NEGOTIATING NORMALITY IN SARAJEVO DURING THE 1992—1995 WAR[1]

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Based on the last decade's anthropological theories of war, where war is seen as violence aimed at destruction of civilian life and population, the article describes everyday civilian life during the siege of Sarajevo (1992—1995). Examples are given of how the circumstances of random and unpredictable shooting, as well as shortages of goods and fuel which did not follow any logic comprehensible to an average Sarajevan, led to a gradual change of what was considered to be a normal life and attitudes, the process that is called negotiating normality. The changes are described on all levels of social life - from the most existential subsistence techniques, over jeopardised social networks, to sometimes very refined shifts in political ideology.

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[1] This article was originally written in January 1996. The materials used were collected during three field-work periods in Sarajevo (two weeks in September 1994, one month in March 1995, and one week in October 1995). Since then I have spent additional three and a half months in the field, gathering more material on the war peroid, as well as on the emediate after-Dayton social processes. However, I have chosen not to integrate these findings into this article.

Introduction

During my fieldwork in Sarajevo (1994/95) I found that people often used the concept of "normality" in order to describe some situation, person, or their way of living. The concept was charged with a sense of morality, of what was good, right or desirable: a "normal life" was a description of "how I want to live;" a "normal person" was a "person who thinks and does things I find acceptable." Thus, "normality," as an emic concept, communicated social norms of the person using it, and as such often indicated her ideological position.

When used as an analytical concept, as I do here, it is important to bear in mind that social norms are always in a process of change. Each member of a society continuously defines and redefines her/his norms of conduct and perception of reality in accordance with her/his daily experiences. This process, which I refer to as *negotiation* in lack of a better term, can exist unnoticed, and it is not seldom that the people involved perceive *normality* as a stable entity. Indeed, essentialist feeling of "this is how things *really* are," seems to have tremendous importance in creating a feeling of security. This human need of security in its turn can be used by factors in political arena to promote their own versions of reality, and consequently the ones with more power have more to say about what *normality* is.

By highlighting the process of *negotiating normality* in violent circumstances I want to give an outline of, and suggest a way of interpreting, life in Sarajevo during the war. The interpretation is grounded in the last decade's research done by social scientist in similar circumstances of systematic violence against civilians, as well as in my own experiences from Sarajevo.

Negotiation of normality

When members of a society are exposed to systematic physical destruction, or fear of it, in their daily lives, the "normality" of their lives as they lived them in peaceful times is seriously jeopardised. In wars where civilians and civilian lives are the main targets of destruction, the destruction of "normality" stretches itself through all levels of social life. As Carolyn Nordstrom has shown in the cases of Sri Lanka and Mozambique,

> Maimed *bodies* and ruined *villages* are obvious casualties of dirty wars. Maimed *culture* - including crucial frameworks of knowledge - and ruined *social institutions* are not as visible, but they are equally powerful realities and their destruction might have a much more

> enduring and serious impact than the more obvious gruesome casualties
> of war [Nordstrom 1992:261, italics are mine].[2]

The destruction, however, rarely happens suddenly and totally. The lives people are used to live are disrupted gradually, although continuously. This leaves place for people to come to terms with the disruptions: to feel them, to think about them, to explain them, and to find their ways of acting - in other words, to *negotiate their normality.*

Michael Taussig's "Nervous System" (1992) is an distressing account of such social processes in a "true state of emergency," to use his own words. The expression stands not only for the effects of Colombian state terrorism on the civilian life, but rather characterises a global phenomenon. Central to Taussig's account are notions of "terror as usual" and "normality of the abnormal" which "requires knowing how to stand in an atmosphere of whipping back and forth between clarity and opacity, seeing both ways at once" (ibid.:17).

> I am referring to a state of *doubleness of social being* in which one moves in bursts between somehow accepting the situation as normal, only to be thrown to a panic or shocked into disorientation by an event, a rumour, a sight, something said, or not said - something that even while it requires the normal in order to make its impact, destroys it [Taussig 1992:18 italics are mine].

In such situations, the insecurity produces an ontological and epistemological vacuum (cf. also Nordstrom 1992:261, 267—8). I suggest that it is fruitful to think of each small incident, whereby ones normality is disrupted, as creating such a vacuum. This condition stays for a shorter or a longer period of time, until the disruption is dealt with: interpreted, understood, and the normality is re-established.

Taking examples from the World War II, Scarry (1985) posits that this enables implantation of new "truths," explanations of the events and reality, by the ones who have the power over the destruction. As the cases from Latin American "dirty wars" show,[3] an individual's struggle for

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[2] In this article, Nordstrom uses the concept of "dirty war" to characterise wars where "civilians, rather than soldiers, are the tactical targets, and fear, brutality, and murder are the foundation on which control is constructed," where "victory [is sought] not through military and battlefield strategies, but through horror," and where "all contenders of power" can use these strategies. As Nordstrom herself says, the wars of the second half of our century are mostly such in kind, and that is why I find the dichotomy "dirty war" vs. "clean war" (or just-war) an unnecessary and misleading one. Moreover, as Nordstrom and Martin (1992) argue, from the involved civilian's perspective, any war is a "dirty" one. Since my approach to the war in Sarajevo takes precisely that perspective, I would like to avoid any illusions as to the existence of a "clean" or "just" war, and just call it "a war."

[3] Examples I am using in this paper are from Colombia (Taussig 1992), Argentina (Suárez--Orozco 1992), and Guatemala (Green 1994).

making sense of her situation and the world around is indeed subjected to the "truths" defined by the politico-military power elites. But people do not just automatically accept new explanations, ideas and norms. It is better to say that the *negotiation of normality* takes place in a political space where the power over defining "truth" is highly contested.

From chaos to public resistance

What is characteristic of the type of wars described in this article is the initial notion of chaos and abnormality which creates the above mentioned social vacuum.

In his "Grammar of Terror" (1992:243—245), Suárez-Orozco describes the stages of reaction to systematic terror civilians have been subjected to during the Argentinean "dirty war." First reaction was a *denial* that people were disappearing. Then came the *rationalisations* of why somebody had disappeared which implied that it could not happen to oneself. Coping with a loss of a near person, but not knowing her destiny, caused also reactions of *anger* against the authorities held responsible, or inward turned anger in form of *depression*, "*mummification*" of the disappeared persons belongings, and eventually the *acceptance* of the situation. This is the state where people are full of doubts in what is true and real, which produces more fear and closing into ones own shell of privacy (cf. Taussig 1992:27). "Every possibility is a fact" (ibid.:34) and *paranoia* becomes social theory and social practice (ibid.:21).

Still in the domain of the private, when terror becomes the order of the day ("terror as usual" in Taussig's words), the shared experience of survival turns into "despair and macabre humour" (ibid.:18). This, as the sharing of trauma among women in Guatemala by talking about their sicknesses (Green 1992), is the first sign of resisting the imposed order of terror. When experiences, traumas, desires and ideas get expressed - *voiced* - they become shared. The forms of expression can be various: humour, jokes, poetry, rock-music, paintings, theatre, or talking about sicknesses. The *naming* of the trauma is not only a form of resistance but can in itself be also healing.

When the *voices* leave the private space and enter the public, - as the Mothers of the Plaza did in Argentinean case - the private memory fills the public void (Taussig 1992:27). This is the beginning of the resistance against the power holders' truths, the truths which were to be implanted in the vacuum created by destruction of "normality" (cf. above discussion on Scarry). As Suárez-Orozco describes, in Argentinean case this first public statement was followed up by "involution of the horrible, the elaboration of the terror".

Suddenly a compulsion to speak of the unspeakable seemed to consume the Argentine imagination. The cathartic aspects of speaking of the unspeakable... were rediscovered in Argentina [Suárez-Orozco 1992:249].

Negotiating normality in Sarajevo

To understand the processes of social norm changes in Sarajevo during the war, it is necessary to understand three major components that determine these processes: the pre-war "normality," the changes that the systematic destruction of civilian life in the war brought about, as well as the changes desired by powerful factors in the political (public) arena. The experiences of people in Sarajevo, the ways of dealing and understanding their situation, and the ideology and desires promoted by the politico--military elites, are closely interconnected.

In order to contextualise my focus of interest - changes that the systematic destruction of civilian life in the war brought about (the second component mentioned above) - I shall firstly give an account of the forces and ideologies in the political arena. Attention shall be brought to the change from situation in former Yugoslavia before the war - the changes occurring in close relation to the crisis that continued also through the war.

Thereafter I shall turn to jeopardised normality, not only the ideological one, but rather in all aspects of social life in civilian experience.

Finally I shall concentrate on two spheres of negotiating normality: the routines of everyday life, and the formation of collective identities.

Political arena: brotherhood and unity into nationalism

The political situation in the 1990s in the whole of former Yugoslavia, is informed by a rapid and drastic ideological change:

> ... project of transforming neighbours into enemies opposes the dominant state discourse of the previous 47 years of 'Yugoslav nationality', which naturalised co-operation and consanguinity. The traditions which had constituted identities since Second World War were designed to efface intercommunal antagonisms and to establish Yugoslav *bratstvo i jedinstvo* as the only viable means of ensuring the survival and well-being of individuals [Bowman 1994:149].

> During the period of Communist hegemony... the 'pleasures' of national identification were explicitly proscribed by the ideology of *bratstvo i jedinstvo*: Yugoslavs were told - and convinced - that they

> had to give up the fantasy of ethnic nationhood in order to guarantee survival and the construction of a social system which could provide them with well-being [Bowman 1994:166].

> ... national identities served during the period of state hegemony as means of expressing regional conflicts (mostly economic) which could not be expressed in the rhetoric of a unified Communist federation (Allcock 1992:281—287)... Dissatisfaction with the central government, provoked by perceived injustices affecting all the inhabitants of a region, regardless of their ethnic affiliation, could thus most easily be articulated in 'national' terms, and this ensured that it would be the nationalist road, rather than any other, which would be seen as leading beyond the impasse of Communist politics [Bowman 1994:152].

In Bosnia this "nationalist road" was much more difficult to follow than in other federal republics of former Yugoslavia, since it cut across not only towns and villages, but also neighbourhoods, workplaces, friendships and families. Bosnians were known not only for "tolerance, good will, and conscious desire for co-operative and civil relationships" (Sorabji 1993:33—34, in Bowman 1994:161) among themselves, but also for an essentialist feeling of belonging in the first place to Bosnia and only thereafter to the "nation" they declared in folk-censuses to belong to (cf. Bringa 1993). "You can be a Catholic and a Bosnian. My [Catholic] friends never lived in Croatia..." a young Bosnian woman was telling Tone Bringa in an interview in June 1992 (Bringa 1993:75; see also Maček 1993:4—5).

