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# Democratization Through Civil Society?

A Qualitative Study of Accountability Structures Within NGOs in  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

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## Abstract

The international attempts to build peace and democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are considered to be the most extensive ones in the modern era. In line with neo-liberal theories on development and the New Policy Agenda, substantial amounts of ODA have been directed towards strengthening the civil society in the country and one of the focus areas in this work has been the creation and support of a comprehensive NGO sector. The argument has been that NGOs make ground for grassroots participation and that a participative civil society is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. Today, there are over 12 000 registered NGOs in the country; however, the political climate is anything but participative and the BiH society is distinguished by a widespread political passiveness. The purpose of this study is to take a closer look at structures of accountability with NGOs in BiH and analyze whether they promote grassroots participation or not, and thereby how this can be related to issues of democratization at large.

The results of the study show that NGOs in BiH are highly dependent on their donors, making it hard for them to direct their accountability downwards to the grassroots. External agendas seem to regulate their work. In addition, the general situation is that many organizations are disconnected from the grassroots and rather run by a narrow group of people. Instead of representing the interests of the grassroots, they represent the interests of a few. This has resulted in a public perception of NGOs as not representative of the local population nor working for the common goals of the civil society. Hence, in the conclusion it is argued that NGOs do not succeed in filling their function as arenas for grassroots participation and could therefore be seen as an obstacle to the overall BiH democratization process.

*Key words: Democratization, civil society, non-governmental organizations, participation, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

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## Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BCS	Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian
CCI	Center for Civic Initiatives
CPCD	Centre for Promotion of Civil Society (Centar za Promociju Civilnog Društva)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EC/EU	European Commission/European Union
FBiH	The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FKR	Fondacija za Kreativni Razvoj (Foundation for Creative Development)
IC	International Community
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
MFT BiH	Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Bosnia and Herzegovina
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Aid
OHR	Office of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PWSS	Post-War Stress Syndrome
RS	Republika Srpska
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

# 1 Introduction

*“If citizens do not perceive themselves as the source of development or as actively shaping their community by adopting their goals and strategies, they might see no value in participating in an exogenously driven development project” – Roberto Belloni (2001)*

Since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) between 1992 and 1995, the country has been highly dependent on international involvement on political as well as economical levels. The post-conflict donor activities in BiH are some of the most extensive in the modern era (Sebastian, 2010:2) and in line with new focus within the international democratization and development field during the past three decades much of the official development aid (ODA) has been aimed at creating a strong and viable civil society. The intention with this has been to lay a ground for local agency and political participation; both in order to improve the creation of a legitimate democracy, but also to ensure the implementation of sustainable peace (Chandler, 2000:136). As the EU stated that the emergence of a civil society was important for the development of a pluralistic and democratic society in BiH, focus was put on the role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this setting, and in only sixteen years, there has been an explosion in the number of registered NGOs in BiH (Bubalo, 2011).

However, despite extensive international engagement to promote democracy and development by supporting civil society and NGOs as promoters for change and an arena for local people to participate, there is a widespread political apathy amongst the Bosnian population (Axerup, 2011). Different initiatives to mobilize the population through civil society keep showing negative results (Brkan, 2011). Not only is there a deep distrust in politicians and the parliamentary system, but there is also a deep mistrust in alternative political arenas, such as NGOs.

In many aspects, BiH is considered a protectorate under international rule (Sebastian, 2010:15). This means that the international community has extensive influence in many spheres, out of which civil society is one. With that much international control, some claim that the civil society sector in BiH has become too dependent on international ODA. If so, questions arise regarding where the accountability within NGOs is actually directed; downwards to the grass-roots and by this enhancing participation and democracy, or upwards to the donors and thereby undermining the legitimacy of the civil society as an arena for political participation. With that much money and effort put in NGOs, it is also interesting to analyze what effect this has on internal structures of governance and management in these organizations, and how this influences these organizations' possibility to stay accountable to the local society.

## 1.1 Problem discussion

The research problem revolves around the original idea of NGOs as a vital part of civil society, making up an arena for alternative political and societal participation where the main

driving force should come from the grassroots. However, in the context that NGOs work in today, being dependent on external funding and having to adapt to both donor requirements and higher competition, the reality seems to differ from what this original idea intended. Post-developmental theories argue that downwards accountability has to be sacrificed in order to accomplish upwards accountability, and that one result is that these organizations lose their grassroots connection and instead become elitist driven. Since the political participation and the democratic climate in BiH is nowhere ideal, it is therefore interesting to analyze the role played by NGOs in this negative democratic outcome. With regards to structures of accountability in these organizations and levels of de facto grassroots engagement through this channel of political participation, it is valid to analyze if the goal of creating a strong civil society is achieved or if the effect is in fact the opposite.

From mainstream theories on development where civil society is seen as an important component in democratization, the idea of the NGO sector is that it constitutes a powerful source of grassroots mobilization and an arena for alternative political participation, I want to analyze if this has been accomplished in the case of BiH. These theories will be tested from a critical post-developmental and dependency theory perspective by looking at an empirical reality of accountability structures within NGOs and analyzing how these affect grassroots influence and participation. With the inclusion of theories on participatory democracy, the issue will further be connected to a more general discussion on democratization in BiH.

## 1.2 Research question

The research questions for this thesis are of an empirical character; meaning that they tend to describe what something *is like* and understand *why* in order to make the reality understandable (Lundquist, 2008:62). In relation to the problem discussion above, the main question is as follows;

- *Do NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfill two of their main functions; that is being a successful arena for alternative political participation and enhancers of democracy?*

To give an answer to this question I have chosen to use two more specified questions:

- *With the basis in the selected organizations<sup>1</sup>; what do the structures of accountability look like in NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how do they affect grassroots influence and participation?*
- *How can these patterns of accountability be related to problems of democratization in the BiH society at large?*

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<sup>1</sup> A representative selection of NGOs has been made to constitute the empirical ground for this study. More on this selection can be found in the methodology section.

### 1.3 Purpose of the research

Departing from the argument that participation fosters more participation, the aim of this thesis is to take a closer look at the structures of accountability within a selection of NGOs in BiH. The idea is to map structures of decision making, influence and responsibilities, as well as donor relations, in order to understand where the main accountability within these organizations is directed. The aim is also to get a deeper understanding in the main problematic that face NGOs in BiH as promoters of democratization and strengtheners of civil society. If it shows that there is a lack of downwards accountability within NGOs, limiting alternative political participation and the outcomes that come from participation – namely more engagement and participation – maybe it can be worth questioning the usefulness of these methods to promote genuine democratization in BiH.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

Below is a theoretical framework that will help to analyze the empirical material. It is built upon ideas on participation as the foundation of democracy, moving on to discussions on the role of civil society and NGOs in democratization processes. Further, the focus is on democratization imposed or supported by external actors and in the end what effect this has on the structures of accountability within these organizations. The analytical tools that will be used for the analytical part are derived from the critical theories on development, with a focus on dependency theories and theories on NGO accountability. More on these analytical tools and how they will be used can be found in the very end of the chapter.

### 2.1 Participation, civil society and NGOs

The starting point in this research summary builds on Carole Pateman's critique against realist theory on participation. Pateman argues that the surroundings and contexts in which we all live affect our ability and our will to engage and make a difference in questions and decisions regarding our common good (Pateman, 1970:106). Pateman claiming that "*[...] we learn to participate by participating and feelings of political efficacy are more likely to be developed in a participatory development.*", and with efficient, responsible and accountable arenas for alternative political participation, the individual's interest in engaging in political questions would be favored and developed (Ibid:105). Benjamin Barber develops and ponders on the positive impact of political participation through the perspective of what he calls 'strong democracy' and argues that the idea of community and democracy grows out of participation and also makes it possible. In addition he says that "*[...] civic activity educates individuals how to think publicly as citizens even as citizenship informs civic activity with the required sense of publicness and justice*". Finally, he claims that "*Politics becomes its own university, citizenship its own training ground, and participation its own tutor.*" (Barber, 1984:152).

One of the most common areas for alternative political participation is civil society. Hence, ideas around the societal 'Third Sector' has long been an issue of discussion amongst scholars both within the fields of politics and economics, and more recently also within the field of development. As a general definition, the following is clear and useful;

*"Civil society is an arena of social and political life autonomous from state domination where progressive values and political practices can be articulated, counter-hegemonic institutions can be created, which can nurture and nourish the creation of autonomous political actors who are able to articulate and defend their interests, propose alternative projects for structuring state and society, and transform the relations of state and society"*

(Gershman and Bello in Edwards and Hulme, 1996:35).

Although the concept has been re-introduced in the field and grown particularly strong on the global arena since the 1970's and 1980's together with the up-rise of neo-liberalism, it does trace as far back as to the days of Hobbes and Locke (Gray *et. al.*, 2006:322) and the definitions are many. Hegel explained civil society as “*a social formation intermediate between the family and the state*” (Quoting Mautner:1999, in Grey *et. al.*). Engels and Marx also made a clear separation between civil society (the ensemble of socioeconomic relations and the forces of production) and the state (the super structural manifestation of class relations inside civil society) (Ibid). Critical theory of civil society departs from the otherwise mainstream liberal theory, and thus distinguishes civil society not only from the state but also from the economy (Chambers and Kymlicka, 2002:90). Gramsci, as one of the most prominent Marxist thinkers in the early twentieth century, argued that the capitalist alliances were effective in hanging out power, and that the weapon for the ruling class to exercise power was not through force, but through hegemony (Ibid). Gramsci thereby broke with the pure Marxist theory as he argued that power lies in the production of *ideas* and not in the production of things, and hence civil society was no longer understood solely in economical terms, but rather in sociological and political (Ibid:91).

Many of these theories have moved in a liberal direction, largely explaining civil society to be an antipole against the state and arguing that the larger the civil society, the better the democracy. Tocqueville, e.g., with his discussions on ‘prosperity for association’ argued that the reason that the U.S. saw such success in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century was because of a strong civil society (Gray *et. al.*: 2006:322). Whenever there was a problem, the American civil society would get together trying to solve it, as oppose to waiting for the state to come fix it, as was the case in Europe (Belloni, 2008). The liberal theory also argues that civil society enhances the possibility of individual action. The core of neo-liberalism (critique of Keynesianism) builds on the idea of the individual as the driving force of society; hence, it promotes a political system where the state has as little power as possible and where individual freedom is core (Larsson, 2006:139). The liberal theory, with focus on action and participation of the individual, therefore presents the civil society as a force promoting better and more legitimate democracies. Robert D. Putnam, in his essay ‘Bowling Alone’ (1995), argues that a strong civil society constitutes the base of a functioning democracy. His studies from the American society showed that the more people are engaged in voluntary networks, the better the democracy works. The core of his findings were that the stronger the civil society, the more active the citizenry. He also saw a danger with the ‘declining civil society’ in the U.S., since this would risk making the Americans into passive citizens, which would eventually have a negative influence on the democracy (Putnam, 2006:8).

In addition, Pateman explains that the scope of the term ‘political’ is extended to cover spheres far outside the state and the national government, hence underlining the importance of a civil arena for alternative political participation (Pateman, 1970:106). She argues that “*the opportunity to participate in the alternative areas would mean that one piece of reality would change, namely the context within which all political activity is carried on.*” (Ibid:110). Drawing from all the arguments above, they share the same logics; namely that the existence of a strong civil society results in more participation and hence leads to a more legitimate

form of democracy. As Belloni argues; *“If citizens do not perceive themselves as the source of development or as actively shaping their community by adopting their goals and strategies, they might see no value in participating in an exogenously driven development project”* (Belloni, 2001: 168).

When it comes to the role of civil society in the contexts of democratization and political participation, focus is often put on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The terms ‘civil society’ and ‘NGO’ are commonly used interchangeably amongst theorists and scholars. However, they do not represent the exact same thing. Civil society refers to a larger scope consisting of numerous forms of associational life between the state and the individual level, whereas the sector of NGOs takes a narrower and more vertically organized form of activism (Steel et. al, 2007: 37). Hence, NGOs serve as only *one* part of civil society, and according to Eade, they are considered to occupy the pride place of civil society (Eade, 2007:632). There is a variety of definitions of the term ‘NGO’; however the United Nations (2005) provides a comprehensive and useful one;

*“A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a not-for-profit, voluntary citizens’ group, which is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good. Task-oriented and made up of people with a common interest, NGO’s perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizen’s concerns to Governments, monitor policy and programme implementation and encourage participation of civil society stakeholders at the community level.”*

(United Nations, cited by Unerman and O’Dwyer, 2006).

## **2.2 Development and NGOs: Participatory development and The New Policy Agenda**

The international focus on strengthening civil society was boosted with the end of the cold war and thereby analyzed through many theories descending from the development doctrine. Within this discussion, the past decades have brought forward a new focus on the involvement of *local people* in their own development, which is even referred to as the new development ‘orthodoxy’ by some scholars (Mohan, 2008:47).

In 1990, the theoretical focus on civil society and NGOs became a real policy component amongst Western donors; called ‘the New Policy Agenda’ (Edwards and Hulme, 1996:). Although the details of this agenda came to vary from one donor to another, the common denominator was (in addition to a belief in neo-liberal economics and liberal democratic theory) the renewed prominence to the role of NGOs and other types of grassroots-organizations in promoting democracy, alleviating poverty, building social welfare, and developing a strong civil society. The ‘bottom-up’ approach of development revolves around the idea that the decision-making role of the community enhances the sense of ownership and identity with the process of development, where people are more likely to contribute with

commitment and enthusiasm, something which is required for development and democratization to succeed (Parnwell, 2008:113).

