

NADA

danas i sutra

Experiences from three years of
democratization work in Bosnia and Herzegovina

südost
Europa Kultur e.V.



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Three years in four Centres on 28 pages - A challenge!

16, 20, 24 the number of pages in this brochure kept increasing all the time. Finally we got to 28 pages full of pictures and text. Still we feel that there is not enough space to present everything that has taken place at the four südost Centres in Bosnia for the past three years; not to mention all the people that were involved in the work. For example, there are the trips with school classes to the film festival in Sarajevo which have been a very special experience for the children, and the visit of pantomime artist Patrice who made so many children laugh. For these and for many other things there was not enough space.

But a comprehensive presentation of all the activities and a complete list of all the names are probably impossible to do and would be confusing. We find it more important that this brochure will give a good overview over the Nada project and the idea behind it. We also hope that the readers will gain some insight into the country and get a feeling for the atmosphere in the Centres and the team. The team has been very friendly and open toward us, and we felt very comfortable during the three months of our stay in Bosnia. It was a funny, exciting and educational time, for which we would like to thank everybody. We hope the südost employees will be satisfied with the way their work is presented in this brochure.

*Jadranka Kursar
Jens Tönnemann*

This brochure is the result of a research project of Jadranka Kursar and Jens Tönnemann that was arranged, prepared and supported within the ASA programme (www.asa-programm.de) of "InWEnt GmbH" from Berlin.



Nada- the project name means “hope”. But how is that supposed to work?

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a difficult case in many aspects. First of all, it is a transition country trying to make the difficult change from a socialist society and economy to a democratic and capitalist system. Furthermore we should not forget that the state of Bosnia has been formed only recently. It has gone through the decades of industrial upswing only as a Yugoslavian republic, so that the economic conditions and community spirit necessary for independence were not created after the Second World War. And of course it is a post-war country, in which big parts of the populations have been fighting against each other bitterly for years, in which gruesome crimes have been committed and in which almost every family is mourning victims. Destruction, flight, expulsion and return are the results that put the country under tension until the present. Finally, although the Dayton treaty created a political system that was able to stop war activities, it is characterized by bureaucracy, an excessive focus on the proportional representation of the three groups and far reaching influence of the international community, and has actually caused the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two state structures, the so-called entities (Republika Srpska and Federation). Security issues were given the priority, way before democracy and economic development - who could be surprised, taking into consideration the situation at the time? Today one can see that exactly this lack of democracy in the system and within society as well as the continuous or rather increasing economic problems that are threatening many of the little successes on the way towards consolidation. The morale is low: Help and attention of the internationals is decreasing, the local politicians have little trust, and only very few even feel attached to this weird country Bosnia and Herzegovina.

So in these desperate surroundings we wanted to create “Nada - hope? With a democratisation project? Exactly. Especially here.

The most important element of a functioning democracy are the democrats, i.e. people, groups or institutions who want to take care of the concerns of their society and to take responsibility for improvements in the community. In doing so they strictly stick to the democratic rules because they understand their fundamental value. These democrats are what Bosnia needs, and this is where our project starts. The core idea is to find these democrats in four communities away from the big cities and to strengthen them. We wanted them to learn to fight for their concerns



The team in Berlin: Dirk Sabrowski and Doris Nucke

effectively, but always democratically, and to engage into discussion with other democrats, institutions and citizens. In academic terms: we wanted them to form a civil society. Our task in this process was to strengthen the existing skills, structures, ideas, groups and individuals, to put them into contact, educate them, professionalize them and to decrease prejudices - in a few words: to empower them. But this is only possible if the basis is already there, insofar that initiatives artificially created from outside usually vanish again quickly. To (re)discover strengths after a war can also mean to uncover them from the rubble of

the war; to cautiously start dealing with the past, ones own actions and experiences and with the “other side”. This, too, is part of our work.

To find these democratic sprouts in our four communities was not always easy. Especially since this project and this approach were completely new for all involved. We had to bring the project to life ourselves; we had to develop activities and offers that would suit our approach and at the same time fit the different realities in the four communities as well as the skills and personalities of our local staff. This was tiresome and took time, but, because they had contributed to the development of the project, it also ensured that our colleagues from Bosnia were able to identify with what they were doing. They do not work for südost, they are südost Bosnia. This, too, took some time, until they were really convinced when they told people again and again: “We do not just distribute goods, we really want to change something.”

So our approach is: “We do not solve peoples' problems, we improve their long-term ability to solve problems themselves.”

Dirk Sabrowski
Projekt Director

Südost in Bosnia and Herzegovina Four Centres and a coordination office

Bos. Novi / Novi Grad

A border city with 30.000 inhabitants- work with youth and civil society

Teslić

A community in Republika Srpska. A special focus was put on psychosocial work.

Odžak

The only Centre in the Federation- special focus: intensive work with youth.



Bijeljina

With 130.000 inhabitants the second biggest town in Republika Srpska- special focus: work with Roma

Tuzla

Second biggest town in the Federation- the coordination office is located here.

*B*osnia and Herzegovina has about four million inhabitants. There is a central government in Sarajevo, but the country is divided into two separate administrative entities: The Bosnian Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, which each have their own government in Sarajevo and Banja Luka respectively. Except for the Centre in Odžak and the coordination office in Tuzla, all the südost Centres are located in Republika Srpska which is considered economically weaker.



