conducting my research about, because it usually led into deep discussions about the essence of friendship, which I could make use of when structuring my interviews. I made a map out of four different groups of topics: friendships, future plans, contemporary Bosnia and youth culture, which I structured my questions around. Since I was interested in letting my informants open up and express themselves in their own terms, I believed that the method of semi-structured interviews would fit my fieldwork the best and I wanted to follow the advice on getting “[...] people on to a topic of interest and get out of the way” (Bernard 2011:160). I wanted my informants to define the content and highlight information that they believed was important for me to know, which could lead me on to new, undiscovered aspects of my research. I therefore put an emphasis on developing open-ended questions through which the interviews were framed (Bernard 2011:199-200).

During my fieldwork I conducted 21 individual semi-structured interviews with 12 female and 9 male informants between the ages of 18 and 27. Except for one person, all of them were either enrolled or had just finished studies at university level. Before starting my interviews I assured my informants about their confidentiality and the anonymity of their answers, and thereafter asked for permission to record the interview and take notes. There was only one occasion
where I chose to use a translator due to language problems, and where I did not bring a voice recorder either. Besides the individual interviews, I also conducted three unstructured group interviews with five, seven and three participants where I only took notes. Most of my interviews lasted between one and two hours each, except for the group interviews where we could sit and talk for several hours without touching either of my topics and then suddenly somebody start to tell a personal story for me. I often let my informants chose a place for the interview, but after a while I learned which places could provide a calm and relaxed environment to conduct the interviews in. Since my informants were more or less my age, I tried to give a very informal and neutral presentation of my self, both through my mail correspondence, but also during the interviews. By revealing some of my personal interests for specific topics such as young leadership and role models, my informants were often very eager to give me examples of movies, books, articles, organisations and people that they believed could be interesting for me to look up or to contact. I also arranged three meetings with representatives of non-governmental organisations dealing with youth issues to get a broader understanding of the current political context and the issues and difficulties that young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are facing.

Besides the more formal visits, I tried to take the opportunity and enjoy the facilities of Sarajevo as the cultural and social centre of the country, despite the weather problems. I went to exhibitions, concerts, birthday parties, movie screenings and took as many chances as possible to socialise with young people. I took small notes almost every day with important things I have seen, heard or needed to look up. This way I could also approach some of my informants that I wanted to conduct participant observation with. I wanted to observe how my informants were dealing with their different personal networks during their everyday life, and I decided to follow two people for a couple of days during some hours. Two of my informants said yes to this attempt and these observations provided me with insights of the everyday life for a student in Sarajevo. Some-
times, due to the lack of knowledge of the local language, I was mainly observing the non-verbal communication in the social interactions that occurred. Whenever that happened, my informants were eager to explain me the content of the missed conversations afterwards. Although the language constituted a barrier, it also gave my informants the possibility to reflect on their interaction and highlight different interpretations when giving me descriptions of certain events. As Rabinow (2007:450) argues, the cultural facts the anthropologist finds in the field are already mediated and interpreted before being re-interpreted again by the fieldworker and the informants. Creating anthropological facts involves a process where the lived experience is questioned by both the anthropologist and the informants. Fieldwork then is about constructing a cross-cultural hybrid product as a way of making the informant able to present his or her own experiences in a way that the anthropologist can interpret them (Rabinow 2007:452-453).

2.3 Leaving the Field

Two months of fieldwork in Sarajevo made me face different kinds of challenges, but also inspiration and awareness of new aspects in my research. During my fieldwork I felt the need to be alert, explore and participate in a variety of activities in order to be social and meet new people, but also for understanding the social context of young people in Sarajevo. I sometimes felt that I had to be much more social and straightforward than I actually am. When returning to Uppsala I felt exhausted by all the impressions I gained during my fieldwork and needed several weeks to recover before I could start going through my collected material. On the other hand, my fieldwork also provided me with a new confidence in my own abilities to carry out a research project on my own. I slowly started the process of transcription while looking up all the suggested websites, movies and literature deriving from my informants. I care-
fully read through my notes and tried to connect them to different things that people have told me during the interviews. Soon I was able to place my impressions and the material in a context that could give me an understanding of the personal network patterns amongst my informants in order to analyse the greater structures in which these patterns are embedded in. However, new questions emerged out of the old ones. I wanted to know how these personal solidarities could be used as support systems to achieve certain ends and felt a need to continue my research in the field.

2.4 Returning to the Field

My internship and the participation in one of the Master classes at Hugo Valentin Centre in Uppsala offered me a new opportunity to go back to Sarajevo and follow up some of the questions that emerged out of my already collected data. Through established contacts from my previous fieldwork and with the help of the co-workers from my internship, I was able to get a mailing list of previously graduated students from four Master programmes at the University of Sarajevo. I sent them an email with an introduction of myself and my research, and was able to get in touch with a new group of people who already had graduated to conduct semi-structured interviews with. Many of my informants were already on their way to establish a career and had busy working-schedules. I decided to do a more structured version of interviewing, since I often felt that I would only have one chance to interview a specific person (Bernard 2011:157). I made 23 interviews with people between the ages of 23 and 32, of whom 12 were female and 11 were male participants. All of them were well educated since most of them have finished their Master studies and their language skills were also on a very high level.

While I still kept some of the themes and questions that I made use of during my previous fieldwork, the focus was instead on examining the different
practices and strategies that are available and accessible for my graduated informants when it comes to housing, employment and education. I therefore created an interview guide with four major topics; major decisions, friendship, employment and education, that I tried to cover through open ended questions. Besides doing interviews with the new informants, I also contacted some of my previous informants to make shorter follow up interviews about some of the topics. The local elections that were held during my second time in Sarajevo naturally opened up new themes and concerns to discuss with my informants and contacts. While my research topic did not focus to a large extent on the political sphere, the elections gave me the opportunity to find out about the attitudes and expectations of my informants regarding political participation amongst young people and the prosperity of the country’s political system. I was also able to observe and experience in which ways the different parties and candidates are using campaigns to reach out to people, and how my informants as well as the locals were interpreting and reacting on these campaigns and indirectly how they interpret the power structures that are present in contemporary Bosnian society.

At the beginning of November I once again left Sarajevo with newly gathered empirical data and with new insights from the field. I spent a total of 18 weeks in Sarajevo, and in between I had time to reflect on my own position as an anthropologist as well as how the different accounts deriving from my informants can be understood. In this work I have brought together previous scholarly literature with my mediation of how my informants have constructed, translated and made meaning of their surrounding for me during my fieldwork, as well as the personal reflections of my own fieldwork and the gathered data. All personal names in this work are fictional, I have however put effort in using names that are similar to my informants’ real names, regardless of whether they reveal religious family background or not. The purpose is however not to highlight the ethnicity of my informants, since this factor does not have enough relevancies for my analysis.
3 Background

My fieldwork took place in Sarajevo, which as the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina also serves as the main cultural, economical and political hub in the country. This background is aiming at contextualising the surroundings of my informants and their lives in contemporary Bosnian society. I will start by giving an overview of the country’s recent historical background. Even though it has been almost twenty years since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, the legacy and the consequences of the war still have major roles in shaping the society. The lives of contemporary young adults in former Yugoslav countries are not only shaped by the post-war context, but also by the consequences of the socio-economic changes in the post-socialist transformation (Obradović 2008). But young people are not necessarily victims of circumstances because they are acting strategically and reflecting on their opportunities and the way to get there (Tomanović 2012: 618), which I also want to exemplify through my thesis.

3.1 Independence and War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted one of the former republics within The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until it declared itself independent in March 1992. After the economic crisis in socialist Yugoslavia during the 1980s, nationalistic ideologies rose in organisational form which resulted in a coalition government between the three winning parties that defined themselves along ethno-national lines in the first free election held in 1990. A referendum of independence was held in 1992, which was boycotted by the party SDS¹, hav-

¹ The Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka) is a far right wing political party in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was founded by Radovan Karadžić, who currently stands trial for several counts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (ICTY 2013).
ing the ambitions of creating an autonomous Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RS) (Bougarel 2007:4-5). During its first years of independence the country experienced a war lasting over three years between paramilitary forces of the three biggest ethnicities in the country: Bosniacs (Muslims), Croats and Serbs. The forces of the two latter ethnic groups were both directly and indirectly supported by the governments of the neighbouring countries, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia, as they previously have had territorial interests. Although the conflict first started out as a civil war, it later developed to an international armed conflict where the international forces of UNPROFOR and NATO became involved (Lampe 2000, Burg & Shoup 1999). The war officially ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) in 1995, with a result of a minimum 100,000 people killed and almost half of the 4.4 million population displaced (Lampe 2000, Tabeau & Bijak 2005). It was also characterised by war crimes such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, mass rape and psychological oppression (Lampe 2000). The peace agreement confirmed the existence of the independent state Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as ratified the existence of two different entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). The entities have insignificant common institutional collaboration and the DPA has since then served in a quasi-constitutional role (Bougarel 2007:6, Kofman 2001:31). The Office of High Representative (OHR) was established in 1995 in order to assist the implementation of the DPA and its mandate has been extended several times. The organisation has taken on a protectorate role, since it has the power to dismiss Bosnian politicians and officials (Torsti 2009:66).

3.2 Post-War Ethnic Awareness

The consequences of the conflict and also the peace agreement have been a heightened ethnic awareness amongst the population, as well as an increase of
intolerance amongst other groups (Sekulić et al. 2006). The rural/urban division in the cities has been extended with the categories of newcomers in form of displaced people, as well as with those who left the city or country during the war. These demographical changes have also led to socio-cultural transformations of the cities, especially in Sarajevo where different groups are competing for access to scarce resources such as financial income and housing (Armakolas 2007, Bougarel 2007, Stefansson 2007). Besides local actors in form of political and non-political streams, the international community with various agendas play a great role in shaping the post-war society in terms of war-memories and influencing the local dynamics from above (Bougarel 2007:28).

Contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina has a fragmented structure of authority on central, entity, canton, districts and municipality level and a de facto executive political regime where the “dominant power has been vested in the Office of High Representative and international officials rather than in the weak domestic central institutions” (Cohen & Lampe 2011:191). After Dayton, the constitutional changes have placed stress on the ethnic balance within the public sector in line with the pre-war census made in 1991. The constitution, only defining three nationalities and those who do not fit in either of the categories as “others”, have led to underrepresentation of minority groups amongst top political positions and public services (Cohen & Lampe 2011:140). Citizens who are identifying themselves outside the three nationalities have had hard times to apply for employment in governmental institutions with quota systems, as well as obtaining scholarships and mortgages guaranteed by the state (Markowitz 2010:87). In 2006, Jakov Finci and Dervo Sejdić filed a lawsuit at the European Court of Human Rights against Bosnia and Herzegovina that through its constitution (an annex to the DPA) they were being disqualified from entering as candidates for Presidency or for the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly solely on the ground of their ethnic origin by not being part of the three constituent peoples (Milanovic 2010:636). In 2009, the Grand Chamber of the
European Court of Human Rights concluded that Bosnia and Herzegovina has violated the article in the European Convention of Human Rights that prohibits discrimination (Milanovic 2010:636). The country summary of Human Rights Watch reported that Bosnia and Herzegovina has so far failed to implement the Sejdic-Finci ruling (Human Rights Watch 2012:4).

3.3 Education

The education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be understood against the complex political and constitutional backdrop. While the DPA declared the country as a single independent state, the two entities are still considered highly autonomous. The Federation is divided into ten cantons mainly based on ethnic composition, and even though the capital is Sarajevo, the authority is delegated to canton or municipality level. The RS is instead divided into municipalities with a high centralisation of decision-making power in Banja Luka (Perry 2003:25). The political structure with two entities has been replicated on the educational level, resulting in autonomous and asymmetrical systems. Education was only mentioned as a basic human right in the DPA, which left the implementation to local levels (Torsti 2009:72). The RS has centralised education while the Federation, by consigning the making of education policies to the cantons, has resulted in separate Bosniac and Croat education systems with different curricula and textbooks (Božić 2006:321). The issue of segregation in schools could be described by the practices of two schools under one roof, bussing to mono-ethnic school and teaching of national subjects, according to Božić (2006:326). At the heart of the rationality behind these practices is to give the children ethnically correct education, which refers to “the exclusivity and ineffability of one group in interpreting a common history, a shared geography and linguistics and literature” (Božić 2006:326-327).
In rural areas and small towns, the returning of the displaced people has often resulted in forms of school segregation, due to those who are rejecting the present education system and demanding the curriculum and textbooks from the area they were displaced in and where they constituted the ethnical majority (Božić 2006:326-327). Another consequence of the warfare was the substantial loss of the professional and research elite who left the country to pursue their careers abroad. This brain drain has continued after the war, where a new generation of young skilled people is waiting to emigrate due to the lack of good prospects and slow changes in the political and economic development (Cohen & Lampe 2011: 318-321). The brain drain and the wish to leave could also indicate why one out of three respondents did not believe that the education they would finish or have finished will make it easier for them to find jobs (Đipa & Fazlic 2012:22). Currently there are 10 public and an additional 30 private higher education institutions recognised by the authority in the whole country (Cohen & Lampe, 2011). As other Western Balkan countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in the Bologna Process that is attempting to establish common degree standards and quality assurance norms in Europe. The implementation has, however, met resistance from both entities to educational integration, although individual faculties have begun the process of adopting reforms related to Bologna, despite the absence of a national educational law (Cohen & Lampe 2011:325-327). The lack of will to agree on national educational system has caused difficulties for accreditation of foreign diplomas and studies. This has made it hard for Bosnian universities to take advantage of the returning refugees and new generations of Bosnians that have been educated abroad and include them in their research staff (Cohen & Lampe 2011:327, Stefansson 2004:176-177).
3.4 Employment and Migration

The pressing issue for most young people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the limited employment opportunities. The official unemployment rate is around 40 per cent and over 60 per cent of young people want to go abroad to work (Božić 2007:755). The previous system in Yugoslavia has become a point of reference when comparing to the current employment situation as fixed working hours and benefits from a social welfare system can no longer be claimed (Božić 2007:756). People in Sarajevo earn less today than they did in 1970 and the war only led to the enrichment of a small group of profiteers that were often related to paramilitary forces or authorities (Donia 2009:347, Bieber 2006:34). On the other hand, one way of increasing career opportunities has remained to be through active engagement in public life in political and social organisations. While during socialist Yugoslavia it was the party membership and participation, in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina it is the participation in different seminars and trainings that can increase chances of youth mobility inside the country and abroad (Božić 2007:755-756). The huge group of refugees that left the country during the war has a hard time to return due to the political scene that has been using a combination of structural discrimination and bureaucratic hardships within the authorities in order to make it difficult to return to their homes. They as well as the refugees within the country had to face the displaced persons that have been occupying their pre-war residence. In the pre war era, properties in the rural area were often private, while for the urban apartments the resident had received residency rights. The DPA guaranteed the right to return to the pre-war home for everybody, but created a complicated and long process where property claims and privatisation of previously socially owned apartments were in the hand of local authorities. These authorities were widely using the practices of corruption and obstructions and made so called “fictive return” possible where the possible returnees obtained ownership rights and directly sold it.
to the new inhabitants (Donia 2009:347). As a result of the war the demographic composition in the country changed to such extent that those who were absent during the war did return to a wholly new community and social environment that has developed new categories relying on war-time statuses (Bougarel 2007:20, Stefansson 2004:175-178).

3.5 Youth Political Participation and Activism

According to Božić (2007), the country lacks the institutional organisation of young people. Also, they have not been able to replace the party elites with nationalist orientation or to organise a strong or independent politically active middle-class grouping. Instead, dependency on the state for their employment has been one of the reasons why many people belonging to the middle class are not prepared to make demands on political life (Čabaravdić 2009 in Cohen & Lampe 2011: 341). Amongst other Western Balkans countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina stands out with the highest degree of mistrust of political structures and a lack of interest in politics (Cohen & Lampe 2011:360). According to Božić (2007:573) the widespread apathy especially amongst young people is not a new phenomenon; rather it was present in the previous system of Yugoslavia as well. She draws the comparison between the international community in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina and the socialist Yugoslavia, who share similar roles in challenging nationalistic values ideologically. However, while the ideological framework in Yugoslavia could be described as of internal origin, the international community imposes their ideology from outside (Božić 2007:754).

In socialist Yugoslavia, youth took an important part in the creation of the political capital and culture honouring the revolutionary legacy of young Yugoslavs and the charismatic leader Josip Broz Tito. This connection to the leader cult was increased by the creation of personal and formal associations with
Youth as part of the new Yugoslav identity and a break with the nationalistic political past (Božić 2007:747-748; Spaskovska 2011:358-361). However, youth organisations, such as the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (SSOJ), and their leaders during the socialist Yugoslavia era, were often considered by the population as a continuation of the party, although from time to time attempts at differentiation in agendas were made visible. During the 1980’s membership in SSOJ started to decrease but opened at the same time a space for creating a pragmatic political opposition which through discussions and statements was directing criticism towards the political elite and the defects of the system (Spaskovska 2011: 362).

Another form of space for youth criticism was channelled through the rock music scene that from the late 1970’s has been functioning as a platform for criticising nationalism and ideological questions as well as exchanging ideas and debating over current social issues. When Yugoslavia was on its way to dissolve, many rock bands made observations and statements through their music against nationalism and violence in the same manner as they had done in the past decades within Yugoslavia (Mandichevski 2010, Spaskovska 2011: 360,366). After the war some of the bands have continued touring in the region, but their position in the society and amongst young people as provocative and critical observers of the social reality have mostly diminished or turned into one of the signs for a the cultural iconography of nostalgia for the Yugoslav past (Spaskovska 2011:369-370). Today in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, the possibilities and roles of youth in public life are determined by the international community in the sense that they are providing funds and setting directives. The lack of successful umbrella organisations for youth related organisations combined with a general high distrust towards politicians and public servants have had a discouraging effect on youth participation in political and voluntary organisations (Božić 2007:755-759, Đipa & Fazlic 2012:53).
3.6 My Field: Sarajevo

The capital city was before the war often described as a symbol of ethnic tolerance and coexistence between people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and practices in the region. The growth of the city was carried out by governing authorities of the three regimes, Ottoman, Habsburg and Communist, which together with the Sarajevans’ vision have contributed to shaping the urban environment through hundreds of years (Donia 2009: 353). With 30 per cent, Sarajevo had the highest rate of mixed marriages during the Yugoslavian era (Simmons 2002:628). In the 1980s Sarajevo developed into an important cultural centre in Yugoslavia. The cultural phenomenon of Novi Primitivizam (New Primitivism) that was based on the significant Bosnian humour and Sarajevo subculture were present in both theatre, music and television productions and well-known in the region (Maček 2009:25, Markowitz 2010:22, Spaskovska 2011:360). In 1984, Sarajevo and Yugoslavia hosted the Winter Olympic Games, which was the first time such a large scale event took place in Yugoslavia and also the first time a Socialist country was hosting it (Maček 2009:57, Markowitz 2010:28-29).

