

# INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND ETHNIC CONFLICT-A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

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## INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF ETHNO- -NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND ETHNIC CONFLICT -A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

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*"blood ties" do not necessarily end up in "rivers of blood"*  
(Horowitz, 1985)

## INSTITUCIONALNI I SOCIJETALNI ASPEKTI ETNIČKO- -NACIONALNE IDENTIFIKACIJE I ETNIČKOG SUKOBA – PRILOG HISTORIJSKOJ SOCIOLOGIJI

### *Sažetak*

*Višeeetnički sastav lokalnih zajednica je učestala pojava u modernim društvima. Brojni su primjeri u kojima etničke grupe žive zajedno usprkos kulturnim, simboličkim, političkim i gospodarskim razlikama. S druge strane, društvene razlike se nerijetko pretvaraju u latentne i manifestne napetosti i sukobe. U prvom dijelu rada otvara se rasprava o teorijskim i metodologijskim dilemama u istraživanju etničko-nacionalne identifikacije i etničkog sukoba. Polazi se od opće pretpostavke kako su konfliktni (odnosno mirni) ishodi u višeeetničkim sredinama povezani sa složenom dinamikom etničko-nacionalne identifikacije. U metodološkom smislu, autor se zalaže za integrativni pristup u kojem kvantitativne metode istraživanja (ankete i analize sadržaja) treba kombinirati s kvalitativnim metodama (intrevju, analiza diskursa, istraživanje "usmene povijesti"). Nužnost integrativnog pristupa autor argumentira primjerima iz istraživanja koje je provodio tijekom proteklog razdoblja u višeeetničkim područjima Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine. Polazeći od koncepta socijalne integracije, analiza je usredotočena na međuodnos dviju grupa čimbenika koje se tiču etničko-nacionalne identifikacije. Prvu čine strukturalna obilježja lokalnih zajednica koja su prvenstveno određena utjecajem društvenih institucija. Druga se odnosi na utjecaj društvenih aktera čije djelovanje se odvija na nacionalnoj, regionalnoj i lokalnoj razini. Rezultati kvantitativne analize pokazuju kako postoje bitne razlike između konfliktnih i mirnih područja u otvorenosti etničkih granica i pov-*

*jerenju u institucije. Ipak, kvantitativna analiza ne uspijeva objasniti suptilnije odnose unutar i između područja sukoba i područja mira, posebno kad je riječ o složenom međudjelovanju društvenih aktera poput predstavnika i koalicija političkih, kulturnih, religijskih i poduzetničkih elita na nacionalnoj i lokalnoj razini. Složenu dinamiku etničko-nacionalne identifikacije u lokalnim zajednicama moguće je zahvatiti tek kombiniranjem kvantitativne analize s kvalitativnim metodama koje, usprkos nedostacima poput subjektivnosti, značajno doprinose boljem razumijevanju socijalnih procesa konstrukcije etničkih identiteta i etničkog sukoba.*

**Ključne riječi:** *etno-nacionalni identitet, etnički sukob, etnički mir, institucije, društveni čimbenici*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multiethnic composition of local communities is a common phenomenon in modern societies. Although cultural and political differences may make the tensions and conflicts between groups, There are multiethnic settings in the world that have preserved relative peace for centuries. Such examples are Tirol in Europe or Papua, New Guinea in Asia (Jalal and Lipset, 1992) despite the fact that these areas were surrounded with ethnic conflicts and violence. There are various examples of different communities living next to each other, even though divided by cultural, religious and political symbols connecting them to their recent or not so recent past (Kaufman, 2001: 16). Symbols frequently present barriers to formation of images on a common future because what is considered legitimate in one ethnic community lacks the same legitimacy in the eyes of the other community and vice versa (Wolf, 2006: 67). Symbols, which individual ethnic communities are identified with, may also be understood as historical or cultural “constructs”, but their rootedness in collective conceptions is such that their objectivity is considered unquestionable.<sup>1</sup> Structural features may also intensify the risk of ethnic conflict and violence, particularly under circumstances of rapid social and geopolitical changes. Absence of structural restrictions, such as democratic systems of social regulation or clear territorial boundaries between the states, may easily open the path to violence and genocidal massacres (Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, 2006). The third group of factors are ideological and political. In contrast to democratic values and political practice as features of an “open” society, nationalistic exclusivism generates inappropriate

1 For instance, the myth on Kosovo in Serbian ethnic cosmology was relentlessly employed in ethno-political mobilization of Serbs in all parts of the former Yugoslavia. In Croatia, the newly established government led by F. Tuđman embraced the symbols that inevitably brought to mind the bloody past of the Independent State of Croatia and the Fascist movement present there in the period of the Second World War. This definitively broke the line of communication with the Serbian minority in Croatia at the time.

institutional solutions and stimulates dissatisfaction and ethnic conflicts. A specific aspect of nationalistic exclusivism would be the ethnicisation of the political scene where newly-formed political parties are structured almost exclusively on ethnic basis. Finally, the fourth category of factors in which ethnic conflicts may be rooted are the economic ones. In this sense, it is made difficult or even impossible for minority groups to access material resources in a society using mechanisms such as planned weakening of modernization processes, economic pacification, and establishing different forms of “cultural division of labor” in specific areas where the concentration of minority groups is significant.

At the dawn of the disintegration of the socialist systems in the Balkans in early 90-ties, something similar happened. In the former Yugoslavia there were also some multiethnic settings where peace and local communities have been preserved, while the surrounding areas were burdened by conflicts, ethnic cleansing and violence of war. Asking questions about the dynamics of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace runs a range of theoretical, methodological and practical dilemmas. Where to look for reasons for such different outcomes in the communities that live so close to each other? Whether the outcomes have primarily to do with cultural differences that are reflected in values, norms and symbolic expressions? What is the role of messages transmitted by media, including the ideas and perceptions on others? Or, can different peace and conflict outcomes be primary explained by taking into account circumstances and contingencies created by the strategies of national and local elite-groups, their interests and coalitions. What is the role played by processes of ethnic and national identification? Is it true that stronger ethnic and national identities inevitably lead to ethno-national mobilization, conflict and violence? How can the impact of institutional sector (sociologists would say – structural factors) on the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations be judged? Or, would be more realistic to assume social action as a decisive factor? Rethinking about these and similar questions must take into consideration a series of factors involved in the dynamics of interethnic relations.

## **2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS**

Several sets of theoretical explanations have been used to explain the emergence of ethnic conflict and violence, on the one hand, and the persistence of ethnic peace and stability, on the other. Three sets of theoretical frameworks, concerning the roots of ethnic conflicts and ethnic peace, were combined – taking into account their relative importance or empirical validity – in order to explain basic differences between the two types of areas:

a) The theory of primordialism explains ethnic conflict and violence as a consequence of deep-rooted passions of intolerance and hatred, which are triggered by dissolution of the multiethnic state. Primordial meanings can be used for to justify the peace endurance as well, such as the assumption that people are naturally more inclined to peace than conflict. Some of these assumptions are included in

the peace culture theoretical frameworks as well. From a scientific point of view primordialism may seem just a kind of “inside subjectivism” (Fishman 2004), but for the actors involved in the processes of identity construction the emotional bonds with the group and their symbolic expressions may seem more important than the life itself.

b) Next is the set of modernization theories (developmental, constructionist, instrumental, situationist, etc.). It explains ethnic conflicts and violence as a product of transformation of a predominantly agrarian community into an industrial community, whereby less educated people as well as economically less developed areas, which are committed to collectivism and authoritarianism rather than individualism and democracy, search for an exclusive collective identity and are prepared to take the part in mass mobilization on the basis of ethnicity in order to stretch up firm boundaries against other ethnic groups. Insofar, the whole process takes the form of the politics of nationalism (e.g., Gellner, 1983, 1994). The explanations emphasizing the manipulative role of the political elites and their tendency to instrumentalise ethnic identity and sentiments basically belong to this set of theories (e.g., Obershall, 2000).