Coordination office in Tuzla

The hub of the project

The shelf in Jadranka's office in Tuzla holds a row of green folders, two each for Teslić, Odžak, Novi and Bijeljina. On the wall the activity plan for the next three months and in the shelves stacks of brochures and papers. Despite these amounts, everything seems very orderly. That is necessary, otherwise Jadranka and her colleague Medina would most likely lose the overview. Tuzla is the hub of the project. Again and again the electronic mailbox is blinking, colleagues from the Centres are sending questions, suggestions and reports. The phone is constantly ringing. Danijela from Bijeljina has a problem with another organisation, Mirsad from Novi suggests a new coffee recall, Sanjin from Odžak is stuck with his theatre group. "We are the contact for all the colleagues," says Jadranka, the *südost* co-ordinator in Bosnia, "and we are in close contact with *südost* in Berlin."

Nada as a learning process

Medina takes care of the "figures and paragraphs", i.e. of finances, personnel and legal questions. This is often not easy, because the two entities have different laws. Jadranka monitors the daily work in the Centres, reads weekly and monthly reports and collects and disseminates ideas of her colleagues. There are a lot of ideas - but not all of them fit the project. "We think about the necessary resources, set concrete goals and find ways to realize the ideas," says Jadranka. "At the beginning it was difficult, because there was no handbook to look things up." This work was a learning process for all of them: During the three years, the *Nada* profile evolved bit by bit, every Centre developed its focus areas and the employees discovered their individual strengths. The distance to the people and the places allows Jadranka to deal with ideas and activities more objectively and less emotionally than her colleagues in the Centres. But she also misses the closeness. She is really used to fieldwork: Before she came to *südost*, she interviewed relatives of missing people from Srebrenica and helped with reconstruction in returnee villages. "Now I would sometimes also like to just go to the Centres and help on the spot," she says and laughs. "It is just fun to help people."



*Medina Bektić and
Jadranka Dejanović*

Bijeljina

Looking ahead again

Bijeljina in Republika Srpska, only 10 km from the border of the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, is growing and growing. Nobody knows the exact number of its inhabitants. Estimates talk about 130.000 people. Accommodation and jobs are in short supply. The infrastructure is strained beyond capacity. The cities in the centre are clogged, the schools operate in three shifts and in hot months drinking water is sometimes scarce. Thousands of Bosnian Serbs came to Bijeljina during the war, because there was no combat here. At the same time about 25.000 Bosnian Muslims fled from Bijeljina. 6.500 Roma also left the town - many of them to Berlin, where they got into contact with *südost* for the first time.

When the first Bosnian Muslim re-hired in the community administration in 2003, this was considered a great success. There are still tensions between inhabitants, displaced people and returnees. “The first step in order to be able to leave the past behind is a secure existence,” says Danijela from *südost*, “but many do not have a home or income. How are they supposed to deal either with past or future?” The 32-year old has lived in Bijeljina during the war and understands people very well. “I have lost my best years to the war,” she says, “now I finally want to look ahead and help others to look ahead, too.” No matter whether in conversations with Roma representatives or with potential donors, with school head masters or the town administration: she listens carefully, is patient and gives convincing arguments, even if her throat is already sore from trying to gain attention in a big group.

Founding a youth council

Persistence is also a characteristic of her colleague Nebojša. “I strongly believe that things can be changed here,” he says, “that is not possible overnight, but it is possible.” He has brought the NGOs in Bijeljina together and helped found a youth council. Of this achievement he is especially proud: the young people produce a radio programme, attend district council meetings, fight against drug consumption and have convinced companies to take trainees. Nebojša is satisfied: “A real self-sustaining project.”



Danijela Čolaković and Nebojša Sajić

Bosanski Novi / Novi Grad Awakening the city and its citizens

Where the river Sana flows into the river Una, surrounded by green hills, is the location of Novi Grad or simply Novi, as it is called by its citizens. We are going to use this name in the further text. Before the war the town was an important traffic junction, trains from Belgrade, Sarajevo, Split and Zagreb all stopped in Novi. About 40.000 people lived in the town that was then still called “Bosanski Novi”, and in the 50 villages around, half of them Bosnian Muslims, the other half Bosnian Serbs. During the war almost all of the Bosnian Muslims fled to neighbouring towns or abroad. At the same time Bosnian Serbs from other parts of Bosnia fled to Novi. The new Serb majority of the population renamed the town “Novi Grad”. Many of the refugees have not returned to this day. The train station is deserted, the big hotel “Una” and the shopping mall in the centre are

destroyed. Today this town that lies immediately at the border to Croatia has only 30.000 people inhabitants. Many of them, especially the returnees have difficulties finding work. Mirsad, who had fled to Bielefeld, knows the situation of the returnees well. When he returned to Novi, his house was inhabited by two refugee families. Half a year passed before they found a new place to stay and he could move in. In the same year he started working for südost together with Rasema. At the beginning they tried to establish contacts with the local NGOs, schools, the kindergarten and the community council and talked to them about the situation in the



*Jelena Maksimović and
Mirsad Kusumović*

town. “Then we knew everything,” Mirsad recalls, smirking. For example, that only few people were active in NGOs and that “the city council members do whatever they like”, and that many young people in Novi are bored and have drug and alcohol problems. The südost team tried to strengthen the NGO scene, to bring people together and to improve the contacts with the neighbouring town of Bosanska Krupa. Eight years after the end of the war the relations between the two cities are still strained. südost establishes contacts between young people from both towns and organises artist exchanges. Rasema’s successor Jelena, only 25 years old herself, intensified the youth work. She had established a youth council in the neighbouring city Prijedor before and knew the young people from Novi. “We are trying to mobilize more young people,” she tells us, “for example by founding a youth council.”



