

# Political and Civic Transnational Engagement of Bosnians Living in Norway

Political participation, participation in organisations and belonging.

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# Foreword

30 years since the first Bosnian refugees arrived to Norway, this thesis attempts to make sense of parts of the Bosnian diaspora living in Norway.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Jan-Paul Brekke, for always being so available to me and answering my emails quickly and giving me feedback, even when you were not required to. Your guidance has been invaluable, and I appreciate it very much.

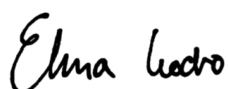
I would also like to thank the persons who reached into their network of Bosnians and helped me gather my informants, you know how you are! I would also like to thank all my informants who took time out of their busy schedules to sit for long interviews, providing me with the material that this study is based upon.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents who supported me and made sure I ate healthy dinners in the last month that I finished up writing this thesis. Your presence made me writing this a whole lot easier.

I will look fondly back on these years at the University of Oslo, and all the great professors I have encountered.

Being a second-generation Bosnian, there seems to be an incessant need to help make sense of where you come from and where you are going. A few years ago, I wrote a bachelor's thesis on dual citizenship, belonging and choosing a place to settle for the Bosnian group from a Bosnian perspective. In this thesis I examine the Bosnian diaspora from a Norwegian perspective, as Norwegian-Bosnians in Norway. I have really invested much time and effort in this thesis and I hope you as a reader can leave having gathered more knowledge about Bosnians in Norway.

Here's to summer vacation!



Elma Kodro

# ABSTRACT

*"We have an expression that says that the first generation builds, the second maintains, and the third sells<sup>1</sup> (translated) (Interview with Informant 4).*

This thesis looks at the Bosnian group living in Norway 30 years after their first arrival in 1993 and attempts to enlighten the question of "To what extent are Bosnians in Norway engaged politically and civically in the Norwegian and Bosnian society?". Data is gathered through interviews with seven individual informants, who are first-generation immigrant refugees in Norway; as well as informants who acted as representatives for the four organisations the Islamic Community Bosnia and Herzegovina in Norway, Mercy, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway and Stecak<sup>2</sup> in the Spring of 2023.

The findings in this analysis show that Bosnians are a transnational diaspora, through their dual citizenship and ties to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the group I interviewed have low participation in Bosnian elections, in contrast to Norwegian election where they have high participation. There is little membership in Bosnian organisations in Norway, but some membership in overreaching organisations (explained further in thesis). The informants are connected to Bosnia and visit the country yearly. Most persons have properties in both Norway and Bosnia. The organisations I spoke with do not seem to be a forum of political participation, other than representing the interests of their members and attempting to raise democratic participation at Bosnian and Norwegian elections.

These findings cannot be generalised for the group overall due to a small number of participants but might act as a supplementary to further quantitative research on this topic.

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<sup>1</sup> In original language: "vi har et uttrykk som sier at den første generasjonen bygger, den andre opprettholder, og den tredje selger". This can be interpreted as meaning that when a new immigrant generation arrives to a country, it invests in building the community, the second maintains it, and the third, being so far removed from the first ones that arrived, inevitably sells it due to a lack of belonging or emotional attachment.

<sup>2</sup> Non-translated names: Islamske Felleskap Bosna-Hercegovina i Norge, Barmhjertighet (Milost), Bosnia-Hercegovina-forbundet i Norge

# Contents

- 1 Introduction .....6
  - 1.1 About the group .....7
  - 1.2 Composition of the Group.....8
  - 1.3 Organising Bosnians .....9
- 2 Literary Review .....10
  - 2.1 Past Studies on the Bosnian Group .....10
    - 2.1.1 Composition of Bosnia and Religious Politics .....10
    - 2.1.2 Being invisible.....12
    - 2.1.3 Integration and Dual Citizenship .....12
    - 2.1.4 Trends in Voter Turnout in Norway Among Bosnians .....14
  - 2.2 Theories on Political Participation and Civic Engagement.....15
    - 2.2.1 The Bosnian Group as a Diaspora.....15
    - 2.2.2 Transnationalism .....16
    - 2.2.3 Civic engagement .....19
    - 2.2.4 Political participation.....20
- 3 Methodology .....24
  - 3.1 Choosing a Method, Validity and Limitations.....25
  - 3.2 Choosing Informants .....28
  - 3.3 Anonymity.....30
  - 3.4 How the Issue Will be Approached.....30
- 4 Findings.....32
  - 4.1 Civic Engagement Through Organisations .....33
    - 4.1.1 Short Summary of the Organisations .....33
    - 4.1.2 Importance of Organising Bosnians in Norway: Do Individuals Participate in Organisations .....38
    - 4.1.3 Problems With Access to Organisations.....40
    - 4.1.4 Individuals’ Membership in Other Organisations .....42
    - 4.1.5 Perception of the Organisations and Critical views .....42
  - 4.2 Political Participation.....44
    - 4.2.1 The Organisations as a Political Forum and Cooperation with Governments .....44
    - 4.2.2 Political Participation Among the Individual Informants .....47
  - 4.3 Looking Into Belonging.....50
    - 4.3.1 Orientation Towards Bosnia or Norway.....50
    - 4.3.2 Ethnic Identity and Interethnic Contact .....54
    - 4.3.3 How Well are they Received? And Contact with Their Communities.....55

4.3.4	Media.....	56
4.3.5	Where Would Your Grave Lie? .....	58
5	Discussion .....	58
6	Conclusion.....	61
6.1	Further studies.....	62
7	References .....	62
7.1	Interviews .....	62
7.2	References .....	63
8	Appendix .....	68
8.1	Interview Guide 1: Individual Informants (Translated in English) .....	68
8.2	Interview Guide 1: Individual Informants (Norwegian).....	72
8.3	Interview Guide 2: Organisations (English) .....	76
8.4	Interview Guide 2: Organisations (Norwegian).....	79

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Thirty years have passed since the first refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina arrived in Norway in 1993 due to the war following Yugoslav partition. After 7 years, many applied for Norwegian citizenship, but also kept their Bosnian citizenship, before dual citizenship was officially recognised in Norway. As Bosnians with dual citizenship have a de jure right to vote in either country, I was interested to see to what extent their political and civic engagement went to. Are Bosnians in Norway more active in Norwegian society or in Bosnian society? Because of this, this thesis aims to answer the question of “To what extent are Bosnians in Norway engaged politically and civically in the Norwegian and Bosnian society?”.

Main components of this thesis are the issues of integration (identity and attachment to the Norwegian society versus the "home country") and political and organisational participation in Norway and Bosnia respectively. I will examine various factors that contribute to and express this political and civic engagement among Bosnians in Norway, and contrast this with their sense of belonging in Bosnia. These factors include voting patterns, engagement in organisations for Bosnians in Norway, and the overall sense of community among Bosnians in both countries. Inspired by a similar study of the Pakistani population in Norway (Ruud 1994), I will look at factor such as political participation by Bosnians in Norway, participation in different types of organisations, Bosnians' orientation towards Norway or Bosnia respectively and Bosnians' integration into Norwegian society. This is important politically, because it addresses the topics of participation, co-determination and loyalty – to perhaps both the Norwegian and the Bosnian state. For the Bosnian group itself it is important to look into these topics, to gauge their sense of identity, belonging and shaping of their own lives.

This thesis is based on two categories of interviewees: Individual Bosnians with dual citizenship living in Norway and representatives from organisations created for Bosnians in Norway. The group of individual informants consists of first-generation immigrants who arrived to Norway in the period from 1993-1998 and were legal adults at the time (at least 18 years old). The

representatives are from the organisations Islamic Society Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Islamic

*Elma Leko*

Community Bosnia-Herzegovina), Barmhjertighet (Mercy), the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway (the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway) and Stecak<sup>3</sup>.

This thesis will be divided into the following sections: First I will discuss some background information about Bosnians in Norway and discuss relevant theories related to transnationalism, civic engagement and political participation. In the third section I will defend my method. The fourth section will present all the findings I have gathered from my analysis. The next two sections will go into a discussion and a conclusion of the findings. Lastly, all references will be listed, and the interview guide will be included in the appendix.

## **1.1 ABOUT THE GROUP**

Before moving on further, it is useful to give some background information on the Bosnian group in Norway. Approximately 14 000 people from Bosnia came to Norway in the 1990s, 6 000 of whom arrived in 1993, while the war in the country was still ongoing (Statistics Norway 2016). It can be assumed that the refugees who came as adults in the 1990s (and until 1998 when the collective protection provision expired (Norwegian Telegraph Agency 2003) differ from those who came to Norway as small children and have grown up in the country. However, this comparison is beyond the scope of this thesis, as only the former group will be examined. Unlike refugee groups elsewhere in Norway, many from Bosnia have come as families, and have a fairly similar population composition to the Norwegian population (Dzamarija 2016, p.16). In 2023, there were approximately 19 000 persons (of which 5 000 were born in Norway) with Bosnian immigrant background living in Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå n.d). Of these, there were in 2018 a total of 3928 Norwegian-born with Bosnian-born parents in Norway, while only 1113 of these are over the age of 15 (Dalsgard et al 2018, p.12).

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<sup>3</sup> The name is the name of stone tombstones found in Bosnia and Herzegovina which date back to the Ottoman Empire. The name of this organisation will not be translated.

## 1.2 COMPOSITION OF THE GROUP

Bosnians in Norway were included in Norway's "whole Norway" strategy, where refugees were placed throughout Norway, to prevent excessive concentrations of people and segregated communities (Valenta and Strabac 2016). Bosnians were placed in different municipalities in the country upon arrival. On January 1, 1995, 248 out of 435 municipalities received Bosnians (Dzamarija 2016, p.17). Most live in Oslo (3400 persons), and after that Sarpsborg is next with 2 percent of the population in the municipality (Dzamarija 2016, p.17). Other places with more than 600 people from Bosnia are Bergen, Drammen and Fredrikstad (Dzamarija 2016, p.17). 70 % of Bosnian immigrants state that they have never experienced discrimination (Valenta and Strabac 2016). The Bosnian group in Norway is not considered very strongly connected (Valenta and Strabac 2016). This is due to a couple of factors. Firstly, during Bosnian immigration to Norway, Bosnians did not have an established, strong immigration group of the former Yugoslavia present when most of them came to the country in the 1990s. This meant that they did not have a group of established Serbian, Croatian or Bosniak citizens to support the Bosnians. Furthermore, although organisations for Bosnians were important in creating this community, due to interethnic conflicts, the group had problems with internal cohesion and many Bosnians who were not members of the Muslim religion felt that these organisations were not meant for them (Brekke 2001 cited in Valenta and Strabac 2016). The lack of solidarity within the group is also linked to its reception in society. Theories of segmented assimilation argue that groups that feel alienated and different both culturally and in appearance are often met with prejudice, and thus protect themselves by turning inward against the group (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Bosnians have not been the recipients of these prejudices, and this may help to explain why they have oriented themselves towards mainstream society (Valenta and Strabac 2016).

According to the Bosnian state, 89 percent of Bosnians in Norway have Norwegian citizenship - and only Australia has a higher percentage with citizenship of the receiving country, at 95 percent (Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice 2016, p.6). In 2011, there were 3706 Bosnians in Norway who had only Bosnian citizenship (Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice 2012, p.7), which means that the rest have either only Norwegian citizenship or dual citizenship.

*Elma Luedro*



### 1.3 ORGANISING BOSNIANS

To my knowledge, there are no official reports or insights into organisations for Bosnians in Norway that have been published by the Norwegian government. Furthermore, the organisations I talked with lack accessible information online or other places of their operation and activities. Therefore, all information I have gathered about the four mentioned organisations are through the in-depth interviews and some information from the individual informants.

However, there is data available on the religious affiliation of the group. According to a report from Statistics Norway's Living Conditions Survey 2016 on living conditions among immigrants in Norway. In the Bosnian group, 62 percent state that they were raised in Islam, 14 that they were raised in Christianity, while the rest state that they were not raised in any religious faith (23 percent) and 1 percent state that they were raised in another religion than the major ones listed (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017, p. 84). When asked which religion they belong to today, 55 percent are still Muslims and 12 percent are Christians, while 32 percent do not belong to any religious faith (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017, p. 86).

We see from this information that there is a predominantly Muslim majority in the group, followed by one or non-religious group that has come to Norway, which further reinforces the sense that the group that has come to Norway is predominantly Muslim, despite the country itself being divided into three ethnic and religious groups. This may affect the choice of interviewees, most of whom will necessarily be Muslims.

the Islamic Community Bosnia-Hercegovina in Norway is as of 2017 the largest Islamic organisation in Norway, with approximately 9.300 members (Carlsen and Røset 2017). The size of this organisation may suggest that it may have a diasporic function to connect the group. Nevertheless, 28 percent of Bosnians state that religion has no significance for them and 75 percent have never participated in religious meetings or prayer organized by religious communities (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017, p.91). This issue of religious participation, belonging and organisation can be interesting to look at in relation to ties between people from Bosnia versus ties with Norway.

## 2 LITERARY REVIEW

This section will be divided into two parts. The first part will discuss findings and statistics about the Bosnian group in Norway, related to politics

### 2.1 PAST STUDIES ON THE BOSNIAN GROUP

#### 2.1.1 Composition of Bosnia and Religious Politics

Some complicated notions are outside the scope of this thesis. However, one thing needs to be addressed: The Bosnian group is not uniquely only *Bosnian* but consists of three ethnonational groups – the Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs, as decided by the Bosnian constitution (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina n.d.). These groups are traditionally tied to the Muslim, Catholic Christian and Orthodox Christian faiths, with different cultural and religious traditions because of this.

Further, though this is also a complicated matter, it is important to introduce some background to the Yugoslavian conflict that broke out into war. In Yugoslavia, being a communist country, there were major efforts to “unite the whole area under a single nation and denomination. This would then lead to war, ethnic cleansing, and destruction.” (Hadzic 2020, p.106). In his paper titled “The Politicization of Religion and the Sacralized Balkan Nations Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina” Hadzic creates a useful in-depth analysis of the way that religion is intertwined with politics in the Balkans<sup>4</sup> and especially Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020).

Hadzic explains how in particular, Serbian nationalism motivated by religion was more prevalent than the Croatian counterpart. Often, offensive actions taken by Serbian militants and the soldiers performing them were blessed by the Orthodox Church. This was tied to the historic Martyr from the 1500s Prince Lazar. However, in contrast, the church also altogether denied performing violence outbreaks or organised rapes. (Hadzic 2020, p.115).

The problem is that religious pluralism in B&H has been introduced as national/confessional pluralism. Its essence was constituted by three national "war"

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<sup>4</sup> Mainly discussing Serbia and Croatia

political parties (SDA, SDS, HDZ), each with the strong support of “their” denomination (Islamic Community, Serbian Orthodox Church, and Croatian Catholic Church).

Religious communities are, even as they may try to dispute this, the most important logistics to ethnonationalist political philosophies. There are two important moments here: the first is the awakening of the nation through a return to religious roots. Others are speeches by religious leaders in election campaigns in which believers are told, most often indirectly, to vote for a particular party. Religious communities often decide local elections, and at the parliamentary level, candidates also seek the support of religious groups. Thus, it is impossible to follow the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics and not look at the role of religion in elections. (Hadzic 2020, p.118)

Because of this, the Bosnian population arriving in Norway might be somewhat segregated and separated into the different ethnicities. Colic-Peisker cites a Bosniak man in Australia saying “When the war started, people were persecuted and killed because they were Muslims. ... If someone beats you up telling you you're a Muslim, you start to think about it and start to develop belonging to that group.” (2005, p.627). As mentioned, according to the Bosnian constitution, Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats are the constituent peoples, together with Others of the country (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina n.d, p.2). However, there has been a trend of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats to adhere to organisations created by the countries Serbia and Croatia. In Sweden, originally, the national organisation for Bosnia and Herzegovina was mainly made open to all ethnic groups, but quickly became ethnically homogeneous and was still so in 2013, as Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats chose to take part in Serb and Croat organisations established already in the 1960s during the labour migration of the time when they arrived in Sweden (Kostic 2013, p.37). Information from the main Croat organisation in Norway also shows that this organisation “claims” Croats arriving to Norway from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kroatisk Forbund Norge n.d.).

This notion of religion intermixing with politics will be inquired about in the interviews.

However, there is no expectation that even if this dimension did exist, this would be something the organisations necessarily disclose.

### 2.1.2 Being invisible

The Bosnian group is well integrated in Norway, and the group has generally benefited from what is called "White Privilege" or white privilege, where the group, because they are similar to the groups native to the nation they come to, find it easier to blend in (Kovacevic Bielicki 2017; Colic-Peisker 2005).

