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### **Mapping the Ephemeral. Yugoslav Civic Activism and the 1990s Conflicts**

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## Abstract

The current paper represents an abridged outline of a nascent doctoral project which examines the failure of Yugoslav civic initiatives in the 1980s and early 1990s to produce a broader pacifist movement that could have prevented the armed conflict. Although Yugoslavia suffered from the illegitimacy of the socialist system and serious economic dysfunctions, it nevertheless managed to establish civic organizations, including anti-war groups, in this climate. However, these groups ultimately failed to mobilize public opinion against the armed conflicts in the 1990s. I am interested in singling out the mechanisms (or 'logic') by which their civic efforts were weakened and destroyed. The majority of studies on civil society focus on how civil societies are formed, but far fewer discuss how civic initiatives are killed off. Primarily drawing upon two research methods, semi-structured in-depth interviews and documentary analysis, the proposed project will cover the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia. In addition to refining our understanding of the dynamics of civil society formation and destruction in the communist and post-communist contexts, my research will hopefully also yield insight into the problems that the Yugoslav succession states have been facing in the process of democratization and accession to the European Union.

## 1. Introduction

The extremely violent character of the wars of Yugoslav succession continues to inspire sociological research almost fifteen years after the Dayton Agreement brought peace to the region. Many studies advance the thesis that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia erupted as a consequence of a weak civil society that was incapable of subverting the inflammatory politics of nationalism and xenophobia. However, my doctoral project (whose predominantly methodological component is outlined in the current paper) will attempt to unearth and acknowledge a range of civic initiatives that took place in almost every former Yugoslav republic immediately prior to the outburst of the armed conflict. This study will aim to provide a solid empirical basis for refuting the widespread misconception that the former Yugoslavia was devoid of civil society in comparison to other Eastern European countries.

Despite the repressive pre-communist historical legacy as well as the authoritarian character of Yugoslav socialism, certain spheres of social life enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy in communist Yugoslavia. This somewhat permissive climate, especially in the last years of the communist regime, allowed for the emergence of civil society organizations; however, such groups ultimately failed to launch a socially and politically relevant pacifist movement immediately prior to the eruption of hostilities in the 1990s. Due to their failure to cohere into a force that could have decisively resisted the subsequent authoritarian regimes, the efforts of Yugoslav civil society have thus largely been ignored in sociological and political science research on the subject. The proposed project aspires to start filling this void. To this end, I will document how some of the most prominent civil society activists account for the failure of their initiatives to produce a broader pacifist movement that could have ensured a peaceful transition to democracy, political pluralism and a market economy.

Scholarship on (post)communist civic activism is of course extensive, but a detailed theoretical account of the development of civil society in either Eastern Europe or the former Yugoslavia exceeds the scope

of this paper. For useful overviews, please refer to Glenn<sup>1</sup>, Kaldor<sup>2</sup>, Licht<sup>3</sup> and Pavlović<sup>4</sup>. Before I proceed, however, I want to emphasize that the term *civil society* is a concept whose long historical evolution is inextricably interwoven with the development of Western European social and political thought. It is, in that sense, a concept that resists an easy transfer from the cultural sphere in which it was conceived and continues to evolve. I have nevertheless opted to use the term not only because it is becoming increasingly popular beyond the 'borders' of the Western world, but also because the movements and organizations that will be examined here were trying to promote *civility* in the literal sense. In the sections of the paper on Eastern Europe, I use the terms *civil society* and *civic activism* interchangeably and perceive *civil society* as consisting of *civic activists* engaged in a wide array of activities ranging from petitions to protests.

## 2. Rationale

Hampered by an underdeveloped political culture and overshadowed by an authoritarian communist regime, civil society in Yugoslavia had a rather marginal status. Although the regime periodically granted broader liberties to some segments of society, the Party retained an iron grip on the country's political life. As a result, all emancipation processes were restricted to big urban centres and limited to a narrow sphere of the intellectual, artistic and economic elite, which proved incapable of connecting to the wider public.

The proposed research is, first of all, a reaction to the longstanding deficit of scholarly literature on political opposition in the Eastern European social sciences. This trend was particularly evident throughout both the 1980s and the 1990s despite numerous conceptual developments and the surge of publications stimulated by Polish protests. The issue of opposition to communist regimes never really managed to acquire a mainstream status in Eastern European scholarship; it was instead pushed aside by a torrent of studies on institutional transformations and the ways in which the countries in question were shaping their political systems to suit European Union legislation.