Odžak

Promoting activism and tolerance

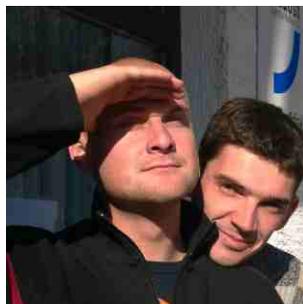
Hasan was 13 years old, when roaring plains flew over his head and he ran towards the canal. “I saw golden bombs falling on Odžak and the ground started shaking under my feet.” He fled from Odžak with his family two times, first to Croatia, then to Germany. Sanjin, who lived in neighbouring Modriča before the war, which belongs to Republika Srpska today, has a similar story to tell. Both Hasan and Sanjin returned in 1997/98, but Sanjin to Gradačac in the Federation. After the Dayton treaty the so-called “mutual” resettlement took place. Bosnian Serbs moved to the Republika Srpska, where lots of newly constructed houses line the borders. Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats moved to Odžak. Many of them are returnees from Germany. Therefore it is not surprising, that the baker or waiter can also take orders in German. The community had more than 30.000 inhabitants in 1990, today it has only about 20.000. Odžak is an “enclave”: it is “trapped” between Croatia and Republika Srpska.

Creating links between the entities

The town and its thirteen factories were completely destroyed during the war.

“None of the houses were left intact during the attacks,” says Hasan. Only recently three new factories have been set up. The unemployment rate is still over 60 percent and Canton money is almost solely spent on Orašje. Consequently, especially youth do not have any perspectives. “The young people are open-minded and want to get active. It is a lot more difficult with the older people,” is Sanjin’s opinion. Both

südost employees supported the democratisation processes by founding supporting and taking an active role in the work of Observer group that is supposed to serve as a link between the local government and its citizens. Besides that, they have initiated the NGO Forum, where besides us are also actively participate four local associations of citizens. Hasan and Sanjin bring together the young people who take part in the creation of a youth magazine, a youth theatre and different workshops. Returnee children and young people shall develop self-initiative and tolerance, so they can use their valuable German skills in their home country and help to create inter-entity links between the schools.



*Sanjin Omeragić and
Hasan Čeliković*



Teslić

Making living together possible again

Afeda and Koviljka have been active with humanitarian organisations after the war, helping the most needy. The Nada project focuses on other aspects. Democratisation and support of the populations' own initiatives are only possible if people are able to look ahead. Their motto is, “Everyone looking for help is welcome”. Afeda and Koviljka always try to provide or to find psychological assistance in order to help people to deal with their wartime experiences.

During the war Teslić was only two kilometres away from the frontline. Today Teslić is part of Republika Srpska, bordering the Federation in the South and East. The community has about 53.000 inhabitants, of which 80 percent are Bosnian Serbs.

Decreasing fears and prejudices

“Why don't you get together”, Afeda asked former camp prisoners. They found an association that became a partner of the NGO forum and has more than 100 members now. Despite repeated requests, the town administration is still not willing to offer the association a location - it doesn't even have enough money for the town infrastructure. The streets and houses are still covered with bullet holes and there is no theatre or movie theatre. Except for an old wood factory there are hardly any possibilities for employment.

To relieve the people from their passivity and war time apathy, Afeda and Koviljka have initiated different classes, meetings and activities and Afeda tells us laughingly, “a cooking class is about the only thing we haven't done yet.” The Centre is a refuge, a “secure space” where people from different backgrounds can communicate, diminish fears and prejudices and cooperate for a common future. “We are the gophers here”, they both say, but they don't mind, because “the greatest satisfaction is to see the sparkle in the eyes of happy people.”



*Afeda Suljić and
Koviljka Špirić*



Work with Non-governmental organisations **Civil Society full of misunderstandings**

The kitchen in the südost Centre in Bijeljina is full of cigarette smoke and worried faces. At the table Nebojša Sajić, a südost employee, and Jasmina Ivošević, president of the local NGO forum, are discussing the things that need to be improved to get the non-governmental organisations in Bijeljina to cooperate. The representatives of the different NGOs don't get along and the slogan "together we are strong" does not seem to work. Nebojša is worried. For months he has talked with the representatives of the organisations in order to explain to them the merits of cooperation. "Common projects get support more easily and together we can make public appearances a lot better," he is trying to explain. "We can exchange ideas and information, help each other and motivate more people to become active." Finally sixteen organisations got together. Nebojša is convinced "A few of them really want to cooperate and realize common ideas, even after the end of the Nada project."



Professionalizing and linking NGO-work

As in Bijeljina, südost has tried to promote NGO work in all the other Centres during the past three years, to overcome prejudices, to professionalize the work of associations and to link their activities. Südost has organized trainings for NGO representatives in which they learned how to write project proposals and the basics of fundraising and management. But as the example from Bijeljina shows, working with NGOs is not always easy. In contrast to Germany, for example, where civil society developed in the seventies and people formed initiatives to get active for their ideals and interests, Bosnia lacks a genuine, grown movement like that. In Bosnia such organisations have only developed through a push from outside. This causes misunderstandings: the numerous foreign organisations in Bosnia are above all considered reliable sources of money and jobs. Although there also are, and were, numerous newly founded local organisations, only a few survive. "Many local organisations give up as soon as their first project proposal fails," Jasmina Ivošević explains. The reason: people who found a local organisation usually hope to be able to live off the money they will get from the donors for their projects and do not primarily want to fight for their interests and ideals. "Therefore many people are suspicious of these kinds of organisations," says Rasema from südost in Novi. And Vesna Vožni from "Lira" in Novi says, "It is hard to convince people of NGOs. Many think we only work for our own good." Hardly anybody

sees these organisations as the voice of civil society. Because the limited resources rather than the common goal are the guideline, the organisations often perceive each other as competition for scarce financial support. “Only few focus on their vision. But that is the primary condition for success,” says Goran Špirić from “Futura Plus” in Teslić.