> To [post-war] generation difference in nationality was just one of the many differences between people... as for the generations before them, the essence of being Bosnian (*bosanac*) was growing up in a multicultural and multi-religious environment, an environment where cultural pluralism was seen as intrinsic to the social order... Dealing with cultural differences was part of people's most immediate experience of social life outside the confines of their home, and it was therefore an essential part of their identity [Bringa 1993:75].

"Nationality" had even less importance in Bosnian towns than in villages. When the war started in Sarajevo in April 1992, first offers fell whilst demonstrating in front of the Parliament in Sarajevo, against the nationalist politics (cf. Magnusson 1993:23). "If you want to divide us, you can divide us only into decent people (*raja*) and jerks (*papci* - literally 'pig--feet')!" said one of the banners they were carrying.

Surprisingly, the international community remained deaf and blind for the character of Bosnian society and the longings of its people. Instead they chose to recognise and support the "nationalist road" of newly empowered political elites. Already in 1992, representing West European

powers, Lord Carrington designed a cantonisation of the country in accordance with the principle of "clean ethnic territories" (see also Bringa 1993:69). All later territorial solutions presented by international negotiators (including the still valid Dayton Peace Agreement) followed the same divisionist logic, in that way not only showing incompetence or indifference for the people of Bosnia, but also clearly establishing power of nationalistic political leaders and their ideology.

This was also one of the factors why, after the shelling of Sarajevo began, there were no more open protests against the new regime(s).

Physical and ideological destruction of Sarajevo

For people in Sarajevo, the beginning of the war meant destruction of their lives on all levels: their lives and property were daily threatened, their working places were destroyed or closed which implied loss of income, savings in the banks were gone, food was scarce as well as water, electricity, gas and wood. Many neighbours, friends and family members left the town, or moved to other parts after their homes had been destroyed. But it was not only hard to survive physically, and cope with the social losses. At the same time everybody was exposed to intense nationalist propaganda. New history, new explanations of the previous life, new villains, new ideology.

However, people did not over-night forget their pre-war lives and experiences. Instead each and every person in Sarajevo was daily faced with disappearance of the world (people, places, routines) they were used to, being forced to live, survive and find their own ways in the new situation.

Breaking of normality by irregularity

> *"If I'll have three children, I shall call them Electricity, Water, and Gas!"*
>
> *(a ten-year old boy in Sarajevo)*

It is not hard to understand the basic necessity of food, water and some source of energy, for the sustainment of bare physical life. Although I was well aware of the banality of these problems that inform each day of life in Sarajevo, I found myself very attentive to whether water or electricity would come at some point of the day.[4] On the days when this happened,

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[4] At that time (September 1994) the gas was completely cut-off.

my fieldnotes unmistakably begin with something like "Today around twelve o'clock I heard water coming..."

The explanation of this preoccupation lies not only in the fact that these things are necessary for physical survival, but points rather to a phenomenon more important for understanding the war in Sarajevo.

What was characteristic was the *scarcity* and *irregular availability* of the life-sustaining-basics, not the total lack of them. This was one of the central strategies used in this war against the civilian life and population. Whether aware of its effects on the population or not, authorities of both warring sides[5] used the alternative cutting and letting the supplies reach the population, as a way to reach their goals (which most often appeared to be military or political). Among people in Sarajevo this caused a confusion: "I don't understand why they [the Serbs] sometimes let us have electricity, water or gas. All the cables and pipelines go through their territory, so they could easily cut us off completely," was a remark I heard very often in the Government-controlled part of the town. As the war went on, many Sarajevans lost illusions as to the care of their own Government for themselves. In September 1994 I was told: "It is not only the Serbs. For example, now it is our Government that is causing the cuts." The general opinion was that this was done in order to victimise the population of Sarajevo[6] and thus gain points on the international political arena.[7]

The effect of these "strategies" was that any daily routine became impossible. During the periods when there was no water at all, whole days went to queuing up at the cisterns and then transporting water home. Often in freezing temperatures, under random shell fire, physical hardships of transport and psychical exposure to nervous, depressed or angry outbursts of fellow townspeople, experience of supplying water in Sarajevo became engraved in people's bodies and memories as something to avoid by all means. Therefore, when the water started occasionally dropping from the cranes, everybody eagerly waited for the sound in order to catch every

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[5] In Sarajevo only the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serb side were politico--military factors. The Bosnian Croat authorities and military forces (HVO) were non--existent, except in the beginning of the war.

[6] By this time Sarajevo was already established internationally as the symbol of Bosnian (Government's) suffering. As the international community's will to do something radical in order to stop the war was again fading away, the renewed suffering of Sarajevans - expressions as "slow strangling of Sarajevo" emerged - was hoped to remind of the untenability of the situation.

[7] The same principle was valid not only for water, electricity and gas, but also for food and wood - although here the question of supplies was different in character because market was involved. (The question of market, and specially of "black-market" and its relation to Government politics and military situation, is a subject that needs to be better described than the space in this paper allows. I have, however, noted this problem in an earlier paper: Maček 1995:16—17).
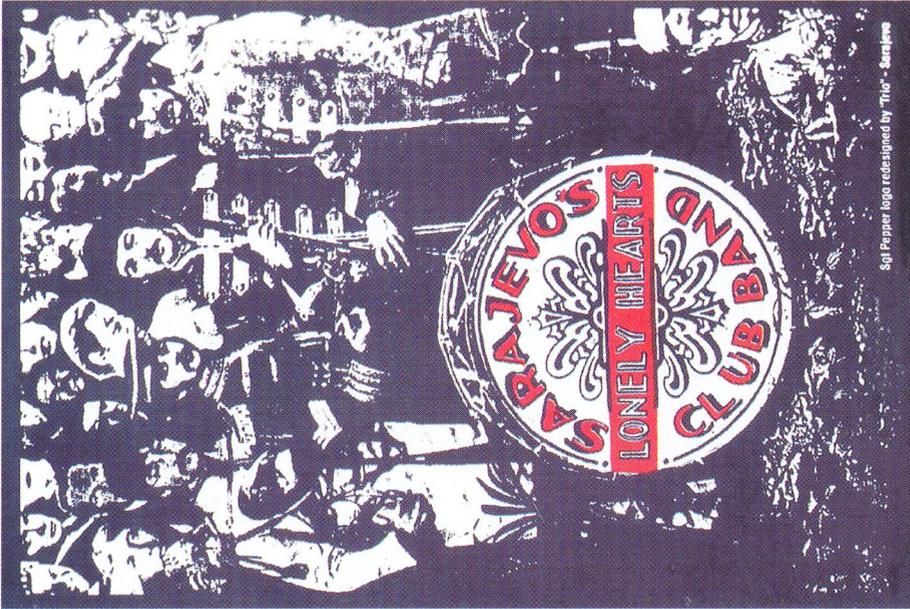
Sgt Pepper logo redesigned by "Trio" - Sarajevo

1. A Sarajevan Art-group *Trio* designed as a comment on disappointment and emotional exhaustion.
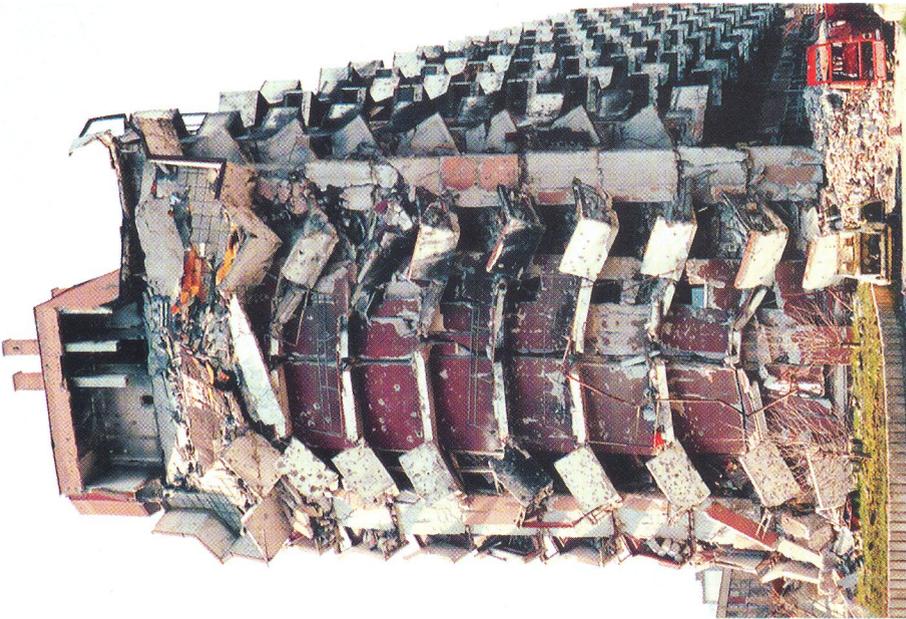

2. "*Loris*": a modern apartment building in *Hrasno*, on the first line towards Serb--held *Grbavica*) after shelling. May 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.

3. A destroyed gas station in *Grbavica*, Sarajevo, April 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.

4. Crossing the bridge of Brotherhood and Unity (*Most bratstva i jedinstva*) between Serb-held *Grbavica* and the Government-controlled parts of the Centre. Sarajevo. February 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.
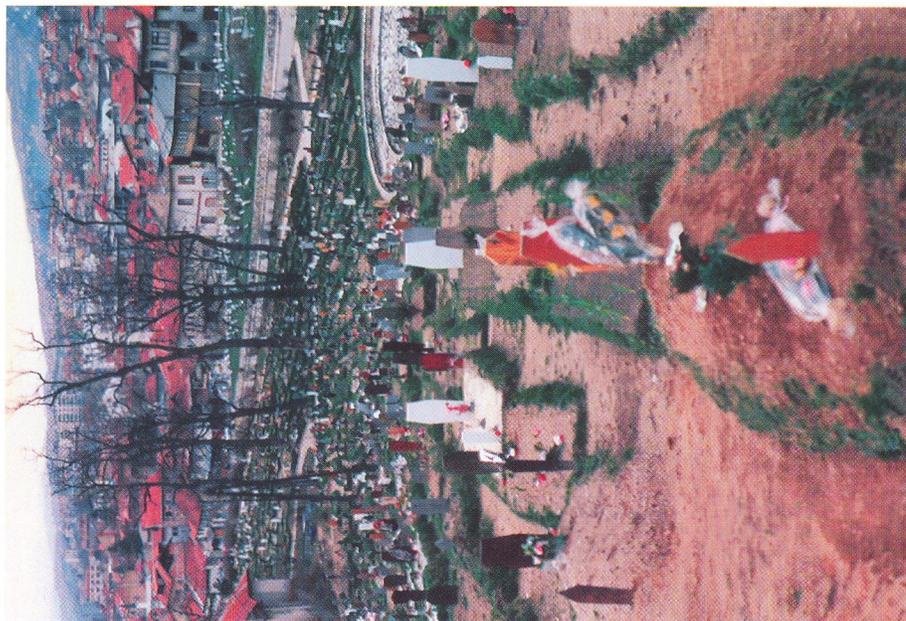
5. The old Muslim cemetery on *Kovači* was expanded by the graves of fallen Muslim soldiers (*šehidi*). Sarajevo. March 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.

