



‘It is open, but not so open’

- gaining access to participation
among Kabuli youths

Elisabet Eikås

Thesis submitted in requirement of
Cand. Polit. Degree
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Oslo
March 2007

Abstract

The thesis “‘It is open, but not so open’ – gaining access to participation among Kabuli youths” is based on fieldwork done in Kabul, Afghanistan, from October 2003 until June 2004. Two years after the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan had started its reconstruction process and many youths wanted to contribute to the rebuilding of their country. The youths in this thesis belong to the urban middle class, and they have all actively taken a step towards public participation, either social or political. The thesis focuses on the possibilities and constraints the youths meet. Looking into the youths’ visions and aspirations is also done in order to assess the strategies employed for these to come true. This is done through looking into three different social fields; how relations within the family can regulate the individual youth’s public participation, Kabul University and different youth organisations where activities are conducted. Within the two last fields, Kabul University and youth organisations, the focus is on the kind of activities that are conducted, between whom, the form they take and possible restrictions within these social fields. One chapter concerns the diverging perceptions of what politics is, how these perceptions influence how politics is talked about, and the consequences this has for how youths relate to politics and political activities in particular. Secondly, the diverging perceptions of politics also extract different models of how politics, access to it and codes of conduct, is perceived. Being extracted from the political sphere, these models are also viable for the wider society as they impart values and premises on how relations should take form and the characteristics therein. Due to diverging perceptions on politics, participation will be used as an analytical tool to embrace what the youths themselves consider to be either social or political activities.

Taking the point of view of the young generation in Kabul, I hope the thesis can give a glimpse into the energy and eagerness to work towards a better future, despite a rather troubled past as victims of macro-political circumstances.

Acknowledgements

Thank you!

First of all, to those who became my informants and friends in Kabul, for the time you gave, thoughts and experiences you shared and the hospitality you displayed. I hope I have been able to treat you with respect through this thesis, the way you treated me.

To Noor Ahmada for introducing me to her brother working in Kabul, giving me a place to start my networking.

To the Friederich Ebert Stiftung and the resident representative Almut Wieland Karimi for literally opening the gate into their office compound, and believing in my project.

To the employees at the Norwegian Church Aid who I met in Kabul, who were my ‘security-net’, and treated me as their personal IDP (internally displaced person). Your concern and good times shared will be remembered!

To Dag Tuastad who has been my supervisor. Your comments, hints and navigation I could not have been without, when my material seemed to take command.

To my fellow students, shared time, coffee, discussions, frustrations and laughter have been a pleasant break from philosophising, pondering and writing.

To the Norwegian Peace Centre which has enabled me to work with Afghan youths, both in Norway and Afghanistan the last two years. The work has kept Afghanistan a little closer than the rapidly ageing field-documents “hiding” in my computer.

To friends who have supported, read, commented, inspired, been curious about my experiences and footed the whiskey-bill. In particular Åshild, Lene, Magnhild, Lorentz and Linda.

And finally, to my mother, who persuaded me to go to Kabul, when I before departure got cold feet and wanted to change my field. ‘At least try, if not more than a week’, she said to me, and as I spent six months in the field without regretting my decision, she was the one getting sleepless nights after watching the news on television. Your generosity, tolerance and encouragement are invaluable. An example worth trying to follow.

Elisabet Eikås, Oslo, February 2007

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	10
The field.....	11
Who are youths?	13
Youths as agents	14
Why young agents in Kabul?	15
Theoretical background	17
Political Anthropology	17
Swat Pathans and political actors	18
Patron-client relations in Swat	19
Relations between equals	21
Reconsidering Barth	22
A change in environment – an alternative structure?	23
Two alternative models.....	25
Networks	26
Method	28
Fieldwork	28
Forum as entrance.....	28
Being a foreigner and a woman.....	30
Sensitiveness of topic and ethics	30
Language	31
Data triangulation	33
Anonymity	34
Representation.....	35
Structure of the thesis	35
Chapter 2: Land and history.....	36
Land and people	36
Ethnic groups	36
Pashtuns	36
Tajik.....	37
Hazara	37
Uzbek	38
Afghan social organisation	38
The history of Afghanistan	39
Tribal federation	39
Amanullah – the moderniser	40
Encapsulating the tribes – introduction of the intelligentsia.....	41
Different political orientation.....	43
The republic coup, the Saur Revolution and the Soviet invasion	44
The Mujaheddin and the civil war.....	45
Taliban	48
Interim government	49
Young people through Afghan political history.....	50

Chapter 3: Enabling and constraining – personal autonomy and the family

.....52

Introduction.....52

Marriage.....53

Shaker.....55

 Time management and making new contacts.....58

 Love-marriage.....60

Young women and family.....62

 Anahita and ongoing activities.....62

 Sima – a parliamentarian candidate?.....65

Ascription or achievement – implications on personal autonomy.....68

Summing up.....71

Chapter 4: Politics and its competing discourses.....73

Introduction.....73

Perceptions of politics.....74

University students and political participation.....76

 - the arguments.....78

 Experienced and learned perception as guiding participation?.....81

Models of politics.....82

 The elder.....82

 Ethnicity & affiliation.....84

 Equality.....86

 Knowledge.....88

 Political models and the perception of politics.....89

Relation to political activities.....91

 Vague political stands.....92

 Social activities.....93

Talks about politics.....95

‘Politics is fine, but in our society, when we talk about politics, it is just bad’.....98

Summing up.....99

Chapter 5: Activities at Kabul University.....101

Introduction.....101

 Participation through bridging and bonding networks.....101

 Entering campus.....102

Prohibition of political activities on campus.....103

 Control mechanism from the university administration.....105

 Students – a potential political force?.....107

Student seminar.....107

 Student influence.....110

 Making ‘politics’ safe.....111

 Bridging aspirations?.....113

Relations between teachers and students.....114

 2nd year sociology, Kabul University.....115

 Encouraging and discouraging participation.....117

 Avoiding instead of confronting.....119

External loyalties creating mistrust.....120

 Students with political affiliation.....121

A symptomatic stroll on campus	122
Trust – an absent resource?	123
The informal character of politics	124
Possibilities and constraints for bridging networks.....	125
Chapter 6: Youth organisations	127
Introduction.....	127
The making of a youth organisation.....	127
Muneer’s story and the foundation of the Solidarity For Afghanistan (SFA)	128
The Afghan Coordinated Youth (ACY)	129
Creating a space for activities	130
Providing bridging organisations?.....	131
The leader.....	132
Workshop in the ACY	133
The leader as an elder?.....	135
Resources for building a patronage?	136
Samir – equalising his client status	140
Patrons and clients or friends?	142
From bridging to bonding youth organisations.....	143
Exposure in public.....	146
Building personal support.....	148
Youth organisations enabling or restricting youth participation?	149
Summing up	150
Chapter 7: Concluding remarks	152
Introduction.....	152
Personal autonomy from family as the main entrance to change.....	152
Participation in civil society through voluntary organisations interpreted as political participation	154
Possibilities of change in the political culture	156
Why do bonding networks prevail, a question of trust?	158
Revisiting Barth and the Swat Pathans.....	159
The maximising actor?.....	160
Appendix	162
Map of Afghanistan.....	162
Literature list	163

Chapter 1: Introduction

11th of September 2001: Samir is in Istanbul on his way to Europe illegally. After living 15 years in exile in Peshawar with his family, at a distance seeing the diverse regimes roaming in Afghanistan, he sees his future to be in Europe. This day changed both his visions and future, he turned around and decided to give Afghanistan another try.

Samir is one of the youth I met in Kabul who wanted to contribute to the reconstruction and take part in the negotiations about the future of his country. Being back in Kabul he saw possibilities and met constraints, This thesis will elaborate on some of these, as seen through the eyes, actions and visions of Kabuli youths.

In this thesis I will look into the possibilities Kabuli youth have for public participation. I will look for the strategies they employ and restrictions they meet in their search to establish public positions. This implies looking at their aspirations and visions, and how they try to take part in the negotiation of the future of their country.

After the fall of the Taleban, Afghanistan was believed to get a new chance to rebuild itself. The country had gone through close to three decades of conflict, with political regimes ranging from monarchy to communism. The Soviet invasion was met by the Islamic resistance forces, the Mujaheddin, which drove the Soviet troops out, but when in power the Mujaheddin contributed to an escalation of the conflict, leading to a civil war and a lawlessness from which the fundamentalist Taleban movement emerged. Resulting in one of the largest refugee populations in the world¹ and a highly suppressed population under the strict rule of Taleban in Afghanistan. 13th of November 2001, the US coalition forces together with the Northern Alliance² controlled Kabul, the Taleban was driven out, and the United Nations facilitated the Bonn Agreement and the subsequent Emergency *Loja Jirgah* which elected Hamid Karzai to be the leader of an Interim Government until the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. It was decided to hold a Constitutional *Loja Jirgah*, to agree on a new constitution, a constitution giving guidelines for a “new Afghanistan” (Barakat: 2002).

¹ 3.2 million Afghans were living outside their country (Damsleth, 2002: 11)

² Remains of the opposition movement against Taliban in Afghanistan.

Theoretically these macro-structural changes suggest a new beginning both for Afghan social life and Afghan politics. In a gradually opening political sphere, previously muted political actors can in time gain access. Refugees are returning from the Diaspora, the international community is present, both through troops, agencies and money. This invokes an optimistic belief in the future for many Afghans: there are possibilities. But this does not come without resistance. There are groups which oppose the interim government and their policies, the presence of international forces and organisations, and there are groups still heavily armed and not willing to lose power.

I arrived in Kabul in October 2003, only months before the Constitutional *Loja Jirgah*³. Before I travelled I had planned to focus on university students, since they had turned out to be important political actors during the 60s and 70s (ch. Edwards, 2002; Roy, 1994; Dupree, 1980). But like many other students arriving in the field, experiences made it necessary to make changes in my initial project, and the university students became only a part of my group of informants, which was expanded to include youths, regardless of occupation.

After introducing my group of informants and connecting them to anthropological perspectives on youths, I will present political anthropology as a theoretical background for this thesis. Narrowing the geographical area, I will use Fredrik Barth's accounts from the Swat Pathans as a point of departure before other ethnographical accounts from Afghanistan will be presented.

The field

Anahita was the first youth I met in Kabul who had the “qualities” I was looking for: young, student, engaged in social activities and with visions on how she could contribute to the development of the country. She became my “door-opener”, introduced me to other students, invited me to a youth conference and put me in contact with an international organisation, organising forums for youths. The group of people who became my main informants were heterogeneous regarding occupation: some were students at the university, others had just

³ Which after several delays was finally opened 14th of December 2003.

graduated from high school while others again were working, in national or international organisations. What they had in common was the fact that all of them had actively taken a step towards social engagement and public participation, through membership in youth groups, activities at the university or activities at work.

The informants belong to the Afghan middle class⁴. Most of them are born into a middle class family, with one or both parents working closely connected with the government during the 70s and 80s⁵. This is also a status the informants themselves are reproducing, as they are now university students, employed as civil servants or in white-collar jobs. For some, attendance at university is their entry into middle class. After the fall of the Communist regime in 1992, especially Pakistan experienced a new wave of Afghan refugees dominated by the urban professional middle class (Damsleth, 2002: 11), and many of my informants, but not all, have for some time lived in exile. Several of my informants that have been refugees point to the fact that being abroad enabled them to continue their education, first interrupted by the civil war in Afghanistan and later by the Taliban. This education, whether it is school diplomas, course certificates (mainly English, computer and management) or university degrees, gives them an advantage in searching for job opportunities when returning to Afghanistan. Job opportunities in Kabul are also the most frequently mentioned reason for moving back to Afghanistan. Either the youths themselves were employed in international organisations or their parents were, and when the organisations moved their headquarters from Peshawar to Kabul after the fall of the Taleban, many of the staff employed in Peshawar followed. As for the standard of living and security concerns, Peshawar still has far more to offer than Kabul.

The youths of the urban middle class as a group should be understood as small and particular in a broader Afghan context. Approximately 75% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas, the illiteracy rate is more than 70% (NHDR, 2004), and the middle class constituted less than 1% of the total Afghan population before the war (Farr, 1988: 129). The figures suggest that these youths have a unique position in the Afghan society. The thesis does

⁴ The new Afghan middle class is an emergence of modern education that was introduced in Afghanistan during the 1950s (Farr, 1988; 149).

⁵ This includes teachers, university employees, bureaucrats, technocrats, engineers, doctors, journalists, middle ranking army officers etc (Farr, 1988).

therefore not deal with Afghan youths in general, but with some individuals in this specific category.

Who are youths?

The concept of youth is closely related to the principle of age and generation, being a category to enter after childhood, but before taking the full responsibility associated with adulthood. Whereas a biological explanation of generation will correspond more or less globally, the cultural notion of generation may vary considerably (Wulff, 1995: 6). Youth as a category needs to be seen as a historically situated social and cultural construct and may accordingly vary both with regard to space and time. Social changes, like modernisation, social rupture, migration, unequal access to economical means or power, can make previous stable age categories more blurred (Abbink, 2005). Therefore, at what age a person is regarded as socially independent and seen as having acquired a status of their own, will vary. From studies in Africa, Durham (2000) gives some guidelines of who are to be considered as youth, either by their own claims, or by others':

Firstly those who straddle the kin-based, domestic space and wider public spheres, secondly those who have gained some level of recognised autonomy and take up public roles, but are still also dependent and not able to command the labour of others as superiors themselves, and thirdly, those who can be expected to act upon their social worlds and not only be the recipients of others actions (...) (ibid: 116).

Being a broad definition, it channels the concept into people who are on their way to take on adult responsibilities and duties, still Durham argues, youths should be considered a diverse group, and not a fixed term. She uses the concept 'social shifter' to indicate the relational aspect of youth as a category. Seeing the category of youth as a social shifter implicitly suggests that different situations and structures will influence who are seen as a youth by others, and who consider themselves to be a youth. By using the term youth, she argues, 'they situate themselves in a social landscape of power, rights, expectations and relationships – indexing themselves and the topology of that social landscape' (ibid). The understanding of a shifter as such is context related and it gives notions of the nature of the context in which it is used (Bucholtz, 2002).

I find it useful to follow Durham's understanding of youth as a social shifter, a relational and situational concept in this thesis. The narrowed social landscape, of the thesis is that of public participation with potential political effects, and within this social landscape my informants characterise themselves as youths. This is done both individually, but also collectively through membership in different youth organisations, and following Durham's line of thought, my informants do not see themselves as able to participate on equal terms with the adults within this landscape, they do not have the same access to the means as those fully integrated. Secondly, their categorisation as youths also reflects the typology (norms) of this social landscape. In Afghanistan as in many other Muslim countries characterised by patriarchy, the power and rights favour seniors and males. Based on this, I will follow my informants' categorisation of themselves as youths when talking about public participation with potential political effect, although some of them in other social contexts, e.g. in the family as mothers or fathers will better be categorised as adults taking the responsibility and duties which follow. But like a friend of mine said when I enquired about the age bracket of their youth organisation: 'if you ask about political activities, we should be considered youths until we are at least 40 years old', a comment underlining the benefits of considering the category of youth as a 'social shifter', also within the same society.

Youths as agents

In anthropological studies, youths have previously often been regarded as objects of adult activities in socialising studies, in e.g. initiation rituals, courtship or marital customs, with an emphasis on the transition to adulthood (Bucholtz, 2002; Wulff, 1995). In other studies they have been assigned a secondary or supporting role, and have not in themselves been considered as actors (Durham, 2000: 14), but as victims or silent receivers of structural or political change (Abbink, 2005: 3). To counter this anthropological tradition, all of these authors emphasise the need to study youths as subjects, regarded as the centre of the events, and capable of acting upon the world.

The concept of agency is suggested as a point of departure for studying youth, tracing agency back to Anthony Giddens' understanding as 'the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal being in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world' (quoted in

Wulff, 1995: 8). Giddens (1984) explains this concept further by stating that ‘agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently’ (ibid: 9), implying that the individual has a choice of actions. This can be seen as the background for the understanding of agency, considering Abbink’s focus on how youths in Africa take an active role in their daily life in order to find answers to whatever situations that emerge, and by this, also shape their own future (Abbink, 2005: 8). But agency does not imply a free choice without any guidelines in which the agency is entrenched. Through the theory of structuration Giddens links the concept of agency to structure. Structures are sets of rules and resources which are embedded in social systems, the framework for interactivities with and among individual agents. However, the structure should not be regarded as only constraining activities, because of the duality of the structure, it ‘is always both constraining and enabling’ (Giddens, 1984: 25). Together the concepts of agency and structure, form a meta-theory which enables us to understand actors as both reproducing and producing social structure. The notion of producing indicates how individuals and minor groups can influence the very structures which constitute the framework of their actions, and reproducing indicates which structural constraints social and political conditions put on individual and group behaviour (Abbink, 2005: 9- 10).

Using this actor- oriented perspective I will consider youths as agents, capable of making choices, choices based on their understanding and processing of the society within which they live. Their knowledge and reflections on the society within which they live will be reflected in the choices they make, the strategies they employ to reach their desired goals, and also display a restriction of possible choices they do not see as existing.

Why young agents in Kabul?

‘Youth, in many regards, are central to negotiate continuity and change in any context’
(Durham, 2002: 114)

The young generation is often seen as capable of bringing different ideas and practices into the society where they live, sometimes to a degree where one talks about particular youth cultures (Abbink, 2005; Durham, 2002; Wulff, 1995). At the same time it is important not to

forget the dialectical relationship with the wider society in which they live, some practices are reproduced, others are altered. Following the actor-oriented perspective currently advocated in the anthropology of youth, will therefore enable us to see how the youth negotiate both their current position in the wider society, as well as giving information on which practices are reproduced and which are changed.

Anthropological literature on Afghanistan has largely focused on rural areas (e.g. Tapper 1991; Dupree, 1980; N. Dupree, 2001) primarily in Pashtun areas, a point Asghar Mousavi (1998) has highlighted in his study of the Hazara population. Being rural studies, they have covered multiple relations within their fields, and no one of them has focused primarily on the role of the youths. An exception is David B. Edwards (2002) who through life-history has reconstructed the emergence of Muslim Youth at Kabul University during the start of the 1970s, bringing focus to youths in an urban environment, and Bente Damsleth (2002) who has looked at young Afghan girls living as refugees in Peshawar and their coping with disrupted lives. As for political scientists, sociologists and historians, focus has primarily been the relation between the state and local governance (e.g. Harpviken, 1995; Rashid, 2001; Roy, 1990, 2003; Rubin, 2002; Saikal, 2004; Vogelsang, 2002), giving useful information on how politics have been conducted in Afghanistan, but less information on how the youths have related to it. With this in mind, I find it useful to take the point of view of the urban young generation, in particular concerning the large scale changes on state level, from the Taleban rule to an interim government supported by the international community where the “promising word democracy” is frequently used. To elaborate on how youths relate to the current social and political situation, I will look into the visions they have, how they try to be part of the negotiation of the future development of their country and which strategies they employ to reach their aspirations and to gain access to public participation, in an environment which ‘is open, but not so open’.

Theoretical background

Political Anthropology

John Gledhill (2000) argues that a lot of political analysis has a bias in favour of the Western notion of the state and of formal political institutions. To override this bias, he sees the task of the anthropologist as looking at informal power-relations, how these are conducted in local-level politics, and how they are confirmed and contested in social practice. Gaining this knowledge from the everyday negotiation over power, can again give a useful understanding of how power-relations on higher levels are conducted (ibid: 20). To look at informal aspects of politics, have also been the focus for those studying resistance and subordinated groups. In her study of the Egyptian *sha'bi* quarters in Cairo, Diane Singerman (1995) looked at the informal character of politics through the concept of participation. She argues that participation as a concept is beneficial for understanding how politics are visible in the everyday lives of people, and also useful in societies where official politics are either reserved for an elite or where political activities are looked upon with risk. In these societies an informal character of politics usually appears, however less distinctive and harder to spot compared to societies where political activities are not associated with risk.

The recent history of Afghanistan suggests that politics are associated with risk, and this will be elaborated in chapter four. The perception of politics and how people relate to it differs. To override this, I have chosen to follow Singerman's analytical tool through the use of participation. She defines participation as the 'structural, dialectic condition of society' (Adams, quoted in Singerman, 1995: 4). She argues that this interactive definition opens up to an understanding of the competition for power both within and between groups, communities and neighbourhoods (ibid). In addition to observe formal relations controlled through the state or institutions, she argues that it also opens up for recognising informal channels through which both individual and community benefits can be acquired. As for the definition of power, I interpret that as 'the ability to influence other people and/ or decisions that have consequences for oneself and other people' (Ekern, 1998: 12). Following this, looking at people's participation is a point of entrance to recognise the ability people, at different societal levels, have to influence their everyday life and their search for desired ends, both as individuals and groups.

To apply the concept of participation on youths in Kabul, it will be necessary to look into which groups and communities the youths relate to and how these are structured. As a background for this, I will look into how previous scholars describe social integration in the region, with a particular focus on political organisation.. Fredrik Barth's account from the Swat Valley will be the point of departure, as one of the most detailed local-level studies of political relations in the region. Other accounts will then give additional information.

Swat Pathans and political actors

In his book "Political Leadership among Swat Pathans" (2004 [1959]) Fredrik Barth did not only give a thorough description of the sources of political authority and based on what foundation organisations exist in the Swat Valley in Pakistan, when first published it also represented a fundamental shift in how to study societies. Whereas his anthropological forerunners Radcliffe Brown and Evans Pritchard saw social structures as the key to understand societies, Barth emphasised the role of the individual and its actions. As such he contributed to the shift from a structural-functional paradigm towards a process approach, within which political anthropology would be characterised with concepts such as process, actors, legitimacy, coercion and support (Lewellen, 1992: 107, 114). Barth calls for the need to first look at the choice of the individuals and second at how these choices constitute the society: '(...) "society" is how things happen to be as a result of all manners of activities and circumstances' (Barth, 1981: 129). Macro-features like lineage systems and class-domination he sees misinterpreted by those who argue that these patterns are reproducing themselves. Rather '(...) the social events that make up such patterns are all brought to pass by *people*' (ibid, italics in original). With this focus, Barth calls attention to the individual actor as the object of study, and it is through following actors and their assessments and actions we can gain an understanding of how a society is knit together. Thus by following individual actors in Swat, Barth's main project in "Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans" was '(...) to explore the kinds of relationship that are established between persons in Swat, the way in which these may be systematically manipulated to build up positions of authority, and the variety of politically corporate groups which result' (Barth, 2004: 2).

Of the relationships Swat Pathans organise into, Barth distinguishes between three types of networks: 1) kinship, 2) neighbourhood ties and 3) dyadic relationships which evolve into patron-client relationships. His main focus is on political leaders, and it is only the patron-client relationships which ‘(...) define leaders and relations of dominance and submission, and these relations may be utilised by the leaders as a source of political authority’ (ibid: 43). Conflicts are situations where a patron can manifest his political authority through showing his ability to mobilise his followers into corporate political groups. Kinship networks (surpassing extended patrilineal families (ibid: 16)) and neighbourhood ties, on the other side, does not imply any form of dominance and submission, and has its political relevance only in being the background of which a villager acts. The patrilineal descent groups are characterised as mutually dependent (also in political loyalty) to the level of extended family. It is patriarchal, which implies the authority within families to lie with its senior male, and mutual trust and respect are expected between father and son, and between brothers (ibid: 22-23).

Looking into the mechanisms of establishing patron-client relationships, as well as the characteristics of these relationships, will therefore give a model of how political relations among the Swat Pathans are organised.

Patron-client relations in Swat

Choice in patron-client relationship

A Patron needs to control sources of livelihood and wealth, sources which are allocated through contracts between Patrons (source-holders) and clients (source- beneficiaries), and in Swat it is the land-owning Pakhtuns⁶ (Khans⁷) and Saints of holy descent who can act as Patrons.

⁶ Pakhtuns are the landowning group within the Pathan ethnic group. Pathan is equal to what in Afghanistan is referred to as Pashtuns. In this chapter I will use Pathan as Barth does, while I in the rest of the thesis will use Pashtun.

⁷ Barth refers to the landowning Pakhtuns as both Chiefs and Khans, I choose to use the term Khan as this is also used outside the Pathan (Pashtun) ethnic group for people who owns land.

Secondly Barth emphasises the choice in these contract-based relationships. According to Barth a client to be can choose which landlord to rent from, for whom to work, which men's house he attends and if he wants to become a follower of a saint or not. The more of these dyadic contracts a client enters into, the more he restricts his political freedom: 'In return for the numerous pleasures and benefits of the membership [in a men's house], the villager must submit to the presiding chief's [Khan's] authority and thus forfeit an unspecified part of his political freedom' (ibid: 56). Looking at this the other way around, any villager enjoys political freedom, but it is through his engagements in dyadic relationships, some of which are necessary and other voluntary, that his political freedom is transferred to the patron in question⁸. And in his choice of patron, Barth argues that the villager is free to maximise his interests:

Followers seek those leaders who offer them the greatest advantages and the most security. With this aim they align themselves behind a rising leader who is successfully expanding his property and field of influence. In contrast, the followers of leaders who are on the defensive suffer constant annoyance from the members of the expanding groups. Under this pressure they tend to abandon their old leaders and seek protection and security elsewhere (ibid: 73).

Several scholars have been critical to the maximising clients and their possibility to choose a patron. Both Asad and Dupree argue that clients do not have a free choice of whom they become a clientele, but that their clientele status is a result of larger societal structures, mainly class-domination (Dupree, 1977: 514- 516; Edwards, 1998: 714). Rather than elaborating on the debate on class domination versus the actor-perspective, the perspective of who interacts and the character of this interaction is of more importance in this thesis. After finishing the presentation on Barth's perspectives, I will reconsider how these perspectives can be applicable today.

Vertical relations as dyadic

Barth emphasises that 'all relationships implying dominance are dyadic relationships of a contractual or voluntary nature' (ibid: 3). As such the relations which transfer power are

⁸ As the Khans are in possession of three of the four dyadic contracts: economical contracts, house tenancy and hosting a men's house, often a villager will have all these dyadic relations with the same patron. However, Barth also shows individuals who have different patrons.

between the patron and each individual client. When describing the assembly in the men's house Barth states that: 'The structure of the men's house (...) groups is similar to that of those described above [economic contracts and house tenancy contracts], in that each one has a leader, and it is the relations of members to this leader, and not to each other, which define the group' (ibid: 52). As such Barth does not see interaction within a group as politically relevant, only personal relations within a dyadic frame. The dyadic frame also includes dominance and submissions which underline '[t]he emphasis, as throughout in Pathan social organisation, is on relations between unequals, not on lateral relations with peers and equals' (ibid: 56). Following this line of argument, Barth argues that there is no political organisation among the equals, only the dyadic relationships between unequals are politically significant. In these dyadic relations the client's loyalty towards his patron includes the patron's right to talk on behalf of all his clients in political issues.

Relations between equals

Despite the emphasis on the socialisation among unequals, Barth also sees that landlords (Khans), who individually act as patrons, gather in each other's men's houses without falling into a patron-client relationship: 'their regular presence in the men's house is an expression for their political identification with the chief [Khan]; but this identification is more like an alliance, even though not between equals, than a unilateral dominance relationship' (ibid: 89). The alliances between the Khans evolve into segmentary oppositions in a two block system with one distinctive leader. In this alliance the Khans are loyal to each other and the leader, but they are free to shift alliances if they find this beneficial according to their own interests. On the different layers in an alliance, among those who consider themselves equal, the relationship is one of competition. The individual patrons compete against each other, to attract more clients and increase their influence at the expense of the competitor.

For regular villagers (clients), socialisation among equals are either connected with the kinship networks (patrilineal), or with neighbourhood ties. These networks serve mainly recreational purposes and are not as politically significant as patron-client relations. They can however be considered political indirectly, as these relations are the background on which individuals frame their political (and other) choices: '(...) choices are decisions which are

constrained by the perceptions of the actors, the circumstances under which persons act, and the reactions of others' (1981: 129⁹). Drawing on this line of thought, Barth argues that relations which imply political activity are not isolated from other relations in a society. Therefore it will be necessary to look into which of an individual's relationships that are influential when it comes to the individual's potential relationships of a political character.

Reconsidering Barth

Making Barth's perspectives on how the Swat Pathans are politically organised applicable for empirical research on youths in contemporary Afghanistan, I see the necessity to reconsider some of his major concepts. Of most importance here, is who figures as *actors* in his research. Acknowledging his focus to be on political leaders and their relations (Barth, 1981), Barth's actors are senior males. It is only senior males of each household who have the means to enter as clientele to a patron, and as such transfer some of their personal autonomy into political support and position themselves in society. Secondly, Barth argues it is only the land-owning Pakthuns who enjoy full citizenship, and their internal competition is based on the political support of their clientele (Barth, 2004: 3). In Barth's study, voices and actions of younger males and females in general are muted: wives, youth and children are the subjects of the male representative of the family. To apply his perspectives on my material, I argue in favour of a widening of the category of actor to include both younger males and females. Widening this category can display political practises which were non-existent at the time of Barth's study, include informal political areas not previously paid attention to and make the political models extracted from the Swat Pathans applicable for empirical inquiry on my material, youths. Widening the category of actors, also follow Barth's analytical tool of using individuals and their choices as a point of departure in order to understand how a society is constituted. It also echoes Giddens' notion of agency, however as explained earlier, he also sees the structures within which an actor displays agency, as influencing his actions, a notion Barth also seems to have considered in his later works (1981).

⁹ Barth wrote this in 1981 in his essay: "Swat Pathans reconsidered", where he considered previous critics against his monograph from 1959. As such, in this quotation it can look as if Barth puts more emphasis on how individuals are affected by their surroundings (both environment and people) than he did in his book from 1959.

A change in environment – an alternative structure?

The political relations described by Barth, fall into the category of tribal politics where relations mainly based on kinship and patron-client contracts make an uncentralised system where authority is distributed among smaller autonomous groups (Levellan, 1992: 31). The question which comes into mind is to which degree these structures prevail both through historical progress and migration of people, in my case, their relevance in an urban environment.

Rural Pashtuns on the Afghan side of the Durrani border, have been described to have a similar political organisation, with emphasis on close agnatic relations (kinship) and patron-client relations. So also for other ethnic groups within Afghanistan, although not considered tribal, but where the place of residence has been an additional factor for establishing solidarity in the local political context (Roy, 1990, 1994: 73- 74; Rubin, 2002: 30ff)¹⁰. Changes, like migration to cities, occupation and ideological changes on the state-level have also affected those being part of it, rural tribal people migrating to the city have become ‘detrivalised’ and political organisations which derive from tribal institutions have developed (Rubin, 2002: 29). The anthropologist David B. Edwards (1998) has applied Barth and his critic’s perspectives from Swat, on the Afghan political scene between 1978 and 1997. He argues that Barth’s notion of the rational calculating political actor is one of the characteristics which has prevailed through the diverse political sequences Afghans have gone through. This has particularly been evident during the resistance movement, where leaders at different levels have initiated co-operation with patrons based on the goods provided (security, weapons etc). It has also been utilised by these leaders, since they have sought supporters, securing their own political ends and ‘savaging rivals’ (ibid: 718- 723). However, Edwards also points to the limitations of the synchronic analysis which Barth conducted and the applicability of the dominant relations in a reality which is complexly interrelated and historically contingent (ibid: 718).

Urbanisation, modernisation, migration, and education challenge traditional structures, and new structures emerge. During the 60s and 70s an alternative form of political organisation

¹⁰ Second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Tajiks, are not tribally organised. Traditional social organisation centres around place of residence, rather than kinship (Roy, 1994: 73-74; Rubin, 2002: 30)

developed in Kabul as a consequence of the modernisation-processes initiated by the government, and political parties within the ideologies of Marxism, Maoism, Islamism and social democracy appeared (Farr, 1988), where previously solidarity-ties were ruptured. The urban middle class intelligentsia challenged the previous local notables and created space for political participation.

Kabul University was one of the main arenas for political activity and here students sought new opportunities to increase their participation:

What had given structure and meaning in the local community – the centrality of the kin group, the respect due senior agnates, the rivalry between cousins, the informality and warmth of the maternal hearth – were irrelevant in the university setting, where unrelated young people came together unannounced and unaware (Edwards, 2002: 204).

The Muslim Youth, like their contemporaries in the leftist parties, abandoned (at least for a time) the ancient allegiances of tribe, ethnicity, language, and sect on which Afghan Politics perennially had rested. In their place, young people took on new allegiances, professing adherence to ideological principles (...) (ibid: 221).

The initial political groups at the university were demographically mixed, and characterised by a relative egalitarianism and inclusiveness (Edwards, 2002: 204).

The change of environment here can be seen at two levels, the first as personal change for the students, in particular for those from rural areas who moved into the dormitory at the university to study. The second change was the increasing variation of political parties which provided a space for young people to participate, where new solidarities (ideology) overrode previous solidarity lines (family, local solidarity group) influencing the political choice of the actors. Politics based on ideology also created a new leadership in Afghanistan, based in the urban- middle class intelligentsia, and among the Islamists, considering Islam an ideology rather than a religion, the young presence and influence was striking (Roy, 1994: 75).

Askar Mousavi (1998) argues that through rejecting previous classifications such as tribe, language and religion, the leftist factions opened for inclusion of previously muted political actors (in his case, the emergence of Hazaras in state administration). Membership in these

newly established groups became an individual choice, not based on family, clan or tribal alliances. These new political factions opened for other loyalties than traditional tribal and local belonging, to influence individual political action, however, the traditional ties also continued to be influential. Olivier Roy (2003) suggests that Afghan politics the last 30 years shows two different faces: one based on traditional political culture the other based on an ideological framework. The traditional political culture, Roy argues, is based on personal relations where belonging to a solidarity group (kinship or place of residence) is what determines political action. The ideological, on the other hand, attracts followers seceded from their original solidarity group because of the ideological vision of the organisation.

As these changes have been concerning which loyalties an individual displays, Kristian Harpviken (1995) also points out how the organisational mode changed with communism gaining state power. The resistance movement he describes changes from local political organisations based on patron-client relationships, to an Islamist rule which operates through modern organisations. The previous individual, vertical relations (also described by Barth) are replaced by an emphasis on non-personal, horizontal relations where individual achievement replaces ascribed status (ibid: 85- 86). The possibility for individual achievement and solidarity among equals were also two of the deriving forces behind political activity at Kabul University (Edwards, 2004; Farr, 1988).

