

# **Should I stay or should I go now?**

The changing role of international organizations in the  
media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Centre for International Conflict Analysis and Management  
(CICAM)

-Radboud University Nijmegen-



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\*Song by The Clash, 1981.



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## List of abbreviations

AU	African Union
BHT 1	Televizija Bosne i Hercegovine / Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiH	Bosne i Hercegovine / Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FBiH	Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine / Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FTV	Federal Television
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
LCY	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RNTC	Radio Netherlands Training Centre
RS	Republika Srpska
SAA	Stabilisation and Accession Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization





# 1. Introduction

History has illustrated that the media can trigger people all over the world to use violence or can play an important role in mobilizing population groups. The impact of media on the escalation of conflicts is widely recognized. Hitler used the media to create a view of hatred for Jews, homosexuals and other minority groups. Radio RTLM in Rwanda stimulated listeners to kill what they called the cockroaches (a racial slur referring to the Tutsi of Rwanda), and broadcasters in the Balkans polarized local communities (Bratic & Schirch, 2007, p. 7). The Serbian media for example revived news of a decades-old conflict and atrocities and used it as a part of a campaign of propaganda and hate speech, to motivate popular sentiment against Albanians and others (Howard, 2002, p. 3).

In all these cases the media serves as a frightful weapon of violence, it propagates messages of intolerance or incorrect information, which manipulates public sentiment. In this way one can illustrate that media can turn a blind eye to societal inadequacies and the root causes of conflict. The media can contribute to perpetuating prejudices, stereotypes and hate speech against other parts of the population, using ethnic, religious or cultural identities (Bonde, in Loewenberg & Bonde, 2007, p. 11).

In many conflict areas the media was not actively engaged in creating hatred, but it neglected to report on inadequacies and root causes of conflict and thereby threatened the stability of a society. The reasons for this can be diverse, some say it is a lack of editorial independence, or loyalty towards a certain group, or lack of professionalism, or even a combination of these (Bonde, in Loewenberg & Bonde, 2007, p. 13). With a lot of support from international organizations these issues are being targeted, and this support is an important part of this research.

However there is also another aspect to the media. The media's potential role in contributing to change on a large scale is unique. It can be an instrument in preventing escalation of conflicts or creating peace and reconciliation, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. This is a professional and responsible kind of media which works on accountability and exposes abuse. It is that kind of media that enables a society to make well informed choices, and thereby works as a precursor of democratic governance, reduces conflict and fosters human security (Howard, 2002, p. 1). It is this kind of media which conflict prevention and peacebuilding professionals can use in harmony with other programs for the most strategic impact in reducing the polarization between groups.

From the beginning of the war until now the international community provided significant support to media in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Media support became a significant and central strategy for the international community to address a range of political and social issues. To cite one example: The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representative on freedom of media, recognizes the unique role of media in conflicts. In former Yugoslavia, the media, the broadcast media in particular, influenced the break-up of the country and the war that followed. At that time political leaders controlled the local outlets<sup>1</sup> of the state broadcasting network and used them to promote ethnic nationalism and hatred and to create fear. The OSCE recognizes this essential role of media when trying to prevent it from falling under the thumb of government officials or political party leaders (Haraszti, 2007, p. 7).

Since the end of the war most media support in the conflict torn parts of Yugoslavia began as direct support for media outlets and for content, with more or less clear political

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<sup>1</sup> A media outlet is a publication or broadcast organization.

objectives. These political objectives include for example enabling leadership changes through counterbalancing official (state owned) media sources or reinforcing the Dayton peace agreement. The political objectives are rarely articulated by media supporting organizations and are usually mixed with more general political objectives like the promotion of human rights, the freedom of expression and political pluralism, which are expressed as goals of their programs.

The organizations involved in supporting media outlets argue that editorially independent, public-service oriented and responsible media cannot exist outside of a democratic political environment in which power is constrained by civil society. In his assessment of ten years of media support to the Balkans, Rhodes (in Rhodes, 2007, p. 16) even argues that for a responsible media to exist, the need for a democratic political environment is a prerequisite. Media operating on the principles mentioned above moves societies towards democracy and human rights protection (Rhodes, 2007, p. 16-18). The role of international organizations in supporting media lies at the core of this research. Policy of international media organizations, as discussed in the next sections, changes over time. And this changing policy influences the role of media in society. But what causes the change of policy of international organizations? During this research I will try to find an answer on this question.

### ***Recent developments within the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina***

Having addressed the importance of the media within conflict it is time to look at the recent developments within the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The bloody three-way ethnic conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 90s was strongly media-driven, both from sources inside as well as from Serbia and Croatia. When the international interference stopped the conflict by the Dayton Agreement in 1995, several media related projects were incorporated. These projects made an attempt to reconcile ethnic communities and break down entity borders through de-ethnicized national media. However the media continued to play a negative role. Politics kept on using the media for political goals and several journalists were victims of political violence. By September 2006, the media was still accused of stirring ethnic antagonisms in the course of a national election campaign (Rhodes, 2007, p. 15).

During 2007 the pattern of nationalistic arguments and debates, which dominated the post-war period, continued (Džihana, 2008, n.p.). These negative developments were more or less stopped by negotiations with the representatives of the six leading political parties, held on 28 October 2007, which resulted in signing the Declaration on the Police Reform Process (Džihana, 2008, n.p.).

This positive development was one of the main reasons for initializing the Stabilization and Accession Agreement (SAA) between the EU and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the 4th of December 2007. This step confirmed according to some, the dedication of the Bosnia-Herzegovina authorities in implementing police reform, reform of the Public Broadcasting System<sup>2</sup>, and restructuring of public administration, as well as in ensuring full cooperation with The Hague Tribunal (Džihana, 2008, n.p.).

The abovementioned developments have influenced the functioning of the media in a positive way, because they encouraged the development of a democratic political environment and thereby a basis for civil society. Which as I explained before is necessary for a

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<sup>2</sup> Although digitalization of the broadcasting sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of the preconditions for meeting European standards, it is not recognized as a priority by governments and political parties. The strategy for transitioning from analog to digital broadcasting is still not developed.

responsible media to exist. However the media landscape of Bosnia Herzegovina remains fragmented along ethnic lines. The idea of unbridgeable differences among different ethnic groups and their conflicting national interests is still being reproduced and reinforced. There are plenty examples of political structures influencing the media to promote their political agendas (Džihana, 2008, n.p.).

One of the most striking cases was a boycott of the state-wide public broadcaster BHT1 by the Government of the Republika Srpska (RS), which began on the 12th of January 2007. Government officials refused to give any statements to BHT1 journalists and stated that this was a response to inadequate treatment of RS authorities, and all institutions and individuals from this entity of Bosnia Herzegovina in the BHT1 program. While the boycott was supported by various institutions, organizations and NGOs from the RS, there were also people who saw it as drastic, unfounded and illegal, because RS officials had not previously used legal and legitimate means of expressing their disapproval. The entire affair ended after the director general of BHT1 and RS government representative signed an agreement on 30 January 2007 and declared that “BHT 1 will inform citizens in all of Bosnia Herzegovina objectively, timely, and impartially.” (Džihana, 2008, chap. Media Sustainability Index Bosnia-Herzegovina).

The research panel of the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) (Džihana, 2008, chap. Media Sustainability Index Bosnia-Herzegovina) argues as in previous years that the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina is still a largely underdeveloped market because it is characterized primarily by fragmentation along ethnic lines and a large number of (ethnically divided) outlets continuing to compete within the media landscape. Other problems the research panel mentions are vulnerability to political pressure and lack of mechanisms that make violations of ethical standards and decline in quality of journalism less probable. The low socio-economic status of journalists was pointed out as the most prominent problem that can lead to low quality of journalism, self-censorship and corruption among journalists (Džihana, 2008, chap. Media Sustainability Index Bosnia-Herzegovina).

### ***The current character of media assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina***

Recently some people argue that donors began an exit process. The idea of this process is that assistance is being given for a fixed period of time, and the exit strategy is designed to secure the investment that has been made by the donor organization in the area. The dilemma of this process emerged from the wide belief in market sustainability, because ‘how should you handle media that serves their purposes but can not easily conform to the new challenges of post-conflict markets’ (Rhodes, 2007, p. 18)? Some international organizations seem to believe that media which serves its purpose will survive when international support reduces and eventually disappears. The question is: what to do with media that also serves a good purpose, but can not survive on its own? In other words the question facing donor organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina is: What to do with local organizations which can not survive without international support?

This so-called exit process of international organizations leaving Bosnia-Herzegovina, lies at the core of this research. A policy which responding to the prevailing conflict stage and media environment, requires careful assessment of the situation and any proposed intervention. As time passes by more and more international organizations, which were involved in media assistance in former Yugoslavia, reprioritize the countries they are working with and shift their focus towards other current conflict regions. When looking more specific at the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina one important question rises: Is the changing policy of international media organizations desirable when looking at the current political and social developments in this country?

To provide you with a satisfactory answer on this question this research focuses on one organization in particular which has been involved in media assistance for Bosnia-Herzegovina since the beginning of the war: Press Now.

### ***The mission of Press Now in Bosnia-Herzegovina***

When looking into the Dutch involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina one soon discovers a remarkable large interference of the Dutch government. While addressing the remarkable large interference of the Dutch government in Bosnia-Herzegovina it is important to provide some numbers as well. Relatively speaking the Dutch government is the largest donor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in absolute numbers it takes a second place just after the United States of America. This intense involvement is partly because of the sense that the Dutch have not been able to prevent the murdering of thousands of Muslims after the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995. From 1992 until 1996 the Dutch government spent over €200 million on emergency and rehabilitation aid in the former Yugoslavia. The largest part of this amount was spent in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From 1997 until the end of 2001 €386 million was donated to Bosnia-Herzegovina and in 2002 another €31 million (Campschreur, 2002, p.68). After 2002 the Dutch government decided to spend less money on Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite the fact that the country was still not stable. They aimed at shifting the focus of aid from large financial humanitarian contributions towards less expensive activities focusing on sustainable development.

Over time Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Press Now have taken up the task to strengthen the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Press Now, a Dutch NGO, was established in 1993 by journalists and politicians. The organization was founded due to a growing concern on the ongoing war in former Yugoslavia. The organization started to support independent media as an alternative to the propaganda and hate speech of the state owned media (Press Now, n.d., chap. About).

Since its start, Press Now's mission has been closely linked to former Yugoslavia. The organization started the promotion of democracy and human rights, through support to independent media in this area. Its strategy has been continuously adapting to local and political media-related developments. In the beginning the support consisted mainly of emergency aid to individual media outlets. Specific media outlets and journalists were assisted in order to help them survive and function in an environment dominated by censorship or other endangering circumstances. Later the focus of activities shifted towards structural support. Longer term investments and strategies, resulting in multi-year project agreements with partners in the region (Press Now, n.d., chap. About).

Press Now started to support television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and some internet media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later on Press Now extended its activities due to the conflicts in Kosovo and Macedonia, and the crisis in Albania, to these regions as well. In 2003 Belarus, Moldova, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Ukraine also became a part of its field of work. In 2004 Press Now extended its media support towards conflict regions and countries in transition on the way to democracy, more in general. Therefore Press Now presently supports over 100 projects throughout the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Press Now, n.d., chap. About).

Press Now aims to promote the development of open and democratic societies, by supporting independent media in regions of conflict and countries in transition. The organization considers the development of a diverse and democratic media as a prerequisite for the development of democracy and civil society. Press Now argues that conflicts are fuelled by the manipulation of information and a strong and open civil society can only develop when supported by a pluralistic, independent media that voices different opinions,

reflects multiple views, stimulates public debate, acts as a watchdog on society, and holds authorities to account (Press Now, n.d., chap. About). In order to develop democracy and civil society, Press Now promotes the development of a varied and sustainable media landscape in regions of conflict and transitional countries (Press Now, n.d., chap. About)

As addressed before, many researchers argue that the news media is very important in the context of the development of open and democratic societies, because at its best it is the watchdog of democratic governance<sup>3</sup>. It can provide early warning of potential outbreaks of conflict, it serves as a watchdog over leaders and officials and holds them accountable. It monitors human rights, and its presence is essential for other parts of civil society to function (Howard, 2002, p. 4). Although most countries recognize freedom of the media, there still are many cases, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where media is used for political purposes or where its freedom has been restricted. In these cases the media usually seeks favors to escape legal restrictions, favors which one day have to be returned. This media ownership is often completely non-transparent and in Bosnia-Herzegovina a serious problem, because of a growing connection between media and politicians. This connection can become a serious threat to media freedom and independence (McIntyre, 2003, p. 5).

Apart from these difficulties the management of Press Now felt that the time has come to assess their contribution to the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the necessity of continuing their support. The war, the reason the foundation of Press Now, has ended more than 10 years ago and the question rises if the presence of Press Now is still necessary. For an extensive period of time, support has been given, and because an exit strategy is designed to secure the investment that has been made in the area, Press Now is wondering whether or not exiting is desirable at this moment.

It is unknown and difficult to assess if and when independent media in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been supported enough for the promotion of developing open and democratic societies, and thus for Press Now to start an exit process. The management of Press Now argues that new areas for urgent media support are rising, and therefore the necessity of their presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina starts being questionable. Little scientific knowledge exists on exit strategies of NGOs, should organizations plan an exit strategy from the beginning? Should it happen quickly or in stages? Are there external factors influencing the exit strategy? Is there a framework for exiting or do all situations differ? This research will try to answer questions of this kind, focusing on the changing role of international organizations, in the process of rebuilding the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This focus will be illustrated by the case of Press Now. Local partners of Press Now are involved in this research as well as other relevant stakeholders. All together this will provide more information on the impact of NGOs like Press Now withdrawing their support on the development of local media organizations.

The following chapters entail a detailed analysis of the developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and their implications for the policy of international organizations involved in rebuilding the media landscape. The first chapter focuses on a definition and operationalisation of the most important theoretical concepts. It sketches a theoretical framework which determines the direction of this research and while placing the results within this framework they get their meaning. A chapter on the accountability of the research methods and techniques which were used follows. After this chapter the empirical chapters follow. First chapter 3 on the policy of Press Now, what exactly does Press Now? Chapter 4 focuses on the political developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina society and their implications for the policy of international media supporting organizations like Press Now. Chapter 5

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<sup>3</sup> Media has also a more negative other side (which has been addressed before), that makes it difficult to act as a watchdog of society.

focuses on the social developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina society and their implications for the policy of international media supporting organizations. Chapter 6 concerns a debate on other developments which influence the policy of international media supporting organizations like Press Now. In the end a conclusion on the basis of the most important findings of this research follows.