Similarly, an exhaustive and systematic study of Yugoslav civic activism immediately prior to the 1990s armed conflicts has not been written. Given the magnitude of hostilities, it is difficult to account for the lack of scholarly enterprise on the subject. I would argue that there are at least three reasons to explain the scarcity of academic interest in the issue.

The first of these reasons is that civic and political contention is, per definition, episodic. The instances of civic challenges to the rapidly degenerating communist system in Yugoslavia became increasingly weak and brief. Traditional civil society literature tends to gloss over these attempts, instead focusing on permanent organizations or at least those that managed to better withstand the pressures of the regime they confronted.

A second reason for the paucity of Yugoslav civil society studies is the fact that nationalism has become the paramount paradigm when it comes to explaining the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Both domestic and

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn, John K.: Framing Democracy – Civil Society and Civic Movements in Eastern Europe, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Kaldor, Mary: Global Civil Society, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Licht, Sonja: Civil society, democracy and the Yugoslav war, in: Spencer, Metta (ed.): The Lessons of Yugoslavia, New York/NY: Elsevier Science, 2000, pp. 111–124, passim.

<sup>4</sup> Pavlović, Vukasin: Civilno društvo i demokratija, Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2006.

(particularly) Western social science scholars have by now generated an enormous amount of literature on the wars of Yugoslav succession in which the destructivity of nationalism is given top billing.

While I recognize the devastating impact that ideologically manipulated nationalist sentiments had on the course of Yugoslavia's disintegration, my interest lies elsewhere. My proposed research was prompted by a sense of dissatisfaction with the academic trend of ignoring the range of civic – *centripetal* – initiatives aimed at averting the Yugoslav catastrophe in the 1990s. I believe that these initiatives, although diverse in size and sometimes contradictory in nature, deserve public appreciation as testaments of civic courage and social responsibility. In addition, the study of civic action forces the researcher to take a serious look at Yugoslav politics, society and culture, and thereby give agency back to the citizens of the devastated country. By the same token, I intend to demonstrate how the war, far from being an inevitability produced by ancient hatreds, was simply one option that could have been avoided.

Thirdly, more extensive research covering the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia became increasingly difficult in the immediate post-war period for a couple of inter-related reasons. For example, contact with former academic colleagues was scarce and the exchange of information was difficult. After the fragmentation of the country, the focus was quickly and sometimes rather purposefully shifted from the federal (Yugoslav) level to the particular concerns of the newborn nation-states. The time, however, now seems ripe for a reversal of this trend. As the deafening nationalist clamour has subsided and some of the deepest wounds are slowly healing, it is the task of post-Yugoslav historiography, sociology and political science to offer critical and empirically founded readings of the events surrounding Yugoslavia's demise.

In that sense, my research encompasses two particular concerns that could be theoretically fruitful. The first of these is history. Recognizing the historicity of the events in question, this project sets out to analyse a dynamic set of processes related to the attempt to bring about political change and avert an armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The processes that the study aims to address were embedded in the broader context of the profound structural transformations that were then taking place in Eastern Europe and the world. In that vein, I will attempt to go counter to the widespread trend in the scholarship on civil society and democracy of detaching such phenomena from their historical context (also see Clemens & Hughes<sup>5</sup>).

More specifically, this project will strive to bridge the gap between history and political science and show that in spite of the fact that events (past or present) tend to have identifiable causes conducive to academic inquiry, they should never be viewed as the inevitable consequence of unalterable social forces. Paying closer attention to history, in other words, demonstrates that current and future developments, albeit certainly influenced by power relations, systematic processes or mere vicissitudes of the past, are by no means entirely determined by them. This is particularly relevant for a region in which the past is an unavoidable point of contention that, for the sake of the future, is still waiting to be *mastered* by both the academic community and the broader public.

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<sup>5</sup> Clemens, Elisabeth S. / Hughes, Martin D.: Recovering past protest. Historical research on social movements, in: Klandermans, Bert / Staggenborg, Suzanne (eds): *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minneapolis/MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 201–230, here p. 220.

