The role of new media as a means of building of new (supranational) identity and conciliation in the Balkans – the example of ex-Yugoslavian space

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(second, and third paragraphs are written by Nicola Strizzolo; fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh are written by Lidija Vujačić)

Abstract: From interviews with young people from ex-Yugoslav (pilot survey was conducted during the summer of 2014) we observed that they do not have communicative relations and identities related only to a residence territory but they have deep emotive interactions with others outside the borders of their country. Their parallel identification, in addition to national, with a wider geographical and cultural space can be analyzed from several aspects. The first is the determination of cultural models with which respondents identify themselves. There are other factors (in this case the role of the media, and online social networks) that, among other factors, affect the reinterpretation of identity. The third level refers to the theoretical framework of the problem and the analysis of the widest social paradigm which (re)define contemporary collective identity. In this paper, the identity is presented as a flexible category, dependents on innovations, opposed to traditionalistic interpretations of identity as a fixed and stable category determined by ethnic, national, religious and mythical frame. In that sense we can talk about influences on (re)definition category of identity or identification of a more complex modern individual and the existence of multiple identities (such as a regional, European or global identity). Our main hypothesis is that the communication, support and planning activities over the border through new media can facilitate the building of above territorial identity and the peace processes after conflict periods into the young population belonging to parts that before were enemies. In paper we tried to describe, through interviews and questionnaire, how this happened in the Balkan and how are the current processes of supranational (regional and European), identification impact on its, real and symbolic, reconciliation.

Keywords: new media, identity, conflict, stereotypes, peace building, (region)alization.

Introduction: from Tijana to our hypothesis

While interviewing a young girl Tijiana who, in 1995, along with her family, managed to escape from war-torn Bosnia, we became aware of the immense influence that the world-wide-web, namely social media platforms, has and how it changes the way we see our world. We first interviewed Tijiana for the online magazine www.agendadigitale.eu[1] and we discovered first-hand the ability the web has to go beyond geographical borders whilst maintaining both cultural and local ethnic identities, confessional and national, and, at the same time, giving rise to a contemporary identity and dialogue amongst people in current or post-war situations. Tijana uses the web to maintain contact with her extended family and friends after the diaspora caused by the Balkans conflict. In addition to this, Tijana wrote a thesis on this phenomena by studying the social network sites of Eastern-block countries and speaking with young people actively involved in both sides of the current Ukraine crisis. Tijana was able to reach those at the forefront of the crisis via her existing social media network[2]. Non different were the inferences from a earlier interview,

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[1] A online magazine about ICTs with contributions of scholars, experts and innovation journalists.
[2] We thank her greatly for the big help to our research, for ideas and contacts shared with us.

always for Agenda Digitale, to Do: a Software Engineer coming from a country of Former Yugoslavia who asked us we to not write his original and official nationality but wanted to be introduced in the article, second his belonging feeling, as European.

From this experiences our research was born, and with this paper our hypothesis takes its first steps, namely that:

Online social networks are ideal platforms to promote peace and a multi-ethnic/international identity building process.

We tried to problematize the topic through a few levels and different steps: so we start with some literature and experiences on peace building process trough ICT, after we continue with exposure our preliminary research and finally we close with a theoretical reflection of the concept of identity and terms important for the main topic.

The categories which will be used in this paper (new media, the concept of contemporary identity, region and regionalization, peacebuilding, European identity, globalization) are fluid and multidimensional. Therefore we try to define them through postmodern anthropological, sociological and communicational theories. So, this work built on the literature in area of sociology of communication, anthropology of ethnicity and empirical material (interviews and cyber questionnaire).

Peace building and social media

The concept of Peacebuilding was brought to the world's attention thanks to the United Nation's 1992 "Agenda for Peace" report written by its former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. What interests us most about this report is the proposition of enhancing the confidence that is so fundamental to the peace process. (Report of the United Nations' Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali "Agenda for Peace" pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council 31 January 1992) (Jaruma 2013).

The actions of international relations in our focus belong to communication trends in cross-border online social networks; in our study, Facebook networks amongst countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Starting from a theoretical approach and moving on to a pilot research, with this paper we will seek to understand if these online social network communication forums could influence and foster a sense of closeness and friendship, trust and solidarity, a feeling of belonging to a common identity; conditions otherwise known as «peace sustainability» (Jaruma 2013).

For some time now there have been ongoing discussions relating to how the internet could both make the world a better place in which to live and become a vehicle to promote peace (Veletsianos, Eliadou 2009).