## **2. Media, international engagement and civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

To answer the main question of this research some essential concepts have to be made operational. This happens by explaining the research objective and research questions. Then the topic of the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be discussed. How did media develop over time, and which international actors were involved? Furthermore the concept of 'civil society' will be discussed. How is it defined in this research and how is it influenced by conflicts and communism? In this chapter there will be also a focus on civil society building, more precisely, what it means and how it is done.

### ***Research objective and research questions***

Prior to this social scientific research an objective was determined, this objective functions as the foundation of the research. The present type of research is exploratory by nature; there exists little satisfying scientific knowledge on the changing role of international media-related organizations in relation to a post communist and post conflict country as Bosnia-Herzegovina, like I have addressed earlier.

The objective of this research is therefore:

*To contribute to the understanding of the process of civil society building in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the media sector in relation to international NGO support.*

The main question of this research is twofold and is as following:

*Given the social and political developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina: In what way is the policy of international media supporting organizations developing, and how does it relate to the political and social developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina?*

Sub questions which are useful in finding an answer on this main question are:

- 1. Do the respondents think that it is time for a changing policy of international media supporting organizations, when looking at the social developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina?*
- 2. Do the respondents think that it is time for a changing policy of international media supporting organizations, when looking at the political developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina?*
- 3. What kind of other drivers influence the policy of international media supporting organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina?*

### ***The importance of media in society***

When researching the changing policy of international media supporting organizations it is important to discuss first what is meant by media. How does it contribute to a society?

Media refers in this research to several mediums or channels used in an organized way to communicate to people: newspapers, radio and television are some examples. The internet is a more recent addition. However when using the media in post conflict situations to build durable peace encompasses more than just the news and information business. Also

entertainment programs from music to soaps and operas are part of the media. So are other channels including for example street theatre, posters, traditional storytelling, and even comic books (Howard, 2002, p.4).

Today, the media are a dominant force governing our daily lives. The media makes and breaks ideologies, influences attitudes and self-identification. Zgrabljic-Rotar even argues that we cannot live without the media. According to this researcher the media is the most important mean of public communication, a forum of exchange of views, an area for a democratic confrontation of different outlooks, a space of multicultural exchange, a means of production of popular cultural genres and a source of a lot of knowledge and information (Zgrabljic-Rotar, 2006, p. 5).

Most countries recognize freedom of the media, but there are many cases and conflict regions where media has been used for political reasons or where its freedom has been restricted. There are cases where the media seeks favors to escape legal restrictions, favors which one day have to be paid back. Media ownership is often completely non-transparent and there is concern about a widespread Berlusconi phenomenon: the connection between media and politicians, which forms a serious threat to media freedom and independence. Editors-in-chief and owners collaborate with political pressure and governments also find ways to control and manipulate media. For example by allocating public service advertisements only to favored media (McIntyre, 2003, p. 5).

The news media remains, according to Howard (2002, p.4), in the forefront of peacebuilding initiatives because at its best it is the watchdog of democratic governance. He argues that 'in such a situation the media provides accurate and balanced reporting which fairly represents a diversity of views in a way that the public can make well-informed choices'. This kind of media can provide early warning of potential outbreaks of conflict, it serves as a watchdog over leaders and officials and holds them accountable. It monitors human rights, and its presence is essential for other parts of civil society to function (Howard, 2002, p. 4).

Zgrabljic-Rotar points at a different aspect of the important role of media in democratic societies. He argues that the media is a mediator between the government and the public, media should monitor authorities and inform the public about all the issues relevant to the community. Media does not reflect, does not mirror reality, but constructs it (Zgrabljic-Rotar, 2006, p. 16). It is widely recognized that stereotypes are very important within the media. With the help of stereotypes, mass media shapes the understanding and the view of the world. A sense of belonging is easily created by using stereotypes. Zgrabljic-Rotar argues that stereotypes can be more than just conveyors of racist, nationalistic, machoistic, promiscuous views of the world, they can reflect, strengthen and promote such positions (Zgrabljic-Rotar, 2006, p. 16).

Bauer also addresses the importance of media within contemporary society. Our society communicates primarily within the media structured relations, he argues. Issues of relevance are organized through media systems, and social change is seen through media. At the same time this change is shaped and created by the media (Bauer, 2006, p. 65). The media represents a place of reality construction and relevance. The media chooses to notice and pay attention or deny attention or simply to forget. Media exchanges values, it secures the existence of what deserves attention (Bauer, 2006, p. 65-66). In arguing so, Bauer says that media constructs your view of society, your reality.

Košir (2006, p. 314) also argues that media constructs reality, mass media replaced the level of inter-personal communication and one's own experience. Košir adds that media is the source of the most important 'truths' regarding the world and our identities, on who we are and what we should be. The media determines amongst other things: what is more or less important for our being, how we should live, what is of value and what isn't, which lifestyles



we should adopt, what habits we should develop, what is politically correct and what isn't (Košir, 2006, p 314).

All these researchers demonstrate why a media that provides accurate and balanced reporting which represents a diversity of views, is important for the public to make well-informed choices. Media constructs reality, it makes people communicate and is the source of who we are and what we should be. This is why media is an important factor in post conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### ***International engagement with media development***

In the following I shall systematize the phases after a conflict with a particular view to an operational approach for international support to media in order to prevent violent conflict and/or to build peace. The potential fields for international media assistance in such a period are: media structure, media legislation, ethical standards, journalists' capacity building and media content. Though different phases offer different possibilities and therefore require different approaches. You will see that these phases are easily to compare with the waves of media assistance of Press Now as mentioned before. Depending on the context of the individual conflict Bonde (in Lowenberg & Bonde, 2007, p. 17) puts media assistance on a timeline with the following phases after a violent conflict:

- Immediate Post-Conflict (2-6 months).  
 This phase is often neglected by international donors and organizations dealing with media interventions. Everything is unstable, difficult and most likely without sufficient technical and management structures. But this phase is important for two reasons: the population is in dire need of humanitarian information and information about the state of the country, the top leadership and future plans, and it is also the phase in which all options are open and during which the immediate short term media interventions must be linked to the future design of media and social structures. Nongovernmental or media organizations should build capacity to act quickly in such situations.  
 Aim: To re-establish order and popular trust through humanitarian assistance, peace negotiations settling issues of conflict, reestablishment of relationships.  
 Actors: Humanitarian organizations, national broadcasters, other media.
- Post Conflict Planning (1/2-2 years).  
 This is the phase in which the future media legislation, structure and management is negotiated and planned between local and international partners. It is also a phase in which it is important to re-establish relationships between the conflicting parties both at top, middle-range and grassroots levels. During this phase many international donors and media NGOs get involved in supporting the media, but experience has shown that it is usually done in an un-coordinated and haphazard way. Through intellectual leadership and strength in terms of resources, intergovernmental organizations should, in collaboration with the local authorities and media organizations, point the direction for potential international partners to take action. This phase should begin re-establishing a framework of national and international networks to increase the communication between media leaders on all sides. It is also crucial during this phase that media increase the mutual knowledge and understanding between the conflicting parties.  
 Aim: Reconciliation, social change and civil society networking across conflict boundaries.  
 Actors: Government, regulatory bodies, media, training and educational institutions, media-, human rights-, and minority NGOs.
- Post Conflict Peace-Building (2-10 years).  
 This is the phase in which the development of new visions and practical solutions to the root causes of conflict take priority. It is important to support a media structure which, in its content, raises awareness of imbalances that demand adjustment. It is also the phase in which the visions for a new common future could be developed with the media as an efficient platform. At the multilateral level, the actors must now focus on long-term development. Additionally, structures providing professional and stable media governance must be implemented.  
 Aim: To diminish the root causes for future violent conflicts through structural and systematic activities.  
 Actors: Parliament, government, regulatory bodies, broadcasters and print media, media-, minority- and human rights NGOs.
- Transformation of Conflict Society (10+ years).  
 In this phase, relationships have been re-established and reconciliation has taken place, but a sustainable peace needs to be assured. It is assumed that the role of all multilateral organizations working with media must soon come to an end. Professionalism and balanced media behaviour must be developed through international and local networks or organizations. It is important for the media to continue stimulation of peaceful communications, to address divisive issues in society that must be dealt with in a long-term perspective, and to stimulate development and debate about a unified vision for the future.  
 Aim: To finally remove root causes and involve all society in the development of joint values, visions and systems through support to government, local and minority leadership and civil society organizations.  
 Actors: Regulatory bodies, legislators, government, media, media-NGOs and other civil society organizations.

(Lowenberg & Bonde, 2007, p. 17)

When looking at the policy of Press Now one could easily argue that their current policy corresponds with the final phase: Transformation of Conflict Society. If it is the case that the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina indeed corresponds with this final phase, the policy of Press Now would be correct and desirable. However as I will argue throughout this thesis, it may be doubted whether the actual situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina corresponds with this

final phase. When comparing the description of this phase with the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, you will see that the structures of a professional and stable media governance are not yet implemented and even the mutual knowledge and understanding between the conflicting parties (characteristics of the earlier post-conflict planning and post-conflict peace building phase) have not been settled yet.

### **Political space and the capacity of local society organizations**

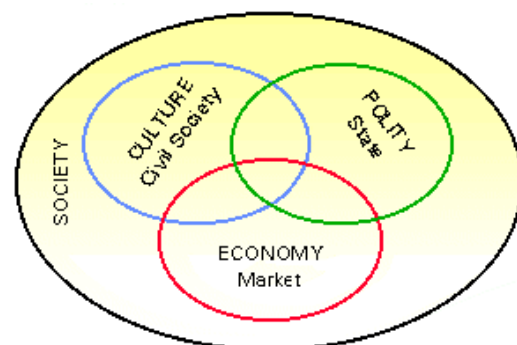
Thomas (in Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 2007, p.205) argues that international human rights norms and transnational activist networks encouraged the mobilization of independent groups and justified transnational networks across Eastern Europe. By doing this an enabling situation was created for societal forces in the East to mouth unprecedented challenges to regimes which had long monopolized social and political space. This situation reshaped state-society relations throughout the Communist bloc and paved the way for radical changes. Risse argues the same: international organizations have contributed to decreasing repression in a series of countries through providing information, socialization, and economic and political pressures (Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons, 2002, p. 520-521). While there was a repressive regime in power, these organizations enlarged political space through their lobby activities. This enlargement of political space enabled local society organizations to rebuild their capacity. Although the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not entirely comparable due to differences in history, the basic idea of this theory provides this research with an extra theoretical basis. When comparing this theory with the above mentioned final phase after a violent conflict and the policy of Press Now, in Bosnia-Herzegovina there should be a situation in which external organizations have enlarged political space and local organizations should be able to rebuild their own capacity. This research tries to find out whether or not this is the case.

### ***The development of civil society***

This part will focus on civil society because rebuilding the media landscape is conceptualized by many organizations in terms of civil society building. Civil society is important to focus on because a strong civil society is seen by many researchers and NGOs as a necessity in a well functioning society. Therefore it is incorporated by many NGOs in their policy to rebuild the media landscape. In the following sections the concept of civil society will be further explained. A definition will be given, the influence of conflict and communism will be explained and in the end the strategy of NGOs concerning rebuilding civil society will be discussed.

### **The concept of civil Society**

The definition of the English word ‘civil society’ has been interpreted in many ways through history. It depends on whose version one follows, but it is according to Edwards (2004, p.3) either a specific product of the nation state and capitalism or an universal expression of the collective life of individuals, at work in all countries and stages of development but expressed in different ways according to history and context. The first option describes the arising of civil society to mediate conflicts between social life and the market economy, because the industrial revolution destroyed traditional bonds of kin and community. (Edwards, 2004, p.3).



Civil society, the market and the state within society

Nowadays a lively and strong civil society is generally seen as a necessity for a well functioning society: it bounds together the individual members. Also Fine & Rai, stated that the idea of civil society played an important role in the collapse of Communism. The fall of Communism in Europe is generally seen as one of the reasons why the concept of civil society has moved to the centre of the international stage (Fine & Rai, 1997, p.1).

Some people see civil society as one of the three sectors present in society. Apart from civil society these people distinguish also 'state' and 'market'. These three sectors can be separate from and independent from each other, though overlapping in the middle. Others argue that the borders are fuzzy and that relations between the sectors exist. They argue that the sectors can be characterized by connections and overlaps between different institutions and their roles (Edwards, 2004, p. 3-4). Most donors involved in development cooperation aim nowadays at a good balance between state, market and civil society, thereby acknowledging the three sectors mentioned before. Each sector has its own task (Schulpen & Klem, 2005, p.15).

### **Defining civil society**

In a research in which civil society is an important concept, a clear definition of civil society is necessary. This is not an easy task, according to all the different viewpoints and the theoretical baggage of the concept. The following clarifications will not mean that the definition used in this research is final, but rather, that it is useful for this particular purpose.

The working definition of this research is based on the definition of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>4</sup> and Press Now. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs argues that civil society encloses all forms of human cooperation between the market and state. It is a wide variety of activities, organizations and informal connections. The Ministry argues that governments, all government institutions and state organs including the Parliament do not belong to civil society. The private businesses and all organizations with the aim to make a profit also don't belong to civil society. Civil society does include for example churches, unions, environmental organizations and sport associations. The policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims at a balance between state, market and civil society, because they argue that civil society can in this way stand up for human rights and address bad policy or touch upon subjects which are being ignored by governments (Nederlands Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2006, n.p. ).

Civil society is in this research defined as the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system). The director of Press Now at the time this research was carried out (De Jonge, 2006, p. 307) argues that Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. He argues that civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional association, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associates, coalitions and advocacy groups. Thereby he argues that it is thus much more encompassing than NGOs (De Jonge, 2006, p. 307).

An assumption which was made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Press Now is that having a civil society is good, and civil society is observable and real. It consists of a population of groups formed for collective purposes, primarily outside of the state and market.