6. "Dangerous Zone", says the warning sign. Most of the Sarajevans got used to dangers, and ignored them as much as possible in order to be able to go on with their lives as "normally" as possible. March 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.

7. Election campaign of the Governing party, SDA (the Party for Democratic Action, led by Alija Izetbegović). The mulit-party system and the democratic elections are important to stress for the Government in Sarajevo. On the other hand, SDA's logo is green with a half moon which is unmistakably associated with Islam, and the aim of introducing an Islamic society. Centre, Sarajevo. September 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.


8. Religious holidays entering public space. Wishes and greetings for *Ramazan Bajram* in a window of a fashion shop in central Sarajevo. February 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.

9. A dishwasher used as a food storage place since there was neither electricity nor water. Sarajevo. September 1994. Photo: Ivana Maček.

10. Flowers being sold for the 8th of March in the centre of the town. Whilst EC was sending only the basic aid (as, for example, sanitary napkins), Sarajevans needed more in order to survive not only physically, but also as socio-cultural beings. Sarajevo. March 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.
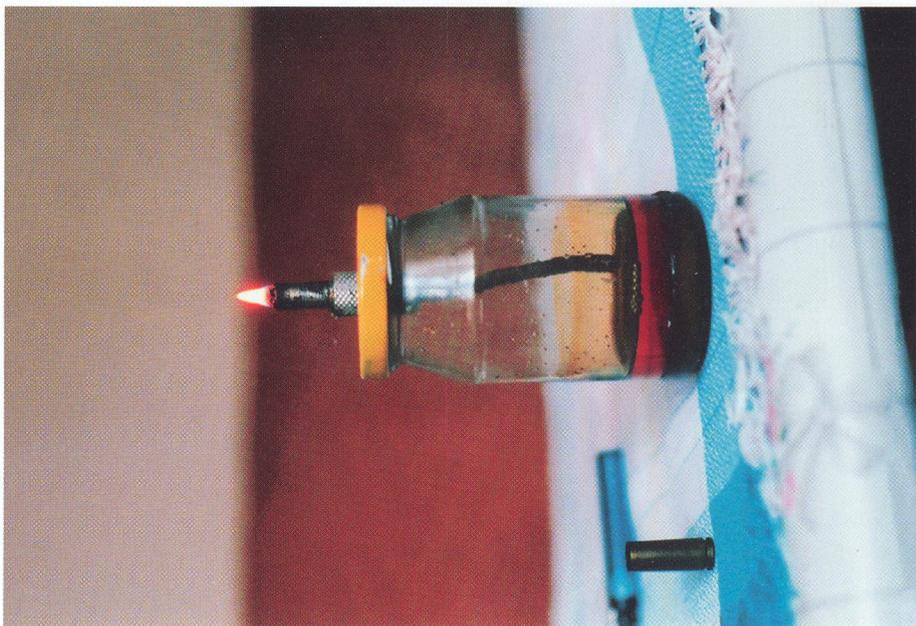
11. A home-made lamp. Sarajevo. September 1994. Photo: Ivana Maček.


12. Inventing and making ovens was a lucrative business during the war. Every household had some sort of oven for making food and warming one room during the winters - they were "ugly" and hard to afford, but they became the centre of any household. *Baš Čaršija*, Sarajevo. March 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.

13. While the town authorities can not organise garbage disposal, some people managed to provide brand new cars for themselves. Sarajevo. March 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.

14. "Maybe Airlines", chek-in for the UN flights from Sarajevo. Even UN soldiers shared the specific war-humour of Sarajevo, not understandable for higher UN diplomats. Sarajevo. October 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.
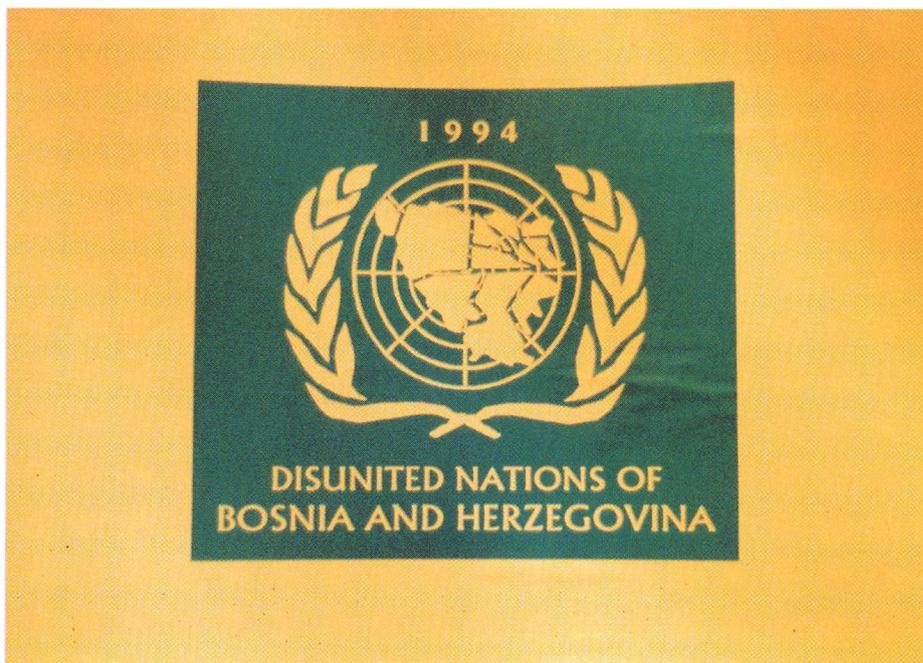
15. "Disunited nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina", a sarcastic comment by Sarajevo designers. Sarajevo. March 1995. Photo: Ivana Maček.

16. An artistic exhibition in the destroyed building of the central Post in Sarajevo. March 1996. Photo: Ivana Maček.

precious drop. This wouldn't last for more than a half an hour, and would not happen every day, but still… the waiting was worth it. Anything to avoid water-queues.

Same happened with random electricity supplies (once it started coming). People forced to spend long winter evenings in a light of a precious candle or under a weak light of a car-battery driven small bulb; people having their homes filled with modern electrical appliances which were out of use for more than two years; people tired of washing clothes by hands in tiny quantities of precious water; people ashamed of their homes which used to be vacuum-cleaned once a week… these people welcomed every second of electricity in order to re-establish the standard of living they considered decent for human beings.

The occasional coming of water and electricity made the people feel that they were able to live more normally.[8] Its randomness on the other hand had a disastrous effects on their coping with the situation:

A young woman was telling me about her mother who would have a bathroom light on, in order to wake up in case electricity came during the night (which it often did during the initial period!), so that she could get up and vacuum-clean. When the electricity came one night (at three o'clock in the morning!) also her daughter woke up. She saw that mother was too tired to do any work so she begged her to go to bed. The woman returned to her bed, but she couldn't give up the idea and couldn't fall asleep for a long time.

In the family where I lived I witnessed similar situations. One day water and electricity came at the same time. For any mother of the household this feels like winning on lottery and my hostess' reaction was the same. Although she knew that both water and electricity could disappear any second, this was her happy moment and she hurried to start the washing machine. As expected, it took less than a half an hour before machine was out of work again, and she ended up rinsing everything by hands.[9]

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[8] "Normality" here was understood to be the living standards of pre-war peaceful life they were used to living (which also generally coincides with standards of living in any western city of the same size - ca half a million).

[9] These conditions are continuing without direct connection to the military situation. In October 1995, after the still lasting (January 1996) cease-fire was declared, I saw a calendar in the kitchen of one of my friends in Sarajevo. It was filled with small notes. She explained that this was her father noting the days when the authorities said there would be water, electricity or gas. The scheme was very complicated but it was possible to work out on which days you would have for instance both water and electricity so that you could plan your laundry for that day. A month later, water, electricity and gas were once again cut off, coming just occasionally and randomly!

Being forced in this manner into just waiting and subordinating totally to whims of destiny (or of the authorities!), the "message" that was slowly but surely engraving itself into people was that they had no power over their lives (and consequently that their lives were worthless), as well as that they could not understand the logic governing their lives.

Breaking of normality as humiliation and shame: worthlessness of life and breaking of social status

The misery that I felt a day after I was shot at from Grbavica (the part of town on the Serbian side, near the centre), in front of UN soldiers in their tanks who didn't do a slightest thing to protect me,[10] can be ascribed to the same process. It was strong and paralysing in the sense that I lost all will to do anything. When I thought about it afterwards I understood that what was happening inside me was a realisation that my life - all I ever did, all my qualities and qualifications, the, as I saw it, righteous purpose of my being in Sarajevo - was no longer worth anything. After a day, when I managed to convince myself about the purpose of my stay, and when I worked out a way of exposing myself as little as possible, the misery disappeared. My world was re-established through my own re-establishment of my own values: my work and my life.

This was something that each Sarajevan was constantly exposed to and forced to deal with. As far as the people I know are concerned, periods of "strength" (whether re-established purposefulness of life - - normality, or just successful dismissal of the situation and dangers) were followed by periods of "depression" (broken normality), and then again by "strength" in a seemingly never-ending pendulum.[11]

Important to note in this process are the feelings of *shame*. When talking about their situation people would not only use the notion of "normal life" but also express the shame they felt: because they couldn't invite me for a decent (normal) meal, because their homes were not as tidy as they wanted them to be, because they lost their dignity by loosing control over their lives and destinies, because they no longer cared if somebody was killed that day (as long as it was not somebody they knew).

From full employed professionals providing a decent standard of living for themselves and their families, during the first year of the war, almost the entire population of Sarajevo was turned into charity-takers

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[10] (Although I was a holder of a UN Press Card.) Fortunately, the shots were too high to hit me and a friend who was with me.