Different experiences

This is obviously a difficult environment, which has required a lot of patience and effort from the *südost* employees during the past three years, for example in Novi, where Rasema and Mirsad had great difficulty to get the organisations together at one table. “At the beginning the meetings always failed,” Rasema recalls. “But I wanted to find a way. That kept me going.” Finally they succeeded in establishing a forum that has met regularly and realized common ideas during these three years. The forum has entered into dialogue with the community and has even achieved the organisation’s inclusion into the community budget.

This task was also difficult in Odžak, where only a few organisations are active and the forum founded by *südost* meets only occasionally. But *südost* joined the OSCE initiative to form a so-called “Observer Group”. Its aim is to organise of citizens and NGO members who will attend council meetings regularly, write protocols, organise public discussions and seek the dialogue with administration and politicians.

The forum in Teslić has achieved very promising results. “It has become a really self-sustaining activity,” says Afeda from *südost*. The forum meets regularly and has developed a leaflet in which the organisations present their work to the public. Some of the organisations receive funding and facilities from the county, and there is an open dialogue. But success takes time. “In many places the politicians see NGOs as anti-governmental organisations. It takes a long time until this perception changes and NGOs and community work together,” says Goran Špirić of “Futura Plus”. Afeda from *südost* is optimistic. “I believe that the forum will cooperate closely and well in the future.”

NGO-support in Odžak

The little “House of Hope” (a centre for disabled children) is situated in the centre of Odžak. The walls are decorated with colourful handcrafts and the table is covered with paper and pens. Handicapped children and youth draw and do handcrafts together and discover their skills. Their parents have gotten together in 2001 and founded an association that has 106 members today. “Hasan and Sanjin from *südost* have supported us from the beginning and have helped establish contacts”, says one of their volunteers, who is now also taking a computer course with *südost*. With the help of *südost*, the association was also able to get their own facilities from the community. That was probably the most important step, as many handicapped children in Bosnia are hidden at home by their families out of shame. Having a centre makes it easier to convince parents to break this isolation and to integrate the children into the community.

Coffee recalls

Evoking personal (hi)stories

“We have a lot of coffee events: Morning coffee, welcome coffee, gossip coffee, good bye coffee. This is a coffee recall.” Professor Slobodan Petrović is one of the speakers of the coffee recalls.

But what is a coffee recall?

This concept means an event, a comfortable coffee house atmosphere, to which everybody can come and listen to the life stories of older people, and also recall his or her personal (hi)story. About every other month, witnesses of the Second World War were invited to each of the four communities. A total of fourteen coffee recalls took place in each Centre during two and a half years. The discussions are moderated, with the guest speaker as witness of the past talking about his personal experiences and past events in a “safe place”: thus the guests can reflect on their own experiences and on relations in the not-so distant past, and they experience the historic developments and their political and social events in a personal, individual context. “This way we can learn more about our past. Let us take it as council for the future” one of the remarks in the guest book says in Novi.

Stories from real life

Contemporary witnesses from Germany also get to talk about their lives. Jutta Frost from Weinheim, for example, the 75 year old daughter of a protestant priest and a Jewish mother, has talked about her life in Bijeljina, Odžak, Teslić and Novi. She talked about her memories of the persecution of Jews by the Nazis in Germany, and about her time as refugee in England and Switzerland, where she participated in the construction of the refugee settlement Bad Vilbel.

Dr. Eugen Kahl and his wife Hildegard reported on the murder of Jewish friends and that they were able to save a few of them by hiding them in their house. Hans Koschnick, former EU administrator for Mostar, was another guest speaker who enriched the audience through his experiences and whose visit attracted more than 100 people in Teslić.

Bosiljka Schedlich, secretary of südost Europa Kultur in Berlin and moderator of these coffee recalls sums up the result: “The story of the winners becomes the story of the single survivor, the contemporary



Coffee recall with Hans Koschnick in Bijeljina

witness, it contains the faces of all the dead and all the survivors.” That way the wartime events become a part of the development of humankind, its possibilities in the good and the bad. All contemporary witnesses have put the division into the good and the criminals into relative terms. They possess great knowledge and experience, which we should preserve for the young generation to help them continue the way towards more democracy and humanity.”

The coffee recalls have slightly opened the door for those people who want to look for a way to reconciliation and a stable peace through open dialogue. Even if Sanjin Omeragić, sudost employee in Odžak, remarks “but we also have to talk about the past war.” Everywhere one can hear and feel: the wounds are still fresh and it will take time for them to heal.