During the Bosnian war, Sarajevo was under one of the longest sieges in modern history, which not only destroyed several significant trademarks of the city such as the Vijećnica (National and University Library) or the Parliament building, but also changed the way of living everyday life for the inhabitants (Markowitz 2010:45-47, Maček 2009). Some Sarajevans even describe the siege as an attempt to commit urbicide (Bogdanović 1993 cited in Simmons 2002:633) or memoricide (Donia 2009:314). Besides the losses of war, the city had to cope with issues such as social ownership, a complex legal system and powerful interest groups. In the decade after the war, the inhabitants also experienced an increased rate of suicide, alcoholism, different illnesses and also a general distress (Donia 2009:335-341). The demographic transformations after the
war have shaped the composition of Sarajevo in the sense that some main categories of social cleavages have developed and still stand out amongst others: newcomers versus locals, returnees and stayers and ethnic divisions (Stefansson 2004:178). As Bougarel argues, “Sarajevans seldom acknowledge that, far from revealing essential cultural or moral qualities of classified groups, differences in way of living in the city are fundamentally a reflection of different war experiences and access to scarce resources such as housing and financial income” (Bougarel 2007:22-23).

Sarajevo, as it once was, has become a nostalgic memory that people refer to when they are complaining about the transformation of the city in a bad way after the war (Markowitz 2010, Stefansson 2004). Although the city experienced a similar destruction in the Second World War, there was a big contrast in the post-war recovery due to that there were no encouraging ideological visions of rebuilding the city as in the manner of the Partisans (Donia 2009:335). The improvement of the post-war economy has been going in a slow pace due to a combination of obstruction of local officials, the lack of legal and political transparency and the misplacement of the recovery aid from the international community (Donia 2009:343-347). The city is still living in the shadow of the latest war, and the citizens have to face the challenges of high unemployment, low levels of general trust and political instability. The future of the city’s common life lies in the hand of its citizens who are trying to break through beyond the contradictory social values, and inventing new ways to preserve and carry on its diverse historical and cultural heritage (Donia 2009:350-352). In later chapters I will demonstrate how my informants in Sarajevo are dealing with the urban space and common life of the city in their everyday life and relations.
3.7 Summary

This background chapter has highlighted the historical, economic and political conditions that affect the lives of young adults in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina. The post-socialist and post-war transformations have created new forms of uncertainties, in which Bosnian young people have to orientate and position themselves. By paying attention to these contexts and the uncertainties they have generated, the examination of friendship ties and patterns of sociability in a local setting can reflect how individuals relate to the on-going transformations. The way people form and develop their patterns of friendship ties can also reveal greater power structures and social norms in their society, which will be elaborated on in further chapters.
4 Theoretical Framework

Throughout this section I shall introduce the theoretical approach that will support the analysis of my findings. The chapter will embark with examining friendship by placing it in a wider structure, with the focus on the concept of contextualisation as used by Allan & Adams (1998). The chapter will proceed by showing how friendships can be seen as interactional dynamic processes related to identification. I will conclude this theoretical chapter by investigating how friendship can be utilised as a form of social capital. My theoretical section will close with a brief summary of the implementation of the mentioned theories.

4.1 Placing Friendship Within a Context

Within the field of anthropology several studies have pointed out the challenges in defining the boundaries of friendship in comparison to other interpersonal relationships (Desai & Kilick 2010, Paine 1969) and to identify features for a universal categorisation that can be applied in real situations (Aguilar 1999, Carrier 1999, Paine 1969,1999). Beside the diversity amongst anthropological works about the definition of friendship, the significance of informal solidarities for giving snapshots of contemporary social and cultural milieux and predictions of social changes has been emphasised as well (Adams & Allan 1998:2-3, Silver 1990:1495-1499, Spencer & Pahl 2007:22-27, Allan 2001:582).

In order to observe specific qualities and characteristics, I will, in this section, present friendship relations as part of a wider structure. Friendship, as well as other relationships, has to be examined as embedded in larger contextualised frameworks in order to be able to identify how certain ties are constructed, distinguished, developed and connected to each other (Paine 1969, Feld 1997, Adams & Allan 1998). Although most of the authors recognise the need and effects of interpreting friendship as part of a wider structure on personal relations, there
are variations in the approaches towards what features are highlighted in their perspectives.

With the concept of context, Adams & Allan want to draw attention to that friendships are not only personal, but also social constructions, where the decisions taken by individuals about who they are going to engage with are not only made in solitariness (Allan & Adams 1998:190). Context, in the sense used by Adams & Allan, refers to the elements that are outside the development, maintenance and dissolution, but are still surrounding the friendships. Both the proportions of the context and the boundaries and exchanges that characterise a certain relationship may vary as the social, structural, cultural, spatial and temporal situations and surroundings are undergoing changes over time (Adams & Allan 1998:05). The patterns of friendships do not remain unchanged across people’s life-course where personal commitments and opportunities as well as social and economic conditions of life are changing (Allan 1998:72). The challenge is, according to the authors, to unpack the existing expressions between the friendships as they are experienced, and the characteristics of the social and economic organisations that form and influence them (Allan & Adams 1998:191).

Adams & Allan identify four different levels of contexts that have impacts on the nature of friendship solidarities. The first level is describing the aspects of the personal environment of the individuals who are friends. The personal environment can involve features like economic circumstances, free time preferences and work commitments, which can either limit or create opportunities for sociability with others and assist friendship (Adams & Allan 1998:06). The focus on the network level lies on larger social collectivities where no specific individual is taking a central role. Here the attention is on how the different patterns of network arrangements influence people’s behaviour and what kind of opportunities and constrains the results of these different patterns open up (Adams & Allan 1998:08). The community level of context is meant to investigate how the changes of the patterns of housing, employment, and studies in an es-
established locality encourage new modes of informal solidarities. Several authors have shown that the instrumental part of the friendship becomes more highlighted in economic hardships, where individuals become more dependent on each other to improve their quality of life in terms of material or other interest (Adams & Allan 1998:09, Abrahams 1999:165). Furthermore, the influence and structure of the community do come into light when investigating what sort of entities of activities individuals can become involved in, since it partly depends on what specific community associations are open for them (Adams & Allan 1998). Relationships can today, however, be maintained via different electronic technologies, without the requirement of the involved to share the same geographical locality, which allows greater individual control and privacy of the relationship. Some of my informants have emphasised how the use of channels like Facebook and Skype have made it possible to overcome both geographical distance and change of patterns in their daily life, helping to maintain or develop a certain friendship. The fourth level of context mentioned by Adams & Allan, is the societal level. The dominant economic and social structures of a time may have impacts on the form of relationships at that period (Adams & Allan 1998:12).

Adams & Allan mention class, gender relations and ethnicity, together with other factors such as age, life-stage or religion, as having impacts on people’s contextual location and the way they form their friendship ties. These factors are part of an interplay of influences that are affecting friendships. At the same time, also the friendships are helping to sustain divisions of these kinds in the society (Allan & Adams 1998:185). Allan (1998) points out that even though the individuals within the friendship consider and treat each other as socially equal, it does not mean that they cannot be different in other aspects. There can be, and there often are, clear differences between friends, but these differences are not interfering with the balance of the equality of social worth amongst the parties in the relationship (Allan 1998:76).
In circumstances where resources are unequal or limited, the significance of reciprocity can become an important matter and different strategies are developed to maintain control over the involved exchanges and to contain the level of commitment. One of these strategies can be to frame the sociability within the relationship around settings where the inequalities are not apparent and the social equality can be sustained (Allan 1998, Oxley 1974). Allan describes a difference in sociability amongst friends deriving from class. According to him, what differentiates working class friendships from middle class friendships is that the former one is more dependent on the joint activities, rather than planned and organised for the friendship’s own sake (Oxley 1974, Allan 1998). Oxley examined in a small town in Australia how men from different classes could sustain the equality amongst themselves because their main locus for sociability was in a pub. The relationships here were centred around drinking, excluding them from activities that would make their differences in class apparent and where the management of the reciprocities could become strained (Allan 1998, Oxley 1974). Both Oxley and Allan imply the dominance of this form of sociability amongst working class men. It is not only amongst working-class people where the activity is playing a major part in the friendship ties. An entity with social, psychological, legal or physical base around which joint activities are organised, as for instance a neighbourhood or a workplace, could be seen as one aspect of the social context that has effect on who will become friends and how the parts in the relationship are interacting with each other (Feld & Carter 1998).

What contextualisation shows is that friendships are more complex than to be solely built on sentimental and unconstrained affections (Carrier 1999:21), or presented as a privilege of Western middle-class informal relationships (Paine 1969). Behind voluntary, informal and personal relationships are the roles of social interactive forces, such as gender, ethnicity, geographical location and age that need to be included in the broader picture (Allan 1989). In my ethnography I will demonstrate how and when these forces are indirectly promoted, negoti-
ated and interpreted by my informants when they are moving between different contexts of sociability.

4.2 The Dynamics of Friendship

This section will present how the formation, development and maintenance of friendship should be considered as an on-going dynamic process related to identification. As Evans (2010:10,89) argues, friendship is directed both to the future and to the past at the same time and is as much about who you can be in a certain situation. Both Evans and Allan & Adams (1998) are connecting identity formation with the available choices, as a representation for certain value systems in a specific context. While Evans (2010:183) highlights the individual action in the social process of self-making through sociability, Allan & Adams (1998:2) rather emphasise the interactions between and around the actors in the relationships.

Goffman (1959) and Jenkins (2008) are also placing interaction in the centre of their argumentation about social identity. Goffman (1959) portrays everyday interactions framed as theatrical performances, where the main regions for interactions are divided into back and front stage. Performances here refer to the activity of an actor to give a definition of a certain situation in front of, but also in co-operation with, others and which have some sort of influence on them. Front can be divided into setting, the physical background that supplies the scenery for the human action, and personal front that refers to equipment that are most identifiable with the actor and that is naturally expected to accompany him or her in different performances (Goffman 1959:22-25). In the back stage or region, the performance can be practised and the performer can conceal certain perceptions of his or her self that might contradict with the performance conducted in the eye of the public audience. Backstage can also refer to a place where familiarity, intimacy and more informal expressions of sociability can be
conducted, while the front stage is characterised by giving a formal impression of the self. One of Goffman’s central themes in his work is the art of impression management. Since society is not homogenous, performances vary from stage to stage and the performer must use his capacity to highlight and conceal certain matters to create an impression of himself that he wants to convey to others. In the presentation in front of the others, the individual will try to incorporate and make use of the current accepted norms and values deriving from the environment as expressions in his or her performance to make it more socially favourable (Goffman 1959:35-43).

Often, however, the actor is not operating alone, rather in teams where every definition of the situations is integrated in a larger co-operation between several participants. The bond between the team members can be characterised with reciprocal dependency and familiarity (Goffman 1959:83). Since each team member has the power to spoil the performance, everyone has to rely on the mutual dependence on each other in order to maintain their given definition of a situation in front of the audience. The bond of familiarity refers to the formal relationship that becomes established in the performance where the team members not only have to define themselves but also each other’s front line in order to accomplish the maintenance of a particular appearance in a shared setting. To keep a dramaturgical co-operation, team members have also agreed to moral obligations not to reveal each other’s secrets. Identity in Goffman’s work is therefore negotiated between the actor and audience through the front and back stage. The actor is shifting between the character that is constructed by the public and his private self to mobilise and present a definition of a situation. To his help, the actor has a variety of impression managements in order to claim certain receptions of the performed image. What I believe is missing from Goffmans’ theory, however, is how people can incorporate and shift between different degrees of roles of audience and actor, at the same time during a performance since the used categories are presented as static. Nevertheless, his theory points out the
important aspect of consciousness in self-presentation as a means to seek goals and pursue interests, which is also relevant for examining how my informants are negotiating their identification according to available possibilities of who they can be in a certain situation.

Jenkins (2008) goes along the same line, arguing that people cannot live their routinised lives as humans without continuously thinking about who they are and who others are. He views identification as a necessary precondition for human life, which he divides into three different but simultaneous orders: the individual, the interactional and the institutional order (Jenkins 2008:40-46). Jenkins derives his argumentation partly from the work of Mead (1934) who argues that we can only see ourselves if we are able to see the collective reality of ourselves. The identity of the individual is embodied in selfhood, which is socially constructed in the sense that “it is an ongoing [...] simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions [...] offered by others” (Jenkins 2008:40). This internal and external identifications have previously been used for making a distinction between the selfhood and the personhood for instance by Mauss (1985), where the former is the individual’s private experience of the self, whilst the latter is what is visible for the public. Jenkins, however, believes that selfhood and personhood are intertwined and simultaneous aspects in the on-going process of identification (Jenkins 2008:51).

We all have the disadvantage of lacking full control over how the image of ourselves is interpreted by others. We all seek to be or be seen as somebody with a particular identity. The process of identification, which is a routine aspect of everyday life, can be different in different settings (Goffman 1959, Jenkins 2008:43). Identification of and by others has consequences since they are not only attributes of individuals but can be constituted collectively as well, either by themselves as group identifications or by others as categorisations (Jenkins 2008). Perhaps the most important context where the individual and collective identities can be produced, reproduced and implicated in each other is within in-
stitutions or power relations. The maintenance or change of collective identities could also be seen as embedded in conflict, over which struggles take place as for instance between political agendas (Jenkins 2008:43-45). In a broader sense, the effects of these conflicts can be reflected in the way people present and position themselves in certain contexts, as it will be described in my empirical part. Friends, family, children, colleagues are resources that we, together with occupation, religious practices, clothes and all sorts of things, can draw upon in self-identification and also in the dynamics of interactional identity processes (Jenkins 2008).

During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the individuals lost their power of defining who they and their social roles were due to the rapid changes in community organisation (cf. Maček 2009). In the contemporary post-conflict and post-socialist era, a community that gives contradictory signals now surrounds the new generation of young people. On one hand, it is encouraged by the international community to promote economically independent and self-sufficient conditions of living. On the other hand, they are being affected by the nationalist agendas of the political parties that encourage the status quo of division based on ethnic belonging. These signals related to community transformations have to be taken into account when examining friendships as well.

Another aspect in the process of identity formation is the matter of choice, both when it comes to who you can be and how you will be valued by your surroundings in a certain situation, as both Goffman’s (1959) and Evans’s (2010) reasoning imply. Due to the historical development there are some people in each society who have more choices than others with regard to whom they can develop a relation with (Evans 2010:183). These activities can be characterised and interpreted by their consequences in terms of showing social structures. Evans is referring to choice, not as a freedom to do as a person pleases, but as a complex process through which a person can make sense of who he or she can become in parallel with the social forces of the present and the incorporated his-
tory of his or her self in the past (Evans 2010:188). Each situation establishes a particular economy of value based on exchange and competencies in which the individual needs to evaluate the position he or she can take as well as the position of others (Evans 2010:188).

Without exchanges or transmissions of material or verbal values, there cannot be any social participation, nor can people without these relations learn about the possibilities and choices they have regarding whom they can become. Friendships are, compared to other personal relationships such as kin, relatively free in the sense of implicit worth of the fixation of the relationship and can therefore offer further choices in how to be and become one’s self (Evans 2010:193). The way people relate to their friends and to the attributes and functions they fulfil can, on one hand, tell us about what cultural scripts regarding informal solidarities are encouraged and reinforced by the individuals in a specific context. On the other hand, it can also give an understanding of the strategies and choices involved in the process of identification and how these correlate to the available opportunities that can be derived from a structural location. I will show how friendship is as much about potentiality and choice (Evans 2010) as about structural embeddedness of ties (Feld & Carter 1998).

4.3 The Utilisation of Friendships

The two previous subchapters have focussed on providing an understanding of how the patterns and practices of friendship have to be viewed as embedded in a larger set of social practices as well as in a certain context. By playing part in the process of identification, friendships, and forms of sociabilities should be seen as parts of dynamic interactional processes involving flexibility, adaptiveness and decision-making. In this last section, I will draw attention to the instrumentalised and productive aspects of friendship in order to investigate how it can be used to achieve certain ends. Friendship has already been men-
tioned in the previous section as a way of getting to know one’s self and others. In my ethnography I will relate to instrumentalisation as both emotional and social support deriving from friends in terms of individual lifestyles, commitment and self-realisation. In this sense, the values and attributes behind the formation and development of different friendships can be revealed.

In order to unpack the instrumentalisation of friendship, I will in my ethnography shed light on how friendship can be viewed as a part of social capital, since this is the form of instrumentalisation that is rooted in the existence of relations between people. Bourdieu views relationships as products of strategies directed towards pursuing symbolical or economic interests with the background of a specific set of economic and social conditions (Bourdieu 1977). Capital is explained as a potential capacity that through time can produce profit and reproduce itself, either in identical or expanded form (Bourdieu 1986:46). Amongst the four capitals of economic, cultural, symbolic and social, it is the last which is linked to the membership of a group, where the relationships can be socially instituted, for instance guaranteed by a name, class or a party (Bourdieu 1986:51). These relationships can be based and maintained by exchanges of material or symbolic kind. The proportion of the acquired social capital depends on the size of the agent’s mobilisable network or connections as well as on the possessable capital of each agent in the network. The social capital of a given agent, however, cannot be considered as fully independent from economic and cultural capital, since these capitals can be converted through the exchanges that are involved in establishing mutual acknowledgement between the agents (Bourdieu 1986:52). The existence of networks is a product of individual or collective investment strategies, which are aiming to reproduce or establish social relationships as useful resources in long or short term, consciously or unconsciously. This can be achieved through giving the exchange that is based on mutual cognition and recognition a symbolic character, which then can be transformed into
capital that is incorporated in the structure and recognised as self-evident (Bourdieu 1986:52).