[11] Further below (in the chapter on "Negotiation") I shall come back to some other ways of dealing with disruptions in ones life.

depending on a good will of a line of organisations (from UN, western NGO:s, religious relief organisations as Caritas, Merhamet, to Islamic relief coming mostly from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait). Examples I am about to give show how shame can gradually turn into the (normal) state of things, which indicates that a change of what is considered to be normal has taken place. This process is, of course, reversible, but most importantly, it never stops:

The couple I was staying with were university educated people in their late fifties. During the whole of their lives they could provide for themselves a decent living which included much more than basic food provision. Even during the first months of the war they could buy their own food and fuel (i.e. wood or coal, needed when electricity and gas were cut off). They simply could not face the humiliation of receiving "mercy from foreigners", as they expressed their view on humanitarian aid. Queuing for hours in cold and under the threat of shelling, in order to be given some kilograms of food, which would last only few days was unthinkable. But after some months the DM-reserves were gone, and they were compelled to apply for help from foreigners - as if they were social cases. It was a public statement of their social degradation caused by the war. By the time I stayed with them in Sarajevo, September 1994, queuing for humanitarian aid was a part of everyday life. They explained it's original humiliation to me, but they no longer felt it.

On the other hand, they still refused to take charity from "Sheikhs".[12] They rather used their own precious flour and yeast, spend almost the whole day in walking to a relative who had a wood-oven, in order to bake the bread themselves. This demanded also usage of precious wood or coal, and having to return the service to the relative sometimes in the future. But all this they could still afford. Receiving help in the name of Allah was perceived as much more degrading than losing the social status. If there is a social logic behind it, then it must be that one can become poor and still live in the same society with same norms, whilst

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[12] Private donors from Muslim countries, mostly Saudi Arabia who could, in agreement with Bosnian Government, buy bread for a whole municipality. They could do this easily because bread was subsidised by Government and UN (providing flour), and sold for so called "Bosnian coupons" which were at the time only form of payment employed people could get as salaries. Not many articles could be bought for coupons, so most of the households had plenty of them. The rate of exchange between coupons and DM was such that if one was to buy bread for one day for one whole municipality the price would be something like 3 or 4 DM. Of course, nobody would do that (or was allowed to do it!) - except for the "Sheikhs". This meant that on that day none of the Sarajevans living in that municipality could buy their bread. On the other had they could "receive" it for free as a gift from the "Sheikh". The purpose of this was to enable the "Sheikh" to do a good deed, which then gives him a higher status and counts in his afterlife!

accepting charity in Allah's name means accepting another kind of society with a whole range of different norms.

The question I asked myself at that time was how long will it take before they will have to accept this sort of charity. The answer can perhaps be given through another example. I have a friend who is a medical doctor and from a Catholic Sarajevan family. Since we met in September 1994 she could now and then make a comment on proliferation of Islam in civil and official everyday life, most often carried out by "Arabs", which she found disturbing. During my last visit (in October 1995) Saudi Arabia established a new donation to medical doctors in Sarajevo. They had been working during the whole war for free, or minimal salaries (like 10 DM in Bosnian coupons), but now the Saudis decided to donate 50 DM per medical doctor a month, which my friend was happy to receive. Although it meant going every moth with her ID-card to two Saudi Arabian representatives (one man and one woman, the woman wearing the veil in the very strict way, which very clearly communicated: "we are Muslims"), she did not make any comment on it. The money was not as much as she would have needed, but it was a welcome increase in family budget, and at that point she was glad to receive it no matter from whom and how it came.[13]

Ideological shift: "*Džamahirija*" or a western democracy?

In the last example we have already touched into one of the most sensitive questions of this war: Is there a beginning of a "*Džamahirija*"[14] (as one of the non-Muslim Sarajevans expressed himself when he came out of the town, leaving his whole life behind him forever) constituting itself in

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[13] Another friend of mine, also a medical doctor, from a Muslim Sarajevan family - though not religious - was jokingly commenting on the same situation: "Since the *Hadžije* came, I feel that I can make small gifts to myself and my family - last week I bought a chocolate bar for my seven year old nephew." "*Hadžija*" is a Muslim person going to Mecca on a *hadž*, a religious pilgrim journey each Muslim should, if possible, make once in his life. Calling the Saudi donators for *hadžije* she was making a clear critique of their involvement in Bosnia which had the purpose to provide them some spiritual "credits". But this is already reaching into subject of coping with the destruction of ones normality, and I shall come back to it later, in the chapter on "Negotiation".

[14] Word related to Arabic *jamaat* (meaning simply "community", "society", or "republic"), *Djumhur* (mass of people), *Djumhurya* (Republic), and *Djamahirya* (Gaddafi's label in Libya). In Bosnia it was though given a connotation of yet another Arabic loan word entering the official language, and what more the "Arabic political form of state" substituting the type of socialist state one was used to. One has to bear in mind also that, no matter in which way an Arabic state is organised, in Bosnia they were perceived as states with Islam officially established as social and political principle. In this way "*Džamahirija*" in Bosnia, could often sound as "fundamentalist state" does in the west. (It has been often used in Serbian press, too, in this sense.)

Sarajevo? Or, is Bosnian Government promoting a multiethnic, multi-
-religious Bosnia - in that sense resembling the one that existed before the
war, as it asserts that it does? From my experience I would argue that the
answer, quite expectedly, lies somewhere in-between, which I hope the
following discussion can show.

To be on the clear, the discomfort lot of people in Sarajevo felt
about Islam gaining more and more importance in the public space had
very little to do with its religious component. As it had been noted earlier,
people were used to Islam's presence in their surroundings, and had always
respected religious Muslims, their beliefs and customs, as any other. What
caused the uncertainty was the growing importance (and power) of Islam
in public life, which before the war was completely secularised. This could
be seen in politics, army, education, humanitarian aid, and media.

Bosnian Government was fighting hard to present a picture of itself
as a democratic government, respecting the rights of all its citizens, no
matter of which nationality. This was, of course, very hard in a war which
was designed as a war between Bosnia's major nationalities, and took place
in the middle of the process of a new ideological and political constitution
of these nationalities,[15] substituting earlier "brotherhood and unity"
ideology and policies.[16]

The presidency consisted of representatives for all major
nationalities, i.e. Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Indeed, a political
organisation for the protection of civil rights of the Sarajevo-Serbs who
stayed on the Government's side - *Srpsko građansko vijeće* - was
encouraged by the Government.[17] Even some of the Ministers were non-

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[15] The political differentiation between these groups existed already in former
Yugoslavia. Each citizen could choose between seven state proscribed "nationalities":
Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Muslim and Yugoslav. Thus, the
important change did not happen on the level of labelling, but rather because of
disappearance of the ideology of brotherhood and unity - most obvious in
disappearance of Yugoslav nationality. The feeling of unity among the Bosnian
population was not officially recognised (there is nothing such as Bosnian
nationality), whilst only one of many differences between people became emphasised
as essential - namely, the "nationality" (cf. Bringa 1993:75).

[16] The "task" Bosnian Government has in this process is rather schizophrenic. On the one
hand they are the ones who are to constitute the new Muslim identity (the term
Bosniak, *Bošnjak*, gradually substituting the pre-war category of Muslim-in-national-
-sense). On the other hand the homeland of their nation is traditionally "mixed", which
means that they can't promote the idea of nationally pure/homogenous states. A factor
that possibly "throws" the Bosnian Government into the hands of other Muslim states
more than they would like to, is the indifference that the West shows for the Bosnian
war. A factor that probably prevents a policy of islamisation (and also encourages the
Government to use democratic forms) are the ideals of western welfare (and probably
also the cultural and geographical/economic vicinity).

[17] 1995 the organisation received the Alternative Nobel Prize for Peace.

-Muslims (the number varying from time to time). On the other hand, they were ministers without portfolio, which in practice meant that all the political power lied in the hands of Muslims. The organisation for protection of Serbs' civil rights in practice functioned as an alibi for the Government - the Serbs I talked to did not feel that it gave them the sense of security in any way. What this means is that the Bosnian Government at least to a certain degree sustained an idea of co-existence and democracy.

Many people I know in Sarajevo really believed in Government's "good intentions". In that way they were able to think of their new country as the continuation of the previous one. The ones that became different and broke all moral norms were the other ones, the "Serbs" on the other side, and specially their political leaders. The concrete examples of injustice against non-Muslim and non-religious citizens could be explained by the "war situation" and belief in Governments "good intentions". (This was a way of dealing with the destruction of their previous experiences of political life: tolerant dismissal of disruptions, a sort of *denial* and *rationalisation* - cf. Suárez-Orozco above - in order to protect the "normality".)

Citizens critical of the Bosnian Government's policies interpreted all this as a mask, and every occurrence which promoted the Muslim, the Islamic, was taken as a proof of Government's "real intentions".

The appointment of Enes Karić, a PhD in Islamic Theology, as a Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports was taken as a clear sign of Islamisation of the state. Religious authorities should not have political power in a secular, multi-religious state.

This was closely connected to the education policy which as of Autumn 1994 included Religion as an optional subject from primary school onwards. The Programme of Religious Education (*Plan i program vjerskog odgoja i obrazovanja* n.d.) brought outlines for all the religions existent in Bosnia.[18] Children and their parents had a choice of whichever religion, as well as not at all taking these classes. The responsibility to organise and finance the education was left to the respective religious communities. In practice, again, this resulted in introducing Islam in most of the schools, whilst of other options only Catholic education was organised (in one or two schools). As a consequence of this, a child not wanting education in Islam was left with option of not attending these classes with its fellow classmates. As Islam was becoming a "state religion" most of the people "got the message" and sent their kids to these classes. In that way they were not "sticking out", and "anyway, living in Bosnia you have to know something about Islam," as the rationale behind it often

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[18] Islam, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Judaism and Adventism.

went. The representatives of the Bosnian Catholic Church were not pleased with this practice, since the original proposition from the Government said that Religious Education should give the children insight in all religions, a sort of "Comparative Religion" or "History of Religions", which they naturally supported.[19]

For the school year 1994/95 came also newly written school-books in most of the subjects. Not unexpectedly, the subjects of History and Language&Literature were changed in accordance with the ongoing process of Bosnian-Muslim identity formation. Let us take a look at few examples from the History book for the fourth grade of primary schools:

> ... in Middle ages Bosnia was populated by a homogenous Bosnian people, called *Bošnjani*.
>
> ... Turkish authorities populated the desolate parts of the land [desolated because of the often plague epidemics and the death of *Bošnjaci* on Turkish Empire's battlefields] by Croats and Serbs from the surrounding countries. These were mostly stockbreeders and work--elements (serfs)... So, the *Bošnjaci* Muslims were left as the only representatives of the Bosnian people - descendants of the Medieval *Bošnjani* [Imamović and Bošnjak 1994:12, my own translation].[20]

This is a typical case of constitution of a single nationality (Bosnian Muslims, today called *Bošnjaci*) as the original, and superior, people. The text is an example of the schizophrenic situation I mentioned earlier, where an Croatian author was used to justify the "political correctness" (or rather historical truthfulness) of the contents.