Two alternative models

Based on perspectives from Barth and other scholars providing ethnography from Afghanistan, there are two different models of how political loyalties are established and how politics is conducted. The first model, which Barth represents, is a model where loyalty is based on kinship, patron–client relations and a common residence (ch. Roy, 1990). These loyalties evolve into hierarchical segmentary organisations, and the political authority lies with the leader of these segmentary oppositions, and the followers have transferred their political autonomy to this leader. The second model, mainly based on Edwards (2002), Harpviken (1995) and Mousavi (1998), assumes ideology as a common denominator for establishing loyalty. By this, adherence to an ideology bypasses loyalty towards kinship or place of residence. Groups established around ideology, show characteristics of horizontal

relationships rather than only dyadic vertical patron-client relations, and it increases the possibility to gain a position based on personal achievements. To evaluate the relevance of these two different models among youths in Kabul today, I will use the analytical tool of networks. Through assessing some of the networks the youths engage in, I hope to be able to shed light on the characteristics of these and how they show similarities or differences to the two alternative models I have presented.

Networks

Ulf Hannerz (1980) states that network analysis has become an influential analytical tool for maintaining the possibility to do relational studies in increasingly complex and heterogeneous fields, both urban and rural. From looking into earlier network studies, initially dominated by the Manchester School, Hannerz argues that ‘looking at networks (...), we understand them partly to cut across enduring groups and institutions, partly to cover other areas of the social landscape’ (ibid: 174), continuing that those created to cover other social areas, are created as a response of ‘depersonalization and unresponsiveness of societal institutions’. As such a focus on network opens for the possibility both to look into relations which are not institutionalised, e.g. informal relations, as well as focusing on the individuals, rather than the structure of relations, or in Hannerz’s word: ‘(...) as we concern ourselves with individuals using roles rather than with roles using individuals, and with the crossing and manipulation rather than the acceptance of institutional boundaries’ (ibid: 175).

Networks will take different forms, and they can be measured along different axes, whether the networks are ego-centred or whether several people within a network are in contact (density of network) (Hannerz: 1980). Another axis to evaluate networks along is the strength of the links between the members, whether they are strong or weak (Granovetter, 1982). A third dimension is to investigate between whom the networks are established. Robert Putnam (1993, 2000) has pointed to this through his definition of social capital. Putnam sees social capital as ‘(...) features of social organisation, such as trust, norms (of reciprocity), and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions’ (1993: 167). Through this definition he is not only looking at networks *per se*, but rather he understands social capital to be a feature of the community level in the society where

networks make one of the crucial components determining the stock of social capital in a society. Further he argues that the more people engage in civic organisation, the better possibilities for people to participate and co-operate, also in political activities. In his early work ,“Making Democracy Work” (1993), he focused on horizontal cross-cutting networks to increase the stock of social capital, his later work, “Bowling Alone” (2000), makes a distinction between two types of social capital, bridging and bonding, based on the kind of membership in the diverse networks.

By introducing the terms bridging and bonding and the characteristics of the members who engage, he simultaneously brings his analyses down from a community level to the level where particular networks can be investigated, by reference to who the members are. Bridging and bonding, Putman argues, emerges both in formally organised associations and at more informal gatherings (2000: 22). Bonding networks¹¹ are exclusive, and tend to reinforce exclusive identities within homogenous groups. On the other hand, bridging networks are outward looking, and tend to encompass people from across diverse social cleavages and in this way achieving the characteristic of being heterogeneous. Through using these terms, I will attempt to look into the characteristics of the diverse networks the youths participate in, although it should here be noted that the total amount of networks a person participates in, will be close to impossible to map for a researcher. But through using the approach of bridging and bonding networks, and the qualities which lie implicit in these concepts, I hope to be able to shed light on what kind of political models are guiding participation among youths in Kabul today. The first model, of kinship and residence as the main loyalty for political support, can within Putnam’s term show similarities to bonded network with homogenous participants, while the emergence of political loyalty around ideology, from the perspectives above, were able to gather people from heterogeneous social backgrounds, and as such can be interpreted as a bridging network regarding the people participating in it. More closely account on these concepts will be introduced together with the presentation of the empirical data.

¹¹ Putnam uses bonding and bridging both with regard to networks and to social capital on the community level. In this thesis, bonding and bridging will be used according to the networks in question, both formal and more informal.

Method

Fieldwork

The fieldwork took place in Kabul in two parts, one from October to mid December 2003, the second from mid January 2004 to the end of May 2004. Arriving in a field where I had no other references than what books, news, conversations with scholars previously working with Afghanistan and some Afghan friends had given me, and my initial time in the field was largely used to try to get adjusted to Afghan society. During these first months, much time was used to get to know both the city and the field, and in my search for relevant informants. As mentioned earlier, Anahita became my door-opener, among other things she introduced me to students at Kabul University, but as will be explained in the chapter on Kabul University, it became closed before scheduled, and what I by then had thought would be my main field “disappeared”. In retrospect, Anahita’s invitation to a youth conference in the beginning of December 2003 would be my breakthrough in gaining access to informants. The conference was arranged by an international NGO where 120 youths were gathered for three days to discuss the constitutional draft. Here I was both introduced to several youth organisation, and most importantly to the international NGO whose office became my main base as I returned to Kabul in mid January 2004.

Forum as entrance

When I returned to Kabul, the international NGO was just about to establish a forum for youths, intended to create more capacity within the area of social and political activities. Membership in the forum was advertised in Kabul Weekly¹² (14. Oct. 2003), and the requirements to apply were: well-known figures in their communities regarding social activities, extraordinarily skilled in their field of interest, and inhabiting leadership qualities. 16 out of 120 applicants were accepted after several rounds of evaluation. The final group was heterogeneous with respect to both ethnicity and occupation. Gender-wise there were five females, the rest were males. However, for Afghan standards, this was regarded as good.

¹² Local newspaper

Sessions in the forum were held every week, but in addition, the office and the garden within the compound soon became a popular hang-out among both members and other friends of Dawaud and Muneer who were working there. Through spending time in this garden, I got to know the participants in the forum, and as they were selected, their backgrounds were also diverse. Most importantly, several of them were members of different youth organisations and approximately half of them were students at Kabul University. Through following these, I gained access to different youth organisations and activities at University (when it reopened at the end of March 2004).

To position oneself in the field and make clear ones objectives, are by most anthropologists seen as a necessity for doing research, as one's position and background will influence both access to and interpretation of data. My role as a student, and not an employee in the organisation was highlighted from the start when I was introduced to the final participants. And as most of the participants either were, had been or wanted to become students at the University, I felt my position was easily understood. This is also a reason why they became my ice-breakers in getting in contact with other active youths. They knew my background and which topics I was interested in. Since they knew other youths who were active, they would talk directly to those in question, explain my topic and ask them if they were willing to talk with me. Using them as ice-breakers was my strategy to try to avoid being seen as a "foreigner with money" (although not always successful), one working for an organisation and the possible benefits from such an acquaintance. During my time of fieldwork, Kabul was loaded with international organisations and expatriates, and secondly, all foreigners in Kabul were working. Explaining my role as "only a student", without working in any organisation, I at times found it difficult to be believed on. When my role as a student was clearly defined in an encounter with new informants, some lost interest in talking with me, while others seemed extra eager to explain to me what 'all those internationals working in Kabul had misunderstood', aksing me to convey the message that their presence was not wanted, and that the money they spent should be given directly to the Afghan people rather than being paid out through salaries to international employees. Also among the young generation there was an ambivalent attitude towards the Western presence.

Being a foreigner and a woman

Both being a foreigner and a woman in Kabul create challenges. Most importantly, both categories initially restrict movement in public. Foreigners working in organisations were due to security reasons to a diverse level restricted from movement in public by regulations from the organisations. As I was not connected to any organisation, I did not have these restrictions, but at the same time, as a foreigner I had to take my precautions. Further there were certain spheres where I did not get access. These were some of the male activities going on in public. The reason for this was not mainly concerning my security, but rather that for some males, it was not in all spheres considered good to be seen together with a foreign girl. Naturally I did not get access to the homes and the families of my male friends. However I could meet family members, primarily sisters and brothers in other places and be invited to weddings.

At the same time being a foreign female also gave me access to places where Afghan females would not. Afghan restaurants are divided into a male section and a female & family section, and I could sit in the male section, while Afghans girls would have to sit in the female & family section. Being a foreigner I was to a certain degree outside the regulation between Afghan males and females, enabling me to get closer contact with males than what Afghan females would have. In a private space (mostly offices) I therefore talked freely with the males, and they with me. As a foreigner I also believe I was seen as a safe conversation partner, for males and females alike. The informants would discuss issues with me which in an Afghan context could be understood as controversial. Several times my closest friends would ask me for my opinions and suggestions when they told me about their hardship, anger and frustrations. My knowledge of their thoughts would not be passed on as rumours in their environment.

Sensitiveness of topic and ethics

Arriving in the field, my initial focus was on political activities at the university, but I soon learned that my stress on political activities by many was seen as a sensitive issue. I knew before I left that certain aspects of politics could be regarded as sensitive, and got the first confirmation of my suspicion when I was talking to a local employee at UNESCO. He was a

former teacher at university and told me, in fairly clear words, not to mention the word politics at campus as different political groups are represented there. I could not know who I would meet, and he was sure there would be those opposing me walking around the campus asking about politics. He suggested that I talk about social engagement until I knew people. I did follow his advice to emphasise social engagement, but at the same time, my curiosity about politics still accompanied me. This sensitiveness made it very important for me to build trust towards the informants. This was the main reason why I used a lot of energy to explain my role as a student, my ethical obligations (like anonymity of people and information) while writing a thesis, and time to get to know them as well as letting them get to know me. I found trust highly important in this context, and relations to political activities was only a topic discussed with those who became my key informants.

Language

My working language was English as I had no knowledge of either Dari or Pashto, the official languages of Afghanistan, at the time of arrival in the field. I had therefore planned to use a translator in most of my work. However the need for a translator became less as I learned to know that many of the youths knew English well. In my main group of 16 informants, only 4 did not speak English satisfactorily for me to converse directly with them.

As this group grew stable and mutual respect and trust grew both between the members and the members and me, there would always be one fluent in English to translate for me during discussions or conversations going on in Dari or Pashto. In more informal settings where I was present, the discussions often went entirely in English. During group discussions of a more formal character, seminars and larger meetings, I would have one next to me to simultaneously translate through the session.

In these group discussions I would take the role of an observer, and in this way the information from discussions generated glimpses of the participants' ideas and views that they shared with each other, with me not being the direct receiver. As such, these were also the situations where I was most "invisible". However the quality of the information gathered through simultaneous translation during a discussion is qualitatively different from the

information received directly from a fluent speaker through conversations. Simultaneous translations are marked by fragments, half sentences and cannot provide the richness and depth done in regular conversations or through interviews. Based on the notes I took during these sessions, I tried to cross-check those of interest with different informants afterwards, not only the person who were talking on a specific theme, but also others present, and as such provide data to compare and reconstruct the discussions and main arguments as authentic as possible. It was a glimpse into the discussions the informants had among themselves, but these glimpses were also useful for me in order to guide my informal conversations into topics I knew had been discussed, in later situations. Secondly, observing the behaviour and reactions of different participants during a discussion, also gave useful non-verbal data.

In situations where I was dependent on translators, this being some interviews and direct conversations with non-English speakers, I ended up with the informant choosing the translator. My main reason for doing this, was that some of the informants themselves suggested that they should pick out the translator as they needed one they trusted as well as understood their way of thinking and talking. I also believe using different translators enriched my data, as none of them became trained by me but were randomly chosen. Secondly, the diversity of my informants, their different opinions, and their knowledge of each other's opinions, created a situation where I felt they put extra emphasis on explaining as correctly as possible their views and vision, in order to underline their diversity.

A drawback of not speaking the native language of the informants, is that all information I have has more or less been directed towards me, unless the information was gathered through group discussion or participant observation. I did not have the opportunity to get access to spoken information between my informants. By this, my informants have in many cases had the opportunity to filter the information I have received, since my presence was their reason to talk in English. Their spoken information can therefore be understood as their way of portraying themselves (Nielsen, 1996: 143-144). At the same time, I hope my long presence in the field contributed to them being honest about they said. This has also been pointed at by Philippe Bourgois: 'Only by establishing long- term relationship based on trust can one begin

to ask provocative personal questions, and expect thoughtful, serious answers' (Bourgois, 1995: 13). But at the other hand, how can you know if people tell the truth?

Of the verbal data presented in this thesis, I have tried to select those I found most representative based on my comparison with other data gathered. As I believe this data convey "true" stories, it is another question how large a part these are of the whole story.

Data triangulation

Participant observation is one of the distinctive characteristics of doing ethnographical research. As explained earlier, being both a foreigner and a woman to a certain degree restricted my movement and also access to the different arenas in which my informants were. Still, I was able to follow them, and participate with them in diverse contexts. Concerning their participation in public, I would go with them to university; meetings, activities and seminars arranged by youth organisations, and forums and larger conferences arranged by other organisations present in Kabul. In addition my participation in their leisure activities spending time in the garden, restaurant meals, weddings, engagement parties, picnics, concerts and sports- activities (conducted safely inside compounds with large walls around) enabled me to experience other parts of their daily lives. Some of my female friends also provided me useful glimpse into the life of Afghan families. In these informal settings, discussions, jokes, and a lot of tea drinking became the rule. The *informal conversations* conducted in these contexts I see in retrospect have given me much useful information, both about the interaction between those present, and the within the themes of discussions.

Data collection of a more structured character was done through a *SWOT-analysis* and semi-structured interviews. In mid-February (2004) a SWOT- analysis was facilitated in the forum which made up my main group of informants. The question of the analysis was: "Youth and Politics in Afghanistan". The acronym SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The list made during this session was long, and for me, the indicators the youths themselves had written, and how they see themselves in relation to politics, became a good navigation tool for both informal questions, initiating discussions as well as looking for actual behaviour within the diverse social contexts I attended.

I had *semi-structured interviews* with 13 of the participants in the forum. Having outlined some broad questions, I tried to let the informants themselves elaborate on what they saw as most important, not steering the course of the interview too much. These interviews took place after I had attended the forum for three months. I found it necessary to wait this long since I knew some of my questions were sensitive. Giving them time to get to know me, and to be trustworthy, I hope contributed to the authenticity of the information I got through the interviews. All these interviews were recorded and transcribed. Bringing a recorder might obscure the situation since it gets more formal and as such influences the data received, but I simultaneously experienced that my informants appreciated the “seriousness” I finally showed after hanging out with them, watching, talking and taking notes for such a long time. At the same time, being in a separate room, where no one around could listen to the conversation, allowed them to talk more freely. At times their eagerness to explain overrode the restriction the recorder might bring, but when noticed again, several hurried to say: ‘that’s off the record’ (which it still is).

This is the concrete basis of the data presented in the thesis, but as in most anthropological studies, what will be presented has to be seen as my interpretation of talks, discussions and the participation I experienced in the encounter with some Kabuli youths.

Anonymity

In the thesis all names have been changed, both on informants and groups. Some people have also been split up, in situations I have found them to be too much present, and in combination with information which can reveal their original identity. Secondly, I have chosen not to link any names as belonging to any ethnic group. In cases where a person’s name is in connection with an ethnic group, either through a quotation or a description, the link has randomly been chosen. This is done to further ensure the anonymous status of my informants.

Representation

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the informants of this thesis are urban middle class youths living in Kabul, and as such, the applicability of the information needs to be kept in mind. Secondly, the main topic of investigation, public participation, has led to a male bias. Females are usually more restricted by their families for participation, often through the need for a male protégé to follow them in public. At university, many females went straight home after classes, and in organisations and at meetings females had to leave for home before dark. The males, on the other hand, were freer to move in the city, and most of them also had fewer obligations to take care of at home. The topic of this thesis also suggests that some females were more reluctant to talk with me, although active. Several times, my male friends would talk to their female friends who they considered active, but inquired to meet me, the females were not ready to talk with me, I was told. This is the background for the lack of gender distinction in the thesis. Difference in gender is salient in Afghanistan and I had hoped to be able to present a representation of this. However, my material does not give me sufficient data to do so on a broad basis, and hence, I have chosen to look at youth as a group. Within this group there are also female voices, however due to my access to informants, the voices of males are more prominent.

Structure of the thesis

After this introduction where I have elaborated on my field and question of the thesis, knit it to anthropological perspectives on youth as well as given a theoretical background and reflected on the use of methodology, chapter two will continue with a geographical and historical outline of Afghanistan. Chapter three will look into how family relations are both constraining and enabling for public participation, and based on this, chapter four will elaborate on different perceptions of politics and different models for political participation. In chapter five, activities at Kabul University will be assessed while chapter six focuses on youth organisations, activities and relations therein. Finally chapter seven will bring some concluding remarks where the main findings from the previous chapters will be highlighted.

Chapter 2: Land and history

In this chapter I will give an introduction of the main ethnic groups resident in Afghanistan, the social organisation and the political history of the country.

Land and people

‘We are the intersection of Asia’, my friends used to tell me, and their description fits well with the geographical location of Afghanistan. The mountainous country lies landlocked with borders with Iran, Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The area of 647,500 square km is divided into 34 provinces, where close to 75% of the total population of 28 million¹³ are rurally based, occupied in agriculture and pastoralism (NHDR, 2004: 17). The main urban centres are Kabul, the capital, Jalalabad in the east, Mazar-i Sharif in the north, Herat in the west and Qandahar in the south.

Ethnic groups

The population is fragmented, and more than 20 different ethnic groups are represented in Afghanistan, some less defined than others¹⁴. The four main ethnic groups are Pashtun (45 %), Tajik (23 %), Hazara (10 %) and Uzbek (8 %) (Rubin, 2002: 26)¹⁵.

Pashtuns

The Pashtuns dominate the south and south-east of the country, and is the largest ethnic group represented in Afghanistan. In addition an equal number of Pashtuns live across the Pakistani border. Their mother tongue is Pashto, an Indo- Iranian language, and they are mainly Hanifi Sunni- Muslims. Rural Pashtuns are tribally organised, their genealogies organise them into families, lineages, clans and tribes, where each of these different layers correspond to a territory (by Barth referred to as *qawm*) (Barth, 1987; 191). They are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. Local politics are discussed in the village council, *jirgah*. Cultural features are symbolised by the Pashtun code of honour, *Pushunwali*. This implies being a good host; for

¹³ Due to lack of census after 1979, this number is an 2003 estimate (NHDR, 2002)

¹⁴ For overview of different ethnic groups, see Dupree, 1980.

¹⁵ Based on 1979 census.

invited and non- invited guests alike, to give asylum, accept blood feud and truce offers, show bravery, steadfastness and righteousness, and defend property and one's women's honour. The Pashtuns have been politically dominant in Afghanistan, at least until the communist coup in 1978. Even the original meaning of Afghan is Pashtun, and Afghanistan is the country of Pashtuns¹⁶ (Weekes, 1984; 622- 629).

Tajik

The Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group. They are situated mostly in the rural north-east, and have Dari, a Persian dialect, as their mother tongue. They are Sunni Muslims, although some smaller groups are Shi'a Muslims. They are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, but characterised as non-tribal people. When asked for their *qawm*, they tend to refer to the place of residence, rather than the tribe (Rubin, 2002: 30). Traditionally they have been mountain-farmers, but major migration into the cities for business and administrative work, made the Tajiks the first non-Pashtuns to enter the upper middle class (Weekes, 1984; 739- 744).

Hazara

The Hazara is the only group whose entire population lives inside Afghanistan, originally located in central Afghanistan, Hazarajat. They have a distinct language, called Hazaragi, but have lately adopted Dari as their main language. Further they are the only ethnic group which collectively belong to Shi'a- Islam. They are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal and were originally tribally based, being nomads and farmers. At the end of the 19th century Amir Abdul Rahman's centralisation policy of the country, conquered Hazarajat and destroyed much of the tribal structure. The Hazaras were defeated, a large part of their land was sold to Pashtuns, and many Hazaras were sold as slaves to other ethnic groups (Rubin, 2002; 31). This economical marginalisation led to a massive migration to the cities, where they occupied the bottom of the social hierarchy. It was not until the introduction of communism that they were able to participate politically on a national level (Mousavi, 1998).

¹⁶ In this thesis Afghan will be used in the meaning of a citizen of Afghanistan, independent of ethnical belonging.

Uzbek

The fourth largest ethnic group represented in Afghanistan is the Uzbeks. The majority of the Uzbek population however lives in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. They reside in the same areas as the Tajiks in north-east. They speak Uzbek, a distinctive language, but most of them are also fluent in Dari. They are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, and maintain tribal designation (Weekes, 1984; 327- 330).

Afghan social organisation

For all Afghan peoples close kinship has been the main resource for political or economical mobilisation. All are patrilineal societies where membership in families and property is inherited by agnatic kin only. The families are patriarchal, constituted by men's dominance over women, and seniors' dominance over juniors. The families are further connected in ties of kinship or other identities such as residence in common territory, or the membership of the same occupational group, locally termed *qawm*.

Qawm is a frequently used term connoted with the centre of local politics. Roy (1994) argues that *qawm* should be understood as a solidarity-group, led by a *khan* or *malek*. The group is closely tied together through kinship and patron-client relations. A *qawm* can represent any segment of the society, from an extended family, a clan, an ethnic group to an occupational group or a village¹⁷. The object of the *qawm* is to protect its members from encroachment from other *qawms* or the state. The internal struggle for power is based on competition among equals. Authority of a *khan* or *malek* is not fixed, but derives from a personal quality of attracting followers and to improve the status of one's own *qawm* (ibid: 74). Personal attributes of a strong man is the ability to protect himself, his family and provide most as a friend and an ally (Barth, 1987: 190). Means for gaining allies and friends are control over *namus*; women, gold and land. Landowners have therefore had a unique starting point for gaining influence through client-patron relations as well as kinship. The term *qawm* is fluid

¹⁷ For the different interpretations of *qawm*, see Bedford, 1996.

and flexible, and it is the particular situation a person is in, which determines the relevant identity, which *qawm* to refer to and which is the basis for action (Rubin, 2002: 24- 25).

In addition to kinship, common residence and occupation, religion also makes social ties. Afghans are pious people, and religious leaders, *mullahs*, *saints* and *ulama*, are subjects of admiration and respect. In villages, in peaceful times, they mainly act as mediators in smaller conflicts, and their political influence is lower. However in times of crisis, religious leaders may act as political leaders as well. Their work as mediators gives them relations to all social layers in a village, from servant to khan. Further they are not part of the intra-tribal or intra-village conflicts and competitions in which the *khans* play their political game. As interpreters of the law (*Shariat*), they can mobilise in the name of Islam, and therefore surpass locally based conflicts and unite different *qawms*, usually in the name of *Jihad*.

Based on these social mechanisms, the political history of Afghanistan is a history of the power-dynamics between centre and periphery, between an emerging centralised state and the local power holders who wanted to sustain their self-governance. Reviewing this history, I will put emphasis on how youths are portrayed, to investigate their presence within Afghan politics as it has developed.

The history of Afghanistan

Tribal federation

Afghanistan as a territorial unit dating back to 1747 when Ahmad Shah Durrani by election became the ruler of a federation of various Pashtun tribes (Vogelsang, 2002; 5). He was the first representative from the Muhammadzai clan of the Barakzai tribe of Pashtuns, the clan the head of state would be a member of until 1978. This secured the Pashtun political and social domination and a social hierarchy was constructed where the Durrani-tribes would be at top, followed by other Pashtuns, then Tajiks, Uzbeks, other ethnic groups, and the Hazaras at the bottom (Rubin, 2002; 26).

It was not until the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan (1880- 1901) that Afghanistan was regarded as a consolidated central state (Maley, 2001; 5-6). To build up a centralised government, the Amir installed a consultative body, a *Loja Jirgah*¹⁸ where he selected representatives from the ruling groups of tribal elders, the royal clan and the clergy (Rubin, 2002; 51), a uniform legal system based on Sharia (Islamic law) was introduced and managed through government appointed judges (Vogelsang, 2002: 266- 267), and he ordered large-scale migration of Pashtuns to settle in the north among the Uzbeks, Hazaras and Tajiks to increase his rule (Dupree, 1980: 417ff). Through these reforms local notables who had previously relied on personal followers for their position, now became dependent on the Amir to hold their positions. This led to a series of uprisings, which the Amir defeated, at times brutally (Vogelsang, 2002: 265- 269). Being situated between two expanding empires, Russia in Central Asia and Britain in the Indian sub-continent, state boundaries were agreed on in 1884 and 1896 towards the north-western frontier and in 1893 the Durand Line was drawn between what is now Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The British continued to be influential inside Afghanistan, and the country was primarily seen as a buffer- state between the British and the Russian empires (Olesen, 1995; 28).

Amanullah – the moderniser

Afghanistan's independence was won during the third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919 under the rule of Amanullah (1919- 1929), Abdul Rahman's grandson (Rubin, 2002; 20). Contrary to his grandfather's iron fist on his subjects, Amanullah's policy was to win his subjects credence through legal, educational and cultural efforts by establishing a new ideological paradigm for the society, that of Islamic modernism (Olesen, 1995; 113).

When Amanullah became the king (1919) at the age of 29, he was a member of a small group of educated modernists known as the Young Afghans. Based on the work of Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin al- Afghani and with an aim to reach equal standards with European states, progress was needed in the economic, scientific, technological and cultural spheres. They put emphasis on education - the creation of an intelligentsia, on women's rights, and on

¹⁸ A Pashtun term for "Grand Assembly of Elders"

the citizen's obligation to serve its country and monarch. An enlightened religious leadership, an intelligentsia and the ruling elite should secure the reformation of Afghanistan into a modern country (Olesen, 1995; 116-120).

During the reign of Amanullah the state-run educational system was both expanded as well as opened for foreign influence. In Kabul he established several high-schools, including the first high-school for girls in 1921. At district-level he established primary schools and encouraged teachers to follow nomads on their migrations. For higher education, he sent students abroad, both males and females (Rubin, 2002; 56).

Amanullah's modernist visions are reflected in the first written constitution made in 1923. Here all Afghans, men and women, were citizens of the state, with equal rights. This broke with the previous affiliation within tribes and the Muslim community, where membership and rights were based on kinship and client-patron relations (Vogelsang, 2002; 279). The intelligentsia started to occupy the positions in the administration, and the local notables lost their influence (Rubin, 2002; 57- 58).

On returning from a trip to Europe in 1928, Amanullah found his country developing too slowly and imposed new reforms. These included a representative *Loja Jirgah* elected by all adult men, conscription of all adult men in the national army, western-styled dresses and hats for all men visiting Kabul, no need for women to be veiled, and education for all boys and girls alike (Vogelsang, 2002; 281). Among the local notables, his modernisation was seen both as a secularisation of the society and an alienation of their power. A series of uprisings ended in Amanullah's defeat in 1929 (Rubin, 2002; 58).

Encapsulating the tribes – introduction of the intelligentsia

The new king, Nadir Shah, reinstated the *Loja Jirgah* as a consultative body and the recruitment to the army became a task for tribal leaders. The local *qawms* remained isolated and self-governed in local issues, and was only linked to the government by kinship and personal relations to obtain patronage. The state was able to give patronage because of the foreign resources that poured into the country as a result of its strategic significance during

the cold war. The political elite acted only as intermediates between the foreign powers (mainly the Soviet) and their resources, and the receiving local *qawms* (Rubin, 2002: 20- 21).

The closest supporters of the state became the newly educated, the intelligentsia, of whom most became employed in the state administration. Education was one of the major goals of the building of the state, and Kabul University was established in 1947. The University was heavily sponsored by foreign donors, both staff and students were frequently sent abroad for further education as well as foreigners teaching at the university. By the early '70s half of the teachers at the Faculty of Shariat Law had degrees from al- Azhar in Cairo, and two-thirds of the teachers at the Faculty of Law and Political Science had been educated in France. The number of students steadily grew, from being a little more than 3500 in 1965 to exceed 11 000 by the mid-70s. Dormitories were built, and both boys and girls from rural areas were introduced to modern knowledge and brought into the growing urban middle class (Rubin, 2002; 71).

The government tried to keep a low profile on ideological and religious issues, but these became more important. The Young Afghans from Amanullah's time, were still an important part of the bureaucracy and demanded more modernisation. The urban middle class increased in numbers, and so did the unemployment rate. Together with a growing divide between the intelligentsia and the population, this called for political reforms (Olesen, 1995: 182- 201).

The constitution of 1964, named New Democracy, introduced a more representative form of government through two consultative organs. An elected parliament ensured the local power holders to be represented, and the *Loja Jirgah* consisting of appointed representatives from different social groups, would ensure the representation of the intellectuals. But as these were only consultative organs, the real power still laid with the King and his close relatives. Still the representative institution and an increasing freedom of the press led to a growing awareness and political activities among the people. Students seeing their future as governmental employees, started to get involved in political activities (Rubin, 2002; 73).

Yousefzai (1974) sees a student demonstration in 1965 as the birth of students as a political force. The demonstration occurred when the students were not allowed to enter the parliamentary hearings due to their large number. They were met by the police, and in the encounter, 3 students were killed. In the call for taking responsibility for this event, the Prime Minister resigned. Louis Dupree observed the incident and wrote: 'As for students, henceforth they will certainly be considered to be a political barometer and a prime target for subversive elements both internal and external' (quoted in Yousefzai, 1974; 173). The succeeding Prime Minister saw the students at the university as potential allies for his progressive politics, visited the university and allowed the students to form a student organisation. From this time student demonstrations were a regular scene in Kabul, and as they realised their power, their demands changed from students' affairs and university liberties to national welfare, Afghan social, economic and political life (Dupree, 1980: 621- 622; Yousefzai, 1974: 174).

Different political orientation

The campus at Kabul University was influenced by the same political ideologies that were emerging in the urban middle class. These can mainly be divided into three different movements, one leftist; dominated by the Marxist-Leninist communists, a right wing movement; symbolised by the Islamists, and a liberal democratic movement. The leftist wing was the first to emerge. They used the newly acquired right of freedom of the press, and used the leftist ideology to attack the social and economical ills of the country, an ideology the students found suitable to explain their own ills (Yousefzai, 1975: 175). With its origin in the left wing of the group the Awakened Youth (Wish Zalmayan), the main communist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was founded in 1965 with Nur Muhammad Taraki as the secretary general. The counter-reaction of the leftist activists was an Islamic movement. The Muslim Youth Organisation was established in 1969, at first mainly with students and teachers from the Faculty of Shariat Law and Faculty of Engineering (Edwards, 1993: 612- 613). Influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, they wanted to create a modern state with political participation and socioeconomic justice in line with Islamic values. Their popularity grew quickly, and only 5 years after their establishment, they won $\frac{3}{4}$ of the seats in the University Student Union (Amin, 1984: 377). The members of the first leadership council of the Muslim Youth were all personalities who would become

prominent leaders in the forthcoming resistance movement, Mujaheddin. They were Rabbani - chairman, Sayyaf - deputy leader and Hikmatyar – in charge of political activities. The organisation later split into different factions, Jaimat-i Islami, led by Rabbani and Hizb-i Islami led by Hikmatyar (Rubin, 2002: 83)

Roy (1990) argues that the subjects taught at Kabul University were only replica of modern Western subjects, without any reference to traditional knowledge. As rural youth came into campus, and learned these subjects, they were trained into an intelligentsia which was no longer connected with the rural power- structures they once belonged to. As political activities increased, these students adapted extremist ideological varieties (Roy, 1990: 107). Kabul University became a ‘centre of insurgents’ (Rubin, 2002: 76).

The republic coup, the Saur Revolution and the Soviet invasion

In 1973, Sadar Mohammad Daoud staged a coup d’etat which overthrew his uncle, the King. Daoud declared Afghanistan a republic and himself President. With a military career and substantial training in the Soviet, the government’s policy turned towards Marxism which also tightened the control of other political ideologies. In particular the Islamists got targeted. Some went into exile in Peshawar, others were jailed, while more than 600 of the active members of the Muslim Youth, were killed (Amin, 1984: 377; Rubin, 2002: 74).

The reforms initiated by Daoud did not live up to the expectations of the more radical People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The 27th of April 1978 the party brought about the Saur Revolution and declared the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. This was the first time the intelligentsia alone obtained power in Kabul and Nur Mohammad Tariki became the first president and the first leader of Afghanistan originating from outside the royal clan¹⁹. PDPA counted only 5000 members, existing mainly of the technocratic elite, governmental bureaucrats, military officers and students (Edwards, 1998: 22), and it was their military skills, not political ideology which ensured their position (Rubin, 2002: 104). The political climate got even colder, and in 1979 Afghan prisons were filled with more than

¹⁹ One exception: Bacha- i Saqao, a Tajik rebel who reigned for 12 months between the reigns of Amanullah and Nadir Shah (Edwards, 2002: 34).

10 000 political refugees, basically students and other members of the urban middle class (Farr, 1988: 139- 140). Although Tariki tried to avoid a communist label by ensuring people that he worked for Afghan nationalism based on social and economic justice under Islam, the communist character of the regime soon became clear to the public. In December 1979 Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in order to strengthen PDPA's position, and they were not to leave until February 1989 (Amin, 1984: 379).

PDPA's policy alienated the local powerbases and the rural population by introducing redistribution of land, restrictions on bride-prices, literacy courses and equal rights for women. Their socialist visions did not gain public resonance (Edwards, 1998: 34- 40). Reactions to these reforms created the first major wave of migrants to Pakistan. These were mainly rural people who upon arrival in Pakistan, gave the liberal reforms initiated by PDPA as their reason for fleeing (Moghadam, 1993: 229- 230). The coming generation would be PDPA's future base, and the educational system was used as a mechanism for political recruitment. At university the focus of the curriculum was changed following Marxist-Leninist ideology and Afghan professors were replaced by professors from socialist countries. Close to 50% of the employees at the university in 1978, were driven into exile, jailed or killed by 1986. The students were further under heavy surveillance. Students' political views were assessed, those passing got their examination, and those failing twice were conscripted into the army (Rubin, 2002: 141).

The PDPA's policy in Afghanistan, based on Marxist- Leninist ideology and westernised values, made the government soon to be understood as an alien entity with an atheistic ideology. Islam therefore became the key symbol for the resistance movement which grew both inside Afghanistan, and in exile in Pakistan and Iran (Edwards, 1998: 41- 43)

The Mujaheddin and the civil war

The uprising against the Soviet supported regime started immediately, and it manifested in two different ways. One was spontaneous, formed on primordial loyalties of different *qawms*. In these Islam was used as a symbolic background and legitimisation while the tribal values would structure the actual response (Edwards, 1998: 41- 43). The second response was

organised in established groups, mainly supported by the educated middle class. The unorganised groups tended to join the organised as they needed supplies and strategic necessities (Amin, 1984: 382).