Building relations to others is essential if an individual wants to possess social capital. It is namely the relations themselves that constitute the source of the individual’s advantage. Besides Bourdieu, Coleman has also made use of the concept when analysing what role social capital has in creating human capital, which is embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual. His research points out that social capital is essential in the family background in order to profit from the human capital provided by the parents (Coleman 1988:S112). However, he points out that social capital outside the family in form of parental relations with others in the community also has value for a young person’s development and educational achievements. Therefore, frequent family moves from one community to another can destroy important established bonds that have an effect on the available social capital for the family as well (Coleman 1988:S113). Coleman is making use of the concept closure, which in this context means the existence of a strong norm that is dependent and guaranteed by sufficient ties between a certain number of people. Closure of a social structure does not only create effective and powerful norms but can also form trustworthiness as social capital within a specific structure (Coleman 1988:S106).

Portes identifies three basic functions of social capital that can be applicable in different contexts. First of all, it can be a source of social control that can often be found in bounded solidarity, which rises out as a product of a common fate and is bounded and controlled by the limits of the community (Portes 1998:10). The second function of social capital refers to it as a source of family support as in Coleman’s work (1988). As previously noted, Coleman points out how multiple family moves can affect the social capital by losing bonds to community. Several researches have, however, showed that the loss of the community form of social capital amongst migrants can partially be compen-
sated by familiar support (Coleman 1988, Gold 1995, Hagan et al 1996, Portes 1998). The third function of social capital that Portes is referring to is the closest to how Bourdieu defines social capital, viz. as a source of gaining access to benefits through a membership of a network. The instrumentalisation of connections as means to gain access to power, certain benefits or activities are here mediated by a system of networks beyond the immediate family (Bourdieu 1986, Portes 1998).

Portes also draws attention to the downsides of social capital and identifies negative consequences from previous studies. One of them is that the tight control of economic advantage generated by bounded solidarity and trust, which Coleman refers to as closure, also limits the access for people outside the community (Coleman 1988, Portes 1998:15). Another negative outcome from a community closure can be the deriving demands from other members to gain access to the resources of fellow members, and by that rendering individual success and economical accumulation a hard task. An intense community life based on several network systems can also reduce the privacy and autonomy of the individual member (Portes 1998:16-17). Finally, yet another negative outcome is referring to the cementation of group solidarity by using downward levelling norms in order to keep the members in place to prevent undermining of group cohesion. This predominately occurs amongst groups or communities that have experienced historical discrimination or opposition from other parts of the society. This has led the group to ground its strong ties in the common experience of their secondary position as for instance Hispanic minority groups in the United States (Portes 1998:17) or the Roma population in several European countries. As Bourdieu and Coleman point out, building relations to others is a necessary precondition in order to acquire and possess social capital and gain access to benefits and advantages in the society. It is also the sufficient ties between people that can create and successfully protect the maintenance of specific norms and interests in a social structure. As Coleman and Portes emphasise, social
capital involves values, such as solidarity, trust and obligation, which can be viewed as not only social but also as emotional support in certain contexts. The motives behind accessing social capital can therefore be as much of emotional character as of social with individuals wanting to feel a belonging, being cared for and loved within a certain context and with certain people. By including this aspect of emotional support within social capital, the examination of how and in which contexts young adults in Bosnia-Herzegovina can relate to their friendships as potential social capital and what functions these utilised ties can fulfil can be nuanced. Also, the boundaries of instrumentalisation of friendship and the different values my informants ascribed to these ties can be unfolded.

4.4 Summary

The purpose of this theoretical part was to highlight three main things. First of all, that friendship should be viewed as a part of a larger structure. In order to identify the characteristics of a certain relationship, it has to be placed in a context, where class, gender, age and ethnicity amongst others appear as interactive factors that influence the structural location of individuals and how they form their ties. The formations of friendships also help sustaining these kinds of divisions in a specific society. When moving between different contexts of sociability the different value systems of specific friendships as well how individuals relate to the social forces can be revealed.

Secondly, friendship should be seen as an interactive and dynamic process related to identity formation. The individual and collective aspects of identification are happening simultaneously and are intertwined whilst people are trying to make meaning of who they and others are in parallel to present social forces in a specific context. Compared to other forms of relationships, friendships are relatively free when it comes to the worth-fixation of relations, which also affects the availability of choices in the sense of identity making.
Thirdly, friendship involves different degrees of instrumentalisation. Social capital in the sense of networks can create a belonging to a certain group or context. On the other hand, it can also create a source of social or emotional support for the individual. Social capital within friendships can involve transmission of physical and symbolic values that can act as individual advantage in certain contexts. Social capital within friendships can help to examine the functions, as well as the nature and quality of these transmissions as well as the social benefits and limitations of building relationship to others.

In my ethnography I will make use of the mentioned concepts in order to examine the friendship patterns amongst young adults in contemporary Bosnian society. I will look at how my informants attach different emotional and social values to certain contexts of sociability. The emotional and social aspects of their friendship ties will also be explored in the sense of how and when they can act as resources for certain ends. In this way, my aim is to give a broader picture about the strategies and coping mechanisms my informants are using through their friendships in terms of finding their place and meaning in everyday life.
5 The Nature of Friendship

The aim of the chapter is to show how the nature of friendship is characterised by flexibility through adaptation to changes in life as well as to transformations of the ties themselves. The chapter will begin with examining the different meanings of friendships through the qualities my informants attribute to the bond that is shared by friends. As my theoretical chapter stresses, friendship needs to be placed in a larger context in order to determine the specific qualities that are formed and influenced by the elements deriving from the socio-economic environment surrounding the relations (Adams & Allan 1998). The understandings of friendship bonds, exemplified by the informants’ personal accounts, serve the purpose of investigating how these often abstract conceptions are created and come into play through interaction. The connection to context and the dynamics of friendship will be examined through the transformation of friendship ties and sociability through life courses but also through changes in the qualities of their bonds. The chapter will end with a brief summary.

5.1 Exploring the Bond Between Friends

This section of the chapter will deal with exploring the meanings and attributes of the bonds between friends in order to reveal the immanent qualities that constitute the bond itself. What has been considered a challenge within my fieldwork is how to examine the individual meanings of what friendship is. Here, friendship ties will be investigated through the experience and attitudes of my informants’ encounters, without reducing the very concept of friendship to a narrow ideal, and by that excluding the broad span of friendship from mere acquaintances to the most intimate ones (Allan 1989:28). Friendship, however, is a complex notion that the following sentence also captures:
Friendship [...] can vary greatly in intensity, from simple well wishers to familiar, close, dear, intimate, bosom, boon-companion friend, each with its own subtle quality. (Firth 1999:xiv)

As Firth points out, each friendship is unique by having its own subtle quality, which makes the examination of friendship an analytically challenging task since some of these qualities of the friendship are more visible than others. Whilst behaviour can be observed, there are less visible parts such as underlying feelings and motivations that are also part of the specific bond between friends (Hruschka 2010). As Allan (1989, 1998) and Feld & Carter (1998) have argued, it is the bond that friends share that is valued within the relation.

Amongst my informants, friendship was often defined by the qualities of trust and understanding. They also often related to the idea of being there; a perceived closeness expressed through support that was often exemplified within a context of hardship or obstacle. As Emira (22) reasoned:

Friendship? It’s knowing that someone is there for you. Someone you call at five in the morning and somebody you can tell everything to.

Her example implies that the interactional connection between friends by being there can include expectation of mutual support or reciprocity (Spencer & Pahl 2007, Hruschka 2010). It also gives an implication that the relationships involve a degree of investment. Investment was often described in the matter of time spent together or in different forms of support, but also in terms of individual sacrifice, as Nermin (19) commented: “I would define a friendship as two people willing to sacrifice something about themselves in order to do the other person a favour”. According to Nermin, sacrifice could be exemplified as offering the friend time, commitment and choices, which thereby reduces ones own personal agency. The conceptions of support, investment and sacrifice can have implications on the shared bond that is based on trust; an essential knowledge that one’s friend would be there for one. As Evans (2010:189) argues, knowl-
edge and emotions are related through the process of learning, in this case through personal experiences, but also through understandings of other social interactions in the individual’s contextual settings. The constructed value of trust can, for instance, involve associations to a conventional idea of friendship expectations that may not even have been experienced at all within the person’s actual friendship sociabilities.

Friendship per definition was often emphasised by its characteristics compared to other sorts of relationships, for instance kin. Ajla (22) said the following:

I consider friends to be a selected family. Family is something that you get from birth. But this friendship kind of family, you select yourself.

Ajla stressed the volitional aspect of friendship, involving personal agency and preferences in the process of selection amongst those who can be friends (cf. Evans 2010:193). Moreover, Jasmina (23) emphasised agency when she described friendship as “[...] a relationship between people that know each other really-really well, and can express themselves as much as they want without being afraid of getting judged [by their friends]”.

Other informants have instead used comparative descriptions by highlighting the commonalities and differences between friendship and other forms of personal relationships in different manners. For instance, they have stressed the similarity between friendship and kinship by stating that their closest friends are like siblings, or that they consider their mother to be their best friend. While some of them stressed the absence of a clear boundary between the different kinds of relationships, other spoke of the ideal form of friendship as involving a combination of relationships, as for instance Davor’s (24) reasoning shows:

Friendship is putting somebody else’s interest in front of yours [...]. I actually think that you can only find that kind of good friend in your partner. That’s the ideal for me.
Prioritising other people’s interest does not only involve a degree of sacrifice or loss of personal freedom and/or choices, but also an obligation or responsibility towards the other party. As both Jasmina’s and Davor’s comments imply, friendships can involve degrees of freedom and obligations at the same time. This duality within the relation can also be connected to trust, since in order to make sacrifices for our friends or in order for our friends to put our interest in front of theirs, we have to uncover the weaker side of our personality and make it possible to show our concerns and fears (Hruschka 2010). Nermin said: “I believe that trust is about vulnerability, you show yourself vulnerable in front of another person”. He reasoned that showing vulnerability gives the other person a potential control over your life. In an ideal form of friendship there is a balance of power and trust, and the individuals do not have to fear that their exposed vulnerability will be used in a wrong way by the other part (Allan 1989, Hruschka 2010, Paine 1969). Trust within a friendship can be seen as the security for keeping parts of the individuals’ identity hidden from the greater public where others can judge it negatively. Friendship in this sense can act as an important foundation of mutual recognition (Paine 1969) by producing and confirming both the individual’s private self and a self that is presented in public (Goffman 1959). My informants also value their bond by declaring the connection between them as friendship (Allan 1998).

Although each friendship can be defined by different criteria, the core conception of what friendship is, thus, circulates around the idea of friends having a certain personal connection that binds them together. What creates the base for the specific connection between friends should be searched within the mutual confirmation or evaluation of their interaction. Since most people have several friends that can differ from each other to a large extent, each friendship can also involve different values that compensate for other qualities (Evans 2010:174-176). This was very well exemplified through how Mirza (26) spoke about his friend:
He is the opposite of me. I am very careerist, and he is an electrician, he never went to college [but] he would put his hand in the fire for me.

For Mirza, even though his friend did not share the same interest for a career in law as himself, the value of knowing that he would be able to do major sacrifices for him had a greater importance for their confirmation of their friendship. My informants’ portrayals about the essence of friendship described that these relationships, while containing behaviours of sharing, helping and showing commitment through different rituals, also include non-visible constructs of qualities such as trust, vulnerability and closeness (Hruschka 2010). The connection between these visible and non-visible constructs brings about the personal bond that comes into play in the interaction between friends.

5.2 Friends Through Time and Life Transitions

In this next section I will discuss how my informants friendship relations and sociability patterns are influenced by temporal changes in their personal environment. In my interviews I was interested in the ways my informants were differentiating between friends in their surroundings, without limiting myself solely to the most intimate forms of friendships. Some forms of friendships can be complex and involve different kinds of roles and ways of relating. The different ways of categorising friends can also reveal how the dynamics of friendship ties comes into play during different life-transitions.

Some of my informants referred to their closest friends as their “best friends”. The relationship with a best friend could be considered as the most personal and intimate form of friendship with the highest level of trust and affinity (Spencer & Pahl 2006:79). The closest and most intimate forms of friendships sometimes included several years of shared history or time, as it was for Emira and her best friend who had known each other for fifteen years. She described their first meeting for me like this:
It was in 1995, the end of the war in Sarajevo. Her mum came to my mum for a cup of coffee and she brought along her two kids, my best friend and her brother. We were just looking at each other; we were only five years old. And then we started talking with each other.

Their friendship started like most other childhood friendships through play, and even though her friend lived in another country, they could keep continuity in their relationship during the summer breaks and through letters. As Emira recounted: “summer by summer we were growing up together and after some time we became so close and started to share stories and memories”.

Through all these years, the childhood friendship gradually moved onto a more mature and complex level where friends could create and maintain a stable common ground for mutual support and intimacy. The progress of their “friendship career” evolved from a childhood friendship to a close and intimate friendship in their adult years. However, not everybody had only one best friend. Samra (29) told me about what friendship meant to her:

I have this close friendship between four girls from high school; there were five of us. We have been hanging out for the last fifteen years, which is half of our lives basically. I am so happy that we have this. We have been there for each other in all possible and impossible situations. We went through all these difficult things together, like abortions, loosing parents, sicknesses. Also through first sexual experience, drugs, partner problems, but it was us who remained [...] . My girl friends are always there for me and I am there for them in hard times.

Samra and her friends have maintained their close friendship through continuous exchange of solidarity and support even after they split from secondary school. Also Dina has a group of best friends since elementary school that she regards as her inner circle of friends. In these cases, the friendships from childhood are often formed within the context of underlying repeated interactions and
activities where personal relations are developed, as for instance at school (Feld & Carter 1998). This context influences the manner in which these relationships are formed and the exchanges that they will involve (Allan & Adams 1998:190). It also becomes a challenge to maintain these forms of friendship when they are leaving the context, for instance graduating from school. Whilst the friends have been sharing a big part of their personal life experiences locked in a specific setting, moving away from that setting, the dynamics of their friendship will most probably change as well (Feld & Carter 1998:142). Several of my informants refer to this as a challenge for the maintenance of the friendship. As Emira argued:

I do have some friends at the university but now I’m a bit scared, because we’re supposed to graduate and we will go on different paths, so I don’t know what will happen to us. Actually, I think it’s good because it will show if our friendship is real or not.

As socio-economic conditions of life are modified, changes in friendship patterns become influenced by the altered responsibilities, commitment and opportunities in individuals’ lives (Allan 1998:72). By leaving their context of sociability, in this case the university, Emira and her friends will lose their natural setting for activities and the larger set of networks surrounding the friendships, such as other students and teachers. Their motivation and flexibility will show how the dynamics of their friendships will change through this transition.

A big part of the interaction that was arranged between “close friends” was organised for its own sake, as a way of catching up with each other’s biographies. Amongst close friends, the frequency of interaction was not necessarily an issue and some of my informants stressed that they do not have to see these friends very often in person. Nermin described his relation with one of his very close friends:
We definitely feel like we don’t have to see each other all the time, she doesn’t get jealous if I put away more time on someone else beside her, and for me, she can also be completely busy, I am fine with it. We still like each other a lot.

Those who are considering themselves really good friends are not necessarily those who are most frequently socialising with each other compared to other friends, neither does the focus of their socialisation has to concentrate on a specific activity. Distance in form of time and space does not seem to threaten these kinds of friendships to fade away as it does in the less intimate friendships that are more focussed around certain activities (cf. Feld & Carter 1998). Instead, surviving and keeping the relation the way it is was presented as a demonstration of the special tie between really good friends. Not everybody measures the distance between friendships on how much time they have spent together. Selma (28) explained it to me in the following way:

I have like one or two friends from each phase of my life, from primary school and high school, and we are still great friends although I moved to Sarajevo [...] and then also from university and from my Master studies. But I would say that my best friends are from my recent past, from two years ago or from my childhood, like primary school. My experiences are not proving that there is that big difference between friends from my childhood and from my recent past for me.

For Selma, what connected her and her friends through her life-course was the ability to share:

[...] whenever you are in trouble, whenever you have something nice that you want to share, you cannot do it with the wall of course. At least in my life, the first people I want to share something with are my friends. Not my sister or my mother, it’s definitely them. Of course it can also be your part-
ner. But there are some things that you can share with friends but not with partner and the other way around.

Bjanka (24) and her friends have another ground for their connection:

Humour is really what connects us and what I need from friends. It also indicates intelligence and connection. Because you have to be able to count on them as well. Confidence you can have with your partner or with your colleagues, but humour connects us friends.

Unlike others, Bjanka did not necessarily expect her friends to be confidants, since she believed that there are other personal relationships in her life that can fill that need. What binds her friends together is another matching of personal values that can imply other hidden qualities (Hruschka 2010, Evans 2010), such as intelligence. If the best friend is the most complex and intimate form of friendship, then the fun friend could be considered a form of friendship that is still more than an acquaintance, but limited in the degree of shared confidence. The types of fun friends or associates were often restricted to certain kinds of activities, like hanging out around the university or going out in the evening. In certain periods of life, even close friends can be moved into that category. As Džena (22) explained:

Especially now that I am working, I need my friends to relax and have fun. I need my weekends to just hang out with them.

The direct and indirect changes through people’s life-courses bring new forms and new needs for sociability and are reflected in the dynamics of their friendship ties as well. In other cases it is not contextual changes (Adams & Allan 1998, Feld & Carter 1998), but changes in the value systems that lead friends to re-evaluate their shared bond (Hruschka 2010).
In the next section the transformation of friendship will be examined from the point of how visible and non-visible constructs of specific bonds bring about changes in friendship and its surroundings.

5.3 Transformation of Friendship Ties and Sociability

Friendships that were previously considered close can sometimes be transferred into the category of looser connections. Even though the nature of the friendship becomes less complex and intimate, it does not always make the relationship less complicated. As with contextual change, a change in the relationship bond can also have an effect on the larger web of relations surrounding it, as for instance a larger group of friends or classmates (Feld & Carter 1998, Adams and Allan 1998, Evans 2010). Sanela (23) told me about a close friend that she lived together with for several months. They studied the same programme at the university and spent their free time together. A conflict developed between them that became more and more infected and in the end, their close friendship could not be maintained anymore. She told me:

For me it was worse than losing a boyfriend, I became depressed by what happened, because I was so connected to her before. That’s when I learned that I have to have distance with a friend [...] . It’s not like I don’t talk to her. I spend time with her and ask how she is and things like that. It is just ridiculous, because we were so close and now I ask her ‘how are you?’ like someone I haven't met since high school.

For Sanela, it has been an ambivalent experience to see her friend take up a new role as a mere associate, which reduces their interaction to shallow conversations, whereas not so long ago their relation was much closer. She also found it hard to deal with her surrounding asking where her friend is, because she did not want to get them involved in their conflict. Usually, a more complex friendship develops out of an associate or fun friendship. Sometimes the tie can
also stay on that level permanently because the friendship lacks some desired attribute. Nermin gave me an example of these kinds of friends:

He is the greatest to party with [...] but once I told him a secret and he betrayed me, so I just completely backed him down. He is still my friend, but we just party and that’s all [...] there is no deeper connection to that.