In Brubaker’s thesis on “ethnicity without groups” a special role is given to the explanation of the processes of ethnic identification, ethnic mobilization and ethnic conflict. His plea for discarding primordialist and essentialist conceptions of ethnic conflict alike, as a conflict between ethnic groups, primarily aims at conceptual clarification. At the level of ethno-political practice, interethnic conflict is presented as a conflict between the ethnic groups. As Brubaker points out, for an ethnicity student and analyst, it is more efficient to think in the categories of ethnicisation as a political, social, cultural or psychological process in the course of which ethnicity is yet to be connected to “groupism”. In Brubaker’s view the “group” is not considered a fundamental analytic category, and groupism is a variable whose changeability depends on the context (Brubaker, 2004: 11).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, ethnicity should not be understood as a substance, thing, entity or collective individual, but should rather be approached from the perspective of relationship, processes, political projects, and contingent events.

c) The third set of theoretical frameworks are taken from different domains of peace research in order to explain the persistence of peace in some multiethnic areas surrounded by the areas where ethnic conflicts and violence or war is taking place. Firstly, the holistic peace (Galtung, 1995) and the peace culture model (Boulding, 2000). These models explain profound differences between peaceful and antagonistic social systems, primarily their patterns of human needs, socialization, overt behavior and cultural, including religious, beliefs, that are incorporated into major institutional arrangements of societies, including military, church, competitive markets, schools, etc. This explanation reminds to some aspects of primordialist

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2 Brubaker advises of the necessity to differentiate between groups and categories. Category is not a group. It is at best the potential basis for group-formation or “groupness” (Brubaker, 2004: 12).

theories of ethnicity and nationalism. It is that peace propensities and endurance are constitutive elements of every culture, as much as conflict and aggression, whereby a dialogue between members of culturally different communities (in multiethnic settings) may soften hard and aggressive and condone soft and peaceful orientations.

In his more pragmatic approach, Vjeran Katunarić recognises several categories/forms of peace in multiethnic situations (Katunarić, 2007). Those are primarily peace-building post-conflict processes in which one may differentiate among peace development stages, such as peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building, and finally, the *democratic peace*, which is in some aspects similar to the idea of a *culture of peace* (Katunarić, 2007: 396). The termination of conflict entails realisation of various programs and projects which, in addition to significant material resources, presuppose institutional transparency and responsibility. It is necessary to build up the civil society sector which complements the work of democratic institutions.

The key explanatory framework of these theories was used for to understand how much they can explain the test-cases, i.e., the existence of conflict and peace areas, in the former Yugoslavia.

This theoretical mix was accompanied by a methodological mix and different methodological procedures were used in collecting data. Starting from the assumption about the complexity of the dynamics of ethnic conflict, combined methods and research techniques were used. One must admit that this is not unusual in the research of ethnic identity and ethnic conflict.<sup>3</sup> Two aspects in this regard have to be emphasized. Firstly, using of different methods very often corresponds to the uses of different theoretical perspectives. Thus, for example, quantitative data analysis with longitudinal outlooks is mostly aimed to establish some evolutionary processes on macro-level, e.g. within analytical units like nations or regions with data aggregated on that level, and is accordingly closer to macro-social theories like functionalism, institutionalism, political realism (state-level analysis), class analysis, etc. Concurrently, qualitative analysis, especially when combined with quantitative, as in the case of Varshney's research (Varshney 2002), requires disaggregation of data and their "deconstruction" from an inside perspective in order to understand meanings which individual actors or small intimate groups attribute to themselves or their interactions with others.

Second important aspect of the methodological mix in this area is that such procedure does not guarantee, although it justifiably claims for scientific progress due to the diversification of methodological practice, better results in terms of (empirical, comparative or theoretical) generalizations of the findings. More properly, the methodological mix seems to improve the explanation of the relationships between different levels of analysis, and social phenomena respectively, i.e. between macro-

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3 Just to cite some examples: Deadly ethnic Riots (Horowitz, 2001); Conceptualizing and Measuring Ethnic Identity (Brady and Kaplan, 2009); Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life (Varshney, 2002).

and micro-level and between institutional and social life-world level – for instance, between institutional policies of government and strategies of civic associations, as in Varshney's study.

In most of our research the combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques were used: survey research, non-structured or semi-structured interviews, content analysis, narrative analysis of different sources, including historical, oral history, etc.

Taking into account these theoretical and methodological presumptions, in this paper the issue of the dynamics of ethnic conflict, and its absence in multiethnic areas of Croatia will be discussed from three important standpoints: identification processes, institutional level and societal level. With that aim, I should refer to previous research projects realized in the multiethnic areas of Croatia.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. IDENTIFICATION PROCESSES, ETHNIC CONFLICT AND ETHNIC PEACE**

The starting point in the research was a general assumption that the conflict (or peaceful) outcomes in multiethnic areas are associated with the complex dynamics of ethno-national identification in multi ethnic areas. As an analytical category, identity was accepted over the last few decades by various theories, from interactionism to structural functionalism. The notion of identity was embraced by completely opposite theoretical perspectives on ethnicity, race and nation, such as theories close to primordialism as well as modernization and instrumentalist theories. The notion of identity serves the purpose of explaining the unstable, multiple, fluid and fragmentary nature of the contemporary Self. Analyzing the heterogeneity of the concept of identity, Brubaker states that, today, the analytical value of the concept is seriously brought into question because the notion, which was originally created to denote sameness, constancy and stability, is acquiring opposite meanings. Instead of hopeless attempts to find a unique substitute for "identity", one should unravel the knot of tangled meanings and divide the notion of "identity" into several less "tangled" notions such as self- and Other-identification, categorization, self-understanding, social location, connectedness, and groupness (Brubaker, 2004: 41–48). Despite this, identity, as a practical category, may have (and frequently has) strategic significance for different social actors, particularly in situations where other forms of social mobilization, such as class mobilization, lose their strength.

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4 Since 1995 the author has conducted or participated in a series of research projects conducted on the topic of ethnic relations, ethnic conflict and ethnic peace in Croatia and neighboring areas. Just to mention some of them cited in this paper: "Croatian ethnicity and cultural patterns in the area of Istria and Rijeka" (1990-1995), "The processes of modernization and territorial identification in Istria" (1997-1999), "Modernization and collective identification in Croatian peripheries" (2002-2005), "Peace enclaves/cradles - Intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention" (CDCULT 2002-2003), "Social integration and collective identities in multiethnic areas of Croatia" (2007-)

Questions arising from these assumptions may be subsumed under the following. Are there significant differences in the processes of identification in areas of ethnic conflict and areas of ethnic peace? Is it justified the claim that more distinct ethnic and national identities automatically lead to greater levels of conflict in multiethnic communities? Why some communities are conflict-ridden, and others are relatively peaceful, although there were no significant differences in the processes of identification?

Quantitative analysis of the identification processes, based on surveys can hardly provide a reasoned explanation of the conflict or peaceful outcome in certain areas. As it can be seen from the review of responses to questions about the level of attachment to certain categories of identification, the difference between conflict and peaceful areas are very poorly marked (Table 1).<sup>5</sup> The most important objects of attachment for both PA and CA were: family, homeland, and Croatia (in spatial sense). The greatest differences may be found in attachment to church (religion), nation and political party, but these later seem not to have such a great importance as previous mentioned.