As Western donors have been interested in supporting democratic transitions around the world, they launched comprehensive aid programs designed to foster democratic practices where the support of civil society and NGOs became an important pillar of democracy and development aid. (Steel et. al, 2007:36). For example, in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states, much faith was put in civil society and NGOs as catalyzing bodies in these post-communist transitions (Uhlin, 2006). In these contexts, states were seen as inflexible, bureaucratic, urban-based and unaccountable to the development work, whereas the civil society came to represent something smaller and more accountable (Van Roy, 2008:520).

NGOs have been said to play the ‘transmission belt’ role within civil society. Their staff, holding valuable knowledge and expertise, can gain to experts, government officials and international agents. By maintaining an independent position vis-à-vis the state, they are seen as able to provide a critical voice to discussions and thereby holding both states and donors as accountable for their actions (Steel et. al, 2007:37). Their good connections with local communities are likely to enhance trust between the different stakeholders. Likewise they work as a channel transferring knowledge both ways, between the superior state- and donor level and the local and grassroots level. Hence, bilateral and multilateral donors have awarded NGOs a key role and seen as an integral part of a vivid civil society, opening up channels of communication and participation (Ibid).

### **2.3 Post-development and the failure of democratization; a critical view**

Today, there is no real threat against the idea of civil society and NGOs as a vital part of both democratization and development in developing countries. Both supporters of the liberal school and those criticizing it acknowledge the importance of having a strong local ownership when working for development in a country (Uhlin, 2006:24) The conflict of today, however, lies in those problems that have been encountered during the implementation of the civil society project. It seems as if many of the theoretical advantages with NGOs as democracy and development providers default. One of the many problems that laid ground to the critique deals with the issue of *ownership*. As NGOs are becoming more and more dependent on external donors, the *real* ownership comes into question. There is a risk that NGOs are getting too close to funding bodies, and thereby risking their independence, legitimacy and the trust of their grassroots (Bebbington and Collison, 2006: 328). This has raised questions of whether donor politics can be justified in the context of local agendas and whose agendas they are really fostering – the locals’ or the donors’.

These critical theories have developed into different fields; post-development, anti-development, ‘beyond development’, neo-marxism and different types of dependency schools (Sidaway, 2008:16). Some of these go as far as calling development ‘the new religion of the West’, leading to cultural Westernization and homogenization of developing countries that

with its 'business as usual' approach fails to acknowledge the existence of 'the local' (Ibid). In this sense, the financial support that civil society and NGOs receive from international donors is rather perceived as a new kind of colonialism; a way for the West to control and direct the development and democratization as they see fit, without any real regard of the needs and desires of the grassroots. Hence, these theories challenge the assumptions about progress, asking who possesses the keys to it and how it may be implemented (Ibid:18). And with countries whose development or democratization more or less depends on external financial help, what free space does civil society and NGOs in reality hold to work for the agenda of the locals, as oppose to the agenda of the donors (Van Rooy, 2008:). When it comes to the case of BiH, Belloni has argued that "*local NGOs and citizen organizations created as a result of this policy are likely to be dependent upon foreign donors, and presumably perceived as alien to Bosnian culture*" (Belloni, 2001).

Sorenson even questions NGOs as social movements, claiming that the NGO sector has not been appointed by the grassroots but by the international community. "*The local NGO sector is primarily the creation of an urban middle class, which has been squeezed in the social transformation in the new republics. With polarization increasing [...] as the ethnic states reward supporters of the ruling party, what remains of the politicized middle class can find a new niche in NGOs. Here the distinction between NGOs as social movements or as service providers becomes unclear*" (Sorenson, 1997:35 in Chandler, 2000:150). He also acknowledges the problematic with the Bosnian NGO sector in particular, claiming that democratization in BiH is a highly political and sensitive business that has become technicalized. "*The financing of private bodies, as representatives of democracy and development, without a clear policy may in fact encourage the fragmentation of societies [...]. The model of NGO assistance to democracy can serve only to complement; it cannot be the leading edge*" (Chandler, 153).

### **2.3.1 Dilemmas with NGO accountability**

The issues discussed above have led scholars to debate *the accountability within NGOs*, and where this accountability is directed. According to Dillon, accountability has become the consensus language of international development (Dillon, 2003:105). Edwards and Hulme (1995) define accountability as "*the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions*" (Edwards and Hulme, 1995:9). Cronin and O'Reagan explains accountability as "*[...] the process through which the actors involved in development aid carry out their responsibilities to undertake certain actions (or not), and to account for those actions*", and further points at essential elements involved in accountability such as clear roles and responsibilities of the organization, such as taking action and evaluating that action, reporting on and accounting for that action and finally responding to and complying with agreed standards of performance and the views/needs of the stakeholders (Dillon, 2003:109). Although there is yet no one agreed definition of NGO accountability (Tandon, 1995:41), there are different themes and issues that are dealt with within the relevant research, all covering different aspects of structure and

patterns within these organizations that may influence their possibilities or disabilities to stay accountable.

Lloyd mentions four directions in which NGOs should stay accountable; upwardly (to the donors providing them with funding), downwardly (to their beneficiaries; those that they provide services to or speak on the behalf of), inwardly (to themselves; their organizational mission, values and staff) and finally horizontally (to their peers) (Lloyd, 2005:3). However, the main problem is to combine these four accountabilities in a setting that is controlled by donors and in which the existence of NGOs depend on external funding. Since almost all financial aid from international donors comes with some kind of conditions (Killick, 2008:511), upwards accountability often gets prioritized at the expense of the other three accountabilities. Even though donors intend to give more power to civil society and NGOs, and many international donors (e.g. the World Bank) have made efforts to become more responsive to the local settings they work within, this has not always succeeded. Many NGOs working under external financial control feel that their influence is still limited (Nelson, 2008:552). As modern civil society building has mostly been dependent upon international resources, local NGOs often perceive the danger of this dependency better than their international peers or counterparts (Belloni, 2001:170). The desired downwards accountability and the possibility for locals to get their voices heard within these NGOs are being put aside as this dependency requires a prioritized upwards accountability. This is explained through what Belloni calls the ‘systemic dilemma’, meaning that when internationals support civil society, NGOs become dependent upon this financing to survive, which results in local groups prioritizing those activities they think will attract the donors (Belloni, 2004:184).

The mere existence of NGOs does not reassure grassroots participation, which has been shown through studies conducted in, e.g., former Soviet states. Here, international funding has led to an increase in number of NGOs, but when analyzed qualitatively it appears as if civil society has not been strengthened nor has the alternative political participation increased. In these states, an *international civil society* is developing at the expense of local civil society (Uhlen, 2006:135,150).

Studies also show that many NGOs that are depending on international funding lack a real grassroots constituency due to an elitist structure within the organization. NGOs often tend towards a market mechanism, making the structure of the organization to look like a private company with a few professionals or a narrow steering board running the show (Belloni, 2001:173). The market orientation has also made NGOs focusing on services rather than genuine political and social participation. Technical delivery and pleasing the donors is prioritized over political articulation and channels of expression and at the same time, the NGOs become contractors and its members become employees (Belloni, 2001:173). However, Eade argues, capacity building and strengthening civil society is about people, not things. Therefore, training and education is all right whereas bricks and mortars are not (Eade, 2007:634) Further, Belloni states that “*By using NGOs as cheap implementing agencies, their potential as agents of change towards reconciliation and democratization is critically undermined*”, and the paradox with the entire democratization project reveals itself (Belloni, 2001:174).

Another issue raised deals with result orientation amongst the different actors and stakeholders. Eade explains that aid agencies often are in a hurry to disburse in order to justify their existence to their constituencies and to their donors. However, “[...] *there are not prizes for coming first, and a lot of damage can be done by taking things too fast. Or indeed by packing up as soon as the funded activity is over*” (Eade, 2007: 636). Belloni’s second ‘temporal dilemma’, is connected to this issue; when a conflict arises between short-term and long-term strategies, focus is often put on quick results. This short-termism limits the real effectiveness in democratization as it might prevent long-term structural projects. Hence, with too much emphasis on efficiency and short-term quantitative targets, upwards accountability rather than downwards accountability becomes the priority. The relation between the NGO and the donor takes a form of contracting rather than partnership which is negative according to Edwards and Hulme, who argue that only genuine partnership can promote participation (Edwards and Hulme, 1996:968). In order to see results, larger and more ‘powerful’ NGOs are desired. It seems, however, as if it is easier for small- or medium sized NGOs to keep a good internal structure with legitimate accountability. Rapid growth makes this difficult (Ibid).

Steven Samson, in his contribution to the debate on NGO accountability and sustainability on the Balkans, calls Western intervention and aid projects “benevolent colonialism” (Samson, 2002:4). The concept is based on the idea that the donor means well, but that somewhere along the line of what he calls “project life”, things go wrong. He argues that NGO and donor relations are built on the funding of projects and understanding of key words or concepts such as, e.g., ‘empowerment, good governance, advocacy, partnership, fund raising and networking’. The priority lies with one project following another and he argues that as a part of this transition, social practices and ideas turn into grant categories. Accordingly, civil society that was originally conceived as the social organization of people to solve different problems has turned into such a category. Samson argues that “*Project society and project jargon reflect project ideology*” (Ibid:5) which gives what he calls the ‘Euro-elites’ a key role in the project life since this jargon originally comes from the outside. This effects the accountability, also within these organizations since there competition between locals and key foreign actors in terms of political influence develops (Ibid:6). Having the donor organizations and their donor policies at the centre of the circle, controlling resources such as money, knowledge and ideas, leads to a competition between local elites over these resources. One of the outcomes is, Samson argues, that in this climate where NGOs are supported by foreign donors and their projects there is a link between project society and new elites. Project elites become a class in itself that is tied to Western ideas and funding, English knowledge and the skills required for project management. Many of them move between different projects and organizations, often finding friends and partners in this elite and being highly connected to moving or studying abroad. The dynamics of this NGO world is more based on kinship and connections than real engagement and inclusion of grassroots (Ibid:1).

Edwards and Hulme argue that there is a contradiction between the two dimensions of the New Policy Agenda; economics and politics (Edwards and Hulme, 1996:1). Dillon also discusses the tension between competing value systems within this sector, what she calls the

“two languages of development” (Dillon, 2003:107), where efficiency, professionalism, new public management approaches and an increased focus on upwards accountability challenges efficacy, communication, commitment to participation, local empowerment and downward accountability (Ibid). Hence, Eade argues that “NGOs do not have any inherent capacity to build the capacities of its grassroots. They replace, rather than rebuild local capacities (Eade, 2007:634). Some argue that donor funding *may* be positive since it increases external pressures for accurate reporting and transparency (Edwards and Hulme, 1996:967) Still, the objective for supporting civil society and the NGO sector is *empowerment* and growth of civil society, outcomes that are difficult to measure. One measurement that has been used frequently is the number of active NGOs in a specific society. However, e.g. Slovakia which is portrayed as one of the least democratic countries in that part of Europe, has in fact one of the largest NGO sectors; something which has led to questioning of this approach (Chandler, 2000: 16). Hence, despite external pressure, “strategic accountability” is difficult to reach (Ibid). Measurements of empowerment is not the same as measurement of success or failure; the traditional model of NGO ownership was basically no local ownership at all, with effective ownership in the hands of unelected officials. Through an efficiency perspective this might be adequate, however not through an accountability perspective (Zadek and Gatward, 1995:200).

As most discussions dealing with NGO accountability evolve around issues of financing and external control, the aspect of accountability which is related to the NGO’s own governance is often neglected (Tandon, 1995:42). With NGOs’ internal governance, one thinks of *the totality of functions that are required to be carried out in relation to the internal functioning and external relations of the organizations* (Ibid). Policy and identity rather than practicalities are highlighted in this discussion, and aspects such as future directions, long-term strategic considerations, policies regarding internal programming, staffing, resources, norms and values are brought into daylight. Tandon argues that the governance of an NGO is concerned with functioning and performance in society, which is both a legal and a moral obligation. This governance therefore needs good structures and processes enabling the organization to monitor performance and to stay accountable to its stakeholders (Ibid).

Further, Tandon mentions two different forms of governance, discussing them through an accountability perspective. The *invisible board* is a board that is basically comprised by a small group or friends or family in order to meet the paper requirements of an NGO, but where the real functions of governance are carried out by the founders. Here, the driving force of the NGO lies in the visions of the founder and in cases where the founder needs guidance or support, the board stays invincible and inaudible. This unclear separation between governance and management has negative effects on internal accountability (Ibid:44). A general dilemma, regardless of what form of governance the NGO has, is when the founder leads (officially or unofficially) the organization for a longer period of time. Clearly, the NGO will eventually only reflect the interests, visions and perspectives of the founder and this has influence on all board members and staff (Ibid:46). Long term objectives will then require the institutionalization of the ideas behind one person, but on the other hand this person will boost and build up the energy and ideas for the organization (maybe with a strong vision, managing

to counterbalance the visions of the donors). There is also a temporal dimension to this as NGOs develop and change priorities in governance over time. At the early stages more focus is put on defining a vision and mission, which may not require as formal and professional a board as the later stages of the organizational process, such as during the stages of growth and consolidation (Ibid). *Staff boards* is when the current staff or the people who set up the NGO themselves decide to become the board, alternatively that senior staff members subsequently are included into the board. These boards often manage to ensure shared and common visions and perspectives for the organization's direction with a genuine commitment to the overall wellbeing of the NGO. However, confusion may easily arise over the distinctions between requirements of governance and the needs of every day management. Staff representation may easily get involved in issues related to staff interests rather than larger institutional concerns. Also, when (as often occurs in NGOs) disagreements occur among the staff, the governing organ of the organization is seldom able to deal with this in a proper manner since the disagreement takes part within the board itself. Fresh, objective and balanced perspectives are not provided in these organizations either; staff often develop and stick to their interests and these are not questioned since the board is made up by the same people (Ibid).