Nermin did not manage to progress towards a more confidential connection within the friendship because his friend did not live up to the expectation of being able to keep a secret. Due to the lack of trust the quality of the friendship remained on the level of being a simple, activity-based connection where they have a good time. The clarity of what they can expect from each other has allowed them to maintain the friendship on a level that suits them both.

The transformation and dynamics of specific friendship qualities can also be seen as context bound where the same friends socialise differently with each other, depending on whether it happens in a group or between individual people (Adams & Allan, 1998). Besides meeting their friends individually, several of my informants were also often socialising with their friends in larger groups. Raja is a local expression I came across in my literature reviews (e.g. Gillard 2001, Maček 2009) and I often brought it up during my interviews to find out the meanings behind it. The word raja can have several meanings, though all of them are more or less related to sociability. One of the ways of using the word is when talking about a “group of friends”. However, there are as many interpretations as there are people. Jelena told me that for her, raja is:

[...] usually a group of people that understands you, who shares your interests and who gets your point. For me raja is my crew, which means my group of close friends that I hang out with in my free time.

Raja as an expression can also mean certain individual attributes, as Emira explained:
It means that you are positive and friendly. A communicative person. You are a proper *raja* if you can hang out with many people. A person who understands different styles and is relaxed and goes with the flow. And who is open to meet new people.

Jasmina who does not even necessarily connect *raja* with friendships provides a third explanation:

I don’t think that the expression covers friendship very good. It is a group of people that hang out. They don’t even necessarily have to be friends or close friends, but they hang out. They are approximately the same age as well, but it is not necessary either. For example, my bigger group of friends, both girls and boys together, we are like twenty people or so all together and we are raja. And we do all kind of things together, sometimes in fact we do nothing really, we just sit somewhere […] but the very important thing is to be open for new people. It is not a closed group, maybe that is the way to characterise a *raja*. We are open for new people to join, everybody is welcome.

While the word *raja* was sometimes used to describe people that are friends, or people that are socialising together, it also has a meaning of describing positive interactional behaviour. Some of my informants were also connecting the attributes of a *raja* with the lifestyle of urban young people in Sarajevo. It is important to note that the emphasis does not necessarily lie on the actual connection to the city, because as we will see later, being born in Sarajevo does not automatically lead to the appropriation of urban values (Stefansson 2007:63). Openness and acceptance were described as the main characteristics of a *raja*, but it could also include a search for fun and inclusiveness with others. The expression could therefore rather be considered as an ascribed cultural mentality (Stefansson 2007:63) covering several kinds of aspects connected to how to socialise.
5.4 Summary

In this chapter the focus was on presenting the nature of friendship in terms of qualities, contextualisation and dynamics. I have presented how visible and non-visible qualities can constitute and bring about the unique bond between friends and exemplified the different values of these bonds through my informants’ narratives. The chapter has also focussed on presenting how mobility between contexts and changes of life courses are having influence on the formation, development and maintenance of friendship dynamics as well as creating new needs for sociability. The last section covered how changes in qualities or values in the friendship bonds affect the evolvement, development and maintenance of the specific relation as well as the larger surrounding. The way my informants relate to their friendship ties in terms of attributes and functions can also reveal what cultural scripts of sociability are reinforced and encouraged in a specific context, as with the example of raja shows. This chapter has focussed on providing an understanding of how friendship relations should not be considered static and isolated entities, but rather fluid and flexible processes which are affected by and affecting the individuals’ identity formation as well as the larger set of contexts in which they are embedded (Adams & Allan 1998, Feld & Carter 1998, Evans 2010).
6 Interactional Identity Processes Through Sociability

Friendship does not start until people do friendly things in friendly places: they are not merely created by friendly talk. (Duck 1988:5)

As the above-mentioned quote implies, friendship has to be viewed from the aspects of contextualisation and as dynamic processes related to interaction. This chapter will focus on the role that sociability and interaction with friends play in a larger process of identity formation (Jenkins 2008). Just as people are shifting between different contexts, the roles and choices about who they can be in a particular situation also have to be negotiated (Evans 2010, Jenkins 2008). Whilst the former chapter investigated the construction of different value systems that create the bond between friends, this chapter will explore the exchange or transformation of physical and verbal values in interactions. Through these interactions people can learn about the possibilities of who they can become, what part of their selves they can present and how they will be viewed by others (Evans 2010).

This chapter will begin by examining one of the typical ways of socialising with friends amongst my informants, namely drinking coffee together. I will thereafter present an example of how one of my informants arranges her sociability with friends in different settings in order to examine how certain friendship qualities come into play with the process of identification. The chapter will continue with the process of identification related to geographical locality, where similarities and differences between values will be observed. A brief summary will be given in the end.
6.1 Coffee with Friends

In this section, I will look closer at different meanings of socialisation with friends and how the values behind these interactions are connected to different qualities of friendship bonds. Regardless of the quality of their shared bonds, the most commonly expressed activity with friends that my informants described to me was to drink coffee together. For many of my informants, drinking coffee was incorporated in their weekly or even daily routine and held an important function regarding socialisation with friends. Drinking coffee does not only involve the activity of drinking a cup of coffee (or sometimes not even that), but it is the most common and taken-for-granted way of maintaining and updating oneself on the biographies of one’s friends, socialising and meeting new people, and a way of spending time instead of going to a class, during the breaks or after classes. Usually, it is a time-demanding, but predictable activity that can take up to several hours depending on how much time or money people have at their disposal. Amongst those informants that were already working, the coffee drinking usually took place after work or during the weekends. The setting can vary depending on the preferences of the people meeting up, the season, the time of the day and the purpose of coffee drinking. In this sense, the activity of drinking coffee fulfils the function of framing and routinising sociability with friends and other personal relationships in a specific social context, where the location and setting can create a space for sociability and a feeling of familiarity. Even though this activity was mentioned as a very typical and enjoyable way of socialising with friends, some of my informants were also criticising and condemning it for several reasons. Mirza described it to me in a humorous way how the meaning of drinking coffee has taken over other forms of obligations:

A classical example of Bosnian young people is that they are drinking coffee all day. We even have this funny expression in our language. When you are saying that you are going to the Faculty [the university] you say “idemo na
kaful	et”.

If you switch the first two parts of Faculty, faku, you get kafu [coffee] so kaful
tet. So when you are going to the faculty, you know you are going for coffee. And that’s what we do, spending our parents’ money on coffee.

What he points out is the amount of students who rather sit and drink coffee instead of participating in lectures at the university. Other informants, as for instance Ajla (23), were instead critically contrasting the activity with the view on youth subculture in other countries:

People in other countries go out on the street to make protests if they have problems. Here they only complain and they sit and drink coffee but they don’t do anything about it, they somehow are waiting for it to sort itself.

The two examples above are related to the activity of “drinking coffee” as a passive act, because it does not bring any socio-economic benefits compared to other activities like working or studying. Due to its connection to pleasure and free time, the expression is also used to explain the passivity amongst young people in general, referring to them as favouring leisure over business. When I met Bjanka for an interview during a weekday, we went to one of the bigger cafés with a terrace, outside the centre of Sarajevo. Asking her about what the biggest challenge for young people like her in Bosnia is, she told me:

Look around! It’s the middle of the day and all the coffee-places are stuffed with people in all kind of ages. Who is in school or at work? [...] We don’t care about anything, we just sit and drink coffee all day!

The activity of drinking coffee can in these cases be seen as clashing with the expectations young people have on themselves in order to live or establish a life according to the expectations of the society where studies and work come

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2 The literal translation of “let’s go to the university” would be “idemo na fakultet”. 
first. This corresponds with the reasoning of Adams & Allan (1998), who argue that ways of socialising are influenced by the norms deriving from contexts on the larger community level. These norms frame the patterns of sociability through constraints and encouragement of specific arrangements, in this case, the time and contextual separation of socialising with friends from studies, employment and participation in political matters. However, drinking coffee mainly provides an important fountain for sociability amongst young adults in Sarajevo where conscious and unconscious processes of identification take place, which will be examined further in the next section.

6.2 Alma’s Ways of Socialising with Friends

Friendship reflects and reinforces the stratified nature of society in the sense that it is present in the public arena where it reflects certain social identities (Adams & Allan 1998, Evans 2010). Identification is a continuous process of construction where others contribute to one’s self-identification, as well as being also an indicator for others about the personal status and position in the society (Jenkins 2008:93). In this regard, drinking coffee, as an activity within a specific setting or with specific people does not only give valuable indications to others about who you are, but also about who you can become (cf. Evans 2010). During my fieldwork I met Alma (23), a Master student in the field of economics, with whom I spent some hours per day for a week in order to observe how she arranged her everyday socialisation with her friends. This section will explore how different qualities of her friendship ties are connected to identity formation in certain contexts through different attributes.

When I spoke to Alma about where she usually goes to socialise with her friends, she explained to me that she could think of at least three places that she regularly visits; depending on whom of her friends she is meeting. Most of her daily socialisation is not with close friends. Therefore she regards meeting her
best friend as a special occasion, because they can only manage to meet once a week or every other week. While she is still a student, her friend is already working and building her career. During their meetings on weekends, they usually go to one of the more expensive cafés where they have particularly nice handmade pastries. There they usually sit and talk about what has happened lately in their lives and laugh about memories from the past. Although they can keep in touch about daily activities via Skype or Facebook, she explained to me that these “coffees” mean a lot for them both, because here they can talk more freely about all kinds of things. On these occasions they are always alone. As Alma said:

[...] it would be weird to bring along your current partner or another friend when I meet her for coffee. I want to be myself when I am with her and be able to talk about whatever I want.

Their meetings imply a special kind of bond between them based on commitments to each other’s personal matters through discussing their joys and fears in life. In this context they can both take up the identity of a committed and intimate friend. Alma and her best friend have created a quality of their sociability based on exclusiveness and intimacy, which would have to be modified or concealed if they would choose to include others in their activities. This corresponds to the division Goffman (1959) has made between back and front stage, where back stage can open up for expressions and behaviour of more informal and intimate character. The maintenance of the quality and interaction in their friendship is also strengthened by certain attributes such as aesthetics and economic status in the choice of location and activity in their sociability. Different qualities and functions of friendship bonds become apparent when Alma is shifting between contexts of sociability. Even if she values the time spent together with her best friend, she also has other friends with whom she can take up other roles in a specific context.
Besides enjoying coffee with her best friend, Alma also likes to go out partying on weekends. She brought me along to her raja that she regularly meets on weekends at a small local bar in the suburbs in the early evening before heading out to party. The core of the group consisted of five friends from secondary school, but often they did bring along other friends or partners, and there was a big fluctuation between the people. The bond between the friends is not as exclusive and intimate as with her best friend, rather it is characterised by openness and acceptance towards others to a certain extent. As we will see later, not everybody is welcome at their table. Alma and her raja have their favourite spot in one of the corners where there is a big table and all of them can fit. They found this place when several of the friends went to take private lessons for a language exam in the neighbourhood. Afterwards, they sometimes went to this bar to have a beer and when they stopped going to the teacher, they started coming here on weekends and have continued to do so for years. First, their main motive to continue socialising in this particular bar was economical since the beer was relatively cheap compared to the bars in the centre of Sarajevo, which was convenient for most of the friends having limited budgets as students. Later on, the bar started to provide a new context for sociability after leaving their natural setting for activities in secondary school. Their conversations were often connected to this former setting through inside jokes, anecdotes and gossip about common acquaintances and former teachers and classmates. In this sense, although the group was generally including other friends and acquaintances, the five friends shared a common identity of being former students from the same secondary school. Their friendship was partly characterised by the attribute of shared memories that were strengthened by inside jokes and stories and unconsciously created a boundary between them and their new friends. However, the friends also made sure that the conversations were giving space to a variety of themes and by that creating a possibility for inclusion of the others. The conversations were, in general, of a very light character and comments about the pre-
sent in terms of work and studies were mostly avoided. Rather, the discussions revolved around where everybody is heading later in the evening and gossip about other people at the bar.

There was a jukebox in the bar playing mainly old songs from the 1980s Yugoslav rock era which disturbed Alma and her friends when they started to go there, since none of them liked that kind of music. Nowadays, those songs played in the bar have also become a way of creating a common association to the place in the form of inside jokes amongst the friends whenever they have recognised the songs outside that context. Another fountain for jokes were the guests, who were often much older than Alma and her friends. Even if they recognise some of the returning guests, they have never had longer conversations with any of them, because as Alma said “they don’t look like we would have anything in common”. Most of the guests at the bar were middle-aged men living in the neighbourhood. Based on their language, behaviour and the way they dressed, Alma believed that these men belonged to the working class.

Alma and her friends were distancing themselves from these guests, by implying on their lower status through jokes and imitations of them. Alma told me that she cannot imagine herself going to these kinds of places when she is older and has more money. Their way of joking correlates with Vucetic’s (2004:7) argument that jokes are often about identity, just as identity is often about jokes. Besides constructing, reinforcing and reflecting on identities, Apte (1985) and Dundes (1987) point to the functionality of jokes, which is both to channel and reduce uncertainty and social tensions. Their sociability also correlates with Evans’s (2010) argument about how friendship is directed towards both future and past, as well as being about whom a person can be in a certain situation. While jokes on one hand serve as a strategy for them to cope with the music and the other guests, they also help the friends to find a common quality of their sociability and to connect with new friends. The jokes and teasing were
also a way of connecting with their past identity as former secondary school students, as well as about the potentiality of who they can be in the future.

The friends that Alma interacts with daily are the ones in her university programme. With them she usually hangs out in the school cafeteria, because it is easy to go to and leave before, between and after classes. The cafeteria is located in the same building where Alma has most of her classes within her programme. Aesthetically the place did not have much to offer to Alma, who thought the beverages were bad and overpriced. The motive for going there was because it is where she can find her classmates most of the time in the breaks and when they wanted to exchange study-related information, notes or books. Most of the socialisation was exclusively connected to conversations about the obligations within courses, result of exams and gossip about teachers and other students. After exams this was the place where they could meet up for having a smoke and a coffee and talk about how it went. Alma and her friends, together with the other students in the cafeteria have created a social place for certain activities related to studies outside the main scene of university performances such as lecture halls. The interactions taking place at university can be viewed through Goffman’s (1959:22-30,112) division of performances into front and back stage, where the front stage is the lecture hall. Here, the power lies in the hand of the teachers, who have expressive control over the frame of activities, communication and demands, whilst the students are taking up more passive roles in form of audience. The big class with up to hundreds of students also limits the interaction and increases the distance between teachers and students. During the exams, however, it is the students who take on the roles of performers but even here the power of framing and the evaluation of the performance lie in the hands of teachers.

The cafeteria then serves as a necessary back stage for the students, where they can practice and support each other’s performances together in teams as well as evaluate their impressions and knowledge related to the front stage. The
status and value of each student was made visible through the contribution they made with additional information, knowledge and support for the studies. In this setting the teachers were regarded as outsiders, which was made apparent when one of them turned up buying a coffee in the cafeteria. The students lowered their voices and removed their notes from the table whilst looking at the teacher until he left. The social space created by the students was intruded by an individual belonging to a group with higher social status, which caused disruption in the activities and unconformity amongst the students. It was made apparent that the created social space in the cafeteria served as a place for relaxation and rehearsal for the performances in the educational context where the teachers were in command. For Alma and her friends at the university, this way of socialising made it possible for them to shift between different roles in the educational context, from passive audience in the lecture halls to active and supportive team members who could share and re-evaluate their knowledge in their own terms.

This section has followed Alma through different forms of sociability with her friends. The activities involved in the sociability are defined by the specific context as well as the certain qualities and values that are attached to the forms of activities. When meeting her best friend, Alma takes up the identity as a confidant and their friendship tie is strengthened by the quality of intimacy and commitment. The specific context in the form of a nice café with good aesthetic and economic attributes helps to strengthen the exclusiveness of their activities. The bond that Alma shares with her raja is only partly as exclusive as with her best friend. Their bond was based on their shared identity as former secondary school students, but also on being open to new social interactions. These were strengthened by jokes and comments related to the specific attributes of the setting such as the music and guests, through which inclusiveness was created with their non-secondary school friend. The jokes and comments served to highlight their social identity and distance themselves from the other guests with different age and status. In the educational context, the distance between students and
teachers lied in the power structures, and the context for sociability served as a place for support and practicing their academic performances. The value in their friendship ties lied in the knowledge each and every student could contribute and share with the others. These examples show that friendships are characterised by on-going processes of what qualities and values are highlighted in a specific context. The same qualities and values also play a part in defining one’s status in a specific setting as well as in the private and public experiences of the self. The next section will follow this lead by showing how certain identities with common value systems are being constructed socially by attitudes and performance.

6.3 Attitudes Towards a Common Urban Identity

This section will focus on how my informants identify with their shared geographical locality in terms of certain social values attached to ways of socialising. Identification according to Jenkins (2008:48,73) is a socially constructed process whose logic lies in the interplay between similarities and differences. Identity should not be viewed as a possession, but rather something that one does and that is part of everyday life-routine (Jenkins 2008:5). In a previous chapter, Sarajevo has been described as a city that used to be characterised by ethnic tolerance and coexistence between people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and practices. The inhabitants shared common social values characterised by the experience of living in this setting, which was reflected in their social manner where these differences were negotiated (Maček 2009:188). During the war, the nationalist political atmosphere challenged these social values by forcing identification along ethno-nationalist lines, which was often met with resistance from the locals (Maček 2009:188, Markowitz 2010:30). As Jenkins (2008:43-45) also points out the maintenance or change of existing collective identities are often embedded in conflict, and in the case of Sarajevo, the
struggle between different powers over identification has continued after the war. In order to understand how my informants were relating to a common urban identity in Sarajevo in the background of these processes, I asked them how they would describe a typical Sarajevan. To my surprise, the answers were very similar when it comes to life-style, worldview and way of behaving. These answers do not serve the purpose of validating any generalisations about people living in Sarajevo. They can, however, give interesting insights and indications about how my informants identify and relate to the value systems deriving from their surrounding urban contexts. The answers can also give indications on how boundaries and categories are created around belonging in terms of behaviour and way of living as well.