**Table 1:** *Identification categories - How much significance do you attribute to the following forms of belonging and affiliation? (T-test results)*

	PA		CA		df	T (p)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Family	3.67	.619	3.63	.720	807	.550 (.58)
Homeland	3.23	.845	3.25	.862	806	-.376(.71)
<b>Croatia</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>.835</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>.849</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>-2.158(.03)</b>
Region	3.06	.892	2.97	.984	801	1.298(.19)
Town	3.02	.896	2.89	1.020	803	1.925(.06)
Culture	2.88	.851	2.94	.867	807	1.023(.31)
District	2.88	.994	2.85	1.019	807	.414(.68)
Language	2.69	1.003	2.80	1.023	807	-1.494(.14)
<b>Nation</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>1.009</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>.960</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>-5.896(.00)</b>
<b>Profession</b>	<b>2.43</b>	<b>.993</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>1.047</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>2.017(.04)</b>
Gender	2.39	1.079	2.47	1.067	806	-1.059(.29)
<b>Church</b>	<b>2.37</b>	<b>1.009</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>.995</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>-6.957(.00)</b>
Generation	2.31	1.037	2.36	1.006	804	-.653(.514)
Europe	2.27	.945	2.30	.981	807	-.405(.686)
<b>Political party</b>	<b>1.62</b>	<b>.783</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>.910</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>-4.132(.00)</b>

5 The cited results were obtained in the research "Social integration and collective identities in multiethnic areas of Croatia". The survey was conducted in late 2008 and included 809 examinees from six multiethnic communities in Croatia being: Rovinj, Vrbovsko, Daruvar, Gospić, Plaški, Pakrac. The first three of them were defined as peace areas, and the later as conflict areas.



This level of analysis could be tentatively called "objective" because of the prevailing quantitative approach. Data collected using qualitative methods show somewhat different situation. In order to illustrate this, here are some highlights from the interpretation of interviews conducted in 2002 in Pula (region of Istria - PA) and Osijek (region of Slavonia - CA).<sup>6</sup>

Pula in region of Istria (PE). All interviewed see regional identity, i.e., Istrian identity, as salient, i.e., more important to inhabitants of Pula than national identity, i.e., being Croat. A majority of interviewed think that Istrians have never clearly differentiated between ethnic groups living on the other side of the mountain Učka (a natural barrier that divides the peninsula from the rest of Croatia), they were perceived just as different. The expression "over Učka" always had a symbolic meaning for people in Istria. In that way Istrian identity takes a kind of primordial, almost natural features. But on the other hand, a high level of ethnic tolerance, without traces of ethnic divide and discrimination, is viewed as a specific quality of Istria. Intermarriages are seen as normal, and there is no form of segregation, least ghettoizing of minorities. One respondent explains, that "the mobilization according to ethnic or national lines came as a consequence of the formation of the ethnic-national parties, but being without major sound-off /in this area". The bottom-line of this explanation can be found in the answers of other respondents too.

Furthermore, they explain that a rather small distance toward newcomers use to appear, but only in the outset of the process of adaptation that takes a short time; thereafter the newcomers are accepted as being the part of the local population. A respondent confirmed this assertion by his own experience both as a newcomer and the member of the ethnic group least popular in Croatia. He said that the domestic population protected him from chicanery by nationalists in Croatia. Finally, all respondents guess that for people in Pula civic identity is more important than ethnic identity. The contradictions in self-perception of the category of identity are evident, but one must admit that it works quite well, especially on the level of everyday life.

Osijek in region of Slavonija (CA). All respondents assume that principal guilt for commencing the war is doubtless and it is the politics of the Serb leadership and Milosevic by person. However, respondents significantly differed in their opinions about other aspects of ethnic relations. Some respondents think that Osijek used to be a place of ethnic tolerance before the war, but this custom has been spoiled by extremists who politically manipulated people, primarily people from rural areas in the vicinity. Such a way, the conflict was "imported" in the urban milieu of Osijek, the one which is much harder to dissolve on the basis of primordial attachments or "primitive" affiliations. This was performed, the narrative goes, by exercising pressures and campaigns of frightening. The campaigns were emulated

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6 The cited data were collected in the framework of the research project "Peace enclaves/cradles - Intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention" led by Vjeran Katunarić. The project has been realized in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The interlocutors in interviews were members of local elite-groups and opinion makers.

by media (on both sides). By that, “the worst instincts awoke among people and made them to join their ‘flocks’”. However, there existed rather strong civic identity among the inhabitants, these respondents said, and evidences for that is a relatively high percentage of intermarriages as well as the identity of people who consider themselves the “old and authentic Osječani /Osijekans/”. Also, and this is confirmed nearly by all respondents, there were no exclusive places in the everyday life in the city before the war in which only people gathered who belong to one ethnic group. (This explanation reminds to the tenets of developmentalist variant of modernization theory of ethnic conflict).

Other respondents think that a significant social distance between Croats and Serbs did exist before 1990, and that it expanded afterwards. The respondents explain that the distance was created by virtue of privileges of Serbs, as they occupied most important positions both in the Communist Party and in the local government. “There were only two groups in the era of Communism: Serbs and the rest, i.e., the people /meaning Croats/... An ethnically mixed marriage was a trump-card for political career; especially in the cases where the wife is a Serb by nationality, the political career of the husband was secured and guaranteed successful”. Finally, all respondents agree that in Osijek nowadays the national identity is more essential than civic identity.

One of the important questions is how to explain the discrepancy between the results obtained from surveys and those obtained in the interviews. A different perspective on the issue of ethnic identification may occur due to the fact that the random sample survey research consisted mainly of ordinary members of local communities while the interlocutors in the interviews were members of local elites and “opinion makers”. Nevertheless, we may presume that social actors primarily follow their real existing situations, their perceptions of interethnic relations, including the explanations of the causes of ethnic conflict and peace. Within the (inter)subjective framework of the situation, the cultural definitions and the perceptions of the others play an important role. They constitute the core of the discourses about self and the others, e.g., how much “we” are different from “them”, and whether these differences can be taken as a pretext for decisions to enter the conflict. Likewise, perceived similarities and common interests of the ethnic groups can be taken as a pretext for decision to endure with actions contributing to peace and tolerance between different ethnic groups in the area. From the point of view of our interlocutors, the process of identification, may seem as an independent variable predicting ethnic conflict or ethnic peace. This perspective comes closer to primordialist theoretical standpoint. On the other hand, the perception of the situation may enforce the existing collective identities and trigger different and yet decisive collective behavior. As Varshney has pointed in his study, “it can be shown that conflict itself is identity-shaping and may have been created for that reason by ethnic partisans” (Varshney 2002: 39). This conclusion fits definitively the constructivist perspective. An illustrative example of the “amplification” of ethno-national identities of different sides in conflict represents the “methodology of

rebellion” which was used similarly in different multiethnic areas in ex-Yugoslavia with a bigger share of Serb inhabitants.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. THE DYNAMICS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT AND ETHNIC PEACE – INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

As often emphasized (Schneckener, 2004; Wolf, 2004; Wolf, 2006; Tiryakian, 2004; Guelke, 2004; Olzak, 2006; Horowitz, 2001), the institutional aspects do not affect just the process of ethnic identification<sup>8</sup>, but also the processes of conflict prevention, ethnic mobilization, and post-conflict integration. A. Varshney in the study of ethnic violence in Indian cities shows that civic associations of members coming from different ethnic groups are more resistant to disintegration processes than Indian cities in which such associations do not exist. Even if a conflict occurs it does not necessarily have to be violent. As Varsney points, “it can take an institutionalized form if ethnic demands for higher political representation, affirmative action, or personal laws are pursued in assemblies, elections, bureaucratic corridors, and nonviolent movements and protests” (Varshney 2002:25).

For these reasons, we expected that the results of empirical studies would point to significant differences in the perception of social institutions in the areas of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace. The second assumption could be that trust in institutions will be greater among respondents from ethnic peace areas. Generally speaking, the results obtained in the study from 2008 appear to confirm the first hypothesis (about differences in the perception of institutions). As Table 2 shows clearly, the differences between the areas of peace and conflict areas were statistically significant.

**Table 2:** Degree of general trust in social institutions (T- test results)

	Peace Areas	Conflict Areas	df	T (p)
Index of General Trust in Institutions	2.09 (.52)	2.22 (.57)	807	-3.526 (.00)

However, what was surprising is that greater trust in institutions was reported by the respondents from conflict areas.