The same happened to the Bosnian Literature which was "cleansed" of Bosnian authors of non-Muslim origin, but mostly of Bosnian Serbian authors, among which the most remarkable was the example of Nobel Price Winner for Literature - Ivo Andrić - who was expelled from the school-books.[21] Paradoxes happened even here, since one of the Bosnian patriotic songs, which was made into a most popular tune and promoted during the war, was written by a Bosnian Serb - Aleksa Šantić. The song is talking about reasons to stay in ones fatherland, which is like a mother to one: bread is bitter abroad where there is nobody of ones own people,

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[19] The Bosnian Orthodox Church was only formally existent in Sarajevo. Its representative was not even a priest but a clergyman who was sent to Sarajevo in the beginning of the war after all Orthodox priests had fled, or were thrown out of the town. He was always invited to official ceremonies, but that was more or less all he did publicly.

[20] Note the "political correctness" in the names of the authors: one a typically Muslim one, the other a typically Croatian.

[21] There are numberless examples of how most of the "things" that represented the previous co-existence of three equal nations was substituted by new Bosnian (Muslim) representations (for example, the street names in Sarajevo).

grandfathers' graves are all-round - they were the ones who knew how to defend their country.[22] Many other of the most popular war-songs had similar subjects: about love for ones town, and contempt rather than hatred, for the people who left.

This brings us to the problem of jeopardised social networks in Sarajevo, most drastically obvious in cases of split families, friendships, neighbour-relations, and work mates-relations.

Social relations

"You should take just one family, any family in Sarajevo, and describe its destiny. That will give you the best picture of what this war made to each one of us."

A suggestion, a description, a painful cry of helplessness - this was something my host often said to me. Indeed, of all families I am acquainted with in Sarajevo, more than 2/3 lost a close family member (a child, a wife, a brother or a sister, a parent), either because they left the town, or because they got killed. If we consider all family members that were part of daily life, and if we also consider the wounded ones, the amount of the population who had suffered is likely to be near the total. Exactly what Sarajevans feel themselves.

In the beginning of the war people were reasoning only about the physical dangers, when they decided to separate for some time. Nobody thought about the effect a many-year-long separation, and anxiety because of not knowing how the dear ones are, would have on their relations. "We thought that this [war] would soon be over. Had we known that it was going to take at least several years, we would never have separated from each other." This, I have heard many times, in Sarajevo as well as from refugees abroad who had somebody left in the town.

The help to leave the town by planes, which the former Yugoslav Peoples Army gave to Sarajevans - mostly old people, women and children - was re-evaluated after the realisation of what this separation did to people. All Sarajevans I met in Zagreb or in Sweden told me that they left

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[22] Ostajte ovdje, sunce tuđeg neba/ Neće vas grijat k'o što ovo grije./ Grki su tamo zalogaji hljeba,/ Gdje svoga nema i gdje brata nije.// Od svoje majke, k'o će naći bolju./ A majka vaša, zemlja vam je ova./ Bacite pogled po kršu i polju,/ Svuda su groblja vaših pradjedova.// Za ovu zemlju oni bijehu divi,/ Uzori svijetli što branit' je znaše./ U ovoj zemlji ostanite i vi,/ I za nju dajte vrelo krvi vaše.// K'o pusta grana, kad jesenja krila/ Trgnu joj lisce i pokose ledom,/ Bez vas bi majka domovina bila,/ A majka plače za svojim čedom.//.

the town with "the last plane" or "the last bus". "Belgrade looked as Saigon these weeks" a middle aged woman told me in Zagreb in Autumn 1993.

I heard a speculation from a man in Sarajevo: "Sarajevo was never cleansed as some other parts of Bosnia, but it was done indirectly in the beginning. By splitting families they [Serbs] knew that the men who stayed behind wouldn't last long before leaving the town to join their wives and children." And this was exactly what happened in many cases, after the initial phase of local-patriotism, anger and defiance ("We felt we wanted to defend the town against the 'jerks' (*papci*) up there in the mountains") faded away and turned into disappointment and emotional exhaustion. A Sarajevan Art-group Trio designed a sharp comment on it (see the illustrations attached to this paper).

But not everybody of those who left, left in the beginning. As the situation did not get better with time passing, many decided to leave during the course of the war, and this exodus is still continuing.[23] These people knew the conditions - they had to make a decision of never coming back. Mostly, of course, they were the ones whose families already were abroad, people who could organise a flight for the whole family, or young people in search of a better start in adult life.

The circumstances of separation were tearing for the relations, specially marriages where the bond between the spouses was not strong. Some of the men, left alone in the town, after some time found another woman. Other families split when one of the spouses decided to fly the town. In case of a Serb, leaving for Serbian territories, this was specially sensitive since the chances of being accused of collaboration or at least of sympathies for (i.e. support of) the enemy. This could be devastating for the members of the family who remained on the Bosnian Government's side.

This ostracising was a more general phenomenon. Family members (specially of different nationalities, and the ones one lost touch with), friends, acquaintances, and neighbours who fled to the Serbian side were generally condemned for their choice. In the mainstream public discourse, they were seen as the traitors (of multi-ethnic Bosnia) and the ones responsible for the tragedy of war (together with the enemy). Even the people who were critical towards their Government, and for whom nationality and religion never played an important role, condemn the ones who fled to the Serbian side (again, most often in the cases where they lost

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[23] At the moment of writing this paper (January 1996) the Dayton Peace Agreement has not yet given the results in respect to larger return of the refugees. Most probably this is because no civil security measures are yet established, and no Government policy as to the treatment of returnees and deserters is put into practice.

contact): "He is a medical doctor, so I know he is not wearing a gun. I know that he is helping people. But he chose to help only one nationality - - the Serbs. I, who have stayed here, am helping everybody, no matter of which nationality. He made his choice for only one nationality."

But not everything was politically loaded. One of the rationales behind staying whilst a part of the family left the town was to keep their chances of returning. By being in the town during the whole war, one was obviously proving ones "political correctness". To have some sort of job would certainly count as an advantage after the war, and what was perhaps most important, one could take care of ones apartment and possessions.

One of the shameful episodes of this war was the plunder of the apartments left by those who fled. Lot of such apartments and houses were "squatted" by refugees coming to Sarajevo from other parts of Bosnia (mostly from Eastern Bosnia, and the Muslim population of *Sandzak* in Serbia). Sarajevans generally felt contempt for these people,[24] but at the same time they understood the need of having a roof over ones head. Having lost many of their own belongings (selling valuables to buy food, burning books and furniture for warmth, or even getting their homes destroyed by shells) Sarajevans could even empathise with refugees who had lost everything material, and often even family members. What they on the other hand could neither understand nor accept were the people, Sarajevans like themselves, plundering everything to the last bit of an installation in the apartments of their neighbours who fled. This behaviour was so disturbing that everybody I knew felt ashamed. At the same time this was the reason why many were scared to leave their apartments unwatched. The idea of ones neighbours, people one knew and had largely depended upon during the war, ravaging among ones personal possessions, was so revolting that it made the thought leaving impossible.[25]

"There will never be Sarajevo again. The town may survive and be built up, but the people who left mean that the life in it will never be the same. Because these people, and the town-life *were* Sarajevo." By this quotation, which I had heard numberless times, I would like to round up the social picture of Sarajevo. Of the 600 000 people living in the town before the war, the UN statistics for 1994 estimate the population to be 350 000, of which ca 150 000 were refugees from outside. This means that only one third of the pre-war population was left, which explains the above quoted sentiments. "I don't have a friend to go to for a talk any

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[24] They were generally regarded as primitive, destroying the culture and the picture of the town by their behaviour and looks. There were lots of jokes or anecdotes about their "uncivilizedness".

[25] The same is true of the ones who have left: one of the reasons for not wanting to return, is the thought of living in the town where ones neighbours did this sort of thing.

more," my host told me. "It was hard to meet somebody in the town even before, but after this [1995] summer, I walk on the main street, and I don't meet anybody" a young working woman told me during my last stay in October 1995. When I asked people to tell me about their friends and what happened to them, the answer I would get was: "All of my friends have left." For some of them people knew where they were, those were the friends who kept contact, those were the friends one "missed badly". Others had just disappeared, and as I said before, those were the ones people condemned.

"But, I made new friends during the war. These friendships can never be as the ones we had in the peace-time - they are short, and they are informed by this horrible situation. But perhaps just because of sharing most difficult moments, they are as strong as the old ones."

Negotiation

These words of a young woman in Sarajevo, bring us to the subject of dealing with ones situation. So far I have been discussing the disruptions that war caused in Sarajevans' normality. I have also noted the processes of integrating the new conditions into the everyday life and attitudes, which caused a change of what was perceived as normal. On several places, though, I have noted the ways in which people resisted the conditions forcing them to give up parts of their pre-war standards. In this chapter I shall take a more systematic look at the forms of negotiation occurring in Sarajevo.