Another interesting aspect of NGO accountability deals with assessment. NGOs are traditionally aware of the importance of assessing their performance. Fowler mentions one problem related to this and brings us back to the 'project mode of development', where development is seen as projects, following a linear process with already set outcomes (Fowler, 1995:145). Fowler argues that the notion of prediction and control together with objective knowledge is distinctive for 'hard' science. In this context, however, it is used through the Logical Framework Analysis being a tool for assessment (Ibid). This project approach to development is highly questioned by Fowler who mentions five factors working against this linear model. With time, the number of actors increases and they all have different views on both process and outcomes and they are not static. Second, the behavior of each actor is linked to external forces, increasing levels of uncertainty and unpredictability. Third, the time frame for noticing changes and progress may differ; e.g., measuring democracy may require many years. Fourth, human well being is very complex and may depend on external factors not related to the organization (Ibid:146).

Fowler argues that NGOs cannot be assessed as governments or markets (Ibid:147). It is important to discuss the many stakeholders involved; all have different views on development, understanding about their and others purposes and roles, ability to sanction, levels of understandings about the NGO itself together with diverse expectations about responsiveness, acceptable levels of service, time-scales for results and impact. Perspectives in the North and in the South/East differ considerably. Therefore, three types of abilities are highlighted as important in this debate; the ability to be (to maintain specific identity, values and missions), the ability to do (to achieve stakeholder satisfaction) and the ability to relate (to manage external interactions while retaining autonomy) (Ibid: 153).

Lloyd argues that accountability needs to be an ongoing process. In order to ensure that the organization is responsible for its actions, all stakeholders need to be involved at every stage of the decision-making process. Retroactive judgment limits the extent to which an NGO can

be held to account (Lloyd, 2005:3) Zadek and Gatward talks of qualitative evaluation in the form of *social auditing*, in order to take all stakeholders interests more directly into account, without major shifts in ownership and organizational structure (Zadek and Gatward, 1995:kapitel 18). Further, Chambers argues that NGOs need to redefine the roles within them; the donors often distrust the competence of the beneficiaries, making locals lack the encouragement to engage and find out what their abilities really are. This leads NGO members to become passive, which reinforces the standpoint of the donor and a bad circle is created (Chambers, 1995:208). According to him, NGO structures have become hierarchical and policies, procedures and organizational cultures are determined by individuals, especially those in power (Chambers, 1995:208). He argues, that change need to start from an individual level; *“if all managers and staff abandoned their north-south orientation tomorrow, adopted participatory philosophy and supported each other in this change, the world of development would be transformed”* (Ibid:212). The only problem seems to be, however, that the already fixed structures prevent such individual action.

## 2.4 Analytical tools

The analytical tools that will be used for the final analysis follow the patterns of this theoretical framework. The focus is however on critical theories on development. First, dependency theories will be used to analyze the relation between NGOs and their financial donors and more exactly theories on donor influence, competition and the project approach of development. Further, more specified theories on NGO accountability (regarding stakeholders, beneficiaries and internal structures of governance and management) will be used to analyze what effect the actual structures of action and decision making within these organizations have on empowerment and grassroots participation. Finally, theories on civil society and participatory democracy are used to tie the first findings together with a larger perspective dealing with issues of democratization in BiH at large.

### 3 Methodology

In this section the chosen methodology for the research will be presented. Starting with a description on qualitative methods, the discussion then moves on to qualitative interviews, sampling, fieldwork, bias and finally what method for analysis that will be used. The chapter ends with a section about limitations that have been considered in order to make the thesis more comprehensible.

#### 3.1 Qualitative research methods

The aim of this thesis is to do a qualitative study of the relation between structures of accountability within NGOs and problems with democratization and alternative political participation, with the starting point in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods share the same objectives when it comes to research; they both aim to give a better understanding of the society in which we live and how individuals, groups and institutions treat and affect each other (Holme & Solvang, 2006:76). The choice between the two is a strategic one which should be based on the aim of the study, the type of research problem, resources and possibly also the grade of experience possessed by the researcher (Ibid). Looking at the main distinguishing factor between the two, quantitative methods is a suitable methodological choice when the research material can be expressed in numbers and dealt with statistically (Ibid). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are used when the research does not aim at precision and systematic observations but rather on an *overall picture* and a *general impression* in order to increase the understanding of certain phenomena or social processes by looking at its qualities (Ibid:79). The later applies to this study, as the aim is to exemplify what the reality of accountability within NGOs looks like in BiH, and through this presenting an overall picture and a general impression of this given topic. Qualitative research also permits for less research units to be used than in quantitative research, as the idea is to intensively study every research unit. As for this study, a limited selection of research units has been done, and more on that can be found under the section on sampling.

Qualitative studies can be based on deep interviews, observations or field studies where the object of study is thought to provide indefinite qualitative information, and not only limited and countable facts (Bjereld et. al, 2002:113-116). According to Holme and Solvang, qualitative methods aim at doing a deep dive into a specific situation and study this phenomenon from the inside in order to reach a more complete understanding of the study object (Holme and Solvang, 2006:93). Using qualitative methods therefore permits me to focus on a specific field of democratization and civil society in BiH, namely NGOs and their structures of accountability, and in this sense I can study them thoroughly in order gain valuable and qualitative information on this specific area, not just numbers and statistics.

There are two questions distinguishing qualitative research and these are *how* and *why*. In this type of explanatory research, a well chosen sample of sources can help to give a more comprehensive picture (Yin, 2007:32). For this research, an attempt is done to cover a representative sampling of NGOs and study *how* their structures of accountability are framed out and also *why* these structures may be related to problems with democratization in the BiH civil society at large.

### 3.1.1 Qualitative interviews

The research of this study builds partly on information gathered through qualitative interviews, which Kvale defines as interviews “*whose aim is to retrieve descriptions of the interviewee’s life world in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomenon*” (Kvale, 1997:13). Qualitative interviewing is described as an art, where there are no common rules or procedures on how to go about to prepare for the interviews, conduct them and finally analyze the retrieved information. With regard to the wish of getting a deeper understanding and insight of the study of the research, the chosen type for most of the interviews are is common *semi-structure* with so called open-ended questions (Ibid:20). This type of interview is defined by that it contains a number of themes and suggestions of relevant questions that need to be covered, but at the same time there is a possibility to change the shape and order of the questions so that they better fit the conversation and the answers of the interviewee (Ibid:117). The open-ended characters of the questions also allow the interviewee to develop in depth answers, rather than just answering with ‘yes or no’ (Ibid). This is a suitable method since it allows me as a researcher to be flexible and if necessary, to make new methodological determinations during the interview. Each organization or body covered in the empirical material is different and is also represented by different individuals. Therefore, the perspectives and views that are held on a specific matter are different and might not originally be included in the interview template. In order for the study to reach a higher level of quality, it is therefore important that the interview can be adapt the interview to the context of every specific situation.

The questions used in the interviews have been drawn from the theoretical framework, relating to the different themes covered in the theoretical discussions on democracy, civil society, and NGOs accountability. These theories and the questions drawn from them make up the base for what I aim to find out in my study, and also the way I approach the problem. As DePoy & Gitling argue; “*Ideas are the lens through which every individual have knowledge about life and it is through these ideas that we get to understand and identify the world*” (DePoy and Gitling, 1999:31).

The interviews conducted will be a combination of individual interviews and key informant interviews. Individual interviews are done with purposely chosen samples with the aim to obtain representative information. In cases where the interviewing is part of an explanatory process, as with my research, it is preferred to have an as differentiated selection as possible. Asking the same questions to different respondents will hopefully reveal different opinions

and attitudes, but it is important to avoid the bias of only asking one group (Mikkelsen, 2005:172). The individual interviews in this research have been conducted with representatives from a selection of NGOs. As for key informants, these are interviewed when special knowledge is to be obtained. Key informants are seen as experts, with special knowledge in the given subject (Ibid). Examples of key informants are, e.g., representatives from the BiH NGO council as well as the donor community such as SIDA and USAID.

While the aim was to tape record the largest part of the interviews, I still reserved myself for the possibility of not being able to do so in all cases. At certain occasions, such as, e.g., seminars, conferences and meetings, I had the opportunity to meet with and listen to people with relevant inputs only for a shorter period of time. Each conversation and/or observation through such forums is considered of value for this study.

### 3.1.2 Sampling

What constitutes appropriate and relevant data for a given study is decided by the purpose of the research (Mikkelsen, 2005:160). I have chosen to conduct *purposive* (also called *judgmental*) sampling. This type of sampling is based on the researcher's own knowledge and judgment with regard to the population, its elements and the purpose of the research and is suitable when the researcher wants to "*study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified, but the enumeration of them all would be nearly impossible*" (Babbie, 2007:193). Leaning towards my own competence and judgments after six months in Sarajevo, together with consulting with staff from SIDA, the Swedish Embassy and other people with competence in this area, the selection is picked from a relevant population and found to be most representative and useful. This selection includes representatives from a range of different NGOs and local and international staff working with civil society promotion. The fact that others have been consulted for the sampling also helps avoiding a biased selection (Mikkelsen, 2005:89)

The sampling of organizations has been done with regard to three important aspects; geography, size, and objective. The idea was to include organizations from different parts of the country (not only situated in Sarajevo), different sizes and working with different questions.

When using purposive sampling it is important as a researcher to be open towards changes and recognize that "*the sampling of subjects may evolve as the structure of the situation being studied becomes clearer and certain types of subjects seem more central to understanding than others do*" (Babbie, 2007:193). The process of data collection is a learning process itself and what is seen as a sufficient source of information in the early stages of the research might change with time. Hence, the inclusion of new subjects may be necessary to make the research more valid, reliable and comprehensive. Due to this, I allowed myself to make use of *snowball sampling* in certain cases. By doing so, relevant informants were asked to help me locate or suggest other informants that were useful for the study (Ibid).

It is important to keep in mind that not representatives from all NGOs in BiH are being interviewed in this study. Hence, it is not possible to generalize and say that the findings apply to all of them. The aim is however still to use these samples to exemplify a larger, more general picture of a situation in BiH. Since the aim is to say something about the population of NGOs, the selection has been made as representative as possible. However, a small selection gives a higher uncertainty, which makes the representative nature of the sampling even more important. Still, one needs to understand the complexity of fieldwork and permit oneself to limit the study. As Jackson says, *“you don’t have to do it all to learn about the problems and goals of it all. No fieldworker ever uses every available technology or pursues all the potential lines of investigation. But knowing the options and limitations of investigation will help the researcher know what’s possible, what’s probable and what’s dreamy”* (Jackson, 1987:3). Hence, despite being in the field, it has not been possible to interview representatives from all NGOs or from all donor institutions active in BiH. In order to keep the research feasible, not only the research problem had to be limited but also the sources of information.

The sources of data can be summarized as follows; review of primary sources includes official government publications, interviews and my own observations in the field. The review of secondary sources includes policy reports, academic journal articles, books and media publications. This material has been selected on the basis of my own knowledge, as well as with recommendations from key informants, who have been considered relatively objective and unbiased.

## 3.2 Fieldwork

The research conducted in this thesis is based largely on fieldwork conducted on the ground in Sarajevo, BiH. As generally argued in the research community, fieldwork refers to primary research and studies conducted ‘in the field’, outside of what is considered ‘controlled settings’ such as libraries and laboratories. The methods used frequently include ‘field experiments’ (McCall, 2006:3). Although traditional fieldwork is often described within the fields of, e.g., anthropology or sociology where the task as a researcher is to include oneself as an observer in the subject matter, fieldwork also refers to shorter and more simplistic projects. It can be, e.g., the limited period when data is collected in a field setting and is then distinguished from other parts of that same research such as planning, analyzing and writing it up (Ibid).

Being in the field will not only enable basing the study on a broad variety of primary empirical data, but it will also make it possible to stay flexible throughout the study. As Jackson argues, flexibility is important in field work as it helps the researcher to redesign the study if so needed when discovering new data. Hence, the researcher stays active and engages in analytic activity most of the time in the field and is able to include models of analysis on the data in the end that were not considered relevant in the early stages of the study (Jackson, 1987:4-5). The combination of access to a broad selection of primary empirical data through

interviews, meetings, conferences, media observations and everyday interaction with local people together with the possibility to stay flexible and develop the study throughout the writing process helps me to conduct a reliable, valid and comprehensive study.

### 3.3 Bias

When conducting research in the field, and especially if the required communication becomes cross-cultural, it is important to keep in mind the differences between basic concepts and structures of language (Mikkelsen, 2005:329). Different concepts have different meanings in different cultures and settings, which requires the researcher to be aware of this when interacting with people on the ground. It is also important to remember that many of the key concepts in this thesis, such as democracy, civil society, and accountability are to some extent still new or even fairly unknown to a large part of the Bosnian population due to the country's long history of socialism and one party system. During the Yugoslav era, political participation was organized in a completely different way meaning that concepts dealing with democracy might have slightly different connotations or meanings to citizens of BiH. This could potentially influence or affect the data collection done through interviewing and observing. It is also necessary to keep in mind that the informants, depending on who they represent, may purposely portray specific phenomena differently in order to present a picture of reality they *want* the researcher to have. This goes especially for the NGO representatives, and in these cases it is important as a researcher to keep a critical mind and using one's own competence to distinguish what is closer and further away from reality.

Looking at myself and my bias, I am biased not only by my academic background in political science and development studies, but also by the theories I am using in my analytical framework. As mentioned in the section on qualitative interviews, ideas and theories serve as a lens through which we have knowledge and get to understand the world. Hence, the theories used might color the way I see and comprehend the received information. Despite attempts to stay unbiased, this might still have influence on the end results and conclusions of the study.