A coffee recall with Professor Slobodan Petrović (excerpts)

“It was in 1941, I remember how the Germans came to Bijeljina.... The expulsions began. I saw the beginning of anarchy.... There was a sniper on the church tower, he looked down from above and just killed. German, non-German, whatever. There were the Germans, and there were local occupiers, the collaborators. And what about history today? It is best not to touch this issue and not to write about it. One doesn't mention it. It is known who shot from the tower, but I don't want to say it. He fled to Argentina. Yes, one of us. He was dangerous. He killed on a whim, pulled the trigger, done... I was in no man's land... with the partisans at night, with the Germans during the day. There was a woman who had two daughters. The son had gone to the war. She didn't even know which side he was fighting on.... After a partisan attack one of the daughters discovered a German soldier in the barn, he was bleeding, he couldn't move. The daughter wanted to report it right away, but her mother didn't let her. She took him in, made him a bandage, and the next morning the Germans took the wounded man with them. Later we heard that he was operated in Budapest and kept his legs. He did not forget this mother. When the border was opened after the Second World War, he returned. He found the woman and said I came to thank you, and if you want, to return the favour, I will marry one of your daughters. That's how it was, that is the story.”

Reactions of the audience

“It is best not to talk about this war. It is fresh, it upsets me and others. I start to shake. I was captured.”

“The past war was even worse. I lived in Bijeljina and I know what it was like. Three times I jumped out of the window. Nobody was safe at night. Every night was like a year.”



Workshops and language classes

Making the Centres known as “safe places”

It is Monday afternoon and the südost Centre in Odžak is filling with primary school children. So far the four boys and four girls don't know each other - but that is about to change. Together they will draw their town, create little handcrafted art works out of bottles, pasta and cardboard boxes. “In these small groups it is easier for the children to find friends”, says südost employee Hasan. “Besides that the group is also mixed.” Mixed means: among the children there are Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, refugees and returnees. “For the kids this is not important yet,” says Hasan. “And we help to not let the prejudices develop in the first place.” The creative workshops are one example of “non-violent communication”. Like language and computer classes they have taken place in all four communities from the beginning. In Odžak they also had a “Bridge of friendship” at the beginning, a project through which the children from Odžak also got into contact with children from the neighbouring towns of Modriča and Gradačac. The workshops also helped make the Centres known in the population as “safe places”, to create trust and get into contact with those looking for help. In Teslić these workshops even led to self-help groups.



Employees become trainers

At the beginning of the Nada project, the südost employees attended seminars in which they learned the techniques of “non-violent communication”; for example the formulation of I-messages in conflict situations. In these seminars they also learned how to deal with traumatized people and with those in need of support, how to deal with emotions and prejudices. Human and minority rights and empowerment were also discussed. The employees can apply these knowledge and techniques in everyday work. Some of them became trainers. Today they educate members of other organisations or develop seminars for teachers and students, for example within PONS (see page 26). Or they start own initiatives- like Nebojša from Bijeljina. “We bring together teachers and students from both entities” he says, “and show them the techniques of non-violent communication, so they can solve conflicts at school and deal with prejudices and emotions more effectively.”



*Workshop in Odžak:
Games without frontiers*

German-Bosnian therapist conferences

Creating a network of experts

“After such conferences you are full of energy and knowledge,” says Atifa Mutapčić. The psychologist is talking about three meetings for professional exchange that südost has organized during the past two years: two of them in Berlin and one in Tuzla, Bosnia. Within a few days, these conferences offered numerous workshops and discussions. The psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists had the opportunity to exchange their methods and techniques and their personal experiences with people traumatised by war. For the first time therapists from all over Bosnia got to know each other and exchanged thoughts with their German and Swiss colleagues working with refugees. Many experts gave the therapists advice and helped them reflect their work. “This has raised our self-confidence,” says Atifa, “we found out that we in Bosnia are not the only ones with problems.”

“So that the past is not forgot”

Dan Bar-On from Israel, for example, was able to give them a lot of food for thought by talking about his experience with reconciliatory work with the children of victims and perpetrators of the holocaust. Bessel van der Kolk from Boston, who has worked on the research of traumatic stress disorders and its recognition, passed his knowledge on to the participants during a workshop. At one of the round tables on “Identification and truth- How can we combine forces to help the families with missing relatives?” in Tuzla, representatives of institutions, administration and human rights organisations agreed to cooperate more effectively among themselves and with the therapists in the future.

During a panel discussion in Berlin, approaches to a violent past were examined by comparing the South African truth and reconciliation commission with the war crime tribunal in The Hague. The political scientist Valérie Rosoux, the anti-apartheid activist Dorothea Kerschgens and Percy Mc Lean from the German Institute for Human Rights discussed how states can deal with violent experiences and memories. “We were encouraged to actively integrate the fundamental human rights and the freedom of opinion in our work and thinking and to pass them on” says Atifa, “so that the past is not forgotten.”

Finally the conferences have created a network of more than 50 therapists in Bosnia. “Such an exchange is very rare here”, the psychologist Atifa says. “When I have a question or problem now, I can ask my colleagues for advice.”



*Fairy tale seminars***Stories against every day concerns**

In April 2003 Mr and Mrs Spangenberg visited our Centres for two weeks in order to present a method they developed on how to help children to deal with their fears and problems by telling them special stories. As a judge for family issues and a psychologist, both of them have years of experience with children in difficult family environments. From this work they developed their idea to work with therapeutic fairytales: "I often realized that the children were unable to understand my rational explanations," Brigitte Spangenberg says explaining the origin of her idea. "In these situations I remembered how I had told my own children bedtime stories to help them deal with their everyday worries". In order to invent such a "healing story", one just needs a little

imagination and the knowledge of the right structure. Princes, ants and superman are then all equally qualified to sooth a child's sorrows. Thus, the storyteller can adapt the content of the story to the cultural background and environment of the young listener.