The analysis of responses concerning different types of institutions shows some interesting trends. First of all, it should be noted that the average trust in

7 The basic strategy was sending external instructors (usually retired members of the former Yugoslav Army and secret services) with the task to spread fear and panic among the Serbs, and win them over to the rebels’ side. Subsequently, they organized mass gatherings with explicit Serbian nationalistic and Chetnik symbolism. It was not before these events took place that the change happened in the minds of the targeted people and they began to take part in the rebellion (Banovac 2009).

8 As M. Perkmann says, “they serve as criteria for action and non-action” and “as such they are an important factor in the constitution of identity” (Perkmann 1998).

social institutions is very low in general (in conflict areas the overall average score was 2.22), and in peace enclaves 2.09. The list of institutions on which respondents expressed their opinions is shown in Table 3. To make the data clearer, the table includes just the answers “Quite a lot of trust” and “A lot of trust” shown for peaceful areas and conflict areas separately.

The results show that trust varies significantly from institution to institution and from peace areas to conflict areas. The institutions with higher trust (over 50% of public trust) in peace areas were: Educational institutions, Health Care, Military and Police. In conflict areas the highest degree of trust went to Educational institutions, Military, Police, Health Care but over 50% of public trust earned Church and TV.

Trade unions, economy, local administration and media (press, TV) are in the middle of the table without any statistical significant difference between PA and CA. Political institutions (national and international) were placed in the very bottom of the list of public trust.

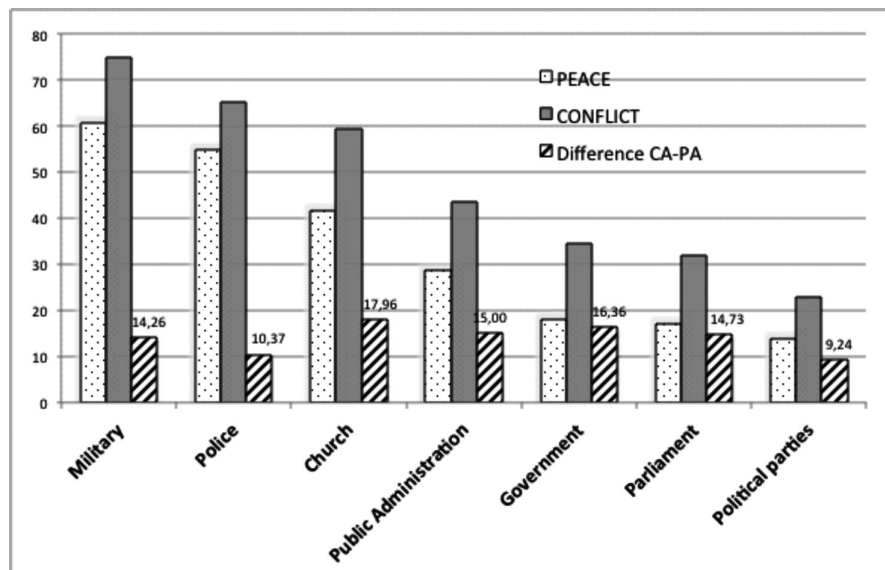
**Table 3:** *Trust in institutions (Answers “Quite a lot of trust” and “A lot of trust”)*

	PA			CA		
	Quite a lot + A lot of trust	Mean	St. Error	Quite a lot + A lot of trust	Mean	St. Error
Education	78,68	3,00	0,71	77,78	3,00	0,77
Health Care	62,56	2,66	0,78	63,31	2,66	0,89
Military	60,67	2,64	0,86	74,93	3,05	0,87
Police	54,74	2,51	0,84	65,11	3,05	0,86
TV	45,98	2,38	0,82	50,38	2,47	0,87
Press	44,07	2,34	0,86	45,22	2,39	0,89
Economy	42,89	2,34	0,74	39,28	2,32	0,83
Local Administration	45,26	2,33	0,89	41,6	2,29	0,87
Church	41,47	2,29	1,02	59,43	2,69	1,01
Judiciary	38,15	2,23	0,84	37,21	2,20	0,84
Trade unions	32,22	2,12	8,00	34,88	2,21	0,87
Public Administration	28,67	2,07	0,81	43,67	2,33	0,85
UN	28,44	2,03	0,86	32,81	2,12	0,87
EU	27,01	2,00	0,85	33,07	2,11	0,89
NATO	27,25	1,97	0,88	36,43	2,18	0,94
Government	18,01	1,76	0,78	34,37	2,15	0,89
Parliament	17,06	1,73	0,77	31,79	2,07	0,88
Political parties	13,75	1,68	0,73	22,99	1,91	0,80

What we consider important in the analysis is not merely the absolute level of trust in individual institution, but the relative differences between the areas of peace and conflict. If we do so, it becomes quite clear that in the background of the trust in institutions operate significant differences in values and political orientations.

Given the differences in trust in institutions between the areas of conflict and areas of peace, there were major differences in the perception of institutions such as church, parliament, government, public administration, military, police and the political parties, shown in Graph 1.

**Chart 1:** *The greatest differences in trust in institutions between PA and CA*



There is no doubt that institutions associated with the nation-state are more firmly rooted in the conflict areas. Such an explanation sounds logical because these areas were predominantly marked with nationalist discourse, especially in the circumstances of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Despite the low trust in political institutions and organizations (especially political parties) should not be forgotten that these areas (i.e. Lika and Slavonia) have always played the role of the strongholds of state nationalism and conservative political options. On this line Catholic Church that supported the ruling national party HDZ, was particularly engaged.

But what is not so self-evident and logical in the data obtained by survey research is concerning some aspects of the processes of institutionalization in peace areas. In contrast to CA, in PA the processes of institutionalization followed somewhat different ways from the very beginning. In a situation of almost total deregulation, which was caused by the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, came to the fore a variety of local initiatives. The best known and most successful was the Istrian

regionalist alternative.<sup>9</sup> In this context it would be important to note that the Istrian regionalism developed as a liberal institutional alternative to the state nationalism, and it was not a populist movement. The political core of Istrian regionalism from the beginning was represented by the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS).<sup>10</sup>

In the Program Declaration from 1991 IDS ideologically defines itself as a party of liberal orientation, but stresses that this orientation is liberal just *in principle*. The real underlying goal of the party was regionalism, which places special emphasis on the territorial and cultural dimension. IDS in this respect defines itself as «a regional party performing on the territory of Istria and the Istrian islands, administratively divided between the republics of Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, but historically, culturally, geographically, ethnically (sic!), economically and ecologically united into a triune whole of this area». This self-determination in itself contains one of the basic strategic ideas of modern Istrian regionalism – the transborder cooperation. It has been defined functionally and primarily as a necessity to facilitate the circulation of «manpower, inhabitants, ideas, knowledge and material goods» between the areas of Istria that are situated in different states. Insisting on «a triune unity of the area» and decentralization of government in essence represents a strategic orientation in furtherance of a special status for this region within the structure of a «Europe of regions».<sup>11</sup> In addition to the demand for greater autonomy and a transborder cooperation policy, the third political goal of IDS was the demilitarization of the Istrian region. In the daybreak of forthcoming tumultuous events it was targeted on Istrian electorate at the time. Two years later (1993) IDS won the local elections with support of 75% of electorate and up to date has a very stable political position in the region.