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<sup>4</sup> The Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs is referred to because they provide NGOs financial support and therefore play an important role in the policy considerations of NGOs.

The three sectors have borders, but they are fuzzy and relations between the three sectors exist. There are institutions which can not be placed in one of the sectors, but should be placed on a grey area in between, such as for example business associations.

Finally for the purpose of this research, the definition is applied to a specific sector, namely the media. This resulted in only those organizations active in realizing developmental goals within the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Hereby however acknowledging that all organizations are part of a larger complex process.

## **Post Communist and post conflict civil society**

When looking at civil society in post conflict regions it becomes clear that civil society can play an important role. Crocker (1998, p.503-507) argued that civil society can play an important role in first deliberating about, formulating and prioritizing goals and forging measures to realize them. Especially during peace negotiations this comes in handy. Secondly in societies making a democratic transition, civil society can play an important role in assisting the victims of human rights violations. Thirdly civil society groups can be helpful in obtaining the truth about the past. And fourth civil society can adopt as one of their main goals to monitor and assess the government and the wider society.

However Crocker also addresses several dangers with respect to the potential roles of civil society. First, there is much that civil society can contribute, yet it should not replace the roles of other actors, including national and local governments. A second danger is that civil society can narrow its scope easily and fail to assess and influence other institutions. Third civil society can not always give citizens in a transitional society what they need. Strong governments can overtake civil society organizations and turn them into ‘parastatal flunkies’. A final danger according to Crocker is inflexibility. The challenges to civil society and the public sphere vary with the circumstances (Crocker, 1998, p. 508).

A lot of literature on post communist civil society addresses its relative weakness, compared to other regions in the world or to the high expectations during the period of 1989–1991. This emphasis on weakness is according to Howard reasonable given the fact that, only a decade ago, many observers expected post communist civil society to be unusually strong and vibrant (Howard, 2002, p. 157).

Howard argues that compared to the idealistic hopes of 1989–1991, the current political, economic, and social reality is disappointing (Howard, 2002, p. 157). The World Values Survey shows that post communist countries do have relatively lower levels of organizational membership (participation in civil society) when compared to older democracies and post authoritarian countries (Howard, 2002, p. 157). Howard argues that this affects the prospects for democracy and democratic stability in the region. Although the weakness of civil society does not necessarily mean that post communist democracy is in danger of collapse or breakdown, it does influence the development of “civic skills” (Howard, 2002, p. 157-158). These “civic skills” are important in creating a media that functions as a watchdog for society. Without “civic skills” journalists cannot provide society with accurate and balanced reporting which represents a diversity of views in a way that the public can make well-informed choices.

The low levels of participation in civil society, a sign of a weak civil society which is not very promising for the quality of media, in contemporary post communist Europe can best be understood by looking at the common elements of the communist experience, as well as the events of the last decade. In particular, three important factors: 1) the legacy of mistrust of

communist organizations; 2) the persistence of friendship networks<sup>5</sup>; and 3) post communist disappointment. According to Howard, these three factors taken together, help to explain the lasting weakness of civil society in the Eastern European region (Howard, 2002, p. 161). However when looking at my definition of civil society, the second argument is not valid, according to my definition friendship networks are an expression of civil society, and therefore it can not be seen as a sign of a weak civil society.

Howard argues furthermore that there are two important reasons why the weakness of civil society has a negative influence on post communist democracy. The first argument follows the line of argument of Robert Putnam and other “social capitalists” (Putnam in Howard, 2002, p. 151). By choosing not to participate in voluntary organizations, post communist citizens lack the opportunity to develop democratic habits and skills. The consequence of this is that the new democratic institutions are neither rooted in, nor actively supported by, the population. The second reason according to Howard, has to do with the direct influence of voluntary organizations. Civil society organizations can protect citizens from potentially unjust laws and policies and promote legislation that their members favor (Howard, 2002, p. 164-165).

When combining the theoretical debates on civil society in post conflict and post communist regions one should first emphasize that civil society can potentially be a key factor in triggering development. However post communist societies have low levels of participation in civil society, and citizens therefore lack the opportunity to develop democratic habits and skills and the civil society organizations can thus not protect the citizens from endangering situations. The media was during the communist period controlled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) and used to exclude people and create tensions. This taken together with the low levels of civil society activity does not make the media a prototype of a watchdog of society. The prospects for the important role civil society can play in post conflict societies with a communist past, are therefore poor. The necessity of civil society after a conflict is evident, however when a post conflict country had a communist experience it is not a matter of course that civil society will act upon this.

### **Civil society building**

Successful civil societies have developed their own systems and structures. They have grown from their own norms and values in a period of centuries. As mentioned before this is for the greater part an endogenous and autonomous process which is hard to influence from outside. However in this age of globalization and international alliances the importance of external influences has increased. Many outsiders have taken the task to strengthen the internal dynamics of autonomous processes ( Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2006, n.p. )

Brinkerhoff (2009, p. 1) agrees with the fact that capacity building, because that is what civil society building is, involves endogenous processes. Although he argues that it concerns an endogenous process, Brinkerhoff, as explained below, does not deny the important role of external organizations. Brinkerhoff further argues that ‘in fragile states, citizens are polarized in ethnic, religious or class-based groups, between whom there is a history of distrust, grievance and/or violent conflict’. Civil society lacks in these cases the capacity to cooperate, compromise and trust each other. This lack of capacity means that a country does not have certain conditions that are necessary to act effectively to achieve some purpose (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p.1).

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<sup>5</sup> According to Howard, (2002, p. 28) in post communist societies many people are still extremely invested in their own private friendship groups, therefore they do not feel the need to participate in organizations and civil society.

An important argument that Brinkerhoff makes in this context addresses capacity building in fragile states. He argues that ‘in societies which have been fragmented by deteriorating or conflict conditions, people’s trust and tolerance levels tend to be lower and their suspicion levels are heightened’. One could easily argue that Bosnia-Herzegovina fits these characteristics. People in a country like Bosnia-Herzegovina are according to Brinkerhoff likely to be less willing to cooperate across societal groups and to give others the benefit of the doubt (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p. 2).

While external organizations are building capacity, they can choose a variety of approaches. In some situations it is necessary to buy-in some capacity, like for example consulting and contracting firms from abroad to improve infrastructure. Press Now does this by involving specialized experts from the Netherlands (and other countries) into their projects. However in the end new capacity has to be built on what already exists, by for example journalist and management trainings. No doubt exists (Worldbank, 2003, p. 4) on the enormous challenge it is to improve the conditions of a conflict affected country.

In building capacity all organizations, including media related organizations, face the challenge of supporting the transition to country owned development, while doing this several dilemmas need to be faced (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p. 2).

1. State versus non-state service provision  
Do you as a donor provide services to non-state actors or to the also needy public sector? Should you support state owned media and transform it or only independent non-state media?
2. Services now versus institutional strengthening  
A dilemma related to the first one. How do you balance the humanitarian need to provide immediate aid in low capacity settings against the need to rebuild public institutions and their capacity to deliver aid. Do you first provide immediate aid like providing newspapers with paper, or do you start with strengthening the media institutions?
3. Immediate security versus long-term stability  
In post conflict countries, the first priority is security. However when concentrating capacity building on immediate security, you do not address the factors that contribute to long-term security and stability. Do you start with providing security for journalists or do you address the factors that contribute to security, like a mentality change.
4. Technical versus political strategies  
When building capacity most organizations focus more on technical strategies, like for example: training of managers, increase funding capacity or improve management systems. However long term results are necessary for changes in the enabling environment. The difficulty lies with the fact that they are less measurable and manageable and are flooded with political and power dynamics between donors and national actors, as well as among the country’s societal groups.

Brinkerhoff, 2009, p.2-4

While recognizing that not all fragile states are alike, these four dilemmas indicate the difficulty of civil society building in a country like Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of the dilemmas most applicable to this research and the current situation in the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina is the fourth one. Should the organizations focus more on their technical strategies, like improving the skills of journalists, or should they strive for changes in the enabling environment, like for example lobbying in order to create political willingness? This fourth dilemma touches upon the earlier presented theories of Thomas and Risse (in Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 2007, p.205 & Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons, 2002, p. 520-521) and will be further elaborated upon in the following chapters.

## ***A final concluding word***

This chapter focused on three important subjects of this research: the media, international engagement and civil society. These three subjects are important in this research because they are necessary in finding an answer on the main question. Media is the first important subject. As addressed in the text, media constructs reality and more than enough researchers have demonstrated why a media that provides accurate and balanced reporting is important for the public. It is this kind of media that NGOs like Press Now strive for, and in researching the policy development of international media supporting organizations it is important to understand this important role of media.

The second subject of this chapter is international engagement. I have addressed different phases of media assistance. The policy of Press Now corresponds with the final transformation phase. However in my opinion the current situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina does not correspond with the characteristics of this phase, and therefore I question whether or not the policy of Press Now relates to the political and social developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the second part of my main question. Important in this line of argumentation is the political space theory of Risse: While a repressive regime is in power, international organizations, like Press Now, can enlarge political space through their lobby activities, enlarged political space can eventually enable local society organizations to rebuild their capacity. In this research I wonder if there is enough political space in Bosnia-Herzegovina for local society organizations to have rebuild their capacity and survive without the support of Press Now.

The third subject of this chapter is civil society. This part focused on civil society because rebuilding the media landscape is conceptualized by many organizations, like Press Now, in terms of civil society building. Civil society is important to focus on because a strong civil society is seen as a necessity in a well functioning society, and therefore it is incorporated in the policy of NGOs to rebuild the media landscape. This is an essential part of my main question because it lies at the core of the policy changes of Press Now. The difficulty with Bosnia-Herzegovina lies in the fact that it is a post conflict and post communist society. Researchers have addressed that the prospects for the important role of civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina are poor due to its post communist and post conflict history. I have addressed a range of difficulties for international organizations when building capacity in difficult situations. One of these difficulties, a balance between improving the enabling environment or more technical strategies, adds up to the political space theory of Risse.



### 3. Research methods

#### *Subjects of research*

Important in this context is that the attention primarily goes to the perception of the concerned organizations. Because time did not permit a research regarding all organizations involved in rebuilding the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and because that would be an endless task regarding the amount of organizations, the research population was restricted to the Dutch organization Press Now and some of her most important local partners and stakeholders. Also the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was added because of their important role concerning funding the activities of Press Now. In practice this means that the following organizations were subject of this research: Press Now, the Press Council of Bosnia Herzegovina, the Association of BH Journalists, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Media Centar Sarajevo. The topic of this research won't be evaluating NGO policy and practice in terms of outcomes. This research seeks to deepen the analysis of NGO experiences and policy while addressing civil society building in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Limiting the subject of research to one case (the case of Press Now) in stead of researching all international media supporting organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina is done because of methodological reasons. This field of research is so difficult that it is better to study one case thoroughly in stead of several on a superficial basis. And a case study is a method which gives a clear picture of the way an organization works and in doing so it gives a clear picture of the specific situation (Wester & Peters, 2004, p. 35-36). I also used this method because I argue that a thorough study of one well chosen organization is by content comparable to other organizations of the same kind, and therefore the results can be carefully generalized to all international media supporting organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who are likely to encounter similar choices and policy dilemmas in their work.

Another reason for this research specially addressing Press Now has to do with the traineeship I did at this organization. A huge advantage in doing so was gaining access to all policy documents and the local partners of Press Now. Important to mention is that I clearly stressed to all partners of Press Now that I was not paid by them, and that my research was not a 'Press Now research'. I did this because it was important for all respondents to be able to speak freely. Further it is important to note that the information I gained from internal documents, while doing this traineeship, was not used for this research. Only free accessible information could be used.

This research addresses the policy of the organizations concerned, and therefore the research population consists out of the people working within these organizations and most affiliated with the topic. All the selected persons will be referred to as respondents, because they reply to questions which in principle only they can answer. The questions concern their knowledge, their experiences and their own expectations. They are the people best informed with the developments within the organizations and the broader context, and therefore they are of importance for this research.

Some of the respondents, although working in an international setting, felt not confident enough to speak in English. Therefore a local translator attended the interviews. This translator worked since the end of the war for several international security organizations in translating local newspaper articles, and could therefore easily translate the interviews.

The motivations, incentives and rewards of stakeholders within an organization, and also pressures which are put on them form a broader environment, shape an organization's actions. In this way organizations can be seen as the result of the interactions of rational actors striving

after material goals (Moore et al, 1994 in finding out fast). In other words: stakeholders are important to address because of their influence on policy change of the organization. They can influence the future policy of Press Now within the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moore (1994, p. ) suggests that there are up to seven sources of pressure in the broader environment, which influence outcomes for any organization. For Press Now, several of particular interest, these are:

1. The financier, and in the case of Press Now this takes the form of their major grantor, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who gives funds for a particular purpose.
2. The user. This deals with the one benefiting directly or indirectly from the services Press Now provides. In this research the following stakeholders will be analysed within this category: The Media Centar Sarajevo, the Association of BH Journalists, the BH Press Council and the OSCE. First two which were mentioned are still local partners of Press Now, the BH Press Council used to be a major project of them, however Press Now stopped supporting it. Before starting to collect data I decided that it was of high importance to work with different categories of local partners, those who are still benefitting from the support of Press Now and those who stopped working with Press Now. This is important because only then you can present a picture which has for example not been dominated by positive stories of Press Now just to please the donor. Finally the OSCE was added to the list of 'users'. The OSCE in Bosnia-Herzegovina is very much involved in society, in their projects Press Now cooperates with the OSCE to improve the situation in society.
3. The staff. This concerns the paid or unpaid workers within in the organization. Employees of Press Now were interviewed during this research to reveal their expectations and influence on policy.

(Original framework by Moore, 1994, p.)

### **Research methods:**

The data of this research was collected first of all by semi-structured topic interviews. This type of interviewing is less structured and gives the subject of the interview more freedom to direct the flow of conversation. This type of interviewing was useful considering the origin of the theme<sup>6</sup> and, due to the different backgrounds of the respondents, a necessity<sup>7</sup> ('t Hart, Van Dijk, De Goede, Jansen & Teunissen, 1996). The impossibility of interviewing an NGO was overcome by speaking with people who function on behalf of the NGO. Conversations were recorded on tape to simplify the analysis after the respondent agreed. For reasons of confidentiality, names of the respondents are not revealed.