### 3.4 Analysis

As for analyzing the collected data and information and in order to answer the research questions, the method of holistic analysis has been chosen. This analysis will be used to analyze all the empirical material; both that deriving from first and secondary data sources. The holistic analysis builds on a division of the process into three parts; choosing a theme or area of problems, formulating the research questions to work with and finally systematically analyzing the collected empirical data by using these questions as a starting point (Holme and Solvang, 2006:142). The analysis will be divided into different parts, originating in the different sub questions composing the main research questions. When analyzing the different parts of the empirical data, this will follow a logical division of themes derived from the

theoretical framework. In this process it is, again, important to stay aware of my own bias as a researcher as well as the possible bias of the informants.

### 3.5 Limitations

As for limitations to this study, the intention is *not* to provide a detailed mapping of the internal structures of accountability within the chosen organizations. Rather, the intention is to investigate the relation between these structures and problems with democratization and alternative political participation with a starting point in the Bosnian society. The sampling of organizations will therefore not be used to analyze the specific internal structures of these given organizations as some kind of case studies, but rather to *exemplify a more general and universal phenomena*

It is also worth to mention the limitations connected to the data collection. As interviews, especially those done with representatives from the different NGOs, are not totally unbiased, it has been necessary to add empirical data received from other sources. Examples of these additional sources are interviews with more unbiased informants such as representatives from the donor community or other higher organizational levels dealing with NGOs and civil society (e.g., SIDA, USAID, CCI and the NGO Council). These informants do not have anything to win by portraying certain organizations in a more positive way than reality prescribes. Finally, certain additional statements as well as numbers and figures have been collected through a variety of public documents, research papers, and media.

There is also a limitation to the theoretical aspects covered when talking about strengthening civil society. The level of democracy and political activity within a country is dependent on several factors, not only on the possibility to engage in the NGO sector. Following this reasoning, not all internal structures within NGOs are related to donor issues. Every setting finds itself in specific contexts that affect and influence spheres on civil, political and economical levels. BiH is not only a country with high international presence; it is also a country in transition from war to peace, socialism to market economy and finally totalitarianism to democracy. As such, with a different theoretical starting point, the conclusions in this thesis could have been completely different.

## 4 Background

In the following two sections, two important aspects will be presented regarding NGOs in BiH and the role they play in democratization and the promotion of citizen participation. The first section explains the extensive work and resources that have been invested on strengthening civil society in BiH since the end of the war. The second section explains the situation of NGOs in BiH today with a focus on facts and functions.

### 4.1 Post-war BiH: Democratization and strengthening of civil society

Since the end of the war in BiH in 1995 and when the real efforts on peace-building and democratization started in the country, strengthening of the civil society has been one of the top priorities within the international community (Chandler, 2000:2). The international presence has been extensive and during the first years following the Dayton Peace Agreement there were over 50,000 foreign ‘nation-builders’ in the country. Even though this figure has reduced, the international control and impact on BiH development is still a controversial issue; the country is not seldom referred to as a protectorate under external rule and one of the core questions regarding BiH’s near future is whether or not the international community (including the mandate of the High Representative) should leave the control in the hands of BiH institutions and whether the country is even ready for such ‘self-rule’ (Sebastian, 2010:15).

Many of the world’s powerful states have been represented in the international presence in BiH, as well as leading international institutions such as OSCE, EU, NATO, UN, IMF and the WB (Chandler, 2000:2). Enormous amounts of international investment has been allotted to state-building and democratization projects throughout the years and although there are no exact figures, post-conflict donor activities in BiH are considered to be the most extensive in the modern era (Sebastian, 2010:2). To exemplify, EU funding to the city of Mostar alone in 1998 reached over 2,500 US dollars per capita, which is more than the whole of Poland was receiving at that time (Chandler, 2000:136). Today, the EU through their Instrument for Pre-Accession Agreement (IPA) assists BiH with over 100 million euro per year. As for bilateral cooperation, SIDA assists the BiH society with circa 20 million euro per year, and is thereby one of the country’s largest bilateral partners (Axerup, 2010). The equivalent contribution from USAID reaches 40 million euro per year (MFT BiH, 2010: 120).

One common focus area for this extensive international commitment has been the emergence of a Third Sector as a crucial tool to promote a pluralistic and democratic society. Much of the resources have been put on conforming ‘democratization from below’ through the support of NGOs (Chandler, 2000:137). Dialogue Development stated in 1998 that *“The strong emergence of a Third Sector in the form of civil society in Bosnia will be instrumental in the gradual emergence of a pluralistic and democratic society ... NGOs are ... destined to play*

*an important role in this post-conflict situation [...] They can moderate and mediate in addressing the relevant needs of society, not always within the realm of the state” (Ibid:135).*

Further, from a CARE Canada report on civil society building in BiH (1996), the following can be quoted; *[...] Accountability, legitimacy and competence in public life are key and these can only be achieved through the active participation of the electorate, buoyed by a strong, plural, associational base, by a web of social, cultural and functional relationships which can act as a ‘societal glue’ and as counterbalance to the market and the state” (Ibid).*

These examples clearly illustrate that civil society is seen as a corner stone in the BiH democratization project where participation of the local population is highlighted. The OSCE argued in 1997 that *“Bosnian citizens as a whole will have to overcome democratization’s challenges if they want their country to develop into a tolerant and democratic state. OSCE Democratization staff will help them to find the tools to do so. Staff will facilitate local efforts, offer support and guidance. In the end, however, there is a limit to what international personnel can do – it is for the citizens themselves to participate and take responsibility in the grassroots project (Ibid).*

Hence, local participation has been the ultimate foal since the early stages of the BiH democratization project. Similar arguments also linger in the contemporary debate. The Civil Society Promotion Centre (CPCD) stated in a recent report that *“An inclusive, participative BiH civil society [that functions in partnership with governmental institutions] is the prerequisite for the quality functioning of civil society in BiH [...]Therefore, citizens should not, literally depend on their country, but instigate their own development and the fulfillment of their existential needs through active involvement and initiatives. This type of citizen and NGO participation can provide for a termination of passive, and the start of active involvement of citizens and a large part of the non-governmental sector” (CPCD, 2011: 7).*

## **4.2 Today’s NGO sector in BiH**

In relation to the above explained focus on civil society and NGOs, the NGO sector in BiH has developed significantly since it was first born in 1992. The late 1990s was a blooming time for NGOs; many organizations started as a direct result of the big handout of international financial aid. As one key informant puts it; *“It was ridiculous how much money was here” (Bubalo, 2011).* By submitting only a fallible handwritten page describing the purpose of the organization, one could receive as much as 50,000 US dollars (Ibid).

Today there are an estimated 12,000 registered NGOs in BiH. However, only 10 % of them are active. The rest exists merely on paper (Valjevac, 2011). Nonetheless, considering the limited number of years that the NGO sector has existed in BiH, its size is substantial. The number of full time employees in NGOs is estimated to around 26,000 and it has become a significant job sector standing for 4,5 % of the total GDP (Papić et. al. 2011:79).

The civil sector in BiH is composed of different types of organizations, from sports- and religious associations to those that represent certain interest groups or societal or political questions. It is estimated that only a few of the NGOs are involved in general civil society promotion and development. Further, only a small number of active organizations are perceived as professional NGOs representing a critical mass of the population (Ibid).

## 5 Analysis

The analysis part of this thesis, and its subdivisions, will be conducted according to the research questions that were outlined in the introduction. Based on empirical examples and data derived from interviews<sup>23</sup> and official documents, the analysis will cover issues dealing with internal structures of NGOs, connecting them to donor influence, grassroots participation and finally to dilemmas of democratization in BiH in general.

### 5.1 Internal structures of accountability

The following section presents and analyses, through exemplifications, different aspects of NGO accountability with the purpose of answering the first the given research question in this thesis; namely “*What do internal structures look like within BiH NGOs and how do they affect grassroots influence and downward accountability?*”

The division of chapters has been drawn from the theoretical framework. The analysis starts with a section dealing with external factors, such as funding and competition, and the effect this might have on the downwards accountability within NGOs. Following that, a more specific focus is put on de facto internal structures with the aim of relating them to problems regarding grassroots participation in these organizations.

#### 5.1.1 Donor relations

Even when analyzing accountability structures *within* NGOs, one starting point is external factors and forces, in this case donor control and the relation between organizations and their financial donors. The following section deals with issues regarding donor relations and connect them to strengthening of civil society and grassroots participation and possibility to influence.

##### 5.1.1.1 International donors

Post-developmental scholars have argued that the dependence upon foreign powers in development and democratization undermines local ownership and grassroots participation in development. BiH which has been, and to one extent still is, under extensive international influence has a civil society climate where NGOs, including their work and their internal structures, are influenced by external factors, and particularly international donors. According

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the interviews have been conducted in English, and thus no translations have been needed. Two interviews were, however, conducted in BCS (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian), and the translations into English were done by the author (myself).

<sup>3</sup> Transliterations of the recorded interviews will not be included in the appendices, but can be received from the author upon request.

to USAID (2009), one of the most difficult aspects to NGO sustainability are questions dealing with funding and finances. The flow of international finances to BiH has been declining the past decade, and with a continuing withdrawal of the traditional type of donor funding, many NGOs are put in a difficult situation (USAID, 2009:77). Statistics show that 35% of associations in BiH see funding as the main problem when it comes to pursuing their mission and implementing projects (Papić et. al. 2011:87) The struggle for financial survival is intensifying and pleasing the donors has become even more important. An informant from the NGO ‘Foundation for Creative Development’<sup>4</sup> (FKR) explains that without international donors their organizations would not be able to operate. *“We are in a constant struggle to survive, and it is very stressful. We are constantly searching for donors and applying for grants. I have to make many applications, to negotiate, to ask, to please”* (Osmanagić, 2011).

Goran Bubalo, employed at the NGO ‘Catholic Relief Services’ (CRS) and also a representative for the BiH NGO council underlines this problematic; *“Most NGOs end up in a quite difficult position. They don’t have the money from the government as they expect, and international donors are withdrawing. It is simply a matter of surviving”* (Bubalo, 2011).

Putting this in the context of NGO accountability, many organizations feel that they have to be flexible towards the agendas of the donors in order to get financial support and put their own interests and efforts on the side (Osmanagić, 2011). As with FKR, they admit that they have to prioritize upwards accountability in order to secure future funding and they are explicitly trying to be very aware of the needs of the donors (Ibid). Bubalo admits that also their organization, despite its rather large scope, puts their agenda where the money is. *“It is all a matter of money. Even though you write a project and get the money for this, there are limitations. You have the project and you have to do exactly that”* (Bubalo, 2011). Other organizations also highlight the importance of being flexible towards the donors. A representative from an NGO in Banja Luka, ‘Centar za Životnu Sredinu’<sup>5</sup> (CŽS) admits that they are willing to change a project to a certain degree in order to get it approved by donors (Crnković, 2011). The same situation goes for a small organization from Jajce<sup>6</sup>; *“It is important to be flexible and good at writing project proposals”* (Kliko, 2011). It is clear that the risk of this dependency matches the scenario described by Lloyd; namely that settings controlled by donors and in which the existence of NGOs depend on external funding, the

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<sup>4</sup> **Fondacija za Kreativni Razvoj (FKR)** is a foundation that is originally a spin off from a project implemented by Catholic Relief Services. Their vision is a BiH where education, culture, social and economy is based on the values of peace and human rights. They work with e.g. parental structures in schools such as parents’ councils, and with the implementation of documents on human rights in the education system. They are also implementing projects supported by the EU delegation in BiH and finally with media production where they are both making their own TV-shows, as well as producing video material for other NGOs in the country. The organization is situated in Sarajevo.

<sup>5</sup> **Centar za Životnu Sredinu (CŽS)** is one of the country’s few NGOs working with environmental issues. Their main goal is the protection and improvement of the environment, the advocating principles of sustainable development as well as enhanced public participation in decision making about the environment. The organization is situated in Banja Luka.

<sup>6</sup> **Drustvo za zaštitu kulturno-povjesnih i prirodnih vrijednosti** is a small organization that has been active for 11 years. It works for the protection of cultural, historical and environmental treasures in the city of Jajce, where it is also situated.

downwards accountability to the grassroots and beneficiaries has to be down-prioritized in order to give room for upwards accountability and pleasing of the donors.

However, not all NGOs are worried about survival. One informant from the organization Fondacija CURE<sup>7</sup> highlights; *“Organizations are always worried about funding, but we know that if we have good projects and good quality, we will probably find a way to get some funds”* (Frašto, 2011). There are also examples of NGOs not worried about meeting the expectations of donors. The Sarajevo based organization Zašto Ne<sup>8</sup> claims not to bend at all to meet external requirements; *“Never. We don’t accept that. Usually, if there is a problem with the donor it ends up with them not funding us. Or they change their minds and tell us that we can do whatever we want. But there are two ways of getting out of any possibility of donor influence on us. One way is that they stop funding us, the other is that they take our idea and they accept it. But the first approach with us it becomes very clear to them what kind of cooperation they can expect. They know from the start what our demands are”* (Brkan, 2011). However, he still admits that they do follow donor guidelines to a certain degree; *“Ok, of course you would look into that and then adjust it into an idea that we have. If that is not feasible, we come up with a list of potential things that we want to do. If it fits somewhere and we think it will pass we go there and try”* (Ibid).

One representative from one of the largest NGOs in BiH, Centre for Civil Initiative<sup>9</sup> (CCI) mentions that they possess space to maneuver in their relations to their donors. Even though they have to follow the procedural guidelines of the donors with e.g. strict reporting, she argues that it is their own ideas that are the main starting point of any activity (Isanović, 2011).

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<sup>7</sup> **Fondacija CURE** is a feminist NGO that has been active for 6 years. The main vision of the organization is equal rights on all societal levels in all of BiH. They are working through workshops and street action in order to empower women’s movements in the country and also to learn the Bosnian population about the concept of feminism. The organization is situated in Sarajevo.