Youth in B&H: "I want to leave"

"I want to stay here. I want to change things and not run away from the problems" - Saša, a 22 year old from Novi, is an exception among the young people in Bosnia. As the United Nations Development Program has determined, 62 percent of his contemporaries between 15 and 31 want to leave the country. Saša can understand them: "there are hardly any jobs and way too little opportunities to spend free time." The young people hope for better educational opportunities abroad. Or for a better life in general: one out of four of them wants to leave the country for good. From 1996 to 2001 92.000 young people from Bosnia have set a precedent and left the country. Very often it was the most active and committed that left the country. 17-year-old Elvira from Bijeljina is one of those young people that the country needs so desperately. She wears a T-shirt with a huge peace symbol, speaks English and German and is involved in four different NGOs. But she, too, says, "as soon as I am done with school I just want to get away from Bosnia."

Giving way to imagination

Through creative exercises, the Spangenbergs passed the necessary knowledge on to the seminar participants. Parents, teachers and social workers not only learned the necessary technique, so in the end they were able to invent their own story for a child they knew. They also had to pretend to be trees and write Japanese poetry, and could thus experience themselves how relieving in it is to give in to ones imagination. Not all of them found it easy to open up to this foreign way of working. But this must probably be considered the most important contribution of this event: not just to pass on knowledge, but to offer experiences with new methodological approaches.

Sandra Roling

Youth work in Odžak

Raising enthusiasm for the home town

The black curtain in the cinema hall in Odžak is rising. All the seats are taken and half the town seems to be there. The attention is focused on the stage. In the spotlight, three girls are sitting on the school yard smoking joints and complain about their boring hometown. They are members of the youth theatre group in Odžak. Eleven young people have written and starred in the plays themselves. One of the scenes is about drugs and the second piece tells the story of a boy who returns to Odžak from Germany after years and meets his sister again. What were his experiences in Berlin? What was it like for her in Odžak?



The Youth theatre group from Odžak

Youth theatre and youth magazine

“Boredom, drugs, returnees- we have tried to discuss every day problems of young people,” says südost employee Sanjin, the initiator of the theatre group. Many young people in Odžak have spent the war years in German and have returned to a destroyed home afterwards. No wonder they don't feel at home and would love to leave the town. There are no jobs and hardly any options for spending free time,” says Sanjin. “Therefore it is important to us to foster enthusiasm for their town in them and to motivate them to become active themselves.”

Südost has not only founded a theatre group, it has also organised trips into the surroundings for children and youth, for example to the banks of nearby Bosna river. Südost employee Hasan had the idea to produce a youth magazine and on this way to empower the young people to work independently and start its own association. 30 young people met regularly in the südost premises for months, sat together until late at night, wrote texts for the magazine and looked for local sponsors. Four voluminous issues have been produced so far.

There is still a lot to do, but the young people in Odžak are aware of that. Some of them are thinking about organizing a scout association. Others want to keep working with the magazine. And Sanjin's theatre group? “The stage fright was terrible”, says 15-year-old Bera, “but we already have a lot of ideas for the next plays!”



Work with Roma in Bijeljina

Summer school sets a precedent

“Without *südost*, not one child would go to school,” Mujo Beganović, Roma representative and assistant of *südost* employee Danijela, is convinced. The summer school that is organized from end June to Mid August for Roma children since 2002, has prepared the Roma children for their integration into primary school. Danijela organizes classrooms, “summer” teachers and, last but not least, Roma children. Two classes were taught four times a week, in which the children learned the basics of reading and writing, mathematics and the right behaviour at school. “Mujo is a great help,” says Danijela. He leads the children to school and makes sure none of them gets “lost”. Besides that he helps convince the parents to register their children with the community and to send them to school. “Through summer school the Roma children were able to set their foot into school, making their enrolment possible,” says Mujo. When he says, “we just don’t have the means,” it becomes clear that the parents just can’t afford to send their children to school. Of the 1500 Roma that have returned, almost 100 percent are unemployed. Obviously there is no money for school equipment, and in Bosnia books are not provided by the schools but have to be purchased by the parents. Thanks to support by the “Foundation for the support of the Roma people” by Günter Grass, the Roma children that attend summer school can be provided with the books for the following school year. Danijela is present at all meetings with different organisations, establishes contacts and finds donors for further supplies of school equipment. “There are always a few notebooks or pens they gladly give for the Roma children,” she says. For example, an SFOR soldier donated 60 EUR as a good-bye present when he returned to the USA. “Of course



Summer school in Bijeljina has started



Danijela and Mujo are distributing school items

there are also difficulties,” says Danijela. “Some children don't go to school regularly and have to repeat the same level every year.” This school year even fourteen year olds enrolled in schools for the first time. This took a lot of negotiation skills and numerous discussions with community representatives and head masters, but Danijela is satisfied with the results.

“The young people are taught in special classes that will allow them to attend the

regular higher grades as soon as possible,” says Danijela.

Meanwhile even an alphabetisation course for grown-ups is offered every week.



Escaping the vicious circle of poverty

The sense and success of this concept is also noticed by others. “Summer schools are also introduced in Lukavac, Modriča, Tuzla, Brčko, Banovići and Vukoslavlje now!” says Danijela. Mujo and Danijela take part in meetings on education reform with other representatives of local and international organisations, the town administration and educational institutions. They exchange experiences on the needs of Roma in order to support reforms and give the Roma the chance to escape the vicious circle of the poverty and exclusion in the long run.