We are invisible immigrants, who unlike others (read: non-whites) are constantly being recognised as Norwegian by not being noticed. This suddenly became very obvious when the Directorate of Elections last year sent out a call to all those with a registered immigrant background to vote in the municipal elections. An acquaintance from Bosnia was furious. She said that this was the first time she really felt like a foreigner in Norway. The fact that many of us felt the same way only proves that we are actually Norwegians on a daily basis. We don't stand out, unless we choose to. We manage our own background the way we want to. It is an enormous privilege.<sup>5</sup> (Kozaric 2020, p.220)

A measure of integration or fitting in can be looking at the youth. Bosnian youth are seen as the best integrated group of refugees in Norway, with an 18 percent higher than average share of secondary school students and a 14 percent higher than average share of students in higher education (Statistics Norway 2016). Nevertheless, Talic shows that Norwegian-Bosnians retain a strong connection to Bosnia, often visiting the country during the summer months, and especially the older generation follows Bosnian news and TV (2017).

### 2.1.3 Integration and Dual Citizenship

One important aspect to consider is the presence of and utility of a dual citizenship. Bosnians arrived mainly from 1993 to 1998, as collective protection for the group expired at the end of 1998 (December 31) (Norsk telegrambyrå 2003). All Bosnians who had arrived in the country

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<sup>5</sup> In original language: "Vi er usynlige innvandrere, som i motsetning til andre (les: ikke-hvite) til stadighet blir anerkjent som norske ved ikke å bli lagt merke til. Dette ble med ett veldig åpenbart da Valgdirektoratet i fjor sendte ut en oppfordring til alle med registrert innvandrerbakgrunn om å stemme ved kommunevalget. En bekjent fra Bosnia ble rasende. Hun sa at dette var første gang hun virkelig følte seg som en utlending i Norge. At mange av oss kjente på det samme, beviser bare at vi til daglig faktisk er nordmenn. Vi skiller oss ikke ut, med mindre vi velger det selv. Vi forvalter egen bakgrunn slik vi selv ønsker. Det er et enormt privilegium."

before January 1, 1999 were thus given the opportunity to apply for citizenship after the ordinary period of 7 years (Norsk telegrambyrå 2003). Jan-Paul Brekke's doctoral thesis looks at various aspects of Norway's temporary protection scheme, which was tried out on Bosnians but eventually abandoned and turned into a permanent residence permit. Here he talks to people from Bosnia in the period from 1995 to 1998 (Brekke 2001). In these interviews, the persons express uncertainty and insecurity because they do not know whether their future will be in Norway or whether they will be sent back, as Bosnians in Germany were. One example is a mine clearance course aimed at clearing mines in Bosnia, to which municipal staff had difficulty recruiting refugees because this would give the authorities an argument for sending them back home (Brekke 2001, p.240). They expressed the difficulty of living a double life and the desire to pursue integration even though they were uncertain about where they would eventually live, so as not to "stop in their life course (translated)" (Brekke 2001, p.251).

In more recent studies, Dzamarija from Statistics Norway, she looks at the integration of Bosnians and calls them "integration winners" (2016). She emphasizes the difficulties in measuring indicators such as "feeling at home in Norway" and "being interested in society and aiming for a future in Norway", but points out that "as of 1 January 2016, three out of four Bosnians had Norwegian citizenship, which may indicate a strong sense of belonging to Norway and a desire to have a future here" (Dzamarija 2016, p. 19). This could be debatable, however, as many Bosnians have dual citizenship, even though the text was written in 2016, 4 years before Norway generally opened up for dual citizenship. In 2000 there was the first wave of applications for Norwegian citizenship, where about 2000 people applied and it was decided that they would not lose their Bosnian citizenship automatically (Norwegian National Broadcasting 2000). One of the negative consequences of having two citizenships is the possibility of being deprived of the Norwegian one, as long as one has a second citizenship. Nevertheless, Høyre, Frp and Krf believed that dual citizenship could help to stop terrorist activities (Kommunal- og forvaltningskomiteen 2018/2019).

When it comes to living in Norway or in Bosnia, a majority of Bosnian immigrants (53 percent) say they want to stay in Norway, while 36 percent want to live partly in Norway or in Bosnia (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017). Almost no one wants to move back to Bosnia.

#### 2.1.4 Trends in Voter Turnout in Norway Among Bosnians

In 2007, there were 8388 eligible Bosnians (immigrants or Norwegian-born to immigrant parents) in Norway, but only 250 of these voted (Aalandslid 2008, p.131). This is despite the fact that the group is seen as well integrated, and will often learn Norwegian quickly, have relevant education, get a job quickly and live in detached houses (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.29). In the Bosnian group, higher education is usually equated with a higher participation in elections (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.59). In the interviews, it may be interesting to investigate whether and why voter turnout is so low.

Kozaric talks in his article about growing up in Banja Luka (in Republika Srpska<sup>6</sup>) after the war at the age of seven, and how all signage was now suddenly in Cyrillic (Kozaric 2020, p.218). "My own narrative of what I experienced in those years is a narrative of being excluded from the established community of meaning, both in a physical, discursive and symbolic sense (translated)<sup>7</sup>" (Kozaric 2020, p.221). This may shed light on a possible feeling of the Bosnian diaspora in Norway with dual citizenship about participating in local elections.

In interviews, Bosnians were found to be less concerned with voting for other Bosnians, if there were any Bosnians to vote for. This is different from the older generations in the Pakistani group, where parent generations collectively voted for Pakistani representatives (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.66). Bosnians are considered to be well integrated in society, having a high degree of employment and living in detached houses<sup>8</sup>, but still have surprisingly low voter turnout (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.29).

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<sup>6</sup> Serbian entity in Bosnia.

<sup>7</sup> In original language: "Min egen fortelling om det jeg erfarte i de årene, er en fortelling om å bli ekskludert fra det etablerte meningsfellesskapet, både i fysisk, diskursiv og symbolsk forstand." (Kozaric 2020, p.221)

<sup>8</sup> In Norwegian "enebolig"

## 2.2 THEORIES ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This section will include relevant theories on how and why diaspora engage civically and politically in the two societies, through the approach of transnationalism.

### 2.2.1 The Bosnian Group as a Diaspora

At the beginning of this century, dual citizenship was something that was not very common in many countries, and in Norway in particular, and was a topic of discussion and debate.

Bloemraad wrote how “To a large extent, this process is an ‘either/or’ proposition: either you are a citizen of your home country or you adopt the nationality of the host country (Bloemraad 2004, p.393). However, as discussed, the most persons from the Bosnian group kept their Bosnian citizenship when they acquired the Norwegian. So, in this context, one could say they are a diaspora with equal rights in both countries.

However, one cannot talk of diaspora, without acknowledging in what way the group is interconnected. An important contributor to this field is Benedict Anderson, explaining how people live in “imagined communities”, where persons belong to a socially constructed community or nation, seeing each other as members of this group and understand each others collective origin (Anderson 2006).

According to Safran, the diaspora is made up of a number of characteristics:

- 1) They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original “center” to two or more “peripheral,” or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return. (Safran 1991)

Robin Cohen talks about a typology of diaspora: Victim, Imperial, Labour, Trade, Incipient and Deterritorialised (2023 p.11). Victims are perhaps the most relevant to this thesis regarding Bosnian refugees. Combining these three viewpoints and characteristics, one can infer that The

Bosnian community can be categorised as a diasporic community. However, as shown in previous research (Halilovich 2012, Colic-Peisker 2005), most of those who identify as Bosnian are of Bosniak origin or only simply “Bosnian” with no ethnic or religious connotations. They are a people that have a collective memory and myth about their homeland, and as show in this thesis are often tied to the country through a citizenship and by owning a piece of land. Further, as previous research has shown, they will not always be fully accepted into their host countries, as seen with Bosnians living in Australia and struggling with the English language, despite being White and “physically” fitting in (Colic-Peisker 2005). Interviews conducted by Halilovich with Bosnians in the United States, Australia and Europe show that many Bosnians believe it is unlikely that they will ever be fully accepted by the host society to which they have arrived and envision that they will one day return to their homeland. This has led them to organize themselves into diasporic communities to address their cultural and social needs. On the other hand, this is in contrast to a diaspora that still builds or buys houses in their new country, works, participates in the political process and starts their own businesses (Halilovich 2012, p.165).

Research shows that diaspora has a role in conflict resolution, or even perpetuation as a thirds dimension of a community acting independently of their home state, in relation to other third-party states or organisations and within their perceived homeland<sup>9</sup> (Shain 2002).

### **2.2.2 Transnationalism**

This study falls under the larger umbrella of transnationalism, as it involves a diasporic community in one country, which, through dual citizenship, is inevitably bound to another country as well. There is arguably a vague, but still significant, difference between diaspora and transnational communities, in that “transnational communities encompass diasporas; however, not all transnational communities are diasporas” (Wong 2007, p.83).

Schiller et al define transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” and explain how “transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations— familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political, that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make

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<sup>9</sup> This research is based on ethnic Jews and Armenians



decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (1992, pp.1-2).

With the emergence of the field of transnationalism, it became apparent that the model of delineating people into clear-cut nation-states which emerged with the rise of capitalist society, was no longer viable in a globalised world (Schiller, Basch and Blanc- 1995). However, one could argue that nation-states are a social construct. As Schiller et al put it:

Key to nation-state building as a political process has been the construction of a myth that each nation-state contained within it a single people defined by their residence in a common territory, their undivided loyalty to a common government, and their shared cultural heritage. In the past immigrants were forced to abandon, forget, or deny their ties to home and in subsequent generations memories of transnational connections were erased. (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1995, p.51)

Wong created a study of transnationalism measured looking at three factors of transnationalism (having one or two citizenships), having an active citizenship, and having a sense of belonging. Firstly, transnationalism was further measured by looking at whether a person had family in the country of origin and whether the person travelled back to their country of origin. Active citizenship was further divided into a civic participation, measuring participation in charitable organisations, job-related associations, civic groups, and service clubs; and a political participation, measured through voting in federal, provincial, and municipal elections in Canada. Lastly, a sense of belonging was measured through a Likert scale of five measured from 1 (“not strong at all”) to 5 (“very strong”). Other than that, the importance of ethnic and cultural identity was measured on a similar scale, as well as a person’s experience of ethnic or racial discrimination. (2007, pp. 90-92). The findings showed that non-transnationals were more active in sports clubs, hobby clubs and community organisations, whereas transnationals had a greater membership in religious, cultural and ethnic/immigration associations, though the connection to transnationalism is “really negligible” (Wong 2007, p.93). “Thus, there is no relationship whatsoever between transnationalism and civic participation or a sense of belonging to Canada”

(Wong 2007, p.94). However, the research did find that transnationals are 15.3 percent less likely to vote in federal, provincial and municipal elections in the host country<sup>10</sup> (Wong 2007).

Schiller posits four different types of “long-distance nationalism (2005). These are anti-colonialism, separatism, regime change and participation (Schiller 2005, p. 574). The most relevant case for this study might be participation. Participating in long-distance nationalism includes diasporic communities who settle in the new land but still participate in politics at home through being members of political parties in the homeland, sending money to these parties, keeping up with politics at home through Internet and the media, going to political meetings, voting, and lobbying (Schiller 2005, p.575)

There is evidence of other countries engaging with their transnational diaspora, with “homelands” being very active in their propagation of transnational ties with who they perceive to be members of their nation-state. Adamson (2016) discusses the political influence of the global diaspora. She mentions countries such as France and Turkey that have set up official ministries to represent their diaspora population. In France, they have set up 11 constituencies that allow expatriate French people to vote in parliament, and Turkey, in turn, has set up an Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities that acts as a bridge between Turks around the world, and also sends religious clerics via the organisation Divanet (Adamson 2016, p.294) to act in the same way. Further, in the 1980’s the prime minister of Grenada, Bishop, called Brooklyn “Grenada’s largest constituency” (Bishop qtd. in Schiller, Basch and Blanc 1995, p.58), because immigrants living there stayed connected both financially and ideologically to projects in their home country in the West Indies. In 1991, Haitian diaspora was designated as a tenth (of the previous nine) territorial division of the country, meaning that Haiti existed anywhere that Haitians lived (Schiller, Basch and Blanc 1995, p.58). “Haitian transnationalism was more than legitimized: it was nationalized” (Schiller, Basch and Blanc 1995, p.58). Bosnia and Herzegovina has no such official institution for diaspora, but this is largely covered by the Ministry of Human Rights (Halilovich et al 2018, p.88). In talking with organisations, it will be interesting to learn whether there is such involvement between the Bosnian government and the organisations. However, it is worth noting that showing interest to homeland politics and having a different

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<sup>10</sup> In this particular study, that country is Canada

citizenship, as well as overall ties to the homeland had no significant impact of participation in elections in Norway among immigrant groups (2012, p.61).

Further, it needs to be stressed that not only the homeland of an immigrant has an impact on their political participation. Rogstad showed how immigrants from a similar group, class and educational background living in Norway and in Denmark had significant differences between their political participation, with 40 percent participation in Norway and 67 percent participation in Denmark (Rogstad 2007, p. 154 ). Rogstad has also shown how transnational ties in the Pakistani group impacts both participation in the Norwegian elections and who they choose to vote for (2007).

Lastly, in terms of belonging, owning a property in the homeland can be seen as an intersection between transnationalism and tourism, serving as a social connection to the homeland (Klekowski et al 2015).

### **2.2.3 Civic engagement**

Some of the earliest work on civic engagement was done by Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19th century. Tocqueville observed that Americans were unusually active in their communities, and he argued that this civic engagement was one of the strengths of American democracy (de Tocqueville 1835)

There are a number of different social theories on civic engagement. Rational choice theory argues that people engage in civic activities in their communities because they believe it will benefit them in some way, such as by improving their community or making their lives better (Norris 1999; Almond and Verba 1963). Civic voluntarism theory says that people who view being involved in their community as being important, will also be more likely to be engaged in civic activities (Verba et al. 1995). Social capital theory argues how people who are more connected to their communities, also are more likely to engage in civic activities (Putnam 2000; Saetnan and Selle 2007).

Though these theories are all helpful in explaining civic engagement, the theory this thesis will focus on is the social capital theory, as it combines to notions of civic and political engagement, as discussed in the next section.

There are some factors that affect civic engagement. Verba and Nie found that civic engagement was highest among people who were well-educated, had high levels of income, and were involved in religious organizations. They also found that civic engagement declined with age. (Verba and Nie 1972). Here, measuring levels of education and income are outside of the scope of this thesis, but the element of religious organisation is interesting. Further, in the Bosnian case specifically, participation in humanitarian organisations in some parts explain a higher participation at elections (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.61)

#### **2.2.4 Political participation**

Before connecting civic engagement with political participation, it would be useful to present some theories on political participation, There are some different theories about political participation. With rational choice theory, Olson finds that people are more likely to participate in politics when they receive a benefit from this participation, and when their involvement have an actual real impact on the results of a policy decision or an election (1965). With mobilisation theory, Verba and Nie believe that people are more likely to participate in politics when an organisation or a political party contacts (mobilises) them, or when they are shown a political message through the media (1972). Through the general incentives model, Gamson argues that people participate in politics because of both individual and collective incentives (1968). In this understanding, persons are more likely to participate if they perceive there to be a benefit for themselves personally – for instance a feeling of belonging or accomplishment, or if it benefits their community. From the viewpoint of social-psychological theory, Milbrath argues that people who participate in politics are motivated by a sense of civic desire or a duty to change circumstances in their community (1965). This theory stresses that persons are more motivated to participate when they feel a sense of belonging to their community and view their participation as vital. Rogstad also posits social capital as being important for political participation (2007).

Downs contends that from an egoistic, utility-maximising point of view, the widespread participation of citizens in mass democratic elections is in a way paradoxical. The reason for this being that the benefits of the means and time invested into informing oneself about the political

parties and actually casting their vote, is much less than the return in form of beneficial outcomes. (Downs 1957). This asks the question of why citizens should or would engage in voting, when there are perceivably small benefits for themselves. One explanation could be voting as an expression of individual freedom. Democracy allows and invites all citizens to participate in it, as a trade-off for having monopoly on power (Fleuss 2019). Citizens in a democratic state are not only being governed by law but are taking part in their creation (Kant 1970, Kaufmann 1997, Habermas 1996). Political participation is not only through voting, however, and *political protests* are also a means to work together with persons who have a similar interest to you (Young 2002).

These theories can all help explain political participation, and more than one theory can be accurate at the same time. However, if we are looking to tie political participation theory to civic engagement, as we do in this thesis, perhaps the most prominent theory is that of social capital. Inspired by Putnam's social capital theory, Fennema and Tillie contend that differences in voter turnout amongst immigrants can be linked to their participation in organisations. In their study, they found that immigrants who were organised in networks of organisations, such as Turks in Amsterdam, were more likely to participate in elections and had a higher degree of trust of political institutions, than Moroccans who were less organised (1999).