Further experiments have been conducted using Information and Communications Technology for peaceful purposes, for example, video games which require players to engage in peaceful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians (Burak et al. 2005).

In other cases "warblogs" and "peaceblogs" are utilized to demonstrate various factors that can actually trigger conflicts as well as providing possible solutions. (Oravec 2004).

Most of the scientific findings concentrated on the use of technology to promote peace, dedicated learning to actually educate people about peace, involving people in conflict resolution initiatives, sustainability research of peace correlated results (Veletsianos, Eliadou 2009).

In further studies, «collaboration, interaction, and communication; understanding of others and the promotion of peace through various educational avenues» (Peace, Innovation Persuasive Technology Lab, 2009; Veletsianos, Eliadou 2009 64) are also premises for peace.

Another basic element in the creation of peace is the understanding of the actions of people in certain situations. For this reason, some experiences were based on a form of online story-telling, video games, and interactive interviews.

Some practices highlighted how the debate about racism amongst a sample group of people of the same age highlighted many parallels in their experiences even though they were all from different countries.

A foundation for peace can be built through these types of interactions amongst people from different backgrounds: hence web 2.0 technologies can nurture and create different forms of communication and cooperation, the core of the peace building process (Veletsianos, Kleanthous 2009).

Veletsianos, Kleanthous (2009), an in-depth study of the scientific evidence on the subject has identified the following forms of technology that have been most widely used to promote peace:

1. Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) (Buchanan et al., 2008; Merryfield 2003; Verbaan 2008)
2. Web 2.0 with blog (Carano & Berson, 2007; Drexler et al., 2008; Oravec, 2004)
3. Wikis (Drexler et al., 2008; Ferdig et al., 2007)
4. Online social networking (Ferdig et al., 2007)
5. Video sharing sites (Buchanan et al., 2008; Meadows & Murphy, 2004).

Other media platforms that have been used for sharing information and communication aimed at furthering mutual understanding include email, video conferencing and mobile phones (UNDV 2008).

Video-games can also aid in the tentative interventions for the management and resolution of conflicts, however only in an educational context (Veletsianos, Eliadou 2009):

Technology is not the determinant variable but the affordances offered by it, it therefore became important to know and develop right combination of technology and education that works best.

Other research monitored how the cooperation of a group of colleagues working in an internet environment (where all team members come from diverse cultural backgrounds) develops not only a cultural intelligence but a global identity as well, without negatively impacting the local or domestic identity. Cultural intelligence is the capacity and motivation to interact with other cultures and to adapt in contexts with different cultures; the global identity is the belonging sentiment to a global context (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003 in Erez et al 2013).

«Global identity widens the range of inclusiveness, allowing multicultural team members to see beyond their national differences and to perceive culturally diverse team members as belonging to one's in-group. Local identity, in contrast, narrows the range of inclusiveness, categorizing members of the same culture as the in-group and members of other cultures as the out-group (Shokef, Erez 2006)» (Erez et al 2013 336).

The results of 1200 case-studies demonstrated that the online cooperation among teams made up of people from diverse backgrounds develops both cultural intelligence and global identity without undermining the local identity (Erez et al 2013): in other words the person made-up of a number of cultural identities does not narrow or eliminate his/her local identity, but increases their own international identity.

Furthermore, the level of trust is increased towards the people these team members interact with (Erez et al 2013) and trust is fundamental to building social capital and the social networks that then follow (Mutti 1998).

This study also sheds light on how the collaboration amongst a team comprised of members from diverse cultural backgrounds, even though online, provides «students with relevant knowledge on cross-cultural differences and similarities, even for a short period, influences the development of the global characteristics needed to successfully adapt to this context» (Erez et al 2013: 347).

Another positive experience was conducted in the Philippines, through video conferences, with the aim of bringing together young people to build cultural bridges based on reciprocal understanding amongst different cultures (Paderanga 2014).

Thanks to this tool, Peace Tech, an NGO with peace education as their goal, tried to better the understanding between both Islamists and Christians divided by differing religious and cultural beliefs (Paderanga 2014).

The 220 students involved, after taking part in this experiment, believed it more possible to be able to live in peace together because they felt they all belonged to the one same community (Paderanga 2014): By using terms of our pilot research, they feel, after their experience, a sense of belonging to something other than a religious or territorial identity.