In this everyday process of fighting for norms that they were not willing to give up, people of Sarajevo demonstrated a tremendous *creativity*. "Creativity" is a word often associated with artistic work, but the war conditions forced literally everybody in Sarajevo (including the artists, of course) into this amazing mental and emotional "display" of power - - power coming from a force that will for life created.[26]

Escape: leaving the town, "*prolupati*", and notion of chaos

To leave the town was one of the most obvious ways of avoiding to deal with the disrupted normality. Especially in the beginning of the war the

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[26] I would like to point here that there is a likeness between a war which forces people to be creative in order to live, and the artistic need to be creative in order to live. Perhaps it has to do with the deeply existential situation, an experience which demands creative, "artistic", ways of action and expression. This idea of an artist is certainly to a degree romantic, but I am not alone about positing this parallel (cf. Aretxaga 1993:243).

rationale behind the decision to leave was to preserve the physical life and the standard of living. But it was also an ideological escape for many people who felt that they could not live in a state where division of people into nationalities was to be the new socio-political order. The life in exile had shown that the escape was possible only to a certain degree. Ones own life was certainly protected. Material conditions of living were sometimes worse, but in many cases even better. The social position, self-esteem and social network were on the other hand lost, and only some of the refugees managed to re-establish equivalent conditions to the ones they regarded as normal before the war. The concern for ones own life was substituted by the concern for the lives of the close people who had stayed in Sarajevo, and the need to deal with ideological and political changes in Bosnia was at least as strong as for the ones who stayed.[27]

"*Prolupati*" is a war-expression hard to translate: it is a verb literally meaning something like "to break through". The expression had already appeared during the 1991 war in Croatia and was very much in use in Sarajevo, too. What it described was a state of persons who acted normally in the daily routines (supplying food, water, fuel), but who at the same time "did not care any more". Persons who lost the hope in their future, who did not have any more strength to re-establish some sort of norms in their lives, who did not care if they would get killed or not. I had firstly noticed them because they could calmly stand in an exposed place whilst the shelling was going on. An elderly man I talked to in March 1995 was not at all interested in the opportunity he suddenly got to move from Sarajevo to a house he had in a peaceful coastal part of Croatia, where his wife, daughter and grandson already were. He had no energy, no will to act in order to improve the conditions of his life. Whether this was a permanent state of mind, or just a temporary condition which could be changed was impossible for me to judge. Characteristic was the more stable condition of these people than the condition of the people who negotiated their normality. There was no longer anything they could be disturbed by, there was nothing they longed for. They had escaped from the exhausting process of negotiation of normality.

Between disruption and re-establishment of normality, there is an epistemologically empty space, a vacuum (see previous discussion). What I noticed in Sarajevo is that people with whom I had most rewarding discussions on politics and their own situation one day, could some other day express feelings of chaos. Nothing made sense, there was no

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[27] The situation of refugees is not the subject of this paper, but from my experiences I can suggest that the process of negotiation of normality in new circumstances is bound to have many similarities to the negotiation of normality in Sarajevo described in this paper.

explanations, no logic, they were tired and feeling weak. This made me realise that notion of chaos functioned as a pause, a taking of a break from the exhausting enterprise of creating normal life.

Sometimes it could also be accompanied with a sort of plea: give me an answer, explain this for me (which I rarely could). As I argued earlier (p. 2) it is not unusual that the answers are taken "from outside", not from ones own experience, when ones own energy is insufficient.

"Imitation of life":
forms of negotiating the existential and social normality

Acceptance of ones conditions and adapting to them (a change in normality) is a way of surviving, and certainly a way of negotiating normality, but it cannot be classed into resistance. On the other hand, I suggest that a *creative acceptance* of ones conditions is a form of resistance. I am thinking of all the most imaginative ways Sarajevans used to make their monotonous, tasteless food of miserable quality into tasteful and varied meals, as a way of resisting the humiliating conditions that also threatened their health and lives. Another case in question could be trying hard to find an employment. It could be said that these people had accepted the situation, but they were doing it in order to resist the destructive effect of irregularity and normlessness that the war brought. Having a job to go to meant not only some economical benefits and social contacts, but most of all it provided for a daily routine.

Another way of dealing with war conditions is to *deny* them (cf. Suárez-Orozco 1992, and the earlier discussion in this paper). In Sarajevo, there was nothing to do about the physical threat of shells and sniper bullets, and the only way of dealing with them was to find ways to ignore them.

From my own experience I found out that being with somebody and talking about something was a good way of forgetting that you were constantly within the sight (and reach) of shells and bullets. If walking alone, the best thing was to actively think about something else (about things you had to do, people you had met, things that were said, etc.)

Rationalising away the danger was another way of doing it. The probability to get killed in Sarajevo is not larger than in any big city in the world - the number of people in traffic or crime accidents in New York is larger than the number of injuries by shells and snipers in Sarajevo, I had been told. There were also stories going around about people hiding the whole war in cellars because they were afraid of getting hurt. When they, after two or three years, came out for the first time, a random shell fell and

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they got killed on the spot. The moral of the story, as in the previous one, being: there is no use of hiding or thinking about the dangers. A young soldier told me that a way of keeping your senses together at the front is to realise that the soldiers on the other side are just as scared as you are, "Everybody is scared. The important thing is not to panic, because then you're dead." As I noted, it is impossible to keep these illusions continuously intact. Everyone goes though periods of "not caring" followed by periods of "fear and feeling exposed", and so forth.

When I asked one of my friends how she felt after a shell exploded in her garden, only a few seconds after she went into the house (she was shaken by the explosion even in the house), she said "miserable". What she usually did after such an experience was to call a friend and just talk, make something special to eat or drink, "do something nice - to forget it" she concluded. Her "technique" was actually to *reaffirm life*, in some way that brought back the feeling of comfort and security.

The need to deny the war resulted also in an amazing activity in cultural life.[28] Also the public life of the town flourished as much as it could: street cafés, restaurants, fashionably dressed youths. All this, as well as some industries that continued their production during the whole war (though sometimes with very low productivity), and the well known daily *Oslobodjenje*, was the pride of Sarajevans. These were the *symbols of resistance* pointed out with pride to every visitor in the town, but the only way to make them happen was to deny the situation.

Of course, people were very well aware of their "survival techniques". That is why they often referred to their lives as "imitation of life": a preservation of "normal" forms of life by activities highly abnormal and humiliating.

Dealing with the emotional pain of separation had much in common with "mummification" that Suárez-Orozco (1992:245) found characteristic in Argentina. In both cases, the remaining members of the family were forced to deal with a close person who was no longer around, but her definite disappearance from their lives was not certain. In case of Argentinean *desaparecidos* family would keep their rooms and belongings intact, exactly as if they were still living there. In Sarajevo this was not often the case - mostly because it was practically impossible - but

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[28] As an experienced co-ordinator of Arts and Entertainment in Sarajevo during whole of his professional life in pre-war Sarajevo, my host had gathered materials about the majority of the cultural events taking place during the war. This documentation he has generously donated to me and the project I am working on ("Belonging in Bosnia: Cultural Dynamics of Collective Identities in the Context of "Dirty War", financed by FRN). Not only for this, but in the first place for the invaluable friendship and insights, I am eternally indebted to him and his wife.

the need to keep the loved ones, who no longer lived with one, in ones life was similar. This *integration* in daily life was often done by making the gone person into the purpose of ones life.[29] As very few people could find any sort of ideological commitment in this war,[30] they found this *private commitment* to the loved ones.

Naming or *expressing* the disruptions in ones normality is one of the ways of resisting the outside conditions and creating (or preserving) ones own norms. This form of resistance was flourishing in Sarajevo during the war. My host told me that he found it difficult to be a man in this war because men are supposed to be brave: "Of course, everybody is scared, but as a man you're not supposed to show it." However, most of the men I talked to expressed their fear quite clearly. Somehow, in the war, it became commonly accepted that everybody felt fear, and this shared knowledge helped enormously in coping with it.

Why artistic life was so popular with Sarajevans is not only because it was "imitating the normality", but also because the everyday common problems (and traumas) could be expressed and shared. Another typical way of commenting the situation (destruction and humiliation) was through jokes.[31]

Of course, jokes and artists are often not just expressing problems, but also making *sarcastic comments or critique*.[32] I have referred to Taussig's notion of "despair and macabre humour" (1992:18). This I found highly true of the situation in Sarajevo. Many of the jokes were impossible to tell outside the town: people who did not have the same ("macabre") experiences had no references by which to appreciate a joke. Instead, they tended to find it disturbing and morbid.

In their daily lives people made all they could to *verbally revenge* on the ones that they saw as the cause of a certain disruption: the 20 years

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[29] I know people who fought for their life in Sarajevo only because they did not want to worry their family members who left the town. People could say that the only meaning with life they had was to once more see their loved ones. Also, the explanation why one did not leave the town with the rest of the family was often to give them (wife, children, parents) the opportunity of return once the war was over.

[30] This is a general characteristic of our contemporary wars (the ones Nordstrom calls "dirty wars"). Any other sort of commitment was also rare. I believe that there were some cases of religious commitment. Patriotic commitment had mostly disappeared after the first war year (see p. 12). There were some people who found interest, rather that commitment, in politics or economy, but these were a minority (though certainly a powerful one!).

[31] As an example, the joke that runs: "How does a smart Bosnian call a stupid one? - By the phone from abroad!" is basically only expressing one of the most acute dilemmas during the war - to leave or not to leave. By sharing the joke, people are letting each other know that they share the same problem.

[32] See as an example group *Trio* and their design — illustration No. 1.

old biscuit that was sent as humanitarian aid from the USA they named "Vietnam cookie" (implying that USA was getting rid of the reserves left over from the Vietnam war); in jokes snipers are made fools; the Muslim donators are called for "*Hadžije*" (implying that they are using the Sarajevans' tragedy to gain some "credits" with Allah - see footnote 13). That this sort of phenomenon is to expect in any similar situation can be supposed since even the UN soldiers stationed in Sarajevo adopted the same sense of humour: They called their air-bridge to Sarajevo for "Maybe Airlines" (insinuating that anything can happen, and that in Sarajevo no "normal" rules can be counted with), and last time I was there they made a little "advertisement":[33]

BREAKFAST IN SARAJEVO

LUNCH IN ZAGREB

DINNER BACK HOME

(EUROPE ONLY!)

WE CAN HELP YOU!

MAYBE AIRLINES

Lastly, I would like to come back to the reflection on new friendships by a young woman with which I introduced the chapter on negotiation (see p. 43). I have experienced this a lot. In the short time I had spent in Sarajevo I can say that I had gained at least some friends for whom I feel as strongly as for any of my out-of-Sarajevo-peace-time friends. This would never had been possible without the war conditions we were sharing. In the same manner I had "acquired" a war-family. The feeling I often had of being a "wrong person" when meeting parents, siblings or friends of refugees I knew from Zagreb and Sweden, was induced by warmth and happiness they showed towards me - as if I was the person they missed. In the beginning I felt bad about it. I felt guilty of having the privileged status of freedom of movement which these people, although deserving it by all standards, did not have. I also felt bad about receiving all this emotional capital which I had not deserved in any way (except by knowing the persons that were so much missed). But after some time I

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[33] The "advertisement" was possible to hang up since Yasushi Akashi's (UN's highest - - civilian - commander of the operation in former Yugoslavia) resignation. He was the one who in 1993 prohibited the "joke". In 1994 a UN officer was complaining to me. "It is a bad sign if the highest authority for the whole operation does not have a sense of humour." In accordance with my discussion I would "correct" the officer and say that Akashi did not have the "Sarajevan sense of humour", and this would imply that he did not have the same life-references as the civilian population (and UN soldiers) did. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the UN operation really did not do much for the people in Sarajevo!

myself started creating a new social (and emotional) network, and in talking with people I realised that these new-bonds were something most common during the war. Filling the old needs with new people was normal in Sarajevo. It was not a substitution for the ones who were missed, but a *substitution for the social and emotional needs* they used to provide.