Apart from semi-structured topic interviews an organization assessment was made of Press Now, according to the schedule showed in the following section 'Stakeholders of Press Now'. This organization assessment made it possible to reveal relevant aspects of Press Now, like different stakeholders and their influence on the policy of Press Now. The information for this

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<sup>6</sup> It is a subject with all kinds of different aspects and by using a semi-structured interview the respondent has the possibility to restructure according to its own preference.

<sup>7</sup> Not all respondents came from the same kind of organization and had all different backgrounds. When using such a wide variety of respondents it is necessary to change the flow of the conversation sometimes, because due to the nature of the questions, some of them were not applicable in a certain situation.

assessment was gained through secondary sources as well as the semi-structured topic interviews mentioned above. The secondary sources fulfilled an important role in this research. Books, scientific articles and newspaper articles which were published within Bosnia-Herzegovina or the region, were used. By using them one can avoid the criticism of presenting a 'West European' perspective. Additionally, policy reports were used. These reports were all presented in public and they provide a clear picture of the strategy of the organization in addressing civil society building. The World Values Survey will be another secondary source. This survey consists of a large quantity of information and can be used by researchers to extract relevant information from.

### ***Internal validity and external reliability***

To assess the research methods which were used, it is necessary to focus on the validity and reliability of this research. Validity and reliability concern the quality of measurement. Internal validity concerns whether measurements actually measure what they are supposed to rather than measuring something else. External reliability, on the other hand, is a matter of dependability: if you made the same measurement again and again, would you get the same result (Babbie, 1998, p.303)?

As a researcher you should be aware of your own personal influence on a research. An increase in personal influence reduces the internal validity. Your verbal and non-verbal behaviour as well as other research related choices influence the results of the research. In order to minimize these influences I used (semi) structured interviews. Using a list of topics, which have been preliminary established, reduces your personal influence on the research. Also the use of open questions increased the validity of this research. Suggestive questions were avoided because they reduce the respondents ability to speak from his or her own point of view. A third method used to increase internal validity concerns the making of methodological memos during research. These notes, which concern doubts, ideas and explanations, support your memory as a researcher and became part of the analysis. A fourth measure to increase internal validity deals with the use of data triangulation. Using different sources of information on one subject increases the internal validity. In some cases triangulation led to contradictory information, which became a cause of reanalysing the information. This was for example the case when discussing the reason of Press Now to stop supporting the BH Press Council. Analysis of the interviews led to contradictory information, and therefore I conducted an additional interview and studied internal documents. The field research applied in this research, such as semi-structured topic interviews, concerns more qualitative data than for example quantitative surveys. Babbie (1998, p. 303-304) even argues that: 'Being there is a powerful technique for gaining insights into the nature of human affairs and conceptualizations are valuable in their own right. Superior validity can be reached by comparing qualitative and quantitative research methods'. An attempt to realize this was made by using the quantitative World Values Surveys and data from Freedom House. Finally several colleagues were consulted during this research on temporary research results. Such a critical inspection also increases internal validity.

External reliability was increased by a extended description of research techniques, concepts and methods. I also tried to identify and describe all the theoretical assumptions of this research. Other researchers can verify the course of this research by reading this description.



## 4. The changing policy of Press Now in Bosnia-Herzegovina

In this first empirical chapter I will try to explain how the policy of Press Now changed the past few years and how it is justified by Press Now. This explanation of Press Now policy is necessary when trying to relate this policy to political, social and other relevant explanations for policy change in the next chapters. This chapter is by no means meant to present the vision of Press Now as a truism, but it tries to analyze the nature of the changing policy of Press Now and their reasons in doing so.

This first wave of Press Now media assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina came in the form of direct support for media and content. Financial support was given to specific media outlets and journalists to allowed them to pay for staff, equipment and operating expenses. This category of support is defined by targeting specific media. Press Now supported independent media outlets during this phase by giving direct financial support during the war, an employee of Press Now travelled into the country and handed over the cash in person, which was risky during the war, but efficient (Rhodes, 2007, p. 19).

The second wave was dominated by the reform of legal and regulatory frameworks. Some NGO's have taken up the task to reform legal and regulatory frameworks. The difference with the first form of media assistance is that it affected the impact of legislation on media indirectly (Rhodes, 2007, p. 25).

A third wave focused more on support for training and education. 17.4 million Euro<sup>8</sup> was recorded to be given to Bosnia-Herzegovina for training purposes. This category of support includes a wide variety of activities. While general training was more common in the early stages, afterwards, more targeted training aimed at particular media, management and fields of expertise was developed (Rhodes, 2007, p. 28).

A forth wave came in the form of support for media institutions. By media institutions we mean media centres, which provide multifunctional support, research, training and production facilities They include journalist associations and self-regulatory bodies. This kind of assistance is often seen as an alternative to direct support, because it deals with assisting media by establishing, strengthening or providing support for entities(Rhodes, 2007, p. 31)..

During these four waves of media assistance a new semi stable post-conflict status emerged in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the form of media support shifted away from the above mentioned direct political goals and a new emphasis on project funding emerged. This new kind of media assistance aimed at specific capacity building goals of professional quality and market sustainability (Rhodes, 2007, p. 18), in stead of changing the political situation. This development is also applicable to Dutch media assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina. International media assistance organizations like Press Now started trying to increase the level of professionalism amongst journalists and aimed at improving the management structure of media outlets. And when the financial stakeholders started to ask for results, the selectiveness of international media assistance organizations increased and they became more demanding towards their local partners.

In order to support development of East European societies, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, many international cooperation projects were established. A wide variety of funding schemes

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<sup>8</sup> Of the 87.1 million Euro in total between 1996 and 2006 (Rhodes, 2007, p.13).

was created by various international donors. Bosnia-Herzegovina was a country which was in particular flooded with NGOs, experts and consultants, who came to help 'create' civil society in a society unfamiliar with this concept (De Jonge, 2006, p. 307-308).

The director of Press Now argues that in most East-European countries, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, civil society development has only been supported for 10-15 years, many donors have now already substantially scaled down their programs or even discontinued them. The interest of Western countries in supporting the transition process in Eastern Europe has in general declined over the last years the director argues (De Jonge, 2006, p. 308). In particular after 9/11, the region has become less appealing to the general public and political interest has shifted towards the Middle East region (De Jonge, 2006, p. 308).

The director of Press Now recognizes the fact that this shift of interest caused a lack of sustainability for a lot of initiatives, which were started to strengthen civil society but were not given sufficient time to really get off the ground yet (De Jonge, 2006, p. 308). The result of this was that many new civil initiatives were stopped when the donors pulled out, and a lot of money which was invested in the initiatives was wasted.

This scaling down of activities is also applicable to Press Now. The organization started just after the war with 28 projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina and now only 2 are remaining, which are no longer media outlets, but media institutions<sup>9</sup>.

An international expert working at the OSCE recognizes the processes of pulling out and argues that it is part of a trend. 'International involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina is cutting down, organizations from abroad are leaving or downsizing. The OSCE is one of these organizations, it is getting smaller and smaller.'

One of the employees of Press Now repeats the argument, when arguing that the role of Press Now in Bosnia-Herzegovina will decrease and stop soon. He argues that 'Press Now is in a final phase of media development in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and when we [Press Now] are finished we are out of the country'.

When talking to the employees of Press Now many of them seem to argue that media related development aid is also a process for the donor organizations: Media assistance is changing, and it seems to be a learning process. 'It is moving away from nonstructural social engineering. In Bosnia-Herzegovina we succeeded in terms of the media to come to terms that it is useless to compete [with other donor organizations]. It is much more productive and for the benefit of the donors and outlets to coordinate donors. It brought benefit to Dani, to Alternative TV, and to Mreza Plus. Because alone, non of the donors could do such a large project'.

*'International organizations introduce a certain attitude which is called 'criteria', but how can you in a very articulated way develop some media outlet if your own nature is changing and you are developing and you are learning in what you are developing? Transition does not only happen to the media, transition happens to the development aid (employee Press Now)'.*

Along 13 years of development aid in Bosnia, the nature of aid changed. Another employee of Press Now argues that it is much more strict at this time, while local partners were being spoiled in the beginning by not enough conditioning the aid. In the beginning the money was just being given to survive, while nowadays they have to provide a budget and a report in other words: there are criteria. The respondent argues that local partners should understand that that is the nature of development aid, it rises, it shrinks and it gets more and more demanding. This criticism is being shared by other Press Now staff members, and seems

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<sup>9</sup> Press Now started to strengthen civil society by supporting media outlets and gradually shifted towards supporting media institutions. For more information see chapter 1.

legitimate, because local partners also argue that international organizations became more demanding.

An employee of Press Now argues that a lot of local partners who are arguing that Press Now is exiting too fast, want to remain in the most comfortable stage, which is impossible, they wish to keep on receiving money without justifying the purpose for the money. Therefore he argues that it is necessary for Press Now to leave. 'Press Now remained 13 years in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while for other countries we have perhaps 3 to 5 years. Actually they had a huge benefit, some of them missed their chances. The international community missed many of the chances'. The respondent argues that they will always say that you have to stay:

*'However you can stay for 30 years and even than they will say in the end that the protectorate and the international community are guilty because Bosnia-Herzegovina is not developed. But if you leave they will say that you abandoned them, you are guilty as well. Arguing that if we would stay, Bosnia-Herzegovina will develop, that is prolonging childhood and that's a problem. They have to stand on your own feet.'*

In arguing so the employee of Press Now seems to be sure of the fact that it is time to leave the local partners on their own. Another employee argues that there are always too many expectations, and local partners will always get disappointed, whatever happens. 'If the international community stays than they say: we are not living in democracy because we are controlled by the foreigners, if the international community leaves they say fuck off you left! Whatever you do is wrong'.

The program-coordinator stresses that from the moment you intervene, you risk a lot. 'You're bringing tremendous change. Some changes are immediately noticeable, some are very slow and not everything can be predicted'. However he argues that whatever you do, you do it wrong. 'Local partners have an absolute unrealistic assumption that there is a mastermind of development aid. There is no mastermind there is trial and error<sup>10</sup>, they are a crystallization of the practices'.

While recognizing that international aid is not homogeneous, most respondents do argue that international organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina are scaling down their activities. Press Now is no exception to this trend. Employees of Press Now argue that it is not just a process which local partners undergo, but the organization itself is also changing by nature. Local partners want to remain in the most comfortable stage and therefore they argue that the international organizations should stay, including Press Now. The reason for willing this has according to Press Now to do with unrealistic assumptions of the local organizations. The local partners seem to expect too much of international organizations.

This line of arguing raises questions. It seems as if Press Now is not to be blamed for accusations of local partners who do not understand the changing policy of Press Now. The organization is changing because it has to and local partners seem to expect too much. In my opinion this is a rather one sided story, but it does reflect the explanation of Press Now for changing their policy. In order to provide this story with more different viewpoints and to address the objections of local partners to this policy, the next chapters will give the floor to local partners as well.

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<sup>10</sup> The trial and error to which this respondent is referring has to do with a project in Bosnia-Herzegovina which did not work out. The exact content of this project can not be mentioned, because it still causes a lot of commotion with the local partner as well as with Press Now itself.





## 5. Political developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina

This chapter assesses current political conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, political influence on the media landscape, and the prospects of a country torn between nationalistic elites on one hand and the desires of important regional actors for control of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the other hand. Is an enabling situation created for societal forces to mount unprecedented challenges to the regime as in the theory of Risse? Because when it is not, capacity building efforts of organizations like Press Now will not work, and as a consequence of this an exit strategy is not in its place.

### ***Political connections with the media***

One of the first subjects which occurred during this research and influenced media in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the regional situation. The Balkan region is known for its regional polarization and political connections. It causes a dangerous situation in one of the least stable countries of the Balkans: Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Paddy Ashdown, a British politician and international diplomat and in the period from 27 September 2002 to 30 May 2006 the international High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina recently addressed the situation as well. He argues that ‘Europe needs a wake-up call, Bosnia is on the edge again’. Europe ignores in his opinion the warnings that the politics of this country are increasingly fractured. Ashdown argues that he is not at all sure if Brussels sees the danger in Bosnia. Brussels in his opinion thinks Bosnia is done, their policy now is ‘don’t rock the boat in Bosnia’ while we deal with Kosovo and Belgrade. Ashdown argues that ‘it is not just tactically wrong, but it is strategically disastrous’. He argues that ‘if the past 20 years have taught us anything, it is that, when it comes to trouble, Bosnia is the fulcrum of the Balkan, where even a brief spell of wrong-headedness can quickly become the prelude to enduring tragedy’ (Ashdown, 27 July 2008, p.27).

This presents a clear picture of regional influences on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When we look more precisely into the situation of the media landscape one soon discovers that many respondents agree on the issue of regional political linkage. Regional political connections are uncontrollable and a problem for the region, is an often heard phrase. ‘When Kosovo declared independence, everybody was waiting what will happen in Bosnia. Such a security issue shapes the discourses of Bosnia-Herzegovina media. It defines what is talked about and in what way. You can imagine how the Serb media would report on the Kosovo issue or how other media would report, probably totally opposite. It has definitely had an impact on media in Bosnia-Herzegovina’.

Another local media worker argues that the situation is even worse than during the war when looking at this polarization through political linkage. ‘Of course we are not in the war, it is peace. We have a good condition to work in, digital equipment, better conditions than earlier, but at the end we have a terrible situation’. She argues that two different kinds of lobby exist in Bosnia-Herzegovina ‘One part of the media in the federation supports the Minister and the other part the opposite Minister. Oslobodjenje<sup>11</sup> as one of the main daily media in Bosnia-Herzegovina supported the minister while the other media Dnevni Avaz<sup>12</sup> supported the other energetic lobby’. By stating that the situation on political linkage is worse

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<sup>11</sup> Popular newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina based in the capital city Sarajevo.

<sup>12</sup> One of the most popular newspapers in Bosnia-Herzegovina based in the capital city Sarajevo, it is often viewed as a pro-Bosniak newspaper.

than during the war this respondent also emphasizes the problem it creates in the region. The media seems to be influenced by regional political lobby, as newspapers are more than ever a mouth piece of political parties.