«Research has shown that social networking is fundamental to the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life, not only in pursuing post-war livelihoods, but also in their social reintegration into their original or new communities» (Lamb 2013). On this premise, the World Bank's Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP) are sponsoring a project for the use of Information and Communications Technologies in peace-building. However apart from this empirical premise, there has not yet been any concrete scientific data to validate this research (Lamb 2013).

Another platform in the creation of peace using Information and Communications Technologies is that of the "Peace Revolution". This platform is used for sharing information and reflections on peace and also serves as a hub for various activities of the organization:

"an education in peace for media operators and volunteers, and a program of 'media education' using the platform for learning and the sharing of experiences aimed at African children in refugee camps (Hardy et al. 2011).

Finally, one of the most significant and promising challenges comes from the analysis of data collected in the context of pre and post conflict elections. «One critical component in building and sustaining peace are political developments and democratic reforms that set the stage for broader participatory governance» (Best 2013: 31).

Research conducted by "Georgia Tech" is bearing fruit via the "Aggie" software program. This program aggregates and analyses, in real time, information and input from multiple social media sites and blogs all at the same time.

The program was tested in the Nigerian election of 2011. The software «in real time tagged and flagged social media reports of ballot and election irregularities, sending them both as visual timelines and traceable event lists to the Abuja situation room». Sadly however, where voting irregularities did occur, there were instances of serious violence, killing and wounding many.

The software has been reconfigured to track any calls or agitation towards violence across various internet discourse streams. This made it possible for security forces to be sent directly to where violence had erupted, as well as assisting in preventing multiple outbreaks of violence. Overall the "Aggie" software program assisted in discouraging electoral fraud and guaranteeing a more transparent and democratic election. The designers of Aggie believe that by «using […this…] software system to connect reports expressed through social media directly to real time response […it's possible…] to attenuate elements of electoral-related violence and help return the country to peace» (Best 2013: 32).

We don't undervalue the opposite discussion: how the ICT can support the war. We also wrote on the topic in the past: cyber terrorism, net war and hacker use the same basics of the potentiality for the peace building of Internet, a common language trough a net connecting data, computer, service, resource (financial and energetic) and machine in all world with possible disaster of biblical proportions (Strizzolo, 2014; Holt 2011; Grillo et al. 2013; Tehrani et al 2013). But in this work we concentrate on the "white" web.

Our pilot research

On the basis of the above, we have created a questionnaire and designed interview questions. The questionnaire contains the following items:
1. Nationality
2. Number of contact in FB
3. Gender
4. Age
5. Number of contact in the countries of former Yugoslavia (FY), in 6 cohorts ("= 0", "> 0 and < = 5", "> 5 and < = 15", "> 15 and < = 35", "> 35 and < = 150"; "< 150")
6. Time dedicated to different activities
7. Travels in the countries of FY;
8. Physical friends in these countries and their social/cultural identity based on the following questions: "Do you feel that your identity corresponds to the tradition and culture of your Country?", "Do you feel you culturally belong to a larger territory than your country?", "Which of these geopolitical realities you feel you belong in?" (My Country; Something like the Former Yugoslavia; Balkans, Europe)
9. The use of other social network sites other than FB.

We published the questionnaire via Snowball sampling via Google Drive through our FB networks amongst those in FY countries, therefore the results are representative only of a small demographic.

We published the questionnaire via Snowball sampling via Google Drive through our FB networks amongst those in FY countries. We used our FB contacts with people from countries of former Yugoslavia for distribute to them our questionnaire and for share it with their contacts in the same geographical area.

All statistical inferences have value inside the group of questioned people, not for a general population, but however we can't undervalue the existence of a group of 115 people with the under described characteristics and that they communicate through FB with thousands of other people (the maximum number of contacts is 4182, the summa 67580 - many people can have the same relations -).

In any case, second to theory, they represent a group of diffusion of the attitudes, ideas (Rogers 2003) and tend to share a "horizon of meanings" (Schütz 1952) with common points from us evidenced: in other words they share and negotiate their world image into the process of reality building (Berger, Luckmann 1966).

How much shared is this world image and how much diffuse is this process is possible to define only with deeper and more expensive research tools.

A total of 115 people participated in the questionnaire over the countries concerned with the following breakdown: 42 from Bosnia, 38 from Serbia, 17 from Croatia, 13 from Montenegro, 3 from Slovenia, 2 from Macedonia and, 0 from Kosovo.

For the limited number of case we did not calculate the distribution of properties in to the different Nationality (excepted with descriptive intent only, rather than projective, when it comes to the belonging feeling), so it represents a trans-border group of interconnected young people (it's a result of a snowball of contacts of contacts).