The organised Mujaheddin groups had their bases in exile, in Peshawar, Pakistan, as their leaders had fled Afghanistan during the '70s. These were categorised in two: the traditionalists and the Islamists (Amin, 1984: 382- 384). The traditionalists were a reaction to the Saur Revolution and they wanted to restore the pre- revolution status of the country. They drew their support mainly from the conservative religious elite (*ulama*), tribal chiefs and landlords. The traditionalists view on the role of Islam, was that of individual ethics and piety. Through the ethical reformation of the individuals' ways of life, society would be reformed. On the other side, the Islamists pursued the ideology of the Muslim Youth, Islam was an ideology of the society, and the state would be the starting point for the transformation (Roy, 1994: 76). The Islamists were organised well and were able to quickly gain new followers as refugees were pouring into Pakistan. Two of the main parties were Hizb-i Islami; led by Hikmatyar, seen as the most revolutionary and supported mostly by Pashtuns, and Jamiat-I Islami; led by Rabbani and supported mostly by Tajik students. As a Pashtun, Hikmatyar was favoured by the Pakistanis, and was able to control 250 schools with a total of 47 000 students and staff in Pakistan. Many of these made up the core of his political party, as well as most of the soldiers in his military force, the Army of Sacrifice (Lashkar-i Isar) (Rubin, 2002: 213- 215).

Roy (1994) argues that the communist coup and the Soviet invasion, were what triggered a large-scale politicisation of the Afghan society. Firstly, the political activists, the Mujaheddin, came back from exile in Peshawar to organise the upheavals and secondly the previously non-political minded peasants and local notables joined one or another of the different Mujaheddin- groups in order to get weapons. Who the local would affiliate to, differed. Some members of the Muslim Youth were back at their places of origin, and with the network from Kabul, they were able to provide resources through their network with Islamist groups and were thereby considered local strongmen (Rubin, 2002: 257). Others would relate to existing religious networks, the sufi-network and *madrassa*- fellowship, and support the traditionalists.

Others again would base their resistance on communal loyalties, like tribal links, patron-client relations and other *qawm* affiliations (Roy, 1994: 83- 85).

When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the communist government led by Najibullah steadily declined. In April 1992, president Najibullah had to seek protection in a UN- compound, and the Mujaheddin groups were at power in Kabul. However, the alliance that was created through the Peshawar accord between the different Mujaheddin factions under the banner of Islam was starting to disintegrate. The different groups were heavily equipped with weapons donated by foreign powers for fighting the Soviets and during the presidency of Rabbani (Jaimat-i Islami), Afghanistan turned into a civil war, and ethnic tensions rose. As Hikmatyar (Hizb-i Islami) were not represented in the government, the Pashtuns saw Kabul as being ruled by Tajiks and Uzbeks, they attacked and got their share of power in the central government for a while. This again, led to reactions from the other factions present in Kabul and fission and fusion became the norm between them. In Kabul the fighting factions were Rabbani and Masoud as his military leader (Tajiks), Hikmatyar (Pashtun), the Shia- party Hizb-i Whahdat led by the Hazara Ali Mazari (Hazara), and the Uzbek leader Dostum. These kept changing alliances, often “negotiating” through use of military force, leaving tens of thousands killed, devastating the physical structure of the city, and another wave of refugees on their way to security in Pakistan²⁰. This time the refugees came from the urban middle class, those who had worked in the state administration during the communist area. As the fight for power in Kabul went on, local warlords saw their chance to increase their local powerbase. Roadblocks were built, people were looted and the opium production secured finances for weapon supplies. In west Afghanistan, Ismael Khan made his own government, and around the country the local warlords tightened their control over the people and played their own game of power (Vogelsang, 2002: 323- 325). It was in this lawlessness that Taliban emerged as a political force.

²⁰ For atrocities conducted by the fighting factions in Kabul, see Human Rights Watch, 2005.

Taliban

Taliban's origin centres around the southern city of Qandahar where they emerged at the end of 1994. Heavily supported by the Intelligence Service in Pakistan, they were to secure a trade convoy from Pakistan to Turkmenistan, via Qandahar and Herat. The lawlessness of the Afghan society, and the dreadful experience of the local population which was exploited by the warlords, made a surprisingly easy gain of support for the Taliban in rural areas (Barakat, 2002: 806).

The leader of the Taliban was Mullah Mohammad Omar, a 34 year old *madrassa*²¹ teacher from the outskirts of Kandahar. He was himself educated in traditional *madrassa* which gave him a network of religious learned, and as teacher he had access to students who would follow his movement. The name Taliban itself symbolises this, as Talib (singular) means religious student. The Talibs were recruited in *madrassas* in southern Pashtun areas in Afghanistan and across the Pakistani border. In Pakistan, attendance to the *madrassa* was one of the few possibilities for social mobility for young Afghan males living in refugee camps. A variety of people from different backgrounds lived in the refugee camps, and the previous saliency of loyalty towards place, decent-group and tribal ancestor was swapped with a hope to restore Afghanistan to an ideal Islamic polity, ending the corruption and steadily declining morality of the Mujaheddin leaders, also evident in the refugee camps where they lived (Edwards, 1998: 724- 725). Their aim was to restore peace, disarm the population, enforce *Shariat* law and defend the integrity and Islamic character of Afghanistan (Rashid, 2001; 21- 24)²². Their political advancements moved quickly, in 1995 they controlled Herat, in 1996 Kabul, and by 2001 they controlled more than 90 % of Afghanistan, more than any previous administration had been able to do (Barakat; 2002: 807).

The Taliban has a long list of atrocities conducted in their search to fulfill the Jihad the Mujaheddin did not complete. In particular this was visible in the cities, which for the Talibs was the symbol of Islamic decline and of Western influence. Restriction of female behaviour,

²¹ Islamic religious school.

²² For the influence of Pakistani Government, in particular the intelligence service, ISI, and other countries support to Taliban, see Saikal, 2004: 219- 230; Rashid, 2001.

by prohibiting them to work, attend school or even move in public without a *burqa*²³ and protégée, became the symbol of individual submission to the rulers, portrayed through male honour paramount both in Islamic and Afghan rhetoric. Females caught breaking the restrictions, were accompanied to their homes where their father or husband would be punished (Dupree, 2001: 145- 159). In rural areas, in the case of women, the standard set by Taliban did not conflict as clearly with their daily lives. Due to the traditional way of living, a woman would spend her time working in the house, or together with close female kin. Generally, the close relation of the rules and regulations set by Taliban, and the traditional culture still practiced in rural areas, made the Taliban easier to accept. Although all were not satisfied with their strict rule, many considered them as providing a decline in the fighting between the different Mujaheddin factions, and the restoration of security (Barakat, 2002: 807; Dupree, 2001: 160- 161). At the same time, Taliban representatives also varied in piety, in some areas negotiation between local leaders and Taliban representatives made it possible for both female teachers and girls to attend school (Johnson & Leslie, 2005: 48) whereas they were in other places accused of ethnic cleansing (particularly against the Shia –population, the Hazaras) (Saikal, 2004: 228- 229).

Increasing their territorial control, pressuring their last opponents, Massoud and the Northern Alliance towards the Tajikistan border, the fate of the Taliban would turn out to be their harbouring of Osama Bin Laden and providing ground for his al-Qaeda training camps.

Interim government

11th of September, and the terror attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the US, was the start of Taliban's end (at least for a while). The al-Qaida network was singled out as the initiator of the attacks, and the Taliban refused to extradite the leader, Osama Bin Laden. Coalition forces led by the US, Operation Enduring Freedom, started their air-attack on Afghanistan 7th of October 2001. Simultaneously they cooperated with Afghan forces on the ground, mainly the Northern Alliance (former Mujaheddins), gave them new weapon supplies and the Taliban fled Kabul in November 2001. The United Nations facilitated talks

²³ All covering veil

between the former conflicting parties in Afghanistan, and the Bonn Agreement set for an Emergency *Loja Jirgah* to establish a multi-ethnic interim government (Barakat, 2002: 801-802). The Bonn Agreement focussed mainly on political transition, and although demobilisation was part of the agreement, local warlords again saw an opportunity to increase their powerbases as Taliban vanished, both in the capital and in rural areas. A UN resolution provided ISAF troops to be deployed in Kabul, to secure military stability in the capital, and by 2003 provisional reconstruction teams (PRT's) were organised in several provinces to increase both the international presence and "security" (Johnson & Leslie, 2004).

The *Emergency Loja Jirgah* in June 2002 elected Hamid Karzai as the president, and a *Constitutional Loja Jirgah* agreed on a new constitution signed in January 2004.

At my time of fieldwork, both the presidential and parliamentary elections were set to be held in August 2004. Both elections became delayed, but in November 2004 Hamid Karzai was elected President of Afghanistan, and by November 2005 the elected parliamentarians from all provinces gathered in Kabul for the first time.

Young people through Afghan political history

Youths in Afghan history have either been portrayed in connection with modernisation, often indirectly through education or as cadres for political actors. Their first emergence in the history-books came during the reign of Amanullah at the start of the 20th century. In his search for modernisation of the country, his closest cooperation-partners became the newly educated intelligentsia representatives in Young Afghans. The recruitment of like-minded people would be secured through an expansion of the state-run educational system, including high-schools in Kabul for both boys and girls. Upon his defeat, his large scale modernisation processes were decreased, but within the ruling elite, education continued to be a strategy for developing the country. Kabul University was established in 1947, and an increasing number of students, both urban and rural were educated into the growing middleclass. The constitution of 1964, new democracy, and the following political freedoms, can be seen as the introduction of youths, students, as potential political actors in Afghanistan. Still minded towards modernisation, the leftist faction and its contrast the Islamists (Muslim Youth)

increased their political activities both on the campus of Kabul University and on the national political scene. Of these, the Muslim Youth was initially seen as a student movement, independent of any other Afghan political actor or patron (Edwards, 2002: 220ff). The leftists had their supporters within the government, but as their numbers grew among the students, their influence within the faction also increased. As the leftists claimed national power, the educational system was used as a catalyst for recruiting members into their ranks. The Islamists who were forced into exile, held on to their personal political positions acquired at the university. From being united in the Muslim Youth at Kabul University, they became divided into Jaimat-i Islami (Rabbani and Massoud), Hizb-i Islami (Hekmatyar) and Ittihad-i Islami (Sayyaf), and started mobilisation of younger and elders alike into their different factions. As such the young political Islamist actors emerging at Kabul University were able to sustain their influential political positions through their leader positions in the Mujaheddin. But as their age and power increased, so did the possibility for youths to gain influential political positions decrease. Again youths were best seen as cadres for those in power.

The emergence of the Taliban can be interpreted in either way. For the young men living in refugee camps in Pakistan, enrolment in the *madrassa* and subsequent participation within the Taliban movement, meant a possibility for mobility, both physically and socially. Steadily conquering more and more of the Afghan territory meant that young Taliban representatives were in control of local areas, upward social mobility and political power. At the other hand, their strict interpretation of Islam, the increasing centralising of power to the Qandahari Shura and the leadership of Mullah Omar, in addition to support from the tribal Pashtuns, the younger Talibs (Rashid, 2001) were once more best suited as front soldiers.

This is the template on which the young Afghan generation today lives.

Chapter 3: Enabling and constraining – personal autonomy and the family

Introduction

Of the networks a person belongs to, family is the most immediate, and in Afghanistan it is argued to be the core organisational unit to which an individual belongs. Based on rural studies (e.g. Tapper 1991) it is argued that the family as a unit manages economic and political relations in the public sphere. Dupree (1980) argues that this was still the dominant pattern also among urban dwellers during the late 60s and 70s, although the modernisation was in progress, and possibilities for public employment and the subsequent increased individual economic liberties, had started to slightly modify the strict rural patterns. However, the role of the family, the responsibilities that lie within and the possibility for individual autonomy are also connected to which level the government is able to take responsibility for the social security and welfare of its citizens. Dupree (ibid: 189- 191) argues that despite the modernisation, these functions were still covered by the extended family at the end of the 70s, and Damsleth (2002) has shown that during the civil war and the Taleban, the extended family network continued to play a significant role, both inside Afghanistan and in the Diaspora. Still today the government is not able to provide satisfactory social services and security to the citizens, and the extended family is still regarded as the safety-net where individuals find protection and where their needs related to security are met. Of equal importance, the family is also the source of social status, individual honour and codes of conduct, which makes the maintenance of family discipline a cherished ideal, at least in public. A disciplined family and children with proper conduct, gives the family head a good name and enhances his prestige in the community, a prestige that in the second run belongs to the family as a whole and its individuals respectively (Emadi, 2005: 166). Internal family relations are characterised by strong reciprocity, and for an individual member this includes both obligations towards the family and services provided by it²⁴.

²⁴ A family's economic situation: the number of adults at work, the number of family- members and the housing conditions are by many youths seen as the main challenge to their attendance in education or in voluntary organisations. The economic responsibilities within the family needs to be taken care of first, youths often play a major role in this, secondly if these needs are satisfied, the youths might have some time available for other activities.

Secondly the Afghan society is portrayed as patriarchal which implies both the seniors' dominance over the younger and male dominance over females (Dupree, 1980: 181; Emadi, 2005: 165ff; Tapper, 1991). As the main actors of this thesis are youths, family reciprocity and discipline, and the patriarchy within families, suggest that the family can restrict the personal autonomy of the youths, and as such constrain potential public participation.

To elaborate on this, I will focus on the possibilities the youths have to negotiate within their families in order to achieve the personal autonomy enabling them to participate in public. I will first consider marriage, the discussions and manoeuvres I experienced around this theme. I will argue that the youths' negotiating on their future marriage with their families, is used as a strategy both to keep up present public participation as well as securing future participation. This will be shown through the concepts of time management and love-marriage, which I interpret as a negotiation-tool used by the youths to sustain or increase their autonomy. Secondly, as the empirical data will show, some youths also have families which enable public participation, and as such, personal autonomy from the family also becomes a question on whether to rely on ascribed or achieved statuses to enter the public realm.

Marriage

Spending time with youths in their 20ies, of which some are not yet married, seeing their future marriage and the changes it might bring continuously approaching in time, makes marriage a difficult topic to bypass. Secondly, the discussions, strategies and negotiation on marriage among the youths, I saw as giving useful information both on the importance of the family in the Afghan society, but also on the possibilities the youths themselves saw for influencing their own daily lives, both presently and for the future. As scholars have pointed out, marriage in a Middle Eastern context, is usually not only a question of the man and woman getting married, but is a responsibility for the relatives (Eickelman, 2002: 158). Among the youths in Kabul, the possibility to influence their own marriage became a symbol where they could display their informal power within the patriarchal family structure, a symbol which was also transferred to the wider society, through the possibility for youth participation. Before going on to how the youths manoeuvred with the question of marriage, I

will briefly look into previous anthropological literature considering marriage in an Afghan context, exemplified mainly by Nancy Tapper.

In her book, “Bartered Brides”, Nancy Tapper (1991) sees marriage as the key institution to understand the wider society among the Durrani Pashtuns resident in Afghan Turkistan²⁵. She looks into how different ideologies and strategies concerning marriage are employed in order to secure the economic and political interests of the respective families. Based on the different families’ social standing, in addition to take care of economic considerations, these strategies are managed in such a way that ‘(...) marriages are an integral part of on-going political relations at all levels of social organization from the household to the ethnic group, and they are as much the cause as the consequences of political activity’ (ibid: 279). Actions considered to have political implications, seen through the negotiation of honour among males, include the size of the bride-price (ibid: 144), public festivities in connection to the marriage ceremony (ibid: 172) and affinal relations established. Although affinal relationships do not have any ‘specific rights and duties, nor do they necessarily define the character of social relationships’ they distinguish themselves from relationships with strangers through the ‘ideals of fellowship, affection and cooperation’ (ibid: 49- 50). Even if they are not fixed relationships for cooperation, highlighted through a woman’s anticipated loyalty to her husband’s agnates in case of conflicts (Tapper, 1991), affinal relations are seen as an opportunity to maintain and increase one’s social fields, contacts and networks (Barth, 2004: 36- 41; Rubin, 2002: 23).

In Tapper’s analysis, male heads of families have been portrayed as the main negotiators of marriage agreements²⁶ and to a certain extent, also considered as the main beneficiaries of these agreements. I think it is important to keep in mind that her study was done in a rural area, and as Dupree (1980) noticed, in urban centres the strict rules of the rural population began to modify. This also concerns marriage, where he argues that the spouses-to-be, in

²⁵ Her fieldwork was conducted between 1970 and 1972 among pastoral nomads living in the north central Afghanistan. Publishing her book in 1991 and being able to follow the development in Afghanistan at a distance, she sees her account of the Maduzai subtribe as explanation of the times that once existed. As Pashtun nomads, they have been forced to move, taking their share in the number of IDPs occurring during the conflict in Afghanistan, and so their social context and following activities have altered (Tapper, 1991: xx). I find it important to keep this in mind when using her models as a point of departure to elaborate on marriages.

²⁶ Damsleth (2004: 132- 133) argues that the mothers have the most influence in the choice of a future partner for the youths.

certain social layers increasingly had the possibility to choose their partner (ibid: 198). Independent on who choose the partners, family or the spouses, the perspectives from Tapper can still be applicable, regarding with whom one marriages, which relations are established through affinal ties and the implications a marriage has on social status. In the following I will take the point of view of the youths themselves, the future spouses, and look into how they relate to the question of marriage. In doing so, I will argue that the spouse-to-be to has the opportunity to use an upcoming marriage as a negotiation tool within the family to secure both present and future aspirations to public participation, that in Tapper's term can be interpreted as 'political relations'. To do this, I will start with a case on Shaker. A young man with several ambitions and possibilities, but also drawn between his different possibilities and aspirations, mainly between relying on an ascribed status and his search for autonomy from his family, making his own career based on achievements. His case illustrates the complexity this brings along.

Shaker

Shaker is the son of a local notable from one of the provinces. Shaker himself has never lived in his native province as his father settled in Kabul when returning after two years of studies in Europe. Despite Shaker's father establishing his nuclear family in Kabul more than 30 years ago, going in exile in Pakistan during the 90s and now once again living in Kabul, he is still considered to have a relatively large political influence within his tribe²⁷, which is making up roughly 1/5 of the population in this province. In addition to their home in Kabul, they also have a house in their native village where Shaker's father spends much time, and sometimes Shaker accompanies him on these travels.

Shaker is the second of three sons, but as his elder brother has migrated to Western Europe and has shown little interest in engaging in politics, Shaker's father sees Shaker as his natural successor concerning the responsibilities within the tribe, an idea Shaker seems to like, however not without care:

²⁷ The term *tribe* is used as it was used in conversations, and as such, does not necessarily correspond to the anthropological use of the term. .

Shaker:

In this kind of societies you always have to gain things by actually agreeing with some conditions.

Elisabet:

Yeah?

Shaker:

All my tribe is standing behind me. They think I am the future prospect. They believe I can go on to whatever extent. Only, there are some conditions they have, there are some conditions. For example, I should get married to someone in my tribe, no one out of [outside] the tribe. Otherwise I will lose my place in my tribe. This kind of things. Eh.. and I should be more focused on my tribe. Trying to support them, my tribe, to...to solve their problems, rather than thinking on the whole of Afghanistan. Obviously they want me to be on that level [as well], at the same time they want me to be more focused on them. Those are the conditions. So far I have turned out some of them, he-he [smiles discrete], specially some proposals to get married to someone in my tribe. Because I am not prepared so far to start a life...

Elisabet:

Start a life? But you have one now, or?

Shaker:

Yeah, but that is the way they say it: you have to start your life. And I can't do it, I have so many things to do in my life.

In Shaker's case the concrete negotiation with his father is about his future marriage as well as how he spends his time now, implicitly maintaining a possible ascribed status and stating autonomy. Several times when I found Shaker upset or disillusioned and asked him what the problem was, he would tell me a short story which usually ended up originating in a disagreement with his father. For some months the main topic of the disagreement would be the question of marriage. The main reason Shaker told me, why his father wanted him to get married, was both due to Shaker's own age, 26, and to his own. As a widower his father wanted at least Shaker to get married, then Shaker could bring his wife to the house, she would assume the domestic responsibilities and Shaker's younger unmarried sister would then be available for marriage. For Shaker's father to see Shaker married meant keeping the family cycle going, a daughter-in-law to move into their apartment to take the main responsibility for the housework, and the possibility to marry off his youngest daughter.

In addition to keeping the household cycle running, Shaker's statement above suggests that his father also sees the number of preferable spouses to be restricted for Shaker. Shaker states

that for him to keep the possibility to pursue his father's position within their tribe, he is expected to marry a girl from his own tribe. Following Tappers' model above, Shaker establishing affinal ties within his tribe can consolidate the tribe and be a useful resource for future political activity. Secondly, it is also a sign of the symbolic value of marrying endogenously, a cherished ideal within the various scales of social organisation from extended families (cousin-marriage) to ethnic groups, where marriage outside one's own ethnic group, among the Pashtuns, is the absolute boundary for Pashtun identity (Tapper, 1991: 60, 66). Shaker also sees ethnic belonging as the absolute boundary for his future spouse, acknowledging that his family would not accept a wife from another ethnic origin²⁸. His father, on the other hand wants to restrict the future spouse to come from within their tribe. From the point of view of Shaker's father, Shaker's marriage within the tribe can also work positively for his ongoing political activities, establishing preferable relations to his son's affinal relations.

During these months when Shaker seemed upset by his father's wishes for him to get married, Shaker would tell me how his father when being in Pakistan or in their province would call Shaker to talk about suitable families with available females he had visited, in order to persuade him to accept his father to take further contact with a suitable family. Shaker on the other hand would not give his father this acceptance, since he did not consider himself ready for it. Shaker's reluctance also led to a problematic relationship between Shaker and his father when the father returned to their home in Kabul. Several times Shaker chose to stay overnight with friends with the explanation that he did not have the energy to meet or confront his father at home. On other occasions Shaker would use his brother and sister living at home as brokers between himself and his father, persuading his siblings to support him but at the same time make sure they would take care of their father. Although in conflict with his father, Shaker was anxious of not being at home making sure his father and family were doing fine, as this was his responsibility as the eldest son living at home. The discrepancy between Shaker's personal wishes and his obligations towards his family, gave him much troubled ponder.

²⁸ Most of the youths see ethnic belonging as the absolute boundary for future spouses. Although some say that it might be 'possible' to marry someone from another ethnic group, usually they hastily add 'but it is safer to marry someone like yourself'. Of my acquaintances, all marriages were between spouses from the same ethnic groups, only one had parents from an inter-ethnic marriage.

Shaker spent as much time as possible outside the house, returning home only late at night hoping that his father to had already gone to bed.

The conflict of the marriage-issue between Shaker and his father seemed to be at its peak for nearly two weeks in which time Shaker constantly tried to avoid his father, not talking to him, not answering the phone and staying out of the apartment as much as possible. The relationship between Shaker and his father became more and more troubled. His siblings were complaining, and his close friends got worried for the reputation this might bring if it became public. Persuaded by close friends, at the end Shaker finally talked with his father and presumably came to an understanding. The next day Shaker only stated that they had talked together the night before and that now everything was fine: his father had promised not to bother Shaker any more about getting married. So far, Shaker seemed to have stated a relative autonomy from his father.

The relationship between Shaker and his father is only portrayed to me through Shaker's stories, and the data has to be treated as such: Shaker's version of their relationship. Nevertheless I find them to give fruitful information as they clearly reflect Shaker's concern about their relationship. As I see it, Shaker would not be this preoccupied, shown both through his appearance of low spirits as well as his eagerness to talk with me about the issue and his relation with his father, if their relationship was not of importance. His relationship with his family was of major importance to maintain his possibility for participation through an ascribed status, but simultaneously he was drawn towards the possibilities for achieved positions opening up for young skilled people in a post-war situation. Time management, possibilities for establishing beneficial contacts and the dream of a love marriage, was Shaker's strategy to make use of these new opportunities emerging in Kabul.

Time management and making new contacts

At the time being Shaker (26) is working in the administration of one of the largest national NGOs, a job which demands both many hours and much energy in the office. In addition, he is also active in a youth organisation and member of the board in two different Afghan NGOs. To manage all these assignments most of the hours of his day are taken, a fact Shaker often

communicates through highlighting the need of Afghanistan, the country, for him to work. In a self-sacrificing way he often downplays his own personal needs, stating that he only needs some clothes, food and a floor to sleep on. At the same time, his social interaction, inviting friends for dinner at restaurants several times a week and going abroad on holidays suggest a privileged position with few economic worries. In such a situation, portraying self-sacrificing for the needs of the country might be easier than if his economic and social situation had deteriorated.

He has several wishes for the future, he wants to go abroad for studies, and for sure he wants a family. However, this is not the time for either, Afghanistan is in great need of skilled people, and as he says: as long as he gets job offers, he must inhabit some of the skills that are in demand. Getting married now would mean further responsibilities for Shaker to take care of, and would necessarily be a restriction on the activities he is currently doing, which seems not to be in his interest. An additional reason why he wants to keep up his current work for Afghanistan is also the opportunities he is offered. Given his young age he has already had several influential positions in various organisations, an experience which provides him with good job opportunities. Taking these opportunities also means he has the possibility to establish contacts and networks outside his family and kin which can be useful for his future career. For the time being, Shaker seems to value the time used to establish further contacts outside his family as the best investment securing public participation. For him, marriage means a restriction on time he can use maintaining and developing these contacts. 'I want a love-marriage' Shaker would say, legitimating the delay of his marriage and his present time-management²⁹. And Shaker was not the only one emphasising the possible prospect of a love-marriage. By briefly looking into the term love-marriage, I will argue the possible prospect of a love-marriage was used by the youths as a strategy to delay their marriage in negotiation with their family

²⁹ I will come back to Shaker later in the chapter to analyse his case in connection to possibilities for ascribed positions.

Love-marriage

In a society where marriage is as much, if not more, a coalition of two families than of two individuals, the question of how the bride and groom met and how they were married seem to be of everybody's interest. 'Was it a love-marriage?' seems to be one of the most frequently asked questions to newly-weds. In short, a love-marriage is an arranged marriage, but in a love-marriage the boy and girl have met before and decided to initiate the negotiation for an engagement. This is usually done first by their internal agreement, then the boy talks to his family and asks them to pay a visit to the girl's family to start the negotiations, following the traditional practice of negotiation between families towards a final engagement agreement and marriage. If their families agree and they get married, they will be considered to have a love-marriage. The term love-marriage might give connotations of emotional affections only. These being part of it, as I understand the term when used by my informants, equally important are the spouses' role in initiating the negotiation between the families and hence, having a possibility to influence the choice of their future partner.

Secondly, having the possibility to influence the choice of a future partner also has a symbolic value, it illustrates the spouse in question's power within his/ her family. Among the youths, it gives status to enter a love-marriage. While marriage is a task for the family, in particular for parents, for a young person to be able to influence this choice, is an incentive for them to be influential within other areas as well. In this way, being able to show influence within the patriarchal family communicates a degree of autonomy, and in its widest sense, it becomes a symbol for the possibility to bring change in the wider society.

While love-marriage is not a choice for all, the youths I spent time with were either students or engaged in social activities, which means having the possibility to get to know other youths outside their immediate family and neighbourhood through university, seminars or workshops, and hence also to meet members of the opposite sex one finds special³⁰. This potential, for those who have it, I will argue, also increases the status of a love-marriage among the youths themselves. Particularly among young men the future prospect of a love-marriage was often declared as preferred. As I interpret it, the aspirations of a future love-

³⁰ The ethnography done by Damsleth (2004), she argues that her informants are mostly in only- female settings, and that weddings are an arena for mothers to network for future marriages.

marriage can also be used as a negotiation-tool towards their parents to delay a marriage and block parents' initiative to start engagement negotiations³¹, of which I argue Shaker is an example. The possibility to delay a marriage also means a delay of family duties, implying the responsibilities following a marriage, which further restricts the time an unmarried person can use for personal purposes. Avoiding an early marriage can mean more time to focus on individual benefits, building a career, engaging in activities and making contacts and networks before the duties and responsibilities as a husband come into existence.

For women, love-marriage is also seen as preferable, however it is not communicated as directly as among the young men. Women tend to focus on getting a good husband, one they can trust and one who will take care of them and their children. The young women who are studying and who want to delay their marriage, use the argument of finishing their education before getting married, with their parents. Despite those hoping for a future husband who will understand and accept their wishes to continue their education or to work in public, many of them do not necessarily believe this will happen even if it is promised. Therefore the argument of finishing their education is used in negotiation with their family if proposals they are not ready to accept occur during their time of education. By being able to delay a marriage, the women also sustain the possibility to continue their present activities allowed by their parents. As will be shown in a case with Anahita later, while arguing for finishing their education before marriage, also females use this time to search for a preferable spouse.

Marriage is important both for young men and women as well as for their families. Even though a marriage can be characterised as a union between two families as much as between two individuals, the examples above focus on possible negotiation opportunities utilised by young men and women in order to influence their own marriage. By being able to influence the timing of the future marriage, particularly through delaying it, the youths simultaneously negotiate on how they spend their time (time-management) and hence their possibilities for public participation. While one might find some patterns of marriage which are more common than others, there will always be different solutions to what is acceptable both to the families as well as to society. In addition to what is socially accepted, finances and security are two

³¹ The term love-marriage was used between the youths. In encounter with their families, to my knowledge, they argued they were not ready to get married.

other important factors in the negotiation both between the different families and between the young man/ woman and their parents. Rather than elaborating on the diverse marriage-patterns which exists, I will continue to look into how negotiation within the family influence the youths possibilities to keep up preferred activities in public. To do so, Anahita, the young, engaged student I first met will provide the data. Her being a young woman, I will first go back to Nancy Tapper (1991) to briefly look into previous scholars' research on a woman's position within the family.

Young women and family

Being a woman in an Afghan family, usually means that one is subject to the decisions of one's family, whether this is the parental family or ones husband and family-in-law, practices established through patriarchy and patrilineal descent. Nancy Tapper (1991) argues these mechanisms to be understood through looking at who has the main responsibility of managing a family's honour and shame in public. Looking at the change of responsibility of a women through marriage, she argues the Maduzai fall into a model where the behaviour of a female lies within the responsibility of her husband and his agnates. The honour of a man will be affected by the behaviour of his unmarried sisters, daughters, wife and mother, as such, the responsibility of a woman's behaviour changes through marriage, from agnatic to affinal³² (ibid: 17). Looking at Anahita, confirms Tapper's notion of responsibility for a women's behaviour, but more importantly, her case also suggests how young females can advocate and influence their own possibility to live through their aspirations both in the present and in the future.

Anahita and ongoing activities

Anahita and I meet on campus one sunny afternoon. As we walk towards the faculty of literature where she is to deliver a note to one of the teachers, she talks about how tired she is, how much work there is with the internet café they are trying to establish, the demands her boss at work makes on her and how her parents are not happy about her spending so much

³² This model Tapper distinguishes from a model where females primarily are the responsibility of her male agnates, also after marriage, a model also represented in the Muslim Middle East (1991: 16).

time outside the home. The night before she had not arrived at home until nine in the evening and when she came home her mother was both upset and worried because she was out that late. Defending herself she had told her mother of the different offices she had to visit after university was finished, which led to her coming late into work where a paper she had to finish was waiting. Listening to this her mother commented that she thought Anahita worked too much, reminding her that she also had to take her responsibility at home, and to be a decent daughter, upon which Anahita replied that as she is working for women rights to be equal to those of men, she also has to work like a man. In her opinion, if women are to get the same rights as men, they have to work as much and as hard as men do. As she tells me this, I can see she is not happy about the argument with her mother the night before and she goes on talking about how good and kind her parents are who let her continue with all the different activities she has initiated. Not all parents allow their daughters to keep her level of activities in public. As she says, so far her parents have just accepted all her work. She continues to talk about the work she wants to carry on with: the internet café run by female students at the university, the research she is doing on child-marriage in Afghanistan and how she wants to contact the Ministry of Women Affairs as well as President Karzai to discuss the findings from the research, and the work she is doing for the INGO where she is employed. She was all excited about the work she was doing, her ambitions and visions and why it was all so important when she all of a sudden just stopped, looked at me and said: ‘but if I get a husband who does not like that I work in offices, I will stop’. I was very surprised to hear this, as I found Anahita to be one of the braver young women who seemed both to believe very much in the importance of her work as well as working really hard. She continued: ‘cause I do not like arguments in the family, then I stop working’.

I think this conversation with Anahita illustrates very well the constraints young women who want to be active meet, especially regarding families. Even more than young unmarried men, young women are always dependent on their families to approve if they are to participate in public activities on large scale. Smaller activities might be hidden from the family, like Noria, a member in the forum for youths who did not tell her parents that the forum was about political activities and participation in society. She told them it was about cultural revival. When she educated herself to become a journalist her parents were not very happy about her

choice as they did not think journalism was a suitable career path for women. She also knows her parents would not appreciate her interest in political issues, so therefore she chooses to keep it a secret; ‘not to worry my parents unnecessary’.

Anahita’s public activities are too time consuming to hide from her parents. For the time being it seems that she has been able to successfully negotiate with her parents to be allowed to continue all her activities, a negotiation which is portrayed to me as replied with silence: her parents accept what she is doing, but do not give her extra encouragement to continue. Noria and Anahita as such provide examples of how different families have different standards of what is appropriate female behaviour in public³³. However Anahita also makes it clear that it is not a possibility for her to continue her work if this is not accepted by the family, in her case shown through a future scenario of a husband and family in-law who will not accept her work in public, upon where she states she will quit most of her activities.

A couple of weeks later we sit together in the garden of an office, drink tea, talk about how the last weeks have been and comment on some of the friends we have in common. As the sun burns and the tea-cup is emptied for the second time, Anahita starts to question me about Dawaud in particular, how I find him, ‘he is nice, no?’ and if I think he is a good man or not. A little surprised by the intensity of her questions and her eagerness to get the “right” answers, I slowly start to understand her agenda as she goes on talking about the good attitude and values she thinks Dawaud has, how gentleman-like he is and how much he respects women. The way I see it, Anahita’s hope to continue her present activities lies in her future husband and as such her search for a husband, who respects women, who sees the value of women participating in public and who himself is socially engaged, is both an investment for her future career where she can continue the work she has started, and in a family. Combining this with Anahita’s earlier comment on how she will stop working if her future husband does not appreciate it, both supports Tapper’s model where responsibility of female behaviour is transferred from agnatic to affinal kin through marriage, as well as it confirms the need of families to publicly present themselves as an integrated unit. But this does not however reject the possibility for negotiation within families. Currently, Anahita’s natal family allows her to

³³ The largest distinction here is between those families who let their females participate in public, through work or studies, and those who do not let them.

continue her work in public, but for Anahita to be able to keep up her public participation in the future, she now searches for a future husband and family-in-law with whom she sees the possibilities for a successful negotiation thereon³⁴.