### **Political instability**

A first expression of the dynamics of polarization which came up during this research has to do with political instability. This itself is a factor which influences the media landscape negatively, because the potential for a repressing regime increases.

Political instability is damaging Bosnia's prospects of joining the European Union and causing some officials to worry that the Balkan country could one day slide back into conflict. Political tensions are now running so high that some regional experts and leaders say violence could eventually flare again in the country. Sulejman Tihic, the head of Bosnia's largest Muslim political party and former Muslim member of the tripartite presidency said that 'There could be war, and a year or two ago I would not have said this is possible'. Such a prospect for war makes the situation in the media landscape not any easier. Violence, political tensions and conflict generally creates a kind of media which is not the best watchdog for democratic governance. It increases the chances of media being used once more as a tool for political reasons.

Some experts fear Bosnian Muslims might hit back militarily if the Serb Republic's push for state-like powers goes out of control. 'War is not going to break out tomorrow, but if this is allowed to continue, it may break out a year from now, or two years from now, or four years from now,' said a foreign diplomat with years of experience in the region. Other experts do not expect renewed conflict, even if tensions are high. In an interview with Reuters, Dodik said he did not want to secede from Bosnia-Herzegovina. Experts differ on whether his separatist rhetoric is political positioning or true intent, but they blame Sijadzić, a Dodik rival, partly for the tensions. Sijadzić has called for the abolition of the Serb Republic (Tanner, 10-11-2008, n.p.).

The cause of this serious picture of the security situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina lies according to a Dutch media expert with the protectorate<sup>13</sup>. He argues that apparently something went wrong with it. It failed. 'After 13 years since 1995, the results are more than poor. The protectorate, which is a special form of social engineering, got stuck with the local politics' he argues. Local politics made the protectorate fail, because of ongoing political conflicts.

This political instable situation creates a dangerous situation. If Bosnia-Herzegovina would fall back into violent conflict, the media landscape would not benefit from this. War stops any further development of the media and destroys almost the entire media infrastructure. Most of the newspapers and broadcasting stations become mouthpieces for propaganda and also instruments of force for political organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Miroslav Lajcak the current High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina has a more optimistic view. He argues that another war is not an option for politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Petty daily politics and rhetoric aside, he believes that 'both citizens and politicians of Bosnia and Herzegovina are mature and wise enough not to waste the opportunity for a better future that lies ahead and exchange it for a new wave of destruction and suffering'. Just before signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union Lajcak is positive about the progress in the country. He argues that much has been changed since last autumn. At that time, he argues, the political atmosphere was

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<sup>13</sup> He is referring to the signing of the Dayton Agreement in Dayton, Ohio by Izetbegović, Tuđman and Milošević, which brought a stop to the fighting and roughly established the basic structures of the current Bosnia-Herzegovina.

negative. However it is still rather easy to cause a political crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and then the entire reform process is put on hold. What changed according to Lajcak is that political leaders reached an agreement on police reform, opening the way for the country to initiate the SAA early in December. He argues that this positive momentum was lost and only in April there was a final breakthrough. When asking Lajcak on the international community leaving Bosnia-Herzegovina, he argues that it is certain that the OHR will come to an end and will transit into the EU special representative, EUSR. However this requires the full engagement and partnership of the domestic political leadership and the EU. As for the presence of the international community, Lajcak hopes that it will be increased through investments and economic growth. And his objection to speculations on dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina is clear. 'The international community is committed to defending Bosnia-Herzegovina as an internationally recognized country with full territorial integrity and sovereignty. That is how it will remain. Anyone who believes different is kidding themselves' (Ahmetasevic, 13 June 2008, p. 7).

This rather optimistic view of Lajcak is not shared by several others. An international expert, working at the OSCE describes a rather serious picture.

*'If you asked me this in 2002 I would have responded differently. Now the situation got a lot worse. I come from this country and I can see how people think when I go outside. People talk about leaving, because the situation is getting worse, or some have their savings abroad. I never think like that, but I do think that it is therefore necessary for the international community to stay. Definitely.'*

When relating this political situation to the media landscape it is important to notice that already since the media in Yugoslavia were controlled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), they were not 'observers of political developments'. In fact, the media served in certain aspects as a channel of communication between the political elite and its representatives. Friedman argues that 'in the negative part of this role, the media contributed to defining an ethnic identity, which excluded others, while reinforcing tensions'. Thus the media were necessary to prepare the populations within Yugoslavia for war (Friedman, 2004, p. 77).

The media since the war, as before and during the war, has been utilized as a political tool by the ruling regimes within Bosnia to consolidate their power. The international community intervened repeatedly to ensure that nationalist media were suppressed and only media expression that reflected the multiethnic point of view of the international community flourished (Friedman, 2004, p. 77). A local media worker argues that media is a key factor in the creation of democracy. However she argues that the current situation shows that media contributes to radicalization, and the situation is the same as in 1992. 'Maybe it is rude to say, but it is true.

### **Political pressure**

A second expression of the dynamics of polarization which came up during this research has to do with special interest groups pressuring the media. A lot of respondents report that media in Bosnia-Herzegovina is being increasingly influenced by interest groups or even criminal groups. This resulting in a delicate security situation.

Research from the Freedom House (Jelisić, 2008, p.153), an organization focusing on strengthening democracy and supporting human rights in Southeast Europe, reveals that although media laws in Bosnia-Herzegovina provide freedom to broadcasters, alliances between political groups and media and the resulting biased coverage are taken as a fact and considered normal in society. Print media is thought to be most open to biased reporting. In fact, research found it difficult to identify who was controlling whom—did politicians control

major print outlets by co-opting them in pushing their political agendas, or did the outlet owners have even greater influence over politicians, using these “alliances” to support their private interests (Jelisić, 2008, p.153)?

The OSCE argues that the media of Bosnia-Herzegovina is increasingly more influenced by political pressure. One of their international experts argues that it is important for the OSCE to be involved in media development again. ‘The OSCE is not considering to go back deeply in media development, but considers talking to local organizations involved’. This international expert argues that the media situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is worse than ten years ago. ‘At the time politicians were not so pushy as it comes to media, they were not trying to influence what we read so much 10 years ago’.

Zeljko Kopanja founder of the Banja Luka newspaper *Nezavisne Novine* reported from the beginning of on war crimes committed by Bosnian Serbs. As a result of this he was attacked in Banja Luka in October 1999. He was injured and lost both his legs. However he started working short after. He is convinced that the offenders got orders from the political and economical elite, which is probably connected to Radovan Karadzic (Sadée, 26 & 27 July 2008, p.10-11).

An international expert agrees with this, and argues that the way the media in Bosnia-Herzegovina reports, you can see which party they support. ‘When a representative of a party in Banja Luka said all kinds of negative stuff about the media and the political influence it is subjected to, you could not read about it in the papers later on. Only electronic media and the media in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina reported about it, not the media in the RS.’

These are some striking examples of how politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina is being influenced by politics. Politics control the media according to the Freedom House and the OSCE and Kopanja is a personal example of this practice. This political pressure is the practice of a repressive regime in power that monopolizes social and political space.

One of the local employees of a media organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina argues that it is important to notice that the media situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not significantly worse than in other countries. Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina has regulation and self regulatory agencies. He agrees that Bosnia-Herzegovina has bad press, but every country has it. ‘The Netherlands invented Big Brother and speaking of financial influence: the Italians have Silvio Berlusconi. And what about the huge corporations that are controlling media across Europe and not to mention America’. He argues that this is a global trend. ‘Huge financial influences are controlling media everywhere, and more and more so in Bosnia. But more than anything in the rest of the world. Bosnia Herzegovina is now getting up. The country, he argues, is quite behind. So speaking of media ownership Bosnia Herzegovina is not special. Most certainly not!’

However the fact that it seems to be a global trend, does in my opinion not mean that it does not hamper the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The employee agrees with this: ‘Influence is a bad thing, but not drastically more serious than in Italy or France or any central European country. I know that this is happening all over the world, but honestly, that is why it is important!’ A global increase in political pressure on the media also causes a serious threat to the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### **The security situation of journalists**

A third expression of the dynamics of polarization and a rather important factor which influences the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina deals with the security situation of journalists. Although journalists and reporters generally do not face security threats, incidents do occur. Journalists still sometimes face harassment and pressure from nationalists and

organized crime figures. Appeals to ethnic hatred in the media are less widespread than in the past, but journalistic standards generally remain low (Friedman, 2004, p. 78).

One of the examples of an incident is the case of Vitomir Popović, the Serb representative in the Office of the State Ombudsman for Human Rights. During his attempt to be reelected in October 2007, while responding to a journalist's question in his Banja Luka office, Popović openly threatened Federal Television (FTV) journalist Damir Kaletović, stating that the reporter and his editor in chief, Bakir Hadžiomerović, “deserve a bullet in their foreheads.” This statement was broadcast on FTV. The Society of BiH Journalists strongly condemned the threat and asked for the responsible organs to start a criminal investigation against Popović (who also served in a wartime government led by Radovan Karadžić) (Jelisić, 2008, 153).

Bosnian representatives in the FBiH Parliament on several occasions also tried to exercise pressure on the Federal television, in response to criticism from this public broadcaster. RS prime minister Dodik also tried to exercise pressure on the national BHT 1 by publicly criticizing its editorial policy. In the first half of the year 2007, RS officials boycotted BHT 1 by not giving statements to its reporters (Jelisić, 2008, 153).

The Free Media Help Line is a line especially created for journalists who have experienced any kind of intimidation and interference during their work in the media in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They register cases of violations of media freedom and journalist rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When comparing the registered number of cases over 2007 with the first half of 2008 a serious picture emerges. By the end of 2008 there was a total number of 56 registered cases, however the detailed division of this number over the different kinds of violation was not known yet. The only number which was known is the number of physical attacks, this number rose from 4 in 2007 to 25 in 2008 (Free Media Help Line, 2008, n.p.).

<i>Kind of violation</i>	<i>Number of registered cases 2007</i>	<i>Number of registered cases first half 2008</i>
<i>Threats/pressures</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Physical attacks</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Banning of information</i>	<i>3</i>	
<i>Working disputes</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Complaints on journalists and media</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Total number of cases</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>20</i>

Source: Free Media Help Line.

The violations mentioned above vary from for example a BBC journalist being almost intentionally hit by a car in Banja Luka, threats being sent to a journalist of Glas Srpska newspaper, the government of Herzegovina (Herzegovina Neretva Canton) preventing transfers of money intended for co financing of public media houses and media of special interest in the Canton, RTV Mostar crew being attacked during a shooting and journalists of Slobodna Bosna magazine and daily Oslobođenje being thrown out of the facilities of the Party for BiH (Free Media Help Line, 2008, n.p.). One could argue that the rather serious rise of violations emerges from an increase in access to reporting violations, and that the actual number of violations did not rise at all. However when in a country a total number of 56 cases of violation of media freedom and journalist rights is registered, this alone should be enough to demonstrate the difficult condition in which journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina do their work.

An international expert, working at the OSCE, argues therefore that when looking at this situation, international involvement in the media in Bosnia-Herzegovina is still important. Especially now, with the current media situation. The international expert refers to a boycott in the Republika Srpska a black list of journalists. The existence of such a black list and a boycott indicate the poor state of the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The current political parties seems to use political interference and pressure as a way to maintain power, and thereby restricting media and journalists to function as a watchdog of society.

### **Ethnic separation**

A final expression of the dynamics of polarization mentioned a lot by the respondents which influences the media landscape in Bosnia-Herzegovina is ethnic separation. Political linkage and pressure seems to create a segregated society and media landscape.

One of the local media workers argues that Bosnia Herzegovina society is a segregated society, it is a society divided along ethnic lines.

*'It [society] fought a war along ethnic lines. It is a society which is administrative and territorially divided along ethnic lines. And this all has a impact on how life in society work. So we have religion: Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox and others, we have 4 groups clashing. And than you also have ethnic groups, which are also four: Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, plus others again. And again there are four groups'.*

Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina he argues is as a result of these 4 existing groups fragmented, polarized, segmented and segregated. 'A recent conflict, which ended less than 15 years ago, resulted in a destroyed country, which has a huge impact on the population. With the devastating effects of killed people, you also have people who are creating that situation. They create territorial homogenization. Some studies show that in more than 90% of the municipalities there is almost total homogenization of the one that dominates'.

Zeljko Kopanja, editor in chief of Nezavisne Novine, a daily in Banja Luka argues that politicians in Bosnia-Herzegovina play a game for years. He argues that every time Serbs feel oppressed they threaten with separation. And although Kopanja argues that the current prime minister Dodik is a man of a different kind, Dodik also flirted the last years several times with a referendum on becoming independent from the Republic. Kopanja argues that it is a warning to politicians in Sarajevo. Threatening with separation is a reflex of self-defense, he argues (Sadée, 26 & 27 July 2008, p.10-11) . This story is not incorporated for (de)legitimizing the actions of Kopanja or Dodik, but the story alone sketches a picture of the media situation in Bosnia-Herzegoviana. A situation in which ethnic separation is feared by some and used by others. And a situation in which there is no room for more moderate voices.

The Freedom House follows this line of argument by arguing that there is a diversity of print and electronic sources of information, but the range of political viewpoints varies around the major political options in the country. These options are now dominated by ethno-territorial biases, as is the media landscape. The use of the internet is no alternative because it is limited since the infrastructure is underdeveloped and still expensive. A narrow interpretation of the regulatory laws so far has protected the dominant position of the three major telecom operators, which correspond to ethnically-defined territories (Jelisić, 2008, 153).

The Media Centar Sarajevo, one of the local partners of Press Now, is influenced by this in a way that it determines the activities of the Centar. At this moment they are publishing a book on public broadcasting in multi-ethnic societies, and a subject of study are: Bosnia, Macedonia, Switzerland and Belgium, it is a comparative study. The purpose of this book is

to figure out 'what the hell is going on'. One of the employees argues that ethnic separation influences the Centar in terms of receiving the issue and trying to deal with it. In another way it also limits the access of the Media Centar Sarajevo to certain funds, the government and aid agencies. 'Because we are not politically appropriate, we do not have a preferential status.