Being a Sarajevan is not necessarily connected to locality in terms of upbringing, rather to certain kinds of actions. Even a person from Sarajevo can have qualities that are described as “non-Sarajevan”, for instance behaving in a morally or culturally inferior way. I asked Kenan (26) how someone could become a Sarajevan and he told me:

Being a Sarajevan means to adopt the philosophy of the way to live in the city. A lot of people that are considered as legends here are not originally from Sarajevo, they were not born in the city. But they earned the respect because of what they did for the city and the people here. I think to be a Sarajevan, you first of all have to respect the city, its culture and history and try to become a part of it, not to change it. You have to accept the city the way it is, and then the city will accept you.

Kenan highlighted certain values, such as respect and adaptation as the key to becoming accepted as a Sarajevan. Ajla also reasoned in similar manner and highlighted the connection to certain behaviours:

A lot of my friends are from different nationalities and we are friends. We are the real true Sarajevan people who do not care about what kind of nation-
ality or religion you have, we just care about if you are a good or bad person. Here we say that if you want to fit in, you just have to be raja, you know. You just have to be open to everyone.

This sort of Sarajevan identification existed in Sarajevo also during the war (see Maček 2009:112-113). The importance of respecting and socialising across ethno-religious differences should, however, be seen as part of a larger Bosnian tradition of social practices that are negotiated in local contexts (Bringa 1995, Kolind 2004, Maček 2009). Rather than emphasising distinctions based along ethno-national lines, qualities such as respect and openness were used as attributes in the way of categorising people amongst my informants. Kolind (2004:142-143) and Stefansson (2007:60-63) mention a rather moral distinction between what they call *cultured* and *uncultured* people, which depends on the context and actual behaviour. The significance of this category lies in that it runs counter to the ethno-national distinctions, by condemning certain actions in rather moral and ethnically neutral ways (Kolind 2004:146). At the same time, *cultured* and *uncultured* can become parts of stereotyping, which is a routine feature of attempts to maximise predictability in everyday situations (cf. Jenkins 2008:189).

Jenkins (2008:164) argues that stereotypes are extremely condensed symbols of collective identification. Amongst my informants, connecting a specific identity to the way of living the city life in Sarajevo validates some of the systems of norms that are present in the urban setting. Using stereotypes especially highlights the norms that are in the process of being redefined, as well as helping to rediscover dimensions of past community life that are in tension in the present (cf. Crow & Allan 1994). One of these norms mentioned by several of my informants stressed the continuity of their inherited and recreated historical perception, namely that Sarajevo has been and should be a multicultural city where different ethnicities and religions can coexist and be tolerated. The same
informants also objected to that ethnicity and religion should play a significant part in defining the individuals’ identity the way it does today in contemporary Bosnian society. Some of my informants chose to protest to the current forms of categorisation of people by declaring themselves as “others” in situations where some form of ethnic categorisation is needed. Jasmina explained her motivation:

Here identity is equalised with religion. I don’t want to equalise my existence or non-existence of my religion with a nation. I don’t want to associate myself with a religion, I am an atheist, but even if I were religious I would not want to equalise it with a nation or identity.

Non-religious informants often expressed views similar to the above quote. Furthermore, during the war secularised people were the ones more reluctant towards the ethno-religious categorisations imposed upon them, since those implied a connection to religious symbols and language (Maček 2009:139-147). The pre-war composition of Sarajevo was predominately secular and religious traditions and practices were perceived as private rather than public matters (Maček 2009:124). The national identification with Yugoslavia and its slogan “Brotherhood and unity” provided a collective form of belonging for people across ethno-religious lines, which after the breakup of the country was dismissed. The political and economic transformation during and after the war brought along an imposing process of mobilising religion as part of identification, which was met with resistance not only by secularised people. Kenan, who described himself as an observant Muslim, motivated his standpoint through a different form of distinction:

If I say that I am a Bosniac, I share the nationality with some people from a small village, although I see a difference between those people and me. That’s the reason why I don’t consider myself being a Bosniac, because I feel like there are more common things between the people growing up here in the same city, although they don’t share my religion, than with some other
people that are Muslims from Ex-Yugoslavia. I don’t feel I have a different nationality from the non-Muslims here in my city that I grew up with.\(^3\)

Several of my informants, just like Kenan, pointed out one of the main consequences of the war, namely the massive migration from rural areas in Bosnia and from other parts of former Yugoslavia to Sarajevo. The political division of Bosnia and its people into three homogenous nations (Maček 2009:64), and the deepening of ethno-national identities deriving from the legacy of the DPA, were by most of my informants recognised as one of the major obstacles that hinders progress on national level. However, as young urban middle class adults, my informants identified another issue that perhaps plays a bigger part in their life, namely the concern about the way people coming from other, mostly rural places can fit into the urban milieu and accept the norms that they themselves have been brought up with. This concern was also very apparent during the war (Maček 2009:111-112) but from a historical point of view it is not a recent phenomenon. (Stefansson 2007:61). Sarajevo has throughout history been shaped by its openness towards new residents, which has contributed to its multicultural setting and social practices (Donia 2009:353). The dichotomy of cultured and uncultured presented by Stefansson (2007:61) and Kolind (2004:142) is based on the relative aspects of contextualised practices that are intertwined with different value systems. Davor’s reflection illustrates the complexity of the relation between practices and locality:

If somebody who is not from Sarajevo does something inappropriate, then it has far more consequences than if a Sarajevan did the same thing. Then it would be like ‘ok, where is he from?’ You can take out somebody from the

\(^3\) Historically, ethnicity has been connected to religious belonging on the Balkans. From the war until present times, nationalistic leaders and churches have played out the generalisations and stereotypifications based on religiosity within the ethno-national identification. Bosniacs are most commonly perceived as religiously Muslims, Croats as Catholics and Serbs as Orthodox Christians although this is not always the case (cf. Maček 2009, Markowitz 2010).
village but you cannot take the village out of them. You will always be able to differentiate between the manners, at least that is what people here think.

What Davor highlights is the complex nature of the relations between the newcomers after the war and the Sarajevans who lived there before the war. When the differences in value systems become displayed through practices, these experiences contribute to strengthening the continuous perceptions of ascribed cultural mentalities (Stefansson 2007:63). Bourdieu (2000:149) explains social actions by presuming that habitus, as a product of history, creates a base for the prediction of a specific way of behaving amongst a limited amount of actors. If habitus in this context is seen as the implicit knowledge of how to behave in an urban setting according to the existent norms and values, a certain continuity in conceptualising this knowledge can be presumed to be a part of the process in identity formation amongst my informants.

Through this section I have presented how the informants are directing their critique and distinction towards the threats to urban values such as respect for history and openness to others. The core quality of the values consisted of the knowledge about how to live in a multi-religious urban milieu, through upbringing or adaptation. The threats towards these urban values were twofold. On one hand, the imposed salience of ethno-national identities from the political elite with the mobilisation of religion that happened during the war is still present in the contemporary Bosnian political and economical discourse. The threat was however not only present in the apparent existence of these forces, but also in the individual embracement of the existing identifications. My informants were objecting to these forms of identifications by either declaring themselves as standing outside of them, as Jasmina and Kenan, or stressing the human qualities, similar to those within friendships, above nationality, as Ajla. Another threat towards urban values were the systems of values and practices deriving from the newcomers who came to Sarajevo during or after the war, which were
considered as uncultured in the sense that they lacked the will to adopt the urban values in order to become part of and accepted by the community. Identification, however, should be considered as a process that is never finalised and that can be negotiated in different contexts (Jenkins 2008:17). To say who I am and who I am not in a specific setting does not mean that I cannot be the opposite in another one. Identification is flexible and notions such as *we* and *us* are symbolic constructs (Cohen 1985, Jenkins 2008:34, Maček 2009). The power of negotiating between different forms of identification comes into play when these symbolic constructs can be transformed into capital as a way to achieve certain ends (Bourdieu 2000:187) which will be elaborated further on.

### 6.4 Summary

This chapter has placed friendship within the interactional process of identification, in which different qualities of friendship bonds are strengthened by contextual settings and which contributes to who one can be in a certain context. Ways of socialising are also influenced by the existing norms deriving from the society, that frame the pattern of social activities in terms of time and space, and condemn activities outside those frames as the example of drinking coffee shows.

When Alma is socialising with her friends, she moves between different contexts and activities. The interplay between identity formation and the qualities of her friendship ties becomes apparent through how she relates to her surrounding and its attributes. Identification processes are also continuously changed and negotiated in the local settings, to which specific social values can be attached in order to create a certain common identity in geographical terminology. This common identification can appear as forms of qualities that are shaping everyday practices in terms of socialisation. Forms of identification can also reveal different power structures that are competing over the maintenance
or change of identification processes, thus locality can be embedded in conflict, as much as showing how people are positioning and reflecting these processes in a certain context (Jenkins 2008:43-45). Friendships can play a part in these dynamic processes as an economic, but also as social and emotional, resources in order to cope with the demands from larger structures, which will be the theme of the following chapters.
7 Forms of Support

It is remarkable that nothing touches a man of humanity more than any instance of extraordinary in love or friendship, where a person is attentive to the smallest concern of his friend, and is willing to sacrifice to them the most considerable interest of his own. (Hume 1978:604)

Independent of the categories my informants used, they often gave their friends different attributes depending on the characteristics of involvement from their own part. The dimension and structure of a person’s individual network can indicate what kind of resources are available for the individual in order to shape and deal with the challenges that might arise in their lives. In this chapter, I will look into how my informants have made use of their friends as resources to achieve some sort of means or ends. The issue of instrumentality within friendship is characterised by complexity and to sustain a relationship solely for instrumental purposes might often disqualify the tie from being made out of friends. On the other hand, the core value in the exchange of services within friendship lies in the balance and the regularity of involved effort from each part.

7.1 Emotional Support

Forms of emotional support are embedded in the balance of verbal and non-verbal communication between friends (Hruschka 2010, Spencer & Pahl 2007). Balance does not necessarily mean equality, however. The support can be balanced, and does not have the pressure of being demonstrated. Sometimes emotional support can be shown through a simple response in the form of a smile, look or touch. It can also be shown through confirming the friend’s feelings or giving an acknowledgement of some act. What emotional support, however, does include is a level of exclusivity in the sense that these emotions are
not meant to be revealed for everyone. Thus, it also requires a high level of trust and understanding from each other in order to avoid giving away sensitive information (Hruschka 2010). Emira gives an example of how her best friend fulfills the goal of emotional support in the sense of being there when she is coping with challenges in her life:

[...] like if I have a family issue or other certain issues that I am struggling with and cannot tell my mother or my sister or other friends at university. In my case, I know that I can call her and cry and say that I don’t know what to do and you don’t have to say anything, you just have to listen [...]. She can keep my secrets and even though there are situations where she actually cannot give me advice because she does not know much about it, she can still listen. And that is something that I appreciate very much.

By listening, Emira’s friend is showing interest and commitment to Emira’s current emotional state, and although she might not be able to solve a dilemma or a problem, by being there she provides a space for Emira to put her feelings into words and to reflect on the situation together with somebody that she feels comfortable with. The act of including her in the problem solving, even as a mere listener, highlights the emotional value of commitment and generosity. Even with great friends, this is not always something that is equally shared. Ena (24) and her relation with her best friend has a different dynamic:

We have a very special relationship, her and I. She knows that I am the more proactive one, and she is the one that is asking for advices from me. But I wouldn’t ask from her. She would expect me to do the right decision and be strong about it, because she could not take on the same kind of role as me. And I have accepted that. It did bother me before that she couldn’t be the person for me to have as a shoulder to cry on, but now I am fine with it. She is too fragile and I have to take the protective role over her.
Instead of having one exclusively committed friend ready to take on all her problems, as in Emira’s case, Ena told me that she divides her problem between several of her close friends, who share the same kind of personality as her but differ in the sense that they have very different lifestyles. In this sense, she is able to pick the right person to seek emotional support within a specific field. Ena and her friend do, however, maintain a balance in their friendship through a lot of other activities where their different needs can be fulfilled. Instead of relying on one single person, Ena has surrounded herself with several people with the same value system as herself, from which she can obtain emotional support from, depending on her own needs. Ena also explained that her close friend fulfills her emotional need of feeling that she is important and needed and being the one who can provide support in a certain situation. Several of my informants have mentioned that they appreciate that their friends are honest and do not judge even if the friend is acting in a different way than they would. Hruschka (2010:164) argues that people tend to attribute more positive intentions to their friends’ actions compared to the actions of strangers and acquaintances. Due to this, people are more likely to overlook or excuse the misdeeds of their friends. Sanela connected this feeling to forgiveness and said:

You forgive if she or he makes mistakes, because you love him or her. [...] You know how they feel, or you can imagine how they feel and accept that. It is about that specific connection you have as friends.

Being the one that confirms one’s feelings and can provide some sort of acceptance of the situation where the friend has made a mistake can help the friend cope with what he or she did and move on. Having somebody who knows what happened and stands on one’s side can also give strength and confirmation to one’s own behaviour. But some people feel the need of somebody telling “the truth” or opening up about their own feelings and concerns about a friend’s decision-making. Nermina (22) told me that this quality of confining honest feel-
ings could not be maintained between her and her good friend, which led to a gap between them:

This girl was my best friend and we hanged out all day long. But when she met a guy, we kind of broke up as best friends. I don’t like to give advices anymore, because I did it once with her, I told her that I think she was being treated badly, but she stayed with him. I didn’t hear from her for months, she never called me or anything, although we were so close before. And then afterwards, when they broke up, she wanted to come back and continue the friendship like it was before. But I couldn’t. She chose him instead of me.

Nermina’s concerns about her friend’s choice caused a conflict that the friend handled by spending less time with Nermina and prioritising the intimate relationship instead. She could not provide the sense of being there for Nermina. When her friend broke up with her partner and tried to reunite with Nermina, she did not want to trust her again as she was afraid that the situation will repeat itself. Here, trust was not only an expectation but also involved the quality of being honest about their concerns. She also had to face the fact that she and her friend were thinking differently about the commitment to each other in form of spending time together. When Nermina’s concerns were met with negativity and isolation by her friend, it had consequences in the sense that she was not able to take the risk of trusting her again by revealing her honest feelings and putting herself in a vulnerable position (see also in Hruschka 2010:38). Strong emotions in friendship as well as in other personal relationships can sometimes involve both positive feelings such as love, trust and commitment, but also negative feelings as rivalry and envy (Spencer & Pahl 2006:71).

Sometimes a close connection of friendship ties develops as a consequence of an evolved situation where mutual emotional support is provided. Arijana (23) told me that many of her close friends are very “fresh” in the sense that they have not been friends for long. What brought them closer and connected
was an accident that happened to one of her teammates in a student organisation where she was working. An emergency situation can reveal aspects of an individual’s social being that are not shown in everyday situations due to the fact that they do not have to be used. An example of this is vulnerability, which is often hidden from the way people present themselves in public. The common experience of a situation can create a balance of vulnerability where stories and worries can be shared with other people who also had a direct experience of it and have experienced similar feelings and concerns that could be shared in a safe environment without being judged by others. The common experience here is then instrumentalised in order to create a two-sided flow, compared to Ena’s example that describes an occasion with one-sided flow of emotional support (cf. Allan 1989:52-53). A one-sided flow does not, however, mean that there cannot be a long-term balance in the emotional support within the friendship. In a longer term, the one-sided flows of emotional support can be balanced and equalised as for instance amongst friends that have been friends for a longer period of time (Allan 1989).

Samra and her four close girlfriends have been providing emotional support to each other through numerous life-transition events on the path from adolescent years to adulthood, which have continued the same way during their grown up years. Her friends were there for each other in different kinds of hardships and they have accepted each other’s vulnerabilities and created a comfort zone where they could appear weak and receive support from each other. When Samra experienced a hard time pending between two jobs, she did not want to show herself weak in front of her parents, instead it was her friends that could comfort her through coming over and being there both physically and mentally. As she told me, “[...] it meant the world that they were there” for her. Samra believed that their strong friendship bonds have been able to remain strong mainly through investment of emotional support in each other’s life, even though they are not able to spend that much time together as before due to different obliga-
tions and life-styles. Even so, they have tried to arrange that they meet up every now and then and show their support in good and hard times for each other. Friends can also provide the possibility for one to be oneself and to reveal things that are usually put in the backstage and are not visible for the public eye (Goffman 1959). Selfhood, symbolising the emotional and cognitive complexity of a person as Mead and Jenkins have argued, is interactional and emerges in reciprocal relationships through dialogue between the “I and me” in mind on one hand, and in the dialogue with others on the other (Jenkins 2008:64). Bjanka told me about her closest friend: “I feel more me with her than when I am without her”. Through the interaction with her friend, Bjanka presented a picture of herself, which her friend has reflected on in form of feedback. The selfhood is then realised in the interaction with others. The feedback Bjanka’s friend has been giving on her way of presenting herself has been incorporated in Bjanka’s own self-identity. Self-identification is a continuously on-going multiplex and simultaneous process (Jenkins 2008). Bjanka is participating in different interactions and situations every day where she presents herself in various ways and where her presentations are being valued and responded to by others. The way that her friend reacts to Bjanka’s presentation of the self makes the interaction between them relaxed, because she feels that she does not have to hide things that cannot be revealed in front of another audience. As O’Connor (1998:119) also highlights, generating another form of the self that is under control of the involved is part of the attractiveness of friendship as a relational form. The intimacy and closeness between Bjanka and her friend lies in the acceptance of each other’s “selves” with vulnerabilities and weaknesses, in the same manner as between Samra and her friends. With their friends, neither Samra or Bjanka has to put effort into controlling that people will not get access to their backstage, which can have consequences in terms of how other people view and interpret their actions (cf. Goffman 1959, 1983). These sorts of friends share an emotional relation that is extra-situational and where there is no motive to socially
construct an image in order to draw away attention from other parts of the self that they do not want to reveal. The identification in the interaction between friends works in a different atmosphere where showing emotions of vulnerability does not have to be hidden.

The acceptance of vulnerability does not have to be connected solely to the most intimate and closest ties. For instance, it can be part of joking and teasing, something that many of my informants connected with the typical “Sarajevo spirit” (Maček 2009:51-54). By reacting to these forms of jokes and tease in an equally playful manner, the individual shows the understanding of the intention to be good and respond in a way that communicates the same manner, rather than feeling threatened (Hruschka 2010:42). Jokes can also be seen as a way of bonding and creating a feeling of commonness, as we have seen in the example of Alma and the friends she met up with every Friday for a beer. Also for Bjanka, humour is something that connects her and her friends and personalises their way of communicating and interacting. Providing emotional and moral support does not necessarily have to be connected to the kind of friendships that are the most intimate ones. As Allan (1989) argues, moral support is a common feature in most relationships and does not solely appear in those cases where big decisions have to be made. What is specific to moral support within friendship is that it moves beyond formal role behaviour whilst at the same time supports the distinctive meaning of them for the individual (Allan 1989:62). However, morality can also be connected with how relationships are organised according to specific behavioural settings and interactional orders (Goffman 1983:4), which will be elaborated in the next section.