Anahitas' negotiations within her family and future negotiations with her in-law family, are concerned with achieving personal autonomy to a degree where she can continue her present public participation without being constrained by the family. While Anahita tries to achieve her autonomy, Sima provides an example where family relations provide an opportunity for future public participation if manoeuvred the right way.

Sima – a parliamentarian candidate?

The negotiation about the level of participation in public of young men and women which goes on in the family, also opens up for taking advantage of these immediate relations. Sima plans to run for the parliamentary elections from her native province. Her family moved to Kabul when she was only one year old and they have lived abroad several periods, however a large part of her extended family still lives in this province, and she sees the province as an entrance into the national assembly³⁵. However determined she seems to be in order to become a candidate in the election, the plans how to gain support all laid out, she still has some negotiations to do in her family:

Elisabet:

What are your political ambitions, go to the national assembly, you said?

Sima:

Yes. You know, still I have not made my husband and brothers to agree, still they do not want me to go to the parliament. But I say: this is an opportunity, let me go there. Because, from my province, they do not have any women to candidate. We have very less educated women. I say: when they chose someone not educated from this province, it is very bad for the country, let me go there, then I can do something. Even you can teach me something. If I do not know anything, elders can teach me something. Because I have this ability to get knowledge, learn something new. But if you chose some elder women, who have her ideas, she will not change. If she goes to

³⁴ Although making several attempts, Anahita was not able to convince Dawaud to start engagement-negotiations. Two years later she married Qays, whom she had met through her work.

³⁵ The constitution of 2004, article 83, secured a quota of women in the national assembly of 25% of the seats, which was regulated to two women elected from each province (Jones, 2004: 139)

the parliament, she will make something bad for the province, for the country. So let me go there. At least I can say something better.

Now, my father is a mathematics teacher, he is the top mathematics teacher in the whole Afghanistan. (...) Yes, he is a really pride for us. So people in my district like my father too much³⁶, because he was not in any political party, he was very helpful to them. He was teaching there, so lot of them are students of my father. So I think this is good for me too. When I will go there, they will say she is the daughter of that man, they will respect me too. And also my father in-law, he is famous in my district. He is a doctor and he has helped them a lot. So, on both sides I have good connection. They respect my family and also my husband's family. So this is a chance for me too to work with them.

Her first concrete plan is to travel to the province in May when her husband returns for holidays from Europe where he is now working³⁷. On this trip to the province she wants to check her possibilities for collecting votes in the upcoming election, through talking with the *shura*, the mullahs and village elders. Gaining this access, she largely relies on her family connections, and to increase her opportunities for collecting votes, she also plans to use her own capabilities:

Then I am a doctor, this is another good thing for me. Because, people like doctors, because they need doctors. In my district they do not have any doctor, and nurse. No nurse, do not [even] think about doctors! I will go there, for 10 days I will be there, and I will train about 20 women who are doing birth deliveries. I will teach them how to do it in a better way. So this is one work I am going to do with them. The other thing is that I will check their schools, to find out what are their needs, then give my suggestions to mullahs and elders, and if I do this work, then I hope they will like me, and vote for me.

As she is telling me this, she shows me a shoe-box she has turned into a locked charity-box. Here she collects money in order to buy cloth for school uniforms to give to the girls in her district, the fund-raising has already started at the medical faculty. She has also chosen two representatives from her class to supervise her when she opens the box, counts the money and to accompany her as she buys the cloth in the bazaar. Because if she has no neutral witnesses 'they will say a lot of bad words after me: she does not have money, she has come to collect money for herself.'

³⁶ "Too much" is the afghan way of saying "very much".

³⁷ While her husband works in Europe, Sima lives with her natal family in Kabul, despite her family-in-law's residence in Kabul. This suggests that Tapper's model of responsibility to be transferred from the agnatic to the affinal relations of a woman through marriage, is not strictly followed. This is also suggested by Damsleth (2002), where benefits of practical reasons override the dominant norm.

Although these are mainly Sima's plans for the future, they clearly signalise what she considers to be her possibility if she is to make it to the national assembly, gaining access to the electorate in her native province through the connections and honour of her family, and her own acquired capabilities as a student of medicine. Regarding family connections, she sees the possibility to draw on both agnatic and affinal relations as they are both regarded as "good families". Secondly, drawing on both families further expands her expected loyalty from the extended families and their kin respectively. The second source for support will be her own personal capabilities through the knowledge acquired through her studies at the medical faculty. By displaying these capabilities and helping others, she will portray herself as knowledgeable, helpful and trustworthy, positively affecting her own status. What seems to be her main catch is to get her husband and brothers, the immediate family, to agree on her plans. As their agreement is secured, and hence their loyalty towards her will be publicly perceived, the rest of the support seems to be easier to achieve.

Sima's concern for her immediate family, husband and brothers, to approve of her candidature for the parliamentary elections supports the close to absolute principle of family unification to be portrayed in public. That she puts equal emphasis on her brothers' and husband's need for agreement suggests a more flexible treatment of the transfer of responsibility of female behaviour through marriage, than what is portrayed by Tapper (1991). Following Tapper, Sima's concern for agreement should lie with her husband and his agnatic kin, but Sima's concern also includes her natal agnatic kin. But in Sima's case, she has the possibility to positively benefit from her natal agnatic kin's honour and to do so, their cooperation is needed. At the same time, her emphasis on their cooperation suggests that if their support is not secured, she will neither go through with her campaign, suggesting that for females, relations to natal kin will also influence their behaviour and choices they make. Secondly, Sima's case points to the benefits of looking at the prestige of a family in public as a resource for all family members, one of mutual dependence between the individual members, not only female behaviour determining male honour (Tapper, 1991). Sima's case shows how family honour, mainly her father's and father-in-law's social status, can be strategically applied by females in negotiation and as wheels for personal aspirations to come true. At the same time,

her future prospect of being a member of parliament, one can also interpret as a possibility for the whole family to increase its honour in public, through their female member.

Sima provides a case where drawing on family relations can positively affect her possibilities to reach her goal, a seat in the parliament. In her case, her families (natal and affinal) enable her to gain access to public participation. The position of these families in public is a resource available to her. With the case of Anahita, she mentions no such resources within her family to draw on to increase her possibility for public participation. Comparing the two of them suggests that the status of the family one belongs to, will affect on what background public participation is made available, either through ascription or achievement. Being member of a family with high social status or of political importance can enable the possibility for public participation through this ascribed status (like Sima), while those who not have family-relations directly enabling public participation needs to rely on an achieved status (Anahita). Whether to rely on ascribed or achieved status for public participation also brings implications on how family-relations are maintained, perhaps particularly visible among males. To further elaborate on these implications I will go back to Shaker who was introduced at the start of this chapter and look into how his relation with his father evolved. Secondly I will introduce Ahmad as a counter case, and together these two cases provide data on how the social status of the family influences the level of personal autonomy.

Ascription or achievement – implications on personal autonomy

Going back to Shaker, the position of his family, shown through his father's political engagement, suggests an ascribed possibility for Shaker's future political participation. Introducing Ahmad as a counter case, whose family is not politically active and who will therefore need to rely on his own achievements for public participation, I will argue that the possibilities for ascribed entrance and achieved entrance into public participation will also influence the character of the relation between youths and their family, and the level of personal autonomy achievable.

Only a month after Shaker's agreement with his father, he again seemed out of spirits and started to spend as much time as possible outside his home. This time it was not the marriage-

issue which was the top priority of their troubled relationship, but as Shaker explained, that he felt his father did not recognise the quality of the work Shaker was doing. These conclusions would start with Shaker's frustration that his father would complain that his hair is too long, that he wears jeans, spends too much time outside the house, and too little time in their native province. Shaker was frustrated that these were the only areas his father would focus on, that he was not able to appreciate or see the value of the work he did neither in the NGO, the boards of which he is a member, nor through the youth organisation in Kabul. This conflict seemed to be solved as Shaker accompanied his father on a trip to their native province for some days. When they came back, Shaker told how he and his father sat together with the people in their village and discussed the future elections³⁸, their function and the importance of participating. Proudly he stated that all people in their village, both men and women, now were ready to register in order to obtain an election card.

Shaker's relation with his father, and further with his family, is one of great importance. The status of his family is one of political influence in their village, now managed through his father's political activities. For Shaker this status is a potential to secure future political support and participation through ascription, and for his father, Shaker's commitment to his tribe can widen the repertoire of his current political influence. Due to this social and political position of the family, I will argue that Shaker needs to renounce parts of his personal autonomy to fulfil the obligations anticipated due to his ascribed status as the son in this particular family. For youths who do not belong to a family of political significance, where access to participation relies on an achieved status, personal autonomy from the family seems to be more necessary for reaching desired goals. Ahmad proves such a case.

Ahmad is born in Herat, a city in western Afghanistan, but lives in Kabul and attends Kabul University. Even though there is a university in Herat, Ahmad decided to go to Kabul for two reasons: the first, that he found the intellectual environment in Herat to be too narrow for his ideas and he saw fewer possibilities to elaborate on them; secondly, he wanted to move away from the control of his father. As I understood it, when Ahmad moved there was no major conflict between him and his father and family, and Ahmad often talks about how he misses

³⁸ At this time (April 2004) the presidential and parliamentary elections were both set to be in August 2004.

his family, parents and younger siblings. As Ahmad explained to me, when he lives in Kabul his father cannot check up on everything he does and he is free to spend time with the people he himself chooses to be with, being socially active and elaborate on his visions. When I asked Ahmad if his father had approved of him moving to Kabul, he responded that he thought his father knew they had different ideas, so when Ahmad decided to leave for Kabul to ‘get a new start’, Ahmad said: ‘my father just let me do so’.

A clear distinction between Shaker and Ahmad is their future prospects for public positions which are directly drawn from family-relations. Shaker has the possibility to pursue his father’s position within the tribe, and to secure his ascribed position his relationship with his father, his family, extended family and also kin are of major importance to later get legitimacy among his tribe in their native province. To sustain this possibility, he needs to relinquish parts of his personal autonomy and fulfil the obligations mainly his father puts on him, a relinquish Shaker at times seems to find hard to accept, shown through his disputes with his father. Ahmad, on the other hand, being a son of a trader, has no ascribed status to rely on which influence his future aspirations for public participation, neither as an intellectual nor as a political person. When Ahmad in addition seems to have ‘different ideas’ than his father, his choice is to move to another city to obtain autonomy from his family in order to establish his own career through education, contact with other students and networking with others who have the ‘same mindset’ as he does. He sees a future career and positions to be gained through achievement, built on personal capabilities and networks mainly established outside his family network. By moving away from the immediate proximity of the family, he is freer to establish these contacts without disturbance, possible disagreements or confrontations, mainly from his father. Like Ahmad, Shaker also sees the possibility to establish a career through new contacts and networking, as argued earlier as one of the reasons for delaying his marriage. But in addition, his ascribed status provides a similar career-path. His relation with his family needs to be managed satisfactorily in order to maintain the opportunity to benefit from them and secondly, the nature of his father’s position is also influenced by the proximity of Shaker presence, upon where Shaker complains about his lack of autonomy.

As I have shown here, the future possibility for participation through ascription or achievement seem to influence the level of personal autonomy from the family. Additionally, access through ascription or achievement can also be interpreted in connection to how political loyalties are established. Relating the case of Shaker and Ahmad to the two alternative models outlined in the introduction, Shaker has the possibility to enter the political arena through political loyalties established on kinship, which corresponds on the perspectives presented by Barth (2004). On the other hand, Ahmad can be seen as an example on political loyalties established outside the kinship, which shows similarities with the perspectives of Edwards (2002), Harpviken (1995) and Mousavi (1998) in where ideology and the possibility for achieved entrance into the political arena replaces kinship and ascription. As Shaker and Ahmad shows, among the youths in Kabul both these possibilities seems to exist. It is on this basis the next chapter will look into different perception of politics, and different model for access to participation which are derived from these perceptions.

Summing up

The strong position of the family in the Afghan society restricts the personal autonomy of youths in many ways. The patriarchal structure within the family and the family's need of public integrity, lead to a strong reciprocity of obligations and rights within the family that the youths with necessity need to relate to. What this chapter has shown is how youths themselves negotiate within their families, to obtain personal autonomy enabling them to participate in public. Using marriage as a point of departure, the youth's possibility to influence both the timing and the spouse-to-be are strategies employed to maintain the present autonomy which enables public participation, as well as securing future participation either through building personal networks or as in Anahita's case, searching for a husband and family-in-law who will allow her to continue present activities. Another strategy to increase personal autonomy and further possibilities for participation, is to move away from the immediate proximity of the family, of which Ahmad is one example. Ahmad and Anahita are examples of youths who need to negotiate to obtain personal autonomy from their families in order to participate in public, while Shaker and Sima are examples of how family-relations can also be enabling in the Afghan society. Both of them can rely on their ascribed status to gain access to the political realm. Rather than obtaining personal autonomy from the family, they need to

cultivate their family-relations to secure this possibility for public participation. The distinction between Anahita and Ahmad on one hand, and Shaker and Sima on the other, leads to a distinction on whether participation is accessible through achievement or ascription. Participation through ascription reflects the political model described by Barth (2004), where loyalties are based on kinship, while participation through achievement suggests an alternative model for participation (Edwards, 2002; Harpviken, 1995; Mousavi, 1998) where achieved status and loyalties bypassing kinship are seen as a possible entrance into the political realm. These different models for gaining access to participation will be elaborated further in the next chapter, which will look into different perceptions on politics, and the different models these perceptions extract.

Chapter 4: Politics and its competing discourses

Introduction

‘The general perception of politics by the Afghans is that of war and terror. I have a more honourable understanding: I want politics to be something good’.

Merwais

Afghanistan has the last 25 years “seen it all” when it comes to the political orientation of the regime³⁹. They have witnessed coup d’etat, the Soviet invasion, civil war, religious regimes, foreign military coalition forces and international military security forces which by invitation and cooperation with the transitional authorities are still present for the sake of state-building. The population has met them all; the communists, the Mujaheddins (holy warriors), the Talibs (religious students), the Americans, other international soldiers and the Ministers in the current government. How have these encounters influenced the perception of what politics is? What are the connotations of *politics* in Afghanistan today? And how do the perceptions of politics influence the youth’s possibilities for participation and how they look upon participation?

This chapter will elaborate on these questions, starting with the youth’s perceptions of politics. Perceptions in plural, because I will argue there is no uniform perception of what politics is. The diverging perceptions also present different political models. Following a discussion on whether university students should be political active or not, different political models will be presented in accordance with the perceptions on politics, and theoretically linked up to patriarchy, tribalism (particularism) and universalism. After elaborating on the different political models, I will again go back to the diverging perceptions of politics, and see how these perceptions are conveyed by the youths in public, and which external factors that influence this. I will divide this into two areas, relations to political activities, and general talk about politics. Through taking you through this fairly long chapter, I hope to be able to

³⁹ Discourse is here understood in a Foucauldian version, where a discourse designates both language and also what is represented through the language, e.g. it identifies both ways of speaking, thinking and practices appropriate and legitimate which follows (Grillo, 1997: 12)

explain strategies, manoeuvres and the blurred category of politics presented by my informants and interpreted by me.

Perceptions of politics

Politics in Afghanistan, both previous and current is much discussed. The last 25 years of war and conflict in Afghanistan are by most people regarded as evidence that policies during this era failed. Still there is little trust in the political institutions, and the loyalty and priorities of members of the government and other governmental employees, are questioned. I will argue that these last 25 years the society Afghans have lived in and witnessed, has given the word politics negative connotations. Their experience of politics is that it leads to war and conflict, and politics is often associated with killing, destructions, betrayal, and ethnic divisions. When talking about previous politics, it is often referred to as the politics of guns where those without firearms had no saying at all. Warlords and commanders have become common terms. Those living in Afghanistan have witnessed the danger of opposing those in power, relatives and friends have been jailed, even killed, and more than five million people had to flee to a life as refugees (Damsleth, 2002: 9). Every Afghan family has their own stories of how the last 25 years of the political history have affected them, and most of those experiences leave a perception of politics as something negative, something dangerous and further as something one should not intervene with if it can be avoided.

The Soviet invasion (1979) can be seen as the escalating factor of the conflict, and those considered youths today are born just before or right after this invasion. This gives Afghanistan a generation of youths that has never experienced their country in peace until the inauguration of the interim government led by Hamid Karzai in June 2002⁴⁰. Those living all their life inside Afghanistan have had the different conflicts as part of their daily lives, while those living abroad for certain periods of time have always had the notion of the reason why they had to flee their native country.

⁴⁰ Despite the inauguration of an interim government, it can be questioned whether the country has peace or not. See ASIA- briefing (2004) for diverse military political factions which still exist, both in Kabul and in the provinces.

Although all Afghans have been affected by this history, yet in diverse ways, I would argue that the perception of politics is not homogenous. Some have a more positive understanding of politics, at least of the possibility of politics being something else than how it has manifested itself in Afghanistan. Ferdaus once gave his opinion:

At the conference at Hotel Intercontinental Fauzia Wahad, the parliamentarian from Pakistan, she talked about politics, which is my opinion as well. Two definitions; one is that politics is the way of gaining and maintain power. The other definition is that politics is, I think this second is a little better for me, (...) how to rule a country, how to manage the country, to make the expenses the least and to gain the most. I want rationalised politics, not the kind of politics that are in Afghanistan today. This is the way of killing and damaging things.

Ferdaus's statement in itself shows two diverging perceptions of politics. He believes politics is about how to rule a country: gain the most and incur the lowest expenses , but simultaneously he puts his understanding forward as an opposition to the politics he sees in Afghanistan: that of 'killing and damaging' and 'not rationalised'. Also Nadia puts forward two different perceptions of politics, one of what she thinks politics is about, the second how she sees other people define politics:

I think it is management, the art of management. Management of a country, the work or issues that a country will have internally and also with outside partners, international relationships. [It is] how to find the aim of the people and also it should be about how to improve the power itself. This is managing, politics. But if you say people's opinion, they say politics is a way of playing tricks. Because they have experienced whenever a politician came to the chair of presidency, they sold themselves to other countries. They have been used by whether they were British or Russian, they have been sold. And they welcomed the foreigners into our country, but the people have struggled. Many times they [the people] have struggled. It was the politicians who (...) invited the foreigners to come to this country (...). And it has happened through the centuries, if you read our history, it is a very complicated history.

From these statements there is no uniform view on politics to extract. Rather one can see two diverging perceptions: one focuses on the negative aspects of politics: 'that of killing and damaging things' and 'the way of playing tricks', the other on the potentially positive aspects of politics: 'how to manage the country, to make the expenses the least and gain the most', and 'how to find the aim of the people'. Further the negative perceptions are based on

experience: ‘not the kind of politics we have in Afghanistan’ and ‘because they have experienced whenever a politician (...)’, while the more positive perception has no references to experience. Instead, like Ferdaus shows through agreeing with the Pakistani parliamentarian, the more positive perception has an external source. It is something learned, but not experienced. Based on these findings, I will argue that there are two diverging perceptions of politics, one based on experience, the second based on learned knowledge. By learned knowledge, I see the learned perception as a result of acquired information gained mainly through different kinds of education, formal or informal. On the other hand, the experienced perception I see as a result of the particular situation in which the individuals have physically lived. It builds on their personal experiences, both psychologically and physically felt through their everyday life as a result of the macro politics of their country. This gives an experienced perception which has mostly negative connotations, while the learned perception has more positive connotations. These perceptions must be seen as analytical distinctions rather than fixed categories. The real world is neither as organised and clear-cut, nor are opinions always sufficiently coherent to fit into one of these categories. However, I believe the distinction between learned and experienced perceptions will be further clarified and lay the foundation for a better understanding of the attitudes towards participation as we will look into a discussion on whether university-students should participate in politics or not. This discussion, and the arguments put forward will also bring forth how the different perceptions of politics reveal different models of politics.

University students and political participation

This discussion about university students and political participation was held in the forum of youths I got introduced to in January 2004⁴¹. Every Thursday the participants met at 2 p.m. for a 2 – 3 hour session, where a diverse range of different topics were discussed, from gender issues, the role of civil society and the upcoming election-process, to peace- building and ‘how to deal with journalists’, to mention a few. Like every Thursday, also this Thursday I came early to the office, and around noon, Muneer who was in charge of the session this week, got a phone call, talked, looked at me, and said the session had to be cancelled. The

⁴¹ See introduction for more information.

invited first speaker, a member of the constitutional commission, had called and said she could not make it due to illness. Muneer wanted to cancel the session, but I suggested to have a discussion on university students and politics instead. I remembered this had been one issue mentioned during a brainstorming on topics for forthcoming sessions, held earlier in the forum, and I convinced Muneer it was better to carry out the planned session, despite the change of topic, than to cancel it only two hours before. As he was convinced, I hurried back home to fetch my recorder as I anticipated the discussion would be interesting.

At the discussion it was only the participants in the forum and me who were present, and no representative from the INGO whose office we used. At this time, I was fairly well acquainted with the participants and them with me, so I regard this discussion as authentic in the sense that the participants were stating their opinions, not too influenced or obstructed by my presence or the location⁴². The possible restrictions on opinions uttered, would mainly be imposed among the participants themselves, restrictions based on interpersonal relations where location does not play any significant role⁴³. The initial question for the discussion was: “Should university students participate in politics?” Based on the individual participant’s answer they were seated in two rows: those in favour of students to participate in politics in one row opposite those who think students should not participate in politics. The extract from the discussion is fairly long, however dramatically reduced from the length of the original discussion. The reason why I choose to make this space for this discussion, is that I believe it will give a better understanding of the different perceptions of politics, on the rhetoric the youths use when discussing participation and also that it will be a good foundation for extracting political models the youths use in their arguments on participation. As Muneer was convinced, I fetched my recorder as I anticipated this discussion to become on interest.

⁴² Taking into consideration that the discussion was held inside the offices of an international NGO and the participants were part of a forum arranged by this INGO, several will argue that these surroundings will influence the participants, not to state their “true” opinion but rather what they believe the “internationals” want to hear from them. In many cases I also believe this will be the case, however in this particular situation, when I was the only non- Afghan present, and no one of the employees of the organisation was present, I believe the “INGO- influence” was limited.

⁴³ The aspect of interpersonal relations according to talk about politics will be discussed later in this chapter.

- the arguments

Against: Merwais, male, 22 years old, student at Kabul University and radio- reporter

First one has to look at the definition of politics. Politics is fine, but in our society, when we talk about politics, it is just bad. Everyone here talks about politics, but it is different from other places, different problems, governments around the world have different priorities than the government here. In our society, politics is dangerous. Politics is about power. Theory is something different than the practical aspect of politics. One has to look at the practical aspect, the outcome of it, and whether or not it can be changed. Politics here is not based on values. Even during the communists there were good education, a prosperous time, but their politics were still focused on for example language, and not values. These are the facts on politics in Afghanistan. One cannot be political active and transfer this fact.

If our generation enters into politics, it will have one goal: to enter the political parties, and to gain power. In order to gain power, one sacrifices everything: lives, honour, ideas and moral.

The youths that enter politics today are very much ideological when they start. But when they enter they discover the realities of politics behind the scene. They get disappointed. There are two ways of dealing with this: either they leave the political scene and do not want to have anything to do with it, or they become opportunists. They stay in the political sphere and get thought how to do politics by the elder, and learn to accept and work for the issues based on old criteria.

For: Amin, male, 25 years old, student at Kabul University and journalist in a weekly paper.

One has to look at the logics of politics to understand this. Two aspects are important: political awareness and political action. It is natural that every human being should have political awareness. We all enter the physical world based on our political awareness. Therefore the political awareness has priority to political activity. To find the logic in politics, one has to do an assessment. The question to ask is: did we have logical politics in the past in Afghanistan? By experience one can say that there was not enough political awareness.

One should not say that it is bad for youths to enter politics. They should rather seek a new tactic in order to enter politics. All generations or sects should be involved in politics, everybody, every group should be represented in politics.

Some says that we should wait until later, sometime in the future. If not now, then when is the time right for youths to enter politics? The next step has to start one day, one cannot only wait for this to happen sometime in the future.

Further, there are many different students. It is not certain that the students today will make the same mistakes as have been done earlier. It is not necessarily that these mistakes will occur once more.

Against: Marjam, female, 21 years old, high-school graduate

It is not a good idea that youths should enter politics now, now politics are affiliated with ethnic groups and languages. If youths enter politics now, they will stand for the same issues later, they will continue this way of dealing with politics. Youths have

never had the opportunity to use their own minds. I can be in favour of political awareness, but not political activities.

For: Ferdaus, male, 24 years old, student at Kabul University

If the issue is that youths should wait to join politics until the time when national politics are good, that youths should not enter the bad national politics which it is now, when is this time? The question is that when you are 18 years you have the right to vote, are you then not also capable of taking responsibility for entering politics? 25 years ago, it was the students and the youths that made demonstrations towards the government. They were the one to shed light and changed the focal point on governmental politics. One should jump into politics now, one can be able to do good politics now. Someone has to do the effort to change the bad politics that are practiced now into a better way of dealing with politics. We should not be afraid. There is no one else doing this effort, why should not the youths do this?

Against: Fawad, male, 18 years old, high-school student

We need a strong, even dictator government to secure security in this country. Take away the weapons. History has shown that 2 -3 parties have destroyed our country. In our society, every mistake in politics has a bad result. If one does one mistake in politics, this will influence 10 generations. Bad politics have earlier damaged this country, and will most likely do it again.

For: Noria, female, 24 years old, student at Kabul University

Youths should go into politics due to past experience, we have seen what the mistakes has brought us, and we have learned of those mistakes.

Against: Hamid, male, 26 years old, student at Kabul University

We are talking about the involvement of youths in politics, then first we have to look at the definition of politics again. The definition is killing, arresting people, bloodshed, damaging and so on. All bad things. This is the definition of politics in Afghanistan. Everybody says that Pakistan and Iran are the reasons for the bad and current situation in Afghanistan, but I don't think so. It has also with the internal management of politics to do. If one looks at the history, the creation of political parties was announced by the King. The first that was founded was based on ethnicity. There is no fair politics in Afghanistan. It is all about ethnicity; Karzai is supported by Pashtuns, Fahim by Tajik and so on with all the politicians. How can one expect youths to enter politics when this is the leading principle?

At university we are 60 people in each class, all affiliated to some ethnic group. I think we should do politics by not entering the present political sphere. If the youths of today avoid getting involved in politics, and the next generation as well, then maybe politics have neutralised. Then there will be no ethnicity, no language issues.

For: Samir, male, 22 years old, employee

There are now some rural areas that are more developed than urban areas. In some rural areas there are up to 20 schools. This means that these areas will be better educated, and the education will not be equal around the country. Young people should be aware of this happening now, they should be aware of political priorities that are done.

Against: Hamid

Why are some districts better off with schools? You are Hazara [pointing at the previous speaker], you say that you have more schools, better education and therefore are better than Pashtuns and Tajiks...

[At this point the discussion gets very heated and aggressive, 4-5 participants are talking at the same time, pointing at each other and gesticulating. The facilitator is after some minutes able to calm down the situation, and let the previous speaker finish off this part of the discussion]

For: Samir

One ethnic leader made many schools, he found this important because of the oppression during the history.

Against: Merwais

We say we cannot wait to go into politics. But what do we do when we are there? We are in such a hurry to enter the politics that we do not have the time to think about what we want to do there. We have to identify the tools of being influential, before we can enter the politics.

Then there are different mentalities here. It is a difficulty with the mentality of the people. I have a friend who says he is a democrat, but he will not let his wife register for [to obtain] the election card. At the same time you cannot confront the teacher at the university. These are the mentalities that still exist here. Some are extremists, I am a democrat, but we cannot accept each other. I believe in democracy, but there is no room for extremists in my democracy, and opposite, for the extremists there is no room for democrats. It is not possible for these groups to accept each other. For these groups to live together and in peace is just not possible. This is how the situation is here in Afghanistan now.

Experienced and learned perception as guiding participation?

I was surprised to see that only four of the nine participants present from the start were in favour of university students being politically active, after all the participants in this forum were chosen because of their interest for capacity building in political and social fields. At first I believed the reason for this negative attitude for university students to be politically active could be directly connected to their roles as students, and that the restrictions from the university administration⁴⁴ would weigh heavily in their arguments. However, those present who at the time were university students, were randomly seated on both sides and the explicit arguments of the university administration's possible sanctions were long in coming. Further the discussion turned from concerning university students in particular to youths in general, where reference to occupation was given less weight. Of more importance, than explicit circumstances at the university, I find the aforementioned variations in the perceptions of politics. How, then, were these arguments used to convey their opinion on political participation by youths?

Through this discussion one can shortly summarise the arguments as follows: those who think youths should not be politically active argue that the history has shown that political activities lead to failure, their experience of politics is 'bad', including 'killing, arresting people, bloodshed and damaging', it is 'dangerous', and it is about 'power'. History has shown that mistakes in politics have 'damaged the country'. The politics is only about 'ethnic groups and language': it is not 'based on values'. This is true both historically and today, and it is not possible to change this way of doing politics: 'one cannot be political active and transfer this fact'. While those against political participation among students argue that the way of dealing with politics is not changeable, those in favour of participation see youths as possible agents for change in the political field. The youths should 'seek a new tactic in order to enter politics' because 'someone has to do the effort to change the bad politics'. Reaching the legal age of 18 and enabled to vote also signifies being 'capable of taking responsibility for entering politics'. When entering politics, awareness is important. The lived experience of the youths equip them with knowledge of how politics should not be done, their negative personal

⁴⁴ The university administration has officially prohibited political activities on campus. This will be elaborated in chapter 5.

experience of politics gives them a guideline on how politics can be done in a better way: ‘we have learned of those mistakes’.

As the initial question of the discussion was a yes or no-question, it is natural that the following arguments also stress these two aspects, and as most discussions, neither this one had a final answer. However, looking into their arguments and how they perceive politics, gives a deeper understanding of their attitude towards political participation. Those emphasizing an experienced perception of politics, argue that students should not participate. And those who argue students should participate in politics, convey other ideals of what politics can be. I will therefore continue to elaborate briefly on the different models of politics that can be extracted from these two competing opinions. Based on experience the models of “the elder” and “ethnicity & affiliation” are extracted, while with those who argue youths should participate, these models are replaced by “equality” and “knowledge”.

Models of politics

The elder

‘Youths never had the opportunity to use their own minds’, Marjam argues, and I find this remark a good example reflecting the tradition of respect of the elders, still salient in Afghanistan. The tradition of respect of the elders was often mentioned as one of the major obstacles for the youths to contribute to society, this being in the family, at university, at work or in other social arenas. Elders are anticipated to be treated with respect, meaning the younger should listen carefully, not interrupt or raise objections and implicitly the elders’ opinions should be accepted by the younger. This understanding of respect became clear to me during a seminar in a youth organisation. The seminar was on communication and one of the sessions concerned showing respect to your partner in a dialogue. Many participants expressed difficulties in doing so if the person they were in dialogue with had another opinion than themselves. Because, as they stated, once you show respect to a person you simultaneously accept his opinions. For them it was difficult to respect a person whose opinions they did not accept: respecting and accepting are seen as two sides of the same coin. This interconnection of the two concepts goes the other way around as well: the elders should

be respected, their opinions therefore have to be accepted. It is also a notion that the elders use their respect and the practices that follows, to impose their ideas on the younger⁴⁵. In these cases, the younger see no other possibility than to accept the word of the elders. The respect of the elders is based on a perspective where the elders are seen as having more lived experience, more knowledge, more wisdom and are regarded more complete human beings whereas the young are seen as being less knowledgeable, easily disturbed by emotions, not as good a judge on issues as elders and not fully developed as a human being.

The elders as a patriarchy

The model of the elder contains the notion seniority and patriarchy. Patriarchy has been an object of research for many feminist scholars, through gender studies where female subordination to males has been the main focus. However, patriarchy is not only concerned with male domination over females, and Holter (1997) sees patriarchy as a concern of stratification. This stratification leads to ‘women’s secondary position in society and related same-sex or not sex-specific stratification’ (ibid: 280). Holter argues that in modern research on patriarchy, the cross-sex domination is often in focus, neglecting the same-sex domination which was previously more prominent. From her study among female Palestinian refugees Cheryl Rubenberg (2001) defines patriarchy as ‘the privileging of males and seniors and the mobilization of kin structures, kin morality, and kin idioms to legitimate and institutionalise gendered and aged domination’ (ibid: 13). This definition refines Holter’s emphasis on same-sex domination to seniors’ dominance of the young, which I will argue is of significant importance in this study on youths. Secondly, while Holter sees patriarchy as a stratification system in the wider society, Rubenberg knits the patriarchy to emerge in the structure of the family and kin. The power relations of patriarchy originate in the domestic realm, where the patriarch controls resources, reproduction through female control and the legitimate use of violence. From being a domestic attribute, she also argues that it serves as a template for the reproduction of patriarchal relations in other realms of social life (ibid: 12). Reaching out to other social realms also means reaching the level of political regimes. The wide reach of the patriarchal ideology of which Hisham Sharabi applies the term neopatriarchal, includes both macrostructures and microstructures. He argues that this modern form of patriarchy has

⁴⁵ With regard to not treating all elders as one, there will be individual variations on how an elder treats a younger person, and whether he will open up for suggestions or not from a younger person.

developed in the encounter between modernity and tradition. Despite its modern form, the internal structures are rooted in patriarchal values and social relations of kinship, clan, religious and ethnic groups (Moghadam, 1993: 112). Both the patriarchal family and the patriarchal ideology persist throughout the Middle East (ibid: 113), so also in Afghanistan.

Drawn from this literature, the patriarchy can be visible in different social areas and displays itself in different forms. In the previous chapter on family relations, it has already been displayed, and the patriarchy will be a recurring concept throughout the thesis. In the discussion on students' participation in politics, one of the ways patriarchy becomes visible is through the dominance by seniors over juniors, and hence, the term "the elder". In this discussion it becomes a question of accessibility into political established realms. Seniors control both access and the agenda, and for acceptance, one needs to play along with the dominant rules: 'They [the youths] become opportunists, they stay in the political sphere and get through how to do politics by the elder (...)', and when these rules are internalised, they are difficult to change: '(...) and learn to accept and work for the issues based on old criteria'. A second way it materialises in this discussion is through the emphasis of ethnicity and affiliation.