In the end one could argue that a segregated society divided along ethnic lines influences the media landscape in several ways. It influences the kind of activities of local media related organizations and it influences their way of funding. Within the media landscape there is little room for more moderate voices, which advocate multi-ethnicity and therefore the role of the media is not functioning as a watchdog of society, but it is being influenced by politics and certainly not reducing ethnic separation.

## **Conclusion**

The dynamics of polarization influenced through different methods the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Several resources addressed the increased polarization in this country. A first expression of this polarization has to do with political pressure from special interest groups. Although there seems to be a global trend of interference in media most respondents agree on the fact that it is harmful for the quality of the media landscape.

A second expression which came up has to do with political instability. International experts address the political instable situation which creates a dangerous preview. Although some of the respondents have a more optimistic view than others, most of the local media related organizations approach it as serious and threatening. While the media serves as a key factor in the creation of democracy, it serves at this moment as a contributor to radicalization.

A third expression deals with the security situation of journalists. The information provided on this topic indicates the poor state of the media landscape in which the journalists work. The current regime seems to use political interference and pressure as a way to maintain power, and thereby restricting media and journalists to function as a watchdog of society.

A final expression of the dynamics of polarization deals with ethnic separation in society. Bosnia-Herzegovina society is a segregated society divided along ethnic lines. This separation influences the kind of activities of local media related organizations and it influences chances in funding. Political linkage influences the kind of funds the local media organizations have access to.

Press Now did not try to address the overall political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there were projects which aim at directly supporting media and content, reforming the legal and regulatory frameworks, providing training and education, and supporting media institutions. These projects tried to change the overall political situation in an indirect way, however when looking at the current situation they were clearly not sufficient.

When looking at the role of international organizations, and NGOs in particular, it is important focus on the political space theory of Risse and the fourth dilemma of capacity building of Brinkerhoff. The above mentioned situation describes a picture in which political space for society organizations to function is lacking. A regime is in power which interferes on a regular basis with media and is not shy to use it for political purposes. According to Risse the role for NGOs in this matter lies with lobbying to enlarge political space and in doing so enabling the media to rebuild capacity. The dilemma of Brinkerhoff corresponds with this practice: should the organizations focus more on technical strategies (improving skills of journalists) or should they strive for changes in the enabling environment? In my opinion the organizations should follow the theory of Risse. In this case creating a politically enabling environment is at this moment a premise for a well functioning media landscape.

Considering all this I personally doubt whether the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina corresponds with the 10+ years period of Lowenberg & Bonde (2007, p.17). I do not think that relationships have re-established and reconciliation has taken place. The case is that relationships between the conflicting parties are lacking (the media landscape is fractured along ethnic lines) and that mutual knowledge and understanding between the parties is lacking as well. What local media related organizations are doing at this moment has more to do with supporting a media structure which in its content, raises awareness of imbalances that demand adjustment (the post-conflict peace building phase of Lowenberg & Bonde). When comparing this with the before mentioned theory on political space of Risse (Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 2007) one has once again to conclude that the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina does not enable societal forces to (re)build capacity. The media landscape is politicized in a way that it acts as an extension piece of politics and it does not contribute to a society challenging the regime. NGOs can and should strive for changes in the enabling political environment.



## 6. The development of civil society

*'A tree is the product of its seed. Today is rooted in yesterday. In the Balkans, that yesterday is at least as important as today; for some it is more real than tomorrow'*<sup>14</sup>

Press Now argues that international donors can and should create a framework in which a domestic civil society could operate and develop. The director of Press Now argues (De Jonge, 2006, p. 309) that states should guarantee the freedom of association of citizens, and create a free market where civil society could secure itself. However the director also argues that this is a rather sensitive issue, because communist governments of Eastern Europe have a history of engineering civil society by themselves. He argues that civil society development needs a shift in the attitude of the government and society as a whole. International donors should assist in creating a framework in which civil society can develop itself, and give direct support to civil society organizations. Howard also sees a central role for the state. 'It plays a crucial role in enabling, facilitating and encouraging the existence and flourishing of civil society organizations. Although obviously it cannot force its citizens to join organizations, the state can pass legislation that protects the rights of organizations, as well as provide tax or other institutional incentives that encourage them to organize and recruit members' (Howard, 2002 p. 167-168).

This chapter focuses on civil society and it seeks to explain whether a framework in which civil society can operate and develop in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been created. The focus of this chapter builds upon some of the most important findings from this study, particularly with regard to such themes as the role of the communist past of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the capacity of local organizations, they form the framework of a well functioning civil society.

Researchers argue that in states, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Communist Party dominated with its ideology and mechanisms of social control, ordinary people developed strategies for surviving (Howard, 2003, p.1). The first section shows in what ways these strategies from the communist period have persisted in the new post-communist era and thus influence the policy of international organizations. A following section addresses the capacity of local organizations. What exactly is the problem with the capacity of these local organizations? In the final part of this chapter I will discuss whether society in Bosnia-Herzegovina is ready for a changing policy of international media supporting organizations like Press Now.

### ***Communism as a crucial category?***

During communism the Communist Party sought to monitor and control almost every aspect of life, and this feature distinguished communism from other non-democratic authoritarian regimes (Howard, 2003, p. 24). New post-communist institutions are generally based on different ideas and in many ways incompatible with communist practices and experiences. The desire to bridge the gap between the communist period and a new post-communist period is according to Howard (2003, p.26) incompatible with people's prior experiences with communist organizations, since they usually view organizations with suspicion and mistrust.

Therefore a lot of researchers recognize the category of "post communism," as a crucial factor in explaining cross regional variation in participation in civil society organizations, even when considering a lot of other important factors. In other words: the

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<sup>14</sup> (Remington in Mc Ardle Kelleher, 1974, p. 165).

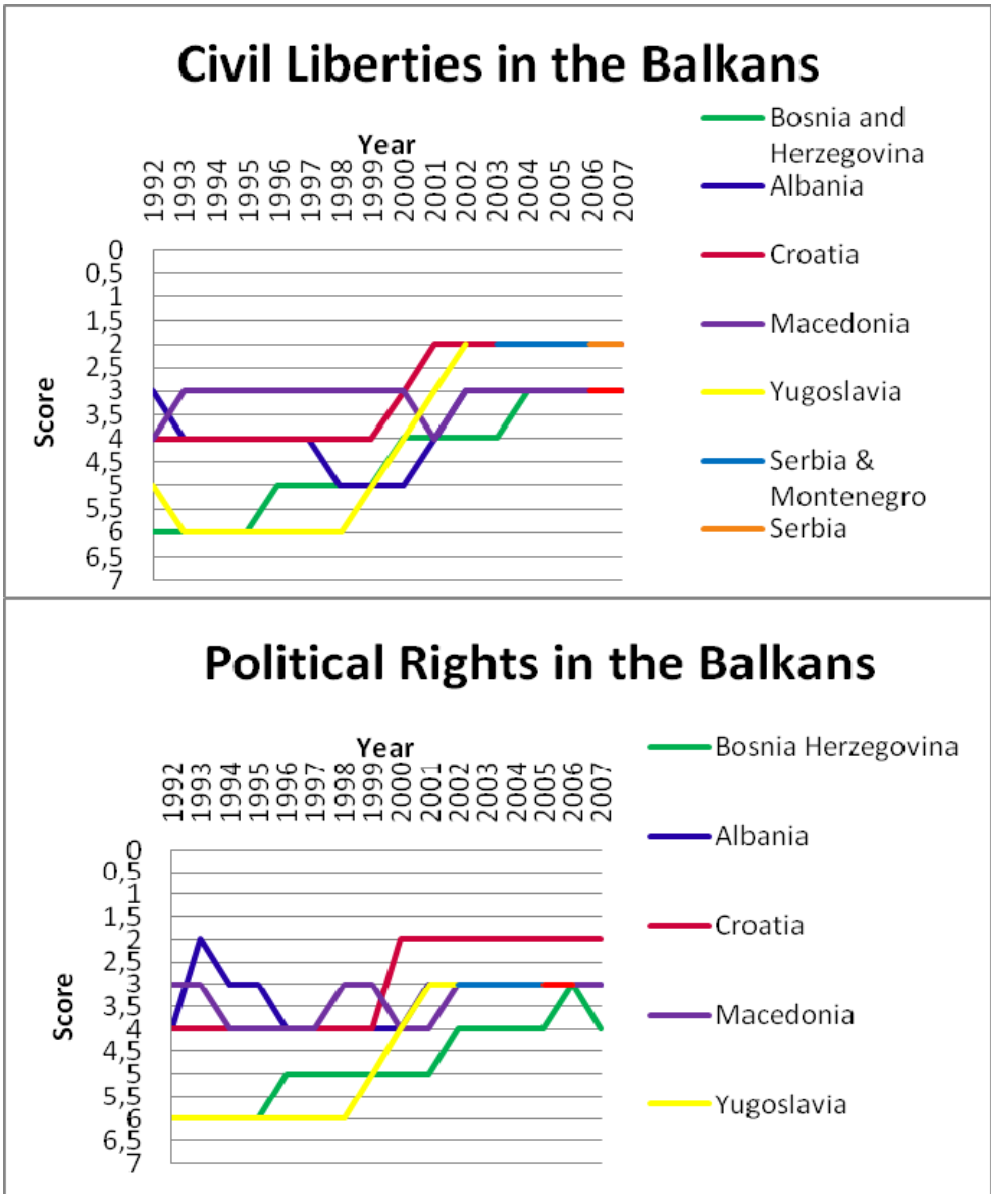
prior communist experience that, a decade after communism's collapse, makes citizens with a communist past less likely to join organizations than citizens of countries with different regime types in history. (Howard, 2002, p. 161) This information makes the level of organizational membership an indicator of the strength of civil society and therefore it influences the role of media. A strong civil society will contribute positively to a media that acts as a watchdog for society. Without such an active civil society journalists will not be able to provide society with accurate and balanced reporting which represents a diversity of views in a way that the public can make well-informed choices. In other words: the capacity of civil society determines the quality of the media landscape.

When compared to other regions, however, the conclusion that post communist civil society is distinctively weak needs further explanation. Howard (2002, p. 159-160) argues that: 'Whereas democratic regimes encourage and even support organizational activity and authoritarian regimes tolerate membership in many groups, communist regimes not only sought to repress all forms of autonomous non-state activity but also supplanted and subverted such activity by forcing their citizens to join and participate in mandatory, state-controlled organizations'. He argues that therefore communist countries have 'legacies' to overcome that are not found in an authoritarian regime, such as the supplanted and subverted activities of citizens (Howard, 2002, p. 159-160). This line of thinking suggests that older democracies have higher levels of organizational membership, and that the post communist countries will score considerably less.

A common heard explanation for the strengths and weaknesses of civil society which fits the above mentioned profile, is that the more repressive a regime is, the more difficult it is for citizens to participate in society (or to become a member of an organization). If a country's political institutions are open and encourage participation, more people are active in civil society. In other words, the more extensive a country's political rights and civil liberties, the stronger will be its civil society (Howard, 2003, p. 76). This line of arguing corresponds with the before mentioned political space theory of Risse. Only if there is a certain amount of political space available in a country, the capacity of civil society organizations can grow.

This theory of Risse and Howard is shared by an international expert working at the OSCE. This expert argued that politics are important for the development of civil society, a political basic situation has to be created, including free press, for a functioning civil society. This vision corresponds more or less with the vision of the director of Press Now, who argued that a framework should be created for civil society to operate and develop. In this process the international expert sees a clear role for non governmental organizations, NGOs should help in creating a basic situation including free press.

When we look more into the civil liberties and political rights in Bosnia Herzegovina a clear picture is presented by the Freedom House. This organization rates all countries on their freedom. The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The ratings of 2008 reflect the period January 1st through December 31st, 2007. Bosnia-Herzegovina scored a 3,5 on general freedom, one of the lowest scores within the entire Balkans. When we look more specific the rating for civil liberties and political rights is also among one of the lowest. Indicating the poor state of civil society in Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Source: Data from Freedom House, Freedom in the world, country subscores<sup>15</sup>

However some researchers argue that there are wide differences among the countries in the region. Rupnik has even claimed that “the word ‘post communism’ has lost its relevance,” and he has added that “it is striking how vastly different the outcomes of the democratic transitions have been in Central and Eastern Europe.” (Rupnik in Howard, 2002, p. 158).

<sup>15</sup> Note: For Yugoslavia, ratings from 1992 to 2002 were for the country that remained following the departures between 1991 and 1992 of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In February 2003, the Yugoslav parliament adopted a constitutional charter establishing the state of Serbia and Montenegro. Thus, beginning in 2003, Yugoslavia is listed as "Serbia and Montenegro." The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro dissolved when Montenegro withdrew in June 2006, making Serbia an independent state. Thus, the ratings for Serbia and Montenegro are listed separately beginning in 2006.

One of the employees of an international media related organization also argues that the developments in Yugoslavia were not entirely due to communism. This respondent does recognize the neglect of civil society however Bosnia-Herzegovina was not a part of the real Soviet bloc and therefore he agrees with Rupnik that the outcome was different: there were traces of developing markets.

*'Communism was soft totalitarianism in Tito's Yugoslavia. Former Yugoslavia was a hugely privileged country, because it was not part of the Soviet Bloc. It means that there were traces of developing markets. At the same time it was not really a developed market, because you had overregulation by the state. You cannot clearly say that it is entirely socialism like totally not democratic. People in Yugoslavia could travel, salaries were high, unexpectedly high. Everybody was happy! He did not invest in civil society he invested into consumption which on the long run increases your foreign debts, actually you are going bankrupt.'*

This respondent adds that instead of bankruptcy you got war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 'The socialist paradigm was replaced by a nationalist model, and communists turned into nationalists, because they needed to legitimate why they were in power'. Therefore the respondent argues that one cannot explain everything what happened with socialism, because it is not enough explanation.

However evidence provided by the World Values Survey, shows that in a wider cross regional perspective post communist countries do all have relatively lower levels of organizational membership, an indicator of the strength of civil society (Howard, 2002, p. 56). Including Bosnia-Herzegovina. This finding suggests that, even though there is some variation among the countries of post communist Europe, on the whole they still appear to form a coherent group.

These empirical findings may affect the prospects for a new post communist era. Although the weakness of civil society does not necessarily mean that post communist democracy is in danger of collapse or breakdown, it does hamper the development of the "civic skills" that are important for supporting and consolidating a democratic system, and it also ensures that many post communist citizens lack the institutional representation and political "leverage" that could be provided by active voluntary organizations (Howard, 2002, p. 157-158). Therefore the lack of civic skills from the communist experience influences the creation of a framework in which a civil society can operate and develop negatively.