In other cases of PA the Istrian success could not be reached due to different reasons which could not be analyzed in this occasion, but there were examples of local attempts to structure the actions in non-nationalist manner even in the wartime

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- 9 More on topic see in: Banovac, Boris (1998). *Društvena pripadnost, identitet, teritorij. Sociološko istraživanje regionalne pripadnosti u Istri*. Rijeka: Pravni fakultet.
- 10 The IDS was established in 1989 in conditions of political ferment in Croatia. Formally it became a political party on the 14th February 1990, following the introduction of multi-party system. The first public appearance of the party took place in Pula on 18th April 1990. The political profile of the party is outlined in the Program Declaration published in 1991.
- 11 The most important characteristics of such a strategy are multi-ethnicity and polycentrism. The former particularly manifests itself in relation to the Italian minority by lending support to a maximalist attitude in protecting their rights, especially in matters of language (institutional bilingualism). Polycentrism is the logical consequence of the demand for decentralization of political power, but it also ensues from the triunity of the Istrian region, thereby wishing to stress the importance of regional identity in comparison to national identity. Although this has nothing to do with traditional autonomist politics, even less with separatism, the mentioned strategic orientation nevertheless represented a limitation of the nation-state influence and as such it resulted in collision with the concept of the governmental system in the new founded Croatian state.

in Croatia.<sup>12</sup> There is no need to specifically argue that all these events that followed the processes of institutionalization of Croatian society had a great impact on everyday life, and more, on the processes of identification in the areas in which the peace was preserved.

### **5. THE INSTITUTIONAL DISSOLUTION AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ACTORS**

In the research of the ethnic conflict and ethnic peace dynamics, the question of social actors and social factors that influence the structuration of social relations in specific situations and social actors that are capable to guide those processes – appears as unavoidable one. The importance of the aforementioned issue particularly increases in cases of rapid social change when the very institutional frameworks of society become undermined.

As authors emerging from different theoretical background suggest, the question of relations among the institutional aspects of sociability and the activity of social actors does not only have an uttermost importance for the understanding of the processes of integration of a society in general, but it also appears in connection with the processes of the construction of personal and social identities (Habermas 1975 , Mouzelis 1997 , Perkman 1998). Problems concerning the ethnic conflict in Croatia and the majority of other parts of the former Yugoslav state, in the beginning of the '90s, were additionally intensified by the destabilization of institutions and by the taking place of overall deregulation processes.<sup>13</sup> In the case of social turmoil's the question of social actors that direct the main social processes comes as a crucial one. Insufficient and inadequate level of institutionalization gives rise to various kinds of alliances between individuals and social groups that affect the processes of social relations' structuration.<sup>14</sup> In some cases there is a significant amount of uncertainty as to the outcome of the actors' confrontation. Therefore, in our research regarding the multiethnic areas, we started from the presumption of the activity of „actors of conflict” and „actors of peace“.

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12 One of our interlocutors in Vrbovsko, a multiethnic area in region of Gorski kotar (PA) told us that they used old Yugoslav militia uniforms without any national symbols instead of Croatian police uniforms which could provoke the local Serbs in those days. It was just a small compromise in the tactics to preserve ethnic peace in tense situation. Something similar happened in Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina) when local police forces wore uniforms with Coat of Arms of Tuzla instead of Bosnian national crest.

13 Low level of confidence in social institutions is but a mere indicator of the poor accomplishment of the institutionalization processes within the Croatian society. That fact is related to one of the greatest social problems in Croatia – corruption.

14 S. Eisenstadt mentions three main kinds of social actors influencing the structuration of social relations: those that structure the distribution of labor; those that articulate the ideology and establish political control; those that affect the construction of intergroup borders and the establishment of intra-group solidarity (Eisenstadt 1992)

Within the framework of our quantitative research carried out in 2008 several research instruments have been used, and by their employment we tried to seize the perception of respondents regarding the activity of social actors. Within the questionnaire questions were posed concerning the main reasons of the occurrence of ethnic conflict and the preservation of ethnic peace in specific areas. Two measuring scales have been devised for the detection of various social actors' influence perception, concerning their impact on the outcome (whether peaceful or directed toward the escalation of conflictual tendencies) of the events in the early '90's. In such manner the respondents from the areas of conflict answered the questions about the main reasons of the conflicts in their regions, as well as about their avoidance in other areas (PA). Reversely, respondents from peaceful regions answered the questions concerning the importance of singular actors in the preservation of peaceful situation in their environment, but were also invited to offer answers about the reasons of conflicts present in other areas. Both of those instruments contained same variables in order for the results to be comparable.

Table 4 shows the respondents' answers concerning the main reasons for the conflicts. The inquiry posed to the respondent from areas of conflict was formulated as follows: „Evaluate in what degree are the specified factors responsible for the conflict in your area in the '90s“. The instrument contained 14 variables and the respondents ought to determine the „responsibility“ for the conflict provocation to each of the suggested factor (or actor). Respondents from peaceful areas were given an equivalent instrument with the question formulated in a different manner: „Evaluate in what degree are the specified factors responsible for the conflicts in Croatia in the '90s“. Both devices included a 4 degree scale: 1. No influence (0), 2. minor influence (--), 3. relevant influence (+), 4. decisive influence (++). For the purpose of a major clarity of reference the first and the last two categories were fused together.

In the discussion of the results of our investigation two questions deserve particular attention. The first one concerns the perception of the main actors of conflicts. Notwithstanding some minor differences in the ordering, both the respondents from the CA and those from the PA agree on three main factors of conflict. They position in the first place the policy of the Serbian leadership (more than 82.4%). Second and third position is assigned to “extremist groups and individuals independently of ethnical affiliation” and, respectively, the Yugoslav army (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents). Fourth and fifth place is assigned to the local politicians from conflict areas and Croatian Serbs.