<sup>8</sup> **Zašto Ne** is a citizens association that originally focused on questions regarding demilitarization of the BiH society together with establishing the right to conscientious objection in BiH. With time, the mission of the organization has expanded and is today directed towards the creation of an effective and responsive civilian society in BiH. The three main program areas are; regional militarization, government accountability and citizens activism and finally cultural support. The organization is based and situated in Sarajevo.

<sup>9</sup> **Centri Civilnih Inicijativa** is one of BiHs largest NGOs working with strengthening of the civil society. Their vision is that the citizens of BiH should understand and participate in democratic processes and the development of their society. They promote these goals by implementing projects of their own, but also through financing of smaller organizations, so called ‘subgrantees’, and provide them with help in their work. The organization is situated in Sarajevo.

### 5.1.1.2 Public Funding

Another aspect of the decreasing international funding is the alternative that is left for NGOs to get funded. With international donors slowly leaving BiH, the government is supposed to take over the responsibility of funding civil society. As a main point in critical dependency theories, one of the obstacles to NGO sustainability and hence also grassroots accountability is when the donors start leaving the field. This being the case in BiH, it is worth mentioning some of the most obvious problems when it comes to public funding. Public funding of NGOs started some ten years ago. However, the task to overtake the funding of the NGO sector has failed and is not sufficient to secure its sustainability (Bubalo, 2011). The problem with public funding is not first and foremost the lack of money, as large amounts of public funding are actually handed out to associations and organizations every year. The total public allocations to the NGO sector in 2010 reached 57 million euro, and made up 0.48% of GDP (CPCD, 2011). The problem rather lies in that the public institutions often lack clear structures and purposes when it comes to funding. One key informant mentions that due to underdeveloped mechanisms and regulations for public funding, most of the money goes to already set and decided for beneficiaries such as, e.g., sports clubs and religious communities rather than organizations based on project ideas that could actually make a difference in society (Škaljić, 2011). *“The largest part of the cake goes to sports clubs, and only a small piece goes to those things that really need to be worked for”* (Ibid). Hence, she argues that the survival of ineffective and passive organizations is upheld, whereas NGOs with a genuine interest in societal change are not supported nor even encouraged in their work.

In addition, only politically non-threatening organizations receive public funding, which makes it hard for regime critical organizations to carry out their work (USAID, 2010:74). The informant from Zašto Ne explained; *“In ten years, I think that not more than 1000 or 2000 euro came to the organization from domestic funding. What we work for and what are goals and missions are is so far not something that the local government would be willing to support, let’s put it like that.”* (Brkan, 2011). The result is inevitably that whatever activities carried out by NGOs and civil societies on a local level is actually not in the interest of the grassroots community; instead it represents the agenda of the current local government.

Financing on the basis of contacts also appears to be a common feature when it comes to public funding. At a round table discussion with both representatives from the government and from the civil society, the problem with funding based on ‘štele’ (“connections”) was highlighted by several participants. *“Financing is not on the basis of projects, rather on the basis of contacts. The important is to give everyone a little, or because you know someone”* (Vučijak, 2011). In addition, lack of transparency in public funding leads to situations where extensive amounts of money are paid out, but without real public insight. As an example, over 100,000 euro was granted to NGOs in the city of Visoko in 2010, but nowhere has this money been accounted for (Škaljić, 2011).

### 5.1.2 Competition

Less funding also leads to a competitive climate for many organizations. The informant from Jajce stressed this problem, claiming that the lack of money pulls organizations away from each other, forcing them to compete. Especially in more rural areas, there are no real forums for organizations to meet (Kliko, 2011). According to her, there are too many organizations trying to survive, which creates a difficult climate. For example, in Jajce there are over one hundred NGOs, out of which sixteen alone are veterans' organizations. Instead of working together they compete with each other (Ibid). This can be connected to Samson's argument about donor organizations and their policies being at the centre of the circle and controlling resources such as money and knowledge. He argues that this leads to competition between local elites over these very resources; a hypothesis that is supported by the above example.

There is also competition over projects and volunteers. As one informant stated, "*[T]here is a constant feeling of other organizations having something we lack, or a constant feeling that they take our volunteers*" (Kliko, 2011). This has direct consequences on the ability to stay accountable to grassroots and true to your mission. The informant from Jajce shared a story of when she was a volunteer for one organization and the director of this NGO would not let her be engaged in activities of another organization dealing with the same questions. "*Even though I promised to stay loyal and most engaged with the first organization, she forced me to choose between the two*" (Ibid). It is obvious that the main priority for this NGO was to win over their 'concurrent' in numbers of volunteers, rather than staying true to a vision of societal change and cooperate with others to reach the desired goals. One key informant mentioned that in cases where the government has money only for one project, it is difficult to get NGOs to get together and apply for funding for joint projects. She adds: "*It is as if these organizations work only for personal interests*" (Vučijak, 2011).

According to mapping done by USAID, competition is particularly difficult for smaller NGOs in today's settings as much of the international donors that are still left in BiH prefer funding larger organizations, or even international agencies or firms (USAID, 2009:77). This supports Uhlin's thesis when arguing that often an international civil society develops at the expense of the local, where larger organizations are prioritized over smaller ones.

International funding is also mostly directed to organizations in urban areas, especially in Sarajevo. Bubalo claims that many donors want to work with organizations on a smaller scale but that there is a lack of capacity with these organizations to show their potential and thereby receive funding (Bubalo, 2011). Often, small and local organizations are solely included as partners dealing with administration or project logistics and not as real driving forces in the projects (USAID, 2009:77). Bubalo further argues that, e.g., the European Commission, with their IPA funds, gives money to the same twenty large-scale organizations, a trend that can be seen with most international donors. Only small grants are given to smaller NGOs, and that is merely to help them survive (Bubalo, 2011). If small and local NGOs are the ones getting out concurred by large organizations, this is negative for democratization not only for the obvious reason that you cannot make your voice heard in civil society unless your organization is large and preferably situated in urban areas. But also, according to Edwards and Hulme, it is easier

for small- or medium sized organizations to keep a good internal structure with legitimate accountability. In a setting like BiH where 85% of all NGOs are considered small and only 15% are considered large (Palić et. al, 2010: 88), this gets even more problematic.

Representatives from larger, urban based NGOs confirm the thesis that mostly rural and smaller sized organizations are affected negatively by competition. To the larger NGOs, competition is not as visible and even though some acknowledge that it exists, they argue that it is not negative. In fact, to some respondents it is even a positive and welcome aspect in the NGO world. As one informant from CCI claimed; *“When it comes to competition; less money is available, yes. But this has made the NGOs focusing more on quality and results than before”*(Isanović, 2011).

These organizations seem to enhance the importance of cooperation and communication as well. As for FKR, the informant admits that competition exists, but at the same time says that they try actively to develop relations with organizations and try to not apply for funding with the same donors (Osmanagić, 2011). Also Fondacija CURE claims to work proactively to communicate better with other organizations, and enhances the importance of helping smaller NGOs, especially in rural areas, so that they do not get out concurred. Still, this does not seem to be too easy; *“There are big organizations that have much money and don’t want to help the small organizations. That is bad. The goal of Fondacija CURE is equality in BiH, on every level. And if we all have the same goal, that is a good situation. That is not concurrence. It is important to have networks and together write proposals for activities in BiH or in the region”*(Frašto, 2011).

Also from the donor side, cooperation and dialogue building is acknowledged as one of the top priorities. An informant from USAID argues that the biggest challenge within the NGO sector is to build dialogue in a setting largely driven by competition: *“All these organizations have developed parallel to each other, even if they share the same agenda or mission”* (Valjevac, 2011). However, as argued by the critical scholars referred to in the theoretical framework, in a reality where projects and results are core, there seems to be a clash between on the one side efficiency, market orientation and donor pleasing and on the other hand genuine development.

### **5.1.3 Project approach, results and assessment**

Drawing from the above topics on relation to donors and competition, another factor that influences NGO accountability is the project mode of development; its result orientation and finally how these results are assessed and evaluated. Here, three important aspects can be related to accountability issues: one is the project approach and how it controls who is the main player of civil society development: the second are the constant requirements from donors to assess and present results, and the way this affects the organization. The third aspect deals with what parameters are actually included in these assessments and how success is measured.

A key informant from the Centre for Promotion of Civil Society<sup>10</sup> (CPCS) that has been working with civil society development in BiH over fifteen years brings up the project approach to development in BiH as a main problem (Mrdja, 2011). According to him, the approach carried out by the donors where focus is on projects and introduction of what he calls ‘new processes’ in civil society leads to situations where the indigenous society is forgotten. *“Civil society in BiH has its own history [...] Instead of supporting already existing processes and structures in civil society they are introducing new ones that do not fit in this community. Where is the indigenous society? They are just introducing new entities that have nothing to do with real civil society development”* (Ibid). He even goes as far as arguing that EU through the IPA<sup>11</sup> instruments is on its good way of introducing a High Representative for civil society in BiH. This explanation goes hand in hand with the theory of Samson, where he discusses ‘benevolent colonialism’; project life with its project jargon constituting the core of civil society development. Here, social practices, ideas and forces of civil society turn into grant categories in a chain of projects, where the local and the indigenous is forgotten.

This project approach results in a work chain that is the same for all the organizations analyzed in this study. They all work in terms of short-term projects ranging from three to eighteen months. The process consists of writing project proposals, carrying out the project and in the end evaluating the results and returning them to the donors only to start the cycle over again. One of the cornerstones in this process is requirements of reporting results back to the donor. As one informant puts it: *“It is necessary to be accountable regarding these partners, to do everything correctly regarding financing, reporting and presentation [...] We are trying to be very aware of their needs”* (Osmanagić, 2011). Not only are there clear demands of narrative and financial reporting, but often they can be time- and energy demanding on the staff (USAID, 2009:76). As one informant explains; *“It is hard to all the time write project proposals and reports”* (Frašto, 2011).

From the donor side and with CCI being an example, it is explained that the financial rules for their subgrantees are very strict. There is a clear focus on results and effects, and if the subgrantees fail to reach the set goals, it often results in them getting their funding seized (Isanović, 2011). Connecting this to Eade and his discussions about the pressure that aid agencies have on themselves to disburse in order to justify their own existence; the impacts on real grassroots empowerment may be of a negative character. Emphasize is put on short-term quantitative targets instead of genuine democratization, and the relation between the NGO and the donor is rather one of contracting than partnership. And as Edwards and Hulme argue, only genuine partnership can promote participation.

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<sup>10</sup> **Centre for Promotion of Civil Society (CPCD)** is a NGO that was founded in 1996 and has since developed into one of BiH's largest organizations. Its mission is to promote civil society, sectoral cooperation and good governance. The organization implement projects for the European Commission, runs its own projects and operational programs and finally support other organizations (so called sub-grantees) in their projects and institutional development. The organization has its main office in Sarajevo.

<sup>11</sup> **The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)** is offered to countries engaged in the process of accessing the European Union. The focus lies in enhancing efficiency and coherence of aid in order to strengthen institutional capacity cross-border cooperation, economic and social development and rural development.

Finally, the very substance of these project reports and result presentations are interesting in the accountability debate. When measuring success, even though it depends from organization to organization and project to project, the focus is clearly on measurable results. But just as asked by Edwards and Hulme, how to measure empowerment of civil society? Zadek and Gatward argue that a measurement of empowerment is not the same as measurement of success or failure. Eade argues that strengthening of civil society is about people, not about things. The informant from Zašto Ne confirms this problem, saying that it might be problematic e.g. in an advocacy project to measure results; it can range from everything between getting media coverage for a specific issue to the level of responsive public officials or the actual implementation of a law. According to him, public awareness is the hardest thing to measure. Usually extra funding is needed to assess this, which is not always easy to get. It is then up to the organization to find means to measure their success, such as feedback, participation or media coverage (Brkan, 2011).

The assessments and evaluations that are of importance to the donors are the ones focusing on visible results, often creating a situation where internal evaluations or the inclusion of other parameters than numbers and figures is not prioritized. The informant from FKR, when asked about internal evaluations explains; *“We assess our work through results. But if you ask me if we have some system [for internal evaluation], that does not exist. We only have official evaluations”* (Osmanagić, 2011). Hence, it seems as if the voices of the activists and the grassroots are excluded and that social aspects of the projects are neglected. Even in CCI, which is a large NGO that has a system of both internal and external evaluations, social aspects are not a focus. Their internal evaluations are made on an individual basis, including factors such as time-lines, results and job-performance (Isanović, 2011). Fowler, in his discussions on NGO accountability mentions the problem where development is seen as projects with a clear linear process and already set outcomes; something he says is distinctive for hard and objective science. Hence, it leaves out aspects of real grassroots participation and development, which can eventually have negative effects on the downwards accountability as social aspects and the voices of the grassroots are neglected. The only example given for some sort of social auditing was by Fondacija CURE. They conduct research after all finished projects, asking the involved participants about their view on the process of the activity as well as the final results (Frašto, 2011). Connecting this to Fowler again; this type of hearings are important also as all the stakeholders involved may have different views on development and different understandings about the organization, its goals and success. Evaluations involving social aspects not only widen the scope of the evaluation per se, but gives everyone involved a possibility to make their voice heard.

Still, the informant from Fondacija CURE highlighted that these evaluations is their own initiative. Hence, there is no demand from the donor side to include these types of evaluations and assessments when a project is finished. Analyzing this with the theories of Edwards and Hulme, Dillon and even Belloni, the argument about the “two languages of development” seems to be valid. There is a clear contradiction between the agendas of the donors; on the one side economy (efficiency, professionalism, delivery and results) and on the other side democracy (political articulation, participation, local empowerment and downward

accountability). As the former apparently gets prioritized over the latter, this makes it questionable whether there is any genuine downwards accountability within these NGOs.