The second principal theoretical concern of my research is the fact that the vast majority of studies on civil society and social movements focus on how civic initiatives are formed as well as on the ways in which they develop and act as challengers of the political system. There is, however, a conspicuous paucity of social science research on the reasons for which social movements fail, or as John Keane<sup>6</sup> says, 'commit civocide'. Even though they require a substantial level of coordination, protest activities are fluid and nebulous undertakings whose outcomes are always uncertain and dependent on popular support.<sup>7</sup>

Competition over a pacifist or bellicose agenda ought not to be reduced solely to the interplay between activists and regime(s), but should take into consideration the multiplicity and nature of the system challengers and the possibility of competition among them. My project will attempt to address this issue and pay particular attention to the logic that ultimately destroyed the nascent Yugoslav civil society initiatives. The question is why Yugoslav civil society activists did not collectively manage to find a channel that would have given them a higher level of legitimacy. Studying the mechanisms responsible for the success or failure of independent (political) activism is especially relevant for a region in which the spheres of civil society and the state have not yet been clearly demarcated.

I initially thought about focusing on Yugoslav civic activism starting with 1988 and finishing with 1995. While the end date coincides with the passage of the Dayton Agreement, which brought peace to the region, the start date is the year in which civic activism intensified in response to the obvious imminence of an armed conflict. It would be possible, however, to broaden the perspective and focus on the time span between 1975 (the year the Helsinki Final Act, which lessened Cold War tensions, was signed) and 1995. Expanding the period of observation would not necessarily require further methodological modifications, because one could assume that the people who promoted civility just before and during the war were also civically active in the 1970s.

### 3. Research questions

The proposed project aims to acknowledge a range of anti-war/civic initiatives in Yugoslavia immediately prior to the armed conflict and examine how the activists themselves account for their failure to secure a peaceful transition to democracy and political pluralism. It will first try to map the ground and identify movements, groups and organizations that were involved in the anti-war civic initiatives. Empirical knowledge of these civic organizations is not expected to provide a definitive explanation of civil society's role in Yugoslavia's dissolution per se, but it is essential for arriving at a more nuanced analysis of the outcomes of the activists' initiatives.

This research is conceptualized as a *qualitative study of an exploratory nature*, and as such, it does not have a clear-cut hypothesis as its point of departure, but it might produce knowledge that could be used for hypothesis generation and testing. Nevertheless, the formulation of the central research question implies that civil society should have been (and should in general be) able to provide a platform on which diverse political interests can be articulated in a way that secures their peaceful co-existence. Independently of whether or not this ability is an intrinsic (and as presented here, somewhat ahistorical)

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<sup>6</sup> Personal communication, April 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Tilly, Charles: *The Contentious French*, Cambridge/MA: Belknap Press, 1986.

feature of civil society, the question now is how, twenty years hence, the activists who attempted to thwart the violent conflict among Yugoslavia's constitutive nations account for their failure to do so.

In the qualitative research tradition in which this project is embedded, research questions are not set in stone, but are continually revised in the light of the collected interview material. The study is perceived as a living process that, while revolving around the central topic, appreciates the uniqueness of personal biography and the historical context surrounding it as well as the researcher's co-constructivist role in producing the analysed corpus of information. Thus the questions proposed here should be understood as points of reference. The project will be guided by the following principal concerns:

- I. How do the activists account for the violent conflict of Yugoslav succession?
- II. How do they make sense of their participation in the civic activities prior to the conflict?
- III. What does 'civil society' mean to the informants and how do they explain their failure to connect to the broader public and possibly avert the armed conflict?
- IV. How do they explain the fact that civil society became a means of modernization, political opposition and even national emancipation (in the case of Slovenia)?

By taking only one side of the coin into account (and in this case, the weaker side, that of the 'unsuccessful' activists), I am faced with the dilemma of if and how to incorporate the 'successful' side, i.e. that of the aggressors and passive bystanders, into the research design.<sup>8</sup> In other words, I was initially hesitant to devote my full attention to a rather small group of civil society activists while neglecting both the considerably more numerous proponents of destructive nationalism and the segment of the population that remained silent. (With respect to the latter group, it would be worthwhile to investigate the extent to which their inaction favoured or actually was the desired result of the devastating policies put forward by irresponsible political elites.) My choice to zero in on the activists is a conscious one and it is backed by at least two reasons.