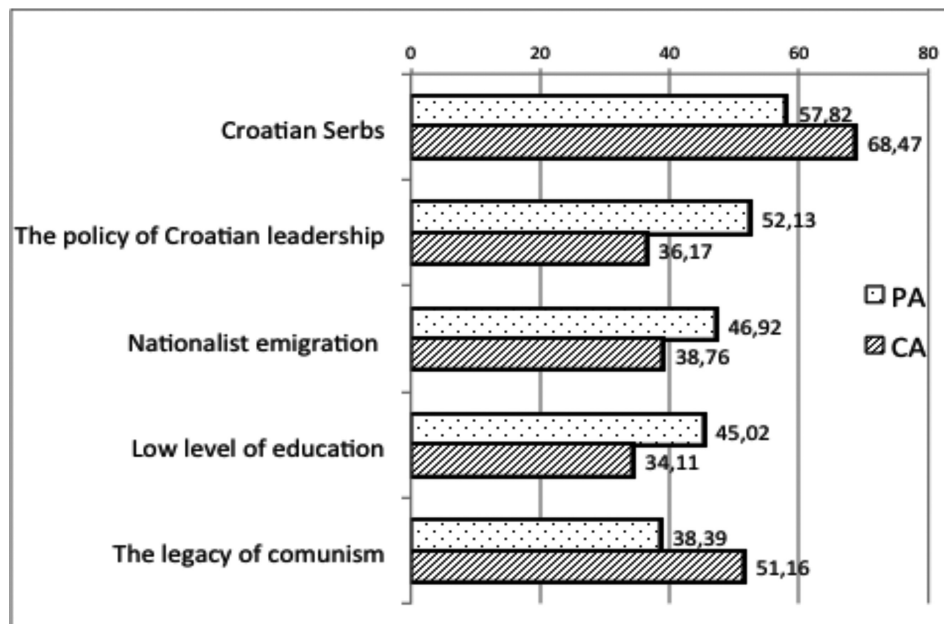


**Table 4:** Perception of “actors of conflict” (level of impact)

	PA/CA	NA	0/--	+;++	MEAN	ST. ERR.
Nationalist emigrant groups	PA	21,56	31,04	46,92	2,78	0,05315
	CA	20,67	40,05	38,76	2,45	0,0626
The Policy of Croatian State Leadership	PA	10,9	36,73	52,13	2,70	0,05165
	CA	14,21	49,35	36,17	2,27	0,05572
Low Level of Education	PA	16,82	37,91	45,02	2,57	0,05181
	CA	14,73	50,9	34,11	2,30	0,05452
Emphasized National Identification	PA	16,82	35,55	46,92	2,60	0,04945
	CA	11,89	38,50	48,32	2,58	0,05496
Non-functioning of Institutions	PA	20,85	49,76	28,91	2,30	0,04444
	CA	16,8	50,91	31,78	2,24	0,04914
Low Level of Economic Development	PA	19,43	46,68	33,65	2,29	0,04937
	CA	12,92	49,36	36,95	2,27	0,05559
The Legacy of Communism	PA	20,85	40,52	38,39	2,47	0,04914
	CA	16,02	32,04	51,16	2,68	0,05108
Yugoslav Army	PA	12,56	11,85	75,12	<b>3,25</b>	0,03896
	CA	11,89	10,86	76,23	<b>3,35</b>	0,04418
Local Politicians	PA	14,93	21,56	63,5	<b>3,06</b>	0,04436
	CA	13,7	23,26	62,27	2,95	0,05128
Foreign Politicians	PA	16,35	38,86	44,31	2,62	0,04798
	CA	19,12	31,26	48,84	2,68	0,05378
Politics of the Serbian Leadership	PA	11,14	6,40	82,47	<b>3,55</b>	0,0349
	CA	10,59	6,20	82,43	<b>3,62</b>	0,03652
Serbs in Croatia	PA	13,27	28,91	57,82	2,85	0,05158
	CA	9,3	21,7	68,47	<b>3,22</b>	0,04965
Extremist Groups and Individuals	PA	10,9	12,79	76,31	<b>3,39</b>	0,04068
	CA	11,63	13,44	74,42	<b>3,40</b>	0,04614
Uninformed Media	PA	17,77	35,78	46,21	2,66	0,04963
	CA	17,57	33,33	47,54	2,69	0,05265

The other question we should consider concerns the main differences in perception of the „actors of conflict“ between the respondents from peaceful and conflict areas. It seems obvious that there is no disagreement upon the main actors of conflict between the respondents from the two types of areas. However, when it comes to other factors that influenced the clashes and intensification of tensions in local communities, a substantial discordance in perception is present. In the analysis of our results we used statistical procedures of testing the variations of arithmetical means (T-test) to determine statistical relevance of the obtained differences in perception of „actors of conflicts“. The most relevant differences are shown in the Chart 2.

**Chart 2:** *Statistically significant differences in perceptions of "actors of conflict" (relevant+decisive impact)*



In the PA a significantly higher number of respondents regards that the instigation of conflicts in Croatia was influenced by: 1. the policy of Croatian leadership, 2. Nationalist emigration groups and individuals, 3. Low level of education in conflict areas. On the other hand, respondents from the conflict areas are more inclined to accuse local Serbs, and every second respondent holds that the legacy of the communist past significantly or decisively influenced the appearance of conflicts. There is no doubt that the immediacy of the armed clashes and the feeling of imminent danger substantially influenced this difference in the perception of „actors of conflicts“. In any case, the situation of ethnical conflict led, to use Brubaker's expression, to ethnic groupism. Consequently, a major portion of blame was projected on the local Serb population as a whole.

When the matter comes to actors and factors of peace (Table 5), a degree of consent between respondents from peaceful and conflict regions is somewhat lower.

Most important social factors singled out by the respondents from peaceful areas are: 1: Tradition of peaceful coexistence (68.7%), 2.Lack of popular support to extremist groups and individuals (61.4%), 3.Peaceful reactions of local authorities (60.2%), 4.Commitment of certain individuals, 5.Local media activity (47.4%).

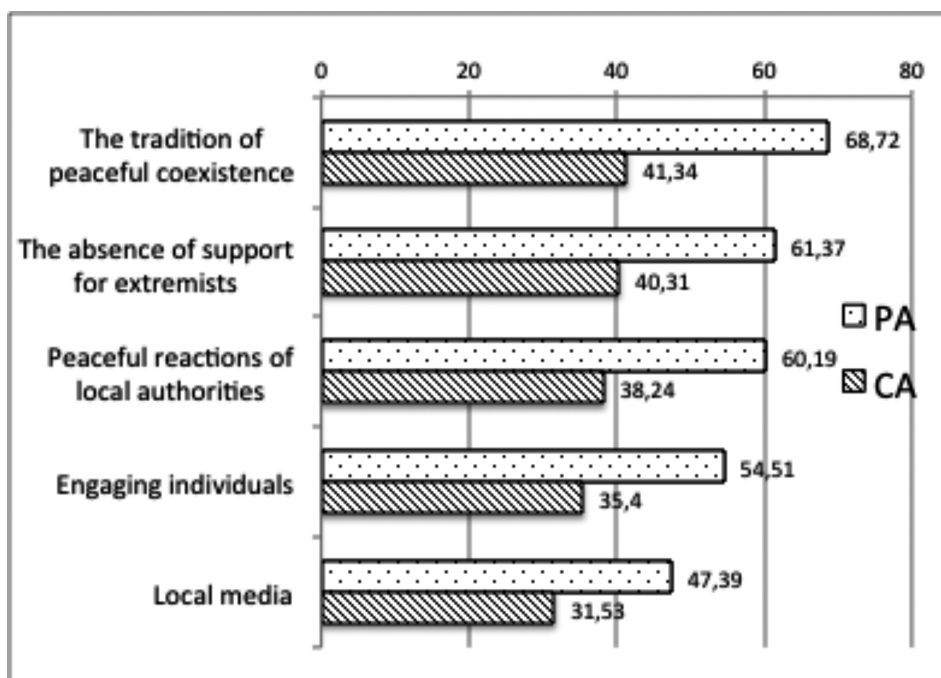
**Table 5:** Perception of “actors of peace” (level of impact)

	PA/CA	NA ZNA	0/--	+ /++	Mean	St. Err
Peaceful reactions of local authorities	PA	18,48	20,85	60,19	<b>3,14</b>	0,05104
	CA	36,18	24,55	38,24	2,58	0,06158
Representatives of Croatian Army	PA	20,85	31,99	46,92	2,73	0,05206
	CA	27,65	26,87	44,44	<b>2,69</b>	0,05688
Representatives Yugoslav Army	PA	22,99	63,27	13,5	1,77	0,04454
	CA	25,84	52,71	20,16	1,87	0,05588
Higher Level of Economic Development	PA	19,67	46,69	33,42	2,32	0,05263
	CA	29,46	38,24	31,27	2,30	0,05872
The Intervention of International Organizations	PA	22,75	60,43	16,35	1,90	0,04729
	CA	29,97	48,58	19,9	1,99	0,05426
Engagement of Individuals	PA	19,19	26,06	54,51	<b>2,94</b>	0,05236
	CA	30,23	33,33	35,4	2,54	0,06188
Functioning of Institutions	PA	23,22	37,68	38,86	2,46	0,0502
	CA	29,97	39,01	29,2	2,31	0,05216
Lack of Support to Extremists in Local Community	PA	18,48	19,67	61,37	<b>3,16</b>	0,05129
	CA	31,52	26,87	40,31	<b>2,65</b>	0,06131
Local Media	PA	21,56	30,56	47,39	2,73	0,05152
	CA	35,92	31,52	31,53	2,49	0,05851
The absence crimes in WW 2	PA	33,65	42,89	23,22	2,21	0,06029
	CA	43,15	30,23	25,32	2,37	0,06459
Weak National Identification	PA	22,04	47,16	30,33	2,29	0,05331
	CA	33,85	39,28	25,84	2,25	0,06001
The Tradition of Peaceful Coexistence	PA	17,06	13,98	68,72	<b>3,36</b>	0,04426
	CA	29,97	27,39	41,34	<b>2,71</b>	0,05824

Respondents from conflict areas find that the absence of conflicts in „some parts of Croatia“ are due to: 1. The efforts made by the Croatian Army to preserve peace (44.4%), 2. Tradition of peaceful cohabitation in some regions (41.3%), 3. Lack of popular support to extremist groups and individuals (40.31). Even in cases when their responses coincide with those of the respondents from peaceful areas, significant differences in the frequencies of answers take place. Yet another interesting fact about the distribution of their responses can be noticed. Namely, it

cannot be a mere coincidence that in the case of social factors and „actors of peace“ particularly singled out by respondents from peaceful areas, their counterparts often assume neutral view and answer with „I am not familiar with it“. This mainly concerns both social factors and „peace actors“ among whose, despite the similarities in order of appearance, exist most significant differences in mean values between peace and conflict areas. These differences are shown in Chart 3.