With regard to organisations in general, In Norway, Tronstad and Rogstad found that those immigrants who are members of overreaching<sup>11</sup> organisations such as labour unions, sports associations or other organisations that gather people across religious or ethnic background) are more likely to vote (2012, pp.49.50). However, they explain that the element of selection is important here, as it is assumed that immigrants who are well integrated into Norwegian society, in that they speak the language well, have knowledge about the Norwegian society and participate in both education and work could also generally be both members of these types of organisations and be active voters at the same time, due to their integration (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.50). Further, good relations with neighbours is also shown to have a significant impact on participation in election – almost to the same degree as participating in these overreaching organisations (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.50). Even so, immigrants from Somalia and Sri

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<sup>11</sup> In original language: “overgripende”

Lanka have higher voting participation than immigrants from Bosnia, Serbia and Iran (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.50). There is no difference in voting between males and females (2012, p.50).

Looking at religion, there have been some studies tying religion to increased political participation. Similar to the study related to religion and civic engagement (Verba and Nie 1972), Verba et al. discovered that persons who attend church are more engaged in political activities (1995). Though Muslims in some cases are interpreted to be more susceptible to radicalism and subsequently potentially terrorism, Eggert and Giugni found that there is no difference between Muslim propensity to engage in protest over that of Christians: “Furthermore, the participation of Muslims in political activities (as that of Christians, for that matter) varies widely across cities. Far from being an intrinsic characteristic of Islam, political radicalism or, in any event, the willingness to engage in protest activities, depends on particular features of the political system.” (2011, p.228)

Outside of civic engagement, time spent in Norway also has a strong effect on participation at elections, and this measure is near linear, meaning that for every year spent in Norway, there is more participation at elections – until an immigrant has reached the point of 20 years spent in Norway, whereupon electoral participation decreases (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, pp.50-51)

#### ***2.2.4.1 Media as a Measure of Engagement***

Media can be a measure of engagement and sense of belonging. Georgiou discusses how the media connects diasporic minorities in European nation states keep in touch with their homelands through the media (Georgiou 2013). In her research, she examined the Arab diaspora, which spans a range of different countries. Bosnians are traditionally from Bosnia and are not as potentially heterogeneous a group. Georgiou also found that participants had difficulty distinguishing between cultural and political belonging, i.e., identity and citizenship (Georgiou 2013, p.88). She also notes that they often negotiate ideologies that are in conflict with each other (Georgiou 2013, p.88) - the European and Western versus the Arab one. Georgiou further explains how it is the older members of the family who decide what media is consumed in communal spaces, while the younger generation is more likely to choose the media themselves in their own bedrooms or in contact with friends (Georgiou 2013, p.90). She points out the internet

as a major factor to what she calls "media nomadism" which contributes to mass self-communication, because the internet is always available and the individual chooses which source to go to, without being bound to the geography of the nation-state (Georgiou 2013, p.89-91). "In this analytical context, we can understand some diasporic individuals' attempt to find community at a distance rather than in proximity as a response to the marginalization that many migrants and diasporic people feel as minorities" (Georgiou 2013, p.93).

Georgiou also discusses how these Arab minorities can resort to online transnational diasporic media, and talks about how mainstream media can help foster community if they include minorities, who state that one of their media sources is precisely these mainstream media (Georgiou 2013, pp.96-97). In Gergiou's research, one Sudanese man "projects a passionate sense of belonging to a distant community through his use of media" (Georgiou 2013, p.93). Through media, he can belong to the distant community of Sudan, rather than Britain, a country he is strongly detached from. (Georgiou 2013, p.93). This belonging to a distant community paired with an alienation of the mainstream society where they live can be a response to marginalisation in society, due to racial discrimination, Islamophobia, xenophobia and other social exclusions (Georgiou 2013, p.93)

Similar interpretations have been discussed in Norway due to the technological revolution with the internet and social media, inexpensive airfares, and access to TV-channels from their homelands, immigrants in Norway are able to follow the news and happenings in their homelands in real time (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.52). "Not only does this mean that immigrants' attention may be focused elsewhere than on Norwegian politics and on Norwegian municipal politics, but Norwegian politicians' responses to international conflicts may help to understand immigrants' political behaviour in Norway<sup>12</sup>. (translated)" (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.52). Immigrants who expected to stay in Norway in the foreseeable future were found to have a higher participation in elections than immigrants who were planning to move out of Norway in the near or far future (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.53). Further, immigrants who

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<sup>12</sup> In original language: "Ikke bare bidrar dette til at innvandreres oppmerksomhet kan være andre steder enn på norsk politikk og på norsk kommunepolitikk, men norske politikeres respons på internasjonale konflikter kan bidra til å forstå innvandreres politiske atferd i Norge."

were not perceive themselves to be attached or tied to Norway were less likely to participate in elections than persons who perceived themselves to be strongly attached (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, p.54),

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

An earlier inspiration for the thesis was a "contemporary witness" material in the archives of the Norwegian Folk Museum with interviews from the group. It was a wide range of about 50 interviews with people from Bosnia, done in 2005-2007. I spent considerable amount of time in the archive, but after reviewing the material, it seems that these interviews are quite personal life course interviews, looking more holistically at the life history of these Bosnians who had come to Norway a couple of years earlier at the time the interviews were done. They often talk about their upbringing and life in Yugoslavia versus Norway, suitable perhaps for sociology, but lack a more in-depth dive into political participation and civic engagement, which I want to focus on. Because of this, I decided to discard the use of this material.

Because of this, I chose new source material. In this thesis, data was collected using semi-structured interviews. I interviewed two groups of Informants with a total of 10 participants. The first group of 7 participants were private individuals, while the second group of 4 people were representatives of different organisations for Bosnians in Norway. The first group were Norwegian-Bosnians with dual citizenship who were adults when they lived in Bosnia and came as refugees to Norway during the refugee influx. These individuals range in age from 45 to 70 years old. Some of the participants had just come of age and completed their university education in Norway and were in a wide network of Bosnians at university who had also moved to Norway at the same time. The second group of informants was a selection of representatives from the most prominent Norwegian-Bosnian organisations. These organisations were religious (due to the intricate and complex identity of nationality, ethnicity and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and other organisations. I want to investigate who are the members of these organisations and what impact and influence they have on both Norwegian and Bosnian political participation.



### 3.1 CHOOSING A METHOD, VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS

In my approach, I have chosen qualitative research methods because questions about individual's own experiences and the meanings they attach to their social world and their lives are best addressed by such in-depth research (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). For example, Statistics Norway has considered in its statistics that Bosnians feel a strong sense of belonging to Norway due to their Norwegian citizenship (Dzamarija 2016) but does not take into account that even before it was officially recognised in Norwegian law, these people had access to dual citizenship.

Obvious limitations of this study is that it is not generalisable for the group as a whole, due to the low number of participants. In any case, a statistical analysis would have been more fitting for a generalising study. However, questions on a questionnaire are often shallow, and due to their nature can only pose shorter questions in an overall shorter questionnaire. With interviews, you have the ability to sit down with the participants for thirty minutes to one hour, a considerably longer timeframe than a questionnaire would allow for, before feeling tiresome to the person filling it out. I wanted to delve deeper into the *reasoning* behind the informants' answer, and for this reason, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was chosen. For instance, with a questionnaire, perhaps the nuances of some organisations' answers about their organisation being political would not be captured. As will be discussed later, they initially answer a stout no, but later share their efforts to help their members' interests or increase participation in elections.

As for validity, it is important to attempt to reduce research and respondent bias in qualitative research. Robson (2002) names a few strategies, some which are outside the scope of this research. These are *prolonged involvement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis and audit trail* (Robson 2002, p.174). Prolonged involvement refers to both the time the researcher has spent being involved in the study, but also the researched being a member of the community. This reduces the threat of respondent bias but can however increase the threat of researcher bias. Being a member of the community, as I am perceived to be, may have increased trust levels between me and the informants. However, this also comes with possible presuppositions about what we consider to be common knowledge and may cause the informants to omit certain information. (Robson 2002). I have attempted to rectify research bias by researching theories and studies made by other social scientists and relying on measurements

cited in their works. Furthermore, to avoid the issue of presupposition or are too familiarised approach between me and the participants, I firstly ensured to meet my participants at neutral grounds. Most often, in-person interviews were conducted at university grounds, in a private room, if this was within reach for the participants. If not, they were met at their place of work or operation (in case of organisations). At no time were the informants interviewed at their places of residence, as I feared this would cause a too casual meeting, and not display the gravity of the research. All informants were contacted through my official university email address. For persons living outside of Oslo, Zoom interviews were performed through the official school account. This in particular was also done to adhere to privacy regulations set by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (now Sikt). The interviewees were all referrals to me, and I had no knowledge of them in form of acquaintanceship or friendship before the interviews. Moreover, as this was comfortable for the interviewees due to their proficiency in Norwegian, all interviews were conducted in Norwegian, to once again stress the official nature of the interviews. This might have been a weakness for those participants who were perhaps more proficient in Bosnian, as one interview in particular was characterised by short answers. However, this person was informed beforehand that they could choose what language to answer the questions in.

Triangulation of data was not a possibility in this study, as I set out to perform my own study through exclusively qualitative methods, and not a mixed method approach. However, I have attempted to include a variety of statistics about the group as background material to help remedy this. In attempting to triangulate theory, I first started out looking at diaspora politics, but after much reading soon realised that the transnational approach might better encompass this topic. With regards to peer debriefing, we were fortunate to have a subject dedicated to receiving feedback on our works in the early stages from other university colleagues and seminar leaders. This helped me uncover new dimensions of the study I would later include, and helped me narrow in on my approach. Member checking, where participants were asked to clarify their responses or my interpretation of their answers after having analysed them, were unfortunately due to time limitations not performed. This would have added a verifying dimension that perhaps future works will benefit from. However, during the actual interviews, I did make an effort to ask the participants to clarify their answer or interpret their answers and ask if this is what they meant to convey. In most cases, my interpretation was congruent with their answers, but sometimes the participants clarified. Negative case analysis refers to analysing cases where you have a participant or case that does not fit into the explanation of a phenomena you are researching. I did not have any such cases. Lastly, keeping an audit trail refers to keeping a record of all research-related

activities. To ensure transparency, in this instance, all interview transcripts are available (with redaction of personal information) upon request.

The first step was to recruit informants through snowball sampling of some contacts with a wide network of Norwegian-Bosnians in Norway. This was deserved as these people are difficult to find in a register. The people who helped find informants were themselves Norwegian-Bosnians, and the informants were only informed in keywords that this was a research project on political participation among Norwegian-Bosnians with dual Norwegian and Bosnian citizenship. When I received their contact details, they were sent a comprehensive email with all the information and a separate information letter attached, informing them that participation is completely voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time during the process. It was important that they received all this information in order to give informed consent. The reason why I ask the participants about their past in the interviews is to investigate how they have generally behaved in relation to political and organisational participation both when they lived in Bosnia and now that they live in Norway, and whether this has changed over the years. Some questions have been borrowed from Talic (2017) and have been cited as such. See appendix.

Secondly, I transcribed all the interviews in Norwegian, except for one interview where the sound was partly corrupted. For this interview, I relied on notes from the interview and parts extracted from the sound file. **All transcripts are available upon request.**

Lastly, I coded the interview through manual thematic coding. This was done by printing out and categorising parts from all of the interviews by colour marking them by theme. Unfortunately, the use of coding software such as NVivo proved too difficult, as the program would routinely crash whenever larger commands were enacted, in several different iterations of the program.

Therefore, I found it more reliable and time effective to code the information by myself. The themes were constructed through the research question, as well as the questions the informants were asked. These themes were generally sorted in this way:

Interview with organisations:

*About the organisation:* purpose, establishment, membership

*Cooperation with government:* cooperation with Norwegian/Bosnian government and Norwegian/Bosnian embassy

*Events:* what events they arrange, what projects

*Political:* whether they are a political organisation, do they have anything to do with politics (interests of the community, talking with politicians etc.)

Interview with individual informants:

*Civic engagement:* knowledge of organisations, participation in organisations, importance of organisations,

*Political participation:* voting in Norwegian/Bosnian elections, importance of voting

*Media:* use of media, following Bosnian or Norwegian media, following international media, following Bosnian diasporic media, what information one seeks, media usage in Yugoslavia, whether Norwegian and Bosnian media are in conflict

*Orientation towards Bosnia or Norway:* Where closest family lives, contact with family/persons in Bosnia, importance of citizenship, citizenship in other countries, if they were to choose a belonging, perception of and contact with other ethnic groups from Bosnia, relationship with Bosnia/Norway throughout the years, visiting Bosnia, owning property in Norway/Bosnia

*Integration in Norwegian society:* Contact with Norwegian neighbours, contact with Bosnian neighbours or community, importance of network with Bosnians or Norwegians, what network they had in Yugoslavia, feeling welcome/well received in Bosnian/Norwegian society

A master thesis is a work that is supposed to in a small way contribute to research that is already been published on a given topic. I believe research papers such as this one should be accessible to all people, and therefore I have chosen to write it in a straightforward manner, simple-to-read manner.

## **3.2 CHOOSING INFORMANTS**

The expert interviews were with leaders or representatives of Norwegian organisations with Bosnian members. These were religious, social or humanitarian organisations. I wanted to talk to

several organisations, such as the cultural organisation Sevdah or the women's organisation Nett BK Organisasjon for Bosniske Kvinner i Norge (English: Nett BK Organisation for Bosnian Women in Norway), but these were inaccessible to me and did initially respond to my request, but were not reachable for arranging interviews. The organisations I spoke to in the end were the Muslim the Islamic Community Bosnia and Herzegovina, the umbrella organisation the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway, the youth organisation Stecak and the charity Mercy. I wanted to look into how they operate, but also gauge their political influence, if there were any. The reason I chose to include a charity organisation, was to see if they were truly simply a charity organisation, or if they may play a political role or be forum for political discussions. Stecak, although a sleeping organisation<sup>13</sup>, was included because it in its most active years was a semi-large organisation, as is the only independent youth organisation I have come across. The Islamic Community and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association discuss being in the process of establishing a youth organisation, though these would be daughter organisations of their organisations, and not independent.

When it comes to individual informants, I interviewed seven men and women who have lived about half their lives in Bosnia and half their lives in Norway. Originally, I had planned a somewhat balanced gender distribution, however due to scheduling issues and withdrawals due to ineligibility, I ended up interviewing five women and two men. This is unfortunate, but one must take into consideration real-life practical possibilities when performing any study.

In the beginning, the idea was to interview the younger generations. However, after some deliberation, I found it interesting to interview persons who had lived “half” their lives in Bosnia and “half” their lives in Norway. Though this is a hyperbole, as it is not the case for all the informants that they have lived equal times in both countries. Nevertheless, I wanted to find persons who had been adults when the war started, and actuality had formed a sense of self and entered into adulthood before they came to Norway. I assumed that these persons would have more connections to Bosnia than persons who were born here or who had arrived when they were small children. Due to their arrival in 1993-1999, these would be people who are about 48-

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<sup>13</sup> No longer fully active, but not defunct.

70 years old. Incidentally, all persons I spoke with arrived in 1993 or 1994, and I managed to get a span of ages.

I wanted to interview only those who have dual citizenship, because of the actual possibility to vote in both countries. If possible, I wanted to interview people from the three municipalities where most people live: Oslo, Sarpsborg and Bergen. However, due to snowball sampling, this was not the case. Though I did get people from different places across Norway, such as Oslo, near Trondheim, Fredrikstad, Arendal and Vestby.

### **3.3 ANONYMITY**

In the interviews with individual informants, I have chosen not to use pseudonyms, but rather to put a number on the informants (e.g. "Informant 1") because names in the Bosnian context, even if they are not real, often say something about the assumed or real religious affiliation of a person. Names can be perceived to have Serbian Orthodox, Croatian Catholic or Muslim Bosniak connotations.

I have chosen to use the organisations' full names. Using the full name of the organisation is justified, as they are a public organisation available to all. I have chosen to omit the names of the individual representatives due to ethical concerns, as I do not wish for individual people to be questioned or tormented for the answers they have given in this study. All informants from organisations were informed about, and have consented to, the fact that the name of their organisation will be part of the study, and that they as representatives might be indirectly recognised. I do not believe this study will have any negative ramification on the participants of this study, or the Bosnian society in Norway as a whole.

### **3.4 HOW THE ISSUE WILL BE APPROACHED**

This thesis was inspired by another master's thesis from 1994 that looked at "Political participation Among Oslo's Pakistani Population" (translated) written 25 years after the first Pakistanis arrived in Norway (Ruud 1994). In terms of time elapsed since arrival, this is very similar for Bosnians. In 2023 it will be 30 years since the first Bosnian refugees arrived in Norway. The mentioned thesis serves as an inspiration considering the conditions the author

wanted to investigate: 1) Pakistanis' interest in politics, 2) Pakistanis' participation in different types of organisations, 3) Pakistanis' orientation towards Norway and Pakistan respectively, 4) Pakistanis' integration into Norwegian society. These issues were investigated by means of a survey which was limited by a low response rate (161 out of 1,172 questionnaires were returned). The current thesis will use these four points of analysis but will use qualitative and not quantitative methods.