Ethnicity & affiliation

'There is no fair politics in Afghanistan. It is all about ethnicity: Karzai is supported by Pashtuns, Fahim by Tajiks and so on with all the politicians'. Hamid's statement is one example of the anticipated loyalty in macro-political issues which lies within the Afghan society, that of ethnicity. Roy (1990: 220- 221) argues that the civil war transferred the previous loyalty of people to local solidarity groups, to the level of ethnicity (see also Rubin, 2002: 234- 237). In macro-scale politics this is also visible today, and in the interim government the posts as ministers are neatly divided between the different ethnic groups, and several of the ministries are accused of being ethnically homogenous (ASIA Briefing, 2004). This transformation of loyalty from a local solidarity group to an ethnic group, also corresponds with the notion of neopatriarchy, where kinship solidarity evolves into clan, religious and ethnic groups. In the terminology of anthropologists, this shows similarities with the theory of tribalism developing into ethnicity. Eriksen (2002) argues this change is both a

result of the change of environment of those in question (ibid: 33, 88) and the preferred terminology used by the anthropologists. Whereas tribes were previously seen as isolated, the notion of ethnic group implies an interrelationship between different groups, where these categories are created through the contact with other groups (ibid: 10). The level of ethnic incorporation varies, and in Don Handelman's categorisation (Eriksen, 2002: 42) ethnic groups in Afghanistan could be categorised within ethnic associations where shared interests are expressed through political organisations, the way they showed themselves during the civil war. Today, many of the active political parties are the same as those who fought during the civil war, and although cooperating in the interim government and theoretically working towards a national loyalty, Roy (2003) argues that some ministers continue their particularistic policy favouring their ethnic group, which further blocks, or at least slows down the process towards a national unity.

While affiliation towards macro- scale politics still bears evidence of ethnicity as the main loyalty as 'we are all affiliated to some ethnic group', affiliation on micro-scale does not necessarily only direct to ethnic belonging. Roy (1994) argues that belonging to a solidarity group which signifies one's loyalty, is not only based on extended kinship, but can also emerge through the same residential area, patron- client contracts or occupational groups. As such, loyalty is context dependent, it can change according to situation, which societal level one operates on, and which actions are at hand (Rubin, 2002: 24- 25). Since loyalty is context dependent, affiliation can again be seen as a question of access, where those affiliated gain access to desirable goods. Although these are not necessarily guided by ethnicity, they can still be considered to convey a particularistic ideology similar to that of ethnicity, where membership or personal relations are what give access.

The model of the elder and of ethnicity & affiliation is highlighted by those who argue against political participation by youth, those who argue in favour of youth participation, replace these models with the alternatives, equality and knowledge.

Equality

Thus, on the other hand, those who argue in favour of youth to actively participate, replace the political model of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation with a model based on equality: ‘All generations or sects should be involved in politics, everybody, every group should be represented in politics’, Amin said. Focusing on equality they argue that a person who has reached the full age and legal capacity at the age of 18 and hence are regarded as liable to vote in an election, should also be considered accountable enough to enter political activities. Along with this argument goes that individuals from different groups: youths, women and different ethnic and religious groups alike should have an equal opportunity to participate in political activities if desired. The equal opportunity to participate also indicates equal weight on the individual voices and the individual’s right to choose freely which voice to use. In other words, the model of equality calls for the eradication of discrimination.

For the youths, the legal age is of importance as a standard for who should be treated as equal. Another salient issue is the equality between men and women. At a youth conference arranged in Kabul at the end of November 2003, 120 youths were gathered to comment on the draft-constitution⁴⁶. One of the suggestions for change in the wording of the constitution came in article 22, chapter 2 (The Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens). The wording in the draft was: ‘Any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan is prohibited’ but the youths wanted to add the phrase ‘men and women’ suggesting the wording of the article to be: ‘Any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens, *men and women*, of Afghanistan is prohibited’. In the final constitution this article remained unchanged, however chapter 1, article 4, was changed from ‘The word Afghan applies to every citizen of Afghanistan’ in the draft⁴⁷ to the wording in the final constitution: ‘The word Afghan applies to every citizen of Afghanistan, woman and man’ (Janse, 2004: 124). The need to formally state the equality between men and women in the constitution reflects the conditions this relationship has within the society. However, stating equality in the

⁴⁶ This conference was arranged by a working group of Afghan youths funded through the international NGO which in January established the forum where this discussion was conducted. The suggestion for change in the draft constitution was the result of two days of group work where different groups got different chapters in the draft constitution to analyse. The results were presented in plenum at the end of the conference, as well as handed over to the Constitutional commission which at that time was still consulting the draft constitution.

⁴⁷ Private copy.

constitution does not quickly change the relations within the society, but following Moghadam (1993) 'legislation is the key element in the strategies available to the state in its efforts to produce social changes or to maintain the status quo' (ibid: 111). This paragraph symbolises two important elements, the equality of women and men, and secondly, that all citizens of Afghanistan, regardless of ethnic belonging, should be considered an Afghan.

Equality as universalism

For the youths in my research, the call for a national identity, to transcend ethnic belonging is often spoken about, and in this way, it shows similarities to Benedict Anderson's (2006) definition of a nation: 'it is an imagined political community – and it is imagined both as inherently limited and sovereign' (ibid: 6). Of most importance in this thesis, is his notion of community. Anderson argues it is a community 'because regardless of actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship', and it is this horizontal comradeship I see present in the youths' vision for everybody to be treated on equal terms. While nationalism often calls for a homogenisation of the population, argued by Anderson (2006) to come as a result of industrialisation, print-capitalism and mass-education, Eriksen (2002) highlights that not all nationalism calls for the homogenisation of cultures, but rather focuses on equal rights for its citizens. This form of nationalism can emerge in polyethnic states, where the emphasis is on shared rights as citizens, rather than shared culture (ibid: 119). As I understand my informants, their call is for the equality of people, eradication of discrimination and for people to have equal rights, regardless of background. This can be interpreted as a universal principle guiding their values, and it is perhaps appropriate to mention the understanding Max Weber (1971) gives of a legal government. In its purest form, the legal government is that of bureaucracy, built upon rational principles. Within a legal government, who decides and to which degree the decision should be obeyed are regulated through legal rules (ibid: 91- 92). From the point of view that those decisions are made upon, the legal rules will guide the outcome, not personal relations or any other particularistic relationship towards the decision-maker, which are common within the traditional government (ibid: 94- 95). Building on the models of patriarchy and ethnicity, these two can be interpreted as traditionalist governments, where personal relations can be highly influential on the outcome of the decision. From the discussion above, those

arguing for youth to be politically active, gives arguments which shows similarities, I will argue, with rational principles based on equality and universalism.

Another feature of Weber's notion of the legal government is the need for those who work within the administration to have competence in the work they are performing. Employees need to show discipline in their work, competence within the frames of the work they are doing, and follow the rights grounded in the legal system underpinning it (ibid: 92-93). This perspective also corresponds to many of my informants call for professionalism, this be in regular jobs, at university or in the state administration, which further leads to the alternative model of knowledge.

Knowledge

Ethnicity and affiliation is still a dominant mechanism in the access to the state-level of political affairs. Samir said once, commenting on a change of one of the ministers: 'first one should replace a Hazara with a skilled Hazara', which confirms the importance of ethnicity and affiliation. But as Samir continued: 'in the future, you want to bring a skilled person, even though he is not a Hazara, you can bring him'. This suggests it should not be affiliation which is the entrance into positions, but knowledge and capabilities. Knowledge and awareness are supplies in demand in the Afghan society. Youths are eager to learn, and course centres are popping up at every second corner in Kabul. And the awareness and knowledge these attendants acquire are equally expected to be acquired among the politicians at their level. '(...) Did we have logical politics in the past in Afghanistan? By experience one can say that there was not enough political awareness', Amin said during the previous discussion, which suggests that also political knowledge is in demand. One of the reasons why this is still in demand, is seen as a result of the model of affiliation as the main entrance into political positions, the persons are not capable to perform in their position in a professional way. Whereas knowledge is anticipated to be provided through educational institutions, awareness can be a result of previous experiences. 'One ethnic leader made many schools, he found this important because of the oppression during the history' indicates that experience, also negative experiences, brings awareness. Several of the youths highlight the negative experience they have had with politics during the conflict as a positive resource for them to

enter the political realm: ‘we [the youths] have seen what the mistakes have brought us, and we have learned from those mistakes’.

Political models and the perception of politics

The models extracted from the discussion on university students and political participation with additional inserts of other relevant data, are put forward as oppositions. On one side are the models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation, based on particularistic principles, while on the other side the models of equality and knowledge convey universalistic principles. I further suggest that these models are derived from the different perceptions of politics, that of an experienced perception and of a learned perception. This leads to a schematical presentation as shown in model 1.

Political models, model 1.

Perception of politics:	Experienced perception	Learned perception
Models:	The elder	Equality
	Ethnicity & affiliation	Knowledge
Values	Particularistic	Universalistic

The models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation, I will argue derives from an experienced perception of politics. In the arguments these models are based on what the youths have seen in previous politics, and what they see as the standard in current political affairs. These arguments, and the corresponding models are also put forward by those who argue against students participating in politics. The models of politics conveyed are models they place less trust on, and they do not want these models to prevail. Further they do not see these models to be changeable, which give the extended argument that if youths enter politics, they will reproduce these specific models. In addition to this argument the youths put forward, it can also be useful to look closer to the property of the experienced models. As these are the models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation, it is reasonable to believe that many youths do not have access to the political sphere through these models, even if they aspire to. It lies in the quality of the model of the elder that younger persons are inferior, and that this can block participation. The model of ethnicity & affiliation is not equally closed as the model of the

elder. This model, on the other hand, demands a personal relation to gain access. Concerning the youths, some have the necessary relations, like Shaker and Sima discussed in the previous chapter, and can rely on ascribed status in order to enter the political realm. Others have not, and an alternative for gaining access is portrayed.

Thus, the models extracted from a learned definition solve the youths' question of access to the political sphere. By highlighting the alternative models of equality and knowledge these neutralise the models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation. If the models of equality and of knowledge were dominant, the youths would have an equal opportunity compared with others to enter the political sphere, if so desired, and entrance to the political realm would be gained through personal achieved status based on universalistic values. Highlighting these models can also be seen as a necessary strategy for the youths to argue for their participation, in addition to a set of values, they need these models in order to legitimate their right to participation.

Summarising the models of politics derived from the perceptions of politics and their arguments leave one set of models: the elder and ethnicity & affiliation, derived from the experienced perception which all of the participants in the discussion seem to be dissatisfied with. Those arguing against students to participate in political activities argue that these models are not changeable while those who are in favour of students participating in politics argue in favour of their participation through an alternative set of models: equality and knowledge, models derived from a learned perception of politics. From this, it seems like all the youths favour participation based on the alternative models extracted from a learned perception and that the arguments are based upon whether the models from the experienced perception, the elder and ethnicity & affiliation are changeable. The two following chapters will look into this question when activities and relations at Kabul University and in youth organisations will be assessed.

These models have been extracted from two different perceptions of politics, an experienced and a learned perception. Leaving the models and going back to the perceptions, these have been established as analytical categories and in real life they are not as clear cut and closed as

on paper. I will argue that they are not either-or categories, but rather that individuals will move between the different perceptions influenced by external factors. Looking into which external factors that influence which perception an individual conveys, I will go into two different topics: relations to political activities and general talks about politics. Through looking into these two topics, will further give a broader understanding of how the question of politics is dealt with, among the youths.

Relation to political activities

When I first came to the forum I used some weeks to get to know the participants a little before I started to ask about political activities for youths; if there were any activities, and where they would be and so on. What surprised me then was that most of the youths would say that there ‘might be some political activities around’, but they were not interested in it, so they would not know much about it. As I talked to the participants, I was wondering why only a few out of the 16 people who were selected based on their aspirations to become future leaders, were interested in politics. After approximately one month I started to note a change in how they dealt with and talked about political activities in my and each other’s presence. More and more of them started to tell me in private conversations that they were interested in politics, and that they hoped they could become politically active in the future, if the circumstances were right. From these initial small hints of interest in political activities, my discussions with them on political activities quickly evolved. As I see it, I did not get this access until they had got to know me, talked to me, questioned my opinions and become familiar with me. I needed to be seen as trustworthy before they started to elaborate on their ideas. I also experienced this need for trustworthiness at other times. When I was discussing activities with my friends and they would name or show me a person they knew was interested in politics, I would ask them if they could either introduce me to this person or if we could talk to him together. Unless the person talked about was a good friend or well acquainted with them, the reply often turned out to be: ‘I don’t know if he is a good person, so I cannot ask him that question’.

Many of my informants state that the experienced perception of politics; politics as war, terror and killing, is the dominant perception among the people in general. When this is the case,

relations with politics and political activities become sensitive issues. Politicians are further not seen as trustworthy people. They are seen as liars, traitors and people working only for their personal benefit. Through producing and reproducing the experienced perception of politics, the politicians have not been able to revile the potential of politics, like Samir once commented: ‘Unfortunately our politicians are not doing well in maintaining the fame of this profession [politics]’.

I would therefore argue that before a person talks openly about either current relations or future aspirations towards the political field, he needs to trust the person to whom these relations are expressed. This is needed to protect both oneself and one’s family from being associated with politics “which is not good”. The audience, understood as people present, will therefore be of major importance in how people present their attitudes and relations towards political activities. If the audience is not seen as safe enough to talk freely about political activities or aspirations by the speaker, one strategy is to talk vaguely about one’s political stands, another is to highlight the social aspect of one’s work.

Vague political stands

Samir explains how he sees two main political powers in the previous history of the country: the Soviet backed communists (Parcham and Khalq) and the Islamists (different jihadi (Mujaheddin) groups). As he explains it, all of them have killed other Afghans and defamed politics when in power, however he still considers them to be the ground on which politics is assessed;

So people, political activists, they have a route from these two, and they cannot have their clear stand on anything, because people will think you are a communist, or you are a jihadi. I have talked to many political activists. In these talks, they just told me not very precise things, they did not talk about their stands, [a] very common issues. A normal person like me could not understand if he was a communist or a jihadi, because he talked about everything so generally. So in Afghanistan, if you do not trust a person really good, you cannot tell him about your stands clearly. The political condition is not very normal (...) it needs time. Maybe after 5 or 10 years people will have a clear stand on every issue, but not now. Now people talk very much generally, because they are afraid.

In this quotation from Samir, he argues that those politically active will always be compared to activists from previous political orientations to assert whether they are communists or jihadis, a comparison Samir also makes himself as he states that he cannot figure out the political standing of many of the political activists he has met. To tell one's true stand one needs to trust the person to whom these opinions are uttered. To link this to the perceptions of politics again, Samir's statement shows that the point of departure is the experienced perception of politics, or according to political activists, those politicians who have produced this experience. This has become the standard of which political activists and activities are measured. For those who state they want to be politically active based on a learned perception, the dominant perception based on experience seem to restricts them to speak out openly because they are afraid of being misunderstood or wrongly categorised. In addition to convey vague political stands in contexts where the audience is less controlled, another strategy is to highlight the social dimension of the activities one involves in.

Social activities

Many of the youths I was in contact with highlighted that they wanted to be socially active but not politically active. However, I found their activities and their arguments for working similar to those who said to me they were working politically. During an interview with Muneer I asked him to explain the difference between social and political activism, when he gave an example from SFA⁴⁸, a youth organisation of which he is a member, an organisation which works socially.

Muneer:

For example at the university, there was a demonstration and the police killed some students, (...) it happened two years ago. First of all we were very careful of our reaction. In case we react, we let the government know of Human Rights, the universal declaration of Human Rights, the constitution, and we try to tell them that this was wrong (...)

Elisabet:

And that is a non-political action, to tell the government that they are wrong?

Muneer:

⁴⁸ SFA (Solidarity For Afghanistan) will be more broadly introduced in the chapter on youth organisations. Here they will only work as an example.

Well you know... we recommend them that this was wrong, you know why? Because of this reason: the social rights. What is not right is not right. And we thought we induce these ideas in their minds, so that in the future at least they have these ideas in their mind so that they can see these things were wrong. So it is kind of capacity building, awareness raising. But we believe this is non- political.

Elisabet:

You *believe* this is non-political?

Muneer:

In this country, *it is* non-political.

SFA's activities of 'letting the government know' about violations of human rights, Muneer clearly states as a non-political activity. As SFA define themselves as a social organisation, these activities are seen as social activities. Several times I discussed this distinction between social and political activities with Dawaud, a board- member of SFA, in order to try to find out how they distinguish between them. At the start, Dawaud would call SFA a social organisation because they worked with social issues, such as non-violence and non-discrimination. When explaining why they were not a political organisation, he said politics are not regarded as 'clean work', it is affiliated with military power and it has a negative understanding among the public. Acknowledging that he did not want SFA to be associated with political movements also suggests that he sees SFA's work as potentially political. In later conversations during my fieldwork Dawaud had reduced the all-embracing social aspect of SFA to also include a political one, saying that their vision might be political, but that they still wanted to work as a social organisation because they were not ready to be a political organisation yet. In even later conversations Dawaud says he sees no major difference between political and social work, and he states that SFA's work for human rights and the elimination of prejudices clearly has a political impact. He sees the choice of being political or social as a choice of a strategy to achieve one's goals within the environment where one is working. For the time being, working under a social banner is easiest, it attracts less attention than political activities, he says. He also thinks that some time in the future, SFA will become a political organisation, but they have to wait until the time is ready for this. Until then: 'You should play by the rules, not attack too much, not confront, and not be too outspoken'.

Their reason for portraying themselves as a social organisation now can suggest two alternatives, firstly because they do not want to be associated with the negative connotations

of politics and define themselves as a social organisation and that this works as a diversion from activities they could have called political. Or secondly, that there is no clear distinction between political and social activities.

When talking about relations or aspirations towards political activities, I have argued that the speaker needs to control the audience where these opinions are uttered. If the audience is not under control, being vague on one's political stand is one alternative, a second is to highlight the social dimensions of the activity. This need to control the audience suggests that relations towards politics can be seen as a sensitive issue. On the other hand, general talk about general politics, does not require mutually controlled audience.

Talks about politics

‘It is not possible not to talk about politics. In Afghanistan, even a child and an old person, even if he is illiterate, he will talk about politics.’ (Samir).

Politics is a subject for interest and discussion in most places: in the bazaar, in the mosque, at workplaces, university and at home. There is a possibility to talk about politics if you are interested:

It is up to yourself. It is not as free as it should be, but still a lot of people are talking about politics. This is because the society is very politicized. Everybody is talking about politics because of the happenings the last years. They all have their antenna up to try to follow what is happening because they are all afraid [that] what happened in the past will happen again. This be the Soviet invasion, the Taleban and so [on]. They all want to follow and discuss these things. Even if you ask a 9 year old about politics, he will be able to say whether Karzai is bad or good, if Fahim is doing well. This [is] most likely because the parents and the grown-ups are talking about it all the time. (Dawaud)

Even though Dawaud here states that the atmosphere for discussing politics is not as open as he thinks it should be, and implicitly that some sensitive issues are not talked about, he simultaneously gives the impression that most people do discuss politics, because, as he states, their previous experiences have taught them to pay close attention to the development of the political affairs as they do not know what will happen next. Their previous experience has also put a mark on the content of their discussions:

90% of the discussions are negative. People are always negative about what is happening, because they have seen what happened [before]. They are doubtful about the things that are happening here, they are susceptible. They would talk about the economy, what have been done since the fall of Taleban? Where are all the funds that have come to Afghanistan? They know there has been a lot of money coming to Afghanistan, but where can one see the improvement? They [the government] have done no change in the life of the people. And for the time being, the people are only thinking about their own lives; what changes has come in my life? What are the reasons for US to be interested in Afghanistan? Is it only because of personal [US national] interests? They wonder whether the DDR process⁴⁹ will work or not. They wonder if the election will be effective. Is the election prepared good enough? Is it only to justify the government which is currently sitting? Who are pushing the elections? The government, the US or the internationals? Why are they using so much money on elections? Why are they not using this for reconstruction and development? This kind of discussions.

Looking closer at the themes of the discussions Dawaud has outlined, one sees that they all centre around the government and international actors. The negative discussions he suggests concern how the current government is not able to neither manage nor distribute the money presumably received, questions about the real reason behind the US intervention and presence, and about the reason and motivation for the forthcoming election. These topics concern only politics at macro-level: that of governmental priorities and international relations. By lifting the ‘talks about politics’ to a macro level, I would argue that those discussing it create a distance between themselves and the topic of discussion, a distance which to a certain extent makes the discussions safe. These discussions concern a level few will have the possibility to create any personal relations to. The distance and lack of personal relations to macro-level politics makes it a topic open, at least partly, for discussion.

Political activities or political aspirations on the other hand lack this distance between the individual and the topic, rather it creates a relation between the two of them. This relation can be seen as bringing politics down to a micro level, and the need to control the audience emerges. As such, talking and discussing politics on a macro-level is less dependent on the audience than talking about political activities and personal political aspirations.

⁴⁹ The DDR- process (demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration) was initiated after the “Tokyo Conference on the Consolidation of Peace in Afghanistan” in February 2003, grounded on the Bonn Agreement statement that all Afghan Forces should come under the control of the Interim Authority. The DDR-process focuses on ex-combatants to give up their arms and be reintegrated into civilian life (Jones, 2004; 24).

Even though talking about macro-level politics is less dependent on the audience than personal political activities or aspirations, it cannot be regarded as a topic to be freely discussed without any restrictions.

You know, you cannot talk about everything. You know, if you talk about Mujaheddin and Masoud and what they did in Afghanistan. If you talk about Masoud, his followers will come and arrest you, even beat you. And you will not be able to fight with them, you will not be able to do anything. Not anything in a discussable way. They will force you. It shows that you are not able to talk about Mujaheddin, because still Mujaheddin is in power in Kabul. And you cannot talk about Fahim. It means that political dialogue is not free. (...) But if you talk about Karzai, nothing will happen, you are free. At least you will think you are free. He- he- he [laughing]. (Hamid)

Although highlighting his points, and possibly exaggerating, Hamid's comment still conveys much of what will be shown, specially in the chapter on the university, not all macro-political issues are discussed in public either. To talk about, or in particular against, those who are considered to have strong power is regarded as dangerous in an open space. Behind this threat lies the assumption that in a crowd of randomly chosen people there will always be supporters or collaborators of the different constellations of people who are considered powerful. Through actions, like threats and assaults, and the stories about such actions, the power-holders are able to limit the negative talk about themselves in public, this is seen through the response of the public. Simultaneously they put limits on the public space as certain political topics are regarded as not discussable.

As such I would argue that there is no public space, understood as an open space where an open political dialogue can exist, without any restrictions. As outlined above, these restrictions concern criticising strong power-elements (strong statements) and the speaker's personal relation (closeness) to the topic in question. The level of personal involvement, closeness to the topic or strong critical statements, is proportionally linked to the openness of the audience in which the statements are uttered. Strong personal involvement, like personal political activities or aspirations, requires the speaker to control the audience (narrow it), while discussions about politics on a macro-level without strong criticism of influential power-holders can take place in a more open space, with a wider audience. It is the speaker

himself based on his own premises, who assesses the level of closeness to the topic he permits himself to talk about after considering the audience and context where the discussion is going on. Individual variation both on the closeness of the topic (what is considered as close) and the perception of a safe context are therefore existent.

‘Politics is fine, but in our society, when we talk about politics, it is just bad’

(Merwais).

I have argued that there are different perceptions of politics, analytically divided into an experienced perception and a learned perception. Rather than being two closed and defined categories, I will argue that these perceptions make a continuum where the experienced perception and the learned perception constitute the two opposing poles. Where an individual perception of politics positions itself in this continuum will be dependent on external factors and the context, such as audience, closeness to topic and possible sanctions. These diverging perceptions of politics, from experienced to learned, makes it difficult to talk about political participation as such. A second factor which makes it difficult is that the dominant perception of politics is the experienced perceptions with its negative connotations. As has been shown, this limits the sphere of politics and restricts those with an alternative perception to speak openly about it. Despite the limited possibility to speak about political activities and participation, youths are still active and they work in order to be able to participate. To legitimate this participation, they often state that they want to work socially, not politically. It is based on these findings, the blurred lines both between the diverging perceptions of politics, and the distinction between political and social activities, I have chose to use the analytical term of *participation* throughout this thesis, to encapsulate both what the youths themselves consider social activities and what they consider political activities.

Secondly, as the empirical chapters will show, those stating that they are socially active, both persons and organisations, work towards values closely related to what have been portrayed as political models derived from the learned perception above, equality and knowledge. As such, also social activities can be understood to contain an ideology of how society and social

relations should be constituted. In this case, the social and the political and their mechanisms and values should not be understood as different and separate, rather I would argue they show mirror images of each other. The political models derived from an experienced perception of politics, that of the elder and of ethnicity & affiliation, are not only seen as dispositions within the political system, but are also liable for the wider society. The same goes with the models derived from a learned definition, the alternative solutions within politics centring around equality and knowledge, these principles are also principles which are seen as alternative solutions in the wider society. As such, I will argue that the political models can also be seen as models guiding access to public participation in general, whether social or political, as I will argue the examples from the previous chapter on family-relations is an example. Further examples will also be visible in the following empirical chapters.

Throughout the two next chapters, I will use the terms social and political the way they were used in the conversations I had. I find this important as my informants at times were very determined to correct me if I suggested to switch the two of them. I hope by using the terms, social and political, as I heard them in connection to concrete situations (in context) will further make the tension that lies within different encounters and how these influence the strategies chosen by the youths in their efforts to live out their commitment, visible. I also believe that the dominant perception of politics, the experienced one, weights heavily on the choice to call an activity political or social. Participation will therefore be used as an analytical tool through which the diverse activities can be further elaborated. Based on the empirical examples in the two next chapters, I will in the final chapter again look into the distinction between social and political activity, then knit up to anthropological perspectives thereon.

Summing up

In this chapter I have argued that there are diverging perceptions of what politics is. I have analytically divided these perceptions into two, one experienced perception and one learned perception. While the experienced perception has mostly negative connotations, which further restrict many youths from personally getting involved in politics, the learned definition has more positive connotations, and conveys an alternative to what politics can be, other than

what it has manifested itself as in Afghanistan. From these two perceptions, different political models are also derived. From the experienced perception, the model of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation are extracted, while the alternative models of equality and knowledge are derived from a learned perception of politics. These further convey the values of particularism versus universalism, where the last seem to be the values most appreciated among the youths. Secondly I have argued that the dominant perception of politics, the experienced one, makes the relation to political activities a sensitive issue. Aspirations and relations to political activities are only talked about in controlled contexts. If the context is not under the control of the person in question, portraying vague political opinions or highlighting the social aspect of the activities, are strategies employed. Based on these findings I have chosen to use the analytical term of participation in my empirical chapters to encapsulate what my informants consider both as political and social activities.

Based on that politics have different perceptions, and that there is no clear distinction between social and political activities either, the political models presented above; the elder, ethnicity & affiliation, equality and knowledge and the distinction between particularism and universalism they respectively represent, I will argue these can be considered as different models regulating access to participation in general. In this chapter they have been derived from politics, but both the elder, affiliation and the call for equality will be visible both at the university and in youth organisations, independent on what kind of participation which is in question. In the next chapter, activities at Kabul University will be assessed, in the search for where these different models display themselves.

Chapter 5: Activities at Kabul University

Introduction

For many youths in Kabul, Kabul University is a place with possibilities. First and foremost it is a place to acquire knowledge, attain an education and hence also the opportunity of a future job or even of upward social mobility. Secondly, in a city with few public places for informal gathering, it is the place in the city where one can meet a lot of other youths. With approximately 9000 students the diversity of the students is large. People from different social backgrounds and geographical areas are gathered and the possibility to meet, talk and discuss is present. For people who are committed to social or political activities, it is a place to find both fellow partisans and opponents, both for students, and external actors.

The main aim of this chapter will be to look into the possibilities and constraints students who want to be active meet on campus. After a short introduction of the atmosphere on campus, my first concern will be the Ministry of Higher Education's prohibition of political activities on campus. I will look into the background of this prohibition, how the university administration tries to control the activities of the students, and the strategies the students use to bypass this prohibition. After giving the accounts of a student seminar I attended, I will look into the relations between the students and the teachers. Following the same class with two different teachers, I will argue that the two of them communicate two different attitudes to the students and their role as participants, both in class and outside. Kabul University being a place where the future elite is educated, leads to the fact that also external political actors have their interests represented on campus. This will be visible when looking into the relations between the students. To assess the possibilities of participation and its character analytically, I will use the concepts of bridging and bonding networks.

Participation through bridging and bonding networks

At a community level, Putnam (1993, 2000) sees the possibilities of civic participation through the concept of social capital and how societies are organised. Looking at the university, I will argue that his community level approach is appropriate, and that the university can be understood as a social area, where several and diverging networks are

present. While Putnam sees the benefit of bridging horizontal network to increase the participation and co-ordination within a society (1993), he also acknowledges bonding networks to be present, and at times to be even more common. Bonding networks are exclusive, they are characterised by strong internal ties, strong in- group loyalty, and often emerge in homogenous groups. While the internal co-operation in bonding networks is good, they can simultaneously tend to create strong out- group antagonism. Bridging networks, on the other hand, are seen as inclusive. They cut across social cleavages, and members are seen as heterogeneous, knit together through weaker links than in bonded networks (2000: 22- 23). Kabul University being a place where youths with different identities, this being ethnicity, rural/ urban or gender meet, I will use Putnam's distinction between bridging and bonding to assess the kind of networks present and possibilities of participation emerging on campus. But before assessing any networks present, we need to enter the campus and meet the student.

Entering campus

The two main gates of the university are guarded by men with Kalashnikovs, usually lounged on some chairs in the shadow of a tree. The campus is a fairly big area. It holds more than 20 major buildings, housing the different faculties and departments, a library, post office, kindergarten, dormitory and a canteen. It is situated in the Carte See district in Kabul, at the west end of the city. This area was heavily destroyed during the civil war and the housing areas around are mostly made up of ruins although renovations and new constructions are emerging. Amazingly enough, the university buildings did not suffer major physical damages only occasional bullet holes in the plastering of the buildings and broken windows can today remind us of these times. In addition to the buildings on campus, there is a vast park area, dotted with small paths and tall trees all of it enclosed by a two meter tall fence, where students seem to enjoy their leisure time between lectures. .

The students' personal appearances are diverse. Jeans seem to be the fashion among most of the male students but some also dress up in a suit, at least a suit jacket, while others use the traditional *shalwar kamiz*. The female students wear either long skirts and blouses, or trousers

with an additional knee- long skirt or jacket, and a shawl. While in the city the use of *burka*⁵⁰ was still common, at the university they were rarely spotted. However I learned that the big “PINE”- labelled plastic- bags many of the females were carrying around, were hiding their *burkas*, and that they put them on when travelling between the university and the home. With approximately 9000 students enrolled⁵¹, the campus was a busy place during day-time. Some students would hurry between lectures, others were hanging around in the vast park area or outside the different faculties or they would go to the canteen to buy a meal made of rice, beans and a cup of soup. The university was a place to meet people, talk, make friends and establish useful contacts. For youths who wanted to be socially or politically active, the university was a place to find people with ‘similar thoughts’. Several student groups were established, varying in size and activities, all highlighting their status as social organisations. One realistic reason for establishing social and not political organisations, is the prohibition of political activities on campus imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education. I will continue with elaborating on the background of this prohibition and how the university administration can use sanctions to control the students’ activities on campus.

Prohibition of political activities on campus

The prohibition of political activities on campus was officially declared by President Karzai and the Ministry of Higher Education after a demonstration emerging from Kabul University in November 2002 during *Ramadan*. The students living in the dormitory were complaining about the facilities, the lack of electricity and water, and not having enough food⁵² for the *Iftar*- meal that breaks the fast every afternoon. After several days with these poor living condition, the students started a peaceful demonstration on campus which went on to the street and towards the city centre. When the students got closer to the city centre, they were met by the police, three students were killed and several injured, hospitalised and jailed in the confrontation. The initial reason for the demonstration is believed to be the unsatisfactory conditions at the dormitory, however it was also argued that the demonstration developed into a politically motivated event.

⁵⁰ All covering veil.

⁵¹ Of the 9000 students, 1500 were females. 3000 of the males came from different provinces and lived in the dormitory.

⁵² Students living in the dormitory get food every morning and evening.

Some of the students who took part in the demonstration, told that it started on campus but that there were some ‘political hands’ who originated external of the university and encouraged the students to go out on to the streets. When the demonstrators came to the streets, other people (not students) joined in, the situation became agitated, car windows were broken and the atmosphere made the demonstration move faster towards the city centre. Others say the demonstration came out of control when some participants: ‘only a few of them, those were the exceptions’, started to shout Mullah Omar⁵³. This was when the police started the assault against the demonstrators, assaults which were continued even towards the hospitalised students. The reaction was not long in coming, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission reported on the case, and questions came up about how the international presence was not able to prevent violations carried out by factional elements within the government (Harpviken et al, 2002; Johnson, 2004: 178).

After this event the prohibition of political activities, here explained to me as campaigning for any political party or organising larger gatherings without permission from the administration, was introduced. The main argument supporting the official banning, was that the students should use their time to study well, so that they would be prepared to contribute to the society when they graduate. Although officially banned, it does not mean that activities are not taking place, and neither does the administration seem to be sure this prohibition is maintained, something my meeting with the vice- principal of the university suggests.

I had an appointment with the vice- principal to clear my presence at the university to do research, and I also asked for general information regarding the situation of the university today. Among other things, he pointed out that the Faculty of Law and Political Science was one of the most popular faculties, and he saw this as a mirror image of the Afghan society, and that everybody is preoccupied with politics after all these years of conflict. As I had been advised not to put questions about politics to anyone in the administration, I was thrilled when he introduced the topic, and dared to ask that since the faculty was this popular, if this also was reflected through political activities on campus? He looked at me, smiled and said: ‘yes’,

⁵³ Leader of the Taliban.

with a voice indicating that *naturally* there were political activities on campus. As I got more courageous by his answer I asked him what kind of political activities. He turned his swivel chair around, looked out of the window for some seconds before turning back to me, answering briefly that he would not know, after all he was a professor in physics, I should talk to the dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Then he pushed his bell on the table, his secretary came immediately from the front office with some documents for him to sign, and I realised that my appointment with him was finished.

Leaving his office with the information my encounter with him had given, I was even more sure that the official ban was not working as well as the Ministry of Higher Education and the university administration might have hoped. Secondly, I interpreted his reaction as a sign of internal disagreement between the teachers on the level of student participation they should allow. However, instead of following the vice principal's advice to talk to the dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, I chose to try to find some students who could provide me with information on what kind of activities they were engaged in and also on how the university administration or the teachers reacted on these activities. After I had been only a few weeks at the university, one of the control mechanisms the Ministry of Higher Education had at hand, became very clear. They closed the university ahead of schedule.