Roma in Bosnia: “Worst situation”

Roma are a group of society that is in the minority everywhere in Bosnia. Like in Bijeljina, they usually live in isolated villages and quarters without paved roads, in old, damaged or unfinished houses. Hardly any of them have a regular job, many are unable to read and write, the majority of the Roma beg. “The situation of the Roma in Bosnia is one of the worst, if not the worst in the whole of Europe,” a report of the Council of Europe found in 2002. During the war many Roma were expelled, and many of them fled to Western Europe. According to a report of the Minority Rights Group, 45.000 Roma are estimated to live in Bosnia- but exact figures do not exist. “Many children aren't even registered,” says Nijaz Biberović, employee of the OSCE Human Rights Department in Sarajevo and Roma himself. “They don't go to school, they beg to support their family, stay illiterate, and the vicious circle continuous.” But Mr. Biberović also knows that it is not always easy to help the Roma. “A big problem is that Roma do not speak with one voice.” Power struggles and distrust among themselves make help and self-help more difficult.

Psychosocial work, for example in Teslić **“So life can continue”**

Afeda and Koviljka, the sūdost employees in Teslić, had one big wish after the end of the war. They wanted to ensure their children a peaceful life with a future, and got involved in their surroundings, supplying humanitarian help to the needy. They soon realized: “working on ourselves is just as important as working on the roof of a house.” When the Nada project began, many people soon became interested in the courses. With drawing, English and computer courses, even fishing trips and chess competitions they tried to get all age groups, male and female together.

For the women's groups they invite a gynaecologist to inform them and answer questions. Through the regular meetings, the groups become self-sustaining and the women finally founded the organisation “Victoria” and carried out a 5000 Euro reconstruction project. Many other self help groups also try to overcome their trauma by becoming active, getting together and applying for projects and working facilities.

Shocks after unexpected deaths

“At the beginning it wasn't easy to convince certain people that we reach out to all of them,” says Afeda. Nevertheless they managed to bring the groups together regularly. During the first get-to-know weeks, trust is established so that people feel comfortable enough to talk about personal experiences later. They know “every trauma is different” and explain that some people are full of fear and distrust after a trauma and have sudden burst of emotion (crying, laughter, stuttering, bed-wetting).

“Many unexpected deaths caused severe shock reactions with the relatives,” Koviljka explains about the war experiences. The former school psychologist works with youth and grown-ups in the Centre. The work in this “safe place” means discovering the different concerns in the group, helping with information, improving the communication between group members, strengthening personalities and “getting to know oneself” in order to finally overcome the traumatic experiences. Within the campaign “Children need love, not beating”, the parents meet a neurologists while, under supervision, their children are drawing in the adjacent room. “One child drew everything in black,” Afeda recalls- in such and similarly difficult cases Afeda and



Violence in many of the children's drawings

Koviljka refer the person in need to a specialist. One of the volunteer specialists is the “Defektolog” Dr. Vuksimović, who is taking care of nine children. Another, the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Đurić, is treating 15 former camp prisoners. Both work intensively with each group for months before a new one with its own special needs can be formed. “The most important is that this offer is for free, as many people can not afford professional help,” the two sudost employees are convinced. Their work is all about getting people out of their isolation so they can communicate and find their place in the community again - so that finally “life can go on” for them in Teslić.

Work with trauma in Bosnia: dealing with war, violence and flight

The word trauma has its origin in the Greek language and means harm. A human being is traumatised “when it is threatened or inhibited in its elementary needs and its human dignity and freedom are disrespected.” In this case the sudden or continuous stress can be too much and finally traumatize the human psyche. Many people in Teslić are war victims, returnees or unemployed, and in many families violence is an every day issue. In order to overcome the trauma, the specialists use special therapies. Koviljka and Afeda for example work with the debriefing method and with bibliotherapy.

The **debriefing method** consists of a number of rounds. First of all, trust is built in the group. One by one the group members get to tell the others about their negative experiences, so that they can get to know each other better and become aware of their strengths. Afterwards they talk about their emotions and the therapist gives them the opportunity to live through their feelings of grief or hate once more. The therapist has to control the emotions. The group members support each other; all are allowed to show their feelings. Finally, when the emotions have been “let out,” a discussion takes place in which the experiences are accepted and the participants learn to live with them.

Bibliotherapy means work with texts in a musical, relaxed atmosphere. A member of the group reads a story full of life wisdom and emotions that appeals to everyone. Suddenly, the story ends, and ever one is asked to continue the story in his or her thoughts and to write it down.



Civil society in Bosanski Novi/Novi Grad

Recognizing problems and solving them together

This sight is rare in Bosnia: 400 school children and youth parade the streets of Novi with posters and banners to demonstrate against the pollution of *their* river Una. In summer the little meadow at the river banks is full of bathing people and fishermen are standing in the river with their rubber boots and fishing rods. But now they want to deposit radioactive garbage in nearby Trgovska Gora in Croatia- the inhabitants of Novi are not consulted, the river Una is threatened. “Suddenly the whole community was standing as one,” Jelena from südost Centre Novi recalls. Together with the schools, she has organised this demonstration on “Planet Earth Day”. “We want to shape civil society and motivate people to recognize problems and solve them together,” says Jelena.