First, there has recently been a flurry of studies focusing on strong centrifugal initiatives, including those devoted to the (ex)Yugoslav intellectuals who – consciously or not – provided the ideological framework for the dissolution of the country (see e.g. Dragovic-Soso<sup>9</sup>). I believe that this quantity of scholarship should suffice to spare researchers of Yugoslavia's demise from having to showcase the advocates of destructive nationalism in their work. The abovementioned works should now be complemented by studies that examine the various counter-movements. Although these studies would not focus on the vast majority of non-participants, they might illuminate some of the reasons for their lack of action. New studies would also contribute to our understanding not only of the outcome of events, but of the multiple equilibria that preceded what we today know to be historical facts.

Secondly, I have also refrained from broadening the study to include the representatives of the 'successful option' for a simple technical reason: The proposed project in its current form is already rather broad in its geographical and theoretical scope, and enlarging the sample would require much more time.

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<sup>8</sup> Stef Jansen, personal communication in April 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Dragovic-Soso, Jasna: *Saviours of the Nation. Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism*, London: Hurst & Company, 2002.

In accordance with the idea of examining *one* civil society opposed to violence and destruction, the basic units of analysis in this study could logically be the individual interviewees. However, it would be equally plausible to provide an extensive overview of civic activism in Yugoslavia immediately before the dissolution and then focus on one or two major organizations that would themselves provide sufficient empirical material, such as the *Belgrade Circle* or the *Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative*. In that case, a single movement or organization would constitute the unit of analysis. It is possible to design the study so that it will have different units of analysis in different research phases. The final choice depends on how the project proceeds once it has entered the fieldwork stage.

Finally, this is a case study (in the sense of an in-depth empirical investigation of a smaller number of phenomena that aims at developing broader theoretical explanations<sup>10</sup>) that will consist of a series of inter-Yugoslav comparisons. Once a broader overview of civic activism in Yugoslavia has been provided, however, it might be more feasible to concentrate on a binary comparison between a successful case and a failed case. Slovenia could serve as a case of successful civic efforts that managed to thwart armed conflict, whereas Serbia or Bosnia would constitute counter-examples. This approach would simplify the research design and allow for a more thorough examination of particular cases. Decisions on how the study will proceed will be made after initial fieldwork has been done in Serbia.

#### 4. Possible implications of the current study

The proposed study is conceptualized as an acknowledgement of the civic efforts to resist identity politics and prevent war in the former Yugoslavia. At the current stage, it is envisioned that the project might have the following implications:

- I. It will unearth a range of civil society initiatives that took place in the former Yugoslavia immediately before the outburst of the 1990s wars.
- II. The study will particularly attempt to account for the failure of such civic activism to produce a broader movement that might have ensured a peaceful transition to democracy and market economy.
- III. This research could refine our understanding of the dynamics of civil society development (formation and destruction) in the communist and post-communist contexts.
- IV. More specifically, the analysis will pay particular attention to the mechanisms or logic by which civil initiatives can be destroyed, especially in the light of the fact that many existing studies concentrate on how civil societies form but very few describe how they are killed off.
- V. At the most general level, the project might offer further insights into the problems that the Yugoslav succession states have been facing in the process of democratization and accession to the European Union.

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<sup>10</sup> Della Porta, Donatella / Keating, Michele: *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

## 5. Method

### 5.1 Recovering past civic activism

Reconstructing and theorizing about Yugoslav civic activism on the basis of the research design proposed here is challenging because the protest activities at issue are separated from us by a distance of around twenty years and took place in a country that no longer exists. Moreover, the civil society organizations behind them were pitted against an authoritarian political regime that was not amenable to their growth and development. This scenario invariably invokes the metaphor comparing social movements to icebergs, whose substance is mostly hidden below the surface.<sup>11</sup> Every new scholar wishing to reconstruct social movements is therefore advised to trace the events in which private grievances break through the surface into public protest.

While scholars of social movements might have diverse theoretical leanings, they all address the vitally important questions of when, how and why people resist authority. Two qualitative research methods are especially conducive to recovering past protest activities. Interviews are a useful tool for studying short-lived or thinly documented social movements that cannot be easily examined by means of structured questionnaires. On the other hand, documentary analysis, with its special attention to authenticity, representativeness and interpretation, can provide both the basis for and complement the collected interview material. The current project draws on both of these methods, which are further justified in the following sections.