A specific point of this study which perhaps differs from other immigrant societies in Norway, is the issue of dual citizenship. In previous research, Talic mentions in his master's thesis, where he also surveyed Bosnians in Norway, that in future studies of the group it would be "natural to investigate the status of dual citizenship among Bosnians in Norway"<sup>14</sup> (Talic 2017)<sup>15</sup>. This will be a part of my study, together with other elements, as research naturally builds or expands upon previous research.

Borrowing from Wong's (2007) study, I will look at the transnational nature of Bosnians in Norway through a number of different approaches. Firstly, at the onset of the study it is established that the individuals I spoke with had a dual Bosnian and Norwegian citizenship. Further, the persons were asked where their closest family lives and whether they had family in Bosnia. Moreover, they were inquired about whether they travel back to Bosnia, and the purpose of these travels. I will look into active citizenship through firstly participation in organisations. Their main focus will be on participation in organisations for Bosnians living in Norway, though the interviewees were also asked about their participation in other organisations. Secondly, political participation was inquired about in terms of voting in elections in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Norway. Further, political participation will be elaborated on to include non-voting activities such as attending protests, political markings, and signing petitions. With regards to belonging, the persons were asked whether they felt they belonged more to the Norwegian society or the Bosnian society, about what their dual citizenship means to them and in a choosing-situation, which they would rather give up. An element of media was discussed, both to

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<sup>14</sup> In original language: "Videre vil det være naturlig å undersøke hvilken status dobbelt statsborgerskap har blant bosniere i Norge i dag, men også hvordan dette forholdet er blant bosniske myndigheter i Bosnia." (Talic 2017)

<sup>15</sup> This has in parts inspired my thesis, even though I only found his work some time into the process.

see the level of access to information from both Bosnia and Norway, but also to see if media was used as a way to be mentally engaged “elsewhere” as seen in Georgiou (2013) and if it was a means of long-distance nationalism (Schillinger 2005). They were also asked about where they saw themselves living in the future, and where they would like their future grave to lie (Talic 2017). Lastly, inter-ethnic contact between themselves and other Norwegians as well as other Bosnians was inquired about. Here, an additional layer of contact and views on the other ethnicities from Bosnia was added, as this is a distinctive feature of the Bosnian society. Moreover, there is some mention of the topic of ethnic or racial discrimination<sup>16</sup>.

The organisations were mostly inquired about where they receive their funding from, if they cooperate with the Norwegian or Bosnian government (including embassies) and whether they are a forum for political engagement. In particular, they were asked if they had organised activities aimed at helping Bosnians vote in Bosnian or Norwegian elections.

Lastly, in research such as this one, I believe it is very important for scientific method to show the results of your research clearly, and show upon what basis some assumptions, findings or conclusions are drawn. Therefore, I purposefully include quotes from the persons I interviewed, as well as information gathered from the interviews. I wish to present it as unbiased and forthcoming as possible as to give the reader the opportunity to see the actual primary source material.

## 4 FINDINGS

This section will showcase the findings from my interviews. It will be divided into four parts. The first will discuss civic engagement through the organisations, looking at what the actual organisations were established for and individuals’ knowledge of and membership in Bosnian organisations. The second part will discuss the organisations as a political forum and individuals’ political participation. Lastly, the issue of belonging will be examined.

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<sup>16</sup> Though this is seen as being quite miniscule for this group



## 4.1 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH ORGANISATIONS

### 4.1.1 Short Summary of the Organisations

The four organisations I interviewed are the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway, the Islamic Community Bosnia and Herzegovina in Norway, Mercy and Stecak. They are all established with slightly different purposes. the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway sees itself as the umbrella organisation for all organisations for Bosnians in Norway. Their members are other organisations for Bosnians who pay membership fees, and two for-profit Norwegian-Bosnian chambers of commerce (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023 in Norway). the Islamic Community, as they themselves explain, is subordinate to the parent organisation Islamic Community located in Bosnia and operates in Norway as a branch. They are the centralized religious organisation for Bosnian Muslims in Norway and have branches around Norway, with their headquarters in Oslo. Their main purpose is to maintain religious duties and ceremonies such as prayer, burial, celebration of holidays and education about Islam. The imams are sent from Bosnia to Norway. The organisation Mercy is a non-profit humanitarian organisation based in Vestfold. They primarily collect money in Norway which is sent to various humanitarian causes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The youth organisation Stecak was active from 2009 until 2016, and is not officially discontinued, but is however a dormant organisation. This organisation was established by Bosnian university students in Norway from different ethnic backgrounds, and had a number of actions they organized, including a successful election campaign to promote participation in Bosnian elections among Norwegian-Bosnians with Bosnian citizenship

#### *4.1.1.1 Purpose and Membership of the Organisations*

the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association in Norway was established in 2001 and consider themselves to be “the biggest representative of Bosnians in Norway<sup>17</sup> (translated)” (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023). Their purpose is to represent the interest of Bosnians to the Norwegian state, and advocate for issues that concern their members. As an umbrella organisation, their board consists of a number of other Bosnian organisations. Some board members are not part of Bosnian organisations, but support the Bosnian cause, such as La Bosnia

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<sup>17</sup> In original language: “den største representanten av bosniere i Norge” (Interview with Bosnia-Hercegovina-forbundet)

Leve, which was active in providing help during the Bosnian war and especially supplying instruments to the Sarajevo symphony orchestra. Their organisation encompasses approximately 13 000 people through proxy, though they do not keep precise records, as they are not required to report membership numbers. Their core organisation-members include the aforementioned Islamic Community (which is part of their board), the women's organisation Nett BK kvinneforening, and the cultural organisations Institut Sevdah and Preporod. Outside of this they have clubs from places such as Trondheim Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand, Sandefjord and Horten. (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023).

The Islamic Community had their first meetings in 1993 and were officially established as an organisation in 1994. The organisation states their purpose as being responsible for the Islamic religious duties and rights of Bosnians living in Norway, with regards to prayer time, Ramadan, and especially arranging of funerals. One important aspect of the Islamic Community is to help Bosnian Muslims living in Norway be buried either in Norway or be transferred to a burial ground in Bosnia. The organisation has 9027 members as of 2023 (Islamic Community 2023). However, most of the interviewees I spoke with state that they are not a member of the Islamic Community Bosnia-Hercegovina in Norway. (Islamic Community 2023). Although the majority of the organisation's members are Bosniak Muslims, they are open to other ethnicities within and outside of Bosnia as well:

All members are Bosnians, but we also have several Norwegians, because our women are married to Norwegian men. So it becomes part of our organisation. Because there are letters coming from the church for the children, but they don't want that, they want to join us. And then we have several Albanians, people from Ex-Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Sandjak, Croatia. We have more people who are not ethnic Bosnians. We have Serbs, Croats and converts. That means we have a completely open organisation that anyone can join<sup>18</sup>. (translated) (Islamic Community 2023).

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<sup>18</sup> In original language: "Alle medlemmer er bosniere, men vi har også flere norske, fordi våre kvinner er gift med norske menn. Så det blir en del av vår organisasjon. Fordi det kommer brev fra kirken for barna, men de vil ikke det, de vil bli med oss. Så vi har flere albanere, folk fra Ex-Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Sandjak, Kroatia. Vi har flere som ikke er etniske bosniere. Vi har serbere, kroater og konvertitter. Det betyr at vi har en helt åpen organisasjon som alle kan bli medlem i."

Stecak as an organisation was created after the creators being inspired by attending an international conference for all Bosnians living in and outside of Bosnia. Stecak's purpose was twofold. The first was to create an organisation to unite Bosnian youth living in Norway, "regardless of their ethnic, religious or other affiliations"<sup>19</sup> (Stecak 2023). The second purpose was to use the resource that is young Bosnians living in Norway to attempt to bring positive changes to the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose was to gather Bosnians with a higher education, though some members of the board did not have a higher education. They arranged gatherings, parties literary nights, and marked important dates in Bosnian society. At these events, the main language spoken was to be Bosnian, to avoid estranging themselves from their homeland. Originally members were aged 15-30 years old, but this was later adjusted to 15-40 years old because persons in the older age bracket were interested in participating in the organisation. However, they explain that people of all ages attended their events and projects. Around 2014 or 2015, they also opened up membership to Norwegians who were interested in Bosnian language, culture and society. As they were financed by LNU, they were conditioned to have a certain number of paying members. They estimate that at the highest, they had 150 paying members, but in total they estimate 900 members all around. (Stecak 2023).

Stecak is very clear on being secular and not tying its membership to any particular ethnic group. Stecak told me that at one point, they were interviewed by the Norwegian news agency Aftenposten in 2012, where "the journalist wanted to point out how Bosnia is divided, and then she wanted to have a meeting where she tried to emphasise, right, yes, but who is Bosniak, who is Serb, who is Croat"<sup>20</sup>, but this was met with resistance from Stecak: "We don't want to be pigeonholed by classifying ourselves in that way. So we are an association for everyone", saying that "our thinking was completely different from the way the constitution of Bosnia is structured

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<sup>19</sup> In original language: "(...) uansett deres etniske, religiøse eller andre tilhørigheter"

<sup>20</sup> Unabridged in original language: "Vi hadde et intervju, det var Aftenposten som intervjuet oss, jeg husker det, det kanskje var i 2012, og journalisten hun ville jo påpeke også hvordan liksom Bosnia er splittet, og så ville hun ha et møte hvor hun liksom hele tiden prøvde å få frem, ikke sant, ja, men hvem er bosniak, hvem er serber, hvem er kroat, ikke sant, og alle vi der, vi var tre fra Stecak som var med på dette intervjuet, vi sa, dette er noe vi ikke bryr oss om, vi er, altså, jeg er både bosniak, serber og kroat, og altså vår tankegang var noe helt annet enn det hvordan grunnloven i Bosnia er bygget opp. Vi vil ikke settes i bås ved at vi skulle klassifisere oss på den måten der. Så vi er en forening for alle, uansett. Så vi hadde også medlemmer, for de fleste bosniere i Norge er jo muslimer, og da er det liksom vanskelig å si at du skal få 50-50 av alle de ulike, liksom bosniske folkegruppene, når flertallet er jo muslimer, men vi hadde medlemmer som, også styremedlemmer, som var sånn, hvor far for eksempel var ortodoks, mor var muslimsk, og sånne, i Bosnia så kaller vi det blandet ekteskap, da, så, ja."

(translated)” (Stecak 2023). However, the representative does contend that “because most Bosnians in Norway are Muslims (...) it's kind of hard to say that you should get 50-50 of all the different, Bosnian ethnic groups, when the majority are Muslims, but we had members (...) where the father, for example, was Orthodox, the mother was Muslim, (...) in Bosnia we call it mixed marriage”(translated)<sup>21</sup>(Stecak 2023).

Mercy was founded in 2011 and presents itself as a purely humanitarian organisation, established to provide aid specifically in Bosnia and Hercegovina. They claim to donate money regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation, and often help persons in need, or donate to soup kitchens or other charity organisations in Bosnia, such as Pomozi.ba. They explain that all money gathered goes directly to donations, with no administrative fees. They have about 50 regular donors who donate around 100 Norwegian kroner each, each month. Their donors usually donate through the banking service Vipps.

#### ***4.1.1.2 How the organisations operate***

All the organisations I talked to are organised with a board that is elected by voting at general assemblies which take place annually. None of the organisations I interviewed, with the exception of the Islamic Community, have their own premises. They state that they borrow premises to which their board members or members have access. All of them work or worked on a voluntary basis, except for the Islamic Community, where the imams, secretary, chairperson and assistant are paid for their work. Mercy states that they are aware of the Bosnia-Hercegovina-organisasjonen in Norway, but are not members because they want all the money they receive for the organisation to be used only for humanitarian purposes and not to pay membership fees. Stecak was for the most part financed by Landsrådet for Norges barne- og ungdomsorganisasjoner (LNU) (English: The Norwegian Children and Youth Council). They specify that they received no operational funding, but rather funding for each project. After LNU decided to cut funding for projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they received some funding from the Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo to continue their judicial project in Bosnia. (Stecak 2023)

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<sup>21</sup> Se footnote 15.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Activities, Projects, and Events***

The organisations give examples of different types of events that they organise, depending on what their purpose is.

Being a religious organisations, the Islamic Community organise activities such as Friay Prayer, Quran school for children and Ramadan activities (Islamic Community 2023). Mercy mostly operates through gathering donations online, but in some cases have put up stands at events organised by the Islamic Community in order to earn donations through sales of food (Mercy 2023). The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association organise concert or dialogue nights where important issues for the Bosnian community are addressed, such as election (discussed further under section about political participation). They have also started a project with Hvite Busser (White Busses) to send students to visit the Srebrenica Memorial site. (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023).

Stecak organised different events ranging from poetry nights to concerts. In addition, they have had larger projects. One such project is increasing election participation, which will be discussed under the section about political participation. Other than this, they organised a project inspired by the Norwegian JURK – judicial counselling for women and established an office in the city of Zenica in Bosnia providing legal aid for women and young people, in cases such as domestic violence issues or material rights. The office was established through the Faculty of Law in the city of Zenica, with two female students using the organisation as an internship in their field of law. This arrangement with an internship was not something that the Faculty of Law had ever had, so Stecak saw a loophole in the educational system in Bosnia and gathered resources to provide students with this invaluable opportunity. Later, the services were extended to be provided to persons living in other cities such as Visoko. The project lasted for three to four years, until funding was cut<sup>22</sup>. (Stecak 2023).

#### ***4.1.1.4 Cooperation With Each Other and Other Organisations***

Some of the organisations do cooperate with each other and with other non-Bosnian organisations.

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<sup>22</sup> Due to LNO no longer financing projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later the informant explains that the Norwegian Embassy might have taken over funding, though this is unclear.

Stecak have cooperated with the Norwegian JURK for the aforementioned project for law students in Zenica. They have also cooperated with Danish and Swedish Bosnian organisations for young persons. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association cooperate with the Holocaust centre in their commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide.

Regarding intermingling of organisations, it is worth noting that the leader of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association is former board member of Stecak (Stecak 2023). The Islamic Community is also a board member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association. Stecak has been asked to be members of this organisations, but have declined (Stecak 2023).

#### **4.1.1.5 Discrimination**

One issue is that of racism or discrimination felt or addressed by the organisations. The only cited example is the Islamic Community. They explains how they received funding from the Norwegian state to secure their premise against terror attacks, for instance setting up video surveillance. However, the representative I talked to seems to believe that they have an advantage in being “white”, as discussed in the beginning of the thesis (Kovacevic Bielicki 2017; Colic-Peisker 2005). “I’ll be honest with you, we notice that, we Bosnians, have white skin colour, we don't get threats [of people] knowing [if] we are Muslims or not, [and] we have a little less of those threats, [than] other Muslims, and other mosques. (translated)” (Islamic Community 2023).

### **4.1.2 Importance of Organising Bosnians in Norway: Do Individuals Participate in Organisations?**

When looking at the importance of organising Bosnians in Norway, the interviewees have some differing opinions. Some believe that it is important, whilst others take a clear negative stance. This can be seen in the answers given by Informant 6, who does not believe organisation of Bosnians is important, and moreover does not wish to participate in organisations aimed at Bosnians in Norway *because* of the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Interviewer: Would you say that organising Bosnians in Norway is important to you?

Informant 6: No, not really very much. I just have to say that after 30 years, and I've lived here twice as long as I have in Bosnia, I don't feel that I belong there anymore. And that's with my hand on my heart. One has to say that you have built a life in Norway and that home is in Norway. I have parents who live in Bosnia, I have family in Bosnia, so I go

there several times a year. But I can say that I don't belong there anymore, and that's simply because I don't agree with the situation that exists there, which has arisen before the war, and for which I have paid quite a high price. So I'm not politically engaged, or engaged in any way whatsoever, because I have nothing to contribute there, I feel.

Interviewer: Which parts would you say you disagree with?

Informant 6: Firstly, the political part, absolutely. That you see through and past both corruption and... The fact that you should belong to a box, and I don't like to belong to a box, to me people are people. I don't care what religion or skin colour they have, and to sort of constantly look at that bit, and be so preoccupied with it and not see the bigger picture, I can't see past that. So while I'm either on holiday or talking to... I mean, I have friends who live there. I personally avoid all conversations around both politics and the situation, because I see that I have quite different views on it. <sup>23</sup> (translated) (Interview with Informant 6)

Informant 6 has also never been a member of any organisations for Bosnians in Norway. She explains that she and her husband came to Norway together and had to build their lives without help from anyone, and when they had children who needed to be followed up on. However, she has been civically engaged outside of formal organisations, “I've been very involved in children's sport, in what the school has and has been involved in. I've been to all the events, I've been on the board, on the swimming team and so on. In that sense, I have been involved. Apart from

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<sup>23</sup>In original language: “Intervjuer: Vil du si at organisering av bosniere i Norge er viktig for deg?”