**Chart 3:** *Statistically significant differences in perceptions of "actors of peace" (relevant + decisive impact)*



Perception of that influenced outbreaks of conflicts and the preservation of peaceful coexistence differs indeed with regard to whether the respondents from peaceful or conflict areas are concerned. This is certainly influenced by the experience of living in the respective regions. In spite of that, distributions of answers point to the fact that respondents in conflict areas are much more laden with the „ethnization“ than their counterparts from the „peaceful“ areas. It is plausible to suppose that the development of events in certain regions made a particular impact on the processes of „ethnization“ and „nationalization“ amidst their population. Quantitative research undertaken in the attempt of deepening the understandings obtained by qualitative methods surely validates this conjecture.

In the context of our analysis, however, it is important to stress that nationalistic politicians, conflict managers and war-lords were admittedly unmatched in terms of power and resource mobilization as well as skill and willingness to achieve their goals, which is to primarily destroy interethnic ties or any form of social capital and

cultural identity that disapproves the nationalistic definition of “Us” and “Them”. This is not to say, however, that peace-orientated people and institutional settings such as PA were lacking all these resources, least of all the will for preserving peace. In fact, a tendency towards peace is more dispersed and the chances for peace to be realized and politically institutionalized are bigger at an initial stage of crisis. It was especially case among civil populations who were targeted as objects of aggression and who had no proper means of defending themselves.

## **6. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Discussion on the results of the dynamics of interethnic relations in conflict and post-conflict period in the Croatian society opens up different issues. In the final section, just three rounds of questions will briefly be discussed. The first one covers the substantive issues, the second relates to the methodological issues, and the third is focused on the theoretical dilemma of primordialism and its alternatives.

In substantive terms, the study shows the complexity of the dynamics of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace. Three aspects considered - a process of ethnic identification, the processes of institutionalization and the impact of social actors - are intertwined social factors that cannot be studied through causal analysis. The identification problem in this regard appears only as one dimension of the dynamics of ethnic conflict. In other words, ethnic identity is a variable that significantly affect the situation of ethnic conflict, and the situation of ethnic peace, respectively. This does not mean that the occurrence of identity should be fully relativized. In this respect it has to be reminded that the respondents from PA as those of CA have listed the “tradition of peaceful coexistence” as one of the main factors preserving ethnic peace in PA. One should also add the reminiscences of distant and closer past, yet especially those from distant time of conflict situations (egg, World War II), may be an important factor to affect the ethnic relations in present. These are the aspects of identity, which often include an emotional charge and lead to the experience of identity, which can be defined primordial. However, if the study of the correlation of identity and ethnic conflict/peace takes more analytical approach (i.e. external), constructivist presumption may be more fruitful in the study.

Institutionalization of social life and people's trust in social institutions can also fit into a complex mosaic of ethnic mobilization, while the effect of institutions has to be perceived as ambivalent. In dramatic situations of the formation of national states, as it happened in the Balkans recently, the institutions associated with the central system of government work to highlight the ethnic and national boundaries. This is surely one of the most important reasons why these institutions enjoy even today more trust in CA than in PA. In a situation of the lack of structured civic associations, and this was the case in the former communist systems, the destructive impact of the new national state on interethnic relations can be crucial. In the meantime, some new alternative approaches in structuring social life appeared. As

it is well known, the most successful case was the Istrian regionalist alternative that opened new space for “actors of peace” in the unfavorable environment. In addition, it has led to the establishment of various forms of “hybrid” identification (Istrian Croats, Istrian Italians, regional identities) that were by definition more tolerant and had a direct impact in reducing tensions in local communities. Once constructed, these innovated forms of identification became a part of the local and regional cultural mosaics, equally strong as other traditional cultural elements.

The matter of societal aspects presents itself as a crucial one when the dynamics of interethnic relations is concerned, especially in case of institutional instability and absence of structured civil sector. In this paper we considered just some aspects of perception of the main actors of peace and conflict. Actions of exponents of local political and cultural elite, representatives of the media and even members of religious and various other organizations at the local level, prove themselves as utterly important for the turnout of different critical situations. In such situations even the mediated interpretation of messages dispatched by the political centre may have disastrous or, respectively, beneficial consequences.<sup>15</sup> Second important factor that seems partially underestimated in questionnaire surveys were the local media; in certain areas they refused to follow the agenda imposed by the political elite (e.g. Glas Istre - The Voice of Istria).<sup>16</sup>

Presentation of these results quite clearly points to some important theoretical and methodological issues, especially when it comes to the study of ethnic identification and ethnic conflict and peace. Ours, but also other empirical studies (Varshney 2002, Horowitz 2001) indicate unsustainability of the theoretical exclusivism in the form of irreconcilable opposition between instrumentalism and primordialism. Although we started the analysis from constructivist hypothesis, the results show that problems of ethnic identification, conflict and peace cannot be reduced solely to rationally motivated actions and interests of current social actors. Affective, historical and symbolic aspects of these processes cannot be ignored. In this sense, it should seriously be considered the claim of some authors (A. Smith 2009, Conversi 2007, Hutchinson 2007) how the different variants of modernism (instrumentalism, rational choice theory, situationism) and cultural primordialism are not so incompatible as previously has been thought. In this sense, the possibility of integration of existing theoretical approaches should also be taken into consideration, especially in the research of ethnic identification and ethno-national conflicts.

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15 It must be kept in mind that during the armed conflict in Croatia even military orders were most often communicated verbally. As our interlocutors repeatedly stressed in interviews, the fate of entire cities could depend on the interpretation of a certain command.

16 “Glas Slavonije” (“The Voice of Slavonija”) newspaper presents a very illustrative example of obstructive activity to the detriment of the actors of conflict; its redaction was seized by the Croatian paramilitary formations, and the editorial board was literally thrown out under armed threats. The newspaper was instantly transformed from advocate of ethnic peace to warmongering medium (Katunarić and Banovac 2003).

These issues are related to the issues and dilemmas of methodological approaches to the study of ethnic identity and ethnic conflicts. The results confirm unequivocally that neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches are sufficient by itself to the study of ethnic identity (Brady and Kaplan, 2009). Quantitative methods, such as survey research, are essential to study a relatively large number of respondents, but they more describe than explain. Achieving explanatory goals seems unthinkable without the combination with qualitative methods such as interviews, analysis of oral history and discourse analysis. This refers especially to the study of dynamic aspects of ethnic identification and ethno-national conflict. Exclusivity of the quantitative and qualitative approaches in social research has a lot to do with theoretical exclusivity, especially when it comes to more general theoretical perspectives, such as positivism and constructivism. Marvasti believes that two analytical frameworks, that are positivism and constructivism, reflect rather different aspects of reality and may represent two different truths. "From this point of view, choosing a research method is not about deciding right from wrong, or truth from falsehood, instead, the goal should be to select an approach that is suitable for the task at hand" (Marvasti, 2004: 8). By doing so, the request of integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in empirical studies of the dynamics of ethnic identities assumes that possibilities exist which may facilitate to overcome the theoretical confrontations that have been present in the field for a long time.