The average age is 24.8 years, the median 23, with a standard deviation of 8 years. There are 77 female and 38 male, for the imbalance between female and male, we are not going to consider the gender as variable.

The average of contacts on FB is 635.5, the median 410, and the deviation standard 733.5.

We revealed an inverse correlation between age and number of contacts (R = - 0.2): in other words, younger people have more contacts. We tried to build an indicator, by giving an increasing index to every increasing age group of friendships with countries of FY, from 0 (we united the age group "= 0" with the cohort "> 0 and < = 5") to 5 (">150"). The indicator seems to ring true namely because of the correlation between the absolute number of contacts and it is very high (R = 0.7): therefore more contacts in absolute means more contacts with the countries of FY.

This indicator shows an important link between the contacts with foreign countries and the physical friendships in those countries (R = 0.44). It is interesting to note that there appears to be a stronger correlation (inverse) between age and groups of friendships in countries of FY (R = -0.24) than the correlation between age and absolute number of contacts (R = - 0.2). Whereas the correlation between contacts (absolute number) in FB and physical friendship inside the countries of FY is R = 0.27.

We also asked our respondents which FB communications stream they used the most. The results are very much an approximation, but they showed time spent messaging tends to be 0 (however other social media platforms were used for messaging); 56 per cent of the time is dedicated to friends; 16 per cent to sharing photos and comments; 13 per cent to information; 10 per cent to plan travel in an FY country; 3 per cent to voluntary activities in relation with members from other FY countries.

Travel trends in FY: 64 per cent travel from one to three times a year to other FY countries, 17 per cent every three months, 12 per cent every two months and 8 per cent never. There is a correlation between contacts in other countries and trips to those countries (R = 1.3).

When asked "Which of these geopolitical realities do you feel you belong in?" 33 per cent answered "Europe", 22 per cent "My Country", 26 per cent "Something like the Former Yugoslavia", and 19 per cent the Balkans.

Only for this item we calculated the percentage distribution of properties that we can see in the following table, whose value is only descriptive, because of the few cases.

Belonging %	Bosnia	Croazia	Montenegro	Serbia
My Country	29	6	31	24
Balkans	19	29	8	21
Something like the Former Yugoslavia	26	30	23	26
Europe	26	35	38	29

This is the resultant graphic with absolute number and percentage:

Belonging (Absolute number)
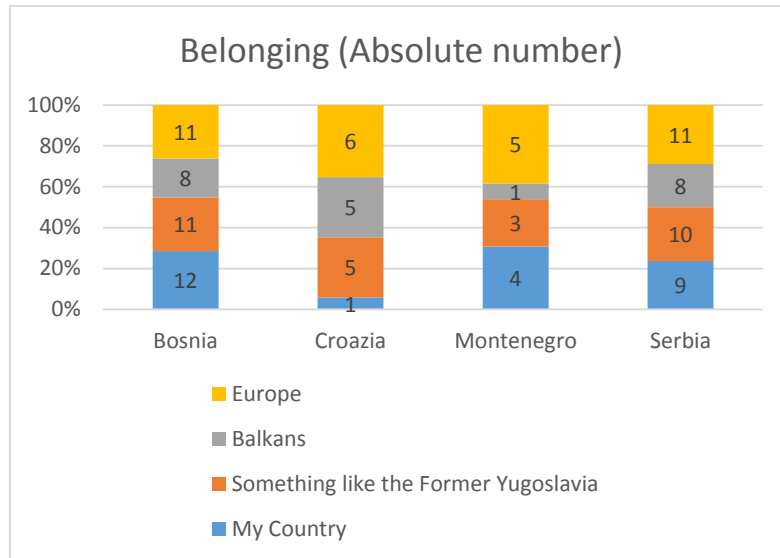
We united those who felt they belong to Balkans with those who felt they belong to Something like the former Yugoslavia, so we obtained so a supranational (but non EU) group.

Belonging %	Bosnia	Croazia	Montenegro	Serbia
My Country	29	6	31	24
Supranationl area (but no EU)	45	59	31	47
Europe	26	35	38	29

We can see how the European component is important for every provenience of cases and it is very important the supranational component (Balkans with Something like the former Yugoslavia) and how little is perceived the national belonging (not more than a third, for all united and for every separated nation).

But we know, from literature (Erez et al 2013), how is possible have more overlapped identities. For this reason we also asked "Do you feel that your identity corresponds to the tradition and culture of your Country?" and "Do you feel you culturally belong to a larger geographic area than just the borders of your country?" by giving the possibility to answer "yes" for both.