Informant 6: Nei, egentlig ikke så veldig. Jeg må jo bare si at etter 30 år, og jeg har jo bodd vel dobbelt så lenge her enn det jeg har gjort i Bosnia, så jeg føler ikke at jeg hører til der lenger. Og det er jo bare med hånd på hjertet. Man må jo si at man har bygd seg et liv i Norge og at hjemme er i Norge. Jeg har jo foreldre som bor i Bosnia, jeg har jo familie i Bosnia, så jeg er jo der hvert år flere ganger. Men jeg kan si at jeg hører ikke der lenger, og det er jo rett og slett fordi at jeg er ikke enig med den situasjonen som er der, som har oppstått før krigen, og som jeg har betalt ganske høyt pris for. Så jeg er ikke politisk engasjert, eller engasjert på noe som helst måte, fordi at jeg har ingenting å bidra der, føler jeg

Intervjuer: Hvilke deler vil du si du er uenig med?

Informant 6: For det første, den politiske delen, absolutt. At man ser tvers gjennom og forbi både korrupsjon og... Det at du skal høre til et bås, og jeg liker ikke å høre til et bås, for meg så er mennesker mennesker. Jeg bryr meg ikke om hvilken religion eller hudfarge de har, og det å på en måte konstant se på den biten, og være så opptatt av den og ikke se det større bildet, det klarer ikke jeg å se forbi. Så mens jeg er enten på ferie eller snakker med... Altså jeg har jo venner som bor der. Jeg personlig unngår alle samtaler rundt både politikk og situasjon, fordi at jeg ser at jeg har ganske forskjellige synspunkter på det.”

that, I had neither the time nor the opportunity to get involved elsewhere.”<sup>24</sup> (Interview with Informant 6).

Informant 7, who is an active politician in a Norwegian party, also shares a disinterested in Bosnian organisations, and explains how she is not a member of any Bosnian organisations. When asked to explain her reasoning for this, she says how “I have been working and integrating [myself] into Norwegian society. I have not had much contact with the Bosnian community. Apart from friends. But I have not been interested in the organisational side of things.”<sup>25</sup>(translated)” (Interview with Informant 7)

Some other Bosnian organisations that informants mention outside of the four I spoke with are Jabuka – functioning as a language school for Bosnian children, the cultural organisation Institut Sevdah, and the charity Merhamet, There was little general knowledge of these organisations among the informants.

#### **4.1.2.1 Problems With Access to Organisations**

In Talic’s thesis, he pinpoints the Islamic Community as a very important organisation for Bosnians in Norway (Talic 2017, p.109-111). “The series of different organisations emerging in the very cloud of immigration to Norway after 1992 has created such permanence. Islamska Zajednica was established as early as 1994 and can be seen as a foundation for a Bosnian interpersonal community in Norway. (Translated)”<sup>26</sup> (Talic 2017, p.110-111). In addition, Talic quotes an imam explaining how he feels a significant responsibility for the Bosnian immigrant group in Norway (Talic 2017, p.110). Being the largest organisation for Bosnians in Norway, he calculates how 54.13 percent of Bosnians in Norway are members (9419 members out of approximately 17 400 Bosnians in Norway in 2016) (Talic 2017, p.109-111). Today, in 2023, that

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<sup>24</sup> In original language: “Jeg vært veldig engasjert i barneidretten, i det som skolen har og har vært med på. Jeg har jo vært på alle arrangementer, jeg har sittet i styre, i svømmelag og så videre. Sånn sett så har jeg vært engasjert. Utover det så hadde jeg jo hverken tid eller mulighet til å engasjere meg andre steder.”

<sup>25</sup> In original language: “Jeg har jobbet og integrert meg i det norske samfunnet. Jeg har ikke hatt mye kontakt med det bosniske miljøet. Utenom venner. Men det organisatoriske har jeg ikke vært interessert i.”

<sup>26</sup> In original language: “Rekken av ulike organisasjoner som vokser frem i selve molden av immigreringen til Norge etter 1992, har skapt en slik varighet. Islamska Zajednica ble etablert allerede i 1994, og kan oppfattes som en grunnstamme for et bosnisk intermenneskelig fellesskap i Norge.”



number is approximately 47.39 percent<sup>27</sup>. This shows a slight decline in the percentage of members, though the membership is still quite high. However, having a high membership number does not necessarily equate to having actual engaged members. In Norway, only approximately 18 percent of persons who say they belong to a religion participate at religious meetings at least one time per month (Østhus 2021).

However, one reoccurring problem some informants I conversed with is not having access to organisations for Bosnians in Norway because of where they are geographically located. As mentioned in the literary review, Bosnians live across Norway and are not concentrated into one location (Dzamarija 2016), and this means that in some places they might be very few in number. One respondent lives near the city of Trondheim. When asked what organisations for Bosnians in Norway she had heard of, her initial response was “almost none (translated)<sup>28</sup>” (Interview with respondent 2). She explains how she used to be a member of the Islamic Community, however she is not any longer because she wishes to contribute to organisations locally. She also says how she has never attended a lecture or gathering organised by them. (Interview with respondent 2). In their interview, the Islamic Community explain that they do have an imam in Trondheim. However, “he belongs all the way up to Iceland and Greenland (translated)” (Islamic Community 2023), meaning that one person covers a large geographical area, and the masjid<sup>29</sup> he belongs to might not be close to the person I spoke with. However, with regards to helping local organisations, she responds how there are no other local organisations for Bosnians in Norway close to her that she knows of (Interview with respondent 2).

Another problem is that the individuals I talked to are not familiar with many organisations for Bosnians in Norway. When asked about it, one interviewee responded “there exists only one<sup>30</sup>” (Interview with Informant 1). This sentiment is shared by Informant 2, who also only lists the Islamic Community.

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<sup>27</sup> 9027 member of Islamic Community out of 19 049 Bosnians in Norway.

<sup>28</sup> In original language: “Nesten ingen”.

<sup>29</sup> A Muslim place of worship.

<sup>30</sup> In original language: “Ja, det finnes bare én”.

#### ***4.1.2.2 Individuals' Membership in Other Organisations***

Although there is little membership in Bosnian organisations among the informants I spoke to, there are a few informants who are members of other organisations, not tied to the Bosnian community. These are what Tronstad and Rogstad (2012) refer to as overreaching organisations. For instance, there is an informant that is member of a go-kart team, one person is member of a sail boating club. Informant 7 who is not a member of any Bosnian organisations, has an active organisational life, listing membership in Norwegian People's and the women's organisation 8 March Committee. Informant 4, who is the only person that is a member of Bosnian organisations in Norway, is also a member of the overreaching organisations in Bosnia, the Scouts. In Norway, she is a member of Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted.

#### ***4.1.2.3 Perception of the Organisations and Critical views***

To gauge their perception of the four organisations, as well as other organisations the informants list the names of, I ask them what their perceptions are of the organisations and what they believe their purpose is. Most are congruent with how the organisations themselves describe their purpose. Informant 4, who is a member of the Islamic Community, explains that the community attempts to “gather people in their faith” and “aid with burials” (Interview with Informant 4).

However, there is one critical opinions of the Islamic Community present. Informant 1 discusses how organisations such as the Islamic Community have no impact or meaning for the Norwegian society. “It means a little bit [i.e. something] to the Bosnians themselves when they get together and have a good time together and speak the language together and compete a little bit between each other and eat the traditional food and joke with each other like Bosnians like to do. But that's the meaning that it has – it does have that. But those gatherings have no impact on Norwegian society.” (Interview with Informant 1). It must be noted that this person is not a member of the Islamic Community, but has attended some events organised by them. He is highly critical of the organisation. Then when asked about what he believes is the purpose of the Islamic Community:

**Interviewer:** What do you think is the purpose of the Islamic Community in Norway?

**Informant 1:** Hm. (h) It's a bit particular. (h) I could talk about that for days. But, why not speak the truth. The purpose of those who work in [the Islamic Community] is to take a lot of money from the state, when we see it from the Bosnian side, the side they

work in.<sup>31</sup> But when we see it from the state side, from the Norwegian side, I am absolutely sure that they like it. That they like the fact that the employees earn all that money. What does that mean? It means that the Norwegian state is fulfilling their duties, their laws, giving that money - but at the same time they want that money not to be used for the purpose for which they give it. They would like it to be stolen instead of being spent on - instead of being spent by the members of the Islamic Community.

**Interviewer:** And maybe the development of the Bosnian community in Norway?

**Informant 1:** Right. It has very much stopped the development of the Bosnian community, because since the Islamic Community has the money, they are able to organise and lead anything concerning Bosnians. Any gathering - and that money makes it

**Interviewer:** -Do you think it has-

**Informant 1:** -And they get involved in everything.

**Interviewer:** Would you say they interfere politically?

**Informant 1:** Yes, of course.

**Interviewer:** In what way do you think then?

**Informant 1:** To protect themselves. If someone who represents the Islamic Community in Norway for Bosnia and Herzegovina gets politically involved and gets to know politicians, first of all to have better muscles to protect themselves, so that they can earn even more. (Interview with Informant 1)

Informant 1 also discusses how the money the Islamic Community receives from the Norwegian state should be used to finance more activities – mentioning a skiing school and a gym room. When I asked him why in particular the Islamic Community should do that, and inquiring about whether other Bosnian organisations could take on the task of organising such activities, he countered that they have “power over the names” (Interview with Informant 1). This can be seen as an interesting constatation, because as mentioned in the literary review, the Islamic Community is the largest Islamic community in Norway (Carlsen and Røset 2017). As mentioned previously, they organisation confirms to have approximately 9000 members (Islamic Community

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<sup>31</sup> This is because as the Islamic Community says themselves, they are a subsidiary of Islamska Zajednica Bosna i Hercegovina, the Bosnian parent organisation

2023). According to the Islamic Community they did organise slalom for the children at a ski centre, but that this is only approximately once a year (Islamic Community 2023).

## 4.2 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

### 4.2.1 The Organisations as a Political Forum and Cooperation with Governments

None of the organisations believe that they are in any way political or politically engaged. The organisation Mercy says "No, we do not interfere, none of us are politically exposed, and we keep everything proper, It's 100% focus on humanitarian work"<sup>32</sup> (Mercy 2023). They have also never participated in marches or protests as an organisation. Although no one thinks that they are a political organisation, there are several who have been involved in increasing voter turnout among Bosnians in Norway with Bosnian citizenship. These include the Islamic Community, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation and Stecak.

When asked about their political involvement, the Islamic Community claims that they are not a political organisation. However, they have an active role in participation in elections. The Islamic Community explain how they help their members gather the right papers and documentation to vote in Bosnian elections, in cooperation with the Bosnian embassy. When asked about efforts towards Norwegian elections, they explain that this is something that would be addressed during the Friday prayers, where the imam would inform those gathered how it is important to vote and utilise their democratic right. However, they explain how their imam Faruk Terzic is member of STL (The Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway), which is a “brigde between religious societies and the state (translated)” (Islamic Community 2023). On STL’s website, Terzic is listed as a representative of Muslimsk Dialognettverk (STL n.d.). On the about-section of the website, there is no information showing a list of the member organisations (muslimskdialog.no n.d.), as there link seems to be a deadlink<sup>33</sup>. However, other sources show that the Islamic Community Bosnia-Hercegovina is a member and a founder of the organisation, along with Islamic Cultural Centre, Det Islamske Forbundet (Rabita), Center Rahma og Albansk

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<sup>32</sup> In the original language: “Nei, vi blander ikke oss i, ingen av oss er politisk eksponert, og vi holder alt ordentlig om, skjønner du. Det er 100% fokus på humanitært arbeid.”

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the website is under construction or is being updated as of May 2023.

Islamsk Kultursenter, and the umbrella organisation as a whole is a member of Muslims Dialognettverk (Tjernshaugen and Eggen n.d.), not only the individual the Islamic Community, which could explain why Terzic is listed as a representative of Muslimsk Dialognettverk in that regard.

Further, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association and the Islamic Community have also to some extent acted as an interest group for an issue concerning Bosnians and pension payments. In 2021, it was reported in the Norwegian media that Bosnians, due to their special arrangement as quota refugees, do not have their pensions calculated on the same basis as other refugees, and in practice receive a smaller pension (Aslam 2021). This is an issue that the two organisations have tried raising with representatives in the Norwegian parliament but have seen these efforts as futile.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Organising Help with Elections***

In 2010, Stecak had a massive campaign with aim to increase voter turnout in Bosnian elections. This project was made up of several different parts. One part of the operation, was helping Bosnians living in Norway with a dual citizenship vote at the Bosnian elections. This was done by creating information brochures about the importance of participating in elections, as well as practical information on how to register to vote in Bosnia as a person living outside of the country. They used tools such as the telephone catalogue 1881.no and the Yellow Pages to contact persons with Bosnian sounding names, eventually sending 1500 letters. Due to their efforts, the elections were held at the Bosnian embassy in Oslo for the first time, with contacts at the embassy crediting the organization with the unprecedented large turnout (Stecak 2023). Other efforts tied to the voting project was inviting the prominent band Dubioza Kolektiv to play a free concert in Oslo, as well as travelling to Sweden for a friendly match between Bosnia and Sweden and handing out brochures to the spectators. Further, they travelled around Bosnian cities such as Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar informing young people or people in general passing by of the importance of voting at the election. The project overall received an estimated funding of 1 million Norwegian kroner. (Stecak 2023). Stecak did not discuss any efforts or projects aimed at increasing Bosnian participation at Norwegian elections, although, as we have seen, voter turnout in Norway is quite low among that group.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association have also organised what they refer to as “dialogue nights”, where the topic of election in both Norway and Bosnia has been discussed. In two instances, they received funding from the Cultural Department to “talk about the election”. They have also arranged help with registering for the Bosnian elections. They did not disclose any results of this effort. (Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023).

#### **4.2.1.2 Cooperation with Authorities**

The three organisations Stecak, Islamic Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina Association disclose varying levels of cooperation with Bosnian or Norwegian authorities, with Mercy reporting none.

Stecak explains that they had a cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, as well as the Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With regards to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stecak had written a letter to them at “a time where the situation in Bosnia was escalating”<sup>34</sup> (Stecak 2023). At another occasion, the Ministry gathered all Bosnian organisations in Norway for a meeting where they explain what it is that they do, giving Stecak the opportunity to present themselves (Stecak 2023). In regard to the Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo, they explain how “the embassy was always open for us”<sup>35</sup> (Stecak 2023). In line with their judicial project in Bosnia, the Norwegian ambassador brought them along to a tour of Istocno Sarajevo<sup>36</sup> (which is the Serbian part of Sarajevo), and particularly the judicial faculty at their university. When asked about cooperation with the Bosnian authorities, they explain how this was not something they wished to have, especially cooperation with any specific Bosnian political party, to avoid being “labelled” (Stecak 2023). They purposefully avoided meetings with Bosnian political parties. With regards to the Bosnian Embassy in Norway, they had been invited by the Embassy to a party at the roof of the embassy in connection with the voting project they had organised. In addition, the Embassy was invited to events, such as presentations about the situation in Bosnia.

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<sup>34</sup> In the original language: “Det var en gang hvor den, altså situasjonen i Bosnia holdt på å eskalere”.

<sup>35</sup> In the original language: “Ambassaden var alltid åpen for oss”-

<sup>36</sup> “East Sarajevo”, previously called “srpsko Sarajevo” or “Serbian Sarajevo”.

### ***4.2.1.3 Marking or Protesting Important Issues***

There have been some markings that the organisations participate in. For the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association, being “the biggest representative of Bosnians in Norway<sup>37</sup>” (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023), it is particularly important to mark the constitutional day of Bosnia and to commemoratively mark the Srebrenica Genocide. This is in cooperation with the Holocaust centre. At these events, Norwegian politicians have been present. The importance of this lies in the fact that there is some contention around these two issues. Some parts of Bosnia refuse to acknowledge the constitutional day and Republika Srpska<sup>38</sup> have in recent years even celebrated the unconstitutional Day of Republika Srpska (Ibrahimović and Arnautović 2023)

Both the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association and Stecak admit to attending the protests with regards to Peter Handke receiving the Ibsen literary award in Norway in 2014. A representative from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association also wrote a chronicle in the newspaper *Aftenposten*, condemning him receiving the award due to his denial of the Srebrenica genocide and supporting Slobodan Milosevic<sup>39</sup> (Kadribegovic 2014).