Finally, the aspect of retroactive assessments can also be questioned. As Lloyd argues, accountability needs to be an ongoing process in order to make sure that the organization is responsible for all its actions, meaning that all parameters and all stakeholders should be assessed ongoing, at every stage of the project.

#### **5.1.4 Beneficiaries and stakeholders**

Continuing from the previous section and the discussion about stakeholder inclusion in assessments, one of the core tasks in analyzing the accountability within NGOs is to identify the beneficiaries of the organizations, as well as the different stakeholders and their agendas. Many Bosnian NGOs are ‘representative organizations’, meaning that they claim to represent or be the soundboard of a certain group of people or societal question. The exceptions are either sports- or religious organizations, or independent so called ‘think thanks’ whose mission is rather based on political independence and producing objective research and reports (Axerup, 2011). When dealing with grassroots accountability, representative organizations are therefore the most interesting to analyze, simply because they claim to represent the voice of the grassroots in the political debate and the development of BiH.

All of the organizations included in this thesis belong to the this genre of NGOs, and their beneficiaries vary from specific groups of people such as women and victims of PWSS-syndromes, to certain focus questions as, e.g., environment, culture, education and development, demilitarization and civil society development and citizen engagement. According to Lloyd, comprehensive accountability is when the upward accountability (as has been mentioned in above sections) is combined with downward accountability to those these organizations speak on the behalf of (women or PWSS-victims) and inwardly to their organizational mission (the specific questions that their work revolves around; environment, culture etc). Fowler, in addition, has mentioned that all stakeholders have different views and understandings about development and even about the NGO itself. He also explains that different stakeholders use the organization for different purposes.

As already mentioned above, donor objectives have an extensive role in the activities of many organizations. It has also been stated that donor objectives may differ from what the indigenous BiH society is all about, confirming yet another theory of Fowler, namely that perspectives in the West and in the East differ considerably. It has also been mentioned earlier that donor control and project- and result orientation makes it difficult to include the local voices and maintain downward accountability. Lloyd has argued that all stakeholders need to be involved in an organization’s decision making. Hence, an important question evolving from this is if there are any arenas for the different stakeholders (including donors, staff and beneficiaries) to meet in order to increase dialogue by this the grassroots legitimacy of the NGO and its activities.

A positive example was given by Fondacija CURE, who mentioned that they have been invited by one of their main donors, Kvinna till Kvinna, for meetings with both staff and volunteers. According to her, some of the donors have interests in joint stakeholder meetings: *“Kvinna till Kvinna came here and we had a meeting with them, and with some of our volunteers. Not all of them, because we need more space. [...] If we get some money and save, we make that meeting for all young girls. Also we call some donors, and ask if they have the opportunity to come”* (Frašto, 2011). She explains that this specific donor even supports and initiates networking and communication between organizations in the country and in the region working for the same goals (Ibid). In this case, all stakeholders do get a chance to meet, and not only stakeholders in Fondacija CURE, but stakeholders and beneficiaries from their entire focus field. Again, connecting this to Lloyd’s theory, this type of stakeholder meetings helps increasing the overall accountability of the organization; including upwards, downwards and inwards accountability.

However, these types of forums for stakeholder meeting are not institutionalized in the world of NGOs, meaning that in most cases the different stakeholders stay separated from each other. In Zašto Ne, there is a clear division between, e.g., the funders and the rest of the stakeholders. The informant explains: *“There is no possibility for them to meet with the rest and have any influence. They are just external partners with whom we communicate. They decide to fund some idea that we have and that is it. That is how we see their role”* (Brkan, 2011). Here, the channels of communication are absent, risking to make it difficult to reach mutual understandings, both from the donors and the NGO’s side. Including donors as an equal stakeholder could open up their understandings to the indigenous views on development. This type of relation reminds more of contracting than genuine partnership, and again, as Edwards and Hulme argue, only real partnership can foster empowerment and participation.

Analyzing how these examples affect accountability to the grassroots, it is suitable to use the terms of Fowler when talking about abilities within NGOs. The ability to maintain a specific identity, value and mission does of course depend on what the mission of the NGO is. When representing the interests of a specific societal group, or questions regarding strengthening of civil society; it seems as if the lack of arenas where all the stakeholders can meet is dangerous. It has already been concluded that, in the end, the donor agenda controls much of the organizations’ outcomes; hence, dialogue between donors and the people involved in this organization (staff and volunteers) could enhance understanding from the donor side and thereby help the organization to maintain their identity, values and missions. In a setting where nearly half of BiH NGOs claim to have their primary orientation and scope of work almost completely dependent on donor interest and desires and where only twenty-two percent claim that donors have no influence on their main mission (Papić et. al. 2011:91), this type of dialogue could be desirable. The second of Fowler’s abilities, to achieve stakeholder satisfaction, would also be promoted. He argues that the number of stakeholder increases with time and they have different views on both processes and outcomes of the organization. Dialogue leads to compromising, which logically increases overall satisfaction. Finally, the

ability to manage external interactions while retaining autonomy would also be positively affected in the case that more dialogue is taking place.

### 5.1.5 Grassroots representation

Continuing from the section above dealing with stakeholders, it is important to mention that even though many NGOs in Bosnia today are representative organizations, the vast majority of them are however not membership based, especially not when it comes to those that are funded by, e.g., international donors. A key informant explains that organizations having a large membership by nature are not usually the ones working for civil society involvement and development. Hence, they are not prioritized by the donors (Valjevac, 2011). Many of the organizations working with donor prioritized issues do not have any real membership or connection with the grassroots. Instead, most of them are run and founded by a small group of people; often a gang of friends (Hedlund, 2011). Goran Bubalo confirms this by claiming that *"Most of them are a one man show. They are simply there for their own survival. We have big NGOs only caring about getting their own money and small NGOs who have no idea what they are doing, or why they are doing it"* (Bubalo, 2011). The informant from CPCD concurs and says that *"[T]hey are there for themselves. They have become their own purpose!"* (Mrdja, 2011). Hence, one might question the legitimacy of these NGOs as real grassroots organizations.

The informant from USAID reminds us that it is important to acknowledge the specific BiH context: *"Civil society here is work! It employs people. The context in BiH is different from that in e.g. Sweden. Almost forty percent of the population is unemployed. Here you might affiliate yourself with friends and start an organization just to get a salary and survive, whereas in Sweden, if you engage with civil society organization, it is probably because you want to make genuine change"* (Valjevac, 2011). The CPCD representative refers to these types of NGOs as 'one laptop organizations', big enough to register and get an office, a laptop and a monthly salary (Mrdja, 2011). He also explains that in many cases, expert consultants have become the main player of the NGO sector, taking over civil society development and standing in the way of the indigenous grassroots to take a part (Ibid). Looking at Belloni's argument, he questions the ability to promote democratization from the bottom-up when the NGO tends towards market mechanisms and are run more like private companies with a few professionals running the show.

Samson argues that many of these professional elites move between different projects and organizations, something which the example of Bubalo shows; on the side of his own organization, he is also a member of the boards of several other organizations (Bubalo, 2011). Also the informant from CPCD, seen as an expert, has been offered inclusion in several other NGOs and projects on the side of his current position (Mrdja, 2011). Much of this 'movement' is based on connections. The informant from Jajce shared a story supporting this theory; staying as a volunteer with the same organization that made her choose between that and another NGO, she later applied for a real job with them. Despite good experience and

years of volunteering she was not hired, and the reason was that she did not have good enough connections with the board. She explains: *“In the end it is all about connections”* (Kliko, 2011). According to Samson, this is a result of elite run NGOs as it leads to a climate more based on kinship and connections than real engagement and inclusion of the grassroots.

The phenomena of no real membership and just a small active base of the organization, often made up by the founders, can be seen through several examples. *Zašto Ne* was established ten years ago, and out of four staff members two of them are the original founders of the organization. Except for some fifteen to twenty external honorary workers that get activated through different projects, the core member group is rather small. The informant himself underlines this: *“[...] It is not a large number of members, so we are not a membership based organization. It is more that the founders are the members of the organization. Now also the law has changed; before you needed to have thirty founders to have an organization. [...] Now it is enough with three founders. Our core founders are I think nine or ten”* (Brkan, 2011). The same situation goes for *Glas Žene*<sup>12</sup>, a six year old organization where the only five active members are the same five that founded the organization. They are also the five making all the decisions (Raković, 2011). FKR has a core member base of three to five people, depending on project size the staff size varies. The informant, however, is a constant employee and was also there when the organization started in 2002 (Osmanagić, 2011). Connecting this to accountability, Tandon argues that it is a general dilemma when the founder(s) lead(s) the organization for a longer period of time. Accordingly, the ideas and interests of these people will eventually get institutionalized, making it difficult to open up for new influences. As this might help counterbalancing donor influence, it might however also hinder grassroots input. Not only is it problematic when the founder stays too long in charge, but the entire hierarchical structure of NGOs is highly questionable through an accountability perspective. According to Chambers, the procedures within NGOs are determined by individuals, and that once these structures have been fixed it is difficult to change them.

### 5.1.6 Volunteers

This leads to a new aspect of structures within these organizations, namely the inclusion of volunteers in their everyday activities. According to research conducted in 2002, close to half of the NGOs in BiH did not have a clear policy regarding volunteers and their inclusion in the work of the organization (Papić et. al. 2011:87). The same research shows that membership is not a real driving force for the direction of the organizations, rather it is a formality. Some reasons are donor emphasis on other factors, e.g., multi-culturalism instead of volunteerism and grassroots participation, together with an already existing political and societal

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<sup>12</sup> **Glas Žene** is an NGO whose mission is to educate women about their rights and their role in the contemporary democratic society as well as activating women and including them in societal political questions. Through this they hope to promote human rights, tolerance and other democratic aspects in society. The organization is situated in Bihać.

passiveness in the BiH society and a lack of understanding of the role of NGOs in democratic societies (Ibid). According to research conducted by USAID recruiting of volunteers is far from being part of the organizations' policy (USAID, 2009:76). With a lack of volunteer inclusion, it is questionable whether or not these organizations are able to uphold a close connection with the grassroots, especially those groups of people whose interests they are claiming to promote or work for.

The FKR informant explains that they occasionally make use of volunteers through projects, but it is not institutionalized or part of the organization's policy (Osmanagić, 2011). As for Zašto Ne, their work is run by a small core staff and if necessary some additional fifteen to twenty people that they make use of in different projects (Brkan, 2011). When it comes to CCI, which is a large organization, their main staff is made up of thirty-five employees throughout the country. According to the informant, volunteers are only used at certain occasions when there is a need for it, such as e.g. in street actions. They have a large number of registered volunteers, however, most of them are not active (Isanović, 2011). As for smaller and more local organizations, the scope of using volunteers is not as developed, not even when it comes to using them as work force for specific actions or projects. Glas Žene does not even have a proper staff. There are five active members of the organizations and they work as volunteers most of the time, only getting paid if the opportunity would come through a certain project (Raković, 2011). Hence, these cases show, which has also been proved through previous research, that the inclusion of volunteers is in general used as a tool to reach the already set goals of the organization rather than being a goal itself.

There are, however, positive examples of organizations using volunteers on a more structured level and not just to perform already decided actions. Fondacija CURE has a core staff of three persons, but there are four volunteers coming to work for them in their office on a daily basis, four hours per day. Their presence in the office and activeness in communicating with outsiders make them included in the everyday activities and planning which helps connecting the organization to the grassroots. There are additionally another four girls coming to the office to help the organization in their work or to do their own personal research one or two times per week. The total number of registered members is 300, and these people get engaged through different activities (Frašto, 2011).

CŽS also has a somewhat more institutionalized manner of including volunteers in their organizational work and focus is put on building the capacities of these volunteers; they are sent to seminars and have the possibility to influence by following the work of the staff, planning activities and writing reports. In addition there are volunteers who are included in different actions but who spend less time with the organization and are not being sent to seminars and don't have the same possibility to influence the work of the organization (Crnković, 2011).

Research shows that the process of recruiting and involving volunteers as well as the overall support for NGO's initiatives has been positively influenced by the use of technology and internet tools (USAID, 2009: 76). Providing information is getting more and more efficient and the use of forums to find out the opinion of the public is also increasing (Ibid). The

problem, however, seems to be that smaller organizations with limited budgets and man power lack the capacities to start up and maintain their own websites. Five of the eight NGOs examined in this study are lacking their own websites and therefore depend on media coverage to a larger extent than larger NGOs who have the capacity to promote themselves. However as, e.g., an informant from Fondacija CURE reveals: even though it has gotten easier to find activists due to developed technology and access to internet, the process can be challenging and very time- and energy consuming (Frašto, 2011).

To conclude this section, inclusion of volunteers is a warranty that activism and grassroots get a genuine chance. When this is lacking, it is valid to question if the NGO is really a social movement or rather just a service provider, to quote Sorenson. According to Pateman, the opportunity to participate in alternative political arenas is important for the context of all political reality in a society and when NGOs lack policies to include volunteers, this opportunity gets subverted.

### 5.1.7 Governance and management

This leads to the last aspect of NGO accountability, namely internal structures of governance and management. According to the law on Associations and Foundations in BiH, three people or more are required to form an association or an organization (UNDP, 2006:17). The same law prescribes governing assemblies or boards as the highest bodies to carry out management and decision making (Papić, 2011:87). However, research has shown that many NGOs have governing boards only on paper; in reality their intentional function of managing the organization is ignored (Ibid). There is also an overall lack of transparency in the operation of many leadership positions (USAID, 2009:76).