### 5.2 Interviews

This is an empirical exploratory study in which a combination of (life story/oral history) narrative interviews and conventional semi-structured interviews will be conducted; see the *Procedure* section below for more information. Narrative studies are guided by an interest in people's lives and an appreciation of their temporal nature. Such interviews are essentially stories that individuals tell about themselves and their own experiences. The researcher's objective is to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determining the most salient themes in the area of research.

Interviewing was selected as the principal data collection method because the objective of the present study is to gain insight into the *meanings* attached to the events in question rather than to simply acquire *factual* information. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for establishing a conversational tone and encouraging the exploration of emergent themes while remaining focused on a predetermined subject. Direct observation is obviously not a viable research method here since the study is concerned with past events. In addition, individual interviews are preferable to focus groups, because the latter are not conducive to eliciting individual narratives and are difficult to organize given that the potential informants are scattered across the former Yugoslav republics.

#### 5.2.1 Sampling

Recruiting participants for this study will be hampered by a lack of systematic documentation about the *population* of Yugoslav civil society activists. The size of this population is not known nor could it be precisely established. In a narrative inquiry, decisions pertaining to sample size are based upon theoretical

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<sup>11</sup> Clemens, Elisabeth S. / Hughes, Martin D.: Recovering past protest. Historical research on social movements, in: Klandermans, Bert / Staggenborg, Suzanne (eds): *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minneapolis/MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 201–230, here p. 225.

considerations. For the purposes of this research project, the goal will be to achieve *analytic generalizations*; the sample will therefore be 'representative' in theoretical terms.

The number of participants in the study will be constrained by the fact that qualitative research dealing with life narratives tends to generate copious amounts of oral material, which has to be thoroughly transcribed and analysed. Although a sampling strategy would need theoretical refinement, the project aims to recruit 50 participants. This number will ensure variance and will not compromise the feasibility of the project. The names of potential participants will be gathered by means of (a) a bibliographical search and (b) 'snowballing' – a technique for locating information-rich informants in which the number of interviewees increases as they themselves suggest additional participants. Table 1 shows the tentative distribution of the envisioned interviewees.

Table 1

Tentative per-country distribution of interviewees

<b>Ex-Yugoslav republic</b>	<b>Approx. number of interviewees</b>
Bosnia	10
Croatia	10
Macedonia	5
Montenegro	5
Serbia	10
Slovenia	10

Given the timeframe in which the project needs to be completed, it might seem somewhat impractical to conduct interviews in six different countries. I maintain, however, that although Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia are now independent states, they can still be seen as constituting one cultural space. This space should be examined in its entirety if similarities and differences are to be highlighted and if the diffusion of political and social ideas and processes is to be better understood.

## **5.2.2 Procedure**

### **5.2.2.1 Interview guide**

The interview guide will be composed on the basis of the relevant bibliography and will be used in the interviews to ensure that all themes pertinent to the research questions are covered. The interview guide will be developed in detail to ensure that all important issues are specified in advance. This does not mean that all questions have to be asked in the same order to all respondents, however, since every interview, while touching upon the relevant issues, needs to have a spontaneous conversational flow. In

order to secure a certain kind of common denominator for making subsequent theoretical generalizations, the most important questions within each interview guide category will be addressed with each interviewee. The interviews will also be restricted to those questions in the event that a participant does not have time for a lengthier interview. The interview guides will most likely be tailored to each of the former Yugoslav republics. On the basis of the relevant bibliography, these documents, while revolving around the same central issue, will take into consideration specific national experiences.

At the current stage, it is expected that every interview will start out with a broadly formulated question, thereby providing the participants with an opportunity to freely *narrate* a biographical *episode* from their involvement in Yugoslav civic activism. Their narratives will hopefully touch upon the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that propelled and accompanied their participation in the studied events. This free-form approach in the initial interview stages is intended to give the respondent sufficient discursive 'space' and thus yield a more personalized interview. At this point, the interviewer will play a relatively passive role. Once the narrative part is over, the informants will be asked for clarifications and examples in order to enhance the quality of responses and deepen the researcher's understanding of the participants' opinions and experiences. One of the principal lines of inquiry at this stage will concern the informants' expectations about their protests as well as their assessments of the situation preceding the outbreak of armed conflict. This issue is important in that it will establish a sort of a benchmark against which the achievements and failures of civic activism will be subsequently evaluated.