Effectively different feelings or ideas of where one belongs seem to overlap each other: 66 per cent of the participants answered "yes" to the question "Do you feel that your identity corresponds to the tradition and culture of your Country?"; 89 per cent answered "yes" to the question "Do you feel you culturally belong to a larger geographic area than just the borders of your country?"; 60 per cent answered "yes" to both question

These overlapping identities are more or less seen across all the different nationalities represented in our research without significant differences.

Overlapping belonging feeling		Do you feel that your identity corresponds to the tradition and culture of your Country?	
		Yes	No
Do you feel you culturally belong to a larger geographic area than just the borders of your country?	Yes	60,00	29,57
	No	7,83	2,61

These answers reflect the answers to the previews question "Which of these geopolitical realities do you feel you belong in?" In the Table below we can see that:

Those who feel a European belonging feel the lowest (percent of cases) correspondence to the tradition and culture of his Country (51 %);

Those who feel an Ex-Yugoslavia belonging feel the highest (percent of cases) overlapping belonging between local and supranational (73 %) and a higher correspondence to the tradition and culture of his Country (80 %);

Those who feel belong to their Country feel the highest correspondence to the tradition and culture of his Country (81 %) and the lowest culturally belong to a larger geographic area (81 %);

Those who feel belonging to a Balkan area feel the highest culturally belonging to a larger geographic area than just the borders of your country (95 %) and a lower identity correspondent to the tradition and culture of your Country (65 %).

Belonging and Overlapping belonging feeling % of case	a. Do you feel that your identity corresponds to the tradition and culture of your Country	b. Do you feel you culturally belong to a larger geographic area than just the borders of your country	Yes a. Yes b.	No a. Yes b.	Yes a. No b	No a. No b
Balkans	65	95	59	36	5	0
Europe	51	89	43	46	8	3
My Country	81	81	69	12	12	8
Something like the Former Yugoslavia	80	93	73	20	7	0

In relation to other social media platforms, 32 per cent use other online social media networks such as Instagram, MySpace, Skype, vkontakte, Google+, Viber, Linked-in, and Badoo.

Finally, we conducted some further, more in-depth research of some key results, namely that of borders and social media. To this end we interviewed eleven people: three from Bosnia, three from Serbia, two from Slovenia, one from Montenegro, and one from Macedonia. The age range is from 19 to 33 years.

For each person interviewed, their online profile is an exact reflection of their physical/offline presence. They interact online with family and friends spread throughout various countries, not only in FY.

They use the social media (not only Face Book) to communicate and, for all type of contact (friends, relatives, work, study and hobbies) with people staying in other countries.

All those we interviewed, apart from the three Serbians and one Slovenian, think that physical borders should not exist, that they actually make no sense, and that there is not that much difference between people from the various countries within the FY. There were also some common ideas and suggestions for a united Yugoslavia offered by those interviewed:

A twenty year old Bosnian man says: "Well, there are some differences, but after all, our parents mostly used to be in one united country, so there is no such a big difference between us"

"The boundaries are just a geographical thing. There are cultural differences but no more than that of other countries, we have the same history with other former Yugoslavian countries" says a twenty nine year old Slovenian.

"I see them as imaginary, invisible lines that certain people invented so that they would have some sort of control over their own and other territories, and most importantly to have control over the people who live in those zones. That they were in the former Yugoslavia is not that important, it was all just one country, but later on after the war things got worse and it became clear that it was our road to perdition since many people

in power took advantage of us, robbed us and destroyed our beloved country" states a nineteen year old Bosnian).

It appears that the only ones, who maintained that geographical borders were actually necessary, and who emphasized the differences between their own and other countries in the FY, were the three Serbians, with two of them considering a united Yugoslavia a mistake:

"The boundaries are necessary. Serbs, Croats and Slovenes have shown that they are not able to live together, therefore, for us the boundaries are a good thing. It is right that the Serbs have Serbia, Croats Croatia and so on" says a twenty four year old Serbian.

"There can be some tensions (but not related with Slovenia). For instance, Serbia-Croatia, England-Poland, and Poland-Russia" from a twenty three year old Slovenian

Everybody felt a strong bond with their country of origin, to a slightly lesser degree with their land, language, values, and communicative characteristics.

Almost everybody of interviewed has experience of travel in another country, for work, study and pleasure and superior studies (college, degree or master).