Raising consciousness for each other and for one's town

Therefore she and her colleague Mirsad have thought up the so-called “days”. In the südost Centre Novi they have a calendar in which certain days are marked green. Besides the “Day of the Planet Earth” there are, for example, “World Non-smokers' day” and “World Children's Day”. On these days, südost organises special activities in cooperation with the inhabitants of the town: On “World AIDS Day” they informed young people about AIDS and organised an AIDS awareness party. On “World Environmental Day” the town collected garbage on the river banks. And the biggest activity took place on the “Day without Cars”: Many inhabitants went on foot, certain streets were closed for traffic and those interested could compete in a bike race. Even the community administration supported this activity. “We have not constructed any houses here,” says Jelena, “but we have brought people together and have helped them to develop a consciousness for the town and for each other.”



Waste on the banks of the Sana in Novi: It will be collected on 'Day of Planet Earth'

Looking back on the project

Nada really creates hope

When looking back at three years of democratisation work, we are surprised in two ways:

First of all we ask ourselves “*What? The three years have passed already?*“. We still remember very well how we got together as a newly formed group of very different personalities who neither knew each other nor (with two exceptions) the organisation südot. And this project, that the Bosnian colleagues still had to turn into something concrete and develop into activities, was - today we can admit it - still quite unclear.

But at the same time we are wondering “*What? So much has happened in just three years?*“. After a starting period of learning and of fighting against doubts from inside and outside, everything went very fast. Suddenly the ideas and suggestions from the communities came, we started to plan, to organise, to find partners and participants. It worked, südot specific and community specific activities evolved. We improved, focused, evaluated, discussed the leitmotiv and dared some experiments. This brochure by far does not show everything, but it offers an impression of how much was possible in the end in these four communities in Bosnia so “lacking hope”. Something has changed, in all four communities.

First of all we have learned that democratisation is a very laborious and lengthy work. Its goal can never be fully reached and its success is difficult to measure. We have also learned that projects of this kind must not be thought up from the German perspective. To decide from the outside what is good for people is the opposite of democracy. So the important factor for success is the way in which the people are addressed. Those who are meant to take on responsibility must also be allowed to participate in the planning instead of just carrying out our ideas. Besides that, honesty, reliability and a sense of reality are necessary in order to not raise false expectations.

We and our partners and participants are sad that the Nada project is going to end soon. But hope itself is not leaving with the project. Many little hints provide prove of that.

Dirk Sabrowski

*A glimpse into the future***Nada is leaving, PONS stays**

“Are ‘improved learning conditions’ a specific or an overall objective of the project?” Concentrated, but still a little confused, the group of students, parents and teachers is looking at the work sheet in front of them. They are supposed to write a project proposal for the equipment of the auto mechanic workshop in their school - luckily so far only as an exercise and with the expert counselling of trainer Tihomir.

The seminar is part of a more extensive training programme, initiated and carried out by PONS, the local association that the sūdost employees have founded in order to keep working on their ideas after the end of the Nada project. Financially supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Slavica Kokoruš, a former sūdost employee and president of the newly founded association, and her assistant Dragana Ilić have been working since September 2002 on this project which they have given the motto “Together for our schools”.

Starting capital for school councils

On the initiative of PONS, teachers, parents and students from eight schools in Northern Bosnia have formed school councils, in which they want to improve the conditions at their schools together. PONS supports them with the necessary know-how. In seminars they learn the basics of project design and implementation. Afterwards each school council is granted a little sum to carry out initial projects-

only after having submitted a professional project proposal to PONS, of course. Learning by doing is the key expression. Even more important than the improved school kitchen or the newly equipped auditorium is the realisation that with a little bit of commitment things can be achieved, even if the budget is tight. Just as one participant sums up his experience: “earlier I thought the school doesn't have any money anyway. Now I see that it is still possible to do something.”

But “Together for our schools” also means something else: as the



Inter-entirety meeting of schools from Modriča and Gradačac

association's name "PONS" - the bridge" indicates, the project is also meant to establish links between the different groups of society. Therefore the coordinators have explicitly selected four pairs of schools that are geographically close but lie in different entities. While learning together in the seminars, school council members from Bijeljina and Tuzla, Teslić and Tešanj, Gradačac and Modriča, Novi Grad and Bosanska Krupa are getting closer step by step. To render the contacts between the neighbouring communities even more close in the future, the project also includes so-called "inter-entity visits": each school council invites members of the neighbouring school to spend a day together. Sports tournaments and little presentations by the schools' extracurricular clubs give students, teachers and parents the opportunity to get to know each other. Despite some fears at the beginning, the feedback is very positive, and both the young people and the grown-ups agree "Such common events should take place more often".



"Beauty of growing up"

With "Together for our Schools" PONS has laid the foundation for its work. As an addition to the ongoing education reform, such projects are very popular with participants and sponsors, and the project is likely to continue to the year 2006. "Beauty of growing up II" which started in 2003, is a project that PONS took over directly from südost. It is a continuation of a successful cooperation with the local organisation of women "Lara" through which the relations of children and grown-ups in the primary schools in Bijeljina are improved. PONS is also able to use the experience and contacts of südost in other respects: For example PONS could set up its office in the same house that the Freudenberg foundation had already let südost and Lara use for free. In the meantime the Freudenberg foundation has even permanently donated the house to the two local organisations PONS and "Lara" for common use.

Because of these lucky conditions, the PONS "headquarters" are located in Bijeljina- but its members work and live in all the communities in which südost was active. In the future, the other members plan to also get active with projects in "their communities". We will still be hearing from PONS. *Sandra Roling*



The team of the first project: Slavica Kokoruš, Dragana Ilić, Sandra Roling

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