#### **5.2.2.2 Data collection**

The so-called *life story interview* to be used in my research will be based on an interview guide prepared in advance. The idea behind this type of interview is to encourage the participants to provide extended accounts of their lives, i.e. to produce narratives that will provide detailed evidence about their life experiences and meanings attached to them. It may be natural for participants to be uncommunicative or even suspicious about the reasons for conducting this type of investigation. This resistance might require the interviewer to meet with some participants several times in order to win their confidence and encourage them to share their stories.

I have not yet decided whether a two-interview approach might be more suitable for this study. In the first interview, the informant would have an opportunity to freely narrate his/her life experience. The notes taken during this process would then lead to the formulation of further narrative questions to be asked during the second interview. In this phase of the process, it is probably better to ask respondents to talk about specific times and situations rather than to try to elicit a narrative about the respondent's entire life.

The interviews will be transcribed *verbatim*, meaning that a thorough 'orthographic' transcript of all verbal utterances will be produced. Given that the present study will focus on *what* is said rather than *how* it is said, any paralinguistic will be recorded only when it is particularly pronounced (e.g. a long pause, laugh, etc.). The verbatim transcription strategy not only allows the interviewer to remain attentive and focused during the interview itself, but will also maximize the accuracy of the transcript. The transcription process clearly informs the early analytical stages and helps the researcher to obtain a thorough understanding of the collected data.

### 5.2.2.3 Interview data analysis

I have not yet decided which method to use to analyse the collected interview data. The analysis will in any case focus on the content of the narratives, but an examination of the narrative structure will also be considered. When it comes to studying the content of the interviews, it will be important to look at the evaluative function of content, the meaning and the referential function that events and experiences have had in the lives of the participants. The study will probably proceed in an inductive fashion and employ grounded theory<sup>12</sup>.

### 5.2.3 Ethical considerations

The informants will receive verbal and written information concerning the design and procedure of the study and will need to give informed consent. They will also be informed about how the interview data will be analysed, documented and presented. The time and place for the interviews will be scheduled after the informants have agreed to take part in the study. Participation is voluntary and the participants' confidentiality will be respected throughout the project. The study will be conducted in compliance with the European University Institute's ethical regulations.

## 5.3 Documentary analysis

The analysis of documentary sources is among the fundamental sociological research methods even though it has not been given as much attention in the standard methodological literature as for example observation, surveying or interviewing. It is considered here that documentary analysis can inform qualitative projects in a useful way, especially in cases where interviews are assigned principal status. The use of documentary sources is based on the *ontological* position that texts, documents, statements, newspaper and magazine articles, films and photographs are meaningful constituents of the social world and thus constitute forms of its expression and representation. This is closely related to the corresponding *epistemological* stance, which asserts that documents and other verbal or non-verbal sources serve as *evidence* of these ontological properties.<sup>13</sup> While it is clear that none of these documents is straightforwardly evidential or capable of capturing the events of interest in their (objective) entirety, I argue that they nevertheless constitute a valuable source of information worthy of critical evaluation. An additional reason for a cautious approach to documentary sources (and particularly those issued by the organizations involved in the protests under study) is that such sources tend to overstate the degree of consensus within movements and organizations.

When documents are used in conjunction with other research methods, as is the case here, their function is mostly to contextualize, verify or clarify personal recollections and other information gathered through interviewing or observation. Documents may well supply an alternative angle and provide an additional dimension to research questions. Conducting successful and productive qualitative interviews is unimaginable without a thorough bibliographical (in terms of books and articles) and documentary (in terms of statements, newspaper articles, etc.) preparation. For example, the Belgrade-based monthly *Republika* was particularly meticulous about documenting civic activism in the period of interest for the current study.

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<sup>12</sup> Glaser, Barney / Strauss, Anselm: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago/IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> Mason, Jennifer: *Qualitative Researching*, London: Sage, 2002.

The research design of my project foresees that documentary analysis will both precede and accompany the collection of interview material, because it will provide access to a range of events and processes that will be revisited later with the interviewees. In order to better appreciate the context in which the civic activities took place, the narrative part of the study will be supplemented by archival work and documentary analysis of:

- I. relevant newspapers and periodicals
- II. NGO statements and publications
- III. protest leaflets (photos and films of protests could also be included)

More sophisticated questions pertaining to documentary analysis, such as availability, sampling, representativity and the concrete analytical method, will be addressed in greater detail upon initiation of the fieldwork.