## Summary

### **THE INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF ETHNO-NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND ETHNIC CONFLICT - A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY**

The multiethnic composition of local communities is a common phenomenon in modern societies. There are numerous examples of ethnic groups living peacefully side by side, irrespective of cultural diversity, symbolic, political and economic characteristics. However, it must be recognized that cases in which the differences are converted into latent and manifest forms of tensions and conflict are easy to find. The present paper consists of two parts. In the first part the theoretical and methodological dilemmas in the research of ethno-national identification and ethnic conflict are discussed. The starting point in the paper is a general assumption that the conflict (or peaceful) outcomes in multiethnic areas are associated with the complex dynamics of ethno-national identification. In methodological terms, the author argues for an integrative approach in which quantitative methods (such as surveys and content analysis) in the research of ethno-national identification should be combined with qualitative research methods (interviews, discourse analysis, oral history). The necessity of an integrative approach is advocated in the second part of the paper that presents the most important results of empirical studies of ethno-national identification, which the author conducted in more than a decade in multiethnic areas of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Starting from the concept of social integration, it focuses on the interaction between two groups of factors affecting the ethno-national identification. The first consists of structural features of communities that are primarily determined by the impact of social institutions. The second relates to the activities of different social actors operating on national, regional and local levels. The results of quantitative research show that there are significant differences in the openness of ethnic boundaries and trust in social institutions between conflict areas and the peaceful ones. Nevertheless, quantitative analysis fails to explain the subtle interrelationships between and within areas of ethnic conflict and those of ethnic peace, especially when it comes to the complex action of social actors such as representatives and coalitions of political, cultural, religious and entrepreneurial elite groups at national and local levels. The complex dynamics of ethno-national identification at the local level necessitates the additional use of qualitative methods, which, despite their subjectivity and shortcomings, can substantially contribute to a better understanding of the social process of construction of ethnic identity and ethnic conflict.

**Key words:** *ethno-national identification, ethnic conflict, ethnic peace, institutions, social actors.*



## Zusammenfassung

### **INSTITUTIONELLE UND SOZIETALE ASPEKTE DER ETHNISCH-NATIONALEN IDENTIFIKATION UND DES ETHNISCHEN KONFLIKTS – EIN BEITRAG ZUR HISTORISCHEN SOZIOLOGIE**

Mehrethnische Zusammensetzung der lokalen Gemeinschaft ist eine häufige Erscheinung in modernen Gesellschaften. Es gibt zahlreiche Situationen, in welchen ethnische Gruppen trotz kultureller, symbolischer, politischer und ökonomischer Unterschiede zusammen leben. Andererseits verwandeln sich soziale Unterschiede oft in latente und manifeste Spannungen und Konflikte. Im ersten Teil der Arbeit wird die Diskussion über die theoretischen und methodologischen Dilemmas in der Forschung zur ethnisch-nationalen Identifikation und zum ethnischen Konflikts eröffnet. Es wird von der Voraussetzung ausgegangen, dass konfliktreiche bzw. ruhige Folgen in mehrethnischen Gemeinden mit komplexer Dynamik der ethnisch-nationalen Identifikation verbunden sind. Im methodologischen Sinne setzt sich der Autor für den integrativen Ansatz ein, bei welchem man quantitative Forschungsmethoden (Umfragen und Inhaltsanalysen) mit qualitativen Forschungsmethoden (Interview, Diskursanalyse, Forschung zur „mündlichen Geschichte“) kombinieren muss. Der Autor argumentiert für die Notwendigkeit des integrativen Ansatzes durch Beispiele aus der während des vergangenen Zeitraums in mehrethnischen Gebieten von Kroatien und Bosnien und Herzegowina durchgeführten Forschung. Vom Konzept der sozialen Integration ausgegangen konzentriert sich die Analyse auf das Verhältnis zwischen zwei Gruppen von Faktoren bezüglich der ethnisch-nationalen Identifikation. Zur ersten Gruppe gehören strukturelle Merkmale der lokalen Gemeinschaften, welche vor allem vom Einfluss der gesellschaftlichen Institutionen bestimmt sind. Die zweite Gruppe bezieht sich auf den Einfluss der national, regional und lokal wirkenden gesellschaftlichen Akteure. Die Ergebnisse der quantitativen Analyse weisen auf das Vorhandensein von wesentlichen Unterschieden zwischen konfliktreichen und ruhigen Gebieten bei der Offenheit von ethnischen Grenzen und beim Vertrauen in Institutionen hin. Der quantitativen Analyse gelingt es jedoch nicht, subtile Verhältnisse innerhalb und zwischen dem Konflikt- und Ruhegebiet zu erklären, insbesondere wenn es sich um komplexe Wechselwirkung zwischen gesellschaftlichen Akteure wie Vertreter und Koalitionen von politischen, kulturellen, religiösen und unternehmerischen Eliten auf der nationalen und lokalen Ebene handelt. Die komplexe Dynamik der ethnisch-nationalen Identifikation in lokalen Gemeinschaften kann man erst durch Kombinierung der quantitativen Analyse mit qualitativen Methoden umfassen, welche trotz Mängel, beispielsweise Subjektivität, der Auffassung von sozialen Prozessen der Konstruktion ethnischer Identitäten und ethnischen Konflikts wesentlich beitragen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *ethnische Konflikte, nationale Identität, historische Soziologie.*

Riassunto

**ASPETTI ISTITUZIONALI E SOCIALI  
DELL'IDENTIFICAZIONE ETNICO-NAZIONALE E DEL  
CONFLITTO ETNICO: CONTRIBUTO ALLA SOCIOLOGIA  
STORICA**

La composizione pluriethnica delle comunità locali è una manifestazione frequente nelle società moderne. Vi sono numerosi esempi nei quali i gruppi etnici convivono nonostante le diversità culturali, simboliche, politiche ed economiche. D'altra parte, non sono infrequenti casi in cui le differenze sociali si trasformano in latenti e manifeste tensioni e conflitti. Nella prima parte del lavoro si apre il dibattito circa le antinomie teoriche e metodologiche nella ricerca dell'identificazione etnico-nazionale e del conflitto etnico. Si parte dal presupposto base come i risultati conflittuali (ovvero pacifici) nelle realtà pluriethniche siano collegati con la complessa dinamica dell'identificazione etnico-nazionale. Dal punto di vista metodologico, l'autore è favorevole ad un approccio integrativo nel quale i metodi quantitativi d'indagine (questionari e analisi dei contenuti) vanno combinati con i metodi qualitativi (interviste, analisi del discorso, indagine della „storia orale“). La necessità di un approccio integrativo viene argomentato dall'autore mediante esempi tratti dalle ricerche condotte su territori pluriethnici della Croazia e della Bosnia ed Erzegovina. Partendo dal concetto d'integrazione sociale, l'analisi s'incentra sul rapporto reciproco tra due gruppi di fattori che riguardano l'identificazione etnico-nazionale. Il primo è rappresentato dalle caratteristiche strutturali della comunità locale, le quali sono in primo luogo determinate dall'influenza delle istituzioni sociali. Il secondo si riferisce all'influsso delle figure sociali, l'operato dei quali si riflette sul piano nazionale, regionale e locale. I risultati dell'analisi quantitativa mostrano che esistono rilevanti differenze tra i territori conflittuali e quelli pacifici quanto all'apertura dei confini etnici e della fiducia nelle istituzioni. Eppure, l'analisi quantitativa non riesce a spiegare i sottili rapporti all'interno e tra i territori di conflitto e quelli pacifici, specialmente quando si tratta del complesso operato reciproco delle figure sociali quali i rappresentanti e le alleanze di gruppi elitari politici, culturali, religiosi ed imprenditoriali su piano nazionale e locale. La complessa dinamica di identificazione etnico-nazionale nelle comunità locali può essere colta soltanto combinando l'analisi quantitativa, che, malgrado lacune come la soggettività, danno un rilevante contributo per una migliore comprensione del processo sociale della costruzione dell'identità etnica e del conflitto etnico.

*Parole chiave: conflitti etnici, identità nazionale, sociologia storica.*