Now, before the conclusions, it follows a theoretical reflection of the concept of identity and terms important for the main topic.

The "nature" of new media and influence on the structure of identity

New media through their pervasiveness, indirectly or directly affect the formation of the so-called modern individual - their system of values, life goals, codes of conduct, kinds of knowledge, but also prejudices and projection of their own identities. Clearly, the media do not offer a (re)definition of values or attitudes and adoption of the cultural and social contents to their audiences through the form of direct ideological indoctrination, but rather through ordinary daily communication and exchange of goods, services, and ideas, new views on old attitudes etc. New media, especially the Internet with developed social networks open space for a permanent reconsideration of relations between I and 'other' and the perception of one's own identity on this route. Open field of online communication relativize gender, age, social, ethnic and other differences. Cyber world is becoming a platform of the depreciation of differences, which allows building and accepting the similarities in the broader sense of identification. People who come frequently into contact in cyber world «feel as though they are part of this group, participating and creating communication relationships and, at times, relationships with other members» (Pravettoni 2002: 173). Similarly, locality becomes increasingly fragile, whether it is viewed from a national or some other, wider, even global, framework, because «it is filled with contradictions, destabilized by the movement of people and dislocated in the emergence of new types of virtual neighborhoods» (Appadurai 2011: 294). Therefore, the boundaries in the real i.e. geographical, political sense become less important, because a kind of new, virtual 'locality' is being created. It works on the principle of simultaneity and sameness or, perhaps, the similarity of all stakeholders who share a common space, linking local or national cultural heritage and identity with the regional and global (cultural, political and economical) flows.

A reminder of the so-called Yugoslav example - from conflict to reconciliation and regional identity

Given that during the pilot study we asked questions about how and how young people from the territory of which coincides with the area of former Yugoslavia communicate through social networks, their responses can be placed in the broader context of the topic. In fact, the modalities of cultural identification (at national/state, regional, European and global level) can indirectly produce answers regarding their relation i.e. Valuing of the past, such as conflicts in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) whose contemporaries were their parents, but also answers regarding the processes of reconciliation, reintegration, real or symbolic, at once unique environment.. In this sense, the very interesting example of ex-Yugoslav (ex-Yu) space as a 'space' for many interpretation of identities, emotions, conflicts and, after all, some kind of new (mostly integrative) sensibility and, at the same time, nostalgia and real political and economical needs. After the breakup the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and many conflicts and various challenging situations, its successors (today independent seven states: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo) see a better real situation and potential for more infrastructure connections in a future. The connection has to potential to let people to share a common destiny, history, stereotypes and desire to build or rebuild demolished relations, in the same time on personal and "official" level (the last years there are many economical or political attempts of linking between actually new states from ex-Yu space). Certainly, regional "identity" would have to base on common, and positive, elements of communion from the past.

National exclusivity, and the extreme form of it, was present, unfortunately, in this region, during nineties of the twentieth century and the breakup of Yugoslavia (the same was with the states that emerged from the former Soviet Union). Some scholars interpret the aforementioned conflicts and subsequent political tension from the point that the states in question have not fully "lived through" their national prides, i.e. their identity, given that they only recently gained independences or renewed their statehoods after a long period of time. Furthermore, one of the reasons that explains the situation according to C. Giordano is that «National states of Central and Southeastern Europe, prior to the acquisition of their, quite late, independences, and even to this day, see themselves as political and territorial expressions of a particular ethnic group» (Giordano 2001: 228), and not as a nation, taking into account the constructive character of the national identity (see more about topic in: Stojkovic 2008; Eriksen 2004).

Unfortunately, many of new states from ex-Yu space still live in their political and economic crisis, divided and ambiguous identities, ideological divisions, national paradigms, stereotypes and so on, but, in the similar way, "are waiting" development of economy, better quality of civil life etc. but dominantly in context of integration in European Union and better position in global market.

In any case, reconstruction of past of which we speak and reconciliation must be remembered as the important points of history and built on quality vision of future neighborhood. Of course, these are processes which require a longer time course, a lot of compromise in terms of political decisions and economic connections. However, it seems that the new media can speed them up, bearing in mind the dynamic field of communication which they allow. This paper, therefore, interprets new media in their most integrative, cohesive role, although they certainly cannot act, and vice versa. However, on the basis of the pilot study and the results obtained, we argued that the role of the media in the aforementioned forms of integration and reconciliation processes is possible from the optimistic point of view. Because discourse in media, just like in any other context can be a source of conflict, but it is as likely to be foundation of dialogue (which was our assumption when selecting this topic).