According to an employee of the OSCE these civic skills are starting to develop in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The employee argues:

*'It is true, communism is an important factor in contemporary Bosnian society. People are very nostalgic, communism was better than the situation today. However it takes time to change such an attitude, it will take years and years. However, nowadays you can already see some changes. People are starting to realizing that we have law that works and that you can bring something to court. You can see this change, which we have never seen before. People start complaining. It is changing but a lot has to be done and it takes time, generations.'*

An employee of a media organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina adds that this development of civic skills takes years: 'When you talk about post-communism and all these things, you need some time. You need some time to develop participatory culture, civil society, trust to institutions, institutions need to be developed in a way that they are functional'. Time seems to be a necessity for the creation of the framework of civil society.

The same respondent also argues that there is a post communist experience in society. However he takes it even further back into history until the 15th and 16th century. Developments at that time fostered the civic activities, social networks, development of trust and social capital. This respondent follows the line of argument of Howard by arguing that the lack of democratic culture and vital parts of civil society exist because of authoritarian rule results in a low level of social capital, low level of participation and low levels of organization trust.

This lack of trust is also mentioned by Howard. 'While authoritarian regimes tolerated non-state activities as long as they did not threaten the state or the military, communist regimes not only attempted to eliminate any form of independent group activity but also supplanted it with an intricately organized system of state-controlled organizations, in which participation was often mandatory' (Howard, 2002, p. 161). Due to this negative experience with state-run organizations during the communist period, many citizens in post communist Europe continued to mistrust organizations.

Whereas Howard explains this mistrust entirely through communism an employee of a media organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina argues that it has to do with a lack of democratic tradition. He argues that 'in situations today the mafia comes in and makes you obey, or cuts off your hands, the state is simply not capable of doing it'. He argues that you can blame it on communism, but he thinks it is more than that, more general than that.

*'The lack of democratic tradition, the lack of democratic participatory culture, centuries of authoritarian rule, centuries of external rule have brought us into a point in which society does not have mechanism, culture, infrastructure, habits that foster the development of social capital and such. Which makes everything much much harder.'*

## **Post communist disappointment**

Another reason according to Howard (Howard, 2002, p. 163) for low levels of public participation in society is the widespread disappointment, and for some even disillusionment, with political and economic developments since the collapse of the state-socialist system. For most people throughout the former Soviet bloc, the years 1989–91 represent a unique, momentous, and fascinating time in their lives, when their world was changing rapidly and dramatically. Howard argues that although they had many fears and uncertainties about where the changes would lead them, most people experienced at least a brief moment of genuine excitement, hope, and idealism during those times of rapid transformation. Moreover, they shared the belief that the end of communist rule would change their lives for the better (Howard, 2002, p. 163). In the years since then many post-communist citizens feel they have been let down, or disappointed.

A representative of a local partner of Press Now is not convinced by the current overruling influence of communism, however she represents a perfect example of post communist disappointment. She argues that the current situation is much worse than during communism.

*'I'm not sure if communism is an important factor in our current society. Communist society was not transparent and it was closed. It had an impact on citizens in public debate, during that period of time it had an impact on dedication, on compliance and on collective rights. No one considered individual rights. However now we have something even worse than the communist system, it is now a society in transition. During the communist regime we at least had a system regardless how negative it was. We had a state at that time, and everyone knew who the leader was. I do not think bad about communism. Many people now believe that it was bad in that communist regime, but now it is no better. People used to say that it was a period of darkness, and I agree, but when we come to the questions of religion and nationality people could not freely express their position. They were afraid of being punished. I do not believe that the current system is better.'*

When relating this example of post communist disappointment to the media landscape one could easily argue that this feeling of disappointment reduces the capacity of civil society and thus the quality of the media landscape. Being disappointed reduces the engagement of people in society and the media won't benefit from this situation, because a well functioning media landscape needs an active civil society.

### **The capacity of local organizations**

As I mentioned before: Many civil societies have developed their own systems and structures, they have grown from their own norms and values in a period of centuries. A lot of international organizations have taken the task to strengthen civil society. However Brinkerhoff (2009, p.1) argued that in fragile states, like Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'citizens are polarized in ethnic, religious or class-based groups, between whom there is a history of distrust, grievance and/or violent conflict' (like we have seen in the chapter on the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina). He argued that civil society lacks in these cases the capacity to cooperate, compromise and trust each other (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p.1). When looking at the local media partners of Press Now, they also argue that Bosnia-Herzegovina lacks several capacities of civil society. They are: financial capacity and human resources.

### **Financial capacity**

When asking an employee of a local media related organization on the capacity of his organization he argues that he is not sure if there is enough capacity. Most important he argues that there is a lack of financial capacity:

*'We are established as a trainings centre, and were heavily funded to offer trainings, however as the funding is decreasing we are still expected to offer trainings. In our case: we are established, funded and then the money pulls out, and then you are still expected to continue. But you don't have an association of newspapers to supporting you, you don't have a million dollar fund on which you sit on which can subsidize you, don't have a financial journalistic community who are able to pay for anything you offer. And even if you have a training which you can offer that is on the level of BBC, you cannot sell. There is no market!'*

Other local media related organizations are more optimistic. One of them succeeded to create a good framework, the organization is striving for sustainability, has its own business plan and is starting to achieve results: more journalists join the association and training is starting to benefit the journalists. The organization also succeeded to expose itself as an organization which protects human rights, regardless where the person being involved comes from. And finally the organization is more and more accepted within society by different organizations at different levels of authority. This respondent believes that better times are coming.

While some respondents determine to stay optimistic about the future, the current picture is less colourful. Financial capability is something Press Now is focussing on more and more for the past few years, they argue that financial sustainability is an important prerequisite for their exit strategy. All their local partners started to develop their own business plans and started to generate income. However, at this moment the financial situation of journalists is not very colourful, and therefore the first employee states: there is no market. The financial capability of local media organizations keeps on being delicate.

### **Human resources: You are as good as your people are**

Human resources however remain according to most respondents a huge problem. Most of the problems deal with a culture in which improving yourself is not necessary, a lack of

professional journalists and the legacy of the war. One of the respondents argues that local culture is a key factor:

*'Here people want a diploma, and if you are not offering a university level diploma or a university classified diploma, It's not very interesting. There is no feeling that you have to improve constantly like you would have in the USA or in Europe. It's a cultural thing I think.'*

An employee of a local media related organization argues that it has more to do with a lack of professional journalists. It is very hard to find competent people, and that universities produce most of the time people who do not have the skills to work in one of the industries. He argues that this is a big problem.

*'Human resources, that's a big problem. I think that an organization can not be better than its people, you can only be as good as your people are. With all the funds of the world, you are still as good as your people are.'*

Official reports of the Freedom House confirm this. Journalism in both of the country's state entities continues to be plagued by a relatively low standard of professionalism (website freedom house).

Another local media related organization also faces this problem. A respondent argues that 'the International Community does not know what to do with media in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. She argues that from 2000 until 2006 a huge amount of money was invested. 'There were about 400 Journalist trainings and the international community invested about 40 million EUR, some say even up to 100 million EUR. However in practice this respondent argues that Bosnia-Herzegovina still has unprofessional media, regardless all the financial and other support'.

*'Young journalists are without experience and skills, there is a huge pressure of the owners of the media and journalists face political pressure on a daily basis. Patriotic feelings are being waken up again. In the end the biggest problem in Bosnia is that there is a lack of professionalism amongst journalists.'*

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs is only recently involved in a media project in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The aim of this project is to increase critical journalism. Thereby the Ministry also recognizes a lack of professionalism. A representative of the Ministry argues that it is important that critical articles will be written. 'Journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina need updated training and need to regain their criticism. The media is very important in changing the mentality of the people, that is something which we should strive for. A country can only grow up when a wide range of subjects will be discussed in the media, and therefore we need critical people'.

An international expert of the OSCE also acknowledges the lack of professionalism amongst journalists. 'When the OSCE tries to organize something, it is whoever is in the office who attends the meeting [referring to the fact that there are not enough journalists trained on a specific field of their profession]. There are only a few good journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina'.

A final, human resources problem which was mentioned several times deals with the legacy of the war:

*'We are a county of 4 million, and during the war 200.000 people were killed. That's huge! In comparison: The Netherlands, which has about 16 million people, it will be close to one million killed. You can imagine how devastating that is. And you can imagine that than 4 million have run*

*away from everything. What an impact that is! A huge impact, socially, economically and culturally'*

## **Conclusion**

The beginning of this chapter started with the director of Press Now arguing that: International donors should assist in creating a framework in which civil society can develop itself, and give direct support to civil society organizations. It is important to repeat this expression and compare it to the following summary of research findings.

A lot of researchers argued that post-communist civil society is distinctively weak, because it has lower levels of organizational membership, the findings of this research confirm this in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Earlier I also addressed that if a country's political space is large enough, the more extensive a country's civil society will be. Data on Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Freedom House show one of the lowest ratings for civil liberties and political rights in the entire Balkans. This indicates the difficult conditions under which civil society has to operate and to the small amount of political space in this country.

Several respondents also argued that the communist experience from the past hampers the development of civic skills. Especially the lack of trust in organizations and a sense of post-communist disappointment were mentioned.

Researchers like Brinkerhoff (2009, p.1) argued that people in post-conflict societies lack the capacity to cooperate and trust each other. However in Bosnia-Herzegovina the lack of capacity seems to focus more on financial capacity, and the capacity of human resources. There is a lack of professionalism amongst journalists, there is a culture which does not motivate improvements, and many people were killed during the war or fled the country.

Several respondents argued that it is important for non governmental organizations like Press Now as well as organizations like the OSCE to stay and support civic engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While Press Now did support the development of local capacity, as explained before, currently their focus shifted. Whereas journalists still need to be trained, they focus more on the financial sustainability of their local partners. However in my opinion a perfect business plan does not outshine the poor quality of the product. And therefore local partners argue that both domestic governments and international donors should intensify their efforts to strengthen local groups and organizations. Their presence is still necessary, training still needs to be given and they are not yet capable of doing their work due to the political situation.

When comparing this information with the intention of Press Now it becomes clear that local organizations do not seem to believe that a decent framework has been created. Communism left a civil society which is still in a poor state, civic skills have not yet been developed (it takes time) and there is a serious lack of capacity regarding financial matters and human resources. The respondents argue that it is not realistic to expect results within the timeframe that has been given. And therefore the necessity of continuing support from organizations like Press Now in creating a framework and in support civil society organizations directly seems obvious to the local partners of Press Now.



## 7. Towards an exit strategy?

This chapter will focus on the legitimation of international media related organizations when changing their policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. How does Press Now legitimate their changing policy, as explained in chapter 1, and why do international experts and local partners think that policy is changing? By comparing the arguments of these representatives, this chapter tries to expose organizational politics within Press Now. A final section deals with a reaction of local organizations to the changing policy of Press Now.

### ***Legitimation of policy***

There are several arguments which were used to legitimate the policy of international media organizations, when scaling down their activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The following sections deal with these criteria, starting with the legitimation of Press Now: policy criteria, and continuing with different kinds of legitimation used by local partners and other international organizations.

### **Fashion trends in development aid**

This first kind of legitimation was heard most during this research. Almost all respondents mentioned this as a factor which influences the policy of Press Now. The last 10 years the Balkan was a popular area for development organizations. However at this moment the volume of development aid in the western part of the Balkans is decreasing according to the respondent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 'Those countries are now too rich for development. A social transformation is necessary. The last 10 years the Balkan was a popular area, now organizations are retreating, it is no 'hot issue' anymore. Which is a pity because there is a lot to be done, also in the field of media development'. The respondent argues that this is more about the money, the rules of subsidy changed. 'Political decisions are being made which you cannot influence very much. Every Minister of Development Cooperation has his own preferences, and development organizations relate to this by changing their financial proposal. Press Now would not ask for money in Southern America if it wasn't a 'hot issue'', the respondent states.

Many employees of Press Now agree with this legitimation. One of them states that as an organization you have to choose your priorities and at this moment there are other crises to focus on.

*'I don't think we are leaving too early, because we [Press Now] differentiated and spread around the globe a lot. There are more than 20 countries where we are operating. In the course of every year you prioritize and reprioritize and apparently Bosnia is coming out of the focus. It is not a priority anymore. You cannot do anything about it because there are some other crisis's. It has to do with global reprioritizing the focus.'*

### **'The international community is lost'**

One of the respondents argues that international aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina is not beneficial and valuable because there is no coherent policy and every organization has other interests. He argues that there is no legitimation, because there is no policy, because the international community is lost.

*'I do not believe in the concept of 'international community', because that thing does not exist. It became a conglomerate of different interests, that more often than not don't cooperate at all. They compete with each other. They're thinking of projects, funds, people, without talking to each other,*

*without coordinating. Most of the time they are competing with each other. I think Bosnia-Herzegovina is the best case for this to illustrate. In most of the time they don't have a clue what they are doing. There is no coherent policy what so ever.'*

Another respondent argues that there have been wonderful projects and ideas, wonderful initiatives, and some major successes. Like the Communications Regulatory Agency<sup>16</sup>, is a big success story he argues. 'There have been some excellent people coming in, top class like Lajcak [Miroslav Lajcak, the current High Representative]'. However he argues that when you look at Bosnia-Herzegovina you can see that many are guessing, 'everybody is guessing'. And apart from that, the respondent argues that people haven't got a clue what they are doing in this country.