"Merhaba, Sir": forms of negotiating the ideological normality

On pp. 36—38 I noted the differences between how people in Sarajevo perceived the political (ideological) changes introduced during the war. The part of population which wanted a secular western-type democracy to live in was usually very sceptical towards Government's policies and often pointed out the growing tendencies towards Muslim domination and Islamization of the society. They lived and fought for the ideals they were living by before the war. Often they were called Yugo-nostalgists (*jugonostalgičari*), although this was misleading. As I had witnessed in several official places, some people refused to take away president Tito's picture from the office walls, for example. This was not because they were nostalgic about the old regime, often they could be very critical of it. The picture was rather a protest against the new regime. It simply said: "I refuse *this*!"

"Merhaba, Sir" was the tittle of one such article published during the war,[34] where author was pointing towards the un-naturalness of using foreign words in everyday language ("Merhaba" comes from a Turkish word for greeting, itself Arabic in origin). The argument was very characteristic of feelings shared by many people I had met: "We have our words for greeting [Bosnian, South-Slavic], so why should we now suddenly use foreign words!? If you want to greet someone in Turkish, then you should be consequent and say also "Sir" in Turkish. So, either you speak Bosnian (*"Dobar dan, Gospodine"*, meaning "Good Day, Sir") or you speak Turkish ("Merhaba, Efendi"). But saying "Merhaba, Sir" is a jumble - a way of trying to "please" the authorities and show your Muslim

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[34] During the whole war there was always some independent media active in Sarajevo. This may come as a surprise, specially if compared to neighbouring Croatia where the war was not so devastating, but the censorship was relatively higher which resulted in very few independent newspapers. As of 1995 there is one independent TV channel (*Studio 99*), few independent radio stations (*Radio 99, Radio Zid*), and quite a few independent and politically critical weeklies. I thought it most interesting that the Government never bothered critical journalists, whilst in Serbia and even Croatia this was known to happen. A journalist explained to me that the part of population reached by the independent press was so small, specially if compared to the amount of population reached by radio and TV almost entirely under Government's control, that they were no serious ideological threat. So, by letting the independent press exist, the Government could also gain some "credits" as to it's "democrativeness".

cultivation, whilst actually not knowing how to do it. The bitterness these critical people felt was in the first place towards the so called neo-Muslims (or the "April Muslims")[35] - the ones who became very much Muslims since the beginning of the war. On the other hand, people who were known to be religious Muslims all their lives, and who used Turkish words in the private, were respected.

Let us now turn towards all those people in Sarajevo who supported the Government's policies, and who accepted new tendencies in the society. Basically they can be divided into three categories: the ones who did it because they felt that it was "the way things are nowadays" and after all "this is our Government, and every Government has it's good and bad sides"; the ones who were completely re-interpreting their pre-war experiences and perceptions of religion and the inter-national relations in their socio-political lives; and the ones who had always had the attitude that more of the (mostly Ottoman) traditions of the Bosnian society should be part of the daily socio-political life. But no matter to which category they belonged, they were all understanding, explaining and supporting the introduced changes, arguing that there is a tradition of both Turkish loan words and of Islam in Bosnia. Greetings like "merhaba" are explained by a large number of Turkish loan words in Bosnian variant of former Serbo--Croatian language, which were in use all the time, but were abolished from official language by the previous regime. The same goes for other language changes (like introduction of letter "h" sometimes in most curious places in words), re-interpretations of literature, history, and the general revaluation of Islam's importance for the society.

But I found that very few people supported an introduction of Arabic loan words in the language, as well as the disturbing presence of "Arab missionaries" who seemed to have quite a large power over the socio-religious issues. Also the "stamp" that fundamentalism was gaining ground in Bosnia was strongly opposed. These reactions were closely connected to the fear of a new Islamisation of Arab provenance, which was seen as something non-Bosnian - an attempt to change the society and customs from outside. Arab language was always a part of religious practice and education, the argument could go, but traditionally there were very few Arabic loan words in Bosnian language, and so it should stay.

One day I went for a walk with my hosts in the old parts of the town. We came to a small mosque and my host wanted to show it to me from inside. As it happened, there was a prayer going on so we decided to wait until it was over. When people came out of the mosque, we asked a man

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[35] They were called "April Muslims" or also "Muslims '92" since the war in Bosnia started in April 1992.

who was responsible for the building if we could take a look and he agreed, but then suddenly a young man who was sitting near the entrance said that non-Muslims were not allowed to enter a mosque. He was dressed very formally in a dark suit and tie, he was dark-haired and had a carefully cut beard and moustache - obviously a foreigner, one of the "missionaries". My host and another elderly local man started arguing with him that this was not true. The young man told them that this was what Koran said. I could see how anger escalated in the faces of my host and the elderly local man, both of whom had a quite good knowledge of Koran and Islam. It did not help. The "missionary" was determined on this point, so we left the place without getting into the mosque. I could see a sort of apology on the local elderly man's face. Afterwards the people to whom I told the story referred to the young "missionary" man as the "Arab".

"They come here and they think that they can teach us what Islam is! We have been Muslims as long as they did, and we have our own Islam in Bosnia. It has always been possible to enter a mosque or a church, no matter of your own religion, as long as you did not disturb the religious sermon", a young *bula* (female student of Islam theology and teacher of Islam in a primary school) that I came to know said when she heard the story. She and her husband, as their whole families, had always been Muslims and believers, and they were obviously disturbed by these new tendencies.

He, who was the officer in the Bosnian Army, and politically active in the Government Party *SDA*, was upset also by the image of Bosnia that he felt was spreading abroad. "*We* are the "fundamentalists" they are talking about!" Since he was not prepared to include the "Arab missionaries", *Mudžahedin*[36]-soldiers or any other "signs" of more dogmatic islamistic presence, as parts of the Bosnian society, he perceived himself of being labelled as fundamentalist because of his Muslim faith and praying five times a day, as well as because of fighting for his Government, his country and his people.

In this reaction he was not alone. People in Sarajevo were all upset about this "fundamentalist" label. No matter to which of the above stated "categories" of (Muslim) Government supporters they belonged, or of which nationality or faith they were, this was something that was unifying for the Sarajevo population.

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[36] "*Mudžahedin*" (pronounced Moojahhedeen) in Bosnian war came to label Muslim soldier from other Muslim countries who came to fight in Bosnia for the Muslim side (i.e. Government side - although it is said that the Government had sometimes difficulties in controlling the *Mudžahedin*-units), seeing the war as "holy" (*jihad*).

On the other hand, it could be said that during the war an almost complete division of the population in accordance with their nationality was accomplished. In the case of the ones that adopted new national ideologies this was very obvious.[37] But, although in considerable numbers, this was not the most typical attitude I had met in Sarajevo. In fact, most of the people would express tolerance towards all nationalities and religions, but when it came to the way they told their stories (anecdotes, or jokes), it could be easily seen with which "side" they were sympathising and identifying themselves.

Although a Muslim-Croat Federation formally exists since 1994, this could not be felt in the life of ordinary people. I shall illustrate this by two stories (anecdotes), both describing how the Bosnian Army (Government controlled) was not at all fundamentalist nor specially "Muslim", although there were some regulations that could have been interpreted in that way.[38] One was told by a woman sympathising with the Government, and the other by a young woman from a Catholic Sarajevan family, critical towards the Government. Both of these women do not consider nationality (or religion) to be an important characteristic for a person, but from the anecdotes they told me it can be seen how they chose a "side" in the conflict to sympathise (identify) with.

First story: "Our army was much weaker than the Serbs on the other side of the forest. The situation was so bad that they sometimes used even coins as ammunition. But they wanted really badly to push back the Chetniks,[39] so they decided to pretend that they were a *Mudžahedin*-unit. And, you know how Chetniks are frightened of *Mudžahedins*! Of course

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[37] Since the part of Sarajevo where I worked was under the Bosnian Government's control (with the project of building a new Muslim identity) the ones who adopted Croatian or Serbian national doctrines left the town. That is why I encountered mostly people of either strong Muslim conviction, or the ones who still did not consider the differences between the nationalities as important (in accordance with the pre-war state-doctrine).

[38] For example, Muslim religious customs - as prayers or Ramazan-fast - were organised in most of the units, although soldiers were not only Muslim believers but also Agnostics, Atheists, Catholics and Orthodox.

[39] "Chetnik" is a label that became more and more used to describe "the enemy soldier". This was in order to make a difference between "Serbs", who can be also "good/decent/normal" people, and the ones who joined the "other side" in the war. The word was also loaded with the moral condemnation: "the ones who fight unfairly", "the ones who behave like non-humans", "the ones that slaughter women, children and destroy everything people have". Shortly, "chetnik" was a "bad person". This could cause paradoxical situations, as when a *bula* (woman, teacher of Islam in Koran-school, always in Muslim clothes and veil) was hitting her son in the backyard of a few-story house. The neighbours thought that she was too brutal so one of them started screaming. "Stop the Chetnik-woman (*četnikuša*)! She'll kill the child!" To say to a *bula* that she is a chetnik is a contradiction i terms. This "mistake" was however very possible in the situation as in Sarajevo where word "chetnik" came to mean a "bad person".

there are not many such units, it's mostly the rumours about them, but still, it is a good way to frighten the Chetniks. So, our guys started shooting with all weapons they had, and went to an open attack shouting "Allah u--ekber!".[40] The Chetniks , of course, thought that they were attacked by *Mudžahedins* so they ran away terrified" [Fieldnotes, March 1995].

Second story: "I have a friend who is a medical doctor with the Bosnian Army stationed on *Bjelašnica*, and he told me how tragicomic it gets when the (Muslim) soldiers up there get drunk and faint in a bush, or somewhere like that. When they are found, they are brought to him, and he has to write a diagnosis. Of course, since Muslims do not drink (sic!), he is not allowed to write that they were dead-drunk, but instead he writes "a sudden attack of epilepsy". So, in that way, if you hear about a tremendous increase of epilepsy attacks during the war, you'll know where it comes from!" [Fieldnotes, March 1995].

The sympathies in the first story lie obviously with "our guys", Bosnian Army soldiers. In the second story they are made fools of. But in both stories it is clear that the Bosnian Army is not religiously strictly Muslim, and specially not fundamentalist.

Conclusion

What I am proposing in this paper is an interpretation of the situation of civilians in the war-torn Sarajevo.