'Fluidity' of cultural and (supra)national identity - regional, European and global identity

Bearing in mind that in the first part of the paper presents statistical data, in the second we specifically seek to generalize responses and interpret them as a basic (processual) characteristic of the modern identity, and to observe them through a broader theoretical concept, especially in the context of integration processes on different geo-political levels (regional, European and global, "unifications"). The paradigm of our existence and the position of individual and collective identification are changed. The constructed nature of identity, along with its transience is in accordance with demands of contemporary way of life and, as we it emphasized before, new media. The postmodern approach in analyses of concept of individual and collective cultural, national and supranational identity sees it as a flexible category what is opposed to traditional normative interpretations that claim that identity is fixed form, determined by strong ethnic, national, ideological or religious frame works. Taking the same approach identity is constructed through collective culture, language, law, but also understanding and «defining of the reality in a way that includes beliefs, values and symbols which aids individuals in rethinking their actions and behaviors» (Koković, Žolt 2003: 50). Conversely, modern identity more depends on a way in which we construct, perceive, and represent ourselves, to ourselves and others (Kelner 2004).

It is the answer to one of the key questions in the survey that we took for a representative for a wider analysis of the second part ("Which of these geopolitical realities do you feel you belong in?" With answers - 33 percent Answered "Europe", 22 percent "My Country," 26 percent "Something like the Former Yugoslavia", and 19 percent the Balkans) and that leads us to the modalities of cultural models that respondents accept and base on different reference points of gathering and identification. Starting from the European, as the dominant level of identification, through national to regional (region here coincides with the ex-Yugoslav space, and a wider area of the Balkans). It is the smallest percentage of positive emotions and

the degree of identification of the Balkans that opens an interesting discourse on stereotypes to this geographical and cultural zone. But to explain the broader contest phenomena and processes it is necessary to note that the national and cultural identity is stable, or variable, in relation to the degree of variability of the attitude towards the "other" (that is, it depends on the context of a specific interpretation of identity and its constituent elements selected).

Also, we must bear in mind that the notion of region (however interpreted for the sake of identification) is a constructive category, which builds a kind of supranational space which coincides again with some past, present and future projections of a particular model of community. The perception of regional 'similarity' exists among specific states that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia, but also in the global community, when interpreting the mentioned area, because it is seen as an 'otherness' in comparison with other regions and so-called European identity or association with the European Union, although there is now much more desirable matrix of binding is the "otherness" in relation to other cultural zones and possible identification of the respondents. Also, its projection is not yet completed, as, after all, the future leaves room for different flows in defining and considering the EU territorial changes that may yield to political, economic and symbolic, i.e. identity complications. The same is true for modern nations which are in a constant process of (re)shaping marked by the indispensable utilitarian dimension of communion (Breton 1994: 40 - 58). Actually, in that approach, national and supranational identification is a similar process construction European identity or Europeanism as Moran similarly interprets it (1989). It is continually rebuilding (EU becomes more numerous, with variant national and local cultural identities which are in a process of acculturation and innovations) and, maybe, in the future will come like national identity. It is possible to become imagined political community, both inherently limited and sovereign, as usually Anderson defines the nation (Anderson 1998).

After all, regional specificity can, to some extent, be compared to the national one (and especially to the supranational affiliation), especially through discourses about so-called Western or civic theories, i.e. interpretations of the formation of nations, which define it as a property never defined for good, but, always re-modified in processes of acculturation" (Giordano 2001: 17). It can be seen from many variations which nations, i.e. states, have, in their composition (different ethnic, socio-cultural, economic, geographic, or other elements).

Also when comparing the process of regionalization at the level of the Balkans, and even within the EU, with the process of globalization, some kind of cultural unification on the multicultural grounds that experience of the world as a unified whole (as we see that it is a consequence of the logic of capital and technology). It means "global unification of mankind" (Fukuyama 1992). Globalization implies the broadest form of identification, in which the cultural (national) identities themselves, to some extent, are being transformed that new cultural values and expressive forms (ideas, procedures, symbols, etc.) emerge, that the importance of local and territorial characteristics is being lost due to medialization and virtualization of the world and that, metaphorically speaking, we are experiencing the "death of geography". On some way it becomes to change of shape and contents of world space «which implies interdependence and communication between all points of the globe» (Djordjević 2009: 372).