Other campaigns that Stecak mentions is the campaign “Bosnian and Herzegovinian above all” (“Bosanac, Hercegovac prije svega”) as opposition to a campaign ran by one political party titled “Bosnjak prije svega”, meaning “Bosniak above all”. This was done to further their mission to eliminate divisions based on ethnicity in Bosnia.

## **4.2.2 Political Participation Among the Individual Informants**

### ***4.2.2.1 Voting Among Individuals***

As all of the respondents had dual Norwegian and Bosnian citizenship, I was interested to learn more about their voting behaviours. None of the participants had any other citizenships that they disclosed.

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<sup>37</sup> In original language, unabridged: “I vedtektene står det at vi er den største representanten for bosniere i Norge”.

<sup>38</sup> Serbian entity of Bosnia. Bosnia is divided into the two entities of the Federation and Republika Srpska.

<sup>39</sup> Serbian president during the Yugoslav wars, nicknamed “the Butcher of Balkan”, see Nielsen (2001).

Six respondents told me that they vote in all Norwegian elections, and the seventh says that he usually votes. They believe that it is important to use the political right and duty that they have in participation in the Norwegian election. Most persons stress them living in Norway being an important factor for why they vote, as they wish to be a part of the Norwegian society. When it comes to Bosnian elections, three people always or regularly vote. For those who do not vote, they give different explanations as to why they do not vote. Informant 5 only votes in Norwegian elections and does not vote in Bosnian elections. At 69 years old, she explains that voting electronically is too difficult and too complicated for her. However, she believes that voting is important as “every single vote counts<sup>40</sup>” (Interview with Informant 5), and if the system was easier with regards to Bosnian elections living in Norway, she would vote. Informant 2 has chosen not to vote in Bosnian elections, because “I don’t know the political situation in Bosnia<sup>41</sup>” (Interview with Informant 2). She explains how she used to vote in the elections, but lost overview of the political situation (Interview with Informant 2). Further, Informant 7 has never voted in Bosnian elections, even though she has been a politician for the past five years. Being a social democrat, she finds that she fundamentally disagrees with the Bosnian political scene being based on “ethnic exclusivity<sup>42</sup>” (Interview with informant 7). Informant 3, who used to be a local politician in Norway but has now turned efforts towards Bosnia, believes that it is important to vote in the Bosnian election: “Because if I don't take part in the democratic process, someone else will decide for me. And I'm very interested in what's happening in Bosnia as well, so the least I can do is vote<sup>43</sup>. (translated)” (Interview with Informant 3).

Interestingly, Informant 6 explains how she has previously voted in Bosnian elections up until now, but as of last elections she has quit. She gives three reasons for this. Firstly, she believes that since she lives in Norway, and does not plan to permanently move to Bosnia, it is not right for

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<sup>40</sup> In original language: “hver eneste stemme er viktig når det er valg”

<sup>41</sup> In original language: “jeg kjenner ikke politiske situasjonen i Bosnia”

<sup>42</sup> In original language: “etnisk eksklusivitet”

<sup>43</sup> In original language: ”Fordi hvis jeg ikke tar del i den demokratiske prosessen så er det noen andre som skal bestemme for meg. Og jeg er veldig interessert i det som skjer i Bosnia også, så det minste jeg kan bidra med er å avgi stemme.”



her “to decide how the people in Bosnia live, and what government they should have<sup>44</sup>” (Interview with Informant 6). Secondly, she has seen no change in the politics or any change in attitudes. (Interview with Informant 6). This has been true up until this month of April 2023, where the three biggest nationalist parties from the three constitutive nations SDA, HDZ and SNSD. However, the general elections of 2022 changed this composition. The High Representative in Bosnia is Christian Schmidt, appointed by the international community and functioning as the highest most power in Bosnia. According to the Office of the High Representative “The current technical government of the Federation<sup>45</sup> consisting of ministers from SDA, HDZ and SNSD in coalition was formed on the basis of the election results of 2014 and does not reflect the will of the voters of 2022.” (OHR 2023). On April 27, 2023, the High Representative broke the deadlock in the Federation<sup>46</sup> (Kurtic 2023).

Lastly, Informant 6 proclaims how it is “obvious” that votes are being stolen. This is an ongoing issue with both local and parliamentary elections in Bosnia, with trading seats at polling stations and creating fictitious candidates (Omerovic 2020).

#### ***4.2.2.2 Yugoslavia as an Undemocratic Federation***

An interesting fact that many of the respondents highlight, is that former Yugoslavia, the country they were raised in, was a one-party state, where there were no democratic elections and people did not go out to vote. “Democracy has to be learnt. We who came from ex-Yugoslavia do not have a democratic mentality. So, it took several years to start learning. There are some who have not understood it to this day, but most people have - at least that is my opinion.” (Interview with Informant 3). He says that since learning the democratic system in his introductory courses in Norway, he has never skipped an election in either country. “It took some time before I started to behave democratically<sup>47</sup> (translated)” (Interview with Informant 3). As time can be argued to be a factor here, looking at it from the side of participation at Norwegian elections, this can be related

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<sup>44</sup> In original language: “bestemme hvordan de menneskene i Bosnia skal leve, og hvilken regjering de skal ha”

<sup>45</sup> One entity of Bosnia

<sup>46</sup> Bosnia and Hercegovina is divided into two entities: The Federation and Republika Srpska

<sup>47</sup> In original language: ”Det tok litt tid før jeg begynte å oppføre meg demokratisk”

to Tronstad and Rogstad, showing that participation in election in Norway is tied to time lived in Norway (2012, pp.50-51)

#### ***4.2.2.3 Other Political Engagement***

The individual informants I spoke with, were politically engaged through being local politicians, participating in protest, markings or petitions, and being political/social writers.

Two persons of the individuals I interviewed have had active roles within Norwegian politics, at a local level. Informant 7 is still active as a politician (Interview with Informant 7), while Informant 3 was a deputy member in city council, though the person is outside of politics now (Interview with Informant 3). For 12 years, Informant 3 also wrote articles in the local newspaper in Norway where he is from, discussing political topics regarding Norway. Since five years ago, representative 3 has turned his focus towards Bosnia, and now writes on topic of politics, civic engagement and general societal issues in a Bosnian online portal. (Interview with Informant 3)

Looking at protests, markings or petitions, there are mixed efforts in the group I interviewed. Informant 4, arriving to Norway at 19 years old, has been to many protest, including the Benjamin-protests, protest with regard to the Palestine-issue, the protest for women in Iran, and torch light processions for Nobel's Peace Price Centre. With regards to protests regarding Bosnia, she has been at the JMBG-protest, which was an issue related to personal identification numbers of Bosnian children.

### **4.3 LOOKING INTO BELONGING**

#### **4.3.1 Orientation Towards Bosnia or Norway**

One measure of belonging and orientation is how often a person visits their home country (Wong 2007). All informants I spoke with visit Bosnia on a yearly basis and explained how their visits to Bosnia were often a combination of vacations and visiting remaining family in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Regarding longer time periods, two persons I spoke with have spent considerable time in Bosnia after arriving to Norway for different reason. One person in the

group I interviewed took a year off from her job and spent it living in Bosnia with her close family<sup>48</sup>. She did this, so that her children would be connected to Bosnian culture and language. Whilst in Bosnia, her children attended one year of Bosnian school. Still, they ensured to bring with them Norwegian material, to still advance their learning in Norwegian. Another person took part in the repatriation program organised by Norway and spent two years in the late 1990s trying to repatriate to Bosnia, but eventually returning to Norway, having found the country they left being too different from the one they left.

One measure where belonging is connected to political participation, is looking at where a person sees themselves living in the future. Most of the informants I talked with see themselves continuing to live in Norway in the future. One person would like to eventually return to Bosnia at retirement age, but has a family who does not currently agree with the notion of moving back.

When asked about why they kept their Bosnian citizenship when they acquired the Norwegian, most of the informants explain how this was not always a conscious decision, as they simply kept the old one when they acquired the new. However, when asked what the citizenships mean to them, a common theme was having freedom in having two passports, and the Bosnian citizenship in particular was an emotional tie. Divulging on which citizenship they would give up if they have to, the informants were split. Some would give up the Bosnian one, as their life is in Norway. Others would retain the Bosnian one: "If I have to lose Bosnian citizenship because of Norwegian, I will not. I will choose always Bosnian. And if I have no choice to live in either Bosnia or Norway, then I will choose Bosnia. But my family - the problem is that my family does not think like that. I will always choose Bosnia over Norway<sup>49</sup>. (translated)" (Interview with Informant 1). One person who feels somewhat alienated in Bosnian society explains how he would give up the Bosnian citizenship, but how he hopes to never come into that situation (Interview with Informant 3).

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<sup>48</sup> This portion is not cited so the person will not be recognised.

<sup>49</sup> In original language: "Hvis jeg må tape bosnisk statsborgerskap på grunn av norske, det vil jeg ikke. Jeg vil velge alltid bosnisk. Og hvis jeg ikke har noen valg for å leve i enten Bosnia eller Norge, da vil jeg velge Bosnia. Men min familie - problemet er at slik tenker ikke min familie. Jeg vil alltid velge Bosnia foran Norge."

The Islamic Community claims that many Bosnians in the pre-corona period signed out from the Bosnian state and gave up their Bosnian citizenship in order to obtain Norwegian citizenship before the new legislation in 2020. "But before that period, in 2016, 2018, 2019, many people were leaving [their Bosnian citizenship]. We ask them not to do it, because what was the reason for doing it. We knew that the Norwegian state was talking about dual citizenship, but people don't bother to listen...<sup>50</sup> (translated)" (Islamic Community 2023 of Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Owning property is also an important indicator of belonging and integration (Klekowski et al 2015). As mentioned, participants expressed that they visit Bosnia on at least yearly basis, and not only that they had a property in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that this was very important to them, as exemplified in Informant 1's answer:

Informant 1: From 1996 or 1997, just half a year after the Dayton Agreement when the war ended, just half a year after that I visited Bosnia. Visited my hometown, my house that was destroyed. And since then I have been visiting Bosnia every year, at least once in the summer per year, but in some periods in 2001, 2002, 2003 I was much longer there and have rebuilt the house and have house there, a nice house, in my hometown called [redacted]. A small town, very small town. And that's where I belong.

Interviewer: So it was important for you to have that property?

Informant 1: Very. It's my soul. That's where my father lived, my grandfather, and ten generations back. And I want to keep it that way. And now it's better than it ever was. But empty. Nobody lives there.<sup>51</sup> (translated) (Interview with Informant 1).

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<sup>50</sup> In original language: "Men før den perioden, i 2016, 2018, 2019 så var det mange som går ut. Vi ber dem ikke gjøre det, for hva var grunn for å gjøre det. Vi visste at den norske staten snakket om at det skulle bli dobbelt statsborgerskap, men folk gidder ikke å høre ..."

<sup>51</sup> In original language: "Informant 1: Fra 1996 eller 1997, bare halvt år etter den daytonske avtalen når krigen sluttet, bare halvt år etter besøkte jeg Bosnia. Besøkte hjembyen min, huset mitt som ble knust. Og etter da har jeg besøkt Bosnia hvert år, minst én gang på sommeren per år, men i enkelte perioder i 2001, 2002, 2003 var jeg mye lengre der og har bygget opp på nytt huset og har hus der, et fint hus, i hjembyen min som heter Kupres. En liten by, veldig liten by. Og det er der jeg tilhører."

Intervjuer: Så det var viktig for deg å ha den eiendommen?

Informant 1: Veldig. Det er sjelen min. Der bodde min far, farfar, og ti generasjoner bakover. Og jeg ønsker på den måten å beholde det. Og nå er det bedre enn det noensinne har vært. Men tomt. Ingen bor der."

We see that the individuals I interviewed do mostly own properties in Bosnia, but they see themselves staying in Norway in the future. The correlation between attachment to the country and voting has been discussed in research (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012)

An interesting point is to see what the informant would think if their children or children's children would lose contact with Bosnia. I ask all participants whether they would accept that potential children or grandchildren would lose contact with Bosnia at some point in the future. Informant 4 answers: "Yes, I would accept that. And I know that we have an expression that says that the first generation builds, the second maintains, and the third sells. It's some kind of expression like that. And we're citizens of the world and who knows where we'll end up. So I don't have any expectations about that.<sup>52</sup> (translated)". (Interview with Informant 4). This can be interpreted as meaning that once one gets to the third generation, they are no longer connected to that which the first generation built and the second generation maintained, and have no problem "selling" it, as they are not attached. On the opposite end, Informant 1, being an older man in his sixties answers a stout "No" to accepting this fate (Interview with Informant 1).

When asked about the importance of teaching actual or hypothetical children about the Bosnian culture, all informants say that this is something that is very important to them and that they in relevant cases have tried to teach their children the Bosnian language. When asked if it is equally important to teach their children, most informants who answered this question, agreed that this was already taken care of, as it was a natural part of their schooling. "Yeah, that came by itself, because they go to school from a young age (translated)"<sup>53</sup> (Interview with Informant 2).

With regards to monetary aid, It seems apparent that Bosnians in Norway in large part direct their help towards Bosnia. Every individual person I spoke to send monetary aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This aid is sent mostly to family members that remain in the country.

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<sup>52</sup> In original language: "Ja, det hadde jeg akseptert. Og jeg vet at vi har et uttrykk som sier at den første generasjonen bygger, den andre opprettholder, og den tredje selger. Det er et eller annet sånt uttak. Og vi er verdensborgere, og hvem vet hvor vi havner. Så jeg har ikke noen forventninger til det."

<sup>53</sup> In original language: "Ja, den kom av seg selv, fordi de går på skole fra liten alder."

### 4.3.2 Ethnic Identity and Interethnic Contact

I asked participants whether their opinion of the other ethnic groups from Bosnia had changed after the war. For those participants who wished to divulge on the topic of ethnicity, it became clear that there were different backgrounds intermixed. Some participants identified themselves as Bosniak, but with a spouse of a different ethnicity “I don't have much contact with Bosnian Serbs because in recent years there is a political situation, so I don't have that [contact]. Bosnian Croats, yes - I have contact with my wife anyway. (translated)<sup>54</sup>” (Interview with Informant 3). Some were of a “mixed marriage”<sup>55</sup> themselves, but do not like to identify with a specific ethnic group from Bosnia. “None. Bosnian. That's why I don't live down there. I don't want to be any one [ethnicity]. I am, what should I say, in proper Norwegian, that is, I am Bosnian. In the same way that I say I'm Norwegian, I'm Bosnian. But nothing beyond that<sup>56</sup> (translated)” (Interview with Informant 6).

The Islamic Community Bosnia and Herzegovina is called the “Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Norwegian”, but in Bosnian it is called the “Islamic Community of *Bosniaks in Norway*” which emphasises this one ethnic group “Bosniaks”, often culturally connected to the Islamic faith. However, as mentioned in the previous section about purpose and membership, they are open to membership from different ethnicities and nationalities, although most members are Bosniaks. The origin of this name was not examined further in my interviews but is worthy of note.

When the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association is asked why they have the the Islamic Community Bosnia-Hercegovina as part of their board, and no other religious organisations, they said that other religious organisations would be welcome, but that they do not know of any other religious organisations for Bosnians in Norway (The Bosnia and Herzegovina Association 2023). This lack of Christian or other religious Bosnian organisations is supported by Cvitkovic

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<sup>54</sup> In original language: “Jeg har ikke stor kontakt med bosniske serbere fordi de siste årene er det en politisk situasjon, så det har jeg ikke. Bosniske kroater, ja - jeg har kontakt med min kone iallefall.”

<sup>55</sup> A term commonly used in Ex-Yugoslavia; vernacular for interethnic marriages.

<sup>56</sup> In original language: “Ingen. Bosnier. Det er jo derfor jeg ikke bor der nede. Jeg vil ikke være noen. Jeg er jo, hva skal jeg si, på godt norsk, altså jeg er bosnier. På samme måte som jeg sier at jeg er norsk, så er jeg bosnisk. Men ingenting utover det.”

explaining how in Bosnia, “ethnic or national identity is most closely linked to religion” (Cvitkovic 2017, cited in Hadzic 2020). It can be theorised that persons of Bosnian Catholic or Bosnian Orthodox denomination adhere to the Kroatisk katolsk misjon i Norge (Croatian Catholic Mission in Norway) and Kirkekommunen Saint Vasilije Ostroški (Serbian Orthodox church in Norway) respectively. As explained by Colic-Peisker, “During the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war of the early 1990s, and in its still unsettled aftermath, being Bosniak also meant not having a homeland other than Bosnia, unlike Bosnian Croats and Serbs who could turn to neighbouring Croatia and Serbia.” (Colic-Peisker 2005, p.628). Croats have their own umbrella organisation called Kroatisk Forbund Norge. On their website, they explain how most Croats came to Norway in the 1960s and 1970s as economic migrants, and then later in the 1990s as refugees. They put Croats from Croatia and Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina into the same category of simply “Croats”, with no nation-state prefixes (Kroatisk Forbund Norge n.d.) Further, in most recent, but quite outdated numbers showing Catholics in Norway by birth country, there were only 227 Catholics born in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004 (Den katolske kirke n.d.).