7.2 Spaces of Social Support

Friendships can provide both social and emotional support in different varieties and levels. One of the examples previously mentioned was Alma and her
When they meet up in the local bar. This activity was valued amongst the friends for providing sociability and distraction from the more serious matters in everyday life, as for instance school and employment. For Alma, these gatherings can provide a setting for relaxation from the sort of obligations that she has in other parts of her life, where she has to compete with her peers on a more serious level. There is also competition present amongst the group of people in the bar, but here they are competing with each other for attention. The most successful one is who can make the whole raja laugh about something or somebody. Alma told me about one of her friends:

This guy is so funny. He was like the clown of our class back in high school, he made everybody laugh, even the teachers laughed at him. Now you cannot imagine that he is working in an office, doing some kind of boring computer based work. I think he needs this kind of gatherings so that he can behave like he used to in school and make all these jokes.

Alma and her friends already have a picture of each other and their way of behaving in their minds when they enter this setting. There is already some taken-for-granted expectation on them, although these expectations might not be present elsewhere. Alma expects her friend to be funny and tell jokes because that is what he has been doing while they went to secondary school together. Now that he is working in a “serious place” he has a limited space for being that kind of person that Alma knows. Therefore the local bar where they go every Friday has become the place where he can be that kind of person again. As Allan (1989:50) and Feld & Carter (1998:142) have argued, the significance of the sociability becomes more apparent when moving out from context. In this case, when Alma and her friends left secondary school their opportunities for socialising have become restricted due to obligations of work or studies. The friends have developed a new activity to keep their ties intact and provide a place for further sociability when they moved out from the setting where they
first were together. Alma and her friends are framing their sociability around a specific setting to tone down eventual social and economic differences that would be apparent in another setting (cf. Allan 1998, Oxley 1974).

Even though the core group of Alma’s friends all went on to further studies after graduating from secondary school, some of them have already started to work besides their studies and therefore have more money to move around than those who are not having any extra-jobs. This gap between those who had money and those who did not became apparent when they started to discuss where to head afterwards. The two of Alma’s friends who were both working and had some more pocket money wanted to go to the city centre to continue drinking and partying at a place with an entrance fee. The otherwise very causal interactions became a bit tensed when they started to argue with each other about whether to go or not. Alma and two other friends wanted to stay at the local bar, arguing that it would cost too much to take a cab into the city centre, pay the entrance fee for a party that might not even be enjoyable, pay for overpriced drinks and then take a cab back home again.

The biggest concern seemed to be how to get there and home again, since in the middle of February it was very cold and there was snow, which made it impossible to take the tram or to walk several kilometres into the centre. Alma became upset when one of her friends, who suggested going, offered her to pay for her entrance fee. She told me that it is not about the entrance fee, it is about them being together as a group. For Alma, it was more important to do something together as a group, rather than concentrating on an actual activity that not everyone could participate in. She felt that her friend was violating the norms of the group, which in this case revealed her own expectation of what these form of gatherings meant to her. She wanted to keep the members of the group together in this local bar where they could maintain the equality between each other and where they could get away from their other roles and responsibilities. Although everybody was free to go, Alma felt that accepting a friend to pay the entrance
fee would cause an unnecessary split amongst the members of the *raja*. The economic inequality between them would become visible, just as it already has started to become in other parts of their lives.

The consequences of their different choices of university education have become visible in the sense that two of them have already found a place to work, with good salaries, whilst the other students are still struggling to find student jobs and can for now only dream of finding something related to their own field. In the end, two of their friends ordered a taxi and went away to the other party. Alma stayed with the rest of her friends and talked for a while and then walked home. When moving out from the specific setting with the specific activities, the differences along economic lines between the friends became apparent and can in a longer run lead to weakening their friendship ties.

Some friendships are maintained because the individual’s daily routine involves meeting up with certain individuals in a specific setting. Alma and her classmates from university are bound in a structural setting where they are more or less together for hours on days when they have classes. She told me that she would want to meet only very few of these university friends outside school. However, she believed that it would create a disadvantage for her not to socialise with her classmates, even though the main thing that keeps them together is the interest in exchanging material and information needed for their studies. Alma reasoned that the effort she needs to put into being friendly and nice in terms of letting other people copy her notes from a lecture could be rewarding for her in the future when she is looking for a job in her field. “Having somebody to recommend you for a job can be life-saving in this business”, she told me. The relationships with her classmates are as Allan (1989:26) argues, maintained principally because they are acting together in a narrow social context. However, Alma can perhaps count on some reward in the future by being helpful and friendly with her classmates at the university. She told me that compared to other classmates she is in a disadvantaged position, because her parents are
not working in the same field and could not give her help in order to find a job. Therefore she sees the possibility that her friends could help her. The sort of friendship that Alma has with her classmates and the sort that she has with her raja are similar in the sense that they both are grounded on a certain activity (Allan 1998, Feld & Carter 1998). Alma’s “fun-friends” are her former classmates who have moved and reduced their sociability from school to another specific setting with different time limits, norms and boundaries. The calls that she can make for her raja are rather limited to the specific context of drinking at the bar and that is also the way they can maintain the structural characteristics of equality amongst each other now that differences in their economic situations have started to be more apparent. With her classmates from university Alma has organised the sociability around the educational context, namely studies and future career possibilities, where she is hoping to be able to use her university friends in order to increase the chance to find a job in the field. This strategy does imply that these forms of friendships can have, if not a direct, but an economic component present (Allan 1989:58). Her strategy is very common, and several of my informants have pointed out the importance of building and maintaining pre-professional networks with classmates or other people who will be helpful in the task of finding a job. The choice of university, whether private or public, and within that, the choice of programme at the university influence how social ties are patterned amongst the students depending on the level of facilitation and encouragement of participation within the context of academia and employment. Ena told me that she felt lucky, because when she started at university, there were several hundred people in her class and she still managed to become employed by one of her professors. She told me:

For you to get someone to say that you are a good worker, you have to achieve a certain level of quality in your work in order for this person to trust
you. At first, my professors were those who saw potential in me and decided that they wanted to push for me.

This form of employment is very rare, especially on bachelor level, and most of the students who are enrolled in one of the programmes that take in several hundred people each year will have very few chances to work together with their professors. Ena’s case is rather amongst the few exceptions, because she managed to find a job within her own academic field during her studies based on her own academic merits. My informants told me that in order to get a job in a particular field, one often has to start elsewhere to acquire references and to get to know people. As we will see later, there are more or less acceptable places to start working at and people will react differently to very similar forms of employment possibilities that are available and presented to them.

Social support can also be fulfilled through embedding the relationship in a specific social formation that is otherwise hard to access, because as Allan (1989:23) also points out, there is a smaller chance that people who are occupying different positions in the social structure are able to meet in a context where formation of friendships is encouraged. The easiest way to increase the personal network with people is through friends and friends of friends in the immediate social environment, from which new constellations of relationships can emerge. Several of my informants have pointed out the advantages of having friends in different fields, as for instance Ajla, who told me:

My friends always tease me that I get along with everyone. They tell me like, how is it possible to get along with so many people? I really like to find new friends, to hang out with people and to get to know them. I feel like I can learn something new from their stories and perhaps they can learn something from me too.

Earlier it was also Ajla who stated that she sees her friends as a selected family. Many of my informants have mentioned that the level of instrumentality
involved in the relationships and the expectation of reciprocity are very similar in kin and close friendships. This similarity appears in the claims to advices in major decisions in everyday life. Kin and friendships can also function as resources when the individuals are confronted with certain obligations from the wider society (Allan & Adams 1998:189). There is, however, a difference in the support when it involves great cost for the individuals. A greater cost makes it less likely for friends to provide aid, whilst the situation with kin is the opposite (Hruschka 2010:98).

In contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina many people in older generations have experienced massive demographic, material and social changes in their society, which have created different social, cultural and economic transformations of former taken-for-granted contexts. In these contexts parents often cannot navigate the new generations. Nermina told me about her mother:

She was always pushing me to this college and to go and get a job [...]. I listen more to my friends’ advices than to my mother. They are more up to date. My mother is really old-fashioned and would say that I should finish college and get a job and then start a family. But I would like to travel and learn from new people around me. She is not amused by my friendship choices, but I don’t really care. Everybody should have the choice to be surrounded by people they like.

Nermina has had a hard time to explain to her mother that she wanted to experience a new surrounding and spend more time travelling as well as considering the possibility of working abroad. Sara (24) explained her view to me about her parents’ generation:

[...] parents here are not encouraging their children to work while studying or to go abroad to work. They are pressured by society as well, but they cannot see that it is a good experience for young people to go abroad and meet new
cultures and learn new languages. It is a skill that is needed today that was not as important when they were young.

Some of my informants have encountered that independency, in terms of moving away from home or working extra besides studies, is not particularly encouraged by their parents. For a Sarajevan student or a newly graduated it is more convenient from a financial point of view, but also often expected to share the household with their parents until they have saved enough money to rent or buy something on their own. But the children are questioning old certainties and they often find strength for their arguments and ways of interpreting their social surrounding through their connectedness with friends in their peer group or from what they have experienced in other settings. Samra lived together with her parents until very recently and moved out when she was 28. Her story of how she moved out from her family home was, if not dramatic, then not without complications:

My mum and dad and my friends were not shocked about me announcing it, but my aunts and uncles would come and ask my parents why I was moving away. Generally, the whole environment asked that. Because when you live in Sarajevo, you have this family house as we did, and your own room, then why do you need to move out? But I had everything settled and I knew that I will have a job for the next two years, otherwise I might had considered it more. [...] But now if I will be without a job, this would be a big question for me, would I move back? It would be like a defeat if I moved back to my family house, it would mean that I haven’t succeeded in my life. But for me this is also a part of growing up. And it has no tradition in Bosnia. [...] You move from home when you get married. There is no place to be alone. And it’s a big pressure from society, because my mum still has to explain for some parts of my family that we are not in a fight. You know, nothing happened
and that I didn’t get married. Because why would I move out if nothing had happened?

The lack of understanding from her family surroundings of why she moved out was a matter that her parents had to deal with afterwards. She took the decision on her own and did not tell her parents about her plans until she had packed all her suitcases and had everything settled with her new apartment. The voluntary separation from her family in this case meant the reduction of both social control and social support deriving from the embeddedness of the kinship ties, since she felt that once she moved away she could not return again without feeling failed. As Samra explained to me, it was not her parents that reacted against her moving, rather it was from within the larger set of interrelated kinship-ties that her decision was met with questions and suspicion. Even those who come from families with traditional values and fulfil their obligations by getting married, have a hard time to create a space of their own. Samra reasoned that:

[…] even if they wanted to, they cannot afford it, you cannot buy your own place or to rent it. I have friends that have been dating for years, but they cannot move together and start a family, because one of them does not have a job.

Despite having different motives for moving away from families, it is interesting whether transition to adulthood is placed on hold until a separate “adult home” can be established or not. Often there is a gap between the expectations of the parents and the younger generations when it comes to housing formations as well as employment possibilities. The ability of planning long term commitments in the future for young adults is often reduced when it clashes with the available demand for geographical flexibility in the labour market (Henderson et al. 2007, Allan & Jones 2003). On one hand, adulthood in this conventional context is often pictured to be reached when a stabilisation of the lifestyle in terms
of relationships, domestic space and career choice occurs (Allan & Jones 2003, Crow & Allan 1994). When these forms of stabilities cannot be reached, the picture of adulthood has to be renegotiated and made sense of in new terms, with new ascribed values and identities. In these cases adulthood is not delayed as Tomanović & Ignjatović (2006:269) argue, it is renegotiated and repositioned against the available and established systems of norms and pressure in the society (Henderson et al. 2007). The next sub-chapter will give an example of how one of my informants deals with forms of uncertainties and what coping strategies he is using to meet challenges in his everyday life.

7.3 Routine and Representation of a Kafana-Lifestyle

As previously discussed, friendships can play an important role in providing emotional support simply by showing interest and commitment to each other in various forms and degrees, or by social support as ways to cope with the demands of the society. The way of coping with these different demands can involve different strategies. Friendships can be instrumentalised in order to present a good public image of one’s self. This is exemplified in the way Bakir (25) is using his second home, a kafana in order to maintain a specific public picture of himself. I met him during my fieldwork and decided to hang out with him for some days to learn how he arranges his social life and meets up with his friends. But compared to other informants, who were either still studying at the university or busy with building their careers, Bakir gave me a different picture of a young middle class Sarajevan adult. He is currently a part time student at a programme he is not really interested in and has been delaying some of his exams that are required for graduating for several years. He told me that the reason he is still enrolled in the programme is that he feels he owes his parents to graduate

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4 Kafana is usually an old and traditional type of restaurant in the Balkans. In this context, it however refers to a café that serves hot and cold beverages and sometimes small meals.
and not that he believes it will make a difference in his chances of becoming employed:

[...] I should have quit long ago. Perhaps I shouldn’t have started the programme, I don’t know. That’s the problem, I still don’t know what I want with my life. My parents told me I should go to university and study and I got accepted. But now I am tired of it, I just have two exams to go before I could get my diploma. But I am tired of studying, it makes no sense and there is no job waiting for me.

Whilst looking for employment opportunities, Bakir met up with his friends to drink coffee almost every day. I spent the whole day with him and after a while when I remarked on how many people were sitting around us in the middle of the day, he laughed and said: “[...] either they are unemployed, like me, or school dropouts like me, or perhaps even both, like me”. There was a contradiction present between the societal pressure on young people to conform to the norm of full employment and the coping strategies to manage the material reality by stretching very limited budgets in a way so that “coffee-breaks” could fit in the daily routine. Rather than being pushed into social isolation, unemployed young people like Bakir are making themselves visible and taking space in the community. The problem of unemployment in this context is not necessarily characterised solely as individual and private matter that should be kept in isolation, as seen in other studies in other settings (cf. Crow & Allan 1994:49). In Sarajevo it is made visible and shown as a public and collectivistic issue. Bakir reasoned:

I don’t feel ashamed because of my situation. There are so many others like me here. I know so many talented and smart people that have not been able to find jobs. Of course, sometimes you are unlucky, but if you see this very often you will become cynical and then you realise that you cannot change
anything. And you would not even know where to start because you don’t know whose fault it is. You become depressed and realistic at the same time.

By meeting up with his friends, Bakir has created a daily social routine in his life, in an informal but at the same time public and visible place where he feels respected and expected. He has managed to create a social identity that connects him to that specific framed setting of a kafana, where he is well known both by other guests and the employed. It is here he has found what Goffman (1959:83) would call teammates who are his friends and acquaintances that are bounded by reciprocal dependence and reciprocal familiarity. To follow Jenkins’s (2008) reasoning:

Who I have relationship with and the nature of those relationships – who I identify with – contributes to who I am and says something to others about me. What’s more, other people can either validate who or what I acclaim to be, refute it or attempt to float an alternative: power and authority are critical in determining whose definition counts. (Jenkins 2008:71)

Reciprocal dependence is present as a way of presenting and negotiating the process between the public and private picture of the self through interactions (Goffman 1959). When Bakir entered the coffee shop he was immediately greeted by the owner, who started to prepare his coffee. Usually, he was one of the first guests in the morning and the owner would sometimes sit down with him to have a chat. Their relationship has been structured the same way for the past fifteen years. Bakir told me that their conversations centre mainly on formal issues, like the weather, the news or the traffic. They have maintained a distance from the more personal matters through all these years and have kept themselves to the roles of customer and owner. Yet, the owner knows enough about Bakir to give him the special treatment that makes him feel unique and welcomed amongst the other guests, which goes beyond the effort he has to put into his job to serve the guests. The owner breaks the principle of equality in service treat-
ment amongst his guest for Bakir’s benefit. By receiving his coffee already before ordering, he possesses a different status that is only significant in this specific setting. In addition, Bakir would sometimes help the owner by going inside and bringing attention to other customers who were looking for him outside when he was busy behind the bar. Whilst their verbal interaction is more or less kept to a ritualised manner and to the general rules of customer versus owner behaviour, the deeds reveal a more intimate and familiar interaction between them. Even though their relationship is bound to the specific setting, it is this particular frame that brings them together as similar in other people’s eyes. Bakir told me that his friends are often amused by his frequent visits to “his second home” and that they associate this place with him and the owner. Despite their different roles, they form a team and represent the place for others.

Nevertheless, it is not only the owner that Bakir is interacting with during the days. Depending on the weather, he has different spots to sit in the café, but all of them are serving the purpose of making him visible to people who are passing by on the streets. He is very rarely alone and sometimes he is changing his spot in the café to go and sit together with his acquaintances at another table. Usually he meets at least one of his friends from secondary school or university every day whom he shares a table with when he is sitting in the place. There are, however, several interactions going on and people are coming and going during those couple of hours he spends there. There are some friends who recognise him sitting there and are just coming over to greet him and exchange some words and then hurry further to other obligations. Others sit down to chat with him for some time without ordering anything and then move over to another table or walk away. The small-scale chitchatting gives them an opportunity to update their biographies on each other and to keep track on what they are up to at the moment. Most of the interactional routines are carried out in a very formal manner with greetings and short nods followed by questions about each other’s whereabouts. Often a small comment on a recent gossip about somebody else is
also exchanged. He spends more time with those friends whom he shares a table with and these meetings are more or less arranged in advance. They know that he is there very often and that they can come by and check if they are around. Most of his friends are still studying or have finished their studies and are trying to find employment, which according to Bakir means that they have time to come and drink coffee with him. Those who have found somewhere to work have less time and cannot spend their time in the kafana anymore. Although Bakir expressed sadness for the lost friends, he said that he had found new ones and that there are enough of his “old friends” that he can spend time with anyway.