Control mechanism from the university administration

This event emerged in mid November 2003 (week 47). I was on my way to the university to meet some sociology students, but in the taxi I got a phone call from a friend, telling me the university was closed. The day before the students had been told by the administration that the university would close for the winter, 3 weeks ahead of schedule. Final exams scheduled for December 2003, were rescheduled to be taken in March 2004 before the official beginning of the new academical year, 22nd of March⁵⁴. The official reason given by the Ministry of Higher Education was the cold weather. Because of lack of electricity and heaters at university they found it too cold to continue classes and they did not want to keep the students and staff on campus any longer. But there is also an alternative explanation for the closure.

⁵⁴ This was also the case for 4th year students who were to complete their whole university degree.

Two days before the Ministry announced the closure of the university, some students started to organise a demonstration on campus, showing their disagreement with the suggestion in the constitutional draft that education should be provided free of charge by the state only until the secondary level⁵⁵, leaving higher education outside the economical responsibility of the state. As university students, implementation of this article would give a situation where they would lose attendance free of charge at higher education, a point some of the students found it important to protest against. It was only a small demonstration, less than 100 participants gathered on campus, and before they reached the Ministry of Higher Education the number steadily declined, only about ten entered⁵⁶. One expresses his disappointment in the small attendance: ‘of 9000 students, only 90- 100 participated even this issue concern all the students at university!’ His disappointment was two-fold, one part concerns the actual small number of participating students in the demonstration. The second concerns the freedom of speech which the interim government is ‘supposed to support’, and that this does not exist, shown by the students too ‘afraid and nervous’ to state their opinion, even when it is about issues that are of direct consequence to them. Another student sees the closure of the university as an obvious reaction from the government: ‘They are afraid of us, they are afraid we will do a demonstration during the Constitutional *Loja Jirgah*⁵⁷, and when they close the university, they know we have no place to gather and organise a demonstration’.

Other researchers⁵⁸ and the media⁵⁹ support this informant’s version that the underlying reason for closing the university was the fear of demonstrations and unrest during the Constitutional *Loja Jirgah*, which was finally to be opened the 14th of December 2003, after several delays.

⁵⁵Article Forty-Three;

Draft constitution: ‘Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the state. (...)’, private document.

Final constitution: ‘Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to the level of the Bachelors (lisâns) free of charge by the state. (...)’ (Jones, 2004: 130)

⁵⁶ The Ministry of Higher Education is situated just outside the campus area.

⁵⁷ Constitutional assembly.

⁵⁸ Conversations David B. Edwards.

⁵⁹ Institute for War and Peace Reporting: http://www.iwpr.net/?p=arr&s=f&o=152647&apc_state=heniarr2003, [07.02.06]

Students – a potential political force?

Reported to be a relatively small demonstration, the reaction of the Ministry of Higher Education to close the university signalises that the Ministry sees the students as a potential political force, a force that before the Constitutional *Loja Jirgah* needed to be controlled. By closing the university, students living at the dormitories went to their native provinces, and students from Kabul became busy with their part-time jobs and leisure activities. The campus at Kabul University is one of the few public places in the city where young people can meet informally, and through the closure, the potential for smaller groups or individuals to mobilise the students was eroded. This event shows the possible sanctions the Ministry of Higher Education and the university administration have at hand to control the students and restrict their possibility of participation. But at the same time, the university administration had also opened up for students to organise activities on campus, as long as they were approved by the administration in advance. One of these activities I attended was a student seminar arranged by the student organisation, United Students, which will be presented as a case, exemplifying activities that did occur on campus approved by the university administration.

Student seminar

“Students’ participation in society” was the title of a seminar arranged at the university in mid May 2004. The organiser was the United Students, an independent group of students, working for social issues, established at the end of 2002. The seminar was hosted in one of the assembly halls at the university. Inside the hall there was a stage with a speaker’s platform under the banner of the United Students. The floor was full of chairs, altogether around a hundred and all filled up with students, mainly men, but also 10- 15 females attended. Above the entrance there were three hand-written banners: “Students must participate in the elections”, “It is the national responsibility of all Afghans to attend the elections” and “A non-political university leads to nothing more than a Bazaar⁶⁰”. Of the eight speakers invited, four of them were from the United Students, three from other student groups at the university and one editor from a magazine published in Kabul. The following extract presents the main opinions of the different speakers.

⁶⁰ Meaning: it is a place for people to shop, the students will be bought.

After welcoming the audience, the first speaker from United Students starts his speech with: ‘Young people should take part in politics!’ After the subsequent applause he continues to say that he disapproves of the elders who do not give access for the students to participate, something which is visible both at the university and outside. The students should have the opportunity to make up their own minds and make their own decisions. They should sit together, reason for what they want to achieve and make a strategy for reaching this goal. When they have agreed on a goal, they should establish a movement and they should work to expand this movement outside campus. For the movement to be established, he suggests only one principle they should follow: in contrast to political parties currently active, this movement should not be discriminative, all people should feel free and be able to join.

After a long applause and some additional comments shouted at the stage, the second speaker from the United Students, and the only female speaker, talks about the idea behind their establishment. They established as an independent student organisation in 2002, with a vision to solve the different problems which occur at the university, both between students, and between students and teachers. The problems arising between students she sees mainly as a result of external parties which gain influence among students at the university. The diversity of these parties only divides the students, the parties only use the students to live out their policies, which only leads to more tension between the students [applause].

The third speaker, from one of the other student groups established at the university, agrees with the previous speaker for the need of students to talk together on campus despite the differences between them. He continues to say that it is however important for the students, in addition to their studies and their situation at the university, that they know their responsibility in society. They should not wait until they have finished their studies before they become politically active. They should combine political activity and studies he argues, then they would be better suited to gain information on how to solve the present political situation and work out the steps to be taken [applause].

The following speaker, an editor of a weekly magazine, builds on this argument and challenges the students to stand together and to make a movement which can oppose the traditional political parties. If the students do this, he argues, they can counteract the present situation where the political parties only use the students. Arguing in favour of this movement, he reminds the audience that the real meaning of politics is humanism [applause].

The next speaker, Merwais, states that the present situation is not suitable for the young generation to enter politics. Politics is for the warlords, politics today is playing with the life of 20 million Afghans. Before youths can enter politics, Afghanistan needs democracy and the rule of law. The students should rather concentrate on the situation at the university. They have to change the values of the teachers. Now the students only use their eyes to look and their hands to write, there is no room for discussions with the teachers. The students are reduced to sculptures. The teachers think the minds of the students are only black or white, the students need to show the teachers that their minds convey more. Unless they are able to bring forth this change at the university, they will not have anything positive to contribute with in politics [applause].

The last speaker at the seminar was Fazel, the leader of the United Students which hosted the seminar. He picks up his argument against the present excluding practices of youths participating in politics, by questioning the use of teaching political theory at the university. He argues that one has to realise that they are close to a failed experience at the university as those studying at the Faculty of Law and Political Science do not get access to neither discuss these theories nor gain experience through political activities where they can use the knowledge acquired at the university. Today it is only those with guns who have political experience, and they are only working for their own benefit. Political parties should work for the people, and the students with their knowledge can contribute in this direction if they gain access. He ends his appeal stating the need to look at the 'despotal' attitude the teachers have to their students and posing a question to the teachers: if they like their country and their students, why do they not let them get their chance? Today he characterises the situation of this relationship to be like this: if the students gather different people and talk together, the teachers either think they will take over the whole university administration or that they are related to al- Qaida, a comment which releases laughter among the audience. Despite his

invitation to the deans of all the faculties, none of them showed up at this seminar, a signal he interprets as the teachers being afraid of questions from the students, because they do not have any answers. When this is the attitude the teachers show towards the students, then the students should work together to make their own decisions.

As the seminar was breaking up, refreshments were served outside the assembly hall. The atmosphere was merry, students were talking and laughing. Those I talked to after the seminar were very happy about it. Some saw it as a good break in their studies, others commented on the diverse audience, that students who usually did not spend time together, were gathered at the same place. One appreciated the information he got, stating that monthly seminars like this could make students become more active. A close friend of mine smiled as he said: 'you see, they all want to make a revolution, but they will not agree with each other'.

Although no teacher or administrative staff attended the seminar, it seemed not to have gone on unnoticed. Two weeks later the administration announced the establishment of a Student Union, where elected students from each faculty should take part in administrative consultations. Fazel, the leader of the United Students saw this as positive progress, but doubted the influence and the ability to bring change for the future representatives: 'it will only be the 1st position students there, those who agree with the teachers'.

Analysing this case, I find three important elements to elaborate on. Firstly, I will assess whether the students have any influence on the university administration, secondly how they were able to talk to so openly about what I interpret as political activity before I will look more closely at the content of the speeches and the aspirations and values displayed in these.

Student influence

Despite the official ban on political activities on campus, seminars arranged by students did occur. Usually these were related to the studies they were doing, e.g. English, economy, physics, agriculture etc, but this seminar distinguished itself from those which were purely focused on the academia. Organised by the social organisation, the United Students, it was arranged with the permission of the administration. However, what initially was to be a

seminar about the importance of the elections, evolved into what I interpret as a highly politically motivated event. Being able to conduct a seminar with this content as well as the subsequent announcement from the administration to establish a Student Union, signals that the students have a possibility to influence the administration, and hence increase their possibilities of campus activities. On the other hand, for the administration to allow these activities, as well as announcing a Student Union to be established, can also work as a valve to release some pressure between the administration and the students who want to be active. After the negative publicity towards both the government and the university administration after the *Ramadan* demonstration in 2002 and the closure of the university in December 2003, giving the students some room to manoeuvre on campus can divert the students' criticism against the official ban on political activities and also prevent similar events to emerge and subsequent negative reports. It is therefore reasonable to believe that this gradual opening up for students activities on campus from the side of the administration is a result of both the students' pressure on the administration and the administration's need to be conceived as just and working towards democracy in the wider society.

Making 'politics' safe

A second feature to look into again is the perception of politics. The organiser of the seminar, the United Students, presents itself as a social organisation working for the students to participate in society. The initial topic of the seminar was "students' participation in society" with a primary focus on the forthcoming election and the benefits of participating in this. But as the speakers entered the stage, the elections were less mentioned and the focus became the need for the students to establish their own movement where all should feel free to join. Of the eight speakers⁶¹ in the seminar, only two argued the students should concentrate on changing the atmosphere at the university, in particular bettering the relation between the teachers and the students. All the other speakers pointed to the need for a broad-based movement to be formed at university, a movement which should seek to gain influence in the wider society outside the campus and which should present itself as an alternative to traditional politics which is currently operated in Afghanistan. The question which arrives is

⁶¹ Two of the speakers were withdrawn from the extract above, because their appeals did not concern other topics or views diverging from those presented.

how this could be so openly discussed if political activities are both prohibited by the administration and as I have argued earlier (in chapter four), less spoken about?

Relating this to the previous discussion in chapter four on the discourses of politics, this can be framed within the category “talk about politics”. Although close to “relation to political activities”, the talked about movement has not yet been established and at the seminar neither of the speakers showed any concrete initiative to take the responsibility of establishing such a movement. In this way, talking about the movement is done in a vague manner, the speakers state the need for such a movement, yet none of them take the responsibility to actually organise it and only a few come up with suggestion on the values which should be its foundation. By not showing personal closeness to the topic, talking about a potential movement to be established at the university is to a certain degree made safe. The speakers keep their retreat open as representatives from student groups portraying themselves as social organisations, and stating they are not ready to do political activities, where the United Students is a prime example. Keeping this distance to potential controversial topics (topics which can lead to strong reactions), both opens for public discussion and simultaneously since it is safe it is a possibility to elaborate on a broader level, which in turn can be more concretely discussed in narrower contexts. At the same time, the publicity the United Students and the other speakers got through this seminar can also be seen as good exposure to recruit members. Broad and safe discussions like this can guide previously less active students to participation if desired. Good publicity and possibility to recruit new members is however only one side of the coin. Not all students support these activities. After the seminar, Fazel was taken aside by two of his acquaintances who warned him that he would face major problems if he continued to co-operate with the Tajiks, ‘those who are our enemies’.

Despite this comment Fazel got after arranging the seminar, which symbolises that external loyalties outside the university are still strong among some students, the content of the seminar speeches also illustrates the aspirations towards evolving bridging networks based on universalistic principles, rather than particularistic values knit to ethnicity which the previous comment suggests.

Bridging aspirations?

Looking at the content of the appeals declared at the seminar there is nearly a unified call for the students to have the possibility to participate more in society, a possibility they today see as restricted. Through highlighting the model of equality and the wish of youth to participate, the speakers at this seminar bring forth a vision of a broad-based movement where everybody can feel free to participate. The initiative of establishing a movement at university is articulated as an opposition to ‘traditional politics’, ‘the elders’ and ‘external loyalties’, arguing in favour of the alternative models extracted in chapter four, equality and knowledge. As argued in chapter four, the emphasis on equality and knowledge can be interpreted as universalistic values, ‘where everybody should feel free to participate’, to be the foundation upon which this movement should be established. Connecting this to Putnam’s (2000) terminology, it can be interpreted that they want to establish a bridging movement. In this bridging movement, their status as Afghan students will be the initial common denominator, a denominator which should surpass other social markers such as ethnicity, rural/ urban divide and gender, social markers which in the wider Afghan society are seen as dividing the population into social cleavages. If they are able to establish such a bridging movement at university, they also see the possibility for it to expand outside campus. The diverse background of the students at the university, gives a university population with representatives from many of the opposing social cleavages⁶² existing, and their physical proximity and increasing knowledge about each other can be seen as a promising point of departure for ‘broad- based’ bridging organisations to be established.

To a certain degree this process has already started, symbolised by the several student groups emerging on campus. To my knowledge, so far the United Students is the largest student organisation with approximately 500 members, ethnically mixed. The arranging of this seminar, where other student groups were invited as speakers, and which was open for all interested students to attend, also shows an initiative of bringing the students together and building bridging networks based on inclusion. This seminar was formally arranged, and also

⁶² Here the diverse ethnic groups are represented, both male and female, in addition to the dormitory which gives the possibility for rural students to attend. However, being inaugurated at the university requires qualifications and in a country where the illiteracy rate is close to 70 % it falls natural that the students are among the most privileged inhabitants. Social cleavages between rich and poor, between middle/ upper class and lower classes are less likely to bridge at the university because some of these groups are not represented there.

the student groups can be interpreted as more formal organisations, although to a different level depending on their size and activities. In addition to these formal attempts to build bridging organisations, the informal interaction at the university, in class, during breaks, in the canteen and at the dormitory, taking the different backgrounds of the students into consideration, is also an arena where bridging networks can evolve, due to the proximity of the diverse students. With necessity, the students need to relate to their heterogeneous backgrounds.

Despite these attempts, both informally and formally to establish networks, there are also people who oppose this process, in particular concerning the more formal, like organisations and organised activities. Representatives from the two student groups I spend most time together with, found it difficult to recruit new members, despite the large amount of students present at the university. To further develop this analysis, it will be necessary to look into barriers which prevent the establishment of bridging organisations, where all students feel free to join. To do so, I will first look into the relationship between teachers and students, as this relationship is a much used example of how youth are deprived of participation in general, and as shown through some of the appeals at the student seminar, a concern among the students.

Relations between teachers and students

Despite the official ban on political activities on campus by the university administration, the seminar referred to above shows that students are allowed to arrange activities, however within frames accepted by the administration, and I have argued that the students as a group have influence on the administration in order to increase their possibilities to be active. When I now turn towards the teachers, to evaluate how they can prevent desired activities by the students from taking place, it is important to see them as individuals, and with the variations that that brings along, rather than a consolidated group of university employees. That the teachers have no mutual understanding of the allowed level of student participation, was also suggested by the reaction the vice- principal had during my interview with him. To describe the individual variations which exist, I will give an example from two classes in the 2nd year of sociology: the same students, but different teachers. Following this description I will look

into how the relations between students and teachers can be seen as obstacles for students to actively participate, mainly shown through their attitude to the students, and what messages this attitude communicates.

2nd year sociology, Kabul University

It is early November, 9 a.m. On the second floor in one of the main buildings on campus, 7 girls and 20- 22 boys are waiting in their classroom. They are 2nd year students of sociology, a department underlying the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Their teacher has not yet arrived, the noise level is high, and they use the time well to update themselves on what the others were doing after university the day before. Some are sitting on chairs, some boys are standing the corner in the back, while others are walking around rubbing their hands to keep warm. The classroom is cold. Temperatures drop to 5 degrees Celsius during nights at this time of the year, and the thick brick- wall keeps the cold well. There are no heaters, not even lights as electricity has been shut off in this part of the building. The limited access to electricity is concentrated on offices and computer departments. A girl is checking her watch, informing the others that there are only 30 minutes left before the break when they can go out in the sun to warm up a bit. Their talking and joking go on, there is a lot of laughter.

The white painted wooden classroom door has a 5 X 5 cm peephole on the upper half. One girl looks out into the hallway to see if the teacher is arriving. She gives a signal, he is coming.

The girls adjust their head- scarves, stand next to their chairs on the two first front rows, the boys find a chair on the remaining rows. The teacher enters the room and greets them, they greet him in return, and the teacher asks them to sit down.

The teacher is in his mid- forties, dressed in a suit and with a nicely cut all covering beard. He recites some quotas from the Holy Koran, and starts his lecture in “Basic Islamic Studies”. Today’s topic is the connection between Islam and politics. He writes three terms on the white- board, and starts to lecture. The students note down the terms and adjust information from his speech, most of them pay attention to the teacher and look in his direction as he talks. The girls however, make sure to look at the floor in front of him when he looks directly at one of them. Some of the boys would meet his glance, while others would be extra eager to

write in their notebooks. During his 15 minute long lecture he asks the students questions once. When the question is posed, the girls look at the floor in front of them, so do most of the boys. After some seconds, three or four boys hesitantly raise their hands, he names one of them, and the student stands up to answer. At the end of the lecture he says something that makes them laugh, they are all smiling and stand up as he leaves the room. Once he has left, the noise level is back where it was before he entered.

In the break I followed some of the girls. On their way out they talk mostly with each other, only occasionally responding to comments uttered by the boys in the class. Outside in the sun, the girls gather in one group some meters away from the many groups of boys standing in front of the entrance of the building. As we stand there one of the girls gives me a short resume of the content of the previous lecture. She explains how politics is an integrated part of Islam, and that the two concepts should not be treated separately. The ideal system of government would therefore be when these two systems are fully integrated.

After 15 minutes we are back in the classroom. One of the boys has a “stage- show” in front of the others, mimicking the previous teacher, a girl throws a humoristic comment at him, the rest of the students are laughing and applauding. The door opens, and Mrs Fozia enters the room. The students find their seats, greet her and sit down. Mrs Fozia is in her early forties. She wears a long skirt, a long jacket and a shawl. With a PhD in sociology from the UK she has been asked to lecture in the topics “gender issues” and “empowerment of women”, among others, at the university. She starts her lesson with asking the students questions. The girls are more eager to answer than in the previous lesson and most of the boys keep their hands constantly in the air. It becomes a discussion between the students, and as Mrs Fozia facilitate them, she comes only once or twice with additional comments. After 5 minutes of discussion, Mrs Fozia writes this lecture’s 3 main keywords on the white-board: power, politics and democracy. She asks the students to share their perception of these terms, most of them have suggestions and she comments these as they are stated. She introduces the theory of Max Weber on traditional, charismatic and rational governments. The students make notes, watch her as she talks, and do not lower their eyes when she looks directly at them, but smiles. At the end of the lecture she gives one of the girls two photocopied articles which concern

today's topic. As there is no photocopier nor paper for copies at the department, the students themselves have to circulate and copy them at a shop in the city if they want to have them. The students pack their bags, and as Mrs Fozia leaves the room, four of the girls follow her to the department office. They are to work on an application for an internet café for female students at the university, and Mrs Fozia has offered that they can sit and work in the office. As they all walk down the corridor, Fozia keeps talking with the girls.

Encouraging and discouraging participation

The case above portrays two different types of teachers which further communicate two different attitudes towards the students and the role of the students. The first is a middle-aged man who uses his authority as a teacher to entail a response of boundless loyalty from the students, making them passive recipients of knowledge. There is only one question asked, and the students are hesitant to answer. They are concentrating on writing down what he says and avoiding eye- contact with him. The second, a younger lady having the same authority as a teacher as the previous one, manages this authority in a way which gives a response from the students of engagement and participation in class. As teachers they both have the same repertoire of authority extracted from their position, however in the encounter with students, they manage it differently. This difference in the management of authority also conveys different messages to the students about what their role should be, passive or active.

Of these two different types of teachers the former is both more referred to and of more concern for the students. At the student seminar one of the speakers argued that the teachers only see the students as sculptures, something to be formed by the teacher, not giving the students the opportunity to participate in classes. His description as well as the presentation of the strict teacher above, are similar to the characteristics of the elder (see chapter four), the one with authority and the one to obey. At the university the strict teacher becomes the symbol of the patriarchy that the youths want to change. They want to be active in class, engage in discussions and be considered as adults, capable of contributing with knowledge. However, openly showing resistance to the teacher is not done without risk. A student told me a story of one time when he was responding to his teacher in class: 'I was standing up in class and commenting on what the teacher had said. The friend sitting next to me started napping

my shirt telling me to sit down. He said [to me] you should not talk like this in class, if you continue the teacher might fail you.’

But as Mrs Fozia shows, all teachers are not the same. Unnecessary to say, she was this class’ favourite teacher! Her attitude towards the students, encouraging them to participate in class and also supporting the female students’ work for the establishment of an internet- café, communicates to the students that their participation, both in class and in public is appreciated. On the other hand, the strict teacher, by preventing participation in class, can have a similar effect through communicating the students’ inferior role, also in public participation.

The strict authority of the teacher, and the patriarchy he represents, is stated as a concern for many students at the university, particularly among the students at the Faculty of Law and Political Science. The reasons for this can be many, but I will argue one to the assumed intentions of the students to choose Law and Political Science. These are students interested in politics and the state of affairs of the current situation in Afghanistan and this interest is often connected to an ideological vision for the future, either personal or for larger constellations. Further, many of the teachers are known for being connected to different political factions, particularly different Mujaheddin groups. The students, who show or want to show social or political engagement, seem to be extra aware of ‘the teacher’s possibility to fail you’. They complain about the teacher’s knowledge, the lack of new and updated information and the lack of discussions in class. They portray the strict teachers who avoid discussions, and who only provide the ‘correct knowledge’⁶³ to the students⁶⁴. Further, the teachers who are connected to political factions put invisible restrictions on the students. Some students choose not to state their opinions in class, even if encouraged, and have decided to finish their education before they engage more in social and political activities, while Merwais and Safir choose to attend another faculty to avoid the possible constraints from teachers upon students’ public participation.

⁶³ Due to the lack of literature and books in the library at university, notes made in lectures are the main “curriculum” in most classes at university. “Being critical” was a word I found absent at university. Most of the students were busy with cramming their notes and reproducing them as authentically as possible at the exams.

⁶⁴ Students at other faculties are also critical of their teachers and their way of teaching. However, students in for example English literature are usually not connected to an ideological basis which is not shared with their teachers when it comes to the subject at hand.

Avoiding instead of confronting

Merwais and Safir, both of them occupied with political questions and socially active, both in student groups and outside the campus, regarded it to be too ‘dangerous’ to study at the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Following their interests, the Faculty of Law and Political Science would be a natural option, however they both attend the Faculty of Literature. From their knowledge about the teachers at the Faculty of Law and Political Science, Merwais and Safir consider that their ideologies diverge too much from those of the teachers. With the authoritative teaching-style of the lectures, Merwais and Safir see no room for the acceptance of their own views. Their concerns are two-fold, firstly they believe it to be difficult to accept the knowledge of the teachers as the “correct knowledge” as they themselves believe to have other ideological frames and values than the teachers in certain issues. Secondly, they believe the teachers will have information on their particular values and ideology and when diverging from the teacher’s, it will be used as pretence for the teacher to treat them unfairly compared to other students.

As Merwais and Safir show they choose to attend the Faculty of Literature instead of the Faculty of Law and Political Science in order to acquire a formal education. In this way they avoid opposing teachers whose ideology contrasts theirs in classes, and hence avoid what can be seen as turbulent relations to the teachers. To keep their possibilities of participation, they choose to work for their visions both through student groups and activities outside campus. As students of literature, these activities do not affect the relations to their literature teachers and they feel confident of being assessed by their teachers according to performance in class and at exams rather than activities outside the classroom. To gain knowledge on political affairs they use alternative resources instead of formal education: reading books, being in contact with groups, discussion forums and NGOs based outside the university.

Teachers with a political affiliation are a constraint of participation and engagement for students whose base values contradict the values of the teachers, but can on the other hand be seen as valuable resources for students with concurrent values who want to be active. Being on good terms with the teacher is important for most students, and supporting a teacher’s

values and opinions is a possibility for a student to increase his status in the eyes of the teacher. But securing a good reputation among the teachers, also heightens the possibility to be regarded as a collaborator of the teacher, one passing on information about what has been discussed after class, to the teacher. The students first manage their relations to the teachers in a safe way, the relations to the students who are considered to be the teachers' favourites, become the next concern. The teacher's authority reaches beyond the immediate proximity of the students and teachers in the classroom, through the students that are seen as collaborators, passing on attitudes, opinions and criticism expressed after lecture hours. In this regard, also the relations between the students will regulate the possibilities of participation. But it is not only the teachers with political affiliation and their cooperating students who are of concern. Kabul University is not isolated from the rest of the city, and many of the students have strong loyalties outside the campus. To further elaborate on this, I will look into how students' external loyalties influence the relations between the students on campus. First I will look at external actors, and their collaborators who are represented at the university which further leads to the promotion of particularistic interests and the creation of mistrust between the students as I interpret it.

External loyalties creating mistrust

It is not only the teachers and the teachers' favourite students who are of concern for other active students. Kabul University is the main career opportunity in Afghanistan and many sons (and some daughters) of current influential political actors are students here. As the main career-opportunity, the education of the future elite, it is likely to think that politically motivated groups also see the advantages of both having their interests represented on campus, as well as getting information about what goes on. 'They are all here', students used to tell me, quickly naming supporters of Karzai and other groups represented in the government like Wahdat-i Islami, Jaimat-i Islami (Rabbani), Nahzgat Milli (Fahim) and Afghan Mellat. Hizb-i Islami (Hekmatyar – which at this time was wanted by OEF⁶⁵) and Ittihad-i Islami (Sayyaf), parties believed to be more extreme, also had their representatives which my friends pointed out to me. And then 'those supported by the foreign countries', the

⁶⁵ Operation Enduring Freedom.

Taliban and al- Qaida, but as my friends admitted, those were difficult to detect because they were working undercover and very carefully. All of them present or not, as speakers at the student seminar suggested, students can be seen as a valuable resource building loyalties to. But at the same time, also mentioned at the student seminar, the external parties are believed to only use the students to live out their policies, and they create more tension than co-operation among the students. Ferdaus once told me a story which can illustrate this point.

Students with political affiliation

Ferdaus told me this story during an interview. It was only the two of us present in the room, and he made sure the door was properly locked before he started:

Last year [2003] when we were in the dormitory, we were speaking about Massoud⁶⁶, and negative points of his personality. There were some elements of power, some people had power, they said to us: if you say some other [negative] points of Massoud like this, we can stop you, we will hit you. And they were threatening us, but on this time we did not have the right of complain. One time a Pashtun person in the dormitory... Ok, in the dormitory, if you go there, there is a lot of pictures of Massoud in the window, 5 or 6 he- he [Ferdaus smiles]. One night a Pashtun student went in front of that window and tore one of the pictures. And the morning after that night, there were police or some elements of power in the dormitory. They said that: even if you are the son of Karzai, if we find you, we will kill you. Ok, and they started to search for that person. Fortunately they could not find him.

Here an initial discussion about Massoud and his reputation, among some students living at the dormitory where one of the opinions was visualised through tearing down a picture of Massoud, was the following morning expanded to a conflict where the ‘police or some elements of power⁶⁷,’ outside the university were included in order to settle the argument. In this incident, the students present at the dormitory who felt their values and opinions dishonoured, had called for external support to assert their values as the correct ones, and it seems natural to see these external parties as creating more discord than cooperation between the students. The way I interpret this case, it shows how some students have loyalties outside

⁶⁶ Portrayed as a National Hero of Afghanistan. Leader of the Northern Alliance and last commander to oppose the Taliban in 2001 on the border to Tajikistan. He was killed 9th of September 2001, during an interview with a Saudi TV- team that had a bomb in their camera (Janse, 2005; Rubin, 2002: xxi).

⁶⁷ The phrase ‘police or some elements of power’ I heard several times. I interpret this as a reflection of the presence of different political militias in Kabul (ASIA Briefing 2004). It was also a notion that all the political factions had their own intelligence, ‘often dressed up in governmental uniforms’ which further suggests that also internally in the government, power-relations were not clearly defined.

the university showing the characteristics of being bonded. However, it should also be noted that in this particular case, Massoud was critically commented, and as shown in chapter four, being critical to those who are considered to have power (in Massoud's case, his successor, Marshal Fahim who acts as Minister of Defence), is regarded as dangerous. But secondly, what this case also shows, is that those who collaborate with the powerful, seem to increase their possibility to participate, at least state their opinions as the correct ones. Belonging to a powerful political faction, can for students increase the possibility to participate and carry out activities, as critics are restricted through the use of sanctions (see chapter four). But in the second run, the presence of these students with strong bonded relations to external actors, can be interpreted as representing particularistic principles which further lead to out-group antagonism (Putnam, 2000). On campus these contributed to an atmosphere where trust became a scarce resource, when politics was the topic on the agenda, as Amin said: 'You have to know the background, you will not start discussing politics unless you know the background of the person in front of you'. I also experienced trust to be a scarce resource, both when it came to gaining access to informants, and when I was together with people I knew well and when we were in contexts where other people were present. At the university my discussions with friends often got interrupted when other people approached. Like the next case illustrates, when Noor Ahmad and I spend one afternoon on the campus.

A symptomatic stroll on campus

A sunny day in mid-May I spent some time with Noor Ahmad, who I had known for several months, on campus. We decided to stroll around on the many paths in the vast park area, finding this attracting less attention from the other students than sitting on a bench or under a tree. We were discussing the possibilities of being active at university, and he told me how he saw his days at the university, about his class-mates who had connections with political groups outside the university, and as we saw three guys from his class at a distance, he briefly greeted them, for only later to tell me that one of them was the son of a commander and one of those who always wanted to impress the teachers, which the teachers let him do, as he was after all the son of this commander. He seemed kind of discouraged about those issues he could not discuss with 'people he do not know' and was explaining how their student group wanted to bring different students together, but that this was difficult to achieve, in particular

to get girls to attend. While talking I found him to be very open about what he told me, however when we met or passed people on the small paths as we were walking, Noor Ahmad would either stop the conversation, take a small break until we had passed the people, or he would ask an occasional question about Norway, like: ‘what are the main export article you have?’, let me answer before going back to elaborate on the topic about which we were originally talking when there were no other students within listening radius of our conversation. The trust he showed me through telling his story, was a trust lacking in those we accidentally met on our stroll.

Trust – an absent resource?

Luhman (1998) argues that trust is needed when risk is involved (see also Hardin, 2006). The cognition of risk leads to an awareness that the wanted result may not appear, one exposes oneself to getting disappointed. This awareness also presupposes that the individual in question has a choice; he might act or not act, he might take the risk or not take the risk, e.g. he might trust or not trust. If the choice leads to disappointment, it will be the person in question, through trusting, that will take the blame as ‘risk (...) is a purely *internal* calculation of *external* conditions⁶⁸’ (ibid: 100). Following this, trust stems from the individuals’ perception, and from the case above, Noor Ahmad’s calculation of whom he could trust listening to our talk. More general at the university, the risk the individuals have to allow for, is with whom to discuss politics, and in particular in relations to political activities.

Hardin (2006) argues that trust in a person is connected to interests, both from the one who trusts, and the trusted. For the person who trusts, it is not sufficient to rely on the interest of the trusted *per se*, but he needs to see his ‘interests encapsulated in the interest of the trusted’ (ibid: 19). The degree to which the one who trusts sees his interests encapsulated in the second person (the trusted), determinates the level of trustworthiness of the trusted. This understanding of how to see a person as trustworthy, shows similarities with Dasgupta’s notion. He argues that an individual will always make a prediction about the individual actor with whom he considers to discuss or co-operate. Dasgupta argues that this calculation is

⁶⁸ Italics in original

based on experience; ‘You trust him only because, knowing what you know of his dispositions, his available options and their consequences, his ability and so forth you expect that he will *choose* to do it’ (Dasgupta quoted in Putnam, 1993: 171⁶⁹). As such, a person for possible future co-operation needs to portray himself as trustworthy, and the more information one has about this person’s background, makes one better suited to judge his trustworthiness, trust is based on knowledge or private experience (Stolle, 2002: 401). But if trust is established based on the previous knowledge of the person in question, this knowledge can simultaneously create distrust, one knows from experience that the person in question is not trustworthy.

From this literature, and the notion that politics is connected with risk in Afghanistan, the question which arrives is how students are able to find other students who they consider trustworthy enough to discuss relations to political activities, and further how this influence the character of political activities. On campus, what my informants considered political activities took the form of informality.

The informal character of politics

The student seminar referred to above, was one of the few formal gatherings arranged by students on campus concerning participation, and it was arranged by a social organisation, and as Fazel, the leader of the United Students pointed out to me, their organisation was not working politically. More common than this seminar, were informal gatherings either among the student groups emerging at the university, or between students and external people who came to the university to discuss. ‘Kabul university is a very big place, you can hide there and talk about something’, Sima once told me when she was very upset because the dean of the Medical Faculty had physically split up a group of medical students who wanted to make an Afghan branch of the International Foundation of Medical Students. As their gathering had not been approved beforehand by the administration, he did not allow them to sit together in the hall, although ‘we were not doing anything political’. On the main campus of Kabul University on the other hand, the vast park- area gave a good opportunity to sit together and

⁶⁹ Italics in original

discuss undisturbed, almost. Among the groups I spent time with, they all had the same story. It had started out as a few friends, but through talks and small discussions outside the classroom, they were able to find people with similar ideas. When the potential member to be had been informally examined through these daily conversations, the group would discuss whether or not to invite this person to join their gatherings. The need for knowledge-based trust based on face to face contact (Hardin, 2006; Stolle, 2002) was apparent: ‘By appearance you cannot see who they support, you have to know their minds’ (Merwais).