### **4.3.3 How Well are they Received? And Contact with Their Communities**

One dimension to look into is how well received the informants feel in both the Norwegian and Bosnian society and uncover any feeling of alienation. Informants admit that they were well received by the Norwegian society, both upon arrival and throughout the years. With regards to Bosnian society, both the diasporic one in Norway and the Bosnian in Bosnia, most feel that they are also well received. However, with informants who do not agree with some aspects of Bosnian society, they do feel somewhat alienated. One person explains how they have both “friends and enemies” (Interview with Informant 3).

One participant has a large network of Bosnian friends, explaining how they have organised themselves in “girl groups” and “boy groups” (Interview with Informant 6), who meet up regularly. Most persons I spoke to have Bosnian friends in their local communities.

The informants I spoke with report having good relationships with their neighbours. Some report taking turns watching each other’s houses when they go on vacation, saying this connection is as important as family (Respondent 2 2023).

There is almost no mention of discrimination among the informants. One participant mentions an incident where her son, working security at a club was shouted some insults by persons outside of the club. However, she puts no importance on this incident.

But I haven't experienced being looked down on in any way, or discriminated against, or not getting a job because I have such and such a name. Because now I look at my child, who has just graduated with a master's degree, got a job right away, without it having any effect. He has in a way been invited to lots of interviews, etc. So it's obvious that it's not the name that is of importance anymore<sup>57</sup>. (translated) (Interview with Informant 6)

#### 4.3.4 Media

As discussed in the literary review, some immigrants in Europe feel that they do not belong in Europe and use media as a way to connect to the community of their homeland, while being quite detached from their new host countries (Georgiou 2013). Because of this, I wanted to inquire about use of media among Bosnians in Norway.

With regards to media, the individual persons I spoke with had mixed reports. Every person I spoke with follow Norwegian media, and range between watching the newscast on television every day, to turning it on when there is an issue that interests them being discussed. They usually follow the traditional Norwegian news media such as TV2 and the different iterations of NRK. Three persons do not consume any Bosnian media whatsoever<sup>58</sup>. For those who do consume it, one person does have Bosnian or Balkan tv-channels on their TV (Interview with Informant 4). The others that consume Bosnian media, usually read online portals which they access through social media sites such as Facebook or Instagram. Some do follow international media, whilst others do not. There does not seem to be a huge importance laid on this. With regards to diasporic media, meaning media aimed at the Bosnian diaspora living outside of Bosnia, none of the informants could name a source that they follow. They do name *Bosnisk Post* (English: *Bosnian Post*) which was a diasporic printed newspaper that used to be in circulation, as a paper

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<sup>57</sup> In original language: ” Men jeg har ikke erfart å bli på noen måte sett ned på, eller diskriminert, eller ikke har fått jobben fordi jeg heter sånn og sånn. For da ser jeg nå på barnet mitt, som nå har jo akkurat gått ut med en master, fikk seg jo jobb med en gang, uten at det har påvirket. Han har jo på en måte blitt invitert på masse intervjuer, osv. Så det er tydeligvis at det ikke er navnet det står på lenger.“

<sup>58</sup> Informants 2, 3 and 5



that was read by most of them and was seen as important. As mentioned, most persons access Bosnian news through Facebook and online portals, and explain how before this technological revolution, there was less access to news from Bosnia. Tied with this, one can see the importance of Bosnian Post.

In keeping with this notion of evolution, there is an element of time that is discussed with the informants. Informant 6 six, although she does not follow any Bosnian media currently, she has so in the past, when circumstances were different, and she believed she might one day return to Bosnia:

Interviewer: So, I'm wondering, have you always had these same habits of following the media? Or would you say this is something that has changed over time?

Informant 6: It has changed over time. In the beginning we watched a lot of Bosnian media. Then it was too hard to get a satellite and all these programmes and so on. And it's kind of like I said, while we were so committed that we thought that something could change, or that we could move back. But then that has kind of diminished over the years. You sort of live your life here. And then it's always just the same old thing that goes on all the time. As I said, nothing changes, so the media don't change either. And there are things that I, well, if I can put it that way. When I sit down and think that in this century, if I still sit and talk about these things, still talk only about the war and still turn round all the time, that is, 30 years later. Then in a way, I have nothing, it's just polluting my mind. I don't want to live in the past<sup>59</sup>. (translated) (Interview with Informant 6)

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<sup>59</sup> In original language: "Intervjuer: Så lurer jeg på, har du alltid hatt disse samme vanene med å følge med på media? Eller vil du si at dette er noe som har endret seg over tid?"

Informant 6: Det har endret seg over tid. I starten så vi jo veldig mye på bosniske medier. Da var det jo for harde livet å skaffe seg satellitt og alle disse programmene og så videre. Og det er jo på en måte som sagt, mens vi var såpass engasjert at vi trodde at noe kan endres, eller at vi kan flytte tilbake. Men så har jo det på en måte avtatt med årene. Man på en måte lever livet sitt her. Og så er det jo alltid akkurat det samme gamle som går hele tiden. Som sagt, ingenting endrer, så da endres heller ikke mediene. Og det er på en måte ting som jeg, altså hvis jeg skal si det sånn. Når jeg setter meg ned og tenker at i dette her århundret, hvis jeg fortsatt sitter og snakker om disse tingene, fortsatt snakker bare om krigen og fortsatt vender hele tiden, altså 30 år etter. Da er det jo på en måte, altså jeg har ingenting, det er bare forurensner sinnet mitt på det. Jeg vil ikke leve i fortiden."

When asked if the media are in conflict with each other (Georgiou 2013), most answer that they are not. One person mentions how they are not politically opposed, but perhaps the framing of issues and focus might be different, citing the case of the Turkish earthquakes in 2023, where Bosnian media was much more focused on this issue than the Norwegian (Interview with Informant 4). However, one person gives the example of how during the war and in the early stages of arrival of Bosnian refugees, there was conflict between Norwegian and Bosnian media, as Bosnian media leaned heavily on Serbian side. She recalls that this changed with the arrival of Bosnian refugees and the Srebrenica genocide in 1995 (Interview with Informant 6).

#### **4.3.5 Where Would Your Grave Lie?**

Borrowing from Talic (2017) I asked the informants about where they would see themselves being buried, as a measure of which place they belong to most closely. Some informants were adamant that the only place they would be buried is Bosnia, whilst others reflected on it and replied that they would like to be buried wherever their children are. Others again want to be buried where they die. Informant 3 believes that it is important to be buried in Bosnia because of his general explanation of how Bosnians have been attempted to be erased as a people (Interview with Informant 3). Informant 6 wishes to be buried in any country that her child is in, but this does not necessarily have to be in Bosnia. “When I’m dead, I’m dead (translated)<sup>60</sup>” (Interview with Informant 6).

## **5 DISCUSSION**

Contrary to what Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995) found in other diasporic groups, there does not seem to be an active promoting of participation in politics by the sender countries in the group I spoke with. Unlike the Haitian group, as mentioned, there is not even an institution created specifically for Bosnian diaspora (Halilovich et al. 2018). Further, from what I gather, the presented organisations do not seem to be a proxy for political parties in any sense, neither from the Bosnian side or the Norwegian

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<sup>60</sup> In original language: ”Når jeg er død, så er jeg død”.

Moreover, it is apparent that Stecak is stoutly against any cooperation with Bosnian political parties or the Bosnian embassy, but seem to accept help from the Norwegian state, though the Norwegian embassy in Sarajevo as well as receiving funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Further, as a contrast to all the other organisations discussed, they do not wish to cooperate with the Islamic Community, due to their firm secular and non-ethnic foundation.

The both affirmative and disagreeing stance when questioned about their political participation from Stecak, Islamic Community and the Association can perhaps be explained by these organisations not wanting the negative association that comes with being perceived as “political”. They are not “political” in that they propagate any specific party or push any specific politicians, but they certainly do attempt to advocate for at least the democratic right and duty of the act of voting.

With regards to what directions the organisations are turned towards, it is clear that two organisations Stecak and Mercy, although situated in Norway, aim their efforts largely towards the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is seen through their statements of purpose Whether this is monetary aid, as in the case of Mercy or increasing political participation as with Stecak. Even when engaging voter in Norway, Stecak’s ultimate goal was increased participation in *Bosnian* election. Islamic Community and the Bosnia Hercegovina Association seem to be faced towards Bosnians in Norway with both their activities and their purpose.

Looking at the social capital theory, civic engagement could equate to increased participation in elections and politics. Among the group I interviewed there is little participation in organisations for Bosnians in Norway. Some cite time as an issue, having busy careers, others talk of the issue of distance to such organisations, whilst some are critical of the organisations and see them as futile. However, some were connected to their Bosnian peers in form of friendships, gatherings, visiting one another and even having a “girls’ group” and “boys’ group” (Informant 6). However, not all of these persons were members of an organisation for Bosnians. There were instances of members in Bosnian organisations not voting at Bosnian elections (Informant 6), those who were

not members and did not vote (Informant 5, Informant 2) and those who were not members and do vote (Informant 1, Informant 3).

From talking with this selected group of people, in my findings, most persons voted Norwegian elections. This can be tied to the Bosnian group I spoke with feeling a clear attachment to Norway to their local community. The individual participants were in most cases involved with their Norwegian community, through contact with neighbours and participation in school activities where this was applicable. Further, some persons were involved in other overarching organisations. This attachment can be tied to Tronstad and Rogstad 2012, who at the opposite end of the spectrum found that immigrants who did not feel an attachment to Norway were less likely to vote. Here Bosnians do feel an attachment, and that might explain why they vote. However, this finding cannot be generalised, as official statistics show that there is nevertheless low participation at elections among Bosnians (see Aalandslid 2008, p.131)

Opposite to their patterns with Norwegian elections, there is low participation in Bosnian elections. In this study, a dimension of coming from an undemocratic system was also discussed, with integration into democracy taking time to assimilate into.

Based on low membership in the Bosnian organisations among the informants I spoke with, one could be tempted to draw the conclusion that these organisations are not very important for Bosnians in Norway. However, this low membership in organisations is hard to generalise with such a small group of informants. However, for statistics that we do have, we see that low membership and participation in the Islamic Community is congruent with previous research showing that 75 percent of Bosnian Norway have never attended a religious meeting (Vrålstad and Wiggen 2017), despite the Islamic Community charting high membership numbers at 9000 members, almost half of all Bosnians. This could potentially indicate that even those who are members on paper, are not active members.

In line with what Hadzic (2020) found about the intermixing of religion and politics in Bosnia, this topic was of particular interest when it comes to the Islamic Community. Through my conversation with them, and through conversations with the other informants, it does not appear

that they are intermixed with politics. However, as the Islamic Community Bosnia and Herzegovina in Norway is only a daughter organisation of the Bosnian organisation and might not be as involved in politics as the parent organisation, if there is any involvement in politics at all<sup>61</sup>.

With regards to long-distance nationalism in terms of keeping up with the politics of the home country through media and the Internet (Schiller 2005), we see that some informants do “keep up” with Bosnian politics, one even spending prolonged time writing analytical pieces. Others however are tainted by the war and the ongoing fragmented society in Bosnia, and do not wish to be exposed to stories from the homeland any longer.

Finally, all the informants I spoke with reported good relationships with their neighbours. This could be an explanation for their higher participation in Norwegian elections, as this has shown to have a significant positive impact on participation in elections (Tronstad and Rogstad 2012).

## 6 CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to study to what extent Bosnians in Norway are engaged politically and civically in the Norwegian and Bosnian society. This has been analysed through looking at both Bosnian organisations in Norway, as well as individuals. I have found that Bosnians in the group I talked with participate in Norwegian elections, but less so Bosnian elections. There is low membership in organisations for Bosnians among this group, and even organisations such as the Islamic Community with a high number of members, can be argued having quite inactive members. Bosnians in this group are members of other overreaching organisations. The organisations I spoke with do not seem to have any significant political impact on neither the Norwegian nor Bosnian society, other than efforts to raise participation in elections. The

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<sup>61</sup> This could potentially be further researched.

Bosnians in this group are connected to Bosnia and visit the country yearly, but most plan on staying in Norway in the future.

An important note, is that in qualitative research, one is careful of drawing generalised conclusion, with such small population numbers. There is a limitation to this study, in that other factors might influence voting behaviour, such as educational background, economic class or regional characteristics. Also, I have chosen to speak to informants through snowball sampling, so this could create a network of people who share in common the fact that they are not active in Bosnian organisation. Other results in regard to voting at Bosnian elections might have been produced had I talked to members who are explicitly members of these organisations.

## **6.1 FURTHER STUDIES**

In her master's thesis Brkic looked at Bosnian diasporic organisations in Norway and their contribution to peacebuilding in Bosnia (2012). This thesis looked at organisations for Bosnians, though only representatives of these organisations were interviewed. Further studies might want to look at the actual members of these organisations – why are they member, what do they hope to contribute with in the Norwegian and/or the Bosnian society? This could be done through a statistical analysis, to create a general overview of the situation. Another dimension might be studying the transnationalism of second-generation Bosnians who were born in Norway after the war. In what way do they differ from their parent generation?

# **7 REFERENCES**

## **7.1 INTERVIEWS**

Interview transcripts are available upon request.

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Informant 3 (2023), “Individual Interviews”. Interview by Elma Kodro, [Zoom] 17 February

Informant 4 (2023), “Individual Interviews”. Interview by Elma Kodro, 20 February  
Informant 5 (2023), “Individual Interviews”. Interview by Elma Kodro, 13 March  
Informant 6 (2023), “Individual Interviews”. Interview by Elma Kodro [Zoom], 17 March  
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### *Organisations*

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## 8 APPENDIX

In this appendix, I will include the original questions posed to the organisations and to the individual informants. However, seeing as they were both semi-structured interviews, other questions were posed that are part of the transcripts, but are not in this appendix.

### 8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE 1: INDIVIDUAL INFORMANTS (TRANSLATED IN ENGLISH)

This will be a semi-structured interview that takes place for approximately 30 minutes to an hour.  
Introduction:

Inform of: the interview's length, purpose and purpose, anonymisation and recording of the interview. Emphasize that this is voluntary, and that the person can withdraw at any time during the process.

Even if you have agreed to join, you can withdraw at any time. And, if there are any questions you don't want answered please just say so and we'll move on.

Question:

\*Tell me a little about yourself.

**How old are you?**

When did you come to Norway? How old were you then?

Where do you live now?

Did you complete an education, and if so, was this approved in Norway?

Has the course of the war affected your education? How?

Did you work in Bosnia, and if so, where and with what?

Are you working in Norway now?

(Talic 2017)

*\*Organization/participation in organizations Are the people part of an organization? What type of organization? Is the person enrolled in the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina? Does the person attend religious/cultural/political meetings for Bosnians? Why/why not?*

Which organisations for Norwegian-Bosnians in Norway have you heard of?

Are you a member of any of these? Participant?

Have you ever been to a lecture, lecture or gathering?

How often do you participate?

Is the organization of Bosnians in Norway important to you? What do you think this organization of Bosnians is trying to achieve?

Have you heard of the Bosnia and Herzegovina League in Norway? What do you think is the purpose of this organization?

Have you heard of Islamska Zajednica in Norway? What do you think is the purpose of this organization? Are you a member of this?

Would you say these organizations are political?

Are you a member of any other religious organizations in Norway?  
Why?

Are you a member of other organizations that are not affiliated with Norwegian-Bosnians?  
Which? Why?

\*Voting in elections.

One of the prerequisites for participating in these interviews is that you have dual Norwegian and Bosnian citizenship. **Is this true?**

Why have you chosen to have these two citizenships? Do you have other citizenships?

*What does it mean to you to have dual citizenship?*

*You have the opportunity to vote in both Norwegian and Bosnian elections. Do you vote in elections?*

What elections do you vote in? Local or state?

Do you vote in Norwegian elections?

Do you vote in Bosnian elections?

Is this important to you? Why?

Have you voted in recent elections?

Have you always had this pattern of tuning? Have there been periods when you have been more or less politically engaged?

Have certain events in politics in Norway or Bosnia made you more interested in voting?

How did the tense political situation last year in Bosnia affect you? *Is it still tense?*

\*Did you vote in elections in Yugoslavia/Bosnia before the war? Why?

Has your political interest changed since you moved to Norway?

*Have you organized yourself politically in other ways?*

Have you participated in rallies or protests before? In what context?

Have you participated in petitions? Which?

Media

*Do you usually follow the media?*

Which media channels do you keep an eye on? *Can you name?*

Is this something you look up, or are you watching what's coming on the TV newscast, for example?