Balkan and stereotypes

Also, one of the most inspiring questions and answers for the analysis is, as we already mentioned, the attitude of respondents towards the Balkans and their own 'Balkanism'. It is indicative, however, that the minimum number of participants in the survey identify with the so called Balkan cultural model, although, in territorial terms, they all live this area (for example, only one-fifth of them see themselves primarily as Balkan types, while majority is perceived more as a European, national of the (Balkan) state that he or she belongs to, as a member of a specific nation - successor of Yugoslavia. It seems that the peoples of the Balkans have an ambiguous attitude toward Balkan area as a whole, condemning on the one hand, the "Balkan" mentality, while at the same time being proud of the "violence" of the Balkan people, and their energy and openness. The fact is stereotypes are processual character and dependent on relations to the so-called "other". Existing stereotypes between Balkan and Europe could have an entirely different connotation when viewed from a past perspective.

Hence, issue of regionalization, however emotional and controversial this is for the Balkans, or, even more narrowly, in the states existing in the ex-Yugoslav space, through the symbolic and practical spheres of

cooperation, opens up numerous developmental opportunities as well as, past controversies (political-ideological conflicts at the end of the twentieth century in Yugoslavia). There is also a number of (un)justified stereotypes about Balkan countries in terms of Balkanism and the Balkanization as labels, among others, and for, «the breaking of certain territory into several small states that are ineffective, and often mutually antagonistic to each other» (Markovic 2001: 204). Although these terms are simply discursive formations they do negatively map the region. A famous study on the Balkan stereotypes by M. Todorova (Imagining the Balkans) argued that the geographic region of the Balkans and the term "Balkanization" were usually interpreted as a synonym for the local, periphery, as opposed to European, cosmopolitan and it represented a return to the tribal through the process of fragmentation of political units (Todorova 2004).

However, regardless of such strict ratings from the "outside" it seems that the terms Balkanism and Balkanization, similar in meaning, are accepted, more or less, even by the Balkan peoples, especially the smaller groupings, which have been targeted by major powers and experienced a complicated past. Looking outward, to the so-called European future they are trying to forget and, in a symbolic sense, to free themselves from their "Balkanisms."

In any case, the widespread stereotypes about the Balkans and relatively fresh memories of the conflict during the nineties on the ex-Yugoslav space should not, as we see in this study, be an obstacle to bringing together people who live in or are originally from these areas. Given that young people are increasingly using new media, among others, in achieving social contacts with the so-called others, it means they are more open to accepting 'differences'. Also, online social networks, especially Facebook, due to its multicultural platform, facilitate a dialogue and the creation of new meanings and cultural identities, relieved from the burdened past (which is a weight that the older generations still carry to some extent). Young people are also more focused on the future development rely on the acceptance of differences, which may enhance coexistence if established on healthy intercultural grounds.

Conclusions

Joshua Meyrowitz, in the book "No Sense of Place" [1986], wrote how electronic media has demolished so many barriers; physical, hierarchical, power, of organizations, and identity.

Even with its many limitations, our pilot research has shown us that there exists a group of "online" people (the Snowball questionnaire is evidence of this phenomena) who feel bonded to the identity and values of their country, but at the same time, feel a sense of belonging to a much larger identity/entity, possibly even a European identity, without any notable distinctions or differences these said nationalities and identities.

Both from the questionnaire and the interview emerges the reality of a youth that communicate, share, travel, experience and feel across borders, who look beyond the actual existence of borders: a "No border generation" is taking shape.

The fact that this "No border generation" could be the direct result of the influence of the internet and social media, and the potency and reach of this influence requires further investigation and research with the input of additional resources.

We have demonstrated a positive link between contacts on FB and real friendships in other countries of former Yugoslavia, how this impacts travel there, and a bias towards the younger generation i.e., the younger generation has more contacts and a larger "friendship" network and will also be the ones to travel more frequently to other countries to meet this network.

Although the information here is not entirely indicative because of the way in which it was retrieved, we cannot deny its existence. Moreover the interviews confirm qualitative aspects of this "beyond borders" sentiment, of this attitude to embrace, also without forgetting the first integrated identity, an identity that sees beyond differences and past conflicts.

Further research on this topic is essential. A research with a sound means of gathering statistics and data, conducted by anthropologists, media and communications sociologists, research both quantitative and qualitative; the findings here in this document are just the first steps.

While we are fully aware of the limitations of our research here, we do see the value of a study strand that could bring a wealth of information and a unique way of using the internet and social media platforms to make the world a better place.

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