Usually these gatherings would not create any anxious atmosphere, when a teacher or guard came over to ask what the students were doing, they would only smile and leave based on the “chit- chat” they would get as an answer. But a few times, the approach of two- three students would make the group quickly dissolve. In the middle of a discussion, if some of the participants noticed the approach, two or three words would be said, people were standing up, dissolving into smaller groups and walking away in different directions. At the university, there were students that one did not want to know what was discussed. Both bonding and bridging aspirations were present.

Possibilities and constraints for bridging networks

Kabul University, being a place where youths from different social and geographical backgrounds meet through daily interactions, gives a promising start for bridging networks to evolve. And to a certain degree these develop, both informally through contact in class, through the breaks in the canteen and so on, and also more formally, through the establishment of student groups which include different students from different backgrounds. The United Students is one example which shows the possibility of establishing a bridging organisation where they are able to use their student identity as common denominator for their solidarity, and the individuals’ ascribed statuses, regarding kin and ethnicity, seem to be bypassed, at least within the organisation. Secondly the seminar they arranged, both inviting other student groups as speakers as well as having an open seminar where all students were welcomed, substantiate both their aspirations and actual efforts to build solidarities around their student identity. At the same time, the content of the speeches at the student seminar suggests bridging aspirations to be present at the university. As such, these cases are examples

of activities where the students at the university are able to adhere to the alternative model extracted in chapter four, equality, and they also suggest that universalistic values should guide both their present organisation, as well as the future movement talked about at the student seminar.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that bonded loyalties (exclusive) prevail, also among the students. The level of mistrust between the students as well as concrete situations, like the story Ferdaus told, suggest that some students see their possibility of participation best secured through a bonding network adhering to particularistic values, whether this be family, kin, an external patron, political group or ethnicity. The interim government is still weak, and the large scale fragmentation of Afghanistan during the civil war, can be one explanation why bonding loyalties by many students is regarded as more trustworthy. Those students who have loyalties to powerful politicians do not accept those who are critical of them, and also loyalties to teachers seem to create an atmosphere of mistrust, where the relations between the different students seem to control mostly what is considered as political activities and talks. Despite the Ministry of Higher Education's official prohibition of political activities on campus, the students as a group, shown through the seminar arranged by the United Students, are able to manoeuvre around this prohibition. One strategy is to categorise the activities as social activities, while at the same time the subsequent announcement from the university administration of the establishment of a Student Union, signals that the students as a group can influence also within the university administration.

Chapter 6: Youth organisations

Introduction

For the youths who do not have family connections or ascribed statuses on to build on to gain access to public participation, youth organisations are one of the most frequently mentioned forums through which participation is enabled. In this chapter I will look into how youth organisations have been established, with a focus on two different organisations which have been established by the initiative of youths. Looking into their establishment shows how initiative for participation outside ascribed status can take form, and also which visions that lie behind the establishments, visions I will argue show aspirations to build bridging organisations. To assess their bridging possibilities I will look into the interaction between members and leader/ leadership, and the power- relations which lie therein. A strong leader will be presented, and I will argue that this internal relationship shows similarities with patron- client relationship. At the same time, social bonding, both vertically and horizontally takes place, and I will argue in favour of the possibility to increase one's status within an organisation. Secondly I will look at how the internal relations within the youth organisations influences the external relations of the organisation as a whole, then I will assess why youth organisations are both enabling and restricting youth participation.

The making of a youth organisation

In this chapter I will concentrate on youth organisations which have initially been established by youths themselves. These organisations therefore have to be distinguished from organisations which have been given space for activities by external actors, these being organisations like NGOs and INGOs which have initiated activities for youths. Through giving examples from the establishment of two different youth organisations, I will focus on how youths themselves have created a space for desired activities which they have not found existent through other organisations or means. These descriptions, the narrative of a founding member and how the leadership portrays their establishment, also give information about the vision and interest behind establishing a youth organisation and provide examples of the initiative of enabling public participation.

Muneer's story and the foundation of the Solidarity For Afghanistan (SFA)

Looking into a narrative gives an overview of some of the considerations an individual who decides to become involved in organisational work, has to make. These considerations will often reflect external factors which influence the individual and as such give an understanding of the environment, of possibilities and constraints, in which the individual acts. Telling Muneer's story, as he told it to me, gives information about his motivation, his options, encouragement given to him and the decisions he made. Together this gives a picture of how one individual, Muneer, became committed to organisational work and how he acted out this commitment.

After two years of study in a Pakistani city, Muneer decided to move back to his family in Peshawar. His student days had been good, but he felt he drifted away from his Afghan background, and back in Peshawar he enrolled at an Afghan course centre to improve his English knowledge. Here he met Dawaud, his English teacher. They were the same age (then 18 years old) and they soon became best friends. At this time, Dawaud was constantly following the development in Afghanistan, an interest which caught Muneer as well. In 1999 Muneer decided to travel back to Afghanistan to work in the field for an international aid agency:

I was very dedicated, I was working here during the Taliban. And other people were [saying]: you are crazy! Everybody was like going to the West, to the States, to Europe, and I was [saying]: no, I am not going. I am going to stay and work for this country.

Muneer was working in the field in Afghanistan for seven months before he needed to go back to Peshawar for security reasons. However, his encounter with people living in Afghanistan only intensified his wish to continue to work for Afghanistan and advocate for more freedom for the people, a work he continued in Peshawar.

I was like... surrounded by many people, media- people, different NGO's. Everybody was like: this young Afghan boy, who is here and who came from Afghanistan, and had fled the Taliban. And many people used to come to me and talk to me: ok, what should be our strategy and this and that. And there I thought, ok we have this big

opportunity, let us be more structured in our activities. Like me, I felt very lonely: I felt I was the only person working. I had to find some other persons to work with.

It was at the course centre Muneer attended he was going to find other persons to work together with. He convinced Dawaud to accompany him to a conference in Islamabad in the middle of 2001, a conference concerning the present situation and development in Afghanistan. This was again a place where there was given much attention to the young people committed to the situation of their native country. In the car on their way back to Peshawar they decided to found a youth group, the SFA, and together with some close friends at the course centre, their organisation soon established a board and started activities for Afghan youths living in Peshawar.

This is how Muneer told me the SFA came into existence.

The Afghan Coordinated Youth (ACY)

Another group which emerged through the initiative of the youth themselves is the ACY. This introduction of the ACY is based on how the leadership of the organisation presents itself publicly, when talking about their origin and activities.

The ACY emerged when the Taliban captured Kabul. At the start they were just some young neighbours living in the same street who did not want the restrictions of the Taliban to obstruct their previous daily activities concerning sports and culture. Going underground, hiding from the regime, these neighbours started to gather in each other's homes during the evenings, reciting their poetry and keeping up the sports activities they were able to on this limited space. At this time several of the youths were university students, however the restriction by the Taliban limited the number of subjects taught at university, and books on social issues, in particular on social commitment were frequently read and discussed during the private gatherings. As the Taliban continued its harsh rule, and inspired by the books they discussed, the group evolved a focus on how they could contribute to improve the conditions for youths in general. They decided to expand their informal meetings, organising discussion groups for youths in their neighbour street, encouraging also them to continue their previous

activities concerning sports, culture and studies, despite the restrictions from the regime. After the neighbour street, they organised the whole block and continued through this pattern to expand throughout the city. Today they have branches of their organisation in ten provinces.

Creating a space for activities

Looking into how the SFA and the ACY were established there are similarities, although they were established under different conditions: the SFA in the Diaspora and the ACY in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. Both of the groups show some dedicated individuals who see the establishment of a youth organisation as the solution to bring their commitment into action. I will argue this comes as a result of a lack of other opportunities act out their commitment.

Muneer's narrative describes that although he was active in the international NGO community in Peshawar, and had the opportunity to work in Afghanistan during the Taliban, he felt alone with his ideas and visions for the Afghan people, e.g. he had no satisfactory forum through which he could put these ideas and visions into action. Encouraged by positive feedback and his connection with Dawaud and other youths with similar aspirations, he and his close friends decided to found a youth organisation. Through founding their own organisation, they also created their own space to focus on youth issues. They started to arrange seminars for Afghan youths in Peshawar, focusing mainly on human rights and the current condition for youths and children in Afghanistan. While the SFA had to create their own space to initiate new activities concerning the conditions of youths, the ACY on the other hand had to create this space to continue previous leisure activities which became restricted by the Taliban rule. The initial sports and cultural activities of the ACY were activities performed in the public space before the Taliban regime, but the new regime closed this space and largely prohibited these activities. As such the organisations diverge in the activities initiated: one establishing new activities, the other continuing previous activities. However the reason behind their establishment is similar, the need to create their own space for desired activities in lack of other opportunities. In this way, the establishment of a youth organisation gives an opportunity to create organisations which are not dependent on ascribed statuses and create an arena where the youths themselves can set the agenda for the organisation and the activities

conducted. The next step will therefore be to look into the vision and activities of these organisations.

Providing bridging organisations?

Both the ACY and the SFA highlight that they want to work as social organisations, providing a space for the participation of youths. Extracted from written materials they have provided, they state they want to work: ‘without any political, military, tribal, racial or language affiliation’, ‘to eradicate linguistic, racial, regional, tribal, religious and gender related discriminations⁷⁰’, and ‘bring the national unity and mutual respect amongst the people of Afghanistan.’⁷¹. These statements suggest they want to adhere to universalistic principles where previously particularistic principles displayed on the Afghan political scene should be bypassed. In both these groups, both regular members and board members are heterogeneous concerning ethnic belonging, and of those groups I have been in contact with, which all highlight their heterogeneous membership, these two distinguish themselves to actually be able to closely live up to this ideal. Their inclusion of youths from different ethnic groups can in itself be seen as an effort to live up to their bridging aspirations.

Equality within the organisation, e.g. between the members, is also expressed as desired by the members themselves. At a workshop on how to bring about change, two board members of the SFA presented their version about how a revitalisation process in their organisation had not been successful. As the change process consumed more time than anticipated, the leadership which had initiated it realised that the regular members did not agree on the initiated process, which resulted in a lack of participation among the members. In retrospect, the board analysed their failure to have occurred as they ‘did not make a decision based on every voice [in the organisation]’. A similar emphasis to treat the members as equals was also displayed at different members- meetings I attended. Different methods of including members were used, plenary discussions, smaller group sessions, presentation in plenary sessions etc. A small case from a workshop in the ACY can illustrate this. It happened during a brainstorming on restrictions for public youth activities, and all present were invited to state their opinion in

⁷⁰ From ‘Rules and regulations of the ACY’, private document.

⁷¹ From SFA’s introduction to their organisation, private document.

the plenary assembly, statements were written on flip-charts. As the brainstorming was about to finish, the facilitator from the board was careful to name the persons present who had not made any statement, highlighting the need for participation from everybody.

These are two brief examples of how youth organisations, and also their leadership, try to promote the equality of all members and as such portray their organisation as including, and aspire to the alternative model for participation extracted in chapter four, equality. As these groups are heterogeneous, both regarding ethnic affiliation, to a certain degree gender - although females are underrepresented, and occupation (university students, pupils and employees) the foundation for a bridging network to evolve is laid. But in order to assess their bridging qualities, the inclusiveness of members and equality between them, it is also necessary to look more closely at the interaction between regular members and the leader/ leadership, and the power- relations which lie within the organisation. To do so, I will first give a case from a meeting I had with some board members and the leader in a youth organisation, before I will continue with a longer case from a workshop in the ACY.

The leader

I had arranged an interview with some board members in a youth organisation where I had earlier not been, through Hamid, a friend of mine who had previously been an active member in this organisation. When I came to their office at the agreed time, I was served tea and started to ask questions to the four present board members. As I asked questions they were all eager to answer and they were filling in each other's answers with comments and additional information. After approximately 20 minutes, the leader of the organisation enters the room, and all stand up to greet him. He greets all of them in turn, takes their hand and gives a short hug, before he stands in front of me, puts his right hand on his heart, bows and welcomes me to the organisation. He sits down behind his 3X2 meter teak desk where there is a picture of himself, a framed table sign with his name and an Afghan flag. One of the others pours him a cup of tea and serves him, and he asks me how I am doing. I answer him and thank him for letting me meet them and ask questions about their organisation. After answering a couple of questions about my interest in Afghanistan and youth organisations he asks me if I have any more questions and I pick up where we left when he entered the room. As I continued my

questions the other board members were not so eager to answer anymore, they would rather look at their leader, wait for him to either answer or name one of the others to do so. Their previous role to give additional information on the other's answers, was now taken over by the leader alone.

The internal hierarchy of the organisation was explicitly displayed, through verbal communication, the lack thereof and their behaviour. Although this might be an extreme case, and also influenced my presence as it was the first time I met them, similar attitudes were also visible in other organisations.

Workshop in the ACY

During a workshop for members in the ACY I detected a similar pattern of behaviour, although not as clearly, by the regular members towards the leader as was shown between the leader and the board members in the previous example.

Seated in a circle, the assembly hall hosted 25 expectant youths, both males and females. The ACY had invited members from four different provinces to attend a workshop in communication. It was the end of April 2004, 35 degrees Celsius outside, and a defective fan in the corner. In front of the circle, there was a podium, an overhead projector and flip-charts for the workshop, and a large banner with the logo of the ACY. A board member welcomes the participants, asks how the travels were, and that he hopes everybody is ready for some informative days. He invites the leader of the organisation to enter the podium. After welcoming all the participants to the workshop, 'my brothers and sisters', the leader held an emotional speech for 45 minutes, on the importance of youth participation and that youths themselves needed to contribute to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. The youths should make every effort to participate, in every field they felt competent, and despite the many constraints they might meet, they should stay together, side by side, work for what they truly believed in and make an effort to contribute to a better future for their country. His speech was answered with enthusiastic applause. When the applause had calmed down, the leader gave the podium to two external Afghan facilitators, two men in their mid 50s, who would lead a three days workshop on communication.

As the workshop progressed, with a combination of group work, plenary presentation and lectures by the facilitators, the participants were more and more eager to discuss the suggestions from the facilitators. On several occasions, some of the participants would challenge one of the facilitator on a statement he had made, engage in a discussion and try to prove he was right. Following the behaviour of the different participations, I soon realised a pattern in those who were most eager to argue their points through, these were the members of the board in the ACY, outspoken and well- articulated. And if one of them started an argument, and got a reply from the facilitator, another board member would continue in line with the previous one, until the discussion was either finished or was closed down by changing the topic or taking a break. The regular members were still hesitant to be critical to the facilitators.

The leader of the organisation was not present during the whole workshop, but he would occasionally show up once or twice a day to see the progress made in the workshop, to make sure everything was alright. Unannounced he would show up, and every time all the participants would stand up to greet him, independent of whether they were in a middle of a discussion or a break. Some of the times he entered through the door at the back of the room and sat down at the closest chair, however those in the immediate proximity would see him and stand up, something which caught the attention of the rest of the group and everybody would stand up and not sit down until he asked them to please do so. Then the workshop would continue. The sessions he was present, he would sit among the other members, listening to their presentations and arguments, seldom participating in the actual discussions. However, at the end of a session he had followed, he would take the word, make a summary, and again emphasise the importance of participation from all.

During this workshop I asked the leader why he did not attend the whole of it. In addition to lack of time and other obligations, he also stated that he did not want his presence to influence the other participants too much. I was a little surprised by his answer and he continued to explain to me that since much of this workshop was based on discussions he saw that his presence could limit the other participants' involvement. He thought they would expect him to

come up with the correct arguments and solutions on the various topic. One of the female participants also underlines this line of thought. After the workshop was finished, she uttered that she never knew before that she was “allowed” to disagree with the opinion of the leadership. However through presentation of diverse group work during this workshop, she had noticed that everybody was encouraged to state their own opinion. The participants, including herself, started increasingly to do so as the workshop progressed. And she continued, she even dared to state what she believed was her true opinion on certain issues, despite not knowing if this was concurrent with the opinion of the leader and the leadership.

The leader as an elder?

Based on the two examples above, the leader in a youth organisation is portrayed as a person with power, one with influence over regular members, one to be respected and whose opinion should be accepted. The feedback of the members to the leader, their behaviour towards him, shows similarities with how the youths describe the elders, or how the teachers at university expect to be treated. Although the leaders in the previous examples most likely are well aware of the respect given to them following their status as a leader, and as such can substantiate this respect through their own behaviour, it is still in the encounter with others, in these cases the members and their feedback and behaviour towards their leader, that the leader achieves authority. Through this behaviour the leader underlines his dominant position compared with the regular members, rather than emphasising the equal participation by everybody that he preaches. In the interaction with the regular members, the behaviour by the members are characterised by loyalty and respect towards the leader. They are hesitant to state critical comments, they usually wait for him to invite them to speak, and some of them to a certain degree expect the leader to have more knowledge and provide the answers. In this regard the interaction between the leader and regular members needs to be seen as a dialectic relationship. On one hand, the leader’s behaviour like an elder extracts certain responses from the regular members. But simultaneously, some regular members expect a leader to provide the correct answers. The wish for a strong leader is also salient among many within the young generation, which was also pointed at in the discussion on political participation in chapter four.

The case from the workshop in the ACY also shows an interesting pattern according to anticipated behaviour towards the elder. One should anticipate that the two external facilitators, both Afghan men in their mid 50s, can rely on their status as *de facto* older than the participants and facilitators of the workshop, to avoid critical comments and discussions against them to occur unless they invited for it. Still, the tendency I noticed was that the participants were more critical towards the two of them, than towards the leader of the organisation. And secondly, that those critical towards them, were board members, e.g. those close to the leader, rather than the leader himself even the times when he was present. The consolidated board members are able to oppose against the elder through being critical towards the two facilitators, and as such setting a standard for the equality of the youths to express themselves and work against the patriarchy displayed through the dominance of the elder. But at the same time, the very same board members support the leader, his statements and simultaneously substantiate the authority of the leader within the organisation. Within the organisation as a whole, the opinions of the leader are seldom critically commented by regular members or the board members in public, and as a group, the youth organisations become consolidated regarding opinions, through a strong leader and his close co-operators.

The leader and board take a prominent position within the organisations, and the behaviour towards the leader shows similarities with how the youth portray an elder to be treated. As has been shown in the chapter about the university, and also in the alternative models for participation, equality and the opposition to the dominance of the elders, are often emphasised. Why then, do youths enter relationships or organisations which seem to extend this pattern? In order to better understand this pattern, it can be useful to look into the analytical tool of patron- client relationships, to look for similarities as well as differences.

Resources for building a patronage?

A patron – client relationship is characterised by the mutual dependence on both parts. The patron provides goods for his clients in order to keep them, goods the client are dependent on. Further, the patron is dependent on the services of the clients in order to produce the goods, and as such it is a dialectical relationship between the patron and the clients. Among the Swat Pathans (Barth, 2004) the Khans and Saints have the means through distribution of wealth to

enter contracts as Patrons, primarily through economic contracts, house tenancy contracts, membership in men's house and membership in a religious group (ibid: 42 ff). Generalising these contracts, to make them applicable detached from the time and space of Barth's study, they can be categorised into access to work/ income (economic contracts), secured livelihood (house tenancy contracts), access to social interaction/ recreation (men's house) and access to knowledge/ meaning (membership in religious groups). Youth organisations can provide the two last resources. As a result of the possibility of social interaction, a third resource comes into existence, the possibility to establish friendship. Friendship originally takes the form of horizontal relations (Wolf, 1977) and as such seems to be an antagonism to patron- client relations which are founded on dyadic vertical ties. However I will argue that my material from the youth organisations shows that they are not mutually excluding, but two different processes existing in parallel. This means that the patron- client relationships should not be interpreted a strict sense, but rather seen as a framework where the leader and board members are understood as patrons, and regular members are seen as clients. The main reason for looking at the leader and members of the board as patrons, is to assess the resources they have at hand which attract youths to their organisations. This will be done, first by looking at the activities they provide, and then at the possibility to establish contacts.

Activities conducted by youth organisations vary both regarding size and the objectives of the organisation. These can broadly be divided into two different categories: 1) social work benefiting people outside the organisation, and 2) activities conducted mainly for members. The first category includes running course centres for children where the members in the youth organisations, pupils and university students voluntarily teach children mainly languages, computer and scientific subjects. This is an offer to supplement governmental education, the pupils pay a small fee to attend, and the voluntary work keeps the budget low. Another activity is arranging sports activities like volleyball, football, judo and other combat sports. Here, members in the organisations are usually coaches, organising activities for non-members, similar to the course centres. The second category, activities for members, has a wide range. Preservation of the cultural heritage through writing and reciting poems is an activity highly appreciated among the youths. One will seldom spend an afternoon or evening together with youths without one or several of them standing up to recite a poem, something

which is given much attention by others present, and reciting sessions can go on for hours. Similarly with music and dancing, although in gender mixed groups, males will sing and dance, and females will watch, smile and whisper along the walls. Some organisations publish magazines where their members are journalists, and others have again established small libraries where books donated to them are systematised and made available for their members to borrow. Another and significant resource a youth organisations can make use of, is the arrangement of members' meetings and seminars, and as such provide knowledge for its members. Some members, usually board members, can contribute with knowledge acquired either through work or studies. Other organisations, like both the ACY and the SFA are able to use contacts that can provide seminars in human rights, communication, management and the like.

With these activities the youth organisations provide a space where members can be active on different levels, e.g. being a volunteer teacher, coach for a football team, writer in a magazine or participant at a members' meeting or seminar. As most of the organisations portray themselves as social organisations, their activities are also looked upon as such. Teaching at a course centre is interpreted as contributing to society through passing one's knowledge on to younger people, and as such contribute to the common good. The same line of arguments is used for sports activities and public cultural events, which are also at times arranged. Taking this point of view, the youth organisations, in particular its leadership can be interpreted as patrons, providing good, providing space for youth activities, and as shown earlier, the respect towards the leader, can show similarities with how Barth argues that clients 'thus forfeit an unspecified part of his political freedom' (2004: 56) due to the reluctance of being critical towards the leadership and as such, shows that they are not of equal status. But on the other side, youth organisations are also a place for social bonding and establishing friendships.

Through providing the space for activities, means providing a space for social interaction and the possibility to make new contacts and friends. Several of the activities conducted by youth organisations are aimed at their members: meetings, workshops, cultural events etc, and these events are also suitable for getting to know each other and establish relationships. Wolf (1977) distinguishes between two different types of friendship, emotional and instrumental,

and they are initially horizontally established. It might be useful to take the point of view from his definition of an instrumental friendship as a start. Instrumental friendships, Wolf argues, are relationships where the initial dyad established can evolve into a friendship which is not restricted within the dyad, but where the persons involved act as links to persons outside the dyad in question. In these relations, access to sources, natural or social becomes vital, but still an emotional aspect remains (ibid: 172- 173). When instrumental friendships reach a maximum of imbalance of reciprocity between the two parts, it evolves into a patron- client relation (ibid: 174). In youth organisations I will argue that an initial patron- client relation can be reversed into an instrumental, although still imbalanced. Emotional friendship, on the other hand, Wolf argues, 'can best provide emotional release and catharsis from the strain and pressure of role playing' (ibid: 172), and are seen as a closed horizontal dyadic relation, where access to resources are provided through other means. To distinguish clearly between emotional and instrumental relationships, like Wolf seems to do, I find difficult. However, I believe that the organisations can provide both kinds of friendship, dependent on the individual in question, their resources at hand and their aspirations. To further substantiate this argument, I will go back to the aforementioned workshop in the ACY and give an account of how the evenings developed.

The evenings of the workshop would start with a large meal, where everybody was present, also the leader and the board members. These meals would have a happy atmosphere, jokes were freely crossing the table, and laughter extended the time of the meal into hours. After the meal was finished, tea was served in the assembly hall, and participants at the workshop would come and leave as they pleased. Either music would be played, poems recited or people would sit in groups talking and giggling. Phone numbers were exchanged, and many pictures were taken among the members. These evenings the leader and the board members were also present, although taking a lower profile than at the workshop during the day. They would sit together with the members, talk with them, and the leader seemed to be careful to circulate between people, talk with all of them and make sure they were enjoying their time at the workshop. In addition to be a time for social enjoyment and relaxation, these evenings were also used well, both by regular members, and by the leader and board to strengthen personal ties. Strengthening these ties, I will argue should be seen as a mutual benefit for both sides.

For the leader and board, social interaction with the regular members is a way of building trust and substantiate the members' loyalty towards them. For the future, instrumental friendship, still asymmetrical, with the regular members, can for the leadership also mean a possibility to increase their number of members and hence their influence. For regular members to build stronger relations to the leader and board members, can have several benefits. Firstly, the leader and the board are usually made up of skilful people who also outside the organisations can have good connections. For a regular member to build a relationship with these, also increases his/ her possibility to gain access to their contacts external to the organisation. Secondly, personal relations with the leader and board can mean a future prospect of gaining more access to the circle of the board and hence be a possibility to be more included in the decision- making processes in the organisation.

To further underline my argument for how friendship can evolve within youth organisations, I will use Samir as an example of one member who was able to transfer his client status as a regular member, to still be a regular member, but one with influence within the core of the organisation. I will argue that he was able to do this through building friendships with board members of the organisation. Looking at how he was able to do this, also gives information on how the relation between leader and board members (the patrons) is.

Samir – equalising his client status

Samir arrived in Kabul at the start of 2004, and had become acquainted with the SFA when living in Peshawar. Upon his arrival in Kabul he picked up his contact with the SFA members, and started to visit Dawaud's, one of the board members, office frequently. At the start his visits were short, but they soon became expanded in time and after some months he seemed to be included in what turned out to be the core of the SFA leadership.

Office hours were over and Dawaud asked if I wanted to join a game of volleyball in the garden. The garden was in the compound of the office where Dawaud worked. In addition to a net tied between two small trees, there were some chairs and two tables in the shadow of a larger tree in one of the corners. The garden was a nice place to hang out during cool evenings, and several nights a week, friends of Dawaud's used to come over, and a game of

volleyball was usually on the agenda. This afternoon Muneer and Samir were already present, as were Merwais and Safir who had just finished a meeting in the office. The six of us started to play, and three other young men joined in as they entered the compound. After one hour of playing, spectacular serves, not so spectacular saves and a lot of laughter, Merwais and Safir headed for their homes while the rest of us sat down for some tea. The latest update on what people had done, and which rumours were new this day were the subject for the initial 15 minutes. Then the discussion turned to the SFA, which strategy they should choose in order to improve their organisation and a discussion on who were considered to be useful members for the next board. As the talk turned to the SFA, I realised that I was the only person not a member of the organisation: Muneer, Dawaud and three of the late coming men were board members, Samir was only a regular member, but equally participating in the discussion, and this was the first time I saw Samir in these discussions. Previously, when the phrase ‘we need to discuss some SFA issues’ was uttered, four – five board members would gather in a corner. But this evening, Samir seemed to be included in line with the others. As the discussion went on, it became more and more intense. The loudness of the voices increased, and from initially discussing in English, they turned to talk more and more in Dari. The first Dari comments were translated to me, but as the intensity increased, no one had the time to do the translation. As the evening turned towards night, I left the compound to get home before dark.

This evening which I first regarded to be an evening where friends spent time together, playing volleyball and relaxing, turned out to be an evening where the strategies and work of the SFA were much discussed. It also occurred to me later that this evening was only one among many such nights. To understand the pattern of gathering, I find it useful to keep in mind the establishment of the SFA previously outlined. They were established in Peshawar by a group of friends connected through the same course centre. As many of them have moved to Kabul after several years in exile, the friendship from Peshawar is continued in Kabul. And as friends they have multiple concerns which can initiate an informal gathering, not only playing volleyball, but also listening to music, watching a DVD, eating in a restaurant or visiting each other’s homes, informal meetings which were also used to discuss the strategy of the organisation. This particular evening after the volleyball game, five board members and Samir as a regular member were present during the discussions. Muneer told me the day after that

they had continued the discussion until two in the morning, but they did not agree, so they needed more time to come up with a solution. These informal discussions turned out to be both time consuming and high tempered and as such they distinguish themselves from discussions where all members were gathered. In these informal forums, where some of the board members and those close to them were present, different opinions, disagreement and negotiation between them seemed to be the rule. Those present had an equal opportunity to state their opinion, and as such influence the outcome of the discussion. However, agreement within the core of the organisation was needed, to portray themselves as consolidated in forums where regular members were gathered, as shown in the case from the workshop above.

From this case, there are three points to be made. The first is how Samir was able to gain access to the informal gatherings where much of the decision- making within the organisation was conducted. As such, he as a regular member increased his influence within the organisation through evolving friendships with core persons within the board, and I will argue, to a certain degree reversed his previous client status to a friendship status, although still “just” a regular member. Secondly, within the core of the organisation, between the leader, board and friends (like Samir), the relationship shows more similarities with horizontal ties, than vertical ties. Those with access to the core of the organisation, are regarded more or less as equals. And among equals, discussions, disagreement and time consuming persuasions seemed to be the rule, also when the leader was present. This leads to a third assumption, that within youth organisations, two horizontal layers can be seen. One evolving between the leader, board members and close friends, and the second evolving between regular members. These two can be characterised as vertically situated in accordance with each other, due to the loyalty displayed by regular members towards the leader and board, but at the same time, Samir proves a case where upward mobility is possible. So what does this data tell us about the similarities and differences with a patron- client relationship?

Patrons and clients or friends?

James Scott (1977) argues that affective (emotional) bonds between patron and client are usually more sustainable and stronger than bonds made mainly on instrumental and material

resources (ibid: 130). Taking into consideration the resources the leader and the board have through the youth organisation: mainly space for social interaction and access to knowledge, I will argue that their personal affective bonding to members is an important mechanism for strengthening their positions as leaders, compared to other patrons who have more instrumental and material resources at hand. I have chosen to interpret these affective bonds as evolving friendship, some asymmetrical, others more horizontally based. In this way I will argue that both patron- client relations exists, shown through the leader and board as patrons providing access to activities for regular members, clients, and the evolving of friendships. Rather than two incomparable relations, I will argue that within youth organisations they both exist in parallel. As I interpret my data, the evolving friendships do not threaten the status of the patrons, as they are still the main gate- keepers of who will be included to participate in their internal discussions, like the case with Samir, where he after a month got accepted. Other friendships can be seen as asymmetrical, those with most of the members, but for the leadership to engage in affective relations, also substantiate their positions as they knit regular members closer to themselves. Rather than making an either-or distinction between either a patron- client relationship or friendship to dominate within the youth organisations, I find it more useful to compare these internal relationships to the youth organisations initial bridging aspirations.

From bridging to bonding youth organisations

At the start of this chapter, I argued that the youth organisations in my example have bridging aspirations, shown through their visions and also through inclusiveness of members, in particular regarding different ethnic belonging. However, the internal relations within the organisations, suggest an integration of the diverse members to a level where the question of the bridging aspirations turning towards bonding relations arises. The strong leader, I have argued shows similarities to how an elder is expected to be treated. In this regard, the youth organisations alternate but still reproduce the elder and the patriarchy he represent, however through a young leader that the members display their loyalty to. Secondly, the leader and leadership's effort to simultaneously socialise with regular members, lays the foundation for personal relations to be established, relations that can further strengthen the loyalty towards the leadership. Based on this, I will argue the youth organisations evolve into dense networks,

characterised by close ties between the participants and strong in- group loyalty (Putnam, 2000) but where power- inequalities exist shown through the regular members' strong loyalty towards the leader, at least in public. Putnam argues that bonded networks are good for "getting by" (quoted from Briggs, *ibid*: 23), and as such are beneficial for those included in these bonded networks. But simultaneously they can create antagonism towards those not included.

This has also been highlighted by Margaret Levi (1996) in her critique of Putnam, who argues that close networks, like neighbourhoods or other civic organisations promote trust within these networks, but simultaneously they promote mistrust towards outsiders. In her opinion, social engagement in civic organisations is not sufficient to promote more general trust and hence the possibility of bridging horizontal networks to evolve. She sees the need of including the role of the government to increase the level of community participation and the promotion of trust (*ibid*: 51- 53), an issue which we will return to in the final chapter.

A second result of the bonding organisations, with strong in- group loyalty, is that rather than promote universalistic principles where equality for all is highlighted, they tend to become representatives of particularistic interests where only those included, in this case members, will benefit. Among the youth organisations in Kabul, this particularistic attitude, antagonism and mistrust shown towards other dense networks, turned into a constant competition between the youth organisations in order to gain admittance both among the NGOs and the INGOs or other potential donors, for funding. During my time of field work, I experienced no attempt at co-operation between the youth organisations established in Kabul, despite the seminar arranged at the university, shown in chapter five. Rather than making efforts at co-operation, when I spent time with different youth organisations, they made sure to let me know why their organisation was better than the others, also those organisations they knew I was in contact with.

The only attempt to gather different youth organisations was made by the initiative of an international NGO which funded the establishment of a co-ordination body aimed to include all the different youth organisation in Afghanistan. This initiative turned out to be short-lived.

A board with representatives from different youth organisations in Kabul established objectives and visions for the coordination agency, and a large youth conference was held in Herat in February 2004. Close to 100 youth representatives from all the different provinces were gathered at the conference to agree on the future prospect of the agency, with an aim to establish branches in eight different provinces. However, the results were long in coming. Nadia, who was a representative at the conference, was furious about the INGO having their own agenda to spend money on the youths, but without listening to what the youths wanted to say or do, while Asghar was discouraged by the lack of cooperation between the representatives. In his eyes they were there only to advocate their own personal visions. Muneer, on his part, picked up his qualities as a negotiator and tried to calm down the hostilities which evolved during the conference. Back in Kabul, a report was written, and four months later, the coordination body ceased to exist.

I think this illustrates that co-ordination between the different youth organisations was not good, close to non-existent, which can be interpreted as a sign for initially bridging organisations to become bonding. This has also been documented by Hans Blomkvist (2001) to happen in India. He points to the fact that the term bonding groups can also apply to groups which initially have been created to overcome social cleavages, in India symbolised by both caste and religion, and modern groups like university students and political parties, but which have become bonding due to the lack of relations outside their immediate groups (ibid: 78). I will also argue that a similar development can be seen among the different youth organisations established in Afghanistan. The combination of a strong leader and leadership, the loyalty displayed by members towards them and friendships established within the organisations, suggests a consolidation within the youth organisations where lobbying for their own particularistic values seems to override their initial universalistic ambitions.

At the same time, these youth organisations do not exist isolated from other networks in Kabul, and as mentioned, gaining access to funds, national or international NGOs, took high priority with many. Many of the youth organisations put emphasis into exposing themselves in public.