Goran Bubalo, key informant and involved with the NGO Council in BiH, stressed the importance of not trusting blindly in the picture that is presented by the organizations themselves. *“We did a mapping once of our member organizations and they are very small and unorganized. If you ask them e.g. if they have a board they will say ‘yes, we have a board’. Everything is perfect according to them, but in reality it is not true”* (Bubalo, 2011). One example is Fondacija CURE. They have an external board that is supposed be informed of the decisions made by the active organization members (Bubalo, 2011). According to the informants from Fondacija CURE, their board is functional and both in charge of dealing with larger questions such as changes of the statute, strategic planning or appointing director as well as generally being informed and supportive of everyday activities and decisions within the organization (Frašto, 2011). However, when talking to Bubalo who is himself a member of this external board, he reveals that it is completely dysfunctional. As an example he mentions that they have not had a meeting for over a year and that the board has no clue of what the organization is doing (Bubalo, 2011). Also within FKR, the informant paints a quite positive picture of the board and its functions. According to him, their board consists of seven people who were elected by the staff and are responsible for making strategic decisions as well as approving financial decisions and documentations (Osmanagić, 2011). Even though

this might be the case in theory, Goran Bubalo reveals that the reality does not comply with this. According to him, even though the organization is doing a great job and the structures seem clear on paper, the board is not functioning as it should (Bubalo, 2011).

These examples can be explained through Tandon's theory about the invisible board. It is composed of a small group just in order to meet legal requirements, but the real governance and the driving force behind the activities is carried out by the founders and their visions. The board is in fact not actively governing the organization and the mission it conducts. This unclear separation between governance and management has negative effects on internal accountability. Tandon means that the NGO's functioning and performance in society is controlled by its governing body. When there is a lack of good structures it is difficult to enable the organization to monitor performance and stay accountable to all stakeholders. The general perception of the NGO sector with local people is that it only exist for its own purpose and to make money (Bubalo, 2011) and that it does in not fact represent them or the grassroots (Brkan, 2011). One can relate this even to the internal management structures of these organizations.

The lack of well functioning boards is proven in many organizations to be capacity related and simply a result of the fact that these organizations have not managed to develop adequate management structures (Papić et. al, 2011:97) As one informant revealed regarding her organization, it has a formal board, but it is unclear what responsibility lies with whom in this management structure. The organization was established twelve years ago, yet they have not come to terms with a final division of responsibilities. The informant argues that it takes time to figure out where to put the different responsibilities; especially if you have little prior experience. Also, some of the staff members are also members of the board (Crnković, 2011). Again referring to Tandon, he brings up the danger in cases where confusion has arisen over distinctions between requirements of governance and the needs of every day management. The staff might get caught dealing with issues related to staff interests rather than larger institutional concerns. Additionally, there might be a lack of objective perspectives in cases where staff members are also members of the board, what Tandon defines as staff boards. The interests of the staff might then never get questioned since the board is composed by the same people.

Lack of capacity can be linked to insufficient instructions and requirements from the donor side. CCI, on the side of their own projects, also work with handing out grants to smaller NGOs, so called 'subgrantees', providing them with training and consultations in their work. However, this work aims at advising the subgrantees in their everyday activities such as how to get better at writing applications and meeting different criteria. There is a clear focus on projects and results, and less focus on strategic consultation. As the informant says; *"We don't really meddle in their internal structures"* (Isanović, 2011). This might leave organizations with weak boards and structures of decision making and responsibility in this bad stage, without any outside pressure on them to improve this. As Bubalo claims, the main general problem with NGOs is that they lack capacities and do not perform as they should; *"I am very frustrated and tired of our ineffectivity. We are generally not doing what we are supposed to*

*do; we are not doing a good job”* (Bubalo, 2011). According to another key informant, the internal capacities in NGOs is not enough, nor is the external pressure for these organizations to actually deal with their organizational shortcomings. *“It is time for NGOs to step out of the stadium of learning and show that they are ready to do work that will make a difference in society [...] More responsibility should be put on organizations to be transparent, to educate and to monitor!”* (Skaljić, 2011).

## **5.2 Problems with democratization**

Above, external and internal structures and patterns in Bosnian NGOs have been connected to aspects of downwards accountability and grassroots participation. In this section, the aim is to bring this discussion even further, connecting these issues to problems of democratization. As such, the discussion aims at answering the second question in this thesis, namely *“How can these patterns of accountability be related to problems of democratization in the BiH society at large?”* First, a brief overview of the democratic stage of BiH will be presented. Further, the conclusions from the above chapters will be analyzed through a democratization perspective and connected with the reality of the state of democracy that the BiH society finds itself in today.

According to both Pateman and Barber, participation fosters participation and the essence of what Barber calls ‘strong democracy’ lies in a society where political participation is promoted and conducted by its citizens. Hence, the essence of true democracy is dynamic arenas of alternative political participation and substantial civic activity. However, looking at the case of the BiH reality, it does not seem to match the ideal of a participatory society or a strong democracy. Despite extensive efforts to develop and strengthen the civil society in BiH and making the grassroots participating in the development of their own lives and societies, there is much work left. Both locals and internationals working within the civil society field agree upon the fact that there is a widespread political passiveness amongst the BiH population (Hajrulahović, 2011). People are apathetic and have distanced themselves from different development processes; be they political, economical or related to the NGO sector. In cases where the local population bothers to activate itself, it is first and foremost concerning their own lives and progress, and not about the progress of the entire society. The trend shows that many, especially young people, would rather leave BiH and improve their lives in some other country than staying and working for a better future and society within BiH (Ibid). Recent research highlights people’s disillusionment with the democratic process and it is explained that the grassroots do not feel as if they have any influence (Nansen Dialogue Centre, 2010:16). In terms of actual engagement and civic participation in the NGO sector, UNDP has found that less than two percent of the BiH population claim to be active members of an association (Papić et. al, 2011:93) When it comes to perceptions about the civil society sector and NGOs in particular, the general opinion with the local population is that these organizations exist merely for their own purposes, working for either their own gain

or the gains of the donors. Hence, the locals do not perceive them to represent their interests (Bubalo, 2011)

Seeing civil society as an alternative arena for political participation, and NGOs as a powerful part of civil society, the NGO sector can be connected to the general stage of democracy in BiH. Drawing from the findings regarding NGOs and accountability, two general aspects can be related to problems regarding the democratization project in BiH. The first aspect is NGOs dependency on external funding and the consequences of this. The second aspect deals with the de facto internal structures of these organizations that to a certain extent can be argued to be somewhat undemocratic.

*External control* and dependency on donors is found to be one of the most serious obstacles for Bosnian NGOs, affecting their possibility to stay accountable to the grassroots. Donor objectives and requirements play an active role in deciding the focus of many NGO projects and activities, making it relevant to bring in Bebbington and Collison's argument and thereby question the real ownership of NGO pursued development. The fact that the financial dependence upon international finances brings many NGOs to prioritize the agendas of the internationals rather than their own is a perfect example of Belloni's 'systemic dilemma'. According to Belloni, this makes the process perceived as alien to Bosnian culture. Connecting this to the reality of low civic and political participation due to disillusionment and a feeling of powerlessness, the link between the current dynamics of the NGO sector and the deficient democratic development in BiH reveals itself.

Further, the donor driven project approach with focus on assessments and fast results creates a climate where professionalism, efficiency and short-term financial and quantitative results are prioritized over long-term structural changes with focus on grassroots inclusion and social aspects. The competition between short-term results and long-term changes is explained through Belloni's 'temporal dilemma' and argued to compose a genuine threat to true civil society development and democracy. As argued by Edwards and Hulme, economics gets prioritized over politics and Dillon's description of the two competing languages of development is applicable. Within the BiH context of high unemployment, the NGO sector has become a business and a job market in the first place. Many people are involved in NGOs for reasons of getting a job and salary rather than to make change in society. According to Gramsci, this would not constitute genuine civil society as he argues that its real understanding lies in sociological and political terms ('ideas') and not economical.

Dependency on funding has also led to competition *between* NGOs. Genuine, small scale, local and rural based organizations which are often better linked with the grassroots have smaller chances of survival than large (often internationally connected), urban based and efficiency oriented organizations with elitist structures and professionals running the show. As size and capacity gets prioritized over visions and local engagement, this inevitably poses a real threat towards the development of a genuine civil society and thereby democratization as such. As argued by both Tocqueville and Putnam, a strong civil society constitutes the base of a functioning democracy.

When it comes to the *internal structures* of NGOs, many organizations are not directly linked to the grassroots. Their internal governance and management and the way that many of them conduct activities and projects is based on the engagement of a narrow group of people. Attributes such as ‘one man’s show’ describe the elitist structure that complies with many of these organizations. This obvious top-down structure, with a lack of arenas for stakeholder dialogue and where the organization revolves around one or a few people, makes it an environment closed for inputs from the ‘outside’, especially from the grassroots. Sorensen’s argument seems to apply to the BiH case; generally, the NGO sector has come to represent an urban middle class that is detached from the local communities. Through a democratization perspective, it is important to take this into consideration since one result has come to be that the public does not perceive these organizations to represent them or their interests

The development and strengthening of an inclusive and participative civil society has been stated as a prerequisite for a functioning democratic climate in BiH ever since the democratization project started in 1995. It seems however, as if Belloni is right in his argument when claiming that the current situation has failed to enable citizens of perceiving themselves as the source or even as a part of the shaping of their community. Hence, they see no value in participating in the development project. Linking this back to Pateman, she has argued that the opportunity to participate in alternative arenas changes the entire political context of a society. With regards to the NGO sector, this opportunity seems to be somewhat absent. The result is that alternative political participation in this arena is limited, which generates a negative spiral for the overall democratization of BiH. In accordance with Barber’s (1984) theory, “*civic activity educates individuals how to think publicly as citizens*”, where “*participation becomes its own tutor*”. As a result of lacking alternative political participation, the population of BiH is not teaching themselves the value and importance of participation in a democratic society, posing a substantial threat to democratization in the country.

With relation to the discussion above, the time has come to answer the main and final question of this thesis, namely whether or not *NGOs in BiH fulfill two of their main functions, that is being a successful arena for alternative political participation and enhancers of democracy*. In order to answer this question, the first thing to look at is the intentional idea with the creation and support of the NGO sector in BiH, namely as an integral part of strengthening civil society and thereby democratizing the country. As quoted earlier, “*The strong emergence of a Third Sector in the form of civil society in Bosnia will be instrumental in the gradual emergence of a pluralistic and democratic society ... NGOs are ... destined to play an important role in this post-conflict situation [...]*” (Dialogue Development, 1998). However, as concluded by answering the two first questions, there is a general lack of downwards accountability and grassroots inclusion and participation within many of the BiH NGOs. External donors have too much influence on these organizations, which affects not only their activities and projects but also the processes through which they work. This often leads to competitiveness and the priority of effectiveness and results rather than grassroots inclusion and accountability. As a result, the grassroots do not perceive these organizations (on the behalf of whom they are suppose to speak) as representatives of them or their

interests, rather as representatives of their staff's own personal gains or the gains of politicians or internationals. Logically, only a small part of the population is actively engaged in this type of organizations which leads to a lack of alternative political participation amongst the BiH population. Hence, the NGO sector as an arena for alternative political participation seems to fail somewhat in this mission. Through this perspective, it might not be genuinely enhancing democracy in BiH. Therefore it might be suitable to once again quote Chandler (2000) and his argument when he claims that “[...] *the model of NGO assistance to democracy can serve only to complement, it cannot be the leading edge*”.

## 6 Conclusions

When looking at the findings from this research, the general conclusion is that the intended development of a strong and participative BiH civil society has failed and that this can be partly explained through the quality of the NGO sector. When it comes to the first question, namely what *structures of accountability within NGOs in BiH look like and how they affect grassroots participation*, two aspects are found to be important. The first one deals with external control and how this hinders these organizations from staying accountable to their beneficiaries; hence discouraging genuine participation from the grassroots. Dependency on donors has led many NGOs to prioritize the visions of their financiers instead of their own. Many organizations express the donor dependency as a ‘struggle of survival’ which sometimes forces them to compromise their own original ideas and visions. Today when international donors are leaving BiH, it seems as if the rush to satisfy the donors is intensifying. Scarce financial resources have also led to a competitive climate for NGOs, which has affects on their overall work. Not only are they competing for financiers, but also for projects and volunteers and this competitive climate has led to a lack of dialogue between NGOs. This makes it difficult to stay true to common visions on societal change. Also, competition seems to affect mostly smaller and more rurally based organizations, whereas larger NGOs that can comply with donor requirements regarding efficiency and capacity manage to stay alive. Hence, those organizations that are working on a more local level and are better linked to the grassroots are the first to get out concurred.

In terms of external control, another aspect hindering grassroots empowerment and downwards accountability is the project mode of development where NGO work is carried out through short-term projects. Projects often include strict focus on short-term results and financial reporting, where efficiency and professionalism are prerequisites. Thereby, aspects of long-term structural change get left out. Assessments mainly include quantitative and financial reporting to the donors, and social aspects are not included. Strengthening of civil society is however about empowerment and democracy; something which these results do not reveal much about. The project mode of development with its focus on professionalism has also lead to a climate of elitism within many organizations, where the NGO sector is largely driven by NGO professionals who have become experts in writing project proposals and with a long experience of the field.

This leads to the second aspect, namely internal structures and the fact that NGOs in BiH are generally not membership based. Instead, most of them have elitist structures and are often run by a narrow group of people; often a group of friends or the founders of the organization. Instead of representing the interests of a critical mass, these NGOs represent the private interests of the people running the show. It also seems as if many of those with leading positions see it merely as a way to secure an income. Hence, civil society in BiH is more about private interests than genuine grassroots empowerment. Overall, there is also a lack in stakeholder dialogue in many organizations, which minimizes understanding of any other stakeholder group than your own. Further, the processes of progressing within NGOs are

often based on connections rather than engagement and interest, making it difficult to engage in alternative political participation unless you know someone. Another common feature is that internal structures are often set only to meet the requirements for registration; both when it comes to number of members and structures of governance. In reality this means that management and governance is often fallible, and in many cases, important functional bodies such as governing boards exist only on paper. Hence, their functions are unclear which has negative effects on proper practice of internal and downwards accountability.