*'They [international organizations] sent people on mission who are literally sleeping. Can you imagine? You come to a meeting, to interview a guy who is running a state. He is running a state of 4 million people! And during the meeting he falls asleep! Many times! I mean what would you think? You would think that he is too old, and senile and that he doesn't have a clue what he is doing here. So I think the international community is totally lost, they don't have an idea what they are doing.'*

Several respondents argue that the OHR doesn't have a clue what they are doing. As one of the respondents argues: 'The people working at the OHR are looking for a great salary and career prospects. It's people are most of the time people who are improving their career prospects. They come to Bosnia-Herzegovina for 6 to 15 months, raise their salary level and than move on'. The reason for this is according to the respondent that back in their home country, it is a great up career moving spot. 'Come to Bosnia, nobody is shooting at you, you have a great salary, you get a wonderful position, you are head of policy department of OHR or something like that'. In my opinion this criticism seems legitimate, it contributes to the overall negative opinion that local media organizations have of international organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## **Political criteria**

Another reason which was mentioned by local organizations why international organizations change their policy has to do with political matters. Organizations seem to legitimize their policy by political criteria. One of the respondents states that: 'Organizations have political criteria for election and selection of activities. They actually choose media [partners for cooperation] from a political side'. The respondent clarifies this by giving the following example<sup>17</sup>:

*'This example is rather contra dictionary and upsetting to me. Prijedor, a city in Republika Srpska, near Banja Luka, was on the black list of the US government because a few years ago Prijedor did not comply with a request to hand over war criminals. A similar situation was in Foča, east of Bosnia-Herzegovina and also belongs to Republika Srpska. In Prijedor there was a quality, free radio, but USAID did not support that radio although it was independent, very professional and had a very good quality program. Just because Prijedor as a city was on the*

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<sup>16</sup> The Communications Regulatory Agency is an independent State institution with sole jurisdiction over telecommunications and broadcasting across the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was originally established on 2 March 2001 by a decision of the High Representative.

<sup>17</sup> The example concerns the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It is the United States federal government organization responsible for most non-military foreign aid.

*black list. That's absurd. If you have one good media to simply put them aside just because of the situation as it was, is nonsense. Especially because in doing so independent media could not act in Republika Srpska and USAID could not help in solving the problem'.*

The respondent argues that apart from some governmental organizations there are also some NGOs who have political criteria when choosing local media they would help. The respondent argues that this is less of a problem because it is in accordance with their mission. 'A German foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, is actually a social democratic orientated foundation, they helped a lot and were very supportive towards labor organizations, and many projects of protection of journalists rights. They are led by political missions and that is ok, because that's the nature of those foundations'. However the respondent does not have any proof of Press Now policy which is politically influenced.

The question rises with local organizations whether or not the reports of international organizations reflect the real situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 'They are made to present better results'. While on a political level Bosnia-Herzegovina started negotiations about integration into Europe, the organizations realized that the country is no 'hot spot' anymore, and by these final reports who do not reflect reality, the respondent believes they are allowed to move further towards other regions.

### ***A reaction from local organizations to dwindling international support.***

It may be clear from the section above, that some respondents, who are arguing that 'the international community is lost' are not very sad for the international organizations leaving. Another reason why some respondents are not very sad is that there might be less organizations that deal with grants specially targeting Bosnia-Herzegovina, however there are other opportunities for funding which are not especially directed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Like MATRA<sup>18</sup> for example'.

However the same respondent argues that although there are new options for funding, many local organizations, like the one he is working for, are depending on external funding. 'If this funding is decreasing, you are not developing quick enough, your capacity to raise money through other sources isn't sufficient and you do not develop commercial services, you are in big trouble'.

Other representatives of local organizations argue that the timing of international organizations to change their policy regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina is wrong. 'It is happening too early'. An argument which many respondents mentioned was that 'the problem is that there was support for the realization of projects in stead of development. There were no long lasting activities'.

A representative of the OSCE argues: 'At this moment Bosnia-Herzegovina does not get as much support as it needs. Timing is important and this country now needs even more assistance. There is so much to do!' The representative argues that it will take a long time if the government is developing like this. 'Bosnia-Herzegovina is no longer in the center of attention, but it needs all the support it can get. Especially the role of smaller NGOs is prominent in creating a well functioning media landscape'.

The OSCE combines this opinion with actions. The representative argues that the OSCE has noticed how important it is to be again involved in media development. 'The

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<sup>18</sup> The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages since 1994 the development of civil society in mid and eastern Europe by this program.

OSCE is considering in 2009 not to go back deeply in media development, but to talk to local organizations involved, and how the OSCE can support them’.

### **Conclusion**

There are several arguments which were used to legitimate the policy of international media organizations, when scaling down their activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some respondents argue that the last 10 years the Balkan was a popular area, now organizations are retrieving, it is no ‘hot issue’ anymore. Others argue that the international organizations do not have a coherent policy, are known by their differences in interests, and do not have a clue what they are doing. A third legitimation which was heard deals with the political criteria of organizations when electing and selecting activities. A respondent even argues that it is possible that the reports of international organizations do not reflect the real situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When evaluating the necessity of international presence/aid in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the respondents do not all agree. In order to escape from the chaotic situation which was created by the invasion of all the international organizations, one of the respondents does not seem to mind that the international community is leaving. However this respondent argues that it is important for local organizations to have the capacity to raise their own money. It is important to notice that this respondent is working at a local organization which is already financially stable. The income of this organization is after huge donor interference for a large part secured by their own commercial income.

All other local organizations, including the OSCE, argue that the timing of international organizations to change their policy is wrong. It is happening too early, because the government is not developing quick enough.

This argument can be easily transferred to the political theory of Risse and Thomas (in Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 2007, p.205 & Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons, 2002, p. 520-521). The enlargement of political space is necessary for local society organizations to rebuild their capacity. And also this chapter seems to conclude that political space is not present in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When coming back to all the different forms of legitimation which were used by local organizations for the changing policy of organizations like Press Now, one of them was heard most. The argument of fashion trends within development aid, was recognized by almost all respondents and it shows that the theories of Risse and Thomas are not all including. They do not seem to address the real dilemma’s of international organizations sufficiently. It is not just the political situation in the country and the situation in society which makes an organization change its policy. The policy of organizations is also being influenced by trends in society.

## **8. The changing role of international media organizations: a reflection on the findings**

This research tries to describe the change in policy of Press Now. It also tries to find an answer on the question of how this policy is related to the political and social situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Is it related at all? The focus is therefore on one case, the case of Press Now. Local partners of Press Now are involved in this research as well as other relevant international stakeholders. All together this provides more information on the desirability of NGOs like Press Now when withdrawing/changing their support.

Press Now is used as a case study in this research. In doing so I limited the subject of research to one case in stead of researching all international media supporting organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One well chosen organization is by content comparable to other organizations of the same kind, and therefore the results can be carefully generalized to all international media supporting organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who are likely to encounter similar choices and policy dilemmas in their work.

The theoretical framework determined the perspective from which I conducted this research. The most important premises is the theory of Risse. He argues that there should be a situation in which external organizations have enlarged political space and only than local organizations are able to rebuild their own capacity, and survive without support of international organizations like Press Now. This research tries to find out whether or not this is the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The policy of Press Now changed over time. While they focused first on direct support for media and content (financial support to specific media outlets and journalists to allowed them to pay for staff, equipment and operating expenses), this was soon followed by assistance in reforming the legal and regulatory frameworks; supporting training and education of journalists; and finally supporting media institutions in supporting their research, training and production facilities.

During all these years, Press Now supported television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and some internet media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organization aims to promote the development of open and democratic societies, by supporting independent media in regions of conflict and countries in transition. The organization considers the development of a diverse and democratic media as a prerequisite for the development of democracy and civil society. According to Press Now, many conflicts are fuelled by the manipulation of information and a strong and open civil society can only develop when supported by a pluralistic, independent media that voices different opinions, reflects multiple views, stimulates public debate, acts as a watchdog on society, and holds authorities to account. In supporting the media landscape Press Now is trying to create a framework in which civil society can operate and develop itself. The state should guarantee the freedom of association of citizens, and create a free market where civil society can secure itself.

Recently some people argue that an exit process of international organizations in the region began. The idea of this process is that assistance is being given for a fixed period of time, and the exit strategy is designed to secure the investment that has been made in the area. This so-called exit process of international organizations leaving Bosnia-Herzegovina, lies at the core of this research. A policy which responding to the prevailing conflict stage and media environment, requires careful assessment of the situation and any proposed intervention. As time passes by more and more international organizations, which were involved in media assistance in former Yugoslavia, reprioritize the countries they are working with and shift their focus towards other current conflict regions. Press Now is one of these organizations.

Their change in policy is defended by the argument that the organization has to change, because of a changing environment. Trends within development aid, make it necessary for Press Now to refocus its priorities, towards more needy regions. So their exit strategy was not planned from the beginning, but came on the agenda at the moment of a changing environment. When looking more specific at the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina one important question rises: Is the changing policy of international media organizations desirable when looking at the current political and social developments in this country? In the next section I will analyze the information which this research provided on this topic.

### ***Political developments***

When looking at the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this research demonstrates that it is influenced by several political developments. The first one is political pressure from special interest groups. Although there seems to be a global trend of interference in media most respondents agree on the fact that an increase of (political) interference is harmful for the quality of the media landscape.

A second development which came up has to do with political instability. The respondents of this research argue that the situation is serious and threatening. While the media serves as a key factor in the creation of democracy, in Bosnia-Herzegovina it serves at this moment as a contributor to radicalization.

A third development deals with the security situation of journalists. The current regime seems to use political interference and pressure as a way to maintain power, and thereby restricting media and journalists to function as a watchdog of society.

A final development deals with ethnic separation in society. Bosnia-Herzegovina society is a segregated society divided along ethnic lines. This separation influences the kind of activities of local media related organizations and it influences chances in funding.

These developments indicate that, the enlargement of political space which is necessary for local society organizations to rebuild their capacity, seems to be lacking.

### ***Social developments***

When looking at the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is influenced by several social developments.

First the overall difficult conditions under which civil society is supposed to exist. There are rather low ratings for civil liberties and political rights, when arguing that more political space increases the chances of civil society this indicates the difficult conditions under which it has to operate. Secondly this research finds that there are rather low financial capacities, due to the poor financial status of journalists. A final social development which influences the media landscape has to do with human resources. There is a lack of professionalism amongst journalists, there is a culture which does not motivate improvements, and many people were killed during the war or fled the country.

When comparing these developments with the intention of Press Now it becomes clear that local organizations do not seem to believe that a decent framework has been created. Communism left a civil society which is still in a poor state, civic skills have not yet been developed (it takes time) and there is a serious lack of capacity regarding financial matters and human resources. The respondents argue that it is not realistic to expect results within the timeframe that has been given. And therefore the necessity of continuing support from organizations like Press Now in creating a framework and in support civil society organizations directly seems obvious to the local partners of Press Now.

In the beginning the director of Press Now stated that: International donors should assist in creating a framework in which civil society can develop itself, and give direct support to civil

society organizations. However the current political and social situation indicates that there is not yet a political and social situation in which capacity building is successful. Political space which is necessary for local organizations to rebuild capacity is lacking and civil society is not yet developed enough. The framework Press Now is referring to has not yet been established. Local and international partners of Press Now argue that the timing of the current exit strategy of Press Now is wrong, it is too soon. In my opinion exiting at this moment will make the investments and efforts of Press Now less useful in many cases. The eventual result of their policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina is longer lasting and more durable if such a framework is created before exiting. Such a framework secures the development of civil society and de media landscape.

According to Press Now the reason why they are exiting and changing their policy has to do with a changing environment. After 9/11, the Balkan region became less appealing to the general public and political interest shifted towards the Middle East region. All international organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina are scaling down their activities, and Press Now is no exception to this trend.

In the past the strategy of Press Now has been continuously adapting to local and political media-related developments. However at this moment Press Now is changing its policy because in order to survive it has to. Important to notice is that in official definitions, the term exit strategy is used to refer to a process in which assistance is being given for a fixed period of time, and the exit strategy is designed to secure the investment that has been made by the donor organization in the area. When looking at this definition, it is questionable if the current policy of Press Now deserves the label 'exit strategy'. It seems as if it is more referring to reducing and eventually stopping support than to securing investments. The danger of doing so is that there is a real possibility for investments to be useless. All the efforts which have been made from the beginning until now risk a real danger of being lost, because there is no framework that secures the development of the media landscape.

### ***Reflection on the theory***

For this research the theory of Risse and Thomas was very useful. It provided the everyday experiences of the organizations with a theoretical background. However this research shows that the theories of Risse and Thomas are not all including. The theory made me realize that it does not address the everyday practices of international organizations sufficiently. It is not just the political situation in the country and the situation in society which makes an organization change its policy, but policy is much more influenced by everyday practices of NGOs.

The dilemmas of capacity building by Brinkerhoff were also very useful. In building capacity all organizations, including media related organizations, face the challenge of supporting the transition to country owned development, while doing this several dilemmas need to be faced. The dilemma which reoccurred several times during this research has to do with the question if organizations should focus more on their technical strategies, like improving the skills of journalists, or should they strive for changes in the enabling environment, like for example lobbying in order to create political willingness? This dilemma seems to be very much applicable to the situation of Press Now. Over time they have focused more on technical strategies, and although they indirectly also influence the enabling environment, the enabling environment as a purpose itself seems to have disappeared from the list of priorities. While this research and the theory of Risse show that especially this is lacking within the policy of international media organizations like Press Now.

## ***Policy recommendations***

A final word of this research is devoted to a recommendation for NGO policy makers, and there are two subjects which I would like to address. Firstly, this research shows in my opinion the value of responsiveness of NGO policy. It is important for NGOs to be able to react on changes in society. Political and social situations should be able to change policy. Intervention policy should be realistically planned from the beginning, including an exit strategy and a policy, which responding to the prevailing conflict stage and media environment, requires careful assessment of the situation in the country and any proposed intervention. So my first recommendation is to NGO policy makers to carefully assess the situation in the country they are working and their proposed intervention (exit strategy). Consulting your local partners is a helpful tool in doing so successfully, because it can prevent your policy from being useless due to the poor situation in society. NGO responsiveness can prevent untimely exit strategies from happening.

Secondly I would like to argue that this corresponds with an almost ideal situation in which policy is not being influenced by trends within the wider system of development aid. I have seen, while doing this research, that fashion trends within development aid are an everyday practice of NGOs. Therefore I would like to emphasize that if there is something in the current system of development aid that needs to be changed, it is the system itself. When looking at the financial sustainability of NGOs, the system makes it necessary for NGOs to change their policy towards fashionable regions and to fail 'unfashionable regions'. In doing so the system and the NGOs neglect a call for more help from many local and international media workers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The system of development aid should be more open to other regions as well, because only than organizations can continue supporting the media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina.



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