Exposure in public

Activities youth organisations have conducted, or conduct, are noticed, both by the general population and by organisations (NGOs, INGOs and the government). Establishing a course centre or arranging cultural and sports events are activities which often are looked upon with content from the public. Once at a volleyball match arranged by ACY, several of the community- leaders at the specific place attended as audience, seated at the front row on chairs while the rest of the audience was seated behind on mats. When the match was finished, these leaders walked up to the leader of the organisation and expressed their gratitude to him for organising activities to keep the youths active. This credit, given by the community leaders to the leader of the youth organisation is credit noted both by the other youths as well as people in the larger community.

This is one example of how organisations are able to expose both youths and themselves to the public. If the activities conducted by youth organisations are appreciated, this will also be reflected in the local community's opinion of the youth organisation and its members. The same applies to positive exposure to other professional organisations, NGOs, INGOs and the government. If the work of the youth organisation is looked upon as successful, the organisers will gain a good reputation among external actors and also a possibility to co-operate with an external actor which could be followed by more activities within the organisations. The initial activities of the SFA in Peshawar suggest this. They were able to build on resources from the international community to conduct workshops, which again increased the status of the organisation with the public and new members registered. Also the activities of the ACY have been noticed. They have implemented several projects for INGOs, among others for Save the Children on rights and duties for children at primary school level. And before the presidential election, the IOM⁷² contracted their drama- group to conduct a drama about public education on the procedure and relevance of the upcoming presidential election, in remote villages.

In these situations the youth organisations have entered a relationship with external actors, a relationship which again can be characterised as a patron- client relationship, but where the youth organisations now have status as clients. For the youth organisations, these contracts

⁷² International Organisation for Migration

can be seen as necessary in order to gain funding for preferred activities and as such, gain access to resources. On the other hand, the character of these contracts will most likely vary, concerning who acts as a patron and based on what conditions these contracts are made. Rather than going into different contract-situations that youth organisations enter into, I will look at who within the youth organisations benefit the most from these external contacts.

A student group at Kabul University got contracted by an international NGO to monitor the upcoming presidential election. The contract was made in April 2004, when I was still on fieldwork. The members of the board in this organisation said the INGO had contracted them because they had members from different provinces, and with the variety in the geographical origin of the members, the INGO saw the potential for a wider monitoring process where the student could go back to their places of origin, and with their local knowledge and contacts would be able to do a better job than if the representatives had come from Kabul. In preparation of this monitoring, Safir, the leader of the organisation was sent to Denmark to attend a conference, while Merwais, the deputy leader, attended an election conference in Malaysia. Both these conferences were organised by the INGO they were contracted through in Kabul. Back in Kabul, Safir and Merwais imparted their newly acquired knowledge to the other members, and together with training from the INGO in Kabul, 25 members of the organisation went to their native provinces during the election to monitor⁷³. From what I have been told, the INGO was very satisfied with the work the members in the organisation did, and continued to fund seminars arranged by the student group. A year later, when Safir had finished his education, he was employed in the INGO. Merwais on his part had been invited to speak at a conference for internationals and members of government some months after the election, organised by the INGO. At this time, Merwais worked as a radio-reporter at a local radio station in Kabul in addition to his studies at the university, but at the conference one of the members got impressed by his speech, and some days later, he was offered the job as the assistant to the leader of national broadcasting. When I met Merwais a year later and he told me this, he just said: ‘you know, Afghanistan is like a dream. One day you are a radio reporter, the next day when you wake up, you are the assistant of the boss and wear a suit’.

⁷³ As the elections were held after I had finished my fieldwork, I got this information when I visited Kabul again in June 2005, through work with the Norwegian Peace Centre.

Also other stories I have heard confirm this pattern. The leader and board members are those who are in contact with external actors, and often those who benefit from them through creating contacts on which they can build their personal career. As these two cases have shown how leaders have gained personal careers, another short case can show how some leaders also see the possibility to build personal support through youth organisations.

Building personal support

I have argued that the internal relations within youth organisations, the combination of a strong leader and board members and evolving friendships, create bonded organisations characterised by strong internal solidarity. In contact with external partners, Merwais and Safir provide an example of how their organisation's successful work benefited their personal career opportunities through contact with an INGO. Other ways for a leader to utilise the solidarity built through a youth organisation, is to promote a potential future career, also political.

Loyalty established through personal ties, and through social activities can also be used for political purposes. Most of the groups I spent time with in Kabul, argued that they were social organisations, but as previously mentioned in chapter four, naming oneself a social organisation can also be a strategy to avoid the negative connotations following the experienced perception of politics. The ambivalence between these two terms became clear to me on several occasions. One group I spent much time together with, was initially a social organisation focusing on running course centres and arranging cultural arrangements for their members. In May 2004, right before I finished my fieldwork, a board member showed me a registration form from the Ministry of Justice. They had now decided to register as a political party in order to campaign in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. I asked if he thought the members would agree on it, the shift from social to political organisation, upon which he replied that they would continue their previous activities through which the members could participate. As long as they provided the space for activities, he thought most members would agree on the change from a social to a political organisation, although some might also leave. On the other hand, the board in the organisation thought it was now time to lobby for youth participation in decision-making processes, where a parliamentary seat would be their aim. It

is however an empirical question to see if the loyalty established through a social organisation is strong enough to be transferred into political support in a national election. Following the line of thought of this organisation, the potential might be there. But on the other hand, it is important to remember that youth organisations are only one of the networks and solidarities youth relate to. As Rubin has noted earlier, which solidarity is more prominent, will depend on the context (2002: 24- 25).

Youth organisations enabling or restricting youth participation?

To consider whether youth organisations enable or restrict youth participation, I find it useful to divide this question into two different fields, one concerning the internal relations within the organisations, and one concerning the relations external to the specific organisations.

To take the internal relations within the youth organisations first, I have argued that the strong leader and members of the board and the hierarchy that is displayed, show similarities to a patron- client relationship where the leader and board act as patrons providing resources, and regular members are clients. Interpreting this relation as a patron- client relation the personal autonomy of the individuals can be seen as restricted, as opposing the leader and board's opinion do not seem to be an opportunity for regular members. On the other hand, these organisations do provide a space for youths who want to be active, and through entering these organisations, they simultaneously are aware of the loyalty expected to be given to the leader. As entering into such organisations are voluntarily I will argue it is a choice of the individual youth whether or not to join a youth organisation with the consequences that follow, e.g. being loyal to the leadership. In those cases where opinions of regular members are not concurrent with those of the leadership, the member chooses to leave the organisation, as Hamid did when the youth organisation he was a member of, changed its main focus of activities.

Secondly, socialisation within a youth organisation and the establishment of friendships can also be seen as a possibility of social mobilisation for those who have aspirations for that, like Samir. For him, being a member of the SFA, getting into the circle of the board through friendship but still being only a regular member, can give a future prospect where he will

acquire a board membership and benefits extracted from this, in particular through exposure to external actors. The socialisation within the organisation, both vertically and horizontally also substantiates the loyalty towards the leader and leadership, and the support the leaders can build on for personal gains. On the other hand, this socialisation and the close relations established within the youth organisation can also be seen as a source of restricting youth participation, but then seen at the community level.

The loyalty within the different youth organisation, to a large degree I have argued, creates bonded organisations, where the internal loyalty and solidarity turn to external mistrust. As such, they do not significantly contribute to a general increase in youth participation.

Following Putnam (2003), bridging networks, together with trust and reciprocity increase public participation on the community level. As far as I can see from my data, few youth organisations are able to provide such bridging networks, although this seems to have been their initial wish. Rather than being able to create bridging organisations, they evolve into bonding organisations with a strong in- group loyalty and where particularistic values replace universalistic ones. For the time being, youth organisations are good “getting by” for those who are included and can as such be active therein.

Summing up

Youth organisations are one of the most frequently mentioned places where youths who want to participate can live out their engagement. The youth organisations in this chapter have initially been established by youths themselves, and as such, they have created their own space for activities detached from ascribed statuses. This means a possibility to open up for participation guided by the alternative models of politics extracted in chapter four, equality and knowledge. However, the interaction within the youth organisations shows a strong leader/ leadership and members who are hesitant to oppose their opinions. I have interpreted this to show similarities with a patron- client relationship, where the leader/ leadership act as patrons, providing resources, space for activities, and where members are clients. At the same time, within the youth organisations there is a lot of social bonding, also establishment of friendships, and although these are characterised as horizontal (Wolf, 1977) and as such distinguish themselves from vertical patron- client relationships, I have argued that they are

not mutually excluding. My data suggest that both vertical and horizontal relationships evolve within youth organisations. I have interpreted this to have two outcomes, firstly, bonding relations substantiate the authority of the leader (also horizontal friendships), secondly it turns the youth organisations, that initially had bridging aspirations with inclusion of youths from different ethnic groups, into bonding organisations. Their internal loyalty seems to decrease the possibility to build bridging networks with other youth organisations. This further leads the youth organisations to show similarities to particularistic values where benefits are distributed among members only.

The hierarchy within the youth organisations suggests that these organisations are not able to change the model of the elder for that of equality within their own organisations, and as such they alternate but still reproduce the patriarchy, however through a young leader. These young leaders are also, I will argue, able to build on personal support in contact with external organisations, and as such be able to gain influence in a wider context. In the cases where these youth leaders gain respectable positions in the wider society, they can be interpreted as symbols and agents changing the patriarchy in the wider context, however in their own organisations the patriarchy seems to be reproduced.

Chapter 7: Concluding remarks

Introduction

In this thesis I have elaborated on the possibilities Kabuli youths have of public participation. This has been done through looking into three different social fields, the family, Kabul University and youth organisations. In addition, I have in chapter four outlined models of participation which the youths consider available, extracted from how they conceptualise political participation. Taking the point of departure of the diverging perception of politics, different models have been extracted. From an experienced perception of politics, the models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation derive, which further show similarities to particularistic principles of gaining access to participation. The alternative models are equality and knowledge, which derive from a learned perception of politics and reflect universal principles for gaining access to participation. This chapter also questions what are considered political and what are considered social activities among the youths in Kabul. So, going back to the initial question of this thesis: what are the possibilities and constraints of public participation among youths in Kabul? And secondly, if public participation is enabled, what are the prospects of changing to the alternative models of equality and knowledge, guiding their access to participation, something which they highlight as appreciated? To evaluate these questions I will start with the family relations, as I do believe the first step lies here, both for participation and for the possibility of change.

Personal autonomy from family as the main entrance to change

In chapter three, I elaborated on how family relations can be both constraining and enabling for youths who want to participate in public. Two of my informants, Shaker and Sima have family relations which enable them through ascribed statuses to take up public roles, in their cases political activities. If they follow their ascribed statuses, they will most likely reproduce the models of participation enabled through particularistic principles, that of ethnicity and affiliation (tribalism), of which the perspective provided by Barth (2004) presented in the introduction represent. As such, the current political culture will prevail. On the other hand, youths who have no ascribed statuses to rely on, negotiate with the family in order to obtain

the personal autonomy they need to be able to participate in public. Contrary to Shaker and Sima who rely on ascribed statuses, they can be wheels for changing the political culture through their achieved statuses, and build solidarities around new identities, showing similarities with the politics emerging during the 60s and 70s, where ideology became the common denomination (Edwards, 2002; Harpviken, 1995; Mousavi, 1998) bypassing tribe and local solidarity groups, at least for a while.

However most of the youths presented in this thesis argue that they want to be socially active, and not politically active. And the social activities these youths engage in seem to be built around solidarities independent from family relations, in their cases, as youths or students. Talking about social organisations, or social activism, the notion of civil society comes as a natural follower, so also among the youths in this thesis.

The Western models of civil society have by anthropologists been accused of being ethnocentric, usually highlighting the liberal- individual ideas of Western societies, and it is explained as ‘a space between family and kin groups on the one hand, and the modern state on the other’ (Hann, 1996: 6). Following this example, although ethnocentric, it is the achieved statuses detached from family relations which will enable youths in Kabul to participate in voluntary organisations, which make up the civil society. At the same time, Hann (1996) argues that ‘when students under some repressive regime take up the call for “civil society” and make it central to their struggle for “democratisation”’ (ibid: 19), one should be careful using the ethnocentric idea of civil society as a slogan, but rather look closer to the specific local political tradition, to better understand how civil society can take different forms in different contexts (ibid). Harpviken et al (2002) have identified the civil society existing in Afghanistan, dividing it into five different areas: 1) community councils, 2) religious networks, 3) the NGOs, 4) voluntary associations and interest groups and 5) political parties. Through including traditional associations, like the community council and religious networks, they have simultaneously expanded the notion of civil society to include more than newly established groups, to also include previously established networks. In Islamic countries, this is argued to be of major importance. The anthropologist Richard T. Antoun (2000) is one who argues traditional forms for organisation should be considered as being part

of the civil society within Islamic countries. He argues that in Jordan, the tribal councils are more efficient as a part of the civil society than modern forms of newly established associations. As his contribution show, the discussion on how to define what and who constitute the civil society, whether it is modern formal organisations, traditional institutions or more informal networks (e.g. White, 1996) creates dispute within anthropology, and as argued by Hann (1996) what makes up the civil society will take different forms in different contexts. The data in this thesis, might push me towards an ethnocentric view, focusing mostly on voluntary and interest organisations, at the university and through youth organisations. However, as my informants are youths, (and following Harpivken et al's identification of the civil society in Afghanistan) access to the community councils is usually restricted because of their age, the same with religious networks unless the family provides the correct ascribed status. For many of the youths in this thesis, living in an urban area inspired by the international presence, and a growing interest for social activities, voluntary organisations became a space for enabling public participation, based on an achieved status.

Participation in civil society through voluntary organisations interpreted as political participation

Most of my informants who were members in organisations would highlight that they were socially engaged and did not want to participate in politics. As mentioned in chapter four, I will argue that this attitude can derive from the experienced perception of politics and the negative connotations that this brings along. At the same time, their motivation for participating was for many to change the social conditions of their country, and as such contribute to a better future in Afghanistan. The question which then arrives is whether contributing to the change of the social condition is a political activity.

For many of my informants, it was not looked upon as such. Anahita told me: 'being active in a political party you want to gain political power, social organisations want to bring social change'. Building on the anthropological literature about social movements (Alvarez et al, 1998; Gledhill, 2002) that work for social change, these are considered part of the civil society, trying to influence the politics within the states where they operate. As such the link between social commitment, participating in civil society and political activism seems

unavoidable. Much anthropological work on social organisations and activism has been done in Latin America, and as such must be seen as both evolving over time and developed within another historical context than what Afghanistan has been through. But in order to assess what is considered social and what is political, research from this area can be useful to look into briefly. It should also be mentioned that the social organisations in Latin America are characterised as fragmented and have shown different variations depending on which countries they have evolved within. However, one of the main arguments is the merging of what is considered cultural and what is considered political (Alvarez et al, 1998). ‘Political culture’, Alvarez et al argue, ‘is the domain of practices and institutions, carved out of the totality of social reality, that historically comes to be considered as properly political (1998: 8), and every country has its dominant political culture. In Afghanistan, this dominant political culture can be regarded as dialectic between the central government and local notables, where patron- client relationships have been dominating, something which was explained throughout chapter two, the history of Afghanistan. Secondly, this experienced perception of politics, extracts the models of the elder and ethnicity & affiliation to be the means of gaining access to this dominant political culture. Following Alvarez et al, in Latin America, social movements have attempted to challenge the dominant political culture through questioning the boundary between political representation, cultural and social practice. This has been done through establishing new identities which presuppose cultural difference (ibid) and through a focus on rights, redefining the concept of citizenship to include previous subordinated groups (Dagnino, 1998). Following Dagnino, the new citizenship requires ‘the constitution of active social subjects (political agents), defining what they consider to be their rights and struggling for their recognition’ (ibid: 51). This struggle, she argues, is characterised by the fact that ‘it has a basic reference not for the democratization of the *political regime* but of society as a whole, including therefore the cultural practices embodied in social relations of exclusion and inequality’ (ibid: 47)⁷⁴. Inspired by the new constitution in Afghanistan (January 2004) the youths represented in this thesis, struggle for their rights as equal citizens and to be able to participate on equal terms with adults in public, and as such become equally included in society.

⁷⁴ Italics in original

Alvarez et al (1998) continue by introducing the concept of cultural politics, a concept where there is no clear line drawn between what belongs to the political realm and what belongs to the cultural realm, but rather that they are merged. Through this concept what is considered political is once again broadened. Alvarez et al's definition of cultural politics is:

The process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meaning and practices come into conflict with each other. This definition of cultural politics assumes that meanings and practices – particularly those theorized as marginal, oppositional, minority, residual, emergent, alternative, dissident, and the like, all of them conceived in relation to a given dominant cultural order – can be the source of processes that must be accepted as political' (Alvarez et al, 1998: 7).

Following this definition, they argue that when movements use alternative conceptions on e.g. women, race, democracy and the like, this deviates from the dominant cultural meanings and they enact cultural politics, because meaning embodied in culture, and negotiations on this, will always be political. This is because they implicitly or explicitly seek to redefine social power. As have been shown through the empirical chapters, the youths try to redefine social power, within their families through negotiations, at university, in order to enable increased participation, and in youth organisations where socialisation between the members is still reproducing, but I will argue that the hierarchy between leadership and regular members is lessening. Looking at participation through this theoretical perspective, what the Kabuli youths interpret as social activities, can also be seen to have political side-effects. Another question is whether their participation actually changes the dominant political culture, or only alternates it.

Possibilities of change in the political culture

In chapter four I elaborated on how the youths want to change the political culture they see today as derived from an experienced perception of politics, where access is regulated by the elders and through ethnicity & affiliation. The alternative models they have provided highlight equality and knowledge, and together these can briefly be summarised as particularistic versus universalistic values. Using Putnam's (2000) distinction between bridging and bonding networks, I have tried to look into what characteristics networks have, through two different fields, Kabul University and youth organisations.

From this data, the university seems to portray itself as the most promising place for an alternative form of politics to evolve, through bridging networks. Today there are tendencies showing aspirations and also concrete actions pointing in this direction. Despite the prohibition of political activities on campus enforced by the Ministry of Higher Education, student groups are established, and seminars, also concerning participation by students, are held. This shows firstly that the university students are able to manoeuvre the administration and to increase their influence for desired participation at the university. Secondly, the university has 9000 students, students with diverse backgrounds, both ethnically, regionally and regarding gender. The proximity of these students, the diverse forums they meet in, in class, in the canteen (although that is segregated according to gender) and outside the classroom, builds the foundation for diverse networks to mingle and also the possibility of bridging networks to evolve, where their common status as students can be the main source of their solidarity. The fact that they were able to arrange a seminar, where representatives from different student groups were gathered, further substantiates the potential, through co-operation, of a change in the political culture towards a more universalistic culture where equality between the different students can be the guiding principle. On the other hand, also at the university there are students whose loyalty is closely knit to bonded groups originating external of the university. For the students who want to build bridging networks, these external loyalties are seen as threatening which further leads to mistrust between the students, and as such restricts the possibility of participation.

The youth organisations established primarily by the initiative of the youths themselves, initially show the potential to provide bridging networks and to adhere to alternative models of access to participation, equality and knowledge. However, these youth organisations portray a strong leader/ leadership and in their relation to regular members, which I have argued shows similarities with patron- client relationships. This relationship should not be interpreted in its strictest sense, since I argue that the establishment of friendships, both between clients, and between clients and patrons, do evolve. Rather I argue that youth organisations should be considered as bonded networks, where power- inequalities exist, and further extract a division between who are included and who are excluded. The bonded

networks increase the internal solidarity, but as shown, little effort, to my knowledge, is done to bridge these organisations with similar organisations. The bridging which does occur, is usually done by the leader and board members towards external persons, mostly potential donors or co-operation partners, which leads to a situation where they personally can benefit from being leaders of a successful youth organisation. In the question of whether they are able to change the political culture or not, the similarities with patron- client relations shown in the relations between the leaders and regular members, particularly through the strong leader, suggest it only alternates the dominant political culture based on particularistic values, but through youth organisations, exposed through a younger leader.

Why do bonding networks prevail, a question of trust?

War leads to the breakdown of trust, and networks are usually narrowed. Additionally, as shown in chapter four, relations to political activities in particular are associated with risk. The recent history of Afghanistan taken into account, it seems natural that trust needs to be rebuilt. How trust is developed to a generalised level which is seen as crucial for public participation in general, is disputed among scholars. Political scientists and sociologists highlight the importance of institutional trust to substantiate trust on an individual level. Stolle (2002) argues that institutional distrust, present in repressing regimes, both discourages spontaneous group activity and trust on an individual level (ibid: 407). In societies without generalised trust, she argues, co-operation is based on patron- client relations, the family, particularised trust for members of one's in-groups and individually based trust (ibid: 398). Similarly Margaret Levi (1996) argues that vertical relations can be seen as those providing most trust and co-operation during insecure times (ibid: 52). In the case of Afghanistan, institutional trust is low. The transitional government has not been able to ensure its security of the citizens, which is one of the most salient demands of the Afghan people. Several militias belonging to different political factions were still present in Kabul in 2004, despite the presence of ISAF troops (ASIA Briefing, 2004; Johnson & Leslie, 2005). Secondly, Afghanistan has been characterised as a country without a state and the transitional administration needs to build its institutions almost from scratch. Institutional building takes time, corruption is growing and the Afghan people is impatient to see concrete results in their daily lives. As these needs for many fail to be satisfied, the integrity and trust of the political

institutions decrease. For both those who are poor and well off, their opportunity to have resources and close networks of support is crucial to make their aspirations to come through. Putnam (1993) also sees trust as one of the most crucial components of building civic institutions, and increasing public participation. But rather than looking at the institutional level, he argues trust first develops through face-to-face contact, typically in close and dense networks. Broader societal trust develops through interaction in bridging horizontal networks. My data seem to support Putnam's understanding of trust to be developed through face-to-face contact, in lack of institutional trust, exemplified through how relations to political activities or aspirations only were discussed with 'people one knows'. As such, Kabul University can be a promising place for increased trust to develop. To a certain degree, this is also a possibility within youth organisations, but as previously shown, their limited interaction with other organisations creates trust within the group, rather than a generalised type of trust. On the other hand, taken the low level of trust which exists in Afghanistan today, also youth organisations, even if bonded, can be a point of departure to generate increased trust, through generalising the previous experience of people's trustworthiness to a level where one can trust also strangers (Hardin, 2002).

As I interpret much of the data in this thesis, I believe the lack of trust in the Afghan society, is one of the main reasons why both bonding networks and also patron-client relations prevail. It takes time to build trust in a population which has been at war. The people in Afghanistan have just started this process.

Revisiting Barth and the Swat Pathans

In the introduction I argued in favour of a widening of the category of agents, from Barth (2004) who regards only senior males as agents, to an understanding of younger males and females in general to be included in this category. As I have done this, and shown through chapter three, the family as enabling and restricting public participation, I will argue that for youths to be considered free agents in the Barthian sense, they first need to obtain personal autonomy from their family. The patriarchy is still salient in Afghanistan. Considering participation, some youths are enabled to gain access to participation through their ascribed statuses, but taking advantage of this, obligations they can not free themselves from follow.

On the other hand, youths who obtain personal autonomy and enter the public sphere through achievement, show more similarities to Barth's notion to the choice of actors, and can more voluntarily choose where to participate, through organisations.

“Society” is how things happen to be as a result of all manners of activities and circumstances’ Barth (1981: 129) argues, and results come from the activities of actors. What are the results produced by youths in Kabul then? ‘Youth’ Durham (2002: 114) argues, ‘in many regards, are central to negotiate continuity and change in any context’, so also in Kabul. At the university, political activities are prohibited by the Ministry of Higher Education, but despite this, the students make organisations and arrange activities. The student seminar on ‘Student participation in society’ arranged on campus, can be seen as one example of how students as a group have been able to manoeuvre around the prohibition. The subsequent announcement to establish a Student Union by the university administration also suggests that the pressure and activities of the students are able to change the relation between the administration and the students on campus. Secondly, the interaction among students on campus, their organisations and the activities conducted, show sign of adhering to the alternative models, based on equality and knowledge, and as such they can be interpreted as wheels of changing the dominant culture. On the other hand, the data from the youth organisations, with the strong position of the leader and board and its bonding characteristic, suggest at the same time that youths also reproduce and continue previous norms and rules within the society.

The maximising actor?

Edwards (1998) argues that Barth's maximising actor was one of the main features he saw present through his study of Afghan politics from 1978- 1997. Although this thesis is not only on political activism, but on public participation in general, maximising one's interests does not seem to be an anathema for my informants either. However, it is important to keep in mind that individuals have different aspirations. I have met those who only want to become a good wife, but still take an education at university because they believe that will secure a more respectable future husband. But for them to work in public after marriage, is not a stated option. For other young females, the search for a future husband who will allow them to work

in public, takes much energy. And I have met those who want to become ministers, if the situation is suitable. Dependent on aspirations, I do believe people choose as best they can to make these aspirations come true, and as such maximising their interest within the frames of the possibilities they see available. At the same time, people show awareness and interests of social work benefiting the whole community, and do their best to contribute to this. But in a post-war situation, where the daily life includes social stress and hardship, Gledhill (2002) argues individualistic responses often seem more viable than pursuing collective utopias (ibid: 204). My data suggests both are present today. Which of them will live to tell the tale of Kabul, the maximising actor or the collective utopian believer, is for the future to answer.

Appendix

Map of Afghanistan



Literature list

- Abbink, Jon (2005) 'Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal', in: Jon Abbink & Ineke van Kessel (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals – Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, Leiden, Brill
- Amin, Tahir (1984) 'Afghan Resistance: Past, Present, Future', *Asian Survey* 24 (4): 373-399
- Anderson, Benedict (2006) *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (revised ed), London, Verso
- Antoun, Richard T (2000) 'Civil Society, Tribal Process, and Change in Jordan: An Anthropological View', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (4): 441- 463
- Alvarez, Sonia E, Evelina Dagnino and Arturo Escobar (1998) 'Introduction: The Cultural and the Political in Latin American Social Movements' in: S. Alvarez, e. Dagnino and A. Escobar (eds.), *Culture of Politics, Politics of Culture – Re-visioning Latin American Social Movement*, Boulder, Westview Press
- ASIA Briefing (2004) 'Election and Security in Afghanistan', International Crisis Group, www.crisisweb.org [20.2.06]
- Barakat, Sultan (2002) 'Setting the scene for Afghanistan's reconstruction: the challenges and critical dilemmas', *Third World Quarterly* 23 (5): 801- 816.
- Barth, Fredrik (1981) 'Swat Pathans reconsidered' in: Fredrik Barth, *Feature of Person and Society in Swat – Collected Essays on Pathans, vol 2*, London, Routledge
- Barth, Fredrik (1987) 'Cultural Wellsprings of Resistance in Afghanistan', in: Rosanne Klass (eds.), *Afghanistan – The Great Game Revisited*, New York, Freedom House

- Barth, Fredrik (2004 [1959]) *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans*, Oxford, Berg
- Bedford, Ian (1996) 'Nationalism and Belonging in India, Pakistan and South Central Asia: Some Comparative Observations', *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 7 (2): 104- 120.
- Blomkvist, Hans (2001) 'Traditional Communities, Caste and Democracy – The Indian Mystery' in: Paul Dekker and Eric M. Uslander, *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*, London, Routledge
- Bourgois, Philippe (1995) *In Search of Respect – Selling Crack in El Barrio* (2nd ed), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Bucholtz, Mary (2002) 'Youth and Cultural Practice', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 525- 252
- Damsleth, Bente (2002) *Coping with Disrupted Lives – A Study of Afghan Girls and their Family Networks*, Cand. Polit. Degree, Departement of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo.
- Dagnino, Evelina (1998) 'Culture, Citizenship, and Democracy: Changing Discourses and Practises of the Latin American Left', in: S. Alvarez, e. Dagnino and A. Escobar (eds.), *Culture of Politics, Politics of Culture – Re-visioning Latin American Social Movement*, Boulder, Westview Press
- Dupree, Nancy Hatch (2001) 'Afghan Women under Taliban' in: William Maley (eds.) *Afghanistan and the Taliban – The Rebirth of Fundamentalism?*, London, Penguin Books
- Dupree, Louis (1977) 'On Two Views of the Swat Pushtun', *Current Anthropology* 18 (3): 514- 517.
- Dupree, Louis (1980) *Afghanistan*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Durham, Deborah (2000) 'Youth and the Social Imaginations in Africa: Introduction to parts 1 and 2', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (3): 113-119

Edwards, David B. (1993) 'Summoning Muslims: Print, Politics, and Religious Ideology in Afghanistan', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (3): 609- 628.

Edwards, David B. (1998) 'Learning from the Swat Pathans: Political Leadership in Afghanistan 1978- 97', *American Ethnologist* 25 (4): 712- 728.

Edwards, David B. (2002) *Before Taliban – Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, Berkeley, University of California Press

Eickelman, Dale F (2002) *The Middle East and Central Asia – An Anthropological Approach*, (4th ed), New Jersey, Prentice Hall

Ekern, Stener (1998) *Street Power – Culture and Politics in a Nicaraguan Neighbourhood*, Bergen, Norse Publication

Emadi, Hafizullah (2005) *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*, Westport, Greenwood Press

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2002) *Ethnicity and Nationalism – Anthropological Perspectives* (2nd ed), London, Pluto Press

Farr, Grant M (1988) 'The New Afghan Middleclass as Refugees and Insurgents', in: G. M. Farr & J. G. Merriam (eds.), *Afghanistan Resistance: The Politics of Survival*, Lahore, Vanguard Books

Giddens, Anthony (1984) *The Constitution of Society – Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Gledhill, John (2000) *Power and its Disguise – Anthropological Perspectives on Politics*, (2nd ed), London, Pluto Press

Grillo, R. D. & R. I. Stirrat (eds.) (1997) *Discourses of Development – Anthropological Perspectives*, Oxford, Berg

Hann, Chris (1996) 'Introduction – Political Society and Civil Anthropology', in Chris Hann & Elizabeth Dunn (eds.) *Civil Society – Challenging Western Models*, London, Routledge

Hannerz, Ulf (1980) *Exploring the City – Inquiries Toward and Urban Anthropology*, New York, Columbia University Press

Hardin, Russel (2006) *Trust*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Harpviken, Kristian Berg (1995) *Political Mobilisation among the Hazara of Afghanistan: 1978-1992*, Cand. polit. thesis, Departement of Sociology, University of Oslo

Harpviken, Kristian Berg, Arne Strand and Karin Ask (2002) *Afghanistan and Civil Society, Report Commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Peshawar/ Bergen.

Holter, Øystein Gullvåg (1997) *Gender, Patriarchy and Capitalism – a social forms analysis*, Oslo, Work Research Institute

Human Rights Watch (2005) *Blood- Stained Hands – Past Atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, New York, Human Rights Watch

Janse, Diana (2005) *Afghanistan och demokrati, Världspolitikens dagsfrågor 2005:12*, Stockholm, Utrikespolitiska Institutet

Johnson, Chris & Jolyon Leslie (2005) *Afghanistan – The Mirage of Peace*, London, Zed Books

Levi, Margaret (1996) 'Social and Unsocial Capital: A Review Essay of Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work', *Politics & Society* 21 (1): 45-55

Lewellen, Ted (1992) *Political Anthropology – an Introduction* (2nd ed), Westport, Bergin & Gravey

Luhman, Niklas (1998) 'Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives' in: Diego Gambetta, *Trust – Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, New York, Basil Blackwell

Maley, William (2001) 'Introduction: Interpreting Islam' in: William Maley (eds) *Afghanistan and the Taliban – The Rebirth of Fundamentalism?*, London, Penguin Books

Moghadam, Valentine M (1993) *Modernizing Women – Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers

Mousavi, Asgar (1998) *The Hazara of Afghanistan – An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*, Richmond, Curzon

NHDR, 2004, *National Human Development Report, Afghanistan – Security with a Human Face – Challenges and Responsibilities*, United Nation Deveopment Programme

Nielsen, Finn Sivert (1996) *Nærmere kommer du ikke... - Håndbok i antropologisk feltarbeid*, Bergen, Fagbokforlaget

Olesen, Asta (1995) *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon

Putnam, Robert D. (1993) *Making Democracy Work – Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

- Putnam, Robert D. (2000) *Bowling Alone – The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York, Simon & Schuster
- Scott, James C. (1977) ‘Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia’ in: Steffen W. Schmidt (eds.) *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism*, Berkeley, University of California Press
- Rashid, Ahmed (2001) *Taliban – The Story of the Afghan Warlords*, Oxford, Pan Books
- Roy, Olivier (1990 [1985]) *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (2nd ed), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Roy, Olivier (1994) ‘The New Political Elite of Afghanistan’, in: Myron Weiner & Ali Banuazizi (eds.): *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press
- Roy, Olivier (2003) Afghanistan: Internal Politics and Socio- Economic Dynamics and Groupings, *WRITENET paper No. 14/2002*
- Rubenberg, Cheryl (2001) *Palestinian Women – Patriarchy and Resistance in the West Bank*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Rubin, Barnet R. (2002) *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan – State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (2nd ed), New Haven, Yale University Press
- Jones, Lucy (2004) *The A-Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance*, 3rd ed, Kabul, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
- Saikal, Amin (2004) *Modern Afghanistan – A History of Struggle and Survival*, London, I. B. Tauris

Singerman, Diane (1995) *Avenues of Participation – Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Stolle, Dietlind (2002) 'Trusting Strangers – the Concept of Generalized Trust in perspective', *Österreishiche Zeitung für Politikwissenschaft; Schwepunkttheft 4, 2/4*: 397-412

Tapper, Nancy (1991) *Bartered Brides – Politics, Gender and Marriage in an Afghan Tribal Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Vogelsang, Willem (2002) *The Afghans*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers

Weber, Max (1971) *Makt og byråkrati*, Oslo, Gyldendal.

Weekes, Richard V. (1984) *Muslim Peoples – A World Ethnographic Survey*, (2nd ed), London, Aldwych Press

White, Jenny B. (1996) 'Civic culture and Islam in urban Turkey', in: Chris Hann & Elizabeth Dunn (eds) *Civil Society – Challenging Western Models*, London, Routledge

Wulff, Helena (1995) Introduction: Introduction Youth Cultures in its own Right: the State of Arts and New Possibilities, in: Vered Amit- Talai and Helena Wulff, *Youth Cultures – A Cross-cultural Perspective*, London, Routledge

Wolf, Eric (1977) 'Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies' in: Steffen W. Schmidt (eds.) *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism*, Berkeley, University of California Press

Yousefzai, Baqui (1974) 'Kabul University Students: A Potential Political Force?', in: Louis Dupree (eds.) *Afghanistan in the 1970s*, London, Praeger Publishers