In his old friendships, Bakir was able to rediscover both his past social identity as a student himself through the memories, and the potential of what he can become through friends whom he shares his everyday experiences with and who also share their life stories with him. Goffman (1990:64) writes that “in certain circumstances the social identity of those an individual is with can be used as a source of information concerning his own identity, the assumption being that he is what others are”. The way Bakir was able to establish a social career by having a large number of friends was through being able to offer time and space for sociality in a setting which is now closely defining his social identity as “a kafana guy” as he called himself. For him, his friendships give him both freedom and agency, and through routinisation he also experiences certainty in his everyday life. Sociability for Bakir could be drawn upon as a social resource rather than economic in the sense that he can feel inclusion and can indicate a certain social status position in the community through his patterns of sociability with a variety of friends and acquaintances (cf. Portes 1998). To the question whether he would use his network of friends for finding employment he replied that real friends do not ask that kind of favour. Friends are not for that, Bakir reasoned, implying on the moral tensions of sociability, namely the limitations of what friends can be instrumentalised for.
### 7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have investigated the instrumentalisation of friendship in form of emotional and social support. Whilst friendships cannot solely be based on instrumentality, they often include the quality of support in the sense that friends can provide each other with the context of showing emotions or expressing their concerns in ways that are concealed from others, for instance parents’ or other people’s moral values. Support can also be social, as in the example of Alma, where she and her friends can take on behaviours and roles that belonged to the narrow context of secondary school, which they have now left. Indirect support can be gained from friends’ life experiences in order to strengthen one’s argument against social norms deriving from family. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the social as well as the economic and political transformation have changed former taken-for-granted contexts that now have to be renegotiated and adapted to new emerging social norms, such as the picture of adulthood. The social support can also appear more strategically, in order to extend one’s network for personal or professional reasons. As we follow Bakir during his day in the kafana, sociability appears as a source of creating a personal identity and as a social resource in the way that he can expect certainty in his everyday life through routinisation, despite his failures in a financial sense. In the next chapter, I will describe how and when friendships and other personal relationships can be used to access benefits on the employment market.
8 Friends for Benefits?

As discussed in the previous chapter, young adults in Sarajevo are exposed to a complex socio-economic situation that cultivates new forms of uncertainty in terms of future planning, which previous generations have not faced to the same degree. Despite that previous generations have also had to tackle issues of housing and employment-opportunities as young adults on their way to becoming independent and self-sufficient, the conditions and the circumstances have changed in a direction where young adults have to navigate through a spectrum of symbolic and economic interests and exchanges between a variety of social networks with different agendas. Regarding youth transitions, Kovacheva (2001:41,43) argues, that the absence of fixed linear routes through life stages has led young people in post-communist settings to invent strategies that are characterised by flexibility. Flexibility in this case relates to how young people are moving between the constant shifting of established borders in terms of time and space (Kovacheva, 2001:41). The complex social transformation has led to a fragmentation of social life on a community level, where less support can be expected from socialising agents. Nevertheless, this chapter focuses on how friendship sociabilities and personal relations can act as integrative forces within social life and how they can be regarded as part of investment strategies for individual development and potential fulfilment in everyday life. In this chapter, I will bring light to and give examples of how different entities of micro-social worlds can be valuable in terms of claiming access to certain means.

8.1 Good and Bad Ways of Using Social Capital

In previous chapters, I have highlighted how Alma and Bakir have reasoned about the diversity of their friendship ties and how these have been used to achieve different individual ends. As other informants have emphasised as well, friends can be used, and are sometimes even expected to be instrumental-
ised as *connections* to employment for instance. Most of my informants do however make a clear line between appropriate and non-appropriate ways of using these connections. Sabina (30) is a lawyer who has changed her work places several times in order to broaden her horizons and find new challenges, a view that according to her is very rare amongst young adults. She explained to me her view on the complexion of recommendations:

I have used recommendation letters but it was difficult because I needed to distinguish the recommendation from the personal connection that I had with the person. I always sought a recommendation from people that I have been in connection with in businesses, rather than a personal recommendation from somebody that I am personally connected to. I myself have also given recommendation letters once. I even made a call for her. But I made it very clear that I was objective and will recommend her because of her skills and not because she is my friend. It becomes problematic though when people see my position and start to tell me sad stories about their or other relatives’ lives. But these are mostly people that are not that close to me. Because my friends would not put me into that position and I appreciate them for that. And I have had bad experience with personal recommendations.

Sabina emphasised the distinction she made between her public and private personae in the context of how her friends can take advantage of her employment position by making claims to recommendations or asking for an employment opportunity. What disturbs her is when people are trying to go *backstage* and approach her as a private persona when she is performing as her public self (Goffman 1959). She distinguishes between her close friends who can see the difference between her public self in her work and the private one when she is outside of work. She reasons that those who cannot make this sort of distinction are those who are not close to her. On the other hand, she herself has avoided relying on personal contacts to obtain recommendations and can find it
difficult to distinguish between public and private selves when she approaches a contact that she is related to in both ways. Mirza on the other hand, found an internship position through one of his friends and expressed a different view:

> It is the way to go if you are searching for jobs, you first go through your friends. If that doesn’t work, then the second option is that you know somebody and you call them to call somebody. And the third option is to apply for every open space, but that’s a long shot, because usually it is already taken.

According to Mirza’s reasoning, friends and their networks are the primary sources when it comes to employment opportunities and he would himself give this sort of help if some of his friends would ask him. As the above mentioned quote shows, there were several alternatives available for Mirza to take into consideration when choosing a way to approach his own motives, in this case finding the optimal way to employment. These three options summarise in general the ways in which most of my informants have found jobs. Even though the third option is morally the most desirable, it is also in many cases the hardest way to find a job. Those informants who managed to find employment this way often spoke about luck. Esma (24) told me:

> I couldn’t find a job for eight months. I was looking for all kind of jobs, outside my field as well. In the end I found a job in a bank. I didn’t have any connections or influences for that job. I was lucky.

Štela is an expression in BCS⁵ that refers to corruption. Even though the word mostly has negative connotations, Mirza explained to me the difference between good and bad ways of using štela through the way it has impacts on the wider society:

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⁵ Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language
My first job was štela. But it is not corruption in that meaning, it’s friendship corruption. It’s preferring somebody among somebody. I had like “white štela” because it was a friend. And actually I was not concerned, because I would have got a job anyway. It doesn’t hurt anybody. But people can use it in a negative way [...] and there I see a big problem.

According to him the negative way of using štela is to use personal contacts in order to avoid putting effort in increasing personal expertise and abilities since the potential and worth of the individual will stem from the established and mobilisable network of connections, rather than from the person’s own accomplishments. He believes that personal expertise and abilities, or human capital, should be rewarded, instead of becoming subordinated to the power of social contacts. Nevertheless, using friendships can sometimes be more accurate than other forms of personal contacts in the sense that they can be more informed about the available opportunities on the employment market and come with suggestions that would be more compatible with the individual’s own preferences and qualities. Alma explained:

[...] both of my parents have higher degrees, but they work in a different field than where I am looking for jobs. Perhaps they could ask around among their friends and relatives about possibilities, but that would be very embarrassing for me [...] I am interested in one narrow field of my studies and my friends from my Faculty know that. So if they would see an opportunity that would fit me and my interest, they would perhaps tell me about it.

Alma and Mirza have several options available to secure their benefits on the employment market through their contacts. Family support can in their examples be seen as a source of social capital, as well as a source of information on job positions through extra-familial networks (Coleman 1988:S104). Family support derives from a parental and social pressure on parents to help their children. However, parents can also be a disadvantage, as we have seen in a previ-
ous chapter where some of my informants have described how their parents have discouraged them from working besides studies. Medina has a similar way to Mirza’s of distinguishing between good and bad štela:

I don’t need to use štela, I believe in skills and knowledge. But helping people, yes. Štela can have both negative and positive connotations. I mean, I believe in this community helping but I am very disturbed about the ways people can get jobs in certain sectors. But the community here is so small, so if someone applies for a job, I am sure that the committee knows at least three of the five candidates from somewhere. I hope that the system will regulate itself, so that it reduces the bad kind of štela.

The central theme of the difference between good and bad štela is how the individual human capital can be accumulated or utilised in an efficient form. “Good štela” can also be called preporuka that means reference or recommendation. Sinan (23) explained:

When you have four hundred people applying for a job, you will have interviews and select a few among them. But maybe you have twenty selected people for ten jobs. And of course you want to know something about them, which you cannot get from the CV. Everybody can make a good CV. If someone would come up and tell me that “you should choose him because I know him and he is hard working” then of course I would choose him rather than somebody else who does not have any references or does not know anybody that I can ask. In the private sector you are lucky because you have the freedom to choose whoever you want.

His last sentence points out that state firms in Bosnia and Herzegovina are based on equal representation of the three officially recognised ethnic categories: Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs (Caspersen 2004). People who are seeking employment within the governmental or state sector have to declare themselves according to these categories. The federational census conducted in 2002 implies
that Sarajevo’s ethnic composition consists of a majority of Bosniacs (Markowitz 2010:83). This provides an advantage for Croats and Serbs living in the city when applying for state jobs, since there are fewer competitors in their categories. Private firms are not obliged to the implementation of the national quota, which was by several of my informants viewed as more attractive in a professional sense, because they favour skills and qualities over ethnic categorisation and party belonging.

Sinan’s comment also points out that in some cases the potential of one’s possible career becomes even more marked by the people one spends time and socialises with. If someone can achieve certain benefits through his or her networks, it often includes the presumption that after some time the favour will need to be returned in the same manner. Štela creates expectations of reciprocity on the person who offers the favour, and obligations on the individual that accepts it. There are beliefs that certain jobs can only be secured by štela, which will be elaborated on in the next subchapter. Selma, however, highlighted that štela should not be regarded as something that is essential in every case when looking for work:

 [...] a lot of people I know got their jobs through connections, like a friend calling and saying “hey, there is this job, you should apply for it”. But even in these cases, people went through interviews and proper selection processes. I mean, it is good if you have recommendations, but you need it for whatever you do [...] On the other hand it is bad if you get a job that you are not qualified for, and that kind of štela is negative.

Mirza, Medina and Selma emphasised that qualifications are to be seen as the prior requirements in the world of recruitment. However, also all three of them agreed on the point that qualifications often have to be pursued outside the education system through activities. Especially in programmes within social sciences, there are seldom any resources or opportunities for obtaining practical
skills or knowledge since each year hundreds of people are accepted to one class. When I asked Selma about what she could have done after finishing her bachelor studies in art history she told me that even though she had some inspiring professors who broadened her theoretical knowledge, no room was left for any practical training:

You are basically trained to know a lot and not being practically trained to do anything. You can become a curator, but you have never set up an exhibition during your studies. You know a lot about Notre Dame in Paris, but you have never seen it in real life. And you can work in media I guess, because you are literate [laughs], and that’s it!

In the previous chapter, some of my informants have highlighted their concerns regarding the discouragement deriving from parents when it comes to taking the initiative to work during summer or besides studies. Where neither the educational circumstances nor the parental encouragement can provide and promote a platform for building up practical skills and knowledge, young adults have to either rely on the intercession of their immediate family circle or try to find ways to get access to networks in the community in order to find employment. In the next subchapter, I will give examples of how networks are extended and instrumentalised for gaining access to means that would not be available otherwise.

8.2 Where Friendship is Not Enough: Inclusive and Exclusive Social Capital

Instrumentalised networks are not socially or naturally given; therefore they have to be established through social relationships (Bourdieu 1986:52). Reproduction of social capital presupposes an effort of sociability to establish or transform already existing relationships so that they can accumulate and main-
tain social relations and increase the possibility of an individual to pursue his or her interests (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital can be embodied in different forms of group membership, which can be part of both individual and collective strategy to increase power or influence in certain aspects (Coleman 1988, Portes 1998). Some social capital can be considered inclusive in the sense that admission and participation is encouraged, as in voluntary and student networks. Personal networks and štela, on the other hand, are ways of creating and maintaining social inequalities by exclusivity and closure towards non-members (Nixon et al. 2009). Several of my informants have highlighted certain areas where štela is necessary for obtaining a position on entry level. These areas are often public institutions and state owned companies, which have been described by some of my informants as a suicide of the career. As Sabina explained:

A lot of people do not live in reality. I think also that a lot of people would tell you that the best job they could find is within the civil service. There everything is fine and secured and you cannot be fired. It is kind of hard to hear that from young people, from my friends for instance. That’s their top job? [...] The work is without substance and that is what bothers me. Your kind of ideal is simply not to work. Your ideal is to be paid for not working.

What Sabina described was a nostalgic vision or a leftover that is still shared by several young adults in contemporary Bosnia and which is transmitted from former generations that experienced different working conditions during the socialist era in Yugoslavia. Ilhan (23) explained to me the reputation of the public sector:

It is not always connections that matter. But in municipality work it does. They are often set up, but I would never want to go there. It gives you security, but is bad for your personal development.
Most of my informants highlighted that work within the public sector is valuable to those who are solely looking for security in their career. Verdana (24) who worked in a state owned company described that it was necessary to mobilise her network in order to find out about the position in the first place, because it was not advertised through open channels, which is true for many of the available employment opportunities. She told me that it was a friend in the party she is a member of who made her aware of the position, but that it was due to her skills that she was contacted and not because of her ideological views. Even if a membership of a party is not openly required as a precondition, it can be useful for certain positions that are closely connected to politics, as for instance ministries and state owned companies.6

Whilst membership of a certain group can open new doors, it can also close others. Ena told me that “no štela can offer you a good job in this current situation, because here are a lot of political streams fighting each other and you will never know who will be on top tomorrow”. Commitment to a certain stream of politics does not always lead to secured benefits if there are shifts in the political power, which in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a common phenomenon on both local and state level. The more commitment a young adult makes to a certain political stream or party, the higher the risk to become labelled by others as a member of that group. Some of my informants attributed political membership and political activism to those young adults who did not manage to find a network system that can help them in their career. As Ilhan explained:

The sad thing is that these children who are coming here from small villages to study are often those who get into politics, because they see it as a way of getting connections and push themselves forward [...] Because the party is

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6 In Bosnia and Herzegovina around 70 per cent of small companies and 40 per cent of large companies such as mines, public utilities and telecommunications are still owned by the state (http://www.fipa.gov.ba/investiranje/privatizacija/Default.aspx?id=47&pageIndex=1&langTag=en-US)
backing you up. If two identical people apply, the guy from the party will get the job [...].

Several of my informants have expressed how people who came from other places in Bosnia or from former Yugoslavia have developed network systems where people from the same area have privileged access to certain positions. This correlates to what Coleman (1988) and Portes (1998) reasoned about, i.e. how a small group can obtain tight control over an economic advantage in a field and create limited access to people outside the field. Alma told me:

Since the war, there were a lot of people coming from other places in Bosnia with different views. Often they were more conservative and perhaps more religious as well. The structure of Sarajevo has changed and those who feel that they cannot fit in the city life are keeping them mostly for themselves. Even in job situations, they are preferring each other, which is weird, because it would be like I take somebody not because she or he is good in the profession, but because she or he is from Sarajevo.

Alma reasoned that migration and mobility have caused a change in the behaviour when it comes to solidarity amongst people living in the city. She felt disturbed by social connections built on shared geographical or ethno-religious identities, which are treated as more important attributes than personal competency in the selection process. She also coupled this irritation with the reason why she does not want to engage herself in political activities. Alma reasoned that if she becomes active in politics, it would mean that she accepts and encourages the contemporary socio-political divisions along ethno-national lines that have been present since the end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When asking about how she thinks young people could make changes she explained the variety of volunteer opportunities around and outside the country. When comparing political participation with volunteering she reasoned that political participation and membership in a party will label that person in the wrong way,
along ethno-religious lines, and “people will think of you as somebody who is either a thief or a criminal, or at least wants to get power in the wrong way”. Volunteering and other forms of activism, on the other hand, can highlight civic involvement in a positive way, “where you will be seen as a person who cares about what is happening around you and that you actually really want to help”. The lack of trust towards political parties and the people who are connected with politics creates a fear of acquiring a negative connotation of accepting the current situation as it is. When speaking to Verdana about her party membership, she told me that it was her father’s idea to join, who thought it would be beneficial for her when seeking employment. Verdana stressed that she was not interested in politics and never attended political meetings organised by this or any other party. There is also the risk of investing engagement in something with an unsure outcome. As Kenan explained to me:

In order to become active in politics, you have to choose sides. Even if you don’t feel like a Bosniac or a Croat or whatever [...] The problem is that we have already chosen to be part of the system the way it is. People do not want to change things, they just want to replace the old people. [A grass-roots level activist group] was fake-activism, they were connected to the opposition at that time, and these activists are now part of the system, they don't fight anymore, it was only a way for them to enter.

Several of my informants have reasoned that by entering the political sphere, one has to agree and accept a political construction of an identity based along ethno-religious lines. As a young adult on entry level, one has to accept a hierarchy of patron-client relations within the party (cf. Paine 1969), where one is more or less bounded by loyalty towards other higher ranked members in order to be rewarded in symbolic and material terms. Lastly, one also has to accept a political stigma and mistrust deriving from the social environment that connects politicians and political activism with hidden agendas, corruption and
preservation of the current political system. One has to be prepared that this stigma will shut other doors in their possible career path. Selma’s reasoning explained this very clearly:

Politics and politicians have really bad reputation. Politics is crucial, but it has stopped being perceived as such. Politics have this reputation that it is made out of all kind of bad people. Therefore people from academics and such, if they are worth anything, are distinguishing or separating themselves from this dirty politics, because they want to stay in academia which is perceived as better [...]. I think being a politician is a very responsible role at any level, and if more people thought like that, we would not have the bad politicians that we have today.

According to my informants, entering the political scenery can therefore be seen as including several risks in terms of not knowing how the political alienations and coalitions will change in the future. The risk lies in that, whilst an individual is taking stand for a group connected to a specific standpoint at specific time, the standpoint of the group might shift as soon as new alienations or opportunities are within reach. Even if a young person joins the political sphere with good intentions to make changes for the benefits of the community without corruption, Davor claimed that: “whoever steps out and sees the reality, always get an offer he cannot refuse”. Young people who engage in politics are often viewed as people who have either chosen to take the easy way for getting access to certain benefits or as people who have failed to find other ways to succeed in their career and are choosing this path as a last resort. Either way, individuals need to count with people in their environments who will be sceptical towards their actions in both moral and professional aspects. Therefore, instead of political activism, most of my informants have emphasised the value of volunteering to gain social capital in terms of new connections, but also human capital in terms of knowledge and skills that otherwise could not be obtained
through regular education. Volunteering and activism within different organisations also provide a platform for insight behind the problems in the political sphere, as for instance many NGOs have to co-operate with governmental institutions. Ena argued that “those who are active in the NGO sector are often more well informed about the problems and the challenges, but also about the different kind of opportunities in this country”. New social capital can be gained in form of connections and information about scholarships, study opportunities and network systems, which can usefully be incorporated in one’s personal support system. My informants expressed that by their investment in activism and participation, they were able to meet others who shared the same interests, which has enriched their lives. Yet, the most valuable consequence of activism and volunteering for many of my informants were the steps that can lead closer to a highly desired employment opportunity, preferably in an international organisation. They felt that it is in these organisations where one can make a difference in their communities, but also achieve greater personal fulfilment in their career.