I hope that the examples I have chosen could illustrate how thoroughly the war has impacted all segments of the civilian life in Sarajevo - from purely physical survival, social positions and relations, to ideological, political and religious values.

I also hope that it can be a contribution to the growing body of anthropological research in the situations of systematic terror against the everyday life of civilians. By putting together research results of other authors, in the introductory part, an then adding my own results from the materials from Sarajevo I can now suggest a following model:

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[40] "Allah u-ekber!" is the Bosnian variant of the Muslim expression "God is Big". In this war it became associated with the *Mudžahedin*-soldiers (or, in other words, "Muslim fundamentalism").

PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION

PEACE   **PEACE**

WAR = VIOLENCE / DISRUPTION (as existential threat)
(as ideological change)
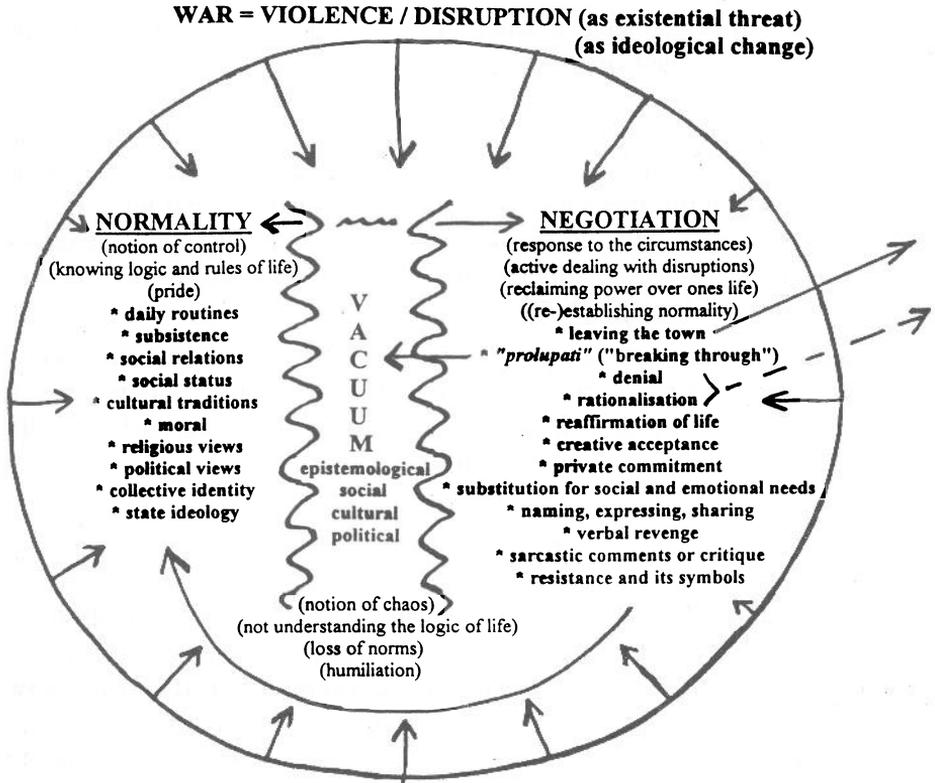
Presenting a diagram is always a problematic task, although it can be a fruitful way of systematising and synthesising ones ideas. I chose to use the above presented diagram primarily as a *tool* for summing up this discussion, rather than as a structure of the discussed phenomena.

I would like the reader now to look at the diagram as a theoretical field of structures and processes which were informing the everyday reality of people living in Sarajevo during the 1992—1995 war. What every Sarajevan was experiencing during the war was the effect of a random combination of any amount of spots noted on the diagram, the combinations changing their contents with time.

For example, when my host and I were not allowed to enter a mosque by an "Arab missionary" (c.f. p. 51), he experienced a strong disruption (a spot within the circle of "war") in the "spots" of daily routines

("it has always been possible to enter any religions temple"), cultural traditions, religious views, political views, collective identity, and state ideology. He also experienced the "spots" of denial (of the change in daily routines), of resistance (towards the disruption of his cultural traditions), of verbal revenge, naming and sharing, and resistance (towards changes in religious views, political views, his collective identity, and state ideology). In this example, he was experiencing at least eleven "spots" on the diagram.

I have to stress once more that it is only theoretically possible to deconstruct experiences of war in this way. Any person involved in such circumstances experiences illogical events, feelings, and personal decisions that (s)he made (in this text called "disruptions" and "negotiations") in an almost instinctive struggle for normality of life.

I have placed the "process of negotiation" on the top of the diagram since I want to suggest that this process is not specific to the war situation only. It happens also in peace time circumstances, although not so fast and less explicit. However, I want to posit that the violent circumstances not only make the process more "visible", but that they also change the contents of it. I suggest that the changes of normality that occurred in Sarajevo during the war period would have taken a different turn in peaceful circumstances.

The "war" is presented as a circle with centripetal arrows of violence/disruption effecting the whole field. The intention is to evoke the feeling of being caught in an everyday situation, filled with social, cultural and political meanings and processes, and at the same time being continuously exposed to violence and disruption. "Peace" is placed in two upper faraway corners, thus symbolising the notion of peace being something positive and desirable (high position), as well as out of reach.

For understanding the sub-field of "normality" it is essential to bear in mind the normality before a disruption happens, as well as the (physical and political) forces behind the disruption. Only in that way it is possible to understand the formation of "new normality", and the constitution of the sub-field of "normality" as a complex mixture of new and old. For example, in order to understand the changes that took place in the political normality among the civilian population in Sarajevo (c.f. previous discussion on subtle differentiation of collective identities), it is necessary to consider the forces that were informing the political space: the former Yugoslav state ideologies that were people's pre-war normality, new national ideologies put forth by the newly established political elites, war experiences which had to be negotiated in terms of these two, as well as the foreign involvement.

The sub-field of "negotiation" is consists of a line of processes (responses and strategies) through which disruptions are dealt with. As opposed to model suggested by Suárez-Orozco, which took place over a longer period of time and in a changing political situation, what I propose here is a more random nature of processes happening in a relatively homogenous political and military circumstances.

The proposed theoretical frame is based on my research of the specific case of civilian life in Sarajevo, but I suggest that it might have broader implications for other resembling situations.

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DOGOVARANJE NORMALNOSTI U SARAJEVU TIJEKOM RATA 1992.—1995.

SAŽETAK

Članak donosi sažet opis rata u Sarajevu, te predlaže antropološku interpretaciju promjena u svakodnevnu životu civilnog stanovništva grada tijekom troipogodišnje opsade.

Teorijska se podloga članka temelji na nizu antropoloških studija takozvanih "prljavih ratova" (dirty wars), koje su se pojavile u literaturi tijekom posljednjih desetak godina. Sličnost sa sarajevskom situacijom je u osnovnom polazištu da je fizička destrukcija tijekom rata usmjerena na civilno stanovništvo, civilni način života, te osnovna kulturološka i ideološka vrednovanja određenog društva (što je u suprotnosti sa uobičajenim interpretacijama drugih društvenih disciplina koje rat promatraju sa gledišta društvenih institucija, fizičku destrukciju vide kao okršaj dviju vojski, a logiku rata objašnjavaju gospodarskim, političkim i vojno-strateškim okolnostima).

Rat u Sarajevu opisan je kao društveni proces tijekom kojega se značenje pojma "normalnost" mijenja i istodobno poprima nova značenja (process of negotiating normality). Ovaj je proces prikazan na egzistencijalnoj i društvenoj razini svakidašnjice, kao i na političkom i ideološkom planu. Za sam su proces važna tri stupnja: prvobitna "normalnost", narušavanje normalnog života fizičkom destrukcijom koja uzrokuje epistemološku destrukciju društva (dakle, rat ne samo da ugrožava goli život nego u stanovništvu uništava predodžbe o društvenim i ideološkim normama), te ustoličenje novih društvenih normi.

Prikaz društvenih promjena nastalih u Sarajevu tijekom rata počinje kratkim opisom političke ideologije bratstva i jedinstva u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, kao i neprimjerenosti novoprocvalih nacionalnih ideologija u samom Sarajevu uoči rata.

Proces promjena normi u ratu opisan je u dva dijela. U prvom je dijelu prikazana destrukcija društvenog života. Nelogičnosti i nepravilnosti u opskrbi najnužnijim potrepštinama za opstanak (vodom, hranom te energentima - strujom, plinom i drvima) uzrokovale su u ljudima osjećaj gubitka kontrole nad vlastitim životom te time dovele u pitanje životne i društvene vrijednosti, što se često očitovalo kao osjećaj srama i poniženja.

Prijeratna ideologija socijalističkog društva, gdje je nacionalni osjećaj bio potisnut u drugi plan, zamijenjena je novom ideologijom uhvaćenom u proturječnostima.

S jedne strane u proturječnosti između Zapada i Istoka, tj. između demokracije i islamske države, a s druge strane u proturječnosti konstituiranja nove bošnjačke nacije, tj. u proturječnosti između principa "jedna nacija - jedna država", te bosansko-hercegovačkog multinacionalnog iskustva i stvarnosti.

Slijedi opis drugog stupnja u procesu promjene normi - bijeg, koji može biti fizički (izbjegliištvo) ili mentalni. Mentalni bijeg može biti duži ("prolupati") ili kraći (osjećaj kaosa).

Treći stupanj analize društvenih promjena u ratu opisuje različite načine pomoću kojih su Sarajlije uspostavljale normalnost u svojoj ratnoj svakidašnjici. U tome neprekidnom procesu iskazala se neograničena količina kreativnosti, karakteristična za egzistencijalne društvene okolnosti. "Imitacija života" je pojam kojim su same Sarajlije najbolje opisale svoj život - život u kojem su da bi održali "normalan život" bili prisiljeni na nenormalno i poniažavajuće ponašanje. Na ideološkom planu rat je omogućio nacionalnu podjelu bosansko-hercegovačkog stanovništva. Osnovne kategorije koje su se pojavile u Sarajevu su: protivnici sadašnjeg režima, pobornici sadašnjeg režima (od oportunista do pravih nacionalista), tzv. "aprilski Muslimani" (s novopobuđenim osjećajem muslimanstva), te "pravi Muslimani" (prijeratni vjernici). S druge strane, ratno iskustvo je ujedinjujući čimbenik za cjelokupno stanovništvo, koje stoga dijeli otpor spram arapskog utjecaja u Bosni i Hercegovini (arabizmima u jeziku, misionarima u džamijama, te nazivu "fundamentalizam"), te prezir spram zapadnjačke inercije i nezainteresiranosti.