Is there a certain type of media you prefer?

*Do you listen to the radio? What radio?*

*Do you read the newspaper? What newspapers? Paper/digital?*

Do you consume diasporic media? So media meant for Bosnians who have migrated out of Bosnia?

Have you always had the same habit of following the media?

Did you pay much attention to the media when you lived in Bosnia before the war?

We have gone through a technological revolution. **Do you use a tablet, smartphone and PC?** Has access to media from Bosnia changed as communication technology has evolved?

*Do you follow media on social media?*

*Do you follow the news on Facebook? Instagram? Twitter? TikTok?*

Do you follow alternative, smaller media?

Why don't you follow these?

Why do you choose a certain type of channel, newscast, newspaper, etc?

*What kind of information would you like to receive?*

Do you think Norwegian and Bosnian media are in conflict with each other?

Aside from movies, what type of content is most often on your TV at home?

\*Orientation towards Bosnia and/or Norway.

*How often do you visit Bosnia? What is the purpose of these visits?*

Have there been periods in your life over the years since the war that you have stayed or lived in Bosnia for an extended period? Why?

Where does your immediate family live?

Do you have property in Bosnia? Do you have property in Norway?

Do you have contact with Bosnia? What applications or tools do you use to contact Bosnia? Has this changed over the years?

Do you have contact with Bosnians from countries other than Norway? (Talic 2017)

Do you have contact with Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and in Norway? (Talic 2017)  
Has your perception of Serbs and Croats changed since the war in Bosnia? Possibly how? 5. Are you concerned about the ethnic affiliation of the person you/your children marry with? Why/why not? (Talic 2017)

Has your relationship with Bosnia changed over the years? Has your relationship with Norway changed throughout the year?

"Do you feel Norwegian/Bosnian", "Is it important for you to maintain ties with Bosnia?"

Are you sending money to Bosnia?

\*Integration into Norway.

*Contact with neighbours. Community participation.*

Would you say you participate in your community in Norway?  
Do you have good contact with your neighbours?

*Did you work when you lived in Bosnia? Did you have good contact with your community?  
Were you a member of organizations? Which?*

Do you work now that you live in Norway?

Do you have a lot of connection to Bosnians in your community? Do you have contact often?  
Do you often have contact with Norwegians, for example that they come to visit or that you meet for coffee?

Is it important for you to have this network? What does this network mean to you? What does this network give you?

Do you feel a connection to Norway? In what way?

Do you feel a connection in Bosnia? In what way?

Do you feel well received by Norwegian society?

Do you feel well received by Bosnian society?

If you were to choose, which affiliation would you prefer – the Norwegian or the Bosnian?  
If you were to give up citizenship, which one would you give up?

Do you have children? How would you feel if they had chosen a Bosnian partner? A Norwegian partner? A partner with a completely different origin?

How do you see the future for you and your children? (Talic 2017)

Would you ever accept that your descendants no longer have a connection to Bosnia? Why/why not? (Talic 2017)

"One day, hopefully a very long time, where do you want your grave to lie?" (Talic 2017)

Ending:

Anything you'd like to add?

## **8.2 INTERVIEW GUIDE 1: INDIVIDUAL INFORMANTS (NORWEGIAN)**

Dette vil være et semistrukturert intervju som foregår i omtrent 30 minutter til en time.

Innledning:

Informere om: intervjuets lengde, formål og hensikt, anonymisering og opptak av intervjuet.  
Legge vekt på at dette er frivillig, og at personen kan trekke seg når som helst under prosessen.

Selv om du har sagt ja til å bli med, kan du når som helst trekke deg. Og, hvis det er noen spørsmål du ikke vil svar på kan du bare si det, så går vi videre.

Spørsmål:

\*Fortell litt om deg selv.

**Hvor gammel er du?**

Når kom du til Norge? Hvor gammel var du da?

Hvor bor du nå?

Fikk du fullført en utdanning, og hvis ja, ble denne godkjent i Norge?

Har krigens løp påvirket utdanningen din? Hvordan?

Arbeidet du i Bosnia, og hvis ja, hvor og med hva?

Arbeider du i Norge nå?



(Talic 2017)

\*Organisering/deltakelse i organisasjoner

*Er personene med i en organisasjon? Hvilken type organisasjon? Er personen meldt inn i Islamske Fellesskapet Bosnia og Hercegovina? Deltar personen på religiøse/kulturelle/politiske møter for bosniere? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?*

Hvilke organisasjoner for norsk-bosniere i Norge har du hørt om?

Er du medlem i noen av disse? Deltaker?

Har du noen gang vært på et foredrag, forelesning eller sammenkomst?

Hvor ofte deltar du?

Er organiseringen av bosniere i Norge viktig for deg? Hva tror du denne organiseringen av bosniere forsøker å oppnå?

Har du hørt om Bosnia-Hercegovina forbundet i Norge? Hva tror du er formålet med denne organisasjonen?

Har du hørt om Islamska Zajednica i Norge? Hva tror du er formålet med denne organisasjonen?  
Er du medlem i denne?

Vil du si disse organisasjonene er politiske?

Er du medlem i noen andre religiøse organisasjoner i Norge?  
Hvorfor?

Er du medlem av andre organisasjoner som ikke er tilknyttet norsk-bosniere?  
Hvilke? Hvorfor?

\*Stemming ved valg.

En av forutsetningene for å være med på disse intervjuene er at du har dobbel norsk og bosnisk statsborgerskap. **Stemmer dette?**

Hvorfor har du valgt å ha disse to statsborgerskapene? Har du andre statsborgerskap?

*Hva betyr det for deg å ha dobbelt statsborgerskap?*

*Du har mulighet til å stemme ved både norske og bosniske valg. Stemmer du ved valg?*

Hvilke valg stemmer du ved? Lokale eller statlige?

Stemmer du ved norske valg?

Stemmer du ved bosniske valg?

Er dette viktig for deg? Hvorfor?

Har du stemt ved de siste valgene?

Har du alltid hatt dette mønsteret for stemming? Har det vært perioder du har vært mer eller mindre politisk engasjert?

Har det skjedd at visse hendelser i politikken i Norge eller Bosnia har gjort deg mer interessert i å stemme?

Hvordan påvirker den anspente politiske situasjonen i fjor i Bosnia deg? *Er den fortsatt anspent?*

\*Stemte du ved valg i Jugoslavia/Bosnia før krigen? Hvorfor?  
Har din politiske interesse endret seg etter at du flyttet til Norge?

*Har du organisert deg politisk på andre måter?*

Har du deltatt i markeringer eller protester før? I hvilken sammenheng?  
Har du deltatt i underskriftskampanjer? Hvilke?

Media

*Følger du vanligvis med på media?*

Hvilke mediekanaler følger du med på? *Kan du gi navn?*

Er dette noe du søker opp, eller ser du på det som kommer på for eksempel nyhetssendingen på TV?

Er det en viss type media du foretrekker?

*Hører du på radio? Hvilken radio?*

*Leser du avisen? Hvilke aviser? Papir/ digital?*

Konsumerer du diasporisk media? Altså media ment for bosniere som har vandret ut fra Bosnia?

Har du alltid hatt samme vaner med å følge med på media?

Fulgte du mye med på media da du bodde i Bosnia før krigen?

Vi har gått gjennom en teknologisk revolusjon. **Bruker du nettbrett, smarttelefon og PC?**

Har tilgang på media fra Bosnia endret seg ettersom kommunikasjonsteknologi har utviklet seg?

*Følger du medier på sosiale medier?*

*Følger du nyhetene på Facebook? Instagram? Twitter? TikTok?*

Følger du alternative, mindre medier?

Hvorfor følger du ikke disse?

Hva er grunnen til at du velger en viss type kanal, nyhetssending, avis osv?

*Hva slags informasjon ønsker du å få?*

Synes du norske og bosniske medier står i konflikt med hverandre?

Bortsett fra filmer, hvilken type innhold er som oftest på TV-en hjemme?

\*Orientering mot Bosnia og/eller Norge.

*Hvor ofte besøker du Bosnia? Hva er formålet med disse besøkene?*

Har det vært perioder i livet ditt gjennom årene etter krigen at du har oppholdt deg eller bodd i Bosnia i en lengre periode? Hvorfor?

Hvor bor den nærmeste familien din?

Har du eiendom i Bosnia? Har du eiendom i Norge?

Har du kontakt med Bosnia? Hvilke applikasjoner eller verktøy bruker du for å kontakte Bosnia? Har dette endret seg gjennom årene?

Har du kontakt med bosniere fra andre land enn Norge? (Talic 2017)

Har du kontakt med serbere og kroater i Bosnia og i Norge? (Talic 2017)

Har oppfatningen din av serbere og kroater endret seg etter krigen i Bosnia? Evt. hvordan? 5. Er du opptatt av hvilken etnisk tilhørighet personen du/dine barn inngår ekteskap med, har? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? (Talic 2017)

Har forholdet ditt til Bosnia endret seg gjennom årene? Har forholdet ditt til Norge endret seg gjennom året?

«Føler du deg norsk/bosnisk», «Er det viktig for deg å opprettholde bånd med Bosnia?»

Sender du penger til Bosnia?

\*Integrering i Norge.

*Kontakt med naboer. Deltakelse i lokalsamfunnet. Valg av partnere.*

Vil du si at du deltar i lokalsamfunnet ditt i Norge?

Har du god kontakt med naboene?

*Jobbet du da du bodde i Bosnia? Hadde du god kontakt med nærmiljøet ditt?*

Var du medlem i organisasjoner? Hvilke?

Jobber du nå som du bor i Norge?

Har du mye tilknytning til bosniere i nærmiljøet ditt? Har dere ofte kontakt?

Har du ofte kontakt med nordmenn, for eksempel at de kommer på besøk eller at dere møtes på kaffe?

Er det viktig for deg å ha dette nettverket? Hva betyr dette nettverket for deg? Hva gir dette nettverket deg?

Føler du en tilknytning til Norge? På hvilken måte?

Føler du en tilknytning i Bosnia? På hvilken måte?

Føler du deg godt tatt imot av det norske samfunnet?

Føler du deg godt tatt imot av det bosniske samfunnet?

Hvis du skulle valgt, hvilken tilknytning hadde du foretrukket – den norske eller den bosniske?  
Hvis du skulle gitt fra deg et statsborgerskap, hvilket hadde du gitt fra deg?

Har du barn? Hvordan hadde du stilt deg hvis de hadde valgt seg en bosnisk partner? En norsk partner? En partner med en helt annen opprinnelse?

Hvordan ser du for deg fremtiden for deg og dine barn? (Talic 2017)

Ville du noen gang ha akseptert at dine etterkommere ikke lenger har en tilknytning til Bosnia?  
Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? (Talic 2017)

«En dag, forhåpentligvis veldig lenge til, hvor ønsker du at graven din skal ligge?» (Talic 2017)

Avslutning:

Noe du ønsker å føye til?

### **8.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE 2: ORGANISATIONS (ENGLISH)**

This will be a semi-structured interview taking place for approximately 30 minutes to an hour.

Will be recorded but you will be anonymised but may be indirectly identified. Participation is voluntary,

Introduction:

Inform about: length of the interview, purpose and aim, anonymisation and recording of the interview. Emphasise that this is voluntary and that the person can withdraw at any time during the process.

**Questions:**

\*Tell us a little about yourself. Which organisation are you a leader/representative of?

\*How involved would you say you are the organisation?

How long have you been involved?

Is this paid work?

Have you been elected as a representative (How did you become a representative?)

Establishment, purpose board and members

When was the organisation established?

Where are you located? Do you have your own premises? Why/why not?

What was the reason for establishing this organisation - what does your founding document say?

Is this purpose still the same or has it changed over the years?

Have you ever changed your statutes? In what way?

Are you a non-profit or for-profit organisation?

Could you elaborate on the name you have chosen for your organisation (was it important that "Bosnia" was part of the name?)

How many people are in the management of the organisation? What does your board look like?

How is the board elected?

Approximately how many members do you have?

Who is a member of your organisation?

Are Bosnians from all the religious groups and nations welcome in this organisation?

Would you say there is one group that is over-represented in this organisation? Which one?

(To what extent would you say the three constitutionally recognised ethnic groups in Bosnia are represented in the organisation?)

Who would you like to be a member of the organisation?

### **Co-operation with authorities**

How close would you say you are to Norway? How connected would you say you are to Bosnia?

How connected would you say you are to people in Norway/Bosnia?

Do you co-operate with authorities in Norway/ authorities in Bosnia/ Norwegian authorities in Bosnia, Bosnian authorities in Norway?

In what way?

Do you have any contact with the authorities or embassies? In what way?

If not, is this a contact you would like to establish in the future? Why?

Events

What types of meetings/lectures/events do you usually have or organise?

Who comes to these events? How many people usually come?

Why have you chosen these particular events?

Who do you want to come to these events?

Have you invited local or state authorities from Bosnia/Norway before? If so, why?

What types of projects have you had in Norway or Bosnia?

What do you prefer to invest money in?

How do you get income to run your organisation?

Do you receive support from the Norwegian state, from the Bosnian state?

Would you say that you are a political organisation? Have you had politics as a theme in your meetings/lectures/events?

Has participation in elections been a topic in your organisation?

Have you as an organisation participated in marches, protests or petitions?

### **Conclusion:**

Anything you would like to add?

## 8.4 INTERVIEW GUIDE 2: ORGANISATIONS (NORWEGIAN)

Dette vil være et semistrukturert intervju som foregår i omtrent 30 minutter til en time.

Vil bli tatt opp, men du vil bli anonymisert, men kan bli indirekte identifisert. Deltakelse er frivillig,

Innledning:

Informere om: intervjuets lengde, formål og hensikt, anonymisering og opptak av intervjuet. Legge vekt på at dette er frivillig, og at personen kan trekke seg når som helst under prosessen.

### Spørsmål:

**\*Fortell litt om deg selv.** Hvilken organisasjon er du leder/representant for?

\*Hvor involvert vil du si du er organisasjonen?

Hvor lenge har du vært involvert?

Er dette lønnet arbeid?

Har du blitt valgt som representant? (Hvordan ble du representant?)

### Etablering, formål styre og medlemmer

#### Når ble organisasjonen etablert?

Hvor er dere lokalisert? Har dere egne lokaler? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?

Hva var grunnen til at denne organisasjonen ble etablert – hva står i etableringsdokumentet deres?

Er dette formålet fortsatt det samme, eller har det endret seg gjennom årene?

Har dere noensinne endret på vedtektene deres? På hvilken måte?

#### Er dere en non-profit eller for-profit?

**Vil du utdype navnet dere har valg til organisasjonen?** (var det viktig at «Bosnia» var en del av navnet?)

**Hvor mange er i ledelsen i organisasjonen?** Hvordan ser styret deres ut?

Hvordan blir styret valgt?

#### Omtrent hvor mange medlemmer har dere?

Hvem er medlem hos dere?

**Er bosniere fra alle de religiøse gruppene** og nasjonene velkomne i denne organisasjonen?

Vil du si det er en gruppe som er overrepresentert i denne organisasjonen? Hvilken?

*(I hvilken grad vil dere si de tre konstitusjonelt stadfestede etniske gruppene i Bosnia er representert organisasjonen?)*

### **Hvem ønsker dere at skal være medlem?**

Samarbeid med myndigheter

### **Hvor knyttet vil dere si dere er til Norge? Hvor knyttet vil dere si dere er til Bosnia?**

Hvor knyttet vil dere si dere er til folk i Norge/i Bosnia?

### **Samarbeider dere med myndighetene i Norge/ myndighetene i Bosnia/ norske myndigheter i Bosnia, bosniske myndigheter i Norge?**

På hvilken måte?

Har dere noen som helst kontakt med myndighetene eller ambassadene? På hvilken måte?

Hvis ikke, er dette en kontakt dere ønsker å opprette i framtiden? Hvorfor?

### **Eventer**

Hvilke typer møter/foredrag/eventer pleier dere å ha eller arrangere?

Hvem kommer på disse arrangementene? Hvor mange pleier å komme?

Hvorfor har dere valgt akkurat disse arrangementene?

Hvem ønsker dere at skal komme på disse arrangementene?

Har dere invitert lokale eller statlige myndigheter fra Bosnia/Norge før? Hvorfor?

Hvilke typer prosjekter har dere hatt Norge eller Bosnia?

Hva investerer dere helst penger i?

På hvilken måte får dere inn inntekt til å drifte organisasjonen?

Får dere støtte fra den norske staten, fra den bosniske staten?

**Vil du si at dere er en politisk organisasjon?** Har dere hatt politikk som tematikk på møter/foredrag/eventer?

Har valgdeltakelse vært et tema hos dere?

Har dere som organisasjon deltatt på markeringer, protester eller underskriftskampanjer?

### **Avslutning:**

Noe du ønsker å føye til?