Volunteering within organisations can also increase one’s value on the labour market through trainings and participation in conferences. The clearest reason behind volunteering for many young people is to see it as a way of socialising and expanding the social circle of potential friends, rather than as a possibility of direct employment, which is underlined in the report presented in Nixon et al (2009:66). There is a big variety of NGOs present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but as many of my informants have accounted, most of them lack the financial means to employ people and have to rely on volunteers to fulfil their purpose and run their activities. The dependency on funding from international organisations can also have limiting effect on the kinds of activities and initiatives that are prioritised. As Bieber (2002:27-28) argued, the funds that NGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina have received are often directed towards short-term projects, the long-term impact of which is often hard to see. Financial dependency has also made significant amounts of the NGOs vulnerable for sudden changes and shifts
in priority areas amongst the most important donor organisations and their policies and agendas in the country that might not respond to long-term local needs (Bieber 2002:27-28). Those NGOs that are trying to adapt and respond to these different agendas are being accused by locals of not working for the community but for their own interests, which is not far from the general perception of the work of politicians (see Bieber 2002, Evans-Kent & Bleiker 2003, Belloni 2001). Ilhan explained that, although he believes that volunteering can be very useful, some of them are more about self-interest:

Some of the NGOs are just fake. They are trying to get funding to get closer to the government or the whole thing is just about boosting their own career. Very few of them are different, they talk a lot about global warming, racism and all these things and they know that everybody is interested in this and it’s a trend, so they can participate in conferences and get funding for that. But in the end they don't really care, they are just fake and they do it because they want to get a good career and put things on their CVs.

Also international organisations are not free from personal interests and hidden agendas of the employed. Just as with state owned organisations, some of my informants reasoned that the hardest thing is to enter the organisation. “Once you get in and get the job, you are secured”, as Ilhan told me. Ena on the other hand was disturbed by the way some international organisations were handling local recruitment to their projects:

Those people who got their jobs in a very dubious manner right after the war, they were only asked if they know basic English and they got the jobs. And these people managed to stay because the system is very user friendly. [...] And these people are still here in 2012 and they don’t even do their work and they do not believe in what they are doing either. There are so many young people out there that would be willing to do their job with much better quality. [...] People that were drivers back in 1996 now have high positions. At
some point I would just fire them for being lazy and not doing what they are supposed to do and for not even having an academic background for such high position which is something that young people today have to fulfil.

Besides the obvious material benefits with working for international organisations, such as health insurance and the security of being able to move forward in career, there are downsides in form of inflexible policies and concepts imposed from head offices abroad. Some of those informants of mine who have been working within different projects related to international organisations have highlighted the challenge of bridging the gap between the policies and the actual field of implementation where they believe that they have been accumulating their practical knowledge in the most efficient way. The social environment also values these forms of employment differently compared to jobs on state level. Samra’s comment on how she felt when she started to work for an international organisation shows this well:

It was a big thing for me and among my friends, because you are 22 and you work for a UN agency and you travel a lot [...]. You know, for people from here, you feel powerful, you feel like you are doing something, you feel that you are worth something.

Those informants who have been active in the NGO sector or within projects related to international organisations have almost all been receiving encouragement deriving from their social environment. This, together with the experience from fieldwork, has increased their self-confidence in the sense that they believe they can bring change and agency to others within their community. As Samra explained to me:

Now, how I see myself in the future is that I want to stay in the field on local level; I wouldn’t like to have a bureaucratic or administrative position in the
UN or something. I would really want to stay local, because from what I have seen, that is where you can really see the change mostly.

Social capital in form of a supportive network and gained self-confidence, in combination with insights, practical knowledge and experiences from their employment opportunities can encourage creativity and lead to new career opportunities. This combination has made some of my informants start up and organise their own employment in form of starting their own NGO or working as consultants or freelancers for different actors. On the other hand, due to complicated bureaucracy on both state and local level, a useful network of people working in different fields can sometimes favour one’s means both professionally and in private. In this context, this form of štela means something different from the previously mentioned štela as a way of entering the job market through the misuse of personal contacts. Several of informants argued that štela can make their life easier and more effective when asking for official documents, making an appointment at the hospital or calling for a reliable plumber in an inconvenient time. As Alma explained:

In the family we usually have people to call when we want to get some official documents quickly. It is not illegal, but it would take so long time to get them otherwise and now we can get them within some days. I don’t even know what I would have to do if we did not have this contact. I would even not know where to start.

The štela that is used within the educational system and in employment-seeking was rather viewed as a way of disempowering the individual by entering a relation based on nepotism and by that reducing the worth of human capital in terms of obtained knowledge and competency in the society as whole (cf. Portes 1998, Coleman 1988). The other form of štela, however, was considered more acceptable because it was not viewed as a personal choice to make a shortcut through an application process that should be based on individual work. In this
context, štela has become a necessary and accepted way of navigating through a social and economic system with conditions of scarcity. One has to rely on other people’s skills and knowledge in order to access certain goods, services and information that otherwise should be equally guaranteed and available through the system (cf. Abrahams 1999:164-165). As Alma’s example showed, the benefits of having a štela can result in faster access to certain documents or medical treatment. Giving the štela money depends on the closeness of the tie (Nixon et al. 2009). Whilst a close personal friend does not require money for a service, some less close acquaintances might expect monetary reward. In the latter case, the štela is not necessarily a person who simply does a favour but one who can be bribed to do something that otherwise would not be allowed within the frame of the available services, such as changing medical care appointments. Even when it comes to family relations, money can sometimes replace a non-financial favour, as Nixon et al. also point out (2009:77). The high level of general distrust towards strangers and frequent use of štela in different forms in contemporary Bosnian society does not only consist of the distrust directed towards unknown individuals outside family and friendship ties (Nixon et al. 2009:40). It also indicates that there is a general distrust towards the professional activities of people in public services. Štela can be seen as a guarantee used to make sure that people do their job as fast and efficiently as possible. Common sense, as Bourdieu (2000:98) has described it, comes into consideration here, where using a štela is a self-evident part of functioning in everyday life.

8.3 Summary

This chapter has focused on how friendships can be instrumentalised as social capital in order to find employment opportunities and extend social networks for career benefits. However, there are certain perceptions attached to how the forms of instrumentalisation of friends can be practiced. My informants
have emphasised the difference in how the worth of personal expertise is handled when using friends to access career options. The chapter has introduced štela, the local notion of corruption regarding social capital. Although its negative connotations, it can be used in both good and bad ways. Good štela presupposes accurate human capital in form of educational or practical skills and knowledge from the person. Bad štela is used when the person lacks human capital or replaces it with a good network system through identification with a certain group (cf. Coleman 1988), for instance a party-membership. However, the chapter has also pointed out that practical skills and knowledge must often be acquired outside the frame of formal education. Participation in different networks through party-membership or volunteering serves as the most convenient way of extending one’s social network and acquiring new competencies, as well as possibilities for recruitment. While party membership was often viewed as a hidden agenda in order to make personal benefits, some informants also associated it with the preservation of the current political system. Volunteering and work within international organisations were also met with the same kind of scepticism by some informants. On the other hand, many informants pointed out the benefits of participation in seminars and trainings, and regarded the possibility to travel abroad as a major motivational factor for engaging in volunteering. Whilst my informants ranked competence and knowledge before the misuse of personal contacts such as friends, another form of štela also exists in contemporary Bosnian society, which is related to the distrust towards the efficiency of public services. This štela is rather used as means to guarantee the best and fastest treatment possible. Social capital in this context can therefore serve four purposes. First, it can be a way of accumulating human capital in form of skills and knowledge outside of education. It can also serve as a way of using the extended network to emphasise one’s human capital. If human capital is lacking, social capital can take its place. Lastly, it can be a way of getting access to good public services.
9 Conclusion

Through their stories and experiences, this thesis has followed young adults in Sarajevo and their patterns of sociability with friends in their everyday life. It is argued that young adults in Bosnia and Herzegovina are exposed to continuous dynamics of economic, social and political transformations in their society. Three major obstacles have been identified that affect young people in contemporary Bosnian society:

1. They have to navigate between the challenges of political and economic instability, which are reflected in high unemployment rates, opposing political streams and the ideology of the international community imposed from outside.
2. They also have to deal with their own individual and common identification processes related to ethno-national categorisations and geographical location.
3. Furthermore, they have to negotiate the picture of adulthood according to the norms and pressures present in their surrounding and to the available opportunities to reach stability in terms of employment, relationships and household.

They are not only going through what Burrell (2011:413) calls a “double transition”, viz. the passage through the post-socialist socio-economic changes and the personal transition to adulthood. Bosnian young adults should rather be seen as passing through processes of “triple transitions”: the post-war, the post-socialist and the way to become adults. I have argued that these processes with their uncertainties and the way to cope with them are reflected in the sociability amongst friends. They appear both in the qualities that create the unique bond between individuals and also in the exchanges they will involve. The created bonds between friends contain visible constructs in form of behaviours of sharing and helping. They also contain non-visible constructs in form of individual
perceptions of trust, vulnerability and closeness that are exemplified through the behaviours. This study has shown how friends are aiming for balance of the qualities that constitute their bond through mutual exchanges. This balance, however, does not mean that the different qualities of each individual are equally in use. As in the case of Mirza and Ena, their friendships included values that could compensate for other qualities, as for instance a common interest in career-possibilities or emotional commitment.

This thesis has showed that friendship sociabilities are influenced by temporal changes in the individuals’ personal environments. Time and life transitions can also change the qualities that are included in the friendship relation. Moving away from a specific setting that has acted as a foundation for sociability, for instance a school, will most probably have an effect on the dynamics of the friendship ties as well. Friendship patterns are also influenced by the changes in the responsibilities and commitments during the individuals’ life courses, such as career and family matters. These changes can also create new forms of and needs for sociability.

The exchange of emotional, symbolic and social values between friends that comes into play is affected by the attributes of a specific context. Contextualisation of friendship presents the arenas where friendship sociabilities can take place in a larger set of social practices and relationships. It is also the specific context that frames and routinises activities that can be undertaken within sociabilities in space and time. For instance, coffee drinking as an activity fulfils the function of framing sociability amongst individuals in a specific location. Depending on the context, different aesthetic and economic features can be attached to the activity in order to strengthen the specific characteristics of communication, interaction and maintenance of the activity, for instance these features can make it even more exclusive and intimate. They can also help to tone down potential differences and create a feeling of similarity within the group. It is argued that contextualisation helps us see how sociabilities can be integrative
and fragmented at the same time. Contextualisation is then highly connected to both individual and social identity-formation.

This thesis has shown that social norms appear in form of condemnation of sociability from an economic perspective, where it is viewed as a passive act compared to other forms of engagement in public life, such as studying, working or political activism. My informants’ concerns towards the visible passivity in form of leisure over business also point out greater structural problems in the social reality. The struggles with unemployment as a private matter are taking place in public life in form of cases like Bakir’s. Whilst his behaviour causes discomfort and is regarded as a form of passivity by others, his story highlights the importance of agency regarding identification. He is trying to balance his shortcomings in an economic sense by creating a certain identity and status through routinised sociability in the public sphere in order to maintain a sense of self-worth and belonging.

His story, however, also points out the limitations of friendship instrumentalisation. Whilst his acquaintances and friendships have provided him with a certain status and social identity in the public arena, he does not consider these relationships as a way of gaining access to recruitment positions, despite his economic failures. Even if Bakir has friends with successful careers, his statement that “friends are not for that” implies a moral dimension towards the expectations he can have on his friends. As Hruschka (2010:99) has argued, one of the benefits with friends is that they can permit access to sources outside kin-relationships. Emotional support can be obtained from friends in form of sustaining their selves by what Allan (1989:63) calls specific treatment outside the framework of formal role behaviour, where hidden weaknesses from social control in form of the public eye or other relations can be revealed. Friends can also act as social support in the sense of providing a space outside the competition within work and studies. Sociability in the educational context, as in the example of Alma, provided a space of taking up a more active role regarding her
studies where knowledge was updated based on the students’ terms rather than on the teachers’. Human capital in form of skills and knowledge is the main component that decides whether friendships can be used for accessing recruitment possibilities.

Often, friends are even regarded as a more morally acceptable resource than kinship ties, because they have been together in a context where their human capital has been revealed, as for instance school or workplace. Bakir did not share the educational context with his friends and acquaintances any more and neither did he succeed to get an official recognition of his formal education competencies in form of a diploma degree. His option would have been to instrumentalise his friends and kin by placing them in, for him, a morally undesirable position where they have to recommend him without having practical knowledge about his human capital in form of skills and qualifications. The friend and his or her position would have to serve as a guarantee for his qualifications, which would put a lot of pressure on the friend both in the relation to him and towards the employers. This is also what Sabina highlighted when she described that there needs to be a separation between the private personal commitments towards friends and her public commitments as a recruiter. The cost for taking such a commitment towards a friend without human capital could in the worst case jeopardise one’s own trustworthiness within a certain field of employment. This form of štela can also cause hardships for the person who has to admit both for oneself and for others, that he or she lacks certain competencies in order to find employment possibilities through other channels.

The thesis has also pointed out how friends can be more suitable to be used as connections to employment opportunities, because they can be more informed about the different available possibilities. They can also act as a motivation for alternative ways to enter the job market through summer work, volunteering and internships, which in some cases contrasts the view and experiences of the parental generation. It is argued that the formal education in many cases
does not provide the necessary human capital in terms of practical knowledge and skills that are needed for certain employment opportunities. In the areas of economics, law and social sciences, the students have very few opportunities to gain practical experience due to the lack of resources at the university and due to overfilled classes with several hundreds of students. Instead, most of their formal education consists of lectures and seminars. In these cases the students have to rely on gaining their human capital in form of practical knowledge and experience outside the formal education system. Many of my informants stressed the importance of extending one’s network through membership in different voluntary or student organisations. Here, also practical skills can be obtained in form of participation and organisation of different seminars, trainings and projects, and lead to a greater insight on the problems in the country.

The study has pointed out that the scepticism of young people towards political participation in form of party membership compared to participation in voluntary, student or international organisations steams from high distrust towards professional activities of politicians and governmental institutions from the social environment (cf. Bieber 2002, Nixon et al. 2009). Young people, who enter the political scene, are often viewed as lacking human or social capital for pursuing a career in another field. Political participation is also viewed as indirectly or directly contributing to the preservation of the current political system based along ethno-national lines. This thesis has argued that the public acceptance of this division has been identified as one of the major threats against urban values in Sarajevo. My informants often associated politicians with certain ascribed uncultured mentalities (Stefansson 2007, Kolind 2004) that were previously connected to the changes in the social landscape made by newcomers in Sarajevo. It has been pointed out that identification is a part of the everyday life routine through interaction, where individual and common identifications are negotiated according to the specific context. Common identification of being a Sarajevan has often been described with similar value systems that operate
within friendship sociabilities. Therefore, a threat towards urban values can be examined from a friendship perspective where the sociabilities as part of a larger set of social practices are being threatened.

A suggestion for further studies would be to investigate those young Bosnian individuals who actively take part in the political sphere and how their political representation according to ethno-national division correlates with how their sociability patterns are formed in practice. How do these correlate to social values in form of ascribed cultural mentality? With the theories of Goffman (1959) and Jenkins (2008) in mind, how do the division and combination of public and private identity formation manifest?

Another suggested theme for further studies beyond the scope of this thesis is how friendship sociability and community life appear on the Internet. As Crown & Allan (1994:21) suggest, community life can help to support political activism. In Bosnia & Herzegovina, where the social life could be seen as both fragmented and integrative at the same time, Internet activism holds a potential of moving beyond the visible organisations of activism in public life. Internet community networks such as Facebook can also serve the purpose of making political statements visible for a chosen public, and these should be considered as an important part of identification processes. Samra told me a story that exemplifies this:

We had a bad situation recently on one of my trainings I held that was going on for seven days. There were young Muslims, young Serbs and young Croats. And all these kids built friendships and fell in love and so on during these seven days. They stayed connected through Facebook. Then Ratko Mladić\textsuperscript{7} was arrested and all these Serb youngsters put his picture as a profile

\textsuperscript{7} Ratko Mladić was a Bosnian Serb military leader who commanded the Bosnian Serb Army between 1992 and 1995 (cf. Encyclopædia Britannica 2013).
picture and the non-Serbs were really offended. And the kids were terrified and had fights and some of them deleted themselves on Facebook and so on.

Examples as this show that Internet communities can provide a space for expression of different social belongings and political preferences that perhaps would not be promoted the same way outside this context. How do the dynamics of promoting and negotiating certain views differ from other contexts and who are the targets? How much of a different political view can be accepted amongst Facebook friends? In what ways do social norms and values appear as pressure or limitations of certain behaviours and expressions? What are the effects of this form of identity formation processes and how do they appear outside the Internet?

During the summer of 2013, political activism grew out from a parliament dispute about identification numbers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Reuters 2013). The constitutional court of the country put the distribution of identification numbers to new-born children on hold until the dispute could be solved, which caused individual cases where ill children seeking treatment outside their country’s border could not obtain passports, due to their lack of identification number. This lead to Bebolucija (put together by the local words for baby and revolution) where individuals with the help of Facebook-groups, twitter and other Internet media spread a non-violent protest mobilisation. The protests have since then continued on the street in front of the parliament building in Sarajevo where people have demanded from their politicians to settle their dispute. The movement has also spread to several bigger cities around the country. Although the outcome of Bebolucija is still unsure, it does indicate that citizens are using social sites on the Internet as a platform to question the world around them, and that they can be organised and mobilised, not only for personal reasons but also for demanding benefits for a larger community. Events like these point out that
future anthropological research on solidarity within community life needs to include the new ways of communicating and forming social cohesion.

Lastly, what can my work tell about friendship and humans in general? Despite that it has received little attention within anthropology, making and having friends are important features of everyday life activities. Friendships provide an essential part of experiencing exchanges of values and qualities within a social relation characterised by choice and potentiality. By not only looking at the private aspects of how friendship ties are formed, but also at how friendships are practiced in the public sphere, anthropologists can contribute with insights on what roles friends can play in certain contexts. Placed in a wider framework of social relations and practices, friendship can also, due to its flexibility, serve as a gate towards the exploration of how people are making sense of what being human is like.
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