When discussing *how these patterns are related to problems of democratization in the BiH society at large*, it is again important to look at the two aspects discussed. The elitist structure of NGOs makes it difficult for the grassroots to use these organizations as an arena for alternative political participation. Theories on participatory democracy claim that participation fosters participation; hence, in a setting where true participation is hindered or lacking, this has negative effects on the overall democratic situation. This seems to be the case in the BiH society which is characterized by political passiveness and low levels of active people in the associational sector. The general perception of NGOs is that they exist only for their own purposes, and hence their role as a dynamic and significant player in civil society gets undermined. If departing from the theory that a powerful civil society is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy, then a substantial threat is posed to the democratization process of BiH.

The second aspect, namely external control over the NGO sector and the forced prioritization of upwards accountability at the expense of downwards accountability questions the actual ownership of the development. In a setting where international agendas are the core of development, local Bosnian priorities therefore easily become forgotten. As a result, the NGO sector as such has come to be perceived as alien to the local population. Again, this is problematic for the overall democratization of the country. One reason is because the main idea of civil society in development projects is that change comes from the bottom up and here it seems as if the opposite applies. However, also because exclusion of the grassroots and their agendas in the development project leads to a negative circle of citizen passiveness. Belloni was right when arguing that; *“If citizens do not perceive themselves as the source of development or as actively shaping their community by adopting their goals and strategies, they might see no value in participating in an exogenously driven development project”*.

All of this adds up to answering the final question regarding *whether or not NGOs in BiH fill the function of being a successful arena for alternative political participation and enhancer of democracy*. The main idea of NGOs as providers of a critical voice to discussions, holding both states and donors accountable for their actions seem to fail in the case of BiH. Neither do they manage to provide a critical voice due to extensive donor control; nor do they really represent a critical voice to begin with due to their elitist structures and distance from the grassroots. The part of civil society in BiH that is made up by NGOs has come to largely represent two main categories; on the one hand the donor community and on the other hand the few people that are working in these organizations. The grassroots are not represented to the extent that they were actually intended, and therefore it is questionable whether the aim of

the civil society part of the democratization project can be achieved through these types of channels. If participation fosters participation, and one of the arenas for grassroots participation is largely disconnected from the grassroots, a negative circle has been created where passiveness rather than empowerment is created. Seeing that the political climate in BiH today is characterized by a widespread passiveness amongst the population and that the perception of the NGO sector shows that people do not consider themselves represented by these organizations, the main purpose of NGOs through a participation approach and their active role in promoting democracy can therefore be argued to be counteracted.

## 7 Final discussions

With regards to the conducted analysis and the conclusions that have been drawn, problems have been found with the NGO sector in BiH as an arena for grassroots participation and thereby also as a provider of democracy. It is important, however to underline that this discussion and its conclusions regarding participation, accountability and democratization are separated from the content of the actual work conducted by these organizations. Project wise, many NGOs in BiH are involved in interesting and important work that leads to good and positive changes for society at large and also for the political situation in the country. The large scope of this sector and the powerfulness that stems from it is not to be underrated. It would therefore be senseless to generalize and say that the NGO sector does not contribute to strengthening civil society and democracy in BiH in all. However, through a democratization perspective, it is not only about the actual work that they do, but also about the structures within these organizations and their actual possibility to constitute an arena for grassroots influence and participation. This contrast is an interesting aspect and the question whether NGOs with their democracy promoting work are able to contribute to an overall democratization process even though they themselves internally seem to fail regarding grassroots participation and accountability could possibly make ground for further research. These types of issues are important highlight, both out in the field but also in the academic world. The development sector is a huge industry and when it comes down to it, much of the real work starts with a theory.

At large, I am content with the results and conclusions that have emerged through this research. The topic is of large importance as Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a country where structures of democracy and peace are being built, and this process is a fragile one. In order to facilitate a positive development in the country it is therefore important to be aware of potential risks with the methods used, and some of these risks is what I have been trying to illustrate in this thesis.

## Executive summary

This thesis is a result of trying to look beyond the failure of the democratization project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The focus of the study is on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the aim has been to analyze them and their actual function as alternative arenas for political participation and enhancers of democracy. An attempt is made to map out general structures of accountability within these organizations and relate them to issues of democratization in the BiH society at large.

Since the end of the war in BiH nearly sixteen year ago, the international community has put its focus on building peace and democracy in the country. In line with the New Policy Agenda and the neo-liberal focus in the development field, one of the main tasks has been to create a strong civil society; both in order to constitute an antipole against the state, but more importantly as an arena for political action. International aid and development assistance to BiH is considered the most extensive in the modern era, and the civil society with the NGO sector in particular has been a substantial receiver of this ODA. As a concrete result, over 12 000 NGOs have emerged and this sector today makes up a substantial part of the Bosnian GDP. However, despite the large scope of the NGO sector, the democracy situation in the country is far from ideal. There is a widespread political passiveness amongst the BiH citizens and only an estimated 2% of the population is active in associations and organizations. In general, there is little understanding of the true meaning of civil society with the local population and NGOs are perceived to work for the agendas of the internationals or their own staff rather than for the grassroots society. Critical theories such as e.g. the post-development or the dependency school argue that the NGO sector is disconnected from the grassroots as a result of too much donor dependency. They argue that this dependency forces NGOs to direct their accountability upwards to their donors rather than downwards to the grassroots society and their beneficiaries.

Drawing from this presentation of the problem, the research questions that are answered in this thesis are the following; what do structures of accountability look like in NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how do they affect grassroots influence and participation? How can these patterns of accountability be related to problems of democratization in the BiH society at large? Finally, by answering these two questions, further arguments are done with relation to the main question which is if NGOs in BiH fill two of their main functions; namely being an arena for alternative political participation and enhancers of democracy?

With regards to the first two questions, the findings of this research show that the donor community and the international agencies in particular, have a substantial influence on NGOs in BiH. This influence regards the actual work that is conducted but also the processes through which this work is carried out as well as internal structures within the organizations. Donors have strict requirements that NGOs have to meet in order to secure funding, something which influences their overall operation. Further, as international donors have started to leave BiH and the amount of financial resources is getting scarcer, the climate which is distinguished by struggle for financial survival is in fact getting more intense. This has led to an increased competition between organizations, where small and rural based

NGOs easily get out concurred by larger urban based ones. Pleasing of the donors is more important than ever and in a setting where these organizations more and more have to compromise their own project ideas and adapt to demands from above, dependency scholars proof themselves right when questioning where the real ownership in this development lies.

The donors approach to development in BiH is the same as in many other places; namely based on short-term projects, with focus on professionalism, efficiency and results. In a setting where results and financial reporting is key, it is difficult for many NGOs to keep sight on more long-term structural goals where empowerment and social aspects of democratization are included. The 'project mode' of development with its stressing of efficiency also enhances professionalism and elitism within NGOs. A ruling elite within the NGO sector has developed and many organizations are in fact distinguished by that they are run by only one person or a few people; often friends or NGO professionals who have been working in the sector for a long time. These elitist structures also mean that most NGOs in BiH are in fact not membership based. Hence, the general pattern is that these organizations are disconnected from the grassroots and instead of representing local voices; they represent interests of a narrow group of founders or the interests of the donors. Another issue is that management and governance is generally unclear within many organizations, making it difficult for them to stay accountable to all stakeholders in a consequent manner. Formal bodies such as governing boards are often found only on paper, but in reality their functions are unclear. Dialogue between different stakeholders is often lacking and there is no clear policy of inclusion of volunteers.

Hence, undemocratic rule and donor pleasing seem to be the two main problems hindering NGOs in BiH from representing the genuine civil society and constituting a functioning arena for alternative political participation. This said, its initial intentions to promote democracy can be questioned. The idea of civil society as a promoter of democracy is that development comes from the bottom-up and where the ownership of development lies with the grassroots. In the case of BiH, the NGO sector is rather controlled by external actors and the development seems to come from the top down. The settings and the climate that makes these organizations having elitist structures, only representing the interest of a few, makes it difficult to talk of genuine grassroots participation and empowerment.

Connecting this to the political situation in BiH where people are passive and do not engage themselves in NGOs nor even perceive these organizations to represent them, it can be concluded that the internal structures of NGOs and the patterns of general upwards accountability is making the grassroots disconnected from the NGO sector. Hence, instead of people becoming active and participative, the opposite occurs. Theories on participatory democracy argue that 'participation fosters participation'. Accordingly, in societies where participation is not encouraged or for some reason not successful, the result is that the population becomes passive. Hence, with regard to the fact that the BiH population in general is not participating in alternative political arenas, the final conclusion in this thesis is that in relation to structures of accountability and in the specific context of BiH, NGOs do not manage to fill two of their main functions; that is being a successful arena for alternative political participation nor genuine enhancers of democracy.

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## Interviews, Meetings and Lectures

Mr. Tobias **Axerup**, First Secretary at the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 September 2010

Prof. Dr. Roberto **Belloni**, Faculty of Political Science, Queens University of Belfast. Lecture on *Civil Society*, 27 November 2008

Mr. Darko **Brkan**, President of the NGO 'Zašto Ne?' ("Why Not") 23 March 2011

Mr. Goran **Bubalo**, Project Director in the NGO 'CRS' and involved with the BiH NGO Council, 19 April 2011

Ms. Natasa **Crnković**, Vice-President and Program Coordinator in the NGO 'Centar za Životnu Sredinu' ("Centre for Environment") in Banja Luka, 6 April 2011

Ms. Natalia **Dianiskova**, Head of the Section for Development, Civil Society and Cross-Border Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5 April 2011

Ms. Berina **Džemailović**, Volunteer in the NGO 'Fondacija CURE' ("GIRLS Foundation") in Sarajevo, 13 April 2011

Ms. Vedrana **Frašto**, President of the NGO 'Fondacija CURE' in Sarajevo, 13 April 2011

Mr. Sadik **Hasanović**, President of the NGO 'Udruženje Optimizam' in Sarajevo, 22 April 2011

Ms. Katica **Hajrulahović**, National Programme Organizaer at SIDA in Sarajevo, 24 February 2011

Mr. Anders **Hedlund**, Counsellor at SIDA in Sarajevo, 24 February 2011

Ms. Samila **Isanović**, 'Centri Civilnih Inicijativa' ("Civil Initiatives Centres") in Sarajevo, 20 April 2011

Ms. Indira **Kliko**, Member of the NGO 'Društvo za Kulturno-povjesnih i Prirodnih Vrijednosti' ("Association for Cultural-historical and Natural Heritages") in Jajce

Mr. Milan **Mrdja**, Programme Director in CPCD (Civil Society Promotion Centre) in Sarajevo, 29 April 2011

Ms. Dragana **Grbić-Hasibović**, Project Manager in CPCD (Civil Society Promotion Centre) in Sarajevo, 29 April 2011

Mr. Jesenko **Osmanagić**, President of the NGO 'Fondacija za Kreativni Razvoj' ("Foundation for Creative Development") in Sarajevo, 22 April 2011

Ms. Enisa **Raković**, President of the NGO 'Glas Žene' ("Women's Voice") 5 April, in Bihać, 5 April 2011

Ms. Sadeta **Škaljić**, Assistant Minister and Head of the Sector for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations in the Ministry of Justice of BiH, 6 April 2011

Ms. Mirjana **Valjevac**, Project Manager at USAID in Sarajevo, 12 May 2011

Ms. Amra **Vučijak**, Head of Consumer Protection Office in the FBiH Ministry of Affairs, 5 April 2011

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Interviews

#### 9.1.1 Questionnaire

For the interviews conducted for this research, a set of questions were used to direct the topic of the interview. However, the questions have been subjects of alteration, allowing the respondents to provide me with more personal answers and where different aspects and focus areas have been differently highlighted depending on who I have been interviewing. Also, when the respondents were not representatives from an NGO, the questions have been more speculatively formulated. Still, the same issues have been discussed. The following questions have constituted the base for the interviews;

- **Background and description of the organization**

Aim and purpose?

What is the organization's dimensionality? (How big, how many active?)

What is your personal role in this organization and what made you work for this NGO?

Who are the beneficiaries of the organization? Whose voice do you represent? What do they consider valuable?

- **Structures of decision making, management and governance**

What does the structure look like? Other stakeholders? Employees? Boards? Membership based?

What type of board? (Are they paid? How big, who is in it, how are they appointed, rotation, one-man-show?)

Who gets engaged in the process when a project is initiated? Mapping of this process!

If someone is dissatisfied; how can they go about? If your members are not satisfied nor listened to, what effects do that have?

- **Relation to donors**

Who are the financers and what are their visions and intentions? (Do they differ from yours?)

What are your relations to your financers?

Is there ever a forum for all stakeholders to get together? How often? Is this useful?

How do you assess your work/results? Assessment strategy? Who do you have to report to?  
What does this process look like?

Focus on results? How do you measure results and success? Are the results consistent with the organization's long-term objectives? Is there even a clear view of what good results are and what bad results are?

Do you feel that you sometimes have to abandon your morals/visions/core values in order to meet external expectations or requirements?

- **Discussions about participation and grassroots inclusion**

What is your relation to the grassroots, the man on the street?

Why do think there is there is such a limited political participation within NGOs?

To what extent does your organization strengthen the base for citizen action?

- **General questions**

Do you feel that you have the possibility to act/change/make a difference?

What is your vision of the future – for the organization and for the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina?