

**The Politics of Multiculturalism in the Northern
Autonomous Province of Vojvodina: (Serbian) Youth
Discourse on Multiculturalism in Novi Sad**



MSc International Development Thesis: Disaster Studies Track

Sara Zarkovic - 940719999180

Supervisor: Gemma van der Haar

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
1. Background to the region of Vojvodina	7
1.1 A “brief snippet” on the region of Vojvodina	7
1.2 Vojvodina’s Demography	9
1.3 Vojvodina and Multiculturalism	11
1.4 A short history of Vojvodina’s autonomy and its political status	13
1.5 1990s rising animosities and their consequences	16
2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	19
2.1 What is identity and how is it constructed?	20
2.2 Multiculturalism	25
2.3 Problem Statement	31
2.4 Research Question	33
2.5 Relevance of research and its ambitions	33
3. Methodology	35
3.1 Type of research	35
3.2 Sampling	35
3.3 Methods used	38
3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews	38

3.3.2 Informal talks and observations	38
3.3.3 Focus group discussion	39
3.3.4 Expert interviews	41
3.3.5 Quantative survey conducted by “ninamedia” research	44
3.4 Limitations of research	45
3.5 Researcher’s positionality	47
4. Multiculturalism in Vojvodina	50
4.1 Management of “ethnicity” in the former Yugoslavia	50
4.2. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim	53
4.3 Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal perception	58
4.4 Where is Vojvodina’s multicultural claim heading?	63
5. Youth Analysis of the “Multicultural” Setup of Society	72
5.1 How the youth talks about their ethnic-cultural surroundings	78
5.2 How the youth depicts the tensions in their surroundings	85
6. Youth Analysis of Multiculturalism as a “Societal Project”	92
6.1 How the youth gives meaning to their multicultural surroundings	92
6.2 How the youth connects to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim	99
7. Discussion and Conclusion	105
7.1 Summary of research results and findings	105
7.2 Critical evaluation of theoretical approaches used	111

7.3 Larger significance of research	116
7.4 Limitations and concerns	119
8. Appendix 1: Main interview informants	123
9. Appendix 2: Expert interview informants	125
10. Appendix 3: Informal talks	126
11. Appendix 4: Quantative survey done by “ninamedia research” in Novi Sad	127
12. Appendix 5: Bibliography	140

Introduction

“Multiculturalism” is the *ethnic-cultural existence of societal plurality* within a certain place, community, or region. Most literature on multiculturalism engrosses itself into talking about multiculturalism as a public policy, which is used towards finding more inclusive ways of embracing notions of multicultural citizenship domains. In this sense, the very notion of multiculturalism bases itself on an institutional domain that *formally* occupies itself with dealing with societal diversity, where it centres upon the crafting of equal rights and opportunities for the different ethnicities living in a certain region.

Nowadays, all societies can be considered as social, culturally, and ethnically diverse. However not all societies have labelled themselves as “multicultural”. This is because it is up to a certain government to construct a claim around their present substance of societal plurality. Nevertheless the very notion of “multiculturalism” is often associated to intertwine a multicultural claim and a multicultural societal reality – yet this does not have to be the case. The relationship between a multicultural claim and its societal reality is not unequivocal. One does not have to mean the other, and vice versa. Primarily the nature between the two is very different. A multicultural claim presents a formal narrative that finds actuality within an institutional domain, whereas a “multicultural societal reality” presents a more fluid, relational, complex, and layered realm. In this regard, even though a multicultural claim needs to base itself upon a certain societal substance – it cannot merely exist without there being some sort of societal affluence to justify it - it does not inform upon the workings and functioning of society itself. What is more, a “societal reality” of ethnic-cultural diversity does not implicate a multicultural claim. As mentioned before, all societies can be considered as “socially diverse”, in which it is up to a region’s government whether they will construct a claim around their existing societal plurality.

Vojvodina presents a region in the northern part of Serbia that embodies the presence of 26 different ethnicities, further comprising ex-Yugoslavian minorities. It is a region that is promoted to be multicultural. This means that the provincial government of Vojvodina has decided to construct a multicultural claim surrounding the region’s notion of societal plurality. On their main website, the provincial government of Vojvodina states that Vojvodina is characterised as a region that “traditionally fosters multilingualism, multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism” (Provincial Government of Vojvodina, 2017). Moreover Novi Sad 2021 that is dedicated towards promoting the region’s domain of culture asserts that “Novi Sad has built its uniqueness on foundations of its multicultural character...” (Novi Sad 2021, 2014-2016). Accordingly Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is made up of the various institutions and organisations that advocate it. Likewise it is Vojvodina’s specific historic circumstances that legitimise its multicultural claim, where it stands to represent an institutional project that offers the region with a “good image”, as well as formally enables the different ethnicities to maintain their identities.

What is more, the region’s multicultural claim is crafted by people *saying* Vojvodina is a multicultural region. As expressed by the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, “it is problematic to say that Vojvodina is seen or perceived to be multicultural, because *it is* multicultural” (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). This was also the reason why this thesis decided to embark on researching “multiculturalism” in Vojvodina, because there seemed to be widespread promotion and acknowledgement of

Vojvodina being a “multicultural region”, due to the vast propagation of this claim; yet what this multicultural claim meant to the people and Vojvodina’s locality, was left unsaid and unknown.

This thesis’ bigger aim is to deconstruct the ambiguous relation between a multicultural claim and its societal reality, in order to show that one does not have to mean the other, and vice versa. By rooting the very notion of “multiculturalism” within the locality of the youth, through the engagement with the youth’s way of talking about and giving meaning to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, this thesis will be able to say something about the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality. This is because the youth will offer their problematisation of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism – involving how they conceptualise their societal milieu, which will also inform upon the youth’s regard of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, and how it is manifested in their life.

Accordingly this thesis has decided to research the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina, because it believes that this issue necessitates attention, especially in the Balkans. South east Europe stands as a region that requires research in the domain of identity and multiculturalism with its past history of war, conflict, and secessions. Within its ethnic-cultural societal mix, Vojvodina comprises ex-Yugoslavian minorities that makes it interesting to examine in the light of Serbia’s past history – with the breakup of Yugoslavia and the consequent Balkan wars that took place. This is why this thesis has dedicated itself to investigating how the (Serbian) youth, who embody the post-Yugoslavian generation, conceptualise their ethnic-cultural surroundings. What does this notion of “multiculturalism” mean to the youth of Vojvodina, who live in the capital city of Novi Sad that personifies the region’s multicultural hub? In this regard, how does the youth position themselves within this multicultural narrative – being the major ethnicity – do they present the generation that is unaffected by the past Balkan wars?

The relevance of this thesis centres upon the provision of new knowledge on identity and multiculturalism in south east Europe. This thesis will provide a *local perspective* on multiculturalism, where this notion that is usually analysed within an institutional domain, will be deconstructed through a localised discourse. Moreover this thesis will reveal how a segment of the Vojvodinian population – the (Serbian) youth - being the supposed unaffected generation of the past Balkan wars, as well as symbolising the “major ethnicity” in the region, problematises ethnic diversity in their environment.

This thesis will utilise a constructivist perspective with a “postmodern subject” that will enable it to look at identity and multiculturalism (the way people talk about their sense of belonging and the different ways they connect to multiculturalism), in a malleable way that will take into consideration the broader cultural constellation of the youth. This means that the very notion of multiculturalism will be regarded as a process that expresses itself within the youth’s environment – manifesting itself through ethnic-cultural diversity and or through the proliferation of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. In this sense, multiculturalism will also be regarded as a social mechanism that can affect a person’s way of identifying.

Furthermore this thesis will examine the youth’s regional consciousness relating to how they conceptualise the notion of multiculturalism, where the concepts of “Downloading” and “Uploading”

will be used as tools to see how the youth problematises Vojvodina's multiculturalism, in regards to how they perceive its multiculturalism to have come about.

This thesis will make a difference between Vojvodina's multicultural claim representing an institutional narrative, and Vojvodina's societal reality that implicates ethnic-cultural plurality. However it is important to mention that references will be made to "*Vojvodina's multiculturalism*" that in the light of this thesis will connote to the fact that Vojvodina is represented to be multicultural, because it comprises 26 different ethnicities that live in the region. Thus this includes the government's propagation of this multicultural claim, with the setting of the region's societal context that epitomises ethnic-cultural diversity. Similarly the use of "*multiculturalism*" will also be utilised, since this was the word used by the youth to associate to the very conception of "societal plurality". This thesis also places brackets on the association to the (*Serbian*) youth, because the youth interviewed adopted much broader identity affiliations, coming from mixed marriages – however they have the option of adhering to the Serbian identity, which consequently makes them have a privileged position in comparison to the other national minorities in the region.

The larger significance of this thesis bases itself on showing that a multicultural claim does not mirror a societal reality and vice versa. Moreover this thesis will show that an institutional domain does have importance in structuring society's functioning. This thesis will also expose the possible problem with autonomous regions embracing certain "claims" that consequently make them have a "distinct identity" from the larger entity they are part of, which can lead to various separatist tensions. What is more, this thesis will demonstrate the ability of the youth to problematise a theoretical notion such as "multiculturalism", where they will expose their purpose of multiculturalism as a "societal project".

Ultimately this thesis calls upon the need for more research to be done in the Balkans, in regards to identity and multiculturalism. These concepts need to be made clearer, more comprehensible, as well as brought closer to the people - so that there is a better understanding of the politics of multiculturalism, in terms of finding better ways to deal with ethnic diversity.

In order to better understand the context of Vojvodina and the larger part of Serbia, this thesis will start off with a *Background Chapter to the region of Vojvodina* and its historical, political, and social setting that will set the scene for the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina. The following *Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Chapter* will present the theory and concepts that will be used within this thesis, to enable it to carry out its research. Similarly the *Methodology Chapter* will outline this thesis' type of research, course of action, methods used, and limitations. Furthermore *Chapter Four* will present the background to Vojvodina's multiculturalism from the experts interviewed that will mainly be based on the nature of Vojvodina's multicultural claim. *Chapter Five and Chapter Six* will consequently delve into the perceptions of the (*Serbian*) youth and their problematisation of Vojvodina's multiculturalism – involving their ethnic-cultural surroundings, and how they regard Vojvodina's multicultural claim. Finally the *Discussion and Conclusion Chapter* will present the main findings of this research, where it will further converse upon the various issues that came up within the chapters, which will ultimately end with a provision of some of my concerns for the region of Vojvodina.

1. Background to the region of Vojvodina

1.1 A “brief snippet” on the region of Vojvodina

The region of Vojvodina represents an autonomous province in Serbia that is located in the northern part of the country. Vojvodina encompasses a total area of 21.506 square kilometres and comprises a population of nearly 2 million people¹ (“Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”, 2013); 66% of Vojvodina’s population is ethnic Serbian that further consists of 26 different ethnicities, including Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Croats, Ruthenians and others (“Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”, 2013). This is why Vojvodina is considered to exemplify a “multicultural region”, since it contains 26 ethnic groups; Serbs represent the biggest ethnic minority in Vojvodina, following Hungarians that account for 12 percent of the population (“Vanishing Vojvodina”, The Economist, 2010).

Moreover Vojvodina’s provincial administration utilises six official languages: Serbian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Ruthenian, and Croatian (“Belgrade Centre for Human Rights”, 2017) - which after the European Union represents one of the few institutions in Europe to do so. An interesting fact is that all official stamps and websites also include the six different language options – further involving Serbian script in Latin, as well as Cyrillic. For example the Red Cross’ official stamp (in Vojvodina) includes all the six different languages; this demonstrates the proliferation of the different ethnic cultures found in Vojvodina, and shows that this formal sense of multiculturalism is institutionally engrained.

Furthermore within the territory of Vojvodina there are 45 municipalities and towns that are represented as local self-government units, which are further organised into seven counties, involving seats in the following towns: Subotica, Zrenjanin, Kikinda, Pančevo, Sombor, Novi Sad and Sremska Mitrovica (“Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”, 2013). The capital city of Novi Sad presents the main administrative and bureaucratic centre, embodying the second largest city in Serbia. Additionally Novi Sad personifies the place where all the different ethnicities merge and come together, since it characterises the main commercial, administrative, and bureaucratic hub. The ethnic composition of Novi Sad in 2011² recorded 269,117 Serbians, 13,272 Hungarians, 6,596 Slovaks, 5,335 Croatians, 3,636 Romani, 3,444 Montenegrins, 2,169 Ruthenians, 1,111 Macedonians, and 891 Romanians. Below are two maps³ that show Vojvodina’s position within the larger part of Serbia, as well as how the territory is divided along its seven main counties.

¹ <http://www.vojvodina.gov.rs/en/autonomous-province-vojvodina>

² <http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf>

³ <http://www.vojvodina.gov.rs/en/autonomous-province-vojvodina>

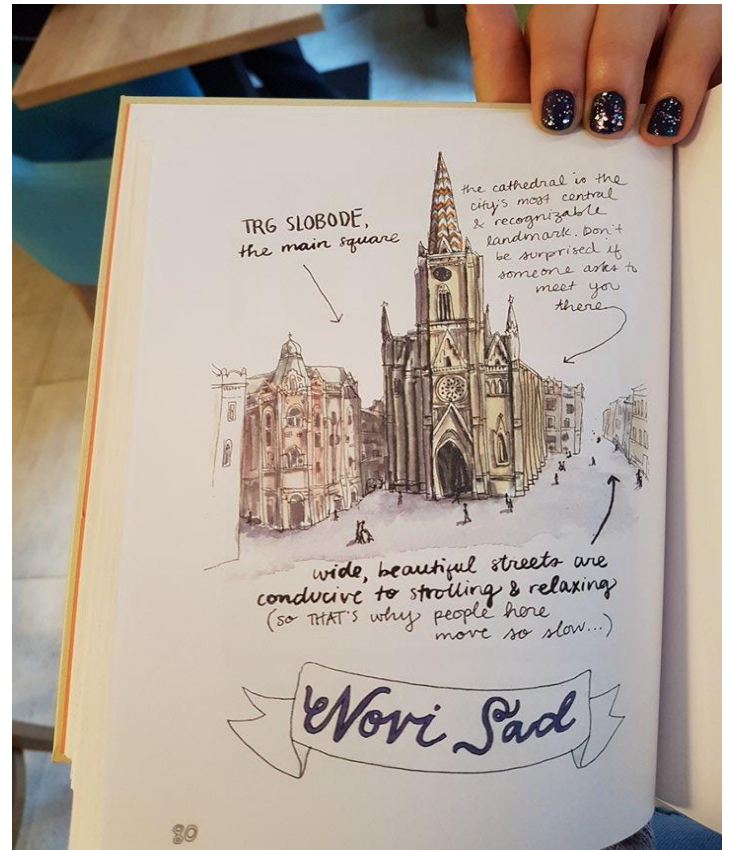
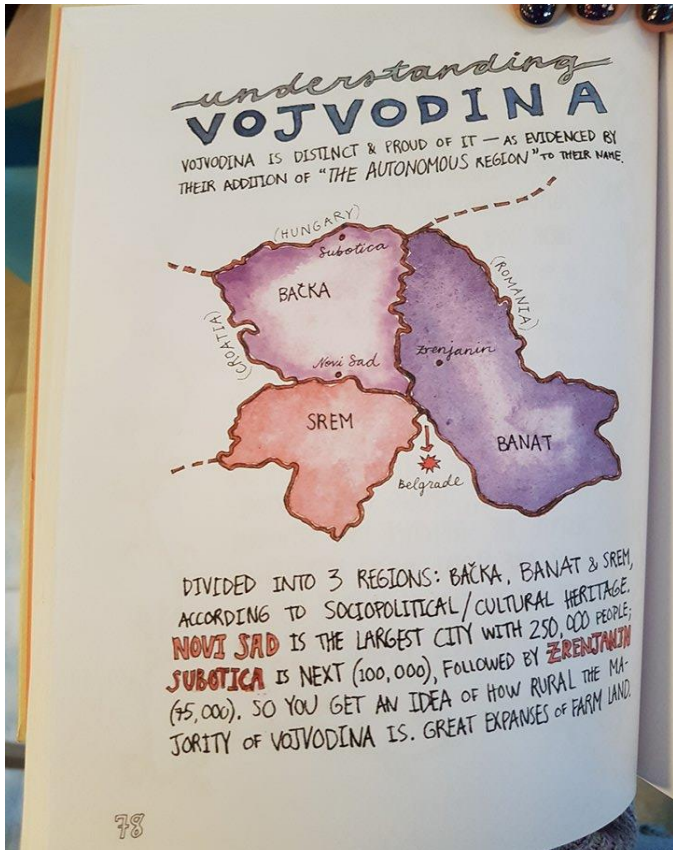


Emma Ficks is an illustrator who designed a short illustrative book where she uniquely and humorously conveys her journey through Serbia. Below are two illustrated extracts from Fick’s “Snippets from Serbia” 2015; the first illustration provides the first page of the introduction into the region of Vojvodina, as well as Fick’s “first impression” of Vojvodina and how she would describe the region itself. Through her book, Fick’s illuminates upon Vojvodina’s main characteristics and features, as well as the “general impression” people have of the region. Fick’s statement of “Vojvodina is distinct and proud of it – as evidenced by their addition of ‘the autonomous region’ to their name” - portrays Vojvodina’s distinctiveness as a region, in terms of its identity. Vojvodina’s flat landscapes, rich agricultural land, calm and easy-going people and colourful architecture makes it “stand out” from the larger part of Serbia – so it is claimed.

As a region Vojvodina encompasses vast agricultural land that Fick also comments on; representing flat land, Vojvodina has great expanses of farm land which can be visibly noticed when travelling by train from Belgrade to Novi Sad. Similarly throughout the centuries many people migrated to Vojvodina because of its profitable agriculture and soil.

Vojvodina was ruled by many empires in the past, including the Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the Ottoman Empire - which has accounted for the presence of the decorative architecture that can nowadays be seen in the centre. For instance the Petrovaradin Fortress represents “a unique gem of the world’s baroque military architecture” (Novi Sad City Museum, 2017); the Fortress looks upon the city of Novi Sad and is situated upon the Danube river, where it remains the only preserved Austro-Hungarian military structure in Serbia (Novi Sad City Museum, 2017).

In addition the centre of Novi Sad is very often described to represent a “European centre”, due to the way the city is structured to embody baroque architecture, the Danube that passes through the city, and the main Catholic Church that is situated in the centre of the town (represented by Ficks in the second illustration). Thus Vojvodina as a region within Serbia distinctively stands out with its particular landscape, history, and ambiance.



1.2 Vojvodina's Demography

Vojvodina has always embodied a very rich demographic picture, enveloping over 26 different ethnic minorities at present. There are four probable reasons towards explaining Vojvodina's demographic cocktail; firstly Vojvodina has been part of many empires, which relates to the natural inflow and outflow of different people who have either stayed on to live in Vojvodina, or have left a certain historical impact. Secondly forced migrations took place during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where in the 18th century the “Austrian rulers encouraged the settlement, along with the South Slaves, of other segments of the population as well, and performed the so-called colonisation” (Novi Sad City Museum, 2017); this was primarily done for economic reasons – to fill up the insufficiently populated southern areas of their state and to further form a defensive buffer zone towards the Ottoman Empire (Novi Sad City Museum, 2017). Thirdly many people migrated to Vojvodina because it represented an attractive region due to its profitable agricultural sector and fertile soil. Fourthly with the breakup of Yugoslavia and all the subsequent wars that took place, many people moved to Vojvodina in prospect for a better life; this resonates with the reality that Vojvodina has always been known for exemplifying a “multicultural region”. When talking to Sonja (who was a refugee from Bosnia), she said that her family moved to Vojvodina precisely because they knew it was ethnically

and culturally diverse and that she would “feel better in Vojvodina than anywhere else in Serbia, because there are people from different nationalities living there” (Sonja, 2017); anywhere else in Serbia she said that she had to hide the fact that she was not fully Serbian - yet in Vojvodina she felt like she could be herself.

Nonetheless Vojvodina has experienced a vast amount of demographic changes in the last couple of years, which is based on two main trends. Firstly there has been an increase in the “in movement” of ethnic Serbs with the immigration of Serbs from neighbouring countries, like Croatia and the Republika Srpska; secondly there has been a natural decrease in Vojvodina’s population including all ethnic groups that has been accounted from 2010. Vojvodina’s population has been shrinking firstly because ‘minorities in Vojvodina tend to be much older than Serbs, aging fast. Secondly intermarriage is also eating away at the minority share of the population (“Vanishing Vojvodina”, The Economist, 2010); the article mainly stresses this trend among the Serb ethnicity, which consequently means that if Serbs choose to marry among themselves, they will inevitably dominate demographically, since they already represent a majority. It is also interesting to mention here that many informants brought up this issue in regards to the Slovakian national minority, where it seemed to supposedly be “known” that Slovaks tended to prefer to marry partners from their own ethnicity, in order to preserve their ethnic identity corpus.

However demography is not the only reason for the decreasing minority population – “young Hungarian, Croats, Romanians leave to study and work in the lands of their compatriots” (“Vanishing Vojvodina”, The Economist, 2010), whereby the expansion of the European Union to take on many Eastern European countries and not Serbia has provided an extra incentive for young people (who have the opportunity to get an EU passport) to move away. With how things have been progressing so far, there are expectations that “by the end of the century Vojvodina will be 90 percent Serb and the remaining 10 percent will largely consist of Hungarians and Roma” (“Vanishing Vojvodina”, The Economist, 2010.) Nevertheless even though there is a vast overall decrease in Vojvodina’s demographic cocktail, in terms of diversity, one cannot disregard the reality that 26 ethnic minorities are presently living in the region.

Vojvodina’s demography has historically been subject to change; over the centuries Vojvodina’s demography has inevitably altered - in the beginning there were many more numbers of ethnic minorities living in the region, however nowadays Serbs constitute the largest ethnicity. The question that should be asked is whether Vojvodina’s future demographic picture will affect its “multicultural identity”, which seems to be something the region is promoting itself to exemplify.

1.3 Vojvodina and Multiculturalism

The region of Vojvodina is epitomised to embody a “multicultural character”, precisely because it has 26 different ethnic minorities living on its territory. There are two ways one can talk about Vojvodina’s multiculturalism. One way alludes to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and the representation of it being multicultural; the other way envelopes the very ethnic makeup and societal diversity that comes with the fact that 26 different ethnicities live in the region. The two ways of talking about Vojvodina’s multiculturalism may be related - however it is something that is not unproblematic. It should not be assumed that the ethnic composition of a society leads to the crafting of its multicultural representation and vice versa.

There is evidence that Vojvodina’s multicultural character is something that is proudly advertised and promoted among many political and cultural authorities; for example the government of Vojvodina (on their main website) state that Vojvodina is a region of demographic diversity, which “traditionally fosters multilingualism, multiculturalism, and multiconfessionalism” (“Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina”, 2013). Likewise Novi Sad has been chosen as the European Capital of Culture in 2021, especially due to its multicultural charm, since “for decades, Novi Sad has built its uniqueness on foundations of its multicultural character and numerous cultural and educational institutions it has” (“Novi Sad 2021”, 2014-2016). Hence by being the capital city, Novi Sad stands as a place that represents all the different ethnicities, which is why this is something that is proudly and positively promoted.

Furthermore Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is something that is recognised by the European Union and the outside world, which is confirmed by Vojvodina’s titles of being chosen as the 2019 European Youth Capital, and the European Capital of Culture in 2021. These examples implicate Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, as well as how it is being conceptualised and represented to be multicultural. Within the 2021 agenda there is emphasis on further developing cultural heritage, opening new spaces intended for culture, as well as mobilising cultural participation towards embracing significant principles of cultural development (“Novi Sad 2021”, 2014-2016). Similarly the 2019 agenda is dedicated towards showcasing Vojvodina’s youth related cultural, political, social, and economic life and development – as well as creating, implementing and expanding youth related activities and involvement (“Novi Sad 2019”, 2017). Consequently Vojvodina’s multiculturalism exemplifies a “European ideal” that is simultaneously being promoted by the region for its benefit. Through these projects and titles, Vojvodina is able to further its prosperity and development as a region, as well as attain accredited world-wide recognition. As emphasised by the Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’, “multiculturalism necessitates European values such as tolerance, respect, dialogue and a democratic attitude, which is something Vojvodina envelopes, and this is why it is many times referred to or called “little Europe” – because these ideas exist here” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Vojvodina’s ethnic makeup is something that has historical correlation and significance. As claimed by the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, “Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is not a mere project or representation; it is a definition as well as a description of a certain reality” (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). This implies that Vojvodina’s multiculturalism can be regarded as a certain “reality”, since 26 different ethnicities live on the territory. Moreover Vojvodina’s societal diversity is based on

contingency and history, because people have been migrating to Vojvodina throughout the centuries with the different empires, the attraction of Vojvodina's fertile soil and land, as well as migrating purposely or accidentally with the various Balkan wars that took place.

Equally one can argue that Vojvodina's structure of ethnic-cultural plurality stems from the various ethnicities that were part of the former Yugoslavia who now find themselves to reside in Vojvodina – whereby Vojvodina possibly embraces an “overarching Yugoslavian identity”. This is because the region of Vojvodina comprises nearly all of the ex-Yugoslavian minorities that make up its demographic picture. Vassilis Petsinis claims that “there has been an absence of a ‘domestic’ tradition of inter-communal friction in the province” (Petsinis, 2004: 99). This alludes to the fact that the various different ethnicities in Vojvodina have cohabited together for years, presenting no interethnic friction during the 90s - in contrast to the other multi-ethnic parts of the former Yugoslavia (Petsinis, 2004: 250). Hence Vojvodina perhaps demonstrates the only part of Yugoslavia where the Titoist slogan “brotherhood and unity” found its practical implementation (Petsinis, 2004: 99); this certainly seems to be true - a region with 26 different ethnicities has the factors that could lead to an interethnic war. However Vojvodina's autonomous status presents a possible factor that enables the region to deal with its ethnic diversity, by providing each ethnicity with political, cultural, and economic representation; for example the Romanians have 28 primary Romanian-language schools (Petsinis, 2003: 16). Similarly there are various cultural associations and leagues that promote the culture, language, and history of the different minorities. Furthermore the provincial government of Vojvodina embraces “multiculturalism” by having six official languages, as well as broadcasting news and various programmes in the languages of the major ethnic minorities.

Nonetheless there seems to be a tension relating to the present ethnic makeup of Vojvodina's society vs. the way in which the region is being conceptualised to be multicultural. This is because there is a natural decrease in the number of ethnicities present in the region, which is subsequently juxtaposed with the increasing number of ethnic Serbs. Consequently why is there an active promotion of Vojvodina embodying a multicultural region, when there seems to be a ‘Serbianisation’ of society? “Multiculturalism” seems to represent a value that is depicted as a “European ideal”, something that is seen as an advantage; however it is important to bear in mind that not all people might view multiculturalism as a benefit. In this sense one is urged to see if there are any other possible narratives that provide a “counter” to this multicultural claim that is being promoted. What is more, this multicultural proliferation of Vojvodina provides no inference into the region's locality in regards to what this means to the people – how they relate to and experience this societal plurality.

1.4 A short history of Vojvodina's autonomy and its political status

The issue of autonomy in itself raises many perplexing and controversial questions, which therefore makes it a complex topic to unwrap. "Autonomy" implies the right for a region to have independence, self-rule, sovereignty, and freedom from the larger part of a country. However the issue of autonomy is also many times connected to various possible secessions; for example a question that is usually posed within the autonomy debate, is when can a certain degree of autonomy lead to a potential secession? Hence the issue of autonomy on the one hand lies in concrete and formal protocols, yet on the other hand can also involve a "grey-zone".

Vojvodina represents an autonomous region in the northern part of Serbia that gained its first autonomous rights in 1944; however Vojvodina has suffered various fluctuations in its autonomous status throughout its history. As suggested by Ficks in the previous section, Vojvodina's autonomy is something that provides the region with the ability to "distinguish itself" from the larger part of the country. This in turn assists the region's progression because it enables it to independently make decisions. Consequently this can be related to Vojvodina's "up keeping" of its ethnic-cultural society, whereby its autonomous status enables the region to maintain its multiculturalism through the various rights, laws, financial support, media etc. that are being accustomed to the different ethnicities living in the region. As expressed by the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, "Vojvodina's multiculturalism is defined within its provincial government through laws and the practice of real politics" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Hence one should consider the possibility of Vojvodina's autonomous status being a factor that influences these ethnic minorities to stay in Serbia, because Vojvodina stands as a region that embraces its "own identity" within the larger part of the country – allowing these ethnicities to express and maintain their own identities, within the very region of Vojvodina.

Vojvodina's multi-ethnic makeup of society was something that was existent, as well as acknowledged during Yugoslavia. In the beginning, Vojvodina's autonomy was limited, however under the 1974 constitution, Vojvodina enjoyed extensive autonomous privileges. The decision of the Yugoslav Communists "to grant Vojvodina autonomy within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was conditioned by their concept of managing interethnic relations within a Socialist multicultural society" (Petsinis, 2004: 87); this statement firstly demonstrates that there already was a "management" of multiculturalism in Yugoslavia, whereby Vojvodina as a region within Yugoslavia was acknowledged as being multicultural; secondly it demonstrates that the actuality of embracing a multi-ethnic society was achieved through providing Vojvodina with autonomous privileges. This is because Vojvodina's autonomy allows it to independently deal with its multi-ethnic society, without the need to attain higher authority approval (from the government in Belgrade). It seems like granting Vojvodina with autonomy was a way for the region to embrace and protect its multiculturalism, because they were able to decide upon their own laws and rights. Moreover it also seemed to be a way to possibly suppress any potential conflict within the region; this was because by providing Vojvodina with autonomy, the region was able to independently offer the different ethnicities various privileges and rights that satisfied their needs.

Under Josip Broz Tito⁴ all the different ethnicities were able to peacefully co-habituate together, where one could argue that Tito's rule was able to suppress all the various notions of nationalisms that were present within Yugoslavia at the time; Tito's slogan "brotherhood-unity" was not accidental - Tito and the whole party knew that ethnic tensions could be a problem (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). When Tito's rule ended, the troubles in Yugoslavia arose - leading to violent war and conflict that finally led to the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. On the one hand, one can argue that Yugoslavia itself embodied an overarching representation of multiculturalism— in which after Tito, surging forms of nationalisms arose that led to bitter conflict and tensions. Nevertheless on the other hand, it can also be argued that the various different ethnicities all lived within their own countries that were represented under "Yugoslavia", which thus denotes ethnic blocks rather than interethnic co-habitation. In this sense there was enough balance between "being separate and living together" - whereby these ethnicities were separate enough in order to be able to live together. However the very breakup of Yugoslavia can be regarded as a symbol of the "failure" of multiculturalism to thrive. Vojvodina nonetheless remains a region that still envelopes mostly all of the major ex-Yugoslavian ethnicities, which deems it a region that possibly personifies this "multicultural heritage of Yugoslavia" - even though Vojvodina was multicultural even during the existence of Yugoslavia.

In 1989 Vojvodina's autonomy (as well as Kosovo's autonomy at the time) was revoked by Slobodan Milosevic⁵, who came to power in Serbia after Tito; Milosevic advocated for centralisation in an attempt to establish a dominant and unified Serbia. This was mobilised through the activation of the "conflict frame" (that was grounded in past memories of the Balkan wars), which played on people's fear of ethnic annihilation (Oberschall, 2000: 989-990). Thus there was a systematic activation of ethnic boundaries and "fault lines", which triggered ethnic nationalism and hatred among the different ethnicities in Yugoslavia; this eventually prompted the start of the breakup of Yugoslavia. Consequently with all the rising tensions and hatreds among the different ethnicities, as well as with how things progressed during the breakup of Yugoslavia – one can argue that it dims the very prospect of Yugoslavia ever achieving a "genuine form" of multiculturalism. It should be mentioned that with the wars that took place during and after the break-up of Yugoslavia - people's mind sets, forms of interaction, and communication have been impacted and engrained with certain prejudices and animosities.

Milosevic's plan of centralisation triggered an agenda of decentralisation in Vojvodina. Subsequently the 2002 Omnibus law was the first attempt that committed itself towards Vojvodina's autonomous provincial administration, after Milosevic's 1990 clampdown; the Omnibus law intended to secure a more efficient execution of certain administrative functions on a provincial level (Petsinis, 2004: 215). Furthermore Vojvodina's autonomous status and privileges were consolidated in the new 2006 Serbian Constitution, which consequently led to the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina that was adopted in 2008⁶. Within its autonomous Statute, Vojvodina encompasses its

⁴ Tito was the first president of Yugoslavia from 1971-1974, also serving various roles from 1943-1980

⁵ Milosevic was the president of Serbia from 1989-1997 and the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997-2000

⁶ <http://www.skupstinavojudine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&j=EN>

own provincial government whose activities are defined within the framework of competences under the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina - the supreme legal act of the Province ("Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina", 2013). Therefore Vojvodina enjoys its autonomous rights by having its own government including political, economic, and legal domains - however it is still under the main authority of Serbia. It is important to note that the adoption of the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina involved a contested and difficult process, because it led to separatist fear among many Serbian politicians. This was primarily the case with the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia who objected the Statute - claiming it was the first step to federalisation, as well as describing the situation in Vojvodina "as a wave of separatism" ("Vojvodina Statute Adopted", B92, 2008).

More recently there have been various political parties that have advocated for more autonomy within Vojvodina. One of these parties is the Vojvodina Party that was formed in 2005, which advocates for more autonomy for the region. In 2013, the Vojvodina party campaigned for a proposal of a 'Third Serbia' that involved the creation of a Republic of Vojvodina ("New Posters for the Vojvodina Republic", B92, 2013). Similarly the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina that was founded in 1990 also advocated for more autonomy for the region; at the start of its establishment until 2011, the League has desired to establish a Republic of Vojvodina within a federalised Serbia. However, more recently, the League has abandoned its "Republic idea" and is now focused on attaining a larger amount of autonomy for Vojvodina. Thus it is clear that there have been organised attempts to bolster Vojvodina's autonomy in the past, and even though these political groups are marginal and these attempts have either failed or been abandoned, they do represent legitimate and on-going questions of what will be the future situation of the region.

It is interesting to mention that some of the experts that were interviewed pointed out the "problem" with seeing Vojvodina as "distinct" and "different" from Serbia, in regards to its multiculturalism - because of the fear of potential separatist movements and secession. Politicians as well as people who "regard this multicultural claim within some sort of regional context can have various separatist ideas, which only a small minority of people are prone to" (Assistant Professor of Tourism, 2017). Nonetheless even though this idea is not publically promoted, it is something that many people seem to mention as "plausibly possible" - a certain way people could adhere to Vojvodina's multiculturalism in regards to its autonomy, which seems to be a reason of possible concern.

Moreover the very adherence towards the use of "Vojvodinian" was also something that was alluded towards possibly sparking tensions when it came to the very sense of national belonging; The Director of the 'Serbian Cultural House' in Novi Sad states that "the use of "Vojvodinian" does not allude to or mean multi-ethnic, but it promotes the idea of the people who want to be separate from Serbia" (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). In this regard the use of "Vojvodinian" (relating to national belonging), as well as emphasising Vojvodina's "multiculturalism" crafts the region as seeming to be "separate" from Serbia - which is not something that is liked by the larger part of the country; according to Aleksandar Popov this is because it reduces and endangers the 'homogenous Serbian ethnic corpus' (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). This is a problem because the promoting of homogeneity stands as an absolute counter narrative to multiculturalism. Similarly the various ethnic minorities will see this "national Serbian homogeneity" that is being emphasised, which in turn leads

them to also promote this sense of national homogeneity (Aleksandar Popov, 2017); consequently there is no positive form of multiculturalism – yet only the prospect for potential tensions.

Nevertheless most experts that were interviewed would agree that Vojvodina's autonomy positively benefits its multiculturalism, because it allows the region to decide on its own laws and rights, without the need for a higher authority approval. Hence by being autonomous, Vojvodina profits by having the right to decide on its own protocols when it comes to ethnic minorities that live in the region. Accordingly "Vojvodina's multiculturalism lies on its autonomy" (Professor of Demography, 2017), since it enables multiculturalism to be actualised by providing ethnic minorities the ability to be schooled in their own language, to have broadcasting of news in different languages etc. In this sense Vojvodina's autonomy formally helps in terms of its multiculturalism. It provides the various ethnicities with privileges and rights that possibly have an impact on their residence within the region - because they are able to maintain their identities within Vojvodina.

On the one hand, Vojvodina's autonomous status represents an enabler for the management of its multiculturalism; likewise Vojvodina's autonomy practically allows the region to take action in dealing with its ethnic-cultural society, and allowing it to prosper. Nonetheless on the other hand, Vojvodina's autonomous status has oscillated throughout its history and has been an issue of contestation throughout, where it stands to envelope a sensitive topic for one to dwell on.

1.5 1990s rising animosities and their consequences

The break-up of Yugoslavia and the consequent Balkan wars that took place have left heavy impacts on people's mind sets and psychologies. People's minds have been engrained with certain prejudices and stereotypes as a consequence of the wars. Moreover there has been a reemphasis of identity and a growing sense of nationalism accompanying politics; the general saying stands to claim that older generations that have lived throughout the years of Yugoslavia, know how it was to live among this "ethnic diversity", whereas the more younger generations only hear the stories and depictions of the past that are nowadays smeared with the animosity and hatreds of past wars.

It is interesting to note that many of the (Serbian) youth that was interviewed, mentioned how the older generations are not tolerant of "difference" and that they uphold certain prejudices about other ethnicities in the region. In their interviews, Ivko and Jovana claim that "the youth is so open for everything, whereas the older people are so closed in terms multiculturalism...for example the way the older people say "Hungarian" with such a negative connotation is so bad" (Ivko and Jovana, 2017). Likewise there was an emphasis on how older generations are generally "less interested and involved with this notion of multiculturalism" (Ivko and Jovana, 2017), whereby they tend to abide by various "life standards and expectations" that seem to be in friction with the mind sets of younger generations. Hence it seems like the older generations that were affected by the wars have embedded animosities and biases towards certain ethnicities, which this is something that is noticed by the youth.

On the contrary, some of the experts that were interviewed stated that it was the younger generations that had a certain "guard" in regards to intermingling with the different ethnicities, and that they do not know what it means to live in a setting with various different nationalities. As emphasised by Aleksandar Popov, "it is the older generations who notice (and like to see) that his or

her neighbour is Hungarian or Slovak, it is these people that have this sentimentality and they want to maintain this multiculturalism; nevertheless there is a negative awareness of this in regards to seeing this “otherness” and “difference” – this is mainly among the younger generations” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). In this sense Popov is attempting to imply that the “younger generations - the people that migrated to Vojvodina in the 90s after the wars - they do not understand this multi-ethnic character of Vojvodina, and they thus experience this as a foreign and unfamiliar concept (Aleksandar Popov, 2017).

Serbia has suffered various secessions in the past years that have impacted the very socio-political physiology of the country. During the existence of Yugoslavia, Serbia felt like it represented the main “centre”, even though Yugoslavia was a federation of six different republics. This was because the Serbian royal House of ‘Karađorđević’ became the Yugoslav royal dynasty. Moreover Tito (who was the president of Yugoslavia at the time) ruled the federation of Yugoslavia from Serbia itself. Tim Judah states that “only Tito prevented Serb domination”⁷ (“Understanding Yugoslavia”, The Economist, 1997), because he was able to balance all the various ethnic nationalisms through his policies and slogans of “brotherhood and unity”. Therefore with the death of Tito and Slobodan Milosevic coming to power in Serbia (from 1997-2000), rising sentiments of nationalism resurfaced. As mentioned in the previous section, this was due to the active manipulation of the media, and the subsequent activation of the “conflict frame” that played on people’s fear of ethnic extermination (Oberschall, 2000: 989-990). There was a vigorous crafting of Serbian nationalism through the idea of making Serbia “great” again. Micheal Portmann proclaims that during the Yugoslav wars of secession in the 1990s, it is estimated that some “30,000 to 50,000 Croats and 40,000 Hungarians immigrated from Vojvodina to their “motherlands”, in order to not be exposed to ethnic violence, intimidation and (informal) ethnic discrimination” (Portmann, 2016: 447). Thus even in Vojvodina, where it has been argued to have not involved more manifested forms of violence and conflict, people felt the urge to flee, due to the various ethnic tensions within the region that were accompanied with a rise of nationalism that was politically spurred.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia was inevitably stripped from its previous glory and power. Likewise with the subsequent seceding of Montenegro in 2006 and Kosovo in 2008, Serbia has felt a “deep loss” in terms of its dominance and power in the region. Therefore one can argue that Serbia has an entrenched distress of losing more parts of its territory; this can be related to Serbia’s embedded fear with the possibility of Vojvodina seceding – hence any connotation or emphasis in regards to seeing or promoting Vojvodina as “distinct” or “separate” from Serbia, is viewed upon with fear and concern. Moreover the reason for many of Serbia’s political choices and actions possibly stem from Serbia’s enrooted and unconscious fear of being vulnerable, and experiencing a denouncement of its sovereignty once again.

The breakup of Yugoslavia and the consequent Balkan wars, as well as the various secessions Serbia has gone through can be examined and probed to a very intricate extent. It presents a very complex issue that this thesis cannot sufficiently cover. Yet it is something that requires touching upon and mentioning within the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina, because it is something that has left a possible footprint.

⁷ <http://www.economist.com/node/597397>

In conclusion, when examining the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina, it is important to acknowledge that the past wars and secessions have left consequences on people's mind sets, interactions, as well as politics itself. Even though this is clearly not something that is openly addressed, whereby most people do not directly adhere to this topic - because they are possibly not aware that this is the case, or they do not wish to openly engage with the topic – it is something that should be recognised as a factor that is responsible for the forming of certain prejudices and tensions within the region. Consequently people's identity and the very issue of multiculturalism in itself, is never neutral. People use their identity strategically - it is something that takes on different forms and is emphasised in certain situations, as well as denounced in others. It is also important to understand that people uphold this multicultural claim for different reasons – it means different things to different people, and it will be utilised in different ways for different motives.

The information provided on the region of Vojvodina, involving its demography, multiculturalism, autonomy and political status, as well as the reference to the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent 1990s tensions, was important in terms of setting the background for this thesis. This introduction provided the reader with the necessary foundation of the region, which will consequently enable the reader to have a contextualised setting of what is to follow.

There is an evident ambiguity surrounding Vojvodina's multiculturalism - is its multicultural claim representative of its current societal makeup? More precisely, is Vojvodina's multicultural claim mirroring its societal reality - in terms of its ethnic composition, but also in the way in which people interact and communicate with each other? This thesis will go on to deconstruct the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality through the very discourse of the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad. Emphasis will be placed on how the youth relates to their ethnic-cultural surroundings – in regards to how they talk about it, perceive it, and give meaning to it. This will further inform whether the (Serbian) youth thinks there are certain tensions among the different ethnicities in the region. Accordingly it is through the everyday discourse of the youth, who will engage with how this notion of multiculturalism is personified within their daily lives, that the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality will be deconstructed.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The aim of this thesis is to find out how the (Serbian) youth conceptualises and gives meaning to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in regards to explicating the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality. This will be investigated through the examination of how the youth perceives and talks about their present lived reality, concerning its ethnic-cultural composition that will also inform upon the youth's opinions on Vojvodina's multicultural claim, and how they consider this narrative to be manifested in their current surroundings.

When inquiring about the topic of multiculturalism, notions of identity will inexorably assemble the bulk of the discussion; this is because one is talking about their engagement and experience within a society that envelopes various different ethnicities. Hence light will be shed on one's place in society, as well as their sense of belonging within the community. Moreover by examining the different ways the youth gives meaning to their surroundings, there will also be an insight into how the youth esteems Vojvodina's multicultural claim - relating to how this narrative expresses itself in their everyday lives. In this sense, the youth will illuminate upon the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality through their own insights, in regards to their environment structure, their engagements, interactions, and experiences with their ethnic-cultural surroundings.

This thesis has decided to utilise a *constructivist perspective* towards examining how the (Serbian) youth perceives their surroundings, as well as how they subsequently give meaning to Vojvodina's multicultural claim.

A constructivist perspective will primarily be used in regards to people's notion of identity and the way they engage and relate to their surroundings. This is because a constructivist perspective enables one to see the malleable ways people relate to and talk of their identity and sense of belonging. As stated by Anthony Oberschall, who is a Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a constructivist perspective "views ethnic identity and sentiment as a social fact", meaning that it is not fixed and that it embodies variance and fluidity in the ways people ethnically identify or feel (Oberschall, 2000: 983). Consequently a constructivist perspective looks at how people construct their "reality" from the different experiences they go through. Each person's reality is different, depending on their past experience, which consequently also implies that the way people choose to identify is also subjective, as well as dependant on various factors.

Moreover a constructivist perspective presents a *social process* that sees identity as something that is continuously made and re-made. It bases itself on the various forms of *identity constructions* – from the fluid ways one can relate to their sense of belonging – to the more homogenous idea of "what it is to be a Serb" for example. Hence using a constructivist perspective allows for one to acknowledge all the different processes that can make up a person's identity.

What is more, a constructivist perspective will also aid this thesis to examine the way in which the youth relates to Vojvodina's notion of multiculturalism. This is primarily because Vojvodina's multicultural claim presents a construction, in which it is used as well as propagated in various different ways. Similarly the way in which the youth will adhere to and uphold Vojvodina's ethnic-cultural diversity (involving its multicultural narrative), will also be fluid - positive and negative - where it will depend on various factors relating to people's backgrounds, experiences, but also

strategic reasons, in regards to it being important for providing more opportunities for the youth for example. In this sense, Vojvodina's multiculturalism can be seen as a *process* (within this constructivist perspective on identity) that can craft one's identity and sense of belonging. This is because it presents a social mechanism that is institutionally propagated but also finds local manifestation through the presence of ethnic-cultural diversity. Thus this thesis is interested in seeing how people connect to as well as describe the local expression of this institutional narrative and its ethnic-cultural diversity.

As a result, this thesis will utilise a constructivist perspective towards analysing the politics of multiculturalism in Vojvodina. A constructivist perspective will principally enable this thesis to take into account the various different ways the youth adheres to their sense of belonging - relating to how they talk about their ethnicity, and how they describe their connection to Vojvodina's multicultural claim. Likewise a constructivist perspective will help this thesis in examining how the youth engages within society, in regards to the different ways people relate to one another. In addition the way in which the youth upholds this multicultural narrative, to the assorted ways they give meaning to it and their surroundings, will also be actualised through a constructivist lens.

The following two sections will outline the general discussions around the notions of "identity" and "multiculturalism" through a constructivist lens, in which it will also describe how this thesis will refer to and use the concepts involved within these discussions.

2.1 What is identity and how is it constructed?

A lot of literature has been written on the notion of "identity", since it is considered to be one of the most assorted and perplexing domains of research. The word "identity" comes from the Latin idem "the same", thus representing an existing similarity, a notion of sameness, as well as a sense of shared belonging among a group of people (Zhan Xiaomei and Wang Shimin, 2014: 155-156). The concept of identity can involve logistical magnitudes (i.e. place of birth), or relate to more subjective spheres of belonging that are rather bounded to a specific person, and their experience as well as emotions. Furthermore the realm of identity branches out to include various "aspects of identity", including political, national, cultural, social, ethnic, regional, as well as economic identity. This is why the notion of "identity" is so diverse and vast, because all of these aspects can affect, influence, and be a part of one's identity. When looking at the youth living in Novi Sad, it is important to bear in mind that all of these different aspects can impact one's way of identifying.

It is also worthwhile acknowledging that "the youth" present a segment of the population that is possibly "more open" to the outside world - meaning that they might be affected by different factors of globalisation that can also impact the way they identify. In this regard, the youth stand to represent a generation whose identity might be affected by a myriad of different factors, which is why a constructivist perspective on identity will help take into account the fluidity when it comes to the youth's sense of belonging.

Stuart Hall, who is a cultural theorist, political activist, sociologist, and one of the founding figures of the school of thought that is known as the "Birmingham School of Cultural Studies", distinguishes between three different conceptions of identity: the *enlightenment subject*, the *sociological subject*, and the *post-modern subject*. These different subjects offer academic perspectives through which

one can look at the different notions of identity. Firstly the *enlightenment subject* focuses on the “individualist conception of the subject and his identity” (Stuart Hall, 1992: 275), alluding to the fact that humans are fully conscious and capable - whereby the inner ‘centre’ of identity firstly emerged when the subject was born, and then subsequently unfolded throughout the individual’s existence (Hall, 1992: 275). Secondly the *sociological subject* claims that the inner core of identity is not autonomous, yet formed in relation to significant others who “mediated the subject to the culture of the worlds he or she inhabited” (Hall, 1992: 276-277). Thirdly the *post-modern subject* asserts that identity is not fixed, yet it is transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented and addressed in the cultural system that surrounds us (Hall, 1992: 277); thus “the subject” can assume different identities at different times, in which he or she is not unified around a coherent “self” (Hall, 1992: 277).

This thesis primarily abides to the “postmodern subject”, because it believes that identity is not fixed, it is something that is fluid, whereby people can embody different notions of identity that come out in different situations. Similarly this also relates to the issue of globalisation, and how one’s “cultural system” nowadays embodies a larger part of the outside world that can easily be reached, as well as manifested within one’s daily life. Hence this can also impact the way people identify and how they relate to their sense of belonging, which can envelope more than just one’s country or regional circle.

Moreover this thesis will also acknowledge the “sociological subject”, since it will be looking at how the youth talks about and gives meaning to their surroundings that is structured upon the probable “interaction” among people from different ethnicities. Accordingly the very social mechanism of “multiculturalism” embodies a *process* that can affect the way in which people relate to their sense of belonging, in regards to it being part of their larger “cultural constellation” in terms of their family structure, friends, and subsequent engagement with the different ethnicities in their surroundings. When referring to the youth’s “cultural constellation” or “cultural system”, this thesis is speaking of the youth’s social and cultural backgrounds in regards to their specific social experiences, family contexts, but also their specific political, historical, economic, and social practices within their milieu that impact their being and how they talk about things.

It is important to mention that the “postmodern subject” will play a much larger role than the “sociological subject”. This is primarily because the “postmodern subject” offers a more comprehensive domain of engaging with how someone relates to their identity and surroundings – where it can be argued that the “sociological subject” presents a part of the bigger picture of one’s cultural system that finds itself within the “postmodern subject” itself. This is why this thesis has decided to utilise a “postmodern subject” alongside a constructivist perspective, because it believes the “postmodern subject” builds onto the constructivist perspective, by providing adherence to the importance of one’s “cultural system” in regards to impacting identity. This further relates to the context of the youth living in Novi Sad, where they will inexorably connect to this notion of “multiculturalism” in diverse ways, since each person is affected by this process in different ways and degrees - depending on their specific involvement and or impact of their cultural constellation. Being within this “cultural system” that propagates a multicultural claim, as well as supposedly embodies an environment of ethnic-cultural plurality – “multiculturalism” as a social process is seemingly part of the youth’s cultural milieu that can impact one’s sense of belonging in different ways. In this

regard, there will be recognition of the fluid ways through which the youth adheres to their identity that will be supported with the acknowledgement of how the youth's cultural system influences the way they relate to their surroundings and sense of belonging.

Most literature on identity focuses on how people's sense of belonging is linked to the conception of the nation state. For example Lauren Leve, who is an Assistant Professor within the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examines the concept of "identity" in regards to the nation, where she implies that the notion of identity is also bounded, shaped, and reinforced by, as well as within the nation state itself. She does this by introducing the concept of a "identity machine", which is an apparatus that "establishes not only the categories of identity recognised and claimed in democratic states, but also the ontological foundations in liberal conceptions of self, citizenship, and social relations" (Leve, 2011: 513). This brings in the notion of *national identity*, which has been an important domain in the past, especially in the 19th century with the emergence of nation states. Roger Scruton who is an English philosopher and writer, specialising in aesthetics and political philosophy, claims that individuals can only act as autonomous beings, because they can firstly identify themselves with "something greater" – "as a member of society, state, region etc. to which people may not attach a name to, but which they recognise instinctively as home" (Scruton, 1986: 156).

Similarly Ernest Gellner, who is a British-Czech philosopher and social anthropologist, adheres to Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" by attaching importance to the nation state as a symbolic community, where there is a "'system of cultural representation' that makes people participate in the idea of the nation as characterised in its national culture" (Gellner, 1983: 6). In this sense Gellner makes a link between the nation state and its inherent promotion of a "cultural representation", which provides that specific nation with a distinct and symbolic "culture"; for example this can be visualised through the way "Dutchness" or "Englishness" is represented – exhibiting a set of meanings and connotations that make us immediately know what it is to be Dutch or English. Hence it seems like notions of identity are very often produced, reinforced, as well as sustained through the nation state itself. Nevertheless while these authors illuminate upon the presence of the "nation state" relating to one's notion of identity, they also implicitly allude to the power of one's broader "cultural constellation" that impacts a person's sense of belonging - this being one's political, historical, and social background that comprises people's family context and social circle for example.

Zhan Xiaomei and Wang Shimin, who are academics at the Sun Yat-sen University in China, offer a more to date examination of *political* and *cultural identity*, by also providing a link to the nation state. It is often the case that the notion of political identity is compared to the notion of national identity - however political identity relates to "the political units (nation, state, town, and region), geographical areas, and groups to which one feels he or she belongs to" (Xiaomei and Shimin, 2014: 160). Likewise political identity does not only represent the "group character" of a nation state, but also provides a psychological indicator enabling the formation of the nation state (Xiaomei and Shimin, 2014: 160). Thus the notion of political identity differs in regards to the notion of national identity, because it firstly involves a much broader range of possibilities to the way in which identity can be formed; secondly political identity relates more to the way people are politically socialised

within geographical boundaries; thirdly the way in which people relate to their physical and geographical surroundings has an effect on the way the nation state is formed.

Likewise *cultural identity* is the process by which “members of a nation recognise, accept and affirm the culture of their nation and thus acquire a sense of belonging” (Xiaomei and Shimin, 2014: 158). Hence cultural identity (similarly like political identity) embodies a focus on “group identity” that is intertwined with a sense of culture, which provides a form of mutual belonging - further standing to represent the nation. In this regard Xiaomei and Shimin talk about *political* and *cultural* identity, where they stress the interrelation between these two ways of adhering to identity that recognises how these two ways merge one’s social and cultural ethnic belonging, with the way in which one accepts the political units and values of a place they live in (Xiaomei and Shimin, 2014: 160-161). This once again alludes to the importance of the “postmodern subject” that brings in this broader sense of a cultural constellation - involving one’s social reality, community, and environment but also one’s political geography and values of the place they live in that affects an individuals’ notion of identity. This consequently relates to the abundance of ways one can relate to their sense of belonging.

Even though most authors choose to focus on “one aspect” of a person’s identity, through their accounts, the authors allude to the inevitable impact of one’s larger cultural sphere that influences the way in which one relates to their identity. One can argue that Xiaomei and Shimin take on a more constructivist perspective by suggesting that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between how people identity and how the nation state is formed in itself – whereas Scruiton and Gellner take on a more “top down approach”, by inferring that it is in the very nature and power of the nation state to construct people’s sense of belonging. However even though Scruiton and Gellner put more emphasis on how national identity constrains itself to the more concrete structure of the nation state, and Xiaomei and Shimin reflect more on how political and cultural identity go beyond the boundaries of the nation state – all authors seem to implicitly embrace the “postmodern subject” that indicates towards the more symbolic influence of a person’s broader cultural constellation. Nevertheless this is not made clear enough in the literature provided above, because there is no explicit or poignant acknowledgement of one’s broader cultural system that can impact people’s way of identifying – yet there is a preferred adherence to a certain domain of a person’s identity, whether that is in regards to national, political, or cultural identity. This is why this thesis has decided to illuminate upon one’s broader cultural constellation, by focusing on how the local youth talks about and engages with their surroundings and sense of belonging. In this regard this thesis will give direct importance to the “postmodern subject”.

When examining the concept of identity, the notion of *ethnicity* also presents a significant domain one must be aware of. Human beings are products of evolutionary processes, which implies upon their relevance involving various social phenomenon that also stands to hold for the notion of ethnicity (Marko Skoric, 2006: 285). This implies the malleable nature of “ethnicity”, where it can be manipulated, used in a strategic way, as well as accentuated and denounced in specific situations. The main elements of *ethnic identity* are considered to encompass a shared culture, language, traditions, laws - but also the conceptualisation and definition of reality in a way that involves beliefs, values, and symbols that helps one to imagine their subsequent actions and behaviour (Kokovic and Zolt, 2006: 118). This thesis will mainly be referring to the notion of *ethnic identity*, even though this will not be explicitly mentioned, since there will be a focus on how the youth’s larger cultural

constellation affects their sense of belonging that will be given significance through their very discourse.

When connecting to the case of Vojvodina, one can argue that its multicultural claim presents an “institutional narrative” that is diffused and promoted by the provincial government of Vojvodina. This is because Vojvodina’s multicultural claim grounds itself on the formal level, by exemplifying a narrative that depicts the region’s image it desires to embody to the outside world. Consequently its multicultural claim presents a feature of “the region of Vojvodina” that could stand to symbolise some sort of “shared regional identity” that potentially impacts people’s sense of belonging. By utilising a constructivist perspective, and looking at the different ways the youth gives meaning to their sense of belonging within the region of Vojvodina - this thesis will attempt to find out the different ways in which this claim expresses itself within the lives of the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad.

Accordingly this thesis will utilise a constructivist perspective, acknowledging how identity and more specifically “ethnicity” in this case are social domains that are malleable and that can be eroded, as well as fabricated. Moreover this thesis will give significance to the “postmodern subject”, in regards to enlightening how the youth engages with their larger cultural constellation through their engrossment with their present milieu. This is why this thesis will talk of “identity” and not give it a specific “label” or “aspect”, since it desires to expose the fluid nature of how one can relate to their sense of belonging. Additionally this thesis will also provide insight into the ways in which the youth esteems Vojvodina’s multicultural claim - whether they can connect to it in terms of their sense of belonging, and how this narrative is personified in their everyday lives. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its supposed ethnic-cultural diversity embody part of the youth’s present “cultural system” that therefore makes it important to acknowledge the way in which the youth talks about and relates to this social mechanism, as well as how it seems to impact, engage, and manifest itself in regards to the youth.

Even though this thesis is focused on the “Serbian youth” (where it will inevitably be utilising this sort of classification), since the people interviewed are regarded to be “Serbian” by the larger part of society itself - because they speak Serbian, and have the “option” of a Serbian identity, whereas other national minorities do not – this thesis will not assume that people identify with a specific ethnicity or that they adhere to a specific sense of belonging – yet it will provide people with the space to express themselves in regards to their identification sentiments and attachments. Hence by using a constructivist perspective alongside a “postmodern subject”, this thesis will demonstrate the varied ways people can relate to their identity – whether that is labelling themselves as “Serbian” and adhering to that identity construction – or refusing to constrict themselves to a certain identity domain and thus embracing more of a fluid sense of belonging. This will also involve the way in which the youth relates to their ethnic-cultural environment and Vojvodina’s multicultural claim.

2.2 Multiculturalism

This thesis acknowledges that the general realm of multiculturalism, as well as the subsequent literature on it envelopes an institutional domain; similarly Vojvodina's multicultural claim also stems from an institutional platform, being promoted by the local government, as well as various other political and cultural authorities. Nonetheless by utilising a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject", this thesis views the domain of multiculturalism not only as an institutional form of propagation, but as a narrative that also finds local expression. This is because Vojvodina's ethnic-cultural context and its multicultural claim avocation embed the region's locality, as well as the youth's present reality. Consequently this thesis finds interest in the way in which this mechanism in society is talked about, perceived, and engaged with. This connects to the different ways in which the youth upholds and relates to Vojvodina's multiculturalism – in regards to how they theorise upon the very makeup of society, how they conceptualise their ethnic-cultural surroundings and their relation towards it, but also concerning how the youth considers this multicultural narrative to be expressed in their daily lives. This is also why throughout their accounts, the youth switches from talking about their multicultural surroundings and experiences, to Vojvodina's multicultural claim – some relate their connection to "multiculturalism" by talking about their ethnic-cultural environment, some adhere to Vojvodina's multicultural narrative, while others talk about the relation between the two.

This thesis considers Vojvodina's multicultural claim to be a "construction", since it is made up to embody a certain story pertaining to the region of Vojvodina. What is more, people also consider this multicultural narrative to have diverse motives, usages, and promotions. Hence a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject" will enable this thesis to acknowledge the assorted ways the youth views this claim to be personified in their lives, in which it will demonstrate the various opinions the youth has in regards to the claims' usage and motives. Likewise a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject" will allow this thesis to regard the broader cultural constellation relating to how the youth adheres to, talks about, and gives meaning to their supposed multicultural surroundings – which will illuminate the very relation between Vojvodina's multicultural construction and their present lived reality.

Downloading and Uploading

Within this constructivist perspective, Kees Terlouw and Bouke van Gorp, who are researchers and academics within the Faculty of Geosciences at the University of Utrecht, introduce the concepts of "Downloading" and "Uploading" that are significant in regards to conceptualising how Vojvodina's multicultural claim came about. "Downloading" refers to a region that has "taken" or "assumed" certain characteristics from nations and or regions to which they belong or belonged to; "Uploading" denotes the "generating" or "yielding" of specific qualities from cities and areas within their boundaries" (Terlouw and Bouke, 2014: 863). This is significant when looking at Vojvodina's multicultural claim, in regards to seeing how it has been constructed; has this multicultural claim been "Downloaded" from the larger part of Serbia and the former Yugoslavia, where it possibly emblematises a former multicultural Yugoslavian identity heritage? Or has this multicultural claim been "Uploaded" from the region of Vojvodina itself, based on certain qualities and characteristics from within its boundaries?

It is not in the interest of this thesis to find out how Vojvodina's multicultural claim specifically came about; yet this thesis desires to see how the (Serbian) youth perceives Vojvodina's multiculturalism – do they see it as something “specific” for Vojvodina (something that provides the region with its authenticity), or do they consider it something that can be found anywhere. If the youth considers Vojvodina's multiculturalism as “specific” for the region, then they see it as being “Uploaded” – constructed from the characteristics that provide the region with its specificity. However if the youth regards this claim as something that can be found elsewhere, then they see it as something that has been “Downloaded” – copied and crafted from a region it belonged or belongs to. Thus in this sense, these two concepts will be used as tools to investigate how the (Serbian) youth gives meaning to Vojvodina's multiculturalism. This will in turn show the way in which the Serbian youth theorises upon this claim, and how they conceptualise its very nature in regards to the makeup of the Vojvodinian society.

Regional identity and consciousness

Anssi Paasi is a professor of Geography at the University of Oulu in Finland, who has written a lot on regional identity, stating that “regions are understood as historically contingent structures whose institutionalisation is based on their territorial, symbolic, and institutional shaping” (Paasi, 2002, pg.139). Moreover Paasi demonstrates the importance of regional consciousness when it comes to regional identity; essentially the regions inhabitants' notion of identity is based on the impact of regional consciousness. It is therefore regional identity that joins people together, provides people with shared regional values and self-confidence...trust, social capital and solidarity needed for institutional thickness” (Paasi, 2002: 140). Hence in regards to Paasi, regional identity can exist only if people believe in the factors that make up the regional identity, which subsequently also constructs a meaningful socio-political space (Paasi, 2002: 138). Paasi mainly focuses his notion of regional identity on territorialisation and the state, whereby boundaries are used to distinguish an area domain or social collectivity ('us') from others (Paasi, 2002: 139); however Paasi also involves this notion of regional consciousness that relates to the personal level of people – providing an answer to the question “where do I belong?”. In this sense, it is interesting to primarily examine whether the (Serbian) youth has regional consciousness - whether they are aware of the fact that 26 different ethnicities live in the region? Moreover through the youth's regional consciousness, this thesis will attempt to see whether they are able to craft upon Vojvodina's sense of regional identity. In this regard, does the (Serbian) youth perceive “Vojvodina's multiculturalism” to envelope a regional narrative, something that provides the region with its “identity”? Equally how do they connect to this narrative in terms of their sense of belonging? Through utilising a constructivist perspective alongside a “postmodern subject”, this thesis aims to delve into the youth's awareness (their makeup) of regional consciousness, in order to examine how they conceptualise their connection with Vojvodina's multicultural claim, as well as how they describe their present societal realities.

Multiculturalism as a theory

“Multiculturalism” stands to embody a society that is heterogeneous. It represents a fact - a definition, where it alludes to the physical presence of several distinct ethnic or cultural groups within a specific society or region (Oxford Dictionary, 2017⁸). Other than adhering to the existence of plurality within a specific region or society, multiculturalism also refers to the situation in which all the different ethnic and cultural groups have equal rights and opportunities (Collins Dictionary, 2017⁹). This is supported by Katharyne Mitchell who states that “multiculturalism is not about inclusion or acceptance of difference but actively “achieves” diversity - it expands the range of imagined life experiences for members of society’s core groups” (Mitchell, 2004: 642). This is because multiculturalism deals with particular modes of immigrant incorporation, and minority recognition and protection. Furthermore Joseph Raz who is a prominent legal, moral, and political philosopher, known for his conception of perfectionist liberalism, claims that multiculturalism means among other things, “the coexistence within the same political society of a number of sizable cultural groups wishing and in principle able to maintain their distinct identity” (Raz, 1998: 197). Hence multiculturalism seems to present a “definition” that embodies a formal and institutional role that holds responsibility in the abiding towards ethnic and cultural plurality, by providing these cultural and ethnic groups with opportunities to maintain their identity. This is done through the protection and recognition of these different groups of people, by stipulating upon their rights, laws, and freedoms.

In both theoretical and policy discourses, multiculturalism means different things in different places; therefore one can argue that multiculturalism is polysemic - it encapsulates a variety of sometimes contested meanings. Additionally not all societies are multicultural in the same way - where the consequences of multiculturalism are also not the same everywhere. What is nonetheless “the same” in all multicultural communities is the danger of the sharpening of the question of the relations between the majority and minority populations; in this sense behind the placate of multiculturalism lies the complicated question of “minorities”, which are from the start (within their very definition), underprivileged in regards to the majority population (Milan Tripkovic, 2006: 17).

Milan Tripkovic, an academic of sociology within the Department of Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad, distinguishes between three different meanings of multiculturalism (2006:9): “multicultural” (that reflects the objective makeup of a society), “multiculturalisation” (representing the process of a society becoming multicultural), and “multiculturalism” (as an ideology and or a political idea). When relating this to the case of Vojvodina, this thesis will utilise “multicultural” to talk of Vojvodina’s ethnic-cultural plurality. The notion of “multiculturalisation” will not be used, since this thesis is looking into a context that is already supposed to be ethnically and culturally diverse. Likewise this thesis will not use the notion of “multiculturalism” to refer to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim that implicates a political ideology and or idea – yet it will directly make reference to Vojvodina’s “multicultural claim”, which presents an institutional narrative that is formally embedded. Consequently this thesis will make a difference between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim

⁸ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/multiculturalism>

⁹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/multiculturalism>

and its ethnic-cultural reality. However it is important to mention that this thesis will make reference to the notion of “multiculturalism”, especially in the empirical chapters. This is primarily for practical reasons, since throughout the youth’s accounts - they talk of “multiculturalism” to stand for the very conception of “societal plurality”. Furthermore there will occasionally be inferences to “Vojvodina’s multiculturalism”, which in the light of this thesis merely stands to represent the fact that Vojvodina comprises 26 different ethnicities living in the region, where it is thus presumed to be “multicultural” - being represented as a region that comprises ethnic-cultural diversity. In this regard this conjoins the government’s institutional propagation with the general ambiance of Vojvodina’s societal context that supposedly exemplifies ethnic-cultural diversity. This further stands to encapsulate the youth’s broader “cultural constellation”, since both of these aspects find expression within their very environment. Nevertheless if this thesis is trying to refer to something more than what is indicated above, to encompass “*Vojvodina’s multiculturalism*”, then this will be clearly indicated, by either referring to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim or its ethnic-cultural society.

In the last 10 years there has been a rapid and significant development in the way pluralist societies organise living with “difference” – there has been a retreat of multicultural citizenship (Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, 2012: 176). Nasar Meer who is a lecturer of Sociology at the University of Northumbria, and Tariq Modood who is a lecturer of Sociology, Politics, and Public Policy, as well as the Director of the Centre for The Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol, assert that this is due to the manifestations of interethnic violence and tensions that took place around the world, in which the notion of “diversity” is sometimes regarded as controversial. Consequently “multiculturalism” as a public policy has suffered considerable “political damage” (Meer and Modood, 2012: 176).

Joseph Raz states that the “replacing of nationalism as the common bond of society is one of the main political challenges facing multiculturalism” (Raz, 1998: 193). Societies are not made up of majorities and minorities but of a plurality of cultural groups - this is why the notion of “tolerance” is not enough; “multiculturalism” presents a ‘new word’, Oxford Dictionary traces it back to the late 50s and early 60s (Raz, 1998: 194), yet Raz ponders about what exactly is distinctive about this multicultural idea, since all people have lived in societies which were multicultural - this “coexistence of cultural, ethnic, religious communities within a political society, within one state, is the condition of many European countries (Raz, 1998: 195). In this sense, apart from being a ‘new word’ - “multiculturalism” represents a return to how we were before the triumph of nationalism and its ideology; in a way Raz argues that multiculturalism is one of the strands in modern political thought which is trying to undo some of the harm done by nationalism (Raz, 1998: 195). In this regard this is also why this thesis has chosen to focus on how a “major ethnicity”, embodying the youth, give meaning to their reality of ethnic diversity that surrounds them - especially considering that they stand to represent the “Serbian ethnicity” that has undergone various past interethnic violence and tensions where the presence of Serb nationalism was dominating. Thus it is interesting to examine how the youth deliberate their position within this ethnic and cultural environment, taking into reflection past Serb sentiments, involvements, and actions.

Most literature on multiculturalism chiefly focuses on how notions of multiculturalism fit within broader political and institutional domains. Additionally most literature also concentrates on the institutional representation of multiculturalism, within notions of citizenship. Will Kymlicka is a

prominent Canadian political philosopher known for his work on multiculturalism, who writes about the relation between multiculturalism and citizenship. Kymlicka claims that in diverse and multi-ethnic societies, notions of citizenship should be strengthened to embrace a common form of citizenship, in order to reduce potential tensions and allow for social cohesion - where each minority feels included within the larger part of the nation (Kymlicka, 2011: 281). One of the biggest challenges to social cohesion in many countries comes from their historic national minorities (Kymlicka, 2011: 283); hence in order for there to be social cohesion and peaceful co-habitation, there needs to be a more multinational conception of citizenship, as well as a more multicultural conception of multi-nationalism (Kymlicka, 2011: 282).

All countries contain a plurality of identities, whereby the phenomenon of territorially concentrated minority nationalism is a distinctive challenge; in these cases, “the members of a regionally concentrated group exhibit a nationalist consciousness – that is, they conceive of themselves as forming a “nation” within a larger state, and mobilize behind nationalist political movements to achieve recognition of their nationhood, either in the form of an independent state or through territorial autonomy within the larger state”(Kymlicka, 2011: 284-285). This is the case with Catalonia for example, however when looking at the region of Vojvodina, this is quite different. Even though Vojvodina presents an autonomous region within the larger part of Serbia, it is not characterised as enveloping a distinctive nationalistic character that desires a potential secession. In the past years there have been “nationalistic” political movements in Vojvodina that have desired more autonomy from the larger part of Serbia - however these movements were quite marginal. Kymlicka sees a general struggle for multiculturalism, because it would entail creating new regional parliaments to represent Castilians, English or English-Canadians, so as to create formal symmetry amongst all the national groups (Kymlicka, 2011: 296). In the case of Vojvodina, the region has an autonomous provincial government that enables it to provide the different national minorities with rights and privileges to maintain their cultural identities. Essentially the goal should not be to develop a state-wide consensus on a single narrative of citizenship – that is precisely what multinational states cannot achieve - yet there should be more emphasis on broadening notions of citizenship in embracing multi-nationalism, as well as a further adherence to conceptions of multiculturalism so that all nationalities feel represented (Kymlicka, 2011: 299). Consequently Kymlicka focuses on the global structures regarding citizenship and multiculturalism - offering a broader framework relating to how notions of citizenship should be structured in diverse societies; Kymlicka emphasises how notions of citizenship can be constructed to represent “multiculturalism”, in regards to equally embracing all ethnicities within a region.

On the contrary, Denis Sindic who is a researcher of social psychology at the Centre for Psychological Research and Social Intervention in Lisbon, writes about how people psychologically conceive their sense of citizenship and sense of belonging. Sindic demonstrates the subjective sense of being a citizen within ethnically diverse societies, which is dependent upon a shared identity with a community; if citizenship is a status accorded to virtue of belonging to a specific community, then one needs to see all people as corresponding to their “community” - seeing others as fellow citizens (Sindic, 2011: 204-205). In this sense notions of citizenship need to adhere to a collective sense of belonging, whereby all ethnicities in a region should be able to identify with. Therefore no matter what ethnicity you embody intrinsically, the conception of citizenship within a multi-ethnic region should allow all people to see a commitment in identifying with that specific form of citizenship,

especially because these people share the same geographical space and their fate is somehow intertwined (Sindic, 2011: 204-205). Consequently Sindic offers a unique insight into the forms of psychological identification, as well as how people subjectively perceive conceptions of citizenship in diverse societies, which moves the discussion away from the focus upon the institutional domain of multiculturalism and citizenship. This is why this thesis is also focused on revealing how the youth subjectively gives meaning to Vojvodina's multiculturalism.

Nevertheless most literature on multiculturalism focuses on an institutional level, in regards to how the notion of multiculturalism can be utilised within politics in forming domains of citizenship to embrace multi-ethnic societies. Subsequently there is no insight into how this institutional narrative is perceived locally; likewise there is no adherence to how such a multicultural claim informs and relates to the local level. It almost seems taken for granted that a multicultural claim defines a certain societal reality – however this does not have to be the case. What is the relation between a multicultural claim that envelopes an institutional narrative, and the local societal reality on the ground? One does not have to implicate the other, and vice versa. This is why this thesis is dedicated towards demonstrating the relation between a multicultural claim and its societal reality, by illuminating how a specific segment of the Vojvodinian population – the Serbian youth living in Novi Sad - conceptualises and gives meaning to their surroundings in regards to its ethnic-cultural composition, as well as how they perceive this multicultural claim to be manifested within their environment.

Vojvodina is being promoted to be a multicultural region by various political and cultural authorities, however is the local population even aware that Vojvodina characterises a region that embodies 26 different ethnicities? Is this multicultural claim accepted and appreciated by the Serbian youth living in Novi Sad – is it something that people can connect to, something that is recognised, as well as embedded within and by the population; these are the kind of questions this thesis will primarily aim to provide insight into.

In conclusion, this thesis will utilise a constructivist perspective alongside a “postmodern subject” on identity and multiculturalism. People's identity is malleable and the way they adhere to their sense of belonging in regards to Vojvodina's “multicultural” society, and its multicultural claim is also something that is fluid, and that can take on a variety of different directions and meanings. It is important to note that identity is never “neutral”, and the way people relate to the notion of “multiculturalism” is also dependant on various factors. Thus the ways in which people uphold, give meaning to, and adhere to multiculturalism in the region can take on assorted routes and connotations that inexorably connect to a person's larger cultural constellation.

Multiculturalism can be seen as a social mechanism that embodies a process that could impact the way in which people relate to their sense of belonging. This is because “multiculturalism” (the very ethnic-cultural makeup of society and Vojvodina's advocating of its multicultural claim), finds itself within the youth's present cultural constellation. Thus the notion of multiculturalism can influence the crafting of a person's identity, where it stands as a possible counter narrative to nationalism, patriotism, and “national identity”. Accordingly this thesis is interested in seeing how such a mechanism in society is talked about, and given meaning to by the youth living in Novi Sad – especially taking into account Serbia's past history of war, secession, and Serb nationalism.

This thesis will inquire into the youth's sense of regional consciousness and how they make up their present lived reality. The concepts of "Downloading" and "Uploading" will be used as references aiding the rationalisation of how the youth theorises upon the nature of Vojvodina's multicultural claim, as well as how they give meaning to it.

Ultimately the case of Vojvodina will demonstrate a practical example of how a segment of Vojvodina's population distinguishes the "multicultural" environment they live in. The (Serbian) youth will provide their understanding of their subjective societal reality of ethnic-cultural plurality, which will also offer insight into how the youth perceives as well as connects to Vojvodina's multicultural claim. This will enable this thesis to see the nature between Vojvodina's multicultural narrative and its societal reality that will be based on the Serbian youth's perceptions and opinions.

2.3 Problem Statement

Vojvodina is generally characterised as region that is multicultural, because it comprises an inter-ethnic cocktail of 26 different ethnicities. This is advocated by many political and cultural actors, including the government of Vojvodina. Similarly Vojvodina's multicultural character is further alluded to in the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina¹⁰, which is the main document outlining Vojvodina's autonomous privileges. Article 7 of the Statute states that "multilingualism, multiculturalism, and freedom of confession shall represent values of particular interest to the Autonomous Province (AP) of Vojvodina" (Statue of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, 2014). Hence this is why Vojvodina's multicultural claim represents an "institutional narrative", because it grounds itself in the Statute of Autonomy, where it is promoted by the provincial government of Vojvodina and various other political and cultural authorities to exemplify the image of the region. What is more, this institutional narrative stands to formally enable the different ethnicities to have rights and privileges to be able maintain their identities. However the problem lies in the assuming interrelation between a multicultural claim (that embodies an institutional narrative) and the makeup of society itself; one does not mean the other, and vice versa.

Vojvodina's multicultural claim does not explain the ethnic-cultural working of society, and how it is regarded and conceptualised by the local people on the ground. It would be interesting to primarily find out whether the local population is aware of the fact that Vojvodina is "multicultural"? Likewise how do the people relate to and engage with Vojvodina's ethnic makeup of society - is its multicultural character something that is accepted and appreciated by its local population? Moreover how do people conceptualise this multicultural character of society, and what does living in a "multicultural environment" mean to people living in Novi Sad? This is something that Vojvodina's multicultural claim cannot inform us about.

Vojvodina's multicultural claim does not directly denote the way its society is set up. Equally Vojvodina's societal reality does not simultaneously signify, as well as craft its multicultural claim. Hence what this thesis aims to do is to deconstruct the ambiguous relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality, to find out whether there is an interrelation between the two or not. This will be done by looking into how the (Serbian) youth perceives, conceptualises, as

¹⁰ <http://www.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&j=EN>

well as navigates between the very sensitivities and contradictions of the Vojvodinian society. It is important to clarify that when referring to Vojvodina's societal "reality", it means the ethnic structure of society, as well as the engagement and interaction of the different ethnicities among each other.

This thesis has decided to focus on the (Serbian) youth primarily because it is interested to find out how this segment of the population conceptualises Vojvodina's multiculturalism, since they represent the "post -Yugoslavia" generation who are thought to not have been affected by the past Balkan wars, as well as the various secessions Serbia has gone through. Likewise this thesis intends to find out how the youth position themselves within this topic – what they can possibly gain and or lose by endorsing this narrative, especially taking into consideration the past interethnic violence and tensions surrounding the Serb ethnicity. In addition this thesis believes that the notion of what "multiculturalism" means to the younger generations is vital in regards to the future prosperity of the region; younger generations will inevitable one day structure the future society – they will be the ones responsible for the political, economic, social, and cultural prosperity of the region. Hence it is interesting to find out whether the youth accepts and appreciates this ethnic diversity existent in the region, particularly since they represent the "major ethnicity". Similarly this thesis will focus on the city of Novi Sad and the youth that currently lives in Novi Sad, because it represents the capital city of Vojvodina, and therefore the main place that personifies Vojvodina's multicultural spirit.

By looking at the perceptions of the (Serbian) youth in Novi Sad, this thesis primarily aims to find out how the youth conceptualises their surroundings in terms of its ethnic-cultural composition - how they perceive it and what it means to them. This will subsequently also inform upon how the youth engages with Vojvodina's multicultural claim, demonstrating how this narrative is embodied in their everyday life; this thesis intends to investigate whether the youth can associate themselves to this multicultural claim, in terms of their subjective sense of belonging – seeing how they see themselves within this very narrative, as well as in what ways they describe their "connection" to it.

Ultimately this thesis intends to fill the gap in knowledge and deconstruct the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality. This will be done by placing the notion of "multiculturalism" on the local level, and seeing how the youth subjectively engages with it in terms of giving meaning to their surroundings' ethnic-cultural composition, as well as how they describe their connection with Vojvodina's multicultural claim. Through the youth's deliberation on the topic, their discourse will be structured upon their larger cultural constellation that will illuminate upon the very "reality" of the ethnic makeup and engagement of society. In this regard, this thesis will find out how this segment of the population relates to Vojvodina's multiculturalism – seeing what sort of outlook is offered by a generation that is considered to be unaffected by the past wars, tensions, and animosities in the region.

2.4 Research Question: How does the local (Serbian) youth in Novi Sad relate to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in regards to enlightening the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality?

Sub-research questions:

- How does the youth talk about their surroundings?
- How does the youth give meaning to (conceptualise) their surroundings?
- How is Vojvodina's multicultural claim perceived by the youth? How is it manifested in their everyday life?
- How does the youth connect to Vojvodina's multicultural claim?
- How does Vojvodina's multicultural claim relate to its societal reality, and vice versa, in the view of the youth?

2.5 Relevance of research and its ambitions

This thesis is significant because it will inform and create new knowledge in regards to collective identity and multiculturalism in south-east Europe. The broader ambition of this thesis is to demonstrate the ambiguity between the representations of multiculturalism that are depicted through institutional narratives vs. the "on the ground" reality that concerns the very makeup and engagement of society. In this sense, this thesis will attempt to show that there should not be an unequivocal assumption between the relation of a multicultural claim and the composition, as well as engagement of society; one does not always imply the other and vice versa – hence this relation is not indisputable.

Furthermore this thesis will fill the gap in knowledge (in literature on multiculturalism), by illuminating upon a *local perspective* of how the youth relates to, engages with, and gives meaning to this notion of multiculturalism that embodies a theoretical conception. Hence this thesis will attempt to demonstrate the "on the ground reality" of Vojvodina's multiculturalism, by delving into the current insights of the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad. Accordingly this will inevitably tie into the Serbian youth's sense of identification, their conception of values, and their relation and interaction with other ethnicities.

Moreover this thesis will add on to the literature on multiculturalism by providing a local perspective that will embrace a "postmodern subject", in regards to signifying the importance of how one's cultural constellation influences their sense of belonging and way of referring to "multiculturalism" itself. This is because the very notion of multiculturalism presents a social mechanism that can craft one's sense of identification. Consequently this research will make explicit the prominence of adhering to the broader cultural assemblage of one's reality, which is why this thesis will not refer to identity labels or constructions, yet leave this field open to fluid interpretations and the affluence of the youth's discourse that will craft the very sentiment of one's sense of belonging within cultural diversity.

What is more, this thesis will demonstrate the “present situation” of the (Serbian) youth’s ideas and relations towards Vojvodina’s multiculturalism. It will offer an insight into how the youth relates upon and conceptualises ethnic diversity in their surroundings. The (Serbian) youth embody a segment of the Vojvodinian population that is supposed to be unaffected by the region’s past animosities, however being the “major ethnicity” in the region, they still are surrounded by the present brewing tensions and negative attitude of the past that makes them an interesting segment of population to examine. Taking into consideration Serbia’s past history - this thesis will go on to depict the youth’s discourse towards multiculturalism that can be used to potentially predict the future stability of the region. This is because the youth will structure the future “major ethnicity” in the region, which makes their relation towards ethnic diversity (within their milieu) an important factor pertaining towards the region’s future.

In conclusion, this thesis can be seen as an example of how such a notion of “multiculturalism” is perceived and given meaning to locally – in terms of its inference towards an ethnic-cultural society, as well as its symbolism of a broader institutional narrative. Consequently this example of multiculturalism in Vojvodina could be used as a reference for future research on multicultural and multi-ethnic regions in the Balkans. Ultimately this thesis will question the interrelation between a multicultural claim and its ethnic-cultural reality, and vice versa; hence this thesis will provide new insights into the ambivalent relation between these two components.

3. Methodology

The following section will outline the “plan of action” in regards to the way in which this thesis went about to achieve its aim. It will informatively present, as well as justify this thesis’ research course of action.

3.1 Type of research

This thesis presents a *qualitative case study* that desires to attain an in-depth perception of how the youth perceives, talks about, and gives meaning to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism: how they conceptualise their ethnic-cultural surroundings, as well as how they connect to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. This will in turn provide insight into the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality.

I am choosing to focus on the “Serb ethnicity” because they firstly demonstrate the major ethnicity in the region (66%), and secondly because, with the breakup of Yugoslavia, the past wars in the Balkan region, as well as the consequent secessions Serbia has suffered - Serb perspectives on multiculturalism are most “thought-provoking”; this is because they present the major ethnicity living in a “multicultural environment” that is existent within the larger part of Serbia. Moreover for the youth, multiculturalism may stand as a narrative that competes with ideas of a “Greater Serbia”, Serbian nationalism, patriotism etc. which is very different for the minorities living in the region. Thus this makes it most stimulating to examine youth perspectives on multiculturalism in the region.

Furthermore the younger generations present an easier sample of the population to reach, since they are more open for contact, especially considering that I am also part of their age group. Ultimately I am choosing to focus my research on the city of Novi Sad, because it represents the main city and therefore the main commercial, administrative, and bureaucratic centre that consequently personifies Vojvodina’s multiculturalism.

3.2 Sampling

This thesis’ research involves *purposive sampling*, comprising the (Serbian) youth that lives in Novi Sad that are between 18-30 years of age. The sample comprised 15 males and 15 females.

It should be noted that it was not always clear whether someone identified as a “Serb” or not; this is due to the specificity of the region of Vojvodina that involves a diverse mixture of people, as well as the very fluid nature of identity. There were informants who openly stated they considered themselves “Serbian”- however most informants came from mixed marriages and were thus hesitant with putting “a label” on themselves; some openly refused to identify themselves, whereas others struggled to find a way to “classify” themselves. Similarly some informants preferred to claim they were “Vojvodinian”, whereas others alluded to its controversial nature in regards to adhering to possible separatist inclinations. In this sense, this is exactly what this thesis originally took into consideration, which is why the use of a constructivist perspective on identity enabled this thesis to observe the intricate and malleable nature of ethnicity, and how people go about it.

In this regard it is important to mention that this thesis places brackets on the connotation to the (Serbian) youth, since this very identity construction is not fixed, and does not fully stand to

represent the youth interviewed. As mentioned before, this is because many of the informants came from mixed marriages and thus related to and talked of their sense of belonging in different ways. For example some people might not even want to label themselves to a specific identity; this was many times the case with informants who openly stated that they purposely abstained from filling in their identity on university forms. Hence by choosing a constructivist perspective on identity, I was able to see the “flexible” side to one’s identity, where I was able to observe the ways in which people navigate, utilise, and relate to their ethnicity. I did not essentially restrict myself to the “Serb ethnicity”, since throughout my interviews I never assumed or directly asked an informant whether they were Serbian, even though I did all of my interviews in Serbian. Yet it was through allowing space for informants to engage with the topic themselves - through asking them questions about their family and the languages they speak that I concluded that all informants had a Serbian identity as an option, which they could adopt if they chose. Therefore even though most informants were much more heterogeneous than expected – meaning that within their families they had one or two people who were Hungarian, Croatian, Slovakian, or Bosnian (this was usually the case with people’s grandparents and or one of their parents having different ethnic roots) – all informants had the possibility of identifying with the Serb ethnicity, since they all had among other ancestries, Serbian origins that gave them the option in classifying with the majority – this is certainly not the case for the other national minorities in the region. Consequently I use brackets on the (*Serbian*) youth to imply that this identity domain is not static, yet I still use it to provide expression to the context of the youth that I interviewed, because they do have a “privileged position” in society in regards to the other national minorities in the region.

This research is zooming into a specific part of the Vojvodinian population that embrace certain characteristics in regards to ethnicity, age, and place of residence - however there are no other qualifications that would restrict participation. In this sense, there is a specific selection of informants (they have to be “Serbian”, living in Novi Sad, and between the ages of 18-30) - nonetheless the very method of choosing participants is random. Therefore there is no pre-determined or stratified sampling taking place – if I have met someone who approximately qualifies those three criteria, they would be suitable as an informant in my research (whether this involves an interview or just an informal talk).

Moreover within my research I also used *convenience* and *snowball sampling*; I primarily started off with the “entry point” of my family and friends (convenience sampling), which then led me onto other people; I immersed myself into the city, which consequently enabled me to easily meet people. In addition if I interviewed a person who afterwards told me about someone they thought would be interesting for me to talk to, I would subsequently follow up on that (snowball sampling). It is however important to mention that I attained a diversity of standpoints within my sample. I did not purposely look for people who would disconfirm certain information - yet this happened inevitably by talking to different people who related to their cultural constellations that embraced diverse sorts of backgrounds and contexts – producing different sorts of answers to my questions. For instance when asking informants how they would describe Vojvodina’s notion of multiculturalism in terms of it being a claim that is institutionally propagated, some informants talked of its benefits and prospects, whereas others engaged with its negative implications that associated to the broader political situation of the country. Accordingly I started off with convenience sampling, which then

inevitably led to snowball sampling; nevertheless I also engaged with random sampling in cases where I met someone, and consequently asked them if I could interview them.

In terms of *access* there were three ways through which I reached my research population. Firstly I started off with my family and friends, as well as attempted to have a “settled” life in Novi Sad for three months, where I mingled with and met various people throughout my daily life. Secondly I contacted the Novi Sad 2019¹¹ organisation that was set up this year with the dedication towards promoting the city of Novi Sad as the European Youth Capital in 2019. Novi Sad 2019 has the aim of connecting and empowering the Vojvodinian youth, as well as creating various new youth-related activities in Novi Sad; through Novi Sad 2019 I interacted with a lot of young people that were part of the organisation. Thirdly I spent a lot of time at the University of Novi Sad, which has a huge campus involving all the different disciplines on one place; this was beneficial because there were two big cafes that all the students went to. Consequently by being involved at the university on a weekly basis, interacting with Novi Sad 2019, as well as leading my own life where I intermingled with various different people by being active in the city, I managed to attain a balanced and thorough sample.

Nevertheless it should be mentioned that by merely focusing on these “access points”, this thesis has missed various people that did not end up being part of this thesis’ sample. These are people who are not studying, and are not interested in the Novi Sad 2019 organisation. In this sense the third “access point” involving random people I have met throughout my daily life, does add to the sample structure, however it is important to acknowledge that this thesis did end up “disregarding” certain people who were missed because they were either not students, not interested in Novi Sad 2019, or people I did not end up meeting in my daily life. It is interesting to think that if for instance I took on a different angle, and focused on the youth that is not studying and not part of Novi Sad 2019, I would have possibly attained different results. This is because the people who are involved in Novi Sad 2019 and who are part of a university, are more likely to have heard of and been engaged (in some sort of way) with the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina.

¹¹ <http://opens2019.rs/en/>

3.3 Methods used

My main data collection methods involved semi-structured interviews, informal talks and observations, a focus group discussion, and expert interviews.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad. These semi-structured interviews enabled me to attain in-depth information about how the youth relates to and perceives their ethnic-cultural surroundings, as well as how they talk about Vojvodina's multicultural claim.

Semi-structured interviews also allow for the acquiring of unanticipated information, in which there is space for further probing of certain issues; informants have the freedom to express themselves, and to offer extra information. For example if an informant mentioned an interesting example I could inquire more into this, which could in turn lead me into an interesting insight. Many informants that were interviewed recalled various experiences they had at school, university, or in their family that always made the communication diverse.

Semi-structured interviews present the bulk of this thesis' research, because they allow for one-on-one communication, where the informant has the time and space to express themselves, while also being stimulated by the questions being asked. In this sense, semi-structured interviews provided people with the freedom to engage with the topic of multiculturalism, and their sense of belonging that in turn enabled this thesis to deal with the heterogeneity of identity, and the different ways people adhered to the notion of multiculturalism.

It should be mentioned here that the identities of the informants will stay anonymous, in which this thesis has decided to allocate arbitrary names throughout Chapter Five and Six for the storyline flow. The list of informant's names as well as more information can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3.2 Informal talks and observations

Informal talks and observations also stand to make up an important part of this ethnographic research. This is because this whole research is structured upon the intrinsic feeling one gets through living somewhere for three months - interacting, observing, participating and being open for the acknowledgement of various stimulus.

As a researcher it is important to attempt to sink into one's ethnographic field, because you can get a lot from just observing your surroundings. For example there were a few days where I just walked around the city for hours just perceiving what was around me; looking at the landscape, buildings, people around me – realising for instance that the colour of the buildings in Novi Sad were much more colourful than in Belgrade. Also that people walked in a much more relaxed fashion. Similarly I would sit at the university café for hours just observing people, their interactions, and communication. I also went around the little kiosks in the city centre looking at the kinds of newspapers and magazines they sold – in order to find out if this “multicultural character” was also represented among the press. This helped me to truly get a sense of what kind of environment I was in, and how all these things interplay and come together within the larger part of my research.

Informal talks enabled me to get unexpected information and insights into my topic, where they sometimes proved to be more valuable than some semi-structured interviews. This is because informal talks make for a more relaxed setting, where people are then also more comfortable with opening up because it structures a “spur-of-the-moment conversation” - rather than an environment where two people are sitting face to face with a voice recorder. Hence informal talks are based on “natural” settings and circumstances that enable people to also be more spontaneous with what they say, which consequently leads to the acquiring of possible unexpected information and insights. For example I went into the “university information point” to ask something and I ended up having an hour conversation with the people working there about their experiences with foreign students, and how they engaged and saw this “multicultural character” being represented at the university.

Additionally I also had a “random” informal talk with one of the people working at the provincial government of Vojvodina (within the sector for culture); I had been trying to get an interview with them for weeks and through our phone calls (where the person would explain to me how what I sent they could not answer to, or what was wrong with how I phrased or expressed something), I was able to get an insight into what their outlook on the topic was. They were not comfortable with being interviewed and the specific questions and statistics I asked for were also not welcomed – however through their explaining of why they could not provide me with the information, I realised their stance on the topic itself. Hence informal talks can sometimes provide unexpected and vital insights to one’s research.

Consequently informal talks and observations are something that structures one’s whole experience as a researcher in the field – I was always engaging, asking, and communicating. It is something that one takes for granted in the beginning, however later realises its importance.

3.3.3 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions offer good ways to bring people together to discuss a certain topic of interest. Hence for this thesis’ research, focus group discussions would be beneficial in regards to seeing how the youth talks about and conceptualises their ethnic-cultural surroundings and Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. Therefore prior to going into the field, I decided on doing two-three focus groups discussions. This was because I expected the focus group discussions to be a good way to zoom into the discourse of the youth, as well as a way to observe their interactions among each other. Nonetheless I ended up doing only one focus group discussion, because it was very time-consuming, as well as a challenge to find participants. Likewise after doing my first focus group discussion, I realised that one would be sufficient because I comprehended that it would be mainly used to confirm certain trends found throughout my interviews. Hence one focus group discussion seemed to do the job - even though it would have possibly been favourable to have carried out more focus group discussions to deduct a specific narrative or overall trend.

For my focus group discussion, I collaborated with the American Corner in Novi Sad¹². As an institution, the American Corner aims to promote certain issues and topics (such as multiculturalism), in which they are also dedicated towards hosting various workshops that made it easy for me to

¹² <http://www.americancorners.rs/local/en/Novi-Sad/>

cooperate with them; they provided me with the appropriate space, as well as found the necessary participants that fitted my research sample criteria. Six people were involved in the focus group discussion that lasted an hour and a half. It is important to mention that even though the American Corner advertised my focus group discussion on their main page, it was hard for them to find participants to be involved - which is also part of the reason why I only ended up doing one focus group discussion. The fact that it was hard for the American Corner to find participants could be due to many reasons, some being that the focus group discussion was advertised online, which does not reach everyone, since there is a possibility for the post to be “pushed down” due to other activity on the newsfeed page; also people might have not had an interest in the topic, or they simply did not understand what the discussion would be about. Similarly people might not have wanted to participate because of the “sensitivity” of the topic, where they did not want to express their thoughts on the matter.

The focus group discussion started off with everyone getting to know each other, which was followed by various general questions that linked to the topic of multiculturalism. I started off by asking the participants to write on a piece of paper what came to their minds when they thought of the word “multiculturalism”. Moreover I used various images, representations, and situations which they then had to examine and interpret. For instance there was a situation in a bakery where a Serb and a Bosnian are commenting on the issue of whether “burek” is only with meat, or whether it can also be with cheese etc. For the Bosnian, “burek” can only be with meat, whereas for the Serbian, it can involve various different additions. This situation is centred upon the topic of “food”, however in the context of multiculturalism, this can lead to potential interethnic tensions; thus it was interesting to see how the youth interpreted this situation.

People were sitting in a semi-circle, so each person always had an opportunity to say something. This enabled me to witness the discourse and interaction among the people – as well as how they inferred and described certain things represented to them.

Hence this focus group discussion was valuable, because it added to my research by confirming certain insights and information found throughout my interviews. It almost served as a “real life simulation” of what I wanted to find out with my research. It is interesting to mention that there was a girl from Houston who randomly ended up joining the workshop; this subsequently led to the suggestion of comparing the “multiculturalism” in Houston and in Vojvodina. Therefore this ended up being an insightful interaction between the participants - firstly because the “multiculturalism” in Houston and in Vojvodina is so different, and secondly because the girl from Houston was not aware that Vojvodina was represented to be a region that is multicultural.

I decided to end the focus group discussion with a debate – one side being for multiculturalism, and the other side being against it; this enabled me to see people’s thought process, as well as how they pondered and expressed certain views and opinions on the topic of multiculturalism. Hence overall the focus group discussion confirmed and made clearer certain hypotheses found throughout my research.

3.3.4 Expert interviews

Expert interviews are usually utilised in regards to providing expert views or professional outlooks on a specific topic. For this research, expert interviews involve two types of “experts”; one set of experts consist of people who embody Vojvodina’s multicultural claim – such as the directors of various institutions in Novi Sad that do inevitably promote this multicultural narrative; the other set of experts involve people with professional knowledge in regards to this topic – such as university professors for instance.

It should be noted that these expert categories can intertwine, whereby some experts can encompass both of these categories - where they do embody Vojvodina’s multicultural claim yet they also have expert knowledge on it. Moreover certain expert positions can contradict their expert categories; for instance there were experts who I expected would uphold as well as glorify Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, but they ended up offering a more controversial outlook on it.

I expected expert interviews to provide me with professional knowledge on the topic of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism. Even though this was certainly the case, there were instances where the personal opinion of experts came out; in actuality in most of the cases I was able to infer the “personal opinion” or stance of a certain expert. This is interesting to note because even though these experts are providing “professional” knowledge on the topic, their personal opinion is also implicitly underlining their argument.

Expert interviews will mostly make up Chapter Four of this thesis, in regards to setting the foundation and providing expert knowledge on Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. Hence they will showcase what Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is all about, what it stands for, as well as how it is viewed upon and defined by the various experts involved.

I was able to conduct eight expert interviews that involved the Director of the Centre for Regionalism, the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, and the Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’ that stands to promote Serbian culture, history, and language. Similarly I was able to interview a person working within the Novi Sad 2021 organisation that is dedicated towards showcasing Novi Sad as the European city of culture in 2021. Moreover I also interviewed some professors at the University of Novi Sad.

Expert interviews stand to personify Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. This is because the experts that this thesis has interviewed come from institutions that embody, promote, or deal with the topic of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism. I have decided to focus on experts within five different institutions that are all based in Novi Sad. It is important to mention that I have only decided to include the expert identities of the “directors” representing the three institutions that have also subsequently permitted me to use their names. For the experts involved within the University of Novi Sad, I have decided to merely include their position and department. This is because I think that including the title and the department of the person is more useful (in this case) than their specific name; the experts interviewed at the University of Novi Sad encompass professors and assistant professors, in which they do not directly represent a certain institution and its name. Nonetheless the other experts represent “the directors” of these institutions, which consequently deems their identity

significant in terms of what they have to say. Below I will offer brief contextual descriptions of the five main institutions involved.

The Cultural Centre of Novi Sad is an institution that endorses the domain of culture within the city of Novi Sad. It does this by creating as well as hosting various events and manifestations that involve music, literature, film, art, and theatre. Moreover the Cultural Centre acknowledges as well as celebrates various days that are culturally important for the people living in Novi Sad. Any person or group of people can be involved within the centre in terms of participation - but people can also take the role in creating events that are dedicated towards manifesting and nourishing culture in the region. In this sense, the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad represents an institution that embodies the realm of “culture”, in which it is centred upon its very promotion and diffusion. The Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad is Mr Bojan Panaotovic. More information on the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad can be found on this link: <http://www.kcns.org.rs/?lng=lat>

“Matica Srpska” also referred to as ‘The Serbian Cultural House’ within this thesis (for practical reasons), presents an institution that is dedicated towards promoting, maintaining, and nourishing the Serbian culture. It stands to represent the oldest Serbian institution relating to literature, culture and science. It was founded in 1826 in Pest, during the liberation of Serbia from centuries of Ottoman occupation and the strengthening of awareness of the need to fully incorporate Serbian people into modern European trends, at the same time as maintaining their cultural identity (Matica Srpska, 2017). “The activities of Matica Srpska were, from the very beginning, aimed at presenting Serbian culture to Europe and at enlightening the people” (Matica Srpska, 2017). This led to the creation of various texts, scripts, and chronicles that had educational purposes, in which the Matica Srpska become a symbol of civil society, education, enlightenment and charity (Matica Srpska, 2017). The Director of the Matica Srpska or as referred to in this thesis, ‘The Serbian Cultural House’, is Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarksi. More information on the history of the institution can be found on this link: <http://www.maticasrpska.org.rs/en/matica-srpska/>

Novi Sad 2021 stands to represent the institution that is dedicated towards promoting Novi Sad as the European Capital of Culture in 2021. Hence Novi Sad 2021 is devoted to endorsing Novi Sad’s cultural realm, where it stands to represent a platform for development of creative potentials of Novi Sad (Novi Sad 2021, 2014-2016). In this sense the project should, above else, “motivate and inspire both cultural workers and all citizens to re-examine current values and set new goals towards democratic cultural development of the city – in which there should be a “re-examination of the modern identity of Novi Sad, a revitalisation of cultural heritage, a reconstruction of the existing and opening new spaces intended for culture, as well as developing cultural participation of all citizens” (Novi Sad 2021, 2014-2016) These are some of the principles Novi Sad 2021 aims to adopt. I interviewed one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021, in which I have decided to keep their anonymity because they are not standing to represent the name of “Novi Sad 2021”, yet they provided their expert knowledge on the topic itself. More information on Novi Sad 2021 can be found on this link: <http://novisad2021.rs/en/>

The Centre for Regionalism was founded in 1998 in which it stands to represent an institution that affirms and promotes the idea of regionalism in line with contemporary European trends and experiences (Centre for Regionalism, 2017). This includes constant advocacy and professional

explanation of the need for democratisation and decentralisation of Serbia, as well as the promotion of cooperation in the region - primarily among the civil society (Centre for Regionalism, 2017). Furthermore the Centre has launched various projects that work on the normalisation, cross-border cooperation, reconnection and reconciliation of relations between the former countries of Yugoslavia. The Director of the Centre for Regionalism is Mr Aleksandar Popov. More information on the Centre and its projects can be found on this link: <http://www.centarzaregionalizam.org.rs/index.html>

The University of Novi Sad represents the main university in Vojvodina. It involves 50,000 students and 5,000 employees - offering around 400 accredited study programmes, in which it represents one of the largest educational and research centres in Central Europe (University of Novi Sad, 2017). The main seat of the University is in Novi Sad - however there are also faculties and institutes in four other cities in Vojvodina (University of Novi Sad, 2017). I interviewed two professors and two assistant professors within the department of demography, geography, and tourism. Their identities will remain anonymous throughout this thesis, because they stand to embody the expert knowledge on the topic that comes from their professional academic backgrounds. More information on the University of Novi Sad can be found on this link: <https://www.uns.ac.rs/index.php/en/>

It should be mentioned that throughout my interviews I realised that the experts involved had two contrasting opinions. There were experts who gave a very positive outlook on Vojvodina's multiculturalism, recounting its advantages. However there were also experts (a small minority) who directly identified the problems with Vojvodina's multicultural narrative, and alluded to various interethnic tensions. It is important to note that the majority of experts interviewed acknowledged the positive side of having a multicultural society and related this to an accompanying multicultural claim - however they also touched upon the various problems and tensions of this multicultural narrative, as well as the convolving ethnic makeup of society. In this regard these different views are useful, because together they make up the overall "expert" image of Vojvodina's multiculturalism.

Ultimately expert interviews will provide a bigger picture, a mosaic of different expert opinions and descriptions of what Vojvodina's multiculturalism is about. They will provide the foundation, as well as act as a mirror in regards to what Vojvodina's multiculturalism represents within the larger part of society.

3.3.5 Quantative survey conducted by “ninamedia research”

Apart from my own ethnographic research, I was also very lucky to be able to attain a quantitative survey, relating to my topic of research that was conducted by “ninamedia research” in Novi Sad¹³. I told them that I was interested in the Serbian youth who lived in Novi Sad and who were between the ages of 18-30. Moreover I provided them with my main research question, as well as with some of the main inquiries I was interested in; they subsequently transformed my open questions into closed questions. Some examples of the questions involve:

- In your opinion is Vojvodina multicultural?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I do not know

- In your opinion who can have an influence on the promotion of multiculturalism?
 1. Media
 2. Family
 3. School system
 4. European Union
 5. NGOs etc.

A total of 175 people took part in the survey that was conducted via CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing). Informants were randomly reached, however if they accepted to do the survey, they then had to fill out some general information criteria that would subsequently allow them to continue with the survey. The survey acknowledged and differentiated answers among gender (male and female), professional status (primary school, secondary school, university and other), and type of settlement (city or city outskirts).

Even though this survey presents quantative research and will not be used as a primary source within this thesis’ research - the survey will be used to support Chapter Four, as well as background information confirming certain general trends in my research. In this sense the survey will aid my research by acting as supporting information that will provide an insight into grand narratives and trends among the (Serbian) youth population.

Consequently through juxtaposing the data provided from the semi-structured interviews, the informal talks and observations, the expert interviews, the focus group discussion, as well as my life in Vojvodina for the past three months - I was able to gain an understanding of how Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is perceived, talked about, and given meaning to by the (Serbian) youth in Novi Sad.

¹³ <http://www.ninamedia.rs/en/research/>

Moreover through the use of *triangulation* (the merging of qualitative and quantitative information), I will be able to compare and contrast, as well as show how these different sources speak to one another.

3.4 Limitations of research

One of the main limitations of this research is the sample size and the subsequent sample representation. This is because this thesis will primarily focus on the local Serb ethnicity that live in Novi Sad; likewise only a small number of the local (Serbian) youth will be included, due to the limited scope of this research. Thus the subsequent validity of making claims is weak, in regards to generalising these results to the whole population. Nevertheless this is not the aim of this thesis anyways.

This research will solely look at the “Serb ethnicity”, which only demonstrates one population’s outlook on the topic. On the one hand this is exactly what ethnographic research is all about - this thesis focuses on how the local (Serbian) youth perceives and gives meaning to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism, in which it will create new knowledge and provide insight into how this segment of the population relates to the topic; however on the other hand this presents a small segment of the population, whereby the examination of another ethnic minority could be seen as more valuable, especially in regards to the topic of multiculturalism. This is because national minorities have higher stakes within this multicultural narrative in terms of their rights and privileges – hence in that case, investigating how a national minority perceives their surroundings, Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative, and their position within it – could be regarded as possibly more fruitful information.

Accordingly because this thesis solely focuses on the (Serbian) youth, it possibly makes it hard for this thesis to say something about the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality; however this thesis is interested in how this segment of the population – the (Serbian) youth – illuminates upon the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality. What is more, this thesis aims to see how a majority youth population relates to the notion of multiculturalism in the region – how they might reflect differently on the topic, further relating to what they might possibly gain or lose by investing in such a narrative. Nonetheless more research needs to be done, in terms of including more people and looking at more ethnicities.

Moreover it should be mentioned that this thesis focuses on the (Serbian) ethnicity which stands to represent the majority population. Hence in this sense, the discourse and sentiments expressed throughout this thesis embody the “majority population”, meaning that the minority voices are silenced within this narrative. The specific opinions of the minorities are not expressed in regards to certain issues that might have either necessitated, or stood for bigger value coming from a minority perspective. Nevertheless even though this thesis is dedicated towards examining how the “major ethnicity” in the region theorises upon the topic of multiculturalism, it is important to note that there is an absence of minority voices; this might be noticeable in certain sections of this thesis, which possibly stand to demand a minority perspective in the place of the majority perspective that is subsequently offered on a specific issue. Therefore this limitation does pose an ethical issue relating to the fact that some topics will be discussed by the “majority population” that in reality might pertain more towards the minorities in the region.

Another poignant hindrance of this research is the language translation from Serbian to English. All of my interviews were conducted in Serbian, which were then translated into English. This poses a possible problem in regards to the loss of meaning, sensations, and understandings when translated from Serbian to English. This is a concern for many researchers conducting research in different languages; on the one hand it is significant for the researcher to make his or her informants comfortable by speaking and conducting interviews in the native language, however on the other hand, when information needs to be translated from the native language to English for example, there is a possibility for meaning to be lost. This is because it can be hard to translate something precisely from word to word - because there are various cultural words or expressions that cannot be sufficiently translated. I had this problem when transcribing my interviews from Serbian to English, where I initially had troubles finding the appropriate translation for certain words and phrases; likewise I consequently also found it hard to find ways to express a certain word or phrase for it to have the same significance in English. Thus one needs to be aware of this limitation, and acknowledge that there can rarely be a perfect translation, because in each language, words and expressions take on subtle yet possible different meanings, notions, and interpretations.

Furthermore another limitation is the sensitivity of the topic, since it inquires about people's personal insights that further allude to issues of identity and sense of belonging. Thus some people might not want to engage in the topic for personal reasons. Consequently the questions need to be framed in a way that will make people feel comfortable to answer them; likewise it is about making sure people know that the research results will be confidential and that their identity will remain anonymous. I did this through telling informants that their identity will stay anonymous (that I was merely interested in the general discourse of the youth), and that if they did not wish to be recorded that that would not be a problem. I used a voice recorder because it made it easier for me to afterwards go back to the conversations, listen to them again, and be able to transcribe them from Serbian to English. I explained to the informants that I needed to translate everything from Serbian to English - hence using a voice recorder was mainly for practical reasons.

None of the people interviewed had a problem with being recorded, and most of the people were very open in engaging with notions of identity and their sense of belonging in regards to the topic of multiculturalism. By having open questions and providing informants with the space to engage with certain issues, they independently went on to talk about such topics, where I (my questions) acted as a mere stimulus. This was something that I did not expect prior to going into the field, because I thought that the issue of "identity" was sensitive anywhere, let alone in Serbia that has previously experienced various wars in the name of "ethnicity". Hence this showed that the issue of multiculturalism and one's sense of belonging do not present such "threatening" topics for this specific age group; this could have possibly been different for the older generations.

Ultimately one's own biasness can also pose a limitation to research. Being from the region itself, (speaking the language, as well as having family there) can make one blind towards certain insights and manifestations. This is because if you are from the region, you are already sensitised with a certain "outlook" of it, and this can make you immune to various comprehensions that simultaneously can limit your research. However this is something that will be reflected upon in the next section on "researcher's positionality" within the field itself.

3.5 Researcher's positionality

As a researcher, it is important to reflect on your positionality within the field. This is because one's positionality can have various implications relating to the research itself, but also involving the people you are working with, as well as the environment. In regards to this thesis, the fact that I (as a researcher) was Serbian entailed advantages and disadvantages that inevitably shaped my researcher's gaze, as well as implicated upon my research.

I consider myself Serbian (I was born in Serbia, my parents are from there, and I also have family there), even though I have never lived in the country itself. In actuality doing research in Serbia for three months was the longest time I have spent in the country. I have stayed in the capital city of Belgrade multiple times, for longer periods - however this was the first time that I stayed in Novi Sad for such a long time. My uncle and aunt live in Novi Sad, so I usually go there once every one or two years to visit them; nonetheless I never stay more than three days – hence one can argue that I have never lived in the region of Vojvodina.

Even though I was inevitably already sensitised to the region – I spoke Serbian, had family and friends there, and also knew about the general context of the country - it took me a couple of weeks in the beginning to get accustomed to my surrounding, to settle my ideas, and to get connected with the people and the environment. I did not have any friends in Novi Sad except my uncle and aunt, which consequently stimulated me to actively engage within city life.

On the one hand, being Serbian was an advantage because it enabled me to quickly adapt and connect to the people, especially the youth. This was primarily because I spoke the language which made it very easy for me to communicate with the people around me, as well as be “accepted” as a local. Likewise I was also able to very rapidly and comprehensively understand the Serbian context - including the complex political, economic, and cultural situation that subsequently allowed me to intricately engage with the topic of multiculturalism. In this sense being Serbian enabled me to quickly associate myself to the people and the context.

However on the other hand, being Serbian possibly made me resistant to certain conceptions that a person who was not from the region would be able to pick up on; this is a disadvantage of having a prior connection to a region and its people, because you do not go in with a “clean slate” – even though this is the case for all researchers. In this sense the fact that I am Serbian possibly led me to not realise certain things in my environment, because I thought they were “normal”; for example the way the in which people are used to saying “Hungarian” or “Albanian” when referring to people from those countries – this is something I have been familiarised with from before - however a person who is not used to this would consider it extremely derogatory from its initial verbalisation. Certainly this is also something I consider to be offensive, but it was something I had to think about, something I did not immediately realise, because it has a “colloquial nature” in regards to the way people use language. Hence being from the region can lead to the potential clouding of one's vision, yet it does push you to deliberate things more.

Furthermore not living in the region has had an impact on my gaze in regards to the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina. I was aware of the fact that there were “different groups of people” living in Vojvodina than in Belgrade for example - but I did not know what this exactly entailed. It was

only after doing research on the region that I realised Vojvodina was promoting itself to be a multicultural region, because it comprised more than 26 different ethnicities. In this regard this was beneficial, because I did not know anything on the topic before I started my research. Likewise because I have never lived in the region of Vojvodina, I considered this notion of “multiculturalism” to possibly be way more “exotic” than it actually was. Apparently this is the case for many people from the larger part of Serbia who consider Vojvodina to embrace this “exotic” place containing so many different people. However the people living in Vojvodina consider this notion of societal diversity to be “the norm” - it is something they are used to. I also realised this after my fieldwork that it is something very natural for the region itself and the people living there – but prior to the field I expected this notion of “multiculturalism” to be more pronounced in terms of diversity (languages, cultures, dress etc.). I think that being Serbian yet never having lived in the region, as well as also enveloping this “post-Yugoslavia” generation, made me think that having Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats etc. living on one territory is not the “norm” – since I do not know what that feels like, or what it is about. This consequently led to me think that Vojvodina’s notion of multiculturalism would be more distinct and visible. Nonetheless through conducting my research, I understood that this notion of societal diversity is “specific” in Vojvodina in which it is something its citizens regard as “mundane”.

The issue of “identity” is never neutral, especially when it comes to interviews, informants can have a tendency to either accentuate or denounce their identity. Marianne van Bochove, Jack Burgers, Amber Geurts, Willem de Koster, and Jeroen van der Waal wrote an academic paper on “*interviewer effects in research*” that examines how respondents accommodate ethnic identity to what they perceive as the norm, when facing a non-ethnic interviewer (an interviewer who is not part of their ethnicity). Similarly Bochove et al show how respondents belonging to a minority population will accentuate the difference between themselves and the majority population, because their ethnic background becomes more distinctive in an interview situation with a non-ethnic interviewer (Bochove et al, 2015, pg.653); this can present a case where the interviewer embraces the major ethnicity in the region, in contrast to the interviewee’s ethnicity that represents the minority.

The way people reinforce, accentuate, and or denounce their ethnicity is of high value, because it shows that identity is malleable and it is something that is used in a tactical way. Bochove et al thus provide an ethical implication when it comes to interviewing people on their identity, especially in the case where the interviewer represents the major ethnicity in contrast to the ethnicities of the interviewees. However what is the case when the interviewer is from the same ethnicity as the interviewees?

On the one hand, informants might accentuate their ethnicity to the interviewer in cases where they feel like the interviewer is also from the same culture, where they feel comfortable to express themselves. However there are also cases when informants will accentuate their identity in order to make a statement, where “identity” is used in a strategic way to make a point. Hence in this sense, accentuating one’s identity is not only related to the ethnicity of the interviewer. On the other hand, informants might also denounce their ethnicity if they know that the ethnic background of the interviewer represents an ethnicity that might have had past tensions with theirs.

Being Serbian and speaking Serbian possibly enabled informants to feel more comfortable in the interview, as well as open up about their ethnic backgrounds; however my Serbian accent showed that I was not from Vojvodina, which could have had an effect on influencing informants to accentuate their “Vojvodinian identity”. Especially because my accent is from Belgrade, this could have unconsciously influenced informants to emphasise their “Vojvodinian identity”, because Belgrade represents the capital city and there is usually a tendency for Vojvodinians to emphasise their “difference” in regards to people from Belgrade, and vice versa. Conversely there is also a possibility that my accent influenced some informants to denounce their “Vojvodinian identity” due to the “fear” of demonstrating Vojvodina’s difference in regards to the rest of Serbia (alluding to possible separatist sentiments). Nonetheless it is important to bear in mind that identity is never impartial and that there will be a variety of factors influencing people to either accentuate or denounce their identity, which is why this thesis acknowledges the constructivist perspective on identity that subsequently sees “identity” in a malleable way, something that people utilise in strategic ways.

In conclusion, it should be noted that as a researcher, one can never be fully unbiased, because each researcher goes into the field with his or her own mind set, knowledge, questions they want to answer, theoretical framework etc. that will inevitably affect the way their research is shaped. In this case, because I am Serbian and I have been sensitised to the culture, history, and the people – my research might have unconsciously been affected in some sort of way; in the sense that it might have taken me more time to come to certain conclusions, as well as my analysis possibly being “less contentious”, because some things might not have made such a big impact on me from the beginning, since being from the region, I did not realise them immediately. Nevertheless not having lived in the region was beneficial in regards to not knowing what Vojvodina’s multiculturalism was all about.

It is however important to acknowledge that my Serbian identity has also aided me with my research, in regards to being able to relate more closely to the people, and for people themselves to feel more comfortable with me as a researcher. Likewise in this regards, I could more intimately understand and relate to the topic of multiculturalism in Vojvodina. Consequently there will always be advantages and disadvantages when it comes to this topic - however it is important to bear in mind that one’s research can never be purely neutral – there will always be things that will directly or indirectly affect one’s research on various different levels and degrees. Thus being Serbian and having a prior sensitivity towards the region will unavoidably have its benefits and drawbacks, but what is important, is for one to acknowledge this.

4. Multiculturalism in Vojvodina

This chapter is dedicated towards examining Vojvodina's multicultural claim, building background into what such an institutional narrative stands for, in regards to what it represents and how it is given meaning to. It should be noted that all this information will come from the knowledge and experience of the experts interviewed for this thesis.

This chapter is divided into four specific sections; the first section will provide a brief historical inference into how "ethnicity" was managed in the former Yugoslavia. "Multiculturalism" was something that was also present in the former Yugoslavia, where there are people who theorise that Vojvodina possibly presents a region that encompasses this "Yugoslavian multicultural heritage". This is because Vojvodina comprises mostly all of the ex-Yugoslavian minorities, in which it also seems to be a place where all these minorities can co-habitate in peace. Hence this section will offer context in regards to how societal pluralism was managed in the former Yugoslavia, which will add to the larger picture of how people's mind sets have been affected by the past Balkan wars - providing a framework to the storyline of how Vojvodina manages its ethnic-cultural pluralism. The second section will consequently focus on the region of Vojvodina, where it will analyse Vojvodina's multicultural claim that stands to represent an institutional narrative; it will provide insight into the significance of this multicultural narrative, what it seems to entail, who it is aimed at, as well as how it is being promoted. The third section will be dedicated to the ways in which this multicultural claim is recognised and supported by the citizens of Vojvodina, as well as how the people themselves connect to this claim. Ultimately the fourth section will offer insight into the expert's prospective aspirations of this multicultural claim – relating to its needs, concerns, as well as possible threats.

4.1 Management of "ethnicity" in the former Yugoslavia

The notion of "ethnicity" was systemically regulated, as well as manipulated in the former Yugoslavia. Socialist Yugoslavia, at least on paper, was based on "universal supra-national principles and on emphasising a common Southern Slav identity united by the overarching value of socialist internationalism" (Daniele Conversi, 2000: 339); in this sense Yugoslavia enveloped a multicultural and multi-ethnic region. There was a policy of "equality" among the different nationalities within Yugoslavia, with a Communist party hegemony that allowed nationalism to exist, mature, and diminish as a political force - without jeopardizing political stability or economic development (Dusko Sekulic, Garth Massey and Randy Hodson, 1994: 83). Therefore with the promotion of equality, the geographical mixing, as well as the devolution of power to the republics - the different nationalities within Yugoslavia were encouraged to have loyalty and to identify with the Yugoslavian state.

There are four sets of factors that encouraged people to self-identify with Yugoslavia (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey, 1994: 84): firstly *modernization* (the transformation from agriculture to industries was seen to erode traditional bases for national differences); secondly *political participation* (which meant that through devolution each nationality was equally involved and represented); thirdly *demographic factors* that alludes to the geographical mixing between the populations, leading to potential interethnic marriages, relations, children etc.; fourthly *minority/majority status* whereby identifying as a "Yugoslav" avoided either assimilating into the majority, or labelling oneself as a minority.

Consequently it seems like the different nationalities had an incentive towards identifying with Yugoslavia, which was in certain cases based on “intrinsic” factors such as geographical mixing that inevitably led to interethnic identities - however in other cases it was based on strategic reasons, relating to one’s political engagement for example. Nonetheless all these different republics within Yugoslavia were inevitably connected to the larger part of Serbia that seemed to represent the main “administrative” and “bureaucratic” centre, since Tito administered the federation of Yugoslavia from Serbia.

As Serbia had enjoyed independent statehood for four decades by the time Yugoslavia was born in 1918, and as the new state was centred upon the Serbian monarchy in Belgrade - it is not surprising that “most Serbs considered it as a “natural” successor, extension, and continuation of the old Kingdom of Serbia” (Conversi, 2000: 341). This meant that most Serbs were programmed to consider Serbia as embodying a superior role and position within Yugoslavia itself. However Tito’s policies encouraged “equality” among the different republics within Yugoslavia. This is why Conversi alludes to a growing sense of “self-victimising Serbian subremacism” that was beginning to take expression in the second half of the 1970s (Conversi, 2000: 341). This relates to the issue in which Serbia felt like it was losing its “rightful” influence and authority within the larger whole of Yugoslavia. Hence because of this sentiment, Serbia (involving the Serbian population) was starting to feel discontent with the constant emphasising of “equality” and a “balance of power” among the different republics within Yugoslavia; this consequently made it easier for the notion of “ethnicity” to be manipulated when Milosevic came to power in 1989. Nonetheless by accentuating “economic development, workplace democracy, economic and gender equality, tolerance for national differences, and equal legal rights of all citizens - Tito and his colleagues assumed that time was on their side, and that “the crisis” the state would inevitably face could be cast in other than nationalist terms” (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey, 1994: 95). This was certainly the case, because during Tito’s rule there was a peaceful cohabitation of the different ethnicities and republics within Yugoslavia, whereby one can argue that Tito’s policy of “equality” did manage to pacify the various notions of nationalisms that brewed in the background.

However once Tito died, ethnicity became a tool used to motivate nationalism, which eventually led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. As argued by Oberschall, the coverage in the mass media became a vast nationalist learning experience since it legitimated the manifestations of Serb nationalism suppressed under Tito (Oberschall, 2011: 992). What is more, Sekulic et al argue that the failed attempt to establish a shared identity among people cannot explain the breakup of Yugoslavia, however it is apparent that shared identity was not much in evidence as a mediating mechanism that sustained Yugoslavia (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey, 1994: 95). This is true, however it is important to note that there was a shared “Yugoslavian identity”, in the broader sense of citizenship and identification - however it was never in Tito’s desire to quell or suppress the various nationalities that made up Yugoslavia; each country within Yugoslavia was given autonomous privileges and people identified with their own ethnicity – yet they were also part of a larger “multi-cultural” whole that everyone collectively shared a sense of belonging to (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey, 1994: 95).

During Yugoslavia the region of Vojvodina, as well as Kosovo were cast as autonomous provinces within Serbia. This meant that they had their own branch of the “League of Communists of

Yugoslavia party”, where they could deal with various domestic issues - however any bigger decisions as well as tensions were dealt with on a federal level.

When Slobodan Milosevic took power as the president of Serbia in 1989, he “de facto” abolished Kosovo’s and Vojvodina’s provincial autonomy - engendering severe protest in all other republics. On the 28th of March 1989, the new Serbian Constitution was adopted, making Serbia a unitary state (Conversi, 2000: 343). In this sense there was an active attempt of centralisation, in order to concentrate Serbia’s power and authority; this demonstrates how the idea of “self-victimising Serbian subremacism” was essentially actualised. System failure bred not only distrust but “provided opportunity for certain individuals to link the distress of people with national differences and historical resentment” (Sekulic, Hodson, Massey, 1994: 88). This can be clearly seen from the way in which Milosevic activated ethnic “fault lines” between the different ethnicities, through the aid of patriotic journalism, propaganda, and the discourse of ethnic annihilation and fear that led the different ethnicities to turn “inwards” within their own nationalities, and close off any interethnic interaction (Oberschall, 2011: 992-993). Milosevic wanted to create a “Greater Serbia” that links back to this intrinsic sentiment of Serbia’s “superiority” within the region. Oberschall’s *instrumentalist view*, which sees “ethnicity” as an instrument that can be utilised for certain political motives and agendas, goes on to explain how the domain of ethnicity was manipulated by political authorities for political ends (Oberschall, 2011: 983); in this regard ethnic boundaries were activated in order to stir up Serb nationalism and legitimate various political actions, as well as enable the nationalist party to be elected. This is further supported by Conversi who states that “when Milosevic and his circle realised the impossibility of imposing their hegemony on a re-centralised Yugoslavia, they opted for a project which, though cautiously disguised, in practice amounted to secessionism” (Conversi, 2000: 332).

Ultimately during Tito’s rule in Yugoslavia, there was a management of ethnicity and nationalism through various policies and narratives that aimed towards the peaceful co-habitation among the different nationalities; identity was expressed in two ways: towards one’s own ethnicity, as well as towards the “Yugoslav state” that enveloped a broader sense of belonging. Therefore Yugoslavia’s notion of “multiculturalism” was managed through the promotion of “equality” - providing each ethnicity representation within their republic that was aided through the devolution of power offered to the various republics within Yugoslavia. Nonetheless once Milosevic came to power, ethnic identity was used as a tool to further stimulate the ethnic fear and annihilation that was existent among the different nationalities, which led to the resurfacing of nationalism. It should be noted that there were already brewing sentiments of nationalism among the Serbian population, which were merely triggered and heightened with Milosevic’s political agenda. This was also the case for the other republics within Yugoslavia, where through Milosevic’s actions of centralisation - forms of ethnic nationalisms were activated, which fed off from each other, leading to the inevitable collapse of Yugoslavia. Consequently the management of ethnicity in Yugoslavia encompasses an intricate process that in both cases was utilised for a political goal – either to encourage ethnic co-habitation or to create ethnic annihilation.

In this sense “ethnicity” should be regarded as a malleable notion that can take on different forms and sentiments, depending on the way it is utilised. The way in which Milosevic manipulated people’s notion of ethnicity and their subsequent sentimentalities, for a political goal - Yugoslavia

could not have maintained its multicultural society. Thus what followed involved violence and bloodshed that led to the tainting of people's mind sets and their subsequent relations towards other ethnicities.

This section has provided contextual background in regards to how ethnicity was managed in the former Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's multicultural society was not able to flourish with the steeping notions of nationalisms that were further "activated" once Milosevic came to power. The next section will be dedicated to how Vojvodina as a region manages and administers its multicultural society.

4.2 Vojvodina's multicultural claim

This section is dedicated towards examining Vojvodina's multicultural claim, in regards to its historical significance, what it stands to represent, who it is directed towards, and how it is being promoted.

Vojvodina's multiculturalism is primary based on *historical significance* that subsequently justifies the crafting of its multicultural claim. This is because the Vojvodinian society depicts a particular mix of people that came to the region because of specific historical circumstances – with the different ruling empires, migrations etc. that consequently legitimise the existence of this multicultural narrative, and make it seem like something that can be considered as a "specific feature" of the region itself.

In the beginning Vojvodina presented unliveable land, it was flood land, however many years later the land dried out, and people were brought to live on the land for many different reasons. For example people were brought onto the land as a necessary "buffer" for the Austro Hungarian Empire; likewise people were needed to plough and farm the land for food production. Additionally the 1990s Balkan wars that took place in the region, also brought people to live in Vojvodina. An interesting insight came from one of the professors within the department of demography who stated that the wars brought many people who fled from areas that could not develop and contain this sense of "multiculturalism" (societal pluralism) – which is thus fascinating that "Vojvodina is trying to stream this multicultural co-habitation where only 50km away you have Croatia, where people are leaving, have left or cannot live, because there were only two ethnicities that could not live together" (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Hence the professor refers to Vojvodina's specificity in terms of streaming and maintaining its societal pluralism, which is something that seems to be in tension in the surrounding areas of the region.

In addition the ethnicities that are living in Vojvodina were not present in the former Yugoslavia in such big numbers; there was an attempt for "multiculturalism" in the former Yugoslavia, however we saw that this did not work out because of the subsequent wars that took place (Professor, Department of Geography and Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Nonetheless these minorities seem to peacefully cohabitate in the region of Vojvodina, where one can argue that Vojvodina possibly embodies a place where the Titoist slogan "brotherhood and unity" found its enactment in people's everyday reality (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

When referring to Vojvodina's specific historical circumstances, another important factor that I think should be regarded within this analysis is Vojvodina autonomous status that seems to be considered as a significant "enabler" of its multicultural claim.

Vojvodina's autonomy dates back to 1944 and has fluctuated ever since. During the 1990s Vojvodina's autonomy suffered due to Milosevic's centralist regime, however it was with the passing of the Omnibus law that affirmed Vojvodina's jurisdiction of its provincial administration in 2002. This meant that Vojvodina as a province had power over its own domestic issues, such as culture, health, economy, education, social protection etc. To this date Vojvodina enjoys its autonomous liberties that are stipulated in the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina¹⁴. The Statute outlines Vojvodina's autonomous privileges, in which it is able to have its own local self-government that can deal with various domestic issues - nonetheless it is still part of the larger Republic of Serbia and hence under the main authority of Serbia.

One of the professors interviewed acknowledged the vast importance of Vojvodina's autonomy, by stating that Vojvodina's multicultural claim essentially rests upon on its autonomy, because "the people who run the province can decide for themselves how much to give to these national minorities in terms of protection, privileges etc." (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Similarly an assistant professor of demography claimed that Vojvodina's autonomy "helps evade certain administrative protocols and legislations that in turn provide the region with some sort of sovereignty over its own people and their lives (Assistant Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

In addition the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad also thinks that Vojvodina's autonomy has a positive relation in regards to its multicultural claim, because it is able to formally account for it through providing rights, laws, financial support etc. that does not have to go through the main government of Serbia (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Thus this is why I consider Vojvodina's autonomous status to be a driver of its multicultural claim, since it enables this claim to effectively and efficiently flourish. It represents an issue that can be dealt with domestically, meaning that the government of Serbia is not involved within this topic that therefore makes it easier and quicker for certain laws to be passed, since Serbia would probably have higher stakes in legitimising certain regulations when it comes to ethnic minorities. Consequently Vojvodina's autonomous status should also be regarded as an element that is historically significant in enabling its multicultural claim to formally thrive.

Vojvodina's multicultural claim stands to represent an *institutional narrative* that is used as a formal label towards describing its societal plurality. This was something that was alluded to by all of the experts interviewed. Likewise Vojvodina's multicultural claim is made up of the various institutions and their discourse – such as the Vojvodinian provincial government that propagates this claim. It exemplifies an institutional narrative and or project, because it formally enables the different ethnicities to maintain their identities, by providing them with various rights and privileges. Equally this multicultural claim is used as a tool for city branding, where it stands to involve "positive" values that therefore provide the region with a "good name". This consequently has an effect on attracting various prospects, opportunities, and foreigners to the region.

¹⁴ <http://www.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&j=EN>

My first expert interview was with the Director of the Cultural Centre in Novi Sad. Mr Panaotovic was one of the most enthusiastic proponents of Vojvodina's multiculturalism. The very first question I asked Mr Panaotovic was "why is Vojvodina considered to be a multicultural region?" To my surprise Mr Panaotovic went on to "correct" my sentence structure by stating that "it is problematic to say that Vojvodina is *considered* to be multicultural, because it *is* multicultural" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Mr Panaotovic went on to justify this by talking about Vojvodina's demography, in which it comprises more than 26 different ethnic minorities that live in the region. Mr Panaotovic confidently added on that this is the reason why Vojvodina's multicultural claim stands to personify "a certain description of a societal reality" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017).

Moreover the Director of the 'Serbian Cultural House' that stands to represent the main institution embodying Serbian culture, literature and science, connects Vojvodina's multicultural narrative to the principles of "tolerance" and "democracy" that seem to be values that she considers to exist in Vojvodina. Likewise there was a further adherence to this multicultural claim entailing "European ideals, which is why Vojvodina is many times referred to as 'little Europe'" (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Furthermore when talking with one of the professors at the University of Novi Sad, they talked of Vojvodina's multicultural claim as a marketing tool. In Vojvodina "we do not have castles here like they do in France but we do have this "multiculturalism" - so we are trying to develop what we can be "known" for - as this cultural region" (Professor of Demography, University of Novi Sad). Therefore it seems like Vojvodina's multicultural claim is being crafted to represent a label that entails a touristic characteristic - representing a "pull factor" that attracts people to the region; this is why I think that part of Vojvodina's multicultural claim is directed towards the outside world, in regards to promoting a good image for the region, as well as enticing people to the region itself. Similarly this is also why I think foreigners would be attracted to a region if it embodies this "cultural constituency", because it is inviting in terms of gastronomy, dress, music, history etc. Likewise a region that represents a "multicultural society" is considered to embrace values of openness, tolerance, and respect that also stand to encompass features that attract foreigners to a specific place.

Nonetheless other than being a tool for city branding, Vojvodina's multicultural claim also seems to be directed towards the ethnic minorities that are living in the region. This is confirmed by Mr Panaotovic who claims that "these different ethnicities are able to maintain their culture, language, and traditions by living in the region of Vojvodina" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). It seems like Vojvodina was able to build its multiculturalism into an "advantage", because all the ethnic groups have the opportunity to preserve and nourish their ethnic culture, in which there has not been a total assimilation of these groups into the majority population - so differences are noticeable (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). These "differences" for example do not only come from the various different languages spoken in Vojvodina, but it is also noticeable from people's surnames (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad 2017). Hence this institutional narrative formally grounds itself on enabling these different national minorities to maintain their identities. In this regard I think by enabling these national minorities to sustain their cultures and traditions - Vojvodina is able to manufacture and maintain its societal pluralism. Consequently this sort of "spirit of community",

where there is a sense of unity but also difference at the same time is what encapsulates Vojvodina's multiculturalism (Professor Assistant, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

Nevertheless it should be mentioned that the way in which Vojvodina is able to provide these ethnicities with the opportunity to maintain their cultures and traditions comes through the embracement of a "segregated model of multiculturalism" (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Most experts interviewed found that this "segregated model of multiculturalism" was associated with a controversial way of structuring society. The most direct form of criticism was provided by Mr Popov who stated that Vojvodina's multiculturalism was based on a "segregated model of multiculturalism", because the different national minorities lived in segregated regions within Vojvodina. This is because there are specific villages that contain a specific ethnicity; in this sense there are clusters of ethnicities concentrated in specific places. Hence this "segregated model of multiculturalism" aims to maintain the cultures and traditions of these ethnicities, by providing them with the space to be able to express themselves and their identities - however in actuality it divides these ethnicities in essence and spirit (Aleksandar Popov, 2017).

An interesting insight I came across by talking to people about the various different ethnicities present in the region, is that this sense of "segregation" also takes place in many schools in Novi Sad. For example there are separate classes for national minorities in the aim of providing them with the ability to be schooled in their language; however this for instance leads Serbian children to not have contact with Hungarian children, and vice versa. Thus there is no interweaving of the different ethnicities in schools, where children from one ethnicity tend to stick together; in the opinion of many experts, this is more likely to lead to the forming of various prejudices from a young age.

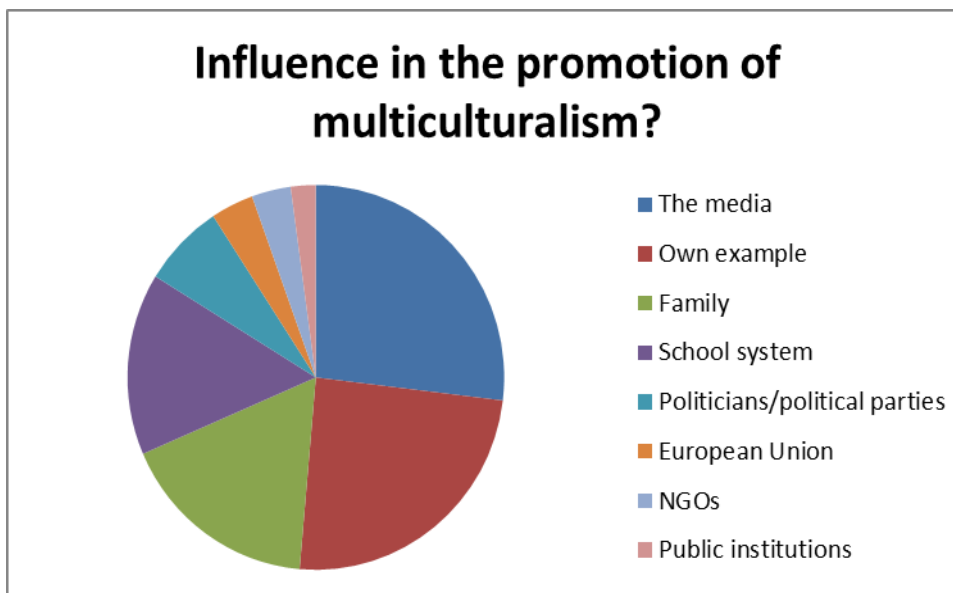
Moreover this "segregated model of multiculturalism" could also be responsible for the enabling of "peace" and co-ethnic habitation in Vojvodina, since the different ethnicities live in separated segments of the region. In this sense this can be related to the former Yugoslavia, where the different ethnicities were given the ability to nourish their identities within their own republics, yet were also represented within the larger whole of Yugoslavia. Thus it seems like the different ethnicities in Vojvodina can also sustain their cultures in which they are possibly given the required amount of "separation" for the enabling of the maintenance of their identities, as well as there not to be any tensions among the different ethnicities.

Vojvodina's multicultural claim is promoted by its provincial government, as well as various other political and cultural organisations. It is these very institutions and their discourse that make up this institutional narrative. For instance Vojvodina's multicultural character is something that is promoted by the organisations of Novi Sad 2021 and Novi Sad 2019 that centre upon exposing the city of Novi Sad to Europe. What is more, these titles demonstrate Vojvodina's recognition by Europe in terms of its ability to represent certain "values" that are esteemed in the world. On their main website, the provincial government of Vojvodina states that the region is characterised by "arable land of good quality, overall economic and cultural development, great population density and demographic diversity; similarly Vojvodina is a region which traditionally fosters multilingualism, multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism" (Provincial Government of Vojvodina, 2017). Vojvodina is in turn promoting its cultural pluralism as a certain "societal value", where its desirability is something that is being implied by the provincial government of Vojvodina. Likewise "cultural diversity" that

embraces this notion of multiculturalism was something that has been positively adhered to in mostly all of this thesis' interviews.

The two main components that came up when I asked about how Vojvodina's multicultural claim was practically endorsed, were multilingualism and multiconfessionalism. Multilingualism is promoted through the provincial government of Vojvodina officially recognising six main languages – including Serbian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Croatian, Romanian and Ruthenian. Likewise there is the broadcasting of regional news and various other programmes in the national languages of these ethnic minorities (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). Similarly multiconfessionalism is promoted through the reality of there being a main Catholic church in the middle of the centre, as well as an Orthodox Church and a Synagogue very close by. For example many Hungarians go to church on Sundays - this is not the case for Serbians - however this is how they retain and nourish the reality of what it is to be "Hungarian" (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad 2017).

It is interesting to mention that for 88 of the people (23,2 percent) that took part in the quantitative survey – "the media", including the television, newspapers, internet and the radio have the most influence in the promotion of multiculturalism. Similarly for another 80 people (21,1 percent), "one's own individual example" stands to have the most influence in the upholding of multiculturalism; this adheres to the way in which one talks about, behaves, and deals with the issue of multiculturalism. Moreover for 56 of the people (14,7 percent), "one's family" also stands to have influence in the promotion of multiculturalism, in which for another 50 people (13,2 percent), it is "the schooling system" (including universities) that has dominance in the promotion of multiculturalism. Only 23 people (6,1 percent) said that "politicians and political parties" have an influence in endorsing multiculturalism, 12 people (3,2 percent) mentioned "the European Union", 11 people (2,9 percent) advocated for "NGOs", and 7 people (1,8 percent) brought up "public institutions". In this sense, it seems like the "media" has the biggest potential in the promoting of multiculturalism, in which one's own attitude and behaviour, as well as one's family and schooling system, also scored very high. Below is a pie chart that visually illustrates the results found.



In conclusion, Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is justified by its historical occurrences, in which its autonomous status is also responsible for enabling this claim to formally thrive. Accordingly Vojvodina’s multicultural claim envelopes a formal description of its societal reality, in which it involves values that are prized in Europe. These values consequently seem to be responsible for Vojvodina’s tourism. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is subsequently directed towards the outside world (Europe), as well as towards the ethnic minorities within the region, since it formally enables them to maintain their identities. Nonetheless the provincial government of Vojvodina manages its multiculturalism through a “segregated model of multiculturalism” that is considered to be a controversial way of adhering to society’s functioning. Moreover Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is promoted by its provincial government, as well as alluded to by many other institutions, where the main elements of multilingualism and multiconfessionalism stand to exemplify this claim. Ultimately most people considered “the media” as well as “one’s own example” in having dominance in the promotion of multiculturalism.

4.3 Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal perception

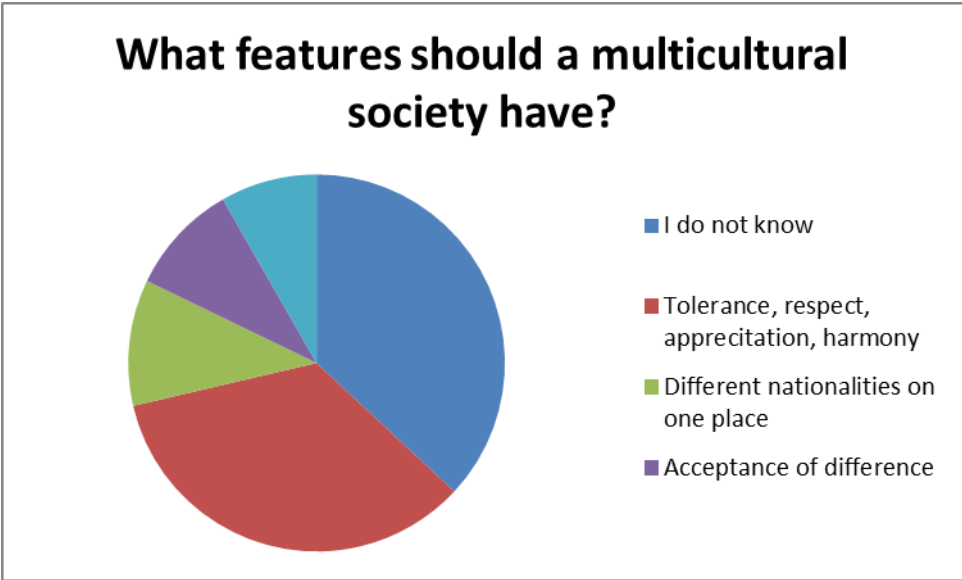
It is clear that Vojvodina’s multicultural claim represents an institutional narrative that is built upon the historical significances of Vojvodina. However how does its population relate to its multicultural claim? This section will be dedicated to examining the ways in which Vojvodina’s population recognises this claim - concerning its perception, support, as well as in what ways people connect to it.

Many of the experts interviewed primarily expressed that people in Vojvodina perceive Vojvodina’s multiculturalism as a “norm”. As asserted by one of the professors, “the people of Vojvodina are traditionally used to this notion of societal pluralism – they have been brought up in a way to live in a multicultural country” (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). The professor related their statement to the notion of the “live practices” and celebrations of traditions among the people living in Vojvodina that make up the spirit of multiculturalism. For instance people go to their neighbour’s house to celebrate a certain tradition - these are the multicultural practices that are not visible on a large-scale, yet they do stand to epitomise this multicultural soul (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

Moreover another example of how people relate to this notion of multiculturalism was provided by Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, who illustrated that there was a national Hungarian theatre created in the centre of Novi Sad, where now so many Serbians also go to because it is so modern and there are language translations; therefore there is “a loss of the question whether the theatre is Hungarian or not – it is for all citizens, and that for me is the way for one to reach this “multicultural ideal”” (Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’ in Novi Sad, 2017).

Similarly out of the 175 people that took part in the quantitative survey, 159 people (90,9 percent) think that “Vojvodina is multicultural” (ninamedia research, pg.7, 2017). Therefore it seems like people are aware of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, where they consider the region to be “multicultural”.

Nevertheless when asked “*what certain features a multicultural society should have*”, 58 people said they “did not know”; 54 people said “tolerance, respect, appreciation and harmony”; 17 people said “many different nationalities on one place”, 15 people said “the acceptance of difference” and 13 people said “freedom of religion and use of mother tongue” (ninamedia research, 2017). Accordingly there seems to be a tension with the thought that most people are aware that Vojvodina is multicultural and that they consider it a “norm”. This is because 33,1 percent (the biggest amount of people in the survey) stated that they “did not know” what features made up a multicultural society. As a researcher this tells me that the people who were asked do not know what a multicultural society entails. Hence they might be aware of the fact that Vojvodina is multicultural, because of the vast propagation of its multicultural claim; similarly people might have been living within this societal plurality for a long time, in which it is consequently regarded as something “normal”; however the issue lies in the majority of people not seeming to know what a multicultural society is about. Below is a pie chart that illustrates the results found.



Nonetheless it should also be acknowledged that 30,9 percent of the people within the survey recognised the importance of “tolerance, respect, appreciation and harmony”, as features within a certain multicultural society that stand to embody the ideals of cultural diversity. Thus this shows that the other half of the people involved within the survey do have an opinion on what a multicultural society should consist of, in terms of its characteristics. Similarly when asking the experts on what they considered as specific ideals of a multicultural society, most of the experts alluded to notions of equality, respect, appreciation, co-habitation, diversity, and tolerance. This is something that confirms the findings of the survey, whereby 54 of the people involved (30,9 percent), also mentioned the concepts of “tolerance, respect, appreciation and harmony” as certain ideals of a multicultural society (ninamedia research, 2017).

It is important to once again here mention that these opinions and perspectives come from the majority population – the (Serbian) ethnicity in Vojvodina. This is because within the quantitative survey only the (Serbian) youth who live in Novi Sad were involved. Hence the voices of the minorities are silenced within this narrative. This means that this narrative only embodies a view from a segment of the Vojvodinian population, which might be very different for the minorities living in the region. In this sense, if this thesis focused on the opinions of the minorities living in the region, Vojvodina’s multiculturalism might have had a very different association.

Many experts that were interviewed suggested that Vojvodina’s multicultural claim should be recognised by the people as a way to learn about other cultures, but also themselves. Mr Panaotovic states that “for one to accept the other, and to be able to appreciate their culture, they need to firstly have appreciation and respect for their own culture, heritage and values” (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Therefore there seems to be a primary need for one to appreciate their culture, which will in turn enable one to respect another culture. While Mr Panaotovic zooms in on the importance of one’s own culture and its appreciation, one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021 (that is dedicated towards promoting the domain of culture within the city of Novi Sad), states that “multiculturalism adds and affects one’s sense of identity and belonging, because you learn about your identity in contrast to someone else - someone who is different; it is a richness to be living in a diverse environment, because the moment you start to explain how you are different, you also start to learn about yourself – since you see yourself in the eyes of the other; but it is also about learning from others, as well as the subsequent richness of your own culture” (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). The Coordinator of Novi Sad 2021 provides a humanistic account of what this multicultural claim means or should mean to the people. This is because Novi Sad 2021 centres upon working with the civil society, in which they emphasise communication and cooperation among different groups of people. The Coordinator concluded her thought by expressing how this multicultural claim is beneficial for the youth that live in Vojvodina, by asserting that “young people can be introduced to various different languages, values, traditions etc. - every difference, if we see it in the right way, can lead to us learning something (Novi Sad 2021, 2017).

It is significant as well as interesting to mention that many experts alluded to the issue of “the feeling of belonging” being damaged among Serbians, because of the past wars, in which there is a shame of feeling and saying you are Serbian. This was something that was expressed by the Director of the Cultural Centre in Novi Sad that stands to embody this multicultural narrative, as well as by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021 that is more focused on engaging with Vojvodina’s civil

society. Both of these experts expressed their hope towards Vojvodina's notion of "multiculturalism" that could potentially aid this sense of hollowness, and maybe bring back this confidence in regards to one's sense of belonging (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Likewise the Coordinator working for Novi Sad 2021 expressed optimism that "this notion of multiculturalism can help this sense of belonging and identification to come back" (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). In this regard it seems like Vojvodina's multicultural claim is being prompted as a possible "positive" future narrative that can provide the region with a good image, which can consequently resurrect people's sense of belonging and confidence with their identification - especially concerning the Serbian ethnicity. Accordingly if one lives in a diverse societal environment that is recognised to embody values that are praised in the outside world, then people will inevitably start to identify with such a narrative and feel more willing to acknowledge their sense of belonging in regards to their ethnicity, as well as the region itself – however this certainly depends on how people relate to their ethnic-cultural surroundings.

Many experts recognised that the people who live in Vojvodina are more likely to identify with their own ethnicity, rather than associate with Vojvodina's multicultural claim. Therefore people do not seem to directly connect to Vojvodina's multicultural narrative, in which it subsequently stands as a manifestation that takes place in their daily lives - in terms of communication and interactions with different ethnicities. This was something that was expressed by Mr Panaotovic who implied that "people are more likely to identify with their specific ethnicity, but they nevertheless feel like they live in a province where they are surrounded with various national minorities" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). This could be because of the way the Vojvodinian society is structured, in regards to there being a "segregated model of multiculturalism" that could thus be responsible for encouraging people to more easily identify with their specific ethnic culture. This can be related to the situation in the former Yugoslavia, where the different ethnicities primarily related to their own ethnic culture, yet also embodied a sense of identification with the larger federation of Yugoslavia.

An interesting insight came from one of the professors who talked about how people tend to emphasise their identity and sense of belonging towards a specific ethnicity for strategic reasons, to be able to attain some sort of desired goal. The professor gave a personal example of a woman who married a man from Bosnia where she would always tend to emphasise her "Bosnian side" - even though she had nothing to do with it, other than the fact that she was married to a Bosnian; however if she heard people from Bosnia, she would say "where are my Bosnians?" (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). With this example the professor wanted to demonstrate the way in which people attempt to "get close" to a certain group of people in order to gain certain benefits, because that group of people might have more connections in society, or because this group of people is more likely to be recruited within a certain sector – hence one's chances for "success" are higher if one is somehow connected to this group of people. This shows how people utilise ethnicity in a fluid way, where the notion of "identity" is used for tactical reasons.

In this sense, Vojvodina's multicultural claim is not something people can directly identify with. It seems to present a narrative that can offer people inspiration, a way for them to learn about themselves and others. However people are more likely to identify with their specific "ethnicity" – even though this is also something that is malleable and that can take on many different meanings and interpretations, depending on the situation.

Consequently the main way people recognise this multicultural claim is through perceiving it as a narrative that encompasses a “regional identity”. As expressed by an assistant professor, “Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is something through which Vojvodina is recognised – Vojvodina as representing the “small Balkan or the small Europe” (Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Likewise “because people regard this claim as enveloping their surroundings - it is thus something that can be seen to present Vojvodina’s “regional identity”” (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

In view of that most of the experts interviewed acknowledged Vojvodina’s multicultural claim as signifying a “regional identity”. As the Director of the Centre for Regionalism poignantly points out as an answer to the question of, “*whether Vojvodina’s multicultural claim can be considered to represent a regional identity?*”, he says “yes it is a claim that stands to represent a “regional identity”, and this is something we are proud of; for example when a delegation comes from abroad we always represent this, also internationally we represent this as an advantage” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Some experts went even further to allude to the claim’s wider significance as enveloping European ideals and values. As claimed by one of the assistant professors, “this is because “multiculturalism” is seen to necessitate “tolerance” and a “democratic attitude”, which are values that are very much esteemed in Europe (Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

In conclusion, Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is recognised to embody a “regional identity” – something that provides Vojvodina with its recognition, as well as something that envelopes people’s everyday milieu. Similarly there is hope that this narrative will bring back people’s sense of belonging that has been tainted by the past Balkan wars, especially concerning the Serbian ethnicity. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is considered to be a part of people’s everyday life, even though it seems like people do not directly connect to this multicultural narrative. In this case people are more likely to identify with their “specific ethnicity” that can also take on various different meanings and motives - however people are aware of the fact that Vojvodina represents a multicultural region. Nonetheless there is concern with people not being aware of what this multicultural claim entails. This is why the next section will be dedicated towards analysing whether and why this multicultural claim is needed - why it seems to be important for the region of Vojvodina, involving its possible concerns and threats.

4.4 Where is Vojvodina's multicultural claim heading?

This section will examine the expert's prospective aspirations in regards to Vojvodina's multicultural claim, further relating to its importance, concerns, and threats.

A good metaphor that relates to the idea of Vojvodina's multiculturalism was provided by the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, "first comes your neighbour then your brother, where it is not important if you live next to a Hungarian or Slovakian - but what matters is for one to respect, acknowledge, and coexist with their neighbours if you want to have a "good life" - because ironically they are the ones you will need most" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Mr Panaotovic adheres to the sense of awareness people require to have in a multicultural society, where people need to communicate and cooperate with one another in order to be able to live in a harmonious environment.

There is a "need" for Vojvodina's multicultural claim, whereby all of the experts interviewed acknowledged the vast importance of this narrative for the future of the region. All of the experts interviewed expressed their hope that Vojvodina will carry on to maintain and nourish its multiculturalism. As articulated by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021, "I hope that we will continue preserving this multicultural attitude and that it will not be extinguished; for example now on Ruthenian television there are Serbian subtitles which is very recent but I think this is important – for Serbs to be able to understand Ruthenians, and not only for Ruthenians to understand Serbians" (Novi Sad 2021, 2017).

Furthermore as the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad asserts, "Vojvodina's multicultural claim has extraordinary importance for the region that has around 26 national minorities – including Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Croatians, Ruthenians and many others" (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). This is because Vojvodina's multicultural claim formally aids the ethnicities living in the region to be able to maintain their identities; primarily in regards to these ethnicities being able to be schooled in their languages, having daily news and other entertainment programmes in their languages - but also having various organisations that promote their cultures and traditions in social, as well as political domains.

In this sense most experts adhered to Vojvodina's multicultural claim being essential in terms of its accountability, because it contains many different ethnicities. Hence because this claim is based on a "fact" - a societal "substance" that connects to the 26 different ethnicities living in the region - "it makes it something that needs to be nourished for and maintained - it cannot be evaded or opposed, because this would lead to a lot of problems in terms of dangerous political ideas" (Assistant Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

Moreover many experts also alluded to the importance of this multicultural claim in regards to Vojvodina's future "image". This relates to the claim's basis as an institutional narrative that is formally grounded in terms of exemplifying a tool for city branding. Thus it seems like Vojvodina's multicultural claim is largely significant for the "positive image" it has in the world, since as suggested by one of the assistant professors, "Vojvodina can be seen as an example that shows that different people can cohabitate and live together despite the name of the region/province" (Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

It was clear that Vojvodina's multiculturalism presented something that people were proud of, where it stood as an important value that people thought should be sustained. Even the experts who offered more controversial accounts of this claim's functioning - they adhered to the importance this claim had for the region and its people that necessitated to be maintained. Even the Director of the Centre for Regionalism who offered the most controversial and pessimistic account of Vojvodina's multicultural claim, states that "Vojvodina is very proud of its multiculturalism, if one looks at this objectively, as a region we have a big plus – it is the only municipality I know of where everything is translated into the five different official languages, also involving national TV and other national minority programmes – so as a region we are doing well, because this multicultural mosaic is well represented" (Aleksandar Popov, 2017).

The importance of Vojvodina's multicultural claim is something that can also be confirmed through the quantitative survey, where 107 people (61 percent) stated that it is "very important" for Vojvodina to nourish its multiculturalism, 49 people (28 percent) stated it was "important", 9 people (5,1 percent) stated it was "neither important or not", 5 people (2,9 percent) stated that they "could not decide", 4 people (2,3 percent) said it is "not important", and 1 person (0,6 percent) said it is "not important at all" (ninamedia research, 2017).

It is interesting to mention that the sentiment that was expressed by some of the experts interviewed, was that Vojvodina was doing well in terms of its multiculturalism, but it could do much more in regards to its use; in the sense that Vojvodina's notion of multiculturalism can be "exploited" much more (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). This was something that was also acknowledged by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021, who states that "Vojvodina's multicultural claim stands as a good manifest, an idea that in practice can represent much more" (Novi Sad 2021, 2017).

A practical example that illustrates how Vojvodina's multicultural claim could be "exploited" more, was provided by one of the professors at the University of Novi Sad who states that "Vojvodina's multicultural claim could be utilised as an "export potential" in terms of specific ethnic skills that are represented in the region; for instance there are paintings by the "Bunjevci people" that are made out of straw - they are handmade and it is impossible to make another one that looks the same" (Professor, Department of Demography University of Novi Sad, 2017). Likewise the professor goes on to illuminate that "many tourists are interested in the city of Subotica because of the "art novo" scene that was created and kept up by the Hungarians; consequently it is not only about the formal and governmental maintenance of Vojvodina's multiculturalism, but it is also up to the specific ethnic group as well" (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). However the professor pessimistically concluded that "it is this continuous up keeping that is necessary - as long as something is bringing in money, it will be embraced and accepted - yet it is about understanding the long term benefits this has for a society, and subsequently investing in something that might pay off later" (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

As a researcher I recognise that there is acknowledgement of the fact that Vojvodina's multicultural claim is recognised by Europe as a "positive ideal", and that Vojvodina as a region (as well as the larger part of Serbia) is striving towards Europe and the European Union, where they are trying to expose its multiculturalism and make it be seen as their "advantage". However at the same time, it

seems like there is only action on the marketing and PR of this multicultural idea, in which “multiculturalism” is seen as a trend. As justified by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021, “demographics and statistics can tell us that a region is multicultural, but if this is not transparent in terms of manifestations, activities etc. - then this multicultural claim “falls into the water” – it is simply not there (Novi Sad 2021, 2017).

Likewise the Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’ also stipulates that, “there is conversely no action on the engraining of this multicultural idea within society, as well as the essential caring and nurturing of multiculturalism within and among society” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). Mrs Palkovljevic Bugarski goes on further to explain that ““multiculturalism” is based on “people” and if the people do not feel that incentive - the need and nourishment for multiculturalism within their environments, then there will be societal problems, but also many people will merely migrate somewhere else; hence the essential caring of multiculturalism - in terms of ethnic-cultural societal diversity - is something Europe should impose as a primary responsibility for this region, because otherwise “multiculturalism” will be lost” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski 2017). In this regard, Mrs Palkovljevic Bugarski alludes to the claim’s institutional basis that centres upon a formal level that does not engage itself with the locality of the people and the environment.

Consequently there is a serious concern for the future of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism, where it being a sole “marketing trend” is not enough for it to sustain itself – Vojvodina’s society needs to be involved in this narrative and feel an incentive to construct their daily lives around such an ideal – where one’s neighbour becomes important for one to have a “good life”.

Most of the concerns with the future of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim were naturally expressed by the experts interviewed. I did not specifically ask a question about whether the experts involved had any concerns for the future of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim - I merely inquired about their opinion on its ensuing future. Hence even though all of the experts interviewed acknowledged the importance of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, they also all conveyed their concerns in regards to its maintenance that directly related to Vojvodina’s societal reality. In this sense there was a switch from the focus on Vojvodina’s multicultural claim to its societal pluralism.

There was a primary adherence towards the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim as representing an institutional narrative vs. the significance of its societal pluralism. Experts expressed their concern with the issue that there needs to be more work done on the local level, in terms of this claim being expressed as well as understood by the people. One of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021 claimed that there needs to be more work on “interculturalism” - better communication and dialogue between people (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). Likewise the Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’ expressed her concern with the need for work on the local level yet also recognised the reality of the region’s context, where she asserts that the “national minorities need to be more active and have more attention, but this is hard in poorer contexts which we are in...the citizens of Vojvodina need to be reminded of how important this societal diversity is to their identity, and this is something we need to care for” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Mrs Palkovljevic Bugarski further alluded to the region’s societal diversity that stands as something that needs to be nurtured for – “it does not represent something that can sustain itself - especially if the region has suffered various wars and tensions in the past” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Similarly she further implied upon the need for reconciliation among the different ethnic minorities within the region. The Director of the 'Serbian Cultural House' gave the most detailed account of the concerns with Vojvodina's multiculturalism that related to Vojvodina's societal reality. Mrs Palkovljevic Bugarski acknowledged the "value" of Vojvodina's societal diversity which she states is "something that needs to be cherished, because nowadays minorities are being lost; hence Vojvodina needs to make this a unique citizen option which we all advocate for – seeing a place where we want prosperity for all national minorities living here" (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Therefore there is a concern with how Vojvodina's multicultural claim impacts the local reality. Additionally there is distress in regards to Vojvodina's societal structure and the subsequent relations among the people. Even though these concerns were not intricately or very openly discussed, they were mentioned. This is something that will come back in the next two chapters of this thesis, through the insights of the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad. Even though not all of the experts directly mentioned the provincial government's embracement of a "segregated model of multiculturalism" as representing a negative way to society's functioning – through their concerns, it was clear that this model represented an obstacle to the flourishing of Vojvodina's societal plurality, especially taking into account the region's past history of war and conflict. The concerns with Vojvodina's multiculturalism continue with the adherence to the various threats towards this multicultural narrative.

There are four possible threats that have been mentioned throughout the expert interviews when relating to Vojvodina's multicultural claim.

Firstly, the region's demographic structure poses a threat to the very survival of its future multicultural society. This is because the national minority demography is decreasing with the entering of Hungary, Croatia, Romania and Slovakia into the European Union, which incentivises many Hungarians, Slovenians, and Croats etc. to leave Serbia and study back in their "home" countries (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). The Director of the 'Serbian Cultural House' in Novi Sad vividly depicted that "people from the larger part of Serbia regard Vojvodina as some sort of exotic place where we all speak Hungarian, but that is not the case anymore...before we had bilingual education but not anymore - multiculturalism is being lost"; likewise in the past there used to be "50 percent Serbs and 50 percent Hungarians, however nowadays there is much less Hungarians in Vojvodina – and they represent one of the biggest minorities, not mentioning others..." (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). Mrs Palkovljevic Bugarski further went on to conclude that "Vojvodina's societal pluralism is decreasing in which there is a slow "Serbianisation" of society. This is because the number of Serbs is staying the same, while the number of national minorities is reducing" (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017).

Additionally one of the assistant professors expressed that there is a natural decreasing of national minorities in the region (either because they are migrating or dying out), in which some ethnicities might already be demographically threatened to exist in the region; only the Roma people are rising in numbers at the moment - nonetheless it is about the local people in smaller places understanding that they can make a local cultural manifestation – this needs to go both ways (Assistant Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Therefore there is a need for more local

awareness relating to multiculturalism and what it entails - what it can bring to the people and their lives.

The decreasing number of national minorities is something that can be also confirmed by recent secondary sources that demonstrate that “the biggest decline in national minorities has been taking place among the rural population, in which many of the Hungarian, Slovakian, and Romanian villages are being emptied due to their inhabitants leaving to their corresponding native counterparts” (Sladjana Gluscevic, VOICE, 2017). In 2002 Vojvodina had 2,031,992 citizens - however from 2002 until the most recent population census in 2011, the biggest decline in numbers has been witnessed from the Hungarian ethnicity; from 2002 until 2011, there has been a 13 percent decrease, involving 39,071 less Hungarians (Sladjana Gluscevic, VOICE, 2017). Likewise Croatian numbers went down by 9,153, Slovakian by 6,305, and Romanian by 5,009 (Sladjana Gluscevic, VOICE, 2017). Thus the decreasing numbers of national minorities present a threat to the future of Vojvodina’s multicultural society.

Secondly, people’s attitudes towards Vojvodina’s multicultural claim can be interpreted as a menace to its existence. As summed up by the Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, “Vojvodina’s societal diversity presents a fact, it is a given, which consequently makes it hard for people to go against this claim; even the people who do not believe in this multicultural claim, they do not have an option - they would not be brave enough to go against this claim, because the capacity for a “counter narrative” to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is very low (Bojan Panaotovic, 2017). Therefore the fact that Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is based on specific historical circumstances makes it a challenge for someone to oppose this narrative.

Consequently the threat lies in the way people regard Vojvodina’s multiculturalism. For instance if one regards this claim in a political sense, where each ethnic group will want their own “piece of land”, then certainly there will be negative opinions (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). However if one looks at this multicultural claim as some sort of “cultural or social phenomenon”, then there can never be disagreements with this representation (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). This is because people will see “societal pluralism” as a natural occurring instance of nature. Therefore the main reason why someone would disagree with Vojvodina’s multicultural representation stems from the way in which people view this multicultural claim.

One of the professors at the University of Novi Sad relates to Mr Panaotovic’s statement by referring to the contingency of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism, claiming that “one cannot take back the fact that one lives in a multicultural environment – in the end of the day one’s perspective and adherence to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism depends on one’s personal historic experience; how I see this multicultural claim, and how someone else sees it, is very personal and cannot be generalised” (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Thus the professor associates to the issue of “subjectivity” in relation to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim that will depend on the specific person, and their particular background and history. In addition an assistant professor also called upon this argument, and implied that there are differences in the way people relate to this multicultural narrative. The expert expressed hope that “these differences (of people being for and against this multicultural claim) will balance out and that people will start to think that

multiculturalism can only bring us good things” (Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

Similarly another reason that was mentioned by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021 as a possible factor encouraging people to have a “guard” against this multicultural claim was based on people not being conversant with diversity, different people and cultures. The Coordinator stated that “people who have a “negative attitude” towards multiculturalism do not travel a lot, in which they are not acquainted with other cultures and different people – travelling opens one’s horizons, people learn about diversity, and start to appreciate what they have; thus people that have not been accustomed to diversity and “difference” - they will not be able to see this notion of societal diversity in any other sort of way” (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). Hence people’s negative attitude towards Vojvodina’s multicultural claim can be seen as a threat to its future progression and existence.

Thirdly, another reason that follows from the different attitudes people can have towards this claim, is the way in which Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative is sometimes emphasised as providing the region with its “distinctiveness” that can be interpreted to involve separatist tendencies. This is because Vojvodina is being crafted as a region that is “distinct” from the larger part of Serbia, which can be looked upon as a “threat” alluding to Vojvodina’s desire of being “separate”. This has to do with Vojvodina’s autonomy and its past “occurrences” of separatist inclinations that were touched upon in the introduction chapter of this thesis. Therefore this can stand to pose a threat to the future of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, in regards to it not being pronounced and promoted to its full potential.

Most experts claimed that this notion of “multiculturalism” was mostly representative for Vojvodina, in which the larger part of Serbia did not entail this sense of ethnic-cultural plurality like Vojvodina does. As the Director of the ‘Serbian Cultural House’ in Novi Sad states, “multiculturalism is quite unknown for the larger part of Serbia, even though they do encompass Roma people and some Hungarians close to the border” (Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski, 2017). Some experts even referred to the larger part of Serbia being “excluded” from the topic itself - where one assistant professor claimed that the larger part of Serbia “is not part of this multicultural mosaic, because they do not live within this space to be able to know how it is” (Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, University of Novi Sad, 2017). Nonetheless the capital city of Belgrade seems to be omitted from this view – where a professor at the University of Novi Sad implies that “there are regions in Serbia where two ethnicities live, but I think they do not know what this means, and they cannot have a perception on it or of it – of course when I speak of this I do not talk about Belgrade” (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

However it was clearly implied that Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is something that presents a unique feature of the region. As stated by the Director of the Centre for Regionalism, “not many regions have this sensibility and sentimentality for national minorities like we do here” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Hence Vojvodina seems to be “specific” because of various demographic and historic reasons that simultaneously cannot be related to the larger part of Serbia; as expressed by one assistant professor, “the larger part of Serbia is not homogenous, however the very issue of “multiculturalism” has always been in the interest of Vojvodina that is therefore not comparable to the larger part of Serbia” (Assistant Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017).

It should be mentioned that people are generally aware of the concern with glorifying Vojvodina as “different” and “distinct” from the larger part of Serbia, because of past separatist tensions. As mentioned in the introduction, in the past there have been political parties in Vojvodina that have advocated for more autonomy for the region, as well as alluded to a possible secession. Even though these movements are marginal and nowadays do not present concrete concerns, it still is a sensitive topic. Hence when talking about Vojvodina’s multiculturalism and how it can be regarded as a “unique feature” of the region - making it “stand out” from the larger part of Serbia - people tend to be careful in regards to how they say and phrase things, since it can make reference to various possible separatist inclinations.

Nevertheless I think this issue can also be regarded as a potential “threat” to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, because it can lead to the dulling and undermining of this claim in regards to it not reaching its full potential. I have come to this conclusion through the “informal conversation” I had with one of the people working within the sector for culture at the provincial government of Vojvodina. Through our conversation I realised that the person did not want to regard or talk about “Vojvodina’s multiculturalism”, because for them this sort of connotation and expression did not exist. This led me to reason that they did not want to talk about Vojvodina’s multiculturalism as something “specific” for the region, because they said that they regarded “multiculturalism” as a feature that encompassed many other societies. This was nonetheless contradicting, since the provincial government of Vojvodina propagates the region as exemplifying a multicultural society – yet they do not want to attach attention to such a connotation. This primarily illuminated upon the “fear” people have in regards to making this claim “stand out”, since it subsequently also implicates Vojvodina’s “distinctiveness” from the larger part of Serbia that can be considered to allude to possible separatist inclinations. Nevertheless this also enlightened upon the inevitable undermining of this claim that led me to think that as a sector of culture, if you are not giving this claim the importance and elocution it requires, it will not get the simultaneous nourishment and attention it needs to progress, as well as reach its full future potential.

Fourthly and lastly, there seem to be societal tensions that stand as potential threats to Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative. The current tensions among the Vojvodinian society have been implied by the various experts interviewed. For example there has recently been statistical documentation that in 2016 there have been 14 criminal events relating to nationalistic, racist, and religious hatred and intolerance in Serbia, out of which 13 have been in Vojvodina (Zoran Strika, 0.21.rs, 2017). Commencing with the burning of an Albanian bakery in 2014, six adolescents were punished; likewise there have been instances where people’s house walls have been graffitied with insulting national based comments (Zoran Strika, 0.21.rs, 2017). It is interesting to note that all these instances have involved Serbs expressing hatred and intolerance towards other national minorities (Zoran Strika, 0.21.rs, 2017). The Director of the Centre for Regionalism explains this “ethnic intolerance” as a consequence of the 90s and the wars that have taken place, which have inevitably witnessed an awakening of nationalism among the people in the Balkans (Aleksandar Popov, 0.21.rs, 2017). As a researcher it is interesting to ponder about whether this notion of the “Greater Serbia”, which was present in the former Yugoslavia, is something that could also be existent within some people’s mind and sentiments in Vojvodina (especially since the region envelopes 66 percent of Serbs); whether it is something that could potentially be brewing beneath this awakening of nationalism as Mr Popov discusses above. Furthermore Mr Popov continues to assert that “the wars have brought a wave of

migrants that are not tolerant towards difference, because they came from places where this small intolerance led to war” (Aleksandar Popov, 0.21.rs, 2017). In this sense, it seems like the way people tend to relate to this multicultural narrative also stems from the past Balkan wars that have stained people’s mind sets towards certain animosities and prejudices.

Another example that was provided by one of the coordinators working for Novi Sad 2021, which could possibly also be responsible for the tensions within the region, derives from the “problem with tending to define a certain culture to a specific religion” (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). The Coordinator articulated that there was a recent instance in Belgrade where “a Roma boy who was sitting at a bus stop holding a Serbian flag was beaten up by some youngsters who said ‘why are you holding a Serbian flag?’” (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). Even though this incidence occurred in Belgrade, it is an example that can be related to the region of Vojvodina as well, because as claimed by The Coordinator, “there is a general problem when it comes to the Roma population; everyone needs to feel like they can belong in Serbia, regardless of their culture, religion, colour etc.” (Novi Sad 2021, 2017).

Moreover the Director of the Centre of Regionalism states that “one thing are the facts - the point that Vojvodina has 26 different ethnicities living in the region – however another thing are politics that ask the question of whether Vojvodina is respecting the rights of these national minorities” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Popov goes further to claim that “Vojvodina is making these national minorities think they are part of (belonging to) a different territory, because Serbia changed its constitution in 2006 from “Serbia is the country for all people living in it” to “Serbia is the country of Serbs and other people living here” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Consequently Popov argues that this change in formulation casts the national minorities living in the region as “second class citizens” (Aleksandar Popov, 2017). Hence facts will stay facts, defining certain circumstances - however it is about the very practice of politics that determines the reality of the situation of the people living in the region of Vojvodina.

A possible approach to tackle the way in which people relate towards this multicultural claim was provided by one of the professors at the University of Novi Sad, who suggested that “the government should try to find a “unified attitude relating to how this multiculturalism will be represented – it needs to be promoted more and there needs to be a merging of different institutions that will together advocate and present this narrative in a coherent way” (Professor, Department of Demography, University of Novi Sad, 2017). It is in this way that the professor described that people could be able to gain an understanding of what this multicultural claim entails, and the benefits it has for society.

Likewise there are various projects that are trying to “mend” the past animosities and hatreds of the Balkan wars that have scared people’s mind sets and consequent relations. For example the organisation Novi Sad 2021 has launched a project called “the bridge of rainbows” that works on various themes, one involving “forgiveness” - the sense of forgiving and letting go of the past, especially between the Serbian, Albanian, Croatian and Bosnian populations (Novi Sad 2021, 2017). It aims to build on better communication and cooperation between these populations through various community based activities. Similarly it is also involved in building various “cultural stations” that will promote multiculturalism, and the “dialogue” among the different populations (Novi Sad 2021,

2017). In this regard there is work being done in the aim of dissolving and tackling past ethnic animosities that seem to represent some of the causes for the present tensions in the region. However the question is whether these attempts will be able to mend the past hatreds, and bring hope for the future outlooks and relations among the people living in the region.

In conclusion, it seems like there are serious concerns for the future of Vojvodina's multiculturalism. This primarily stems from the natural decreasing of ethnic minorities with the subsequent entering of Hungary, Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia into the European Union that incentives people to leave Serbia. In addition people's attitudes towards this claim also stand to pose a menace for its future progression. Even though Vojvodina's multiculturalism is considered by many experts to be something "specific" for the region itself - the suggested "undermining" of Vojvodina's multicultural claim relating to the fear of it possibly signifying separatist inclinations, will also pose as a threat to its subsequent future. Ultimately the fact that there are present tensions among the different ethnicities also demonstrates a threat to the future existence of Vojvodina's multicultural narrative. What is nonetheless thought-provoking is that these criminal "nationalistic incidents" have mostly been conducted by minors, who are considered to be the generation that is "unaffected" by the past animosities of the wars. Consequently this makes it even more interesting to examine how the (Serbian) youth conceptualises their ethnic-cultural surroundings, and what they think of Vojvodina's multicultural claim.

All the experts interviewed adhered to Vojvodina's multicultural claim's embodiment of a "marketing trend", representing an institutional narrative that is attractive for the European Union and the outside world. This claim was given importance in terms of formally achieving its aim of being responsible for the different groups of people living in the region, as well as providing Vojvodina with its "positive image". Likewise there seemed to be experts who had hope that this multicultural narrative can bring optimism, by offering a positive narrative that will potentially have an impact in resurrecting the way in which people identify towards their ethnicity - especially among the Serbian population. Nevertheless the structure and wellbeing of the region's societal pluralism was also something that was considered as vital – correspondingly in regards to how the citizens themselves view their ethnic-cultural surroundings. One cannot merely propagate a certain institutional narrative if there is no substance to back it up – if the reality shows otherwise. Hence if Vojvodina desires to sustain its societal pluralism and carry on to propagate its multicultural claim, it needs to look inwards to embrace its local society and work on finding ways to improve the communication and cooperation between people. A way for people to acknowledge the benefits of living in an ethnic-cultural environment, where they will feel connected and fulfilled through this multicultural narrative. Therefore Vojvodina's "segregated model of multiculturalism" that possibly maintains the "peace" in the region, as well as enables these different ethnicities to sustain their cultures, might pose an obstacle in the overcoming of Vojvodina's present societal threats and challenges. Ultimately there was a general urge from the experts towards the up keeping of Vojvodina's multiculturalism – it was considered to embody a "positive societal value", however it requires nourishment and effort, an engagement with the local context and the people living in the region. The next section will further illuminate upon this issue that relates towards the lack of "engraining" of this claim on the local level, which will be presented from the outlook of the (Serbian) Youth living in Novi Sad.

5. Youth Analysis of the “Multicultural” Setup of Society

This chapter will be dedicated to the voices of the (Serbian) youth living in Novi Sad. Their perceptions will be brought forwards, in regards to how they conceptualise their ethnic-cultural surroundings. The youth base their problematisation of “multiculturalism” on their *expectation* of what this notion means to them, which is deducted from the youth’s everyday practices and experiences within their environment, and cultural system. Throughout this chapter, references will be made to the theory outlined in the conceptual and theoretical framework.

Something that is important to be mentioned before one starts reading this chapter, is the presence of the reoccurring voice of the majority and the sense of “othering” that can be interpreted from the discourse offered by the youth. This is something that is not explicit however it can be felt from the way the youth talks about the national minorities, and their supposed multicultural surroundings. This is because the youth offer their perceptions on the topic of multiculturalism and provide their understanding of it, without questioning their own position within it. In this sense, the youth goes on to analyse the position of the national minorities within this debate, where they do not reflect on their role as “the majority”. This happens even though many of the informants come from mixed marriages, precisely because they have the option of choosing to identify with the Serbian ethnicity if they wanted to, which is not the case for the other minorities in the region. There is nothing destructive or potentially wrong about this specific manufacture of speech, because it is something that is intrinsically produced, nonetheless I feel that it is important to acknowledge, since the discourse is structured around the “majority power of speech” that makes it significant to take into account when reading this thesis.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will focus on the way the youth talks about their ethnic-cultural environment, which will relate to the youth’s awareness of and knowledge on their supposed multicultural surroundings. The second section will focus on the ways in which the youth describes the tensions in the region, as well as how they subsequently give meaning to them. It should be mentioned once again that the identities of the informants will stay anonymous; I have provided arbitrary names merely for the storyline flow.

Before this chapter formally commences, I have decided to include a segment on the way the youth illustrates the region of Vojvodina, and the city of Novi Sad. I have incorporated these descriptions because they primarily set the ambiance for the two following chapters. Equally I think it is important to acknowledge how the youth describes and talks about the place they live in, which is a place they like and appreciate, as well as a place that to them has potential. This further relates to the importance of one’s “sense of place”, relating to how the youth verbally constructs the habitat they live in, which will also offer insight into the youth’s sense of regional consciousness. Accordingly these imageries tell us something – they inform us upon the way the youth thinks about the place they live in, which is significant in the light of this thesis that deals with the way the youth relates to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in order to deconstruct the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality.

Youth illustrations of Vojvodina and the city of Novi Sad

I started off each one of my interviews by asking informants what for them represented the region of Vojvodina, especially the capital city of Novi Sad; what made Novi Sad special and what they liked most about the city itself. It was interesting to see that no informant stumbled upon this question - they all embraced it with enthusiasm, where it became clear that the youth had a lot of love for the city of Novi Sad. This was because mostly all of the informants either said that they were born in Novi Sad, grew up in the city, or were connected to it in regards to their studies, job, friends etc. In actuality most of the interviews started off with “well...Novi Sad is the city I was born in...Novi Sad is the city I grew up in...or I love Novi Sad because of the people that comprise it”. This primarily shows that the youth has a deep connection to the region, where the sense of appreciation the youth shares for the city of Novi Sad and the region itself, connects to the care and concern the youth has for its future progression. This is something that will become visible in the following sections through the demonstration of the youth’s desire to comprehend the domain of multiculturalism, and its importance for the region.

Furthermore what was also interesting is that all of the informants offered a very similar, if not identical account of how they described the region of Vojvodina as well as the city of Novi Sad, its characteristics, and what they (as the youth) liked doing most. This suggests that the youth interviewed share a similar way of relating to the city, in which there is a possible “customary” way of adhering to the milieu around them.

This segment connects to the bigger significance of the youth’s regional consciousness, in regards to their awareness and perception of the region they live in. This relates to Anssi Paasi’s notion of the importance of regional consciousness when it comes to regional identity. In this sense, it seems like the youth does have regional consciousness, since they are able to conceptualise what features stand to make up the region of Vojvodina, in which there is a similar perception of shared values, characteristics, and social capital that in turn produces a meaningful socio-political place. Moreover according to Paasi, this sense of regional consciousness asks the more personal question of “where do I belong” that pertains to the youth’s adherence to the features that for them envelope the region of Vojvodina.

Vojvodina

The three main characteristics people used to describe the region of Vojvodina were “flat land”, “calmness”, and “slow and easy-going people”. Most of the informants primarily alluded to Vojvodina representing “flat land” that is a visible feature of the region, something that one can immediately realise if taking a train from Belgrade to Novi Sad for example. It is interesting to note that most informants implicitly linked the notion of “flat land” to the “calmness” and “easy-goingness” of the people. The informants did not directly state this link, however this was something that was implied through their discourse, where they would for instance say “Vojvodina represents flat land where the people are easy-going, slow, and there is a general feel of calmness” (Luna, 2017). These characteristics were usually contrasted with Belgrade (being the capital and the largest city), as well as the larger part of Serbia - where the youth acknowledged Vojvodina’s flat land, its more “relaxed” way of life, as well as its appreciation for nature and agriculture – something that the youth did not relate to the other parts of Serbia.

It is worthwhile mentioning that before I started any interview I would explain what the interview would be about, which meant that the word “multiculturalism” did come up. Nonetheless most people did not mention the notion of “multiculturalism” as a certain characteristic of Vojvodina. Out of the thirty interviews I conducted, only three to four people mentioned “multiculturalism” as a feature of the region. As claimed by one informant, “Novi Sad represents the harmony of multiculturalism, people are so welcoming here” (Marija, 2017). Likewise Petar also stated that Vojvodina represents “a circuit of different ethnic groups that somehow function together” (Petar, 2017). In addition there was an informant who went into more detail by affirming that Vojvodina represents “a mixture of different cultures not only in terms of nationality but also regionally, which has brought many different values, traditions and behaviours” (Srdjan, 2017). Since only a few people mentioned the notion of “multiculturalism” as representing a specific characteristic of the region, I was initially not sure whether these informants truly believed “multiculturalism” stood as a “feature” of the region, or whether they simply mentioned it because they knew that the interview would be about the topic of multiculturalism - and hence it seemed “good” to indicate it as a feature embodying the region.

Nevertheless when these informants talked about multiculturalism in the later phases of the interview, it became obvious that they did not have concrete knowledge on the topic – in which it either showed that they were pulling together information from various sources and contexts, or that they prepared for the interview beforehand; Marija even admitted that she read on the topic of multiculturalism to prepare for what I was going to ask her. Therefore even though a few people mentioned “multiculturalism” as a feature of Vojvodina - it was clearly not something that the youth had knowledge on, since they showed a lack of familiarity towards the concept itself.

In this sense it seemed like for some informants, it was the first time they were confronted with the topic of multiculturalism, while for others it was like I was tapping into a thought process that was not yet concluded, where they were in search for answers. Equally there were some informants who were more verbal about their opinions on the topic, and thus offered more opinionated accounts. However the bigger significance of all of this is that the youth did fundamentally demonstrate a genuine interest and concern for the topic where they went on to problematise the notion of multiculturalism in their own ways, by relating to their everyday experiences and practises.

The city of Novi Sad

A statement that I feel encapsulates the accounts of the youth in regards to what they think of the city of Novi Sad, is the proclamation provided by Nikola, “a city by measurement of a man” (Nikola, 2017). This is a sentence that was challenging to translate for it to have the same sense of meaning in English, which is why I will offer some more insight into it; this statement implies that the city of Novi Sad is crafted to the exact “measurement” of a man and its needs – meaning that it is “tailored” to fit any person, including their interests, hobbies, and the way they would like to lead their life. This was something that was expressed throughout the interviews, the opinion that Novi Sad is a city for everyone – where “everyone can find themselves, where there is something for everyone” (Anja, 2017).

Some of the main characteristics people mentioned when referring to the city of Novi Sad, were its beautiful architecture that can be seen in the centre of the city, the Danube River, the Petrovaradin

fortress, and the “Kej” that presents a long walking area along the river which has little cafes and where during summer people can swim. There was one person who alluded to the “traditional craftsmanship” as a specific characteristic that can be found within the city. Jelena stated that “there still exists some traditional craftsmanship, like a shoe maker or a hat shop in the city centre, which relates back to how things were in the olden days – this makes the city so beautiful to me” (Jelena, 2017).

These main characteristics encompassing the city of Novi Sad also came up with the activities the youth engaged in within the city. Once again the activities the youth mentioned were very similar to one another. The parallel adherence to the activities the youth engaged with was nicely conveyed by one of the informants - “I like to walk around the Kej, to go to the Petrovaradin Fortress, and to spend time by the river - like every standard Vojvodinian” (Marko, 2017). This statement implies that there is some sort of “standard” way in regards to what people do, and how they engage with their life in Novi Sad.

For instance many informants mentioned that they enjoyed doing things along the river; as asserted by one of the informants, “what I like to do most in Novi Sad is to hang out with my friends by the river...” (Dusan, 2017). The element of “water” involving the Danube River was something that seemed to be present throughout many accounts of the youth. All of the informants mentioned “the Danube River” either as one of the characteristics of Novi Sad, or as a place where they enjoyed to be with friends. The informants also alluded to the river having a “bigger significance” for the city itself, since it offered a place that was open for all people and ages. In this sense the youth does adhere to the prospect of other “national minorities” having a connection to the river. As expressed by one of the informants, “I cannot imagine Novi Sad without the river, I cannot imagine a city without a river actually; a lot happens around the river, people hang out there, there are parties organised etc., also many people have a holiday house by the river (Luna, 2017). Accordingly the river can be seen to stand as a symbol of connection, a place where all people come to and are welcome – hence it can be considered as a “multicultural space”, since it is identified as a place where many people feel at ease.

Novi Sad was also adhered to as city that embodies a vast number of students. This was something that seemed to be important for the youth interviewed, which was also something that appeared to be responsible for Novi Sad’s dynamic energy that was mentioned throughout the interviews. As expressed by one informant, “Novi Sad is generally a town for and of young people, and it’s always people from the same age that you see around” (Dana, 2017). Similarly Dusan also states that “there are a lot of students here and there is this energy that you can feel in the city, when you walk in the centre for example” (Dusan, 2017). Most of the informants recognised the dynamic energy in Novi Sad primarily because they were students themselves; therefore they were within these types of circles. However many of the other people I talked to (who were not students), also acknowledged Novi Sad’s dynamic energy, which was once again related to its large number of students and the vibrancy of the city itself that was considered to stand out from the larger part of Serbia.

Mostly all of the informants alluded to the uniqueness of the architecture that can be found in the centre of the city, where it stood as a feature of Novi Sad that the youth really liked. As enthusiastically referred to by Sanja, “when I look at the centre of the city, I think, wow we are so

beautiful” (Sanja, 2017). Likewise Dragan asserts that Novi Sad “presents a classical European city where you have the city and the river, and then across the fortress...also the architecture dates back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire... there are not many cities like this...we are unique” (Dragan, 2017). Moreover another informant also goes on to compare the centre of Novi Sad with other European cities, expressing that “Novi Sad is a really beautiful city - it’s not because I am from here...but when I travel I see that the architecture we have here can also be found in many other European cities, and I think that what is special in Novi Sad is that there is that balance between new and old – modernisation and up keeping of tradition (Ivko, 2017). Ivko makes a link between the architecture in Novi Sad and other European cities, which makes it seem like Novi Sad’s centre is “accredited” to be beautiful because it is something that can be compared to other European cities. Nonetheless Ivko does also adhere to its “uniqueness” by suggesting that Novi Sad’s architecture poses a balance between old and new. This inherently reflects upon the idea of what a “real” and a “good” city should be and look like, in which it connects to a larger “European city culture” that in the case of Novi Sad is expressed through its architecture.

Another characteristic that was expressed by many informants was that the city was very well organised and that you could walk anywhere. This is something that can be factually proven because most people in Novi Sad ride a bicycle. The structure of the city was something that most informants compared with Belgrade. As stated by one of the informants “Novi Sad is not as big as Belgrade but everything is within 15 minutes away, it is cosy and warm...” (Jelena, 2017). Similarly Jasna compliments that by saying “the whole structure of Novi Sad is so logical and easy, someone who comes here finds it easier to find their way than in Belgrade for example – this is because the centre is actually in the centre” (Jasna, 2017).

The youth also acknowledged the vast amount of opportunities the city has to offer. As described by one informant, “there are many organisations for young people in Novi Sad, there are a lot of opportunities even outside the volunteering sector which I am interested in” (Dusan, 2017). Ana adds on to that by saying that “I think Novi Sad has a lot of opportunities for work, every time I looked for work I found it” (Ana, 2017). In this regard it seems like Novi Sad is a city that accommodates to the youth. This seems to be confirmed by an informant who expresses that “I like to have the opportunity of choice, and this is something I have here in Novi Sad” (Marija, 2017). The feeling of having the choice in opportunities as a young person is important, since if the youth thinks that the city they live in has a lot of opportunities for them - then this suggests that the youth is satisfied with the lives they lead in Novi Sad, and that there is no reason for them to leave.

To conclude this chapter, I would also like to mention some of my own observations of the city. Living in Novi Sad for three months I primarily realised that the people are very warm, easy-going, and welcoming. This is because many times I had incidences where I would enter an organisation and ask for certain information, where people were immediately willing to help me out - some even agreed for an interview on the spot. Also the people genuinely seemed interested in my topic and went out of their way to help me; for instance there was a girl who with her own initiative took out books from the library (which she was not allowed to do) for me to copy, because she thought they could help me out.

An interesting observation I came across when walking around the city was that you can find a popcorn stand on every street. This could certainly be because the people in Novi Sad love to eat popcorn, but I connected this to the “way of life” in Novi Sad that envelopes this sense of easygoingness of the people, as well as the vibrant nature of the city itself. Ultimately the buildings in Novi Sad are very much pronounced in terms of colours and “decorations”, especially in the centre. This is something I once again associated to the vivacity of the city and its people. Below I have put some pictures that encapsulate the vibe of the city itself, its architecture, and the Petrovaradin Fortress. I have included them for visual purposes.



In conclusion, this section has offered the youth's depictions of the region of Vojvodina, as well as the city of Novi Sad. It has provided a picture of how the youth talks about the place they live in, involving its representations, characteristics, and activities. This segment has been important in the crafting of the youth's "sense of place" that provides the context for the following two sections.

5.1 How the youth talks about their ethnic-cultural surroundings

This section will be dedicated towards illuminating the ways in which the youth talks about their ethnic-cultural surroundings, which will be based on the youth's awareness of and subsequent knowledge on the societal diversity around them.

It is important to mention that the youth provides different interpretations in regards to how they relate to the topic of multiculturalism. Some informants adhere to multiculturalism by solely talking about Vojvodina's multicultural claim; other informants connect to the more personal level by emphasising the societal diversity within their present lived reality, while others go on to problematise the very relation between Vojvodina's multicultural narrative and its societal reality. Accordingly this shows that "multiculturalism" means different things to different people, depending on one's experiences, practices, and involvement within their cultural and societal milieu. This is why utilising a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject" will enable this thesis to illuminate upon the assorted ways through which the youth relates to Vojvodina's multiculturalism, by showing what this concept means to the youth, and how they engage with it in regards to their larger cultural constellation.

When I asked each informant what the notion of "multiculturalism" signified to them personally, most informants embraced Anja's statement - "the life of more cultures, different people living together in the same place" (Anja, 2017). Another informant adds on to Anja's account by stressing the necessity of multiculturalism enveloping the presence of people living in one community - "everyone in one place" (Dana, 2017). Thus there was an accentuation on people living in the same place, together, as well as a connotation to "many different cultures and different people" (Dragan, 2017). There was one informant who merely stated that the word "acceptance" was the best way to describe multiculturalism, in which he went on to describe what kind of situation would be "multicultural" for him; he called upon a personal example where "there was this old woman sitting on a bench and a person asked her why aren't you working today, and she answered by saying that her neighbours have a holiday so that's why she was not working" (Dusko, 2017). Dusko utilised this example to show how people respect other people's holidays and traditions, which is why multiculturalism for him encompasses "acceptance", as well as the mutual valuing and participating in other people's traditions if you live in the same community. Dusko went on to say that the respecting of people's holidays and traditions is something that takes place in Vojvodina, at least in the past, where people would respect the Christmas and Easter of the other cultures as well - so they would for example not work on that day, or would fast to show respect.

It should nonetheless be mentioned that most informants hesitated upon this question, in regards to what "multiculturalism" meant to them personally. This was obvious due to the long pauses people would take to think about how they would describe this notion of "multiculturalism"; there were also informants who expressed insecurity with their answer, for example, this can be witnessed from Jasna's account, "multiculturalism means that in Novi Sad and Vojvodina there are people from

different nationalities, if I am correct in that definition?" (Jasna, 2017) I made sure to tell the informants that I was not looking for a dictionary definition, yet how they themselves described it - what this meant to them; however most people struggled with this question, because I think the mere word of "multiculturalism" scared people off - since it denotes intricacy and some sort of "theory". This further demonstrates that "multiculturalism" is not part of the youth's regular vocabulary, where it stands as an unfamiliar concept, yet it seems to be something that the youth feel obliged to relate to and understand. This is because at the same time informants showed effort in attempting to describe this concept and relate it to their surroundings. It felt like I was tapping into the informants thought process that was not yet concluded - since most of the youth had some sort of idea of what this notion of multiculturalism stood for, nevertheless their thought on the topic was not yet fully established. I could have possibly decided not to use the word "multiculturalism", however I think the use of this word was vital in regards to seeing whether the youth was aware of what it entails, and how they subsequently conceive it - since this is also how the region itself is promoted to be.

While some informants had some sort of predisposed opinion on the topic of multiculturalism, where they attempted to problematise its nature, other informants expressed total oblivion in regards to what this multicultural conception entailed. For instance one informant was so blunt by saying "I do not know what multiculturalism is...different cultures?" (Bogdan, 2017). I was surprised by Bogdan's honesty so I went on to help him by telling him what "multiculturalism" stood for, and then I asked him if he was aware of the fact that Vojvodina is promoted to be a multicultural region; he went on to say "I do not know why Vojvodina is represented to be multicultural...because of the different nationalities right? How many are there? 26? Really?" (Bogdan, 2017). In this sense it seemed like I was the one who was providing Bogdan with the knowledge on the topic, to which he was in turn pleasantly surprised about. Moreover another informant also expressed his unawareness by stating "I do not know what it means...multiculturalism? It makes me think of something big happening in terms of events or something – the first thing that comes to mind is all these nations going towards a particular culture or something" (Milos, 2017). I restrained from helping Milos with what multiculturalism was about, especially since he did not ask or require my involvement – I thus allowed him to carry on with his thoughts in order to see what he would come up with. These examples show how the youth does not automatically relate this notion of multiculturalism to their lived reality.

The focus group discussion that I conducted with the six participants nicely links to this discussion, since one of the first things I asked them to do was to write down on a piece of paper what the word "multiculturalism" brought to their minds. They subsequently placed all the papers in a hat, where I then took out each piece of paper and asked them to elaborate more on what they wrote down. The six different things involved "tolerance", "difference", "New York", "the existence of different cultures", "blending" and "food". The two most interesting accounts were based on the components of "food" and "New York"; "food" was said to embody the very spirit of multiculturalism, since societal plurality implicates food diversity, and food was a feature that personified Vojvodina's societal reality (Luna, 2017). Moreover "New York" stood as a "symbol" of multiculturalism, because it represented a place where people from all over the world lived (Tanja, 2017).

I found it interesting that many people alluded to the notion of multiculturalism as standing for something much “larger” – relating to more of an international level, rather than adhering to Vojvodina’s societal reality. This is something that was echoed throughout the interviews as well. For example there was one informant who continuously kept asking whether I was referring to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism or not; this is because Anja kept relating the notion of multiculturalism to an international level, which had to do with her background; Anja was a girl who sang on a ship that went around the world every three months, where she related multiculturalism to the fact that she was immersed in an international setting. For instance this can be implied through Anja’s example of “the work I did with AISEC involved people from many different cultures, and thus communicating and connecting with people from different cultures is something I got used to – I have friends from all over the world” (Anja, 2017). Thus Anja adhered to multiculturalism through her work with AISEC that comprised working with people from all over the world, where she states that she got accustomed to interacting with people from different cultures.

Moreover there were some informants (including Anja) who tended to make sure that I was asking about the region of Vojvodina, by stating “you mean in Vojvodina or generally?” or “you mean how it is manifested in Novi Sad?” This leads me to think that the informants are hesitant to connect “multiculturalism” to the region of Vojvodina, because they possibly do not recognise the term as something that could relate to their own setting. This might simply be related to the youth’s unfamiliarity of the concept of “multiculturalism”, where they are not used to thinking about their own city in this way; nonetheless this might also be because the youth automatically connects “multiculturalism” to an international level, where they do not identify this as something that is part of their lived reality.

It is however important to note that all of the informants interviewed, as well as the participants of the focus group discussion, said that they were aware that Vojvodina presented a “multicultural region”. This primarily pertains to how the youth understood this question; by merely asking whether one thinks Vojvodina is a multicultural region, it is implicitly already inferred that one should say “yes”; likewise it depends on how people conceptualise the notion of multiculturalism. Accordingly this suggests that the youth does have an intuitive connection with this concept since it is something that is “actively” promoted by the region, which is subsequently why the youth is aware of Vojvodina being a multicultural region; it is a conception that diffuses itself throughout the Vojvodinian society that inevitably sticks to people’s sense of consciousness. Nonetheless the youth does show a lack of knowledge in regards to what this ideological concept stands for, where there is a sense of intimidation relating to what this project entails.

When asked what kind of situation would be “multicultural”, most informants alluded to schools and the university that comprises a lot of people from different backgrounds and cultures, where for the youth these very settings seemed to personified this notion of multiculturalism. For instance Marija goes on to say that for her a multicultural situation would involve, “pre-school classes where there are Hungarian, Serbian, and Roma children all together, also students for example – these are the kind of setting that tie me most to multiculturalism” (Marija, 2017). The fact that most informants could hypothesise upon certain “multicultural” situations shows that there was an effort in regards to understanding this notion of multiculturalism. Even though the youth demonstrated an initial

hesitation relating to what this conception entailed and meant to them – the youth was able to problematise the notion of multiculturalism, as well as bring it closer to their own reality.

Likewise there was also an adherence to any “bigger event” that inevitably brings together different groups of people; as asserted by Petar, “any bigger concerts brings together these groups, so either education or cultural events” (Petar, 2017). Other informants alluded to events such as New Year’s or Easter in the centre (Milos, 2017) - even weddings were mentioned as situations where you would find people from different cultures and nationalities (Tanja, 2017). Similarly another informant acknowledged “festivals where there are different representations of the different people from different places” (Sanja, 2017). This was something that was mentioned by a lot of informants, since in Vojvodina there are a lot of festivals throughout the year involving food, music, or folklore that therefore involve the representations of all these different cultures within the region. There was also an informant who mentioned “a museum where in various different ways there is representations of different cultures” (Mara, 2017). The famous summer music festival “EXIT” was also something that came up as a possible situation that brings together people from different cultures. It was not surprising that most of the informants mentioned the EXIT festival, since it is an event that the youth would mostly know of - however EXIT is considered to be more of an “international” event that brings together people from all over the world.

A totally different account came from one informant who said that he considered “unfortunate events and accidents, such as the flood that took place in 1991 to have the power to bring all these different groups of people together” (Dragan, 2017). Likewise another different perspective was offered by Luna who claimed that “protests bring together these different nationalities – for instance when the new government came to power, people went on the streets and there you could find a lot of different nationalities, but people might not have been aware of that” (Luna, 2017).

Consequently the youth identified a variety of different places, settings, and happenings that embodied this sense of “multiculturalism” that they conceived as involving “different types of people”. The accounts provided above imply that this notion of societal pluralism is not something that is dominantly present in the lives of the youth, where it seems like “multiculturalism” (for most of the informants) is based on, as well as found within certain “special occasions” that do not take place on a regular, daily basis. This is due to the youth’s emphasis on “bigger events”; nonetheless this also shows that this multicultural narrative is something that is widely diffused and propagated, since the youth was able to connect it to larger events and occasions.

I was also interested in whether the informants attended certain events or knew specific events that for them brought together the different ethnicities living in the region. However it was surprising to find out that mostly all informants could not recall any specific events that involved various different ethnicities. Only one informant was able to mention two concrete events that involved the representation of the different nationalities in the region. This was the “Prozafest” that “connects different ethnic writers in regards to poems, where this year there was a lot of Croatian writers for example” (Dusan, 2017); also the “Tamburica fest” that is based on “promoting Vojvodinian culture, especially relating to the region of “Backa” that comprises a lot of Hungarians” (Dusan, 2017). Accordingly all of the other informants were not aware of events that comprised different ethnicities.

In this sense most informants' answers involved mere adherences to, "there was this festival of food...but I do not remember the name..." (Nikola, 2017).

Therefore it seems like the youth is either not aware of the events that bring together different ethnicities in the region, or it could be that there are no events that are fully dedicated to this. As explained by one of the more older informants, "the events that seem to involve the different cultures within the region are "polarised" – this means that an event is organised for the "promotion of a certain culture", cultures are boxed in and represented in isolation from one another...I would not know of an event that truly connects or joins all these ethnicities together" (Dusko, 2017). This implies that the youth is possibly not aware of events that do not pertain to their own ethnicity and context. Likewise Vesna was another informant who expressed her dissatisfaction with the fact that "cultural events are not so visible, I do not know how to inform myself on the manifestations happening in the city – this is something that is not emphasised in the town" (Vesna, 2017). Hence it seems like there is a primary lack of awareness in terms of the cultural events that are organised in the city, in which most events seem to be based on "one culture" that dominates. Consequently there is no apparent dedication to the mixing of the different cultures in the region.

Most of the youth related to the topic of multiculturalism by adhering to their own experiences, where they also used the very notion of multiculturalism to reflect on their everyday practices. However this was done in varied ways - by connecting to Vojvodina's multicultural claim, their present lived reality, or by alluding to both.

Some informants alluded to Vojvodina's multicultural claim. In this sense these informants talked about how this claim was expressed in their everyday lives, in regards to being in a situation where people engaged with this topic. It is interesting that most informants stated that they were never in a situation where people talked about Vojvodina's multiculturalism – expect maybe at university or at certain conferences. For instance there was a girl who said that she had a whole workshop on multiculturalism in Vojvodina, but that was because she was part of Novi Sad 2019 and they had to organise a workshop to inform people about the region of Vojvodina - hence multiculturalism was a topic (Marija, 2017). Also another informant says that "I was in a situation where people talked about this notion of multiculturalism, it was at university where we had a debate, I cannot remember the topic exactly, but it was about cultural differences and what connects and differentiates us – that was actually the first time I was confronted with what multiculturalism meant" (Sava, 2017). Thus Vojvodina's multicultural narrative seems to be a topic that comes up in professional settings, involving the university and various institutions that are required to propagate this claim.

There were other informants who adhered to their experiences of multiculturalism within their daily lives. There was an informant who described his experience of multiculturalism through his daily interaction with one of his friends. He asserted that, "I have not been in a formal situation where people talked about multiculturalism, maybe at university, but I see this mostly around friends; for example I have this friend who is from the Republic of Srpska and we exchange views and opinions but I try not to impose certain attitudes because with a lot of my opinions and views she does not agree with, and I also don't agree with her, but that is fine – however in some ways we avoid talking about certain things because we just don't agree" (Dusan, 2017). Dusan acknowledges the different structure of people's mind sets and values that connects to the larger issue relating to how people

were raised to believe in different things. This is something that was also referred to by Tanja who offered a very personal example where she describes how she had a Ruthenian boyfriend, however “after spending more time with him, I realised that even though we might have both grown up and lived in Vojvodina, we were raised in very different ways... but that’s something you cannot realise immediately” (Tanja, 2017); Tanja goes on to allude to the difference in their values, morals, and ways of life, by expressing that “he constantly preferred having her cook, and that he was not accepting of her not eating meat” (Tanja, 2017).

This connects to the topic of how this multicultural component is personified within the informants’ social circle, in regards to their daily communication and exchanges. This can be linked back to Stuart Hall’s “sociological subject” that acknowledges how people relate to their identity and surroundings through the way in which they interact and come into contact with other people around them. In this sense, the way in which the youth interacts with other national minorities in their surroundings will affect the way in which they position themselves within the debate on multiculturalism, as well as how they will adhere to their identity corpus.

When asked whether they had friends from different national minorities, most of the youth said they did. Most informants stated that it was not important where someone was from - that did not present a criterion for them to be friends with someone. As stated by one informant “difference was never a factor for me to pick people or choose friends...” (Anja, 2017). Another informant adds on to this by expressing her “multicultural heritage”, in which she exclaims that her grandmother is Hungarian and that her granddad is German...but also “my mum is Romanian and my dad is Serbian, so I am a mix myself – we are all humans no matter from where you are...” (Dana, 2017).

It was nevertheless clear that the majority of informants who said that they had friends from national minorities, (excluding some informants), these friends they talked of seemed to be mere acquaintances. For instance one of the informants stated that “I do have friends from national minorities, in my school there is a lot of different nationalities, but you have separate classes for Hungarians - this is of course because of their own initiative; in my class there are maybe 10 people that are a different nationality but they tend to keep together a lot, so I don’t interact with them...” (Vukan, 2017). Furthermore Marko was another informant who said that “I have friends from national minorities, I have a Hungarian and Slovakian friend but these are all acquaintances, we always respect each other – it would be rude for someone to come and for them to be messed around with, because of where he or she is from, that is not nice” (Marko, 2017). The one informant who genuinely claimed that most of his friends were Serbian, did say that he had “only one friend from a different nationality, but a very good one, who he considered his life friend” (Bogdan, 2017); Bogdan went on to further describe their relation by expressing that “we always called him ‘Slovak’ out of fun and he never minded it...I also had this Hungarian friend and we also always called him ‘Madjar’ (meaning ‘Hungarian’), and he was okay with it, I mean I don’t know how it affected him...” (Bogdan, 2017). Consequently this suggests that the youth tends to stick within their ethnic circles. This further relates to the youth’s sense of detachment from the subject itself.

Another interesting insight that was provided through the focus group discussion was based on the portrayal of some pictures I presented, where I asked the participants to tell me what representation they considered to be “most multicultural”; there were three pictures involved – the first picture

visibly depicted people from different nationalities; the second picture demonstrated five “white” people sitting at a university, and the third picture involved a conference in Uganda that comprised Africans. All of the informants said that they considered the first picture to be the “most multicultural”, however this was a trick question, because there was no picture that was “most multicultural”; all the pictures could be multicultural in their own way, where it does not mean that the depiction of “visible difference” connotes to the most multicultural surrounding. This led to a subsequent discussion, since there was a girl from Houston who said that she did not consider Vojvodina to be multicultural, due to the fact that this was not something that seemed “visible” to her in regards to people being “different”. We discussed that if one really had to say what picture is “most multicultural”, it could actually be the third picture, because these people could be from different regions within Uganda or East Africa for that matter, coming from different tribes and embracing different religions and traditions. This can nonetheless also be considered the other way around, where just because all the people are “white”, does not mean that the environment is not multicultural; this can be related to the very situation in Vojvodina, where most people “look” the same – in this sense “multiculturalism” is not expressed in visible terms, however it still depicts a multicultural region.

In conclusion, I would infer that most of the youth that was interviewed did have awareness of what the notion of multiculturalism involved, in terms of it presenting ethnic-cultural pluralism. Thus this notion of societal diversity was something that the youth came across within their daily life, however the very conception of “multiculturalism” relating to an ideological project, clearly presents something that is far removed from the everyday life and practices of the youth. Nonetheless the youth was still able to problematise this notion of multiculturalism and relate it to their lives, which shows their ability and desire to comprehend and acknowledge what this concept means to them, and the region itself.

Most informants were able to relate to the notion of multiculturalism as involving different cultures and different people living in one place. Likewise most of the youth was able to link their connotation of multiculturalism to a situation that they considered to exemplify this sense of societal pluralism. Nonetheless there were some informants who did not know what multiculturalism involved, whereby most informants could not recall events that comprised different ethnicities living in the region.

The youth offered a variety of different ways through which they related to multiculturalism, depending on how they conceptualised their relation with it. Some informants related their familiarities to how Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative was personified within their daily lives; this was echoed through their university or project within an institution that they were part of. Conversely other informants related their experience of multiculturalism to their everyday interactions. This shows that there are different ways people adhere to their experiences of multiculturalism – where for some it relates to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, while for others it concerns their daily communication and interaction with others. This illuminates upon the significance of one’s larger cultural constellation that impacts a person’s adherence to a certain conception. This inevitably depends on the specific lives the youth leads and how they engage with this notion of multiculturalism – whether they see it as something that is expressed in their very surrounding, or if it something that they consider to embrace a more institutional domain.

Ultimately when directly asked whether they were aware that Vojvodina is represented to be a multicultural region, all informants said “yes”. However through the ways in which the youth described multiculturalism - involving certain situations, events, their social circle etc. - most informants showed a lack knowledge in regards to what this conception entailed as an ideological project. The youth was more likely to connect this idea of multiculturalism to an “international” level, in which there was an obvious hesitation with relating it to the region of Vojvodina. Moreover this ideal of multiculturalism was also described to implicate exceptional occasions and happenings. The next section will go on to further illustrate how the youth talks about their surroundings, by focusing of how the youth describes the tensions in their environment.

5.2 How the youth depicts the tensions in their surroundings

This section will be dedicated to the ways in which the youth recognises the tensions in their surroundings, as well as the ways in which they give meaning to them. The youth adhered to two types of tensions. One tension involved the way in which the youth perceived some national minorities to be within the region, especially the Hungarian national minority; the other tension encompassed the more “manifested” strains among the different nationalities living in the region.

Something that was brought up by my most informants throughout every interview was that the Hungarian national minority had a tendency to only speak Hungarian - where the youth thought that Hungarians did not seem to generally make an effort to learn Serbian. This was something that the majority of the youth expressed their dislike towards, because as they conveyed, by living in Serbia, one should make an effort to learn the language. This was articulated in terms of the youth being cut off from various conversations and or situations, merely because the people involved started to speak in their native language. As confirmed by one informant, “I don’t like it when some national minorities start speaking in their language when I am around, because that immediately cuts me off from the discussion” (Jasna, 2017). Jasna mentioned that this was mostly in regards to the Hungarian national minority. Marko further related to this issue concerning the Hungarian national minority by stating, “I had experiences where they totally switch you out of their context because you don’t speak their language for example, and then you feel like you are a foreigner” (Marko, 2017).

While Jasna and Marko articulate agitation with their past experiences involving the Hungarian national minority, Milos bluntly asserts, “I think that if you are living here then you should and need to learn the language of the majority” (Milos, 2017). I went on to ask Milos if he thought I should learn Dutch, since I have been living in the Netherlands for nearly five years now; Milos discussed this by saying “it is okay if I don’t speak Dutch because I have not decided to live there...but it also depends on the country and if they speak English or not...just look at Hungary he said, try to find someone who speaks English – this is not possible” (Milos, 2017). Thus Milos deems one’s decision of residence in a country as a factor being responsible for their consequent knowledge of the language.

Mara was an informant who candidly expressed the opinion of “the majority” of the youth when it came to this issue, by claiming, “I think that the Hungarians that live here should know Serbian...they should use their own language of course, but they live in Serbia so they should know Serbian...certainly among your family and school why not, one should speak their language - you should not forget your language and your identity - but in some institutions where Serbian is spoken, you should speak Serbian (Mara, 2017).

By talking about how the Hungarians prefer to solely speak in their own language, one informant fascinatingly expressed, “I do not know why the Hungarians are here...the standard of living and everything is better in Hungary” (Bogdan, 2017). Thus in this regard Bogdan questions why the Hungarians stay in Vojvodina, since they prefer to speak their own language that pertains to their desire of keeping close to one another, but also because the standard of life seems to be better in Hungary.

Moreover Jelena goes on to suggest the “impracticality” with national minorities being schooled in their own language, since it only seems beneficial if they study in those countries - “the fact that national minorities have classes in their language is only an advantage if they want to study in that country” (Jelena, 2017). With this statement Jelena further adhered to the problem of national minorities not learning Serbian in school, because they get educated in their own languages. I also had an informal talk with some of the people working at the “student information point” (at the University of Novi Sad), who mentioned that there were a lot of Hungarians and Slovaks studying at the university, where they also stated that “Hungarians find it the hardest to speak Serbian...they always apologise for not speaking Serbian – approximately a third of the Hungarian students who come in to ask about something, only speak Hungarian” (Student Info Point, 2017). This relates back to the provincial government’s embracement of a “segregated model of multiculturalism” that enables the national minorities to maintain their identities, by being able to be schooled in their own language for example. However this means that the national minorities do not learn Serbian (the language of the majority), which seems to be an issue troubling the youth interviewed.

The topic regarding language and the Hungarian national minority was also something that was brought up in the focus group discussion, which suggests that this is an issue that bothers the youth. It was elaborated on by a girl who provided the group with a personal example, through which she wanted to demonstrate how the Hungarian national minority keeps close to one another. Tanja described that within her course, there are a lot of national minorities, especially Hungarians who tend to keep very close to each other; she said that “every time she would talk to a group of Hungarians, they would at some point switch to Hungarian and totally cut her off from the discussion (Tanja, 2017). Similarly she went on further to express that there were instances where she would walk into the classroom and say “good morning” to the “group of Hungarians who always sat next to each other”, and they would not say anything back (Tanja, 2017). Through this example Tanja articulated her disillusionment with how people within her surroundings behaved, because she expressed that she felt bad starting her day like that - where she would prefer if everyone got along and there were no guards among one another.

Another interesting insight from the youth that once again concerns the Hungarian national minority was described by Vukan, who gave an example of a story one of his friends experienced in a bus going from Hungary to Vojvodina. He said that his friend was travelling with a bus full of Hungarians from Hungary to Vojvodina, where when they were in Hungary, the Hungarians spoke in Serbian - however the moment they entered Vojvodina, the Hungarians started speaking Hungarian; even when they were addressed in Serbian, they would answer back in Hungarian (Vukan, 2017). Vukan brought up this example to describe how the Hungarians strongly desire to stick to their identities in Vojvodina - where in Vojvodina they want to be Hungarian – however in Hungary they probably want to be considered as “Hungarians from Vojvodina” (Vukan, 2017).

Hence it seems like the youth has had various encounters with situations where they felt uncomfortable with national minorities (mostly Hungarians in this case) speaking their own language. For instance Sava who has worked as a student assistant at the university expresses that “there have been times at work where a person would come in and speak in Hungarian, asking why his son cannot study in Hungarian...they ask for a lot but also a lot if offered to them as well” (Sava, 2017). Through this statement, this sense of “othering” is echoed, where Sava talks from a “privileged” position (being the student assistant as well as the “major ethnicity”), articulating how national minorities “ask for a lot”, but they also get a lot offered in return when it comes to educational privileges.

While most informants talked about the Hungarian national minority, there was one informant who did adhere to the Slovakian national minority, by also explaining that they keep very close to each other; Petar stated that “there are three Slovakian villages in Vojvodina where they only get married among themselves, which consequently leads to biological deformities because of incest” (Petar, 2017). Petar expressed that he heard that this was the way Slovaks “keep close” to one another, in which he further goes on to talk about “adaptation”, and how he thinks that societal diversity requires “constant adaptation” - because “there are always new people coming in, where they have to adjust to the system; they do not have to adapt to me as an individual Petar states...I mean there is a persistent need to adapt in general, because you can never be the same or talk about the same things with different people” (Petar, 2017).

While Petar thinks that people need to adapt to the “system”, Dragana implies that people also need to be sensitive to the “majority” around them. Dragana seemed to be personally affected by this issue, in which she heatedly expresses that “people come here and instead of assimilating to me and my culture, I have to assimilate to them...if you are coming here, you need to adapt to me and my home” (Dragana, 2017). In reality to multiculturalism, this implies a mono-ethnic society. Dragana goes on further to provide an example about the “Bosnian Burek” which illuminates the reason why she seemed so afflicted by this issue in the first place; she illustrates that “there was this woman working in a bakery who rudely told me off exclaiming that “Burek” can only be with meat...this happened 5 minutes from my home...she told me that what I wanted was in fact a “pita”, because it was filled with cheese; this is such a stupid example, but do you get what I mean? It’s good for me to know this when I go to Bosnia for example, so I am not embarrassed there, but here, you cannot say stuff like that to me” (Dragana, 2017). Hence it seems like some of the youth has had adverse encounters with some national minorities, who have tried to “impose” certain views on them that have consequently left negative imprints on the youth involved. Even if this is merely Dragana’s way of describing her incident at the bakery, Dragana’s account once again connects to this “majority standpoint”, where she seems to be afflicted by a multicultural society’s inevitable diversity in values that in turn makes her stand out as an informant that is opinionated on the issue.

While the majority of the youth acknowledged the tension with the issue of national minorities (especially Hungarians) keeping close to one another, where there seems to be no initiative towards learning the language of the majority population – the youth also recognised that there were various manifested tensions among the different ethnicities living in the region.

Most of the informants interviewed stated that there were tensions in the region - however when asked if they could provide a specific example, most informants expressed that they could not recall any specific experiences. For instance Anja claims, "I am sure there are tensions but I do not know the extent...I mean if these tensions were extreme, they would be visible..." (Anja, 2017). Moreover Dana adds on to this by stating, "yes there are tensions because people are not open...they look at you in terms of where you come from, and not because you are a fellow human...I have not had any personal experiences but I have only heard stories" (Dana, 2017). Another informant claims that there are tensions, in which he expresses that this is "mostly between Serbs and Croatians, or Serbs and Hungarians...this happens when someone emphasises "their way" or their nationality too much, this leads to conflict" (Petar, 2017). Equally Ivko and Jovana acknowledge that there are tensions with Serbs relating to other ethnicities, where they assert that they "do not know if there are tensions between the different ethnicities...however there certainly are tensions between Serbs and other ethnicities" (Ivko and Jovana, 2017). This implies that even though the youth has not had any personal experiences or encounters with the more "manifested" tensions in the region, in which they have mostly heard stories or experiences from others – the youth does recognise that there are tensions between Serbs and other ethnicities in the region.

There was an informant who gave an example to illustrate the tension between the Serbs and the Hungarians, where he said that he "witnessed the "crossing out" of various inscriptions on the signs when you enter Novi Sad, which were represented in the different languages - such as Hungarian for example; he states that "I think some Serbian nationalists did this because they only left the inscription in Cyrillic" (Dusan, 2017). Furthermore Ante also offers an example that illuminates the "insensitivity" of the Serbian ethnicity towards other nationalities in the region, by calling upon a relevant situation involving the youth at his university; Ante says that "there was a European project that the department of law was working on, and the president of the course (who was Serbian, from Belgrade) did not let me hang up a poster that was in Latin, because he thought that it needed to be in Cyrillic; he did not regard the fact that that Hungarians and all these other national minorities also needed to be able to read it..." (Ante, 2017). Likewise another interesting account was provided by Milos, who further illustrates the tensions in his surroundings through a mundane example that shows how the Serbs act when watching a football match. Milos describes that "if one is watching a match between Serbia and Slovenia for instance, and you see a player who's surname ends with an "ic" and he is playing for the Slovenian team, one would say "look at him...he is a Serb but he's playing for Slovenia...and if they win, one would make a comment in regards to why he is celebrating or singing the anthem" (Milos, 2017). These accounts suggest that the youth is aware of the "insensitivity" between the Serbs and other nationalities, where the youth is able to acknowledge the way in which the Serbian ethnicity relates to other nationalities in the region.

One of the most popular answers given to the question, "*whether there are any present visible tensions in your surroundings*", was usually, "yes there are...people are different so there have to be tensions" (Marija, 2017). Similarly Nikola and Dragan also claim that "yes there are tensions...where there are differences, there are tensions" (Nikola and Dragan, 2017). Therefore it seems like the youth connects the notion of "difference" towards the inevitability of there being tensions; in this sense, it looks like the occurrence of tensions is justified due to the notion of people being different.

Sava was an informant who directly recognised the way in which many people look upon the tensions in the region. Sava depicted the tensions among the different ethnicities in regards to an incident happening, and then “the fact that one of the people involved is from a different ethnicity, is used as a reason to say something against that specific ethnicity” (Sava, 2017). In this regard, Sava identifies the “groupism” perspective that he claims takes place in certain contexts, in order for people to be able to make sense, and explain certain incidents through the activation of prejudices and stereotypes. It is interesting to mention that many informants expressed that these tensions should not be looked upon with a “groupism” perspective - meaning that it is one ethnicity against another, yet these tensions are based on the attitude of “specific individuals”. As expressed by one informant, “there are tensions of course but it depends on the person and how they are...and of course how these national minorities put themselves forwards – how they represent themselves” (Bogdan, 2017). This is also something that was adhered to by Milos, who states that “these sort of incidents that happen...this is the fault of these young kids who have nothing better to do than attack you for no reason - so it’s not the “nationality” causing tensions and problems, but it’s these five people” (Milos, 2017). In his statement Milos alludes to the past incident involving some youngsters who burnt down an Albanian bakery in 2014. The fact that the youth is able to acknowledge the negative side of this “groupism” perspective implies that it is something they have encountered within their surroundings, which they subsequently condemn, since they are able to see the disadvantage of explaining incidents using this type of standpoint. What is more, the youth is able to further infer why using such a perspective is negative, where they provide a better way of adhering to these issues, by looking at the mere individuals involved and not at their nationality.

While recognising the tensions within society, some informants also talked about why this was the case. The youth suggested that the main reason for the tensions in the region was because of the issue of “intolerance”. This was described in the best way by Mara who called this “problem” - “the Balkan Syndrome”. Mara stated that this “Balkan Syndrome” encapsulated the attitude most people had, which adhered to the sentiment of “us and only us - we do not need anyone else, we can do everything on our own” (Mara, 2017). Mara related this issue mainly to the Serbian ethnicity - however she said that this was a syndrome that was also present among all the nationalities living in the region.

Dragana goes on to explain why this is the case, where she states that “the way of thinking is not the same as it was before...because of our history of war, what happened in the 90s...as well as with the rise of nationalism it is hard for multiculturalism to flourish; everywhere there is a rise of nationalism...criminality is identified on “difference” and multiculturalism lives on “difference” – thus it is hard to maintain multiculturalism and its spirit, where you are scared to identify yourself as “different” (Dragana, 2017). This is something that was also related to by Jelena who primarily acknowledges the present intolerance in the region, where she goes on to claim that “this intolerance is justified because of the wars in the 90s...where the people who have lived in ex-Yugoslavia are now old and the younger generations have not heard nice things...there is a lot of emphasis on the war” (Jelena, 2017). It is interesting that Jelena also alludes to this “Balkan Syndrome”, by implying that there is a general attitude among people that advocates that “we need to keep together as one, and let the others to what they want – just let them be” (Jelena, 2017). In this sense it seems like there is a lack of sensitivity, acknowledgement, and care for other people – where the different ethnicities mainly stick to one another.

Another interesting account that was provided by Sava in regards to suggesting a reason why there were tensions in his surroundings, was that he thought that “the tensions among the different ethnicities arose from the reason that people feel threatened when they do not know about something or someone, so then they become closed off and reserved, in order to preserve themselves and what they seem to possess” (Sava, 2017). Sava went on to say that this leads to the crafting of prejudices and stereotypes among the different nationalities, which connects to the previous mentioning of the “groupism” perspective that also denotes this crafting of essentialism in regards to something that seems to be “unknown” and “different”. Thus people prefer to label something in order to give it a place of understanding – however this sort of “labelling” and “grouping” is based on the use of negative as well as derogatory connotations towards a specific group of people that has roots in various past animosities and hatreds, which stem from the Balkan wars that took place.

In addition another tension that was expressed by one informant that I think is worth mentioning in this section, relates to the domain of politics. While asking Mladen how he perceived Vojvodina’s notion of multiculturalism, and what this meant to him, Mladen instantly went on to express his anger towards the political situation in the country. This is significant because it connects to Mladen’s broader cultural constellation that shows how his experience and opinion of the political situation in the country, crafts his very relation to the topic of multiculturalism in the region. Through his account, Mladen also shows concern for his future and the place he lives in. Mladen said that he felt like he was living in a nation that is “using and exploiting its people...making fools of us...I cannot understand a lot of things here, so I just think it’s all a big joke” (Mladen, 2017). He elaborated on this by recalling upon the recent elections in Serbia that he deemed to be “corrupt and rigged” (Mladen, 2017); in this regard Mladen also adhered to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim as a label that is only used for the benefit of certain politicians, and for profit (Mladen, 2017). Hence this illustrates Mladen’s opinion of how this multicultural claim is not utilised in the right way, where it seems like the “real” issues in the region are not being addressed. After the interview with Mladen, I also talked to some of his colleagues that worked at the student café, who also expressed the same opinion as Mladen. They told me that they felt like they had no sort of future in the country, even if they finished university and had a diploma. Consequently another tension within the region can be related to the disillusionment of the youth, in regards to the political situation in the country that seems to impact the youth in a negative way. This is because the way in which youth observes the political situation in the region, is implicitly connected to the way in which they will relate to their surroundings, and the people around them.

In conclusion, the youth does acknowledge that there are present tensions within their surroundings. This was primarily expressed in regards to the Hungarian national minority and their “disincentive” in speaking Serbian; this was something that the youth openly showed they disliked. Likewise nearly all of the informants claimed that there were tensions among the different nationalities in the region, especially between Serbs and other national minorities. In this regard, the youth was able to recognise the way in which the Serbian ethnicity related to the other nationalities in the region. The youth condemned the “groupism” perspective, which seemed to be a way many people within their surroundings related to certain incidents involving other nationalities. Likewise the youth was able to acknowledge that it was wrong to define or label a certain incident to a specific nationality, since for

the youth, one should look upon each happening in terms of the specific individuals and their actions involved.

It is interesting that most informants could not recall any personal or specific experiences with these tensions. This is possibly because the youth themselves do not tend to mix among the different nationalities. Nonetheless there were some informants who did provide reasons as to why they thought there were tensions in their surroundings, which mainly alluded to the past animosities from the Balkan wars. In this sense, mostly all of the informants recognised that there was a presence of “intolerance” in their environment. This was related to the “Balkan Syndrome” that delineates the general attitude of people mainly regarding their own ethnicity and social circle. Ultimately there was also an adherence to the political situation in the country, which could also be considered as another brewing tension, since it seemed to be a burden, causing cynicism among the youth. The way in which the political sector is structured, will inevitably affect the way the society functions; for instance this can be directly related to Vojvodina’s “segregated model of multiculturalism” that is institutionally embedded, however it assembles the way in which the Vojvodinian society is structured, in terms of the schooling system for example.

The next chapter will delve deeper into the way in which the youth gives meaning to their societal surroundings, as well as how they describe their connection to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim.

6. Youth Analysis of Multiculturalism as a “Societal Project”

The first section of this chapter focuses on how the youth gives meaning to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in terms of its promotion, importance, and its very sensitivity – either standing to represent an ideological claim, or a societal value of ethnic-cultural diversity. This once again depends on the way in which the youth relates to the notion of multiculturalism. The second section of this chapter will dedicate itself to the way in which the youth connects to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim.

6.1 How the youth gives meaning to their multicultural surroundings

This section will provide a bigger picture relating to the way in which the youth conceptualises upon Vojvodina’s societal pluralism, as well as their subsequent surroundings. Accordingly this section will demonstrate the youth’s effort to genuinely contemplate and problematise Vojvodina’s multiculturalism.

It is important to mention that there was a general sense of “fear” with glorifying this multicultural narrative in regards to making it “stand out” as a poignant feature of the region of Vojvodina. This is because by emphasising this notion of “multiculturalism” as a unique characteristic of the region, it is crafting Vojvodina as “distinct” from the larger part of Serbia that has sensitive implications when it comes to the topic of secession. This was something that was mentioned by the experts interviewed, which was consequently exposed through the accounts of the youth. Thus even though many people (including myself) believe that “multiculturalism” is something that is “specific” for the region itself, it is always treated with sensitivity, since it can allude to possible secessionist tendencies. This was something that was revealed to be present in the mind sets of the youth interviewed, but I also found myself being careful when adhering to multiculturalism as being a “distinguishing feature” of the region.

Promotion

Most informants talked of promotion in regards to Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative. However this was also subsequently related to the youth’s societal reality.

A big majority of the informants stated that they thought Vojvodina’s multiculturalism was something that needed to be promoted, as well as emphasised more. As mentioned by one informant, “yes I think it should be promoted and emphasised more because there is never enough of multiculturalism, and people need to be conscious about this and accept this, and not have prejudices among each other” (Mara, 2017). Moreover another informant adhered to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism being mostly promoted by the Vojvodinian Television, “where you can hear so many different languages, but I think it should be emphasised more, because these types of information just flow by and people either catch them or not – some pay attention and some do not” (Sanja, 2017). Likewise Marko alludes to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism being a “marketing strategy”, where it seems to only be “a paper”, however he thinks that “it needs to be emphasised and promoted more because some of these people live in terrible circumstances” (Marko, 2017). Hence Marko refers to the societal inequality present within the region, where it seems like some ethnicities are not being taken care of; nevertheless Marko acknowledges that “there are worse areas in the south of the

country, so we are doing good...we have been poor for a long time...so it will takes us some time to be able to lift ourselves in that sort of way" (Marko, 2017).

Consequently the reason for people to think that "multiculturalism" needs to be emphasised and promoted more is because there seem to be various challenges among society – ranging from lack of awareness, acceptance, various prejudices, and certain conditions people live in among this societal pluralism. Similarly throughout the accounts offered, there is some hesitation relating to Vojvodina's multicultural narrative that seems to be something that is imposed, or in this sense "semi-imposed", since it embodies a narrative that is disseminated on a higher level (through the government, television etc.) - however this narrative does not reach or touch the more subtle and local societal reality and its people. In this sense the youth is able to recognise the positive side of this narrative and the subsequent opportunities it can bring, however they also realise that this narrative needs to be brought closer to the local level and its people. This relates back to the present literature on multiculturalism that mainly bases itself on the institutional domain, in which there is no adherence to how this concept finds local expression.

In addition some informants merely thought that multiculturalism should be emphasised and promoted more, "because it is better for the city - the more nationalities there is the better it is for the town" (Tanja, 2017). Therefore there is an acknowledgement of the benefit of this narrative for the purpose of the city of Novi Sad, and the region of Vojvodina. On the contrary there were two informants who genuinely said that they did not want to lie and just say something for the sake of the interview, in which they claimed that for them "no one promotes this..." (Ivko and Jovana, 2017), where they went on to express that it was only with me that they actually sat down and talked to someone about "Vojvodina's multiculturalism". Accordingly this shows that there are polarised views when it comes to the promotion of this multicultural narrative.

Furthermore there were some informants who simply claimed that they did not see a reason why multiculturalism needed to be emphasised or promoted more, because they regarded it as already being enough. For example as asserted by Katarina, "in Novi Sad this is promoted enough and in general I think most people in Vojvodina are aware of this, so there is no need to emphasise this because all these people have the right to their own language, schooling, maintaining of their culture etc. so I think that it is on a great level" (Katarina, 2017). In this sense Katarina shows an understanding of multiculturalism in terms of the protection of minority rights, where she relates her interpretation of multiculturalism to Vojvodina's multicultural claim. Nonetheless with her statement, Katarina demonstrates the "majority standpoint", where she does not seem to question her own position as someone representing the "Serbian ethnicity", yet she goes on to refer to "the other national minorities" and how they relate to the issue of multiculturalism.

Similarly another informant adds on to Katarina's statement by affirming, "I do not think multiculturalism needs to be promoted more, it needs to be believed in – if it needs to be promoted and emphasised so much, it means it is not being appropriated; I think multiculturalism is appropriated here so that is why I think it does not have to be promoted – but the continuum needs to be kept" (Sanja, 2017). Through her account Sanja indicates the need for multiculturalism's incessant "maintenance", especially when it comes to the reality of the societal level, involving people's attitudes and relations.

A totally different perspective on why multiculturalism should not be promoted and emphasised so much came from Nikola, who stated that “I don’t see why this needs to be stressed so much, that you need to be educated in that way... because we already live it; so in my opinion this is stressed in order to actually create difference and to differentiate people; this is because when you talk about multiculturalism so much, then you become aware of your difference and how you are different from others” (Nikola, 2017). In this regard Nikola problematises the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its lived reality.

In addition an interesting account came from another informant who seemed quite agitated by some of my questions, especially when I asked about whether Vojvodina’s societal pluralism should be something that is more promoted and emphasised within the region. Dusko showed distress from the start, because he did not understand why I was inquiring about the topic of multiculturalism; he later told me that he did not like why people put so much emphasis on this matter, since he personally considered it as a ordinary part of his everyday life – yet nowadays he said that this whole topic is essentialised and utilised in the wrong way. Dusko went on to say that “this is already emphasised in regards to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism being a marketing strategy, I mean why don’t we say that Serbia or some other place is multicultural – there is not one community, town or city nowadays that is ethnically pure...certainly in Vojvodina there is more “difference” ethnically speaking, but I think this is a marketing strategy” (Dusko, 2017). Dusko elaborated on his statement by claiming that he does not think it should be promoted or emphasised more, because it is already used as an “injection” (Dusko, 2017) – meaning that it is utilised in moments when it is needed for certain profits, such as providing the region with a “good image” for example. Therefore Dusko showed agitation towards the issue of multiculturalism and how it is used today; he thought that this domain has lost its very essence and importance it had in the past, where it now stands as a mere marketing tool.

Dusko’s account connects to the perspectives provided by Anja and Dana, who recognise Vojvodina’s touristic potential in terms of its multiculturalism. While Dusko offers a negative perception on the use of multiculturalism as a marketing strategy – Anja and Dana go on to explain why and how Vojvodina could utilise its multicultural component within its touristic domain. Anja goes on to compare Vojvodina to the larger part of Serbia, by expressing that “Vojvodina is touristic and I think we are more open to tourists...we are more European I would say, and you can see that in terms of cuisine for example – there are many more vegan options for example, so it’s more liberal in my opinion” (Anja, 2017). Likewise Dana also alluded to this “touristic” image of Vojvodina, where while talking about the Danube and how it could be used much more in regards to tourism, she suddenly had a revelation that “Vojvodina’s societal plurality could be utilised as a touristic enticement, which would involve tourists getting a boat ride along the river and going to all the places comprising different ethnicities and their specific characteristics - involving food, dress, tradition etc.; in the sense of creating some sort of “ethno villages”, where tourists could go around and visit all the different cultures that are represented in the region” (Dana, 2017). This illustrates that the youth is able to acknowledge the potential of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism, and the significance it could have for the region.

Consequently these accounts show that the youth holds different perspectives on the ways in which Vojvodina’s multiculturalism should be used and promoted. Some think it is negatively emphasised

and utilised, while others see its bigger potential, especially in terms of tourism. What is interesting to note is that the youth seemed very committed to this topic, where they were able to recognise the benefits multiculturalism has, as well as what it can bring to the society they live in.

Importance

All of the informants interviewed acknowledged the importance of Vojvodina's societal pluralism. Even the two informants who did not know what "multiculturalism" represented, they recognised that it was important for the region in terms of "economics and money" (Milos, 2017), but also in regards to "the promotion of the region towards Europe" (Bogdan, 2017). This was something that was also recognised by Sanja, who claims that it is important in regards to "the showcasing of Vojvodina, especially Novi Sad as closer to Europe... that we have those necessary values here...so then we have more opportunities in the world and we are more accepted when you say I am from Vojvodina" (Sanja, 2017).

It is interesting to mention that some informants alluded to the importance of multiculturalism in regards to Vojvodina's distinctiveness. As expressed by one informant, "it's important because it is something that makes us different from the rest, so I think this is something we should keep up" (Luna, 2017). Likewise Ivko and Jovana also state that "it is important because it represents us in a good way, we can offer something that others don't have" (Ivko and Jovana, 2017). These accounts nonetheless bear the implicit undertone of the "fear" of elevating Vojvodina's multiculturalism in regards to giving it a "distinct identity" from the larger part of the country, which could possibly adhere to potential secessionist tendencies. This was echoed through the adherence of "offering something that others do not have", and not directly relating to the region's "distinctiveness" from the larger part of Serbia.

Moreover other informants recognised the need for multiculturalism by acknowledging its more intricate nature. As implied by Dragana, "yes it is important for Vojvodina, it's a value which Vojvodina rests upon and if it dies out then we are in a big problem; then there is an opportunity for nationalism and extremism to flourish" (Dragana, 2017). This type of scenario was common among the accounts of the youth, where there seemed to be a fear of retreating back to some sort of "patriotism" that connects to this "ghost of the past", involving past Serbian nationalism and rhetoric. In this sense, it seems like the "alternative" to multiculturalism, is war and conflict. This links back to the topic of whether such connotations to a "Greater Serbia" are possibly brewing in the minds of the Serb ethnicity - however in this case, these connotations seem to be far removed from the mind sets of the youth interviewed, in which all of the informants negatively referred to nationalism and patriotism, as well as the fear of this idea being politically manipulated for a certain goal.

Likewise another informant adds on to this by saying that "multiculturalism is a way of thinking, where one accepts that we all need to feel equally represented and fulfilled, where no one feels limited or as a minority" (Dragan, 2017). The sense of equality and harmony within a multicultural community was something that was recognised as a necessity by the youth. Nikola offers a nice conclusive statement to the importance of multiculturalism in the region, by stating that "it is important not just for Vojvodina but for the world - for one to respect difference; without

multiculturalism I cannot imagine Vojvodina, can you imagine Novi Sad without the cathedral in the centre?" (Nikola, 2017).

Accordingly all of the youth recognised the importance of multiculturalism as a "societal project" – something that should base itself on the locality of people's everyday reality, their environments, and mind sets. This links back to Kees Terlouw's and Bouke van Gorp's concepts of "Downloading" and "Uploading" where it seems like for the youth, Vojvodina's multiculturalism has been "Uploaded" by the region from the very characteristics from within its boundaries – the fact that it envelopes 26 different ethnicities. Therefore even though there was a "fear" with illuminating upon the region's "distinctiveness", it became clear that the youth considered Vojvodina's multiculturalism as being "specific" for the region itself, which further demarcated upon its importance.

Perceptions of multiculturalism

All of the informants thought of multiculturalism as an "advantage". This refers back to the fact that all of the informants also thought that multiculturalism was highly important for the region itself - especially in regards to the community. The youth showed a strong commitment to the idea of multiculturalism, showing that they were able to recognise the benefits and the potential of what this notion of societal diversity can bring to a society.

When talking about the "benefits" of multiculturalism, there was a primary relation to the good this notion can bring socially. As expressed by Dusko, "through societal diversity one can learn more about themselves but also about other cultures – people are constantly becoming richer in this sense" (Dusko, 2017). The richness "societal plurality" brings to a community, as well as the ability to learn new things from this diversity, was something that was mentioned by the majority of informants. For instance Petar claims that "through multiculturalism we are socially always learning something new (Petar, 2017), in which "it can also bring a lot of friendships and make one's life richer in every sort of way (Sonja, 2017). Moreover some informants alluded to the advantage of societal pluralism in regards to the "breaking of various barriers in terms of stereotypes and prejudices" (Boban, 2017). Equally other informants recognised the benefit of multiculturalism in terms of "opening of opportunities for the province" (Marija, 2017), as well as "its benefit for young people and their needs for going across borders for example" (Vesna, 2017). Hence there seems to be a necessity for societal diversity as a value within the region that is recognised by the youth.

In this sense the youth was primarily able to relate to the worth multiculturalism has for the local level that involves the community, but they were also able to connect this to the value it has for the region itself. This relates back to the idea that the youth recognises multiculturalism as a societal project; for the youth this social project seems to involve inclusivity, respect, constant learning, richness, and diversity. What is also interesting is that the youth relates this societal project to the benefit it would have for the region itself, in terms of opening up new prospects. Consequently the youth regards multiculturalism as an advantage, because it embraces societal values and richness for a community - but it also allows new opportunities for the province that directly aids the youth, in terms of providing them with new prospects for their future.

This is why, when it came to the "disadvantages" of multiculturalism, it was often a challenge for informants to come up with its shortcomings. Many informants could not provide an answer to this,

where they stated that they did not know what a possible “disadvantage” of multiculturalism could be.

Nonetheless there were informants who did provide answers to this. However this was mainly expressed or implied in regards to this notion of multiculturalism being utilised in a “political sense”, further involving manipulation. As explained by Dusko, “multiculturalism only becomes negative when it is manipulated...this is what we saw in the 90s...and then we have problems, but this is not something that can happen on its own, its lies on political manipulation” (Dusko, 2017). Moreover Sanja offers her doubts on the drawbacks of multiculturalism, where she claims “I am sure there are some disadvantages, but let’s just say there are none – if applied and represented in the right way then there are none” (Sanja, 2017).

There were other informants who went on to further relate the “disadvantage” of multiculturalism to the issue of “politics”. As stated by Milos, “multiculturalism could be used as an opportunity to get money...where it could stand as a possible opportunity for “theft”” (Milos, 2017). Furthermore another informant claims that multiculturalism could be seen as a disadvantage “if it is misused by some people in regards to the fact that Vojvodina is “multicultural”, and that it will secede from Serbia and that will minimise Serbian national identity (Sonja, 2017). This once again relates back to how Vojvodina’s multiculturalism could be constructed as a “separatist idea” towards representing Vojvodina as “distinct” from Serbia; this is something that is seen to potentially endanger the Serbian ethnic corpus. Additionally Dana once again acknowledges this idea by claiming that “multiculturalism could be a disadvantage because of a political idea getting some sort of initiative, but I think that as long as there are different cultures and people, then there cannot be some sort of big political influence... so the only disadvantage there could be is the loss of Serbian identity (Dana, 2017). The connotation to the possible “loss of Serbian identity” implicates upon this “majority standpoint” that in this sense merely questions one’s own position in this narrative. However it seems like the “disadvantages” of multiculturalism were mainly related to the purposeful manipulation of this idea for a certain “political gain”. This once again relates back to the youth’s detachment from the domain of patriotism and extreme nationalism. Consequently it seems like there is no “pure” disadvantage of multiculturalism, where it requires a sense of “fabrication” for it to be negative.

It is nonetheless interesting to mention that “the loss of national identity” seemed to be a common concern among the youth. This suggests that there is a potential fear of the diminishing of the Serbian ethnic identity corpus. For example as stated by Sandra, “multiculturalism could possibly be negative when it takes a toll and then people lose their identity” (Sandra, 2017). Dragan is another informant who talks about this, where he says that “everything has disadvantages, so maybe a loss of the Serbian national identity” (Dragan, 2017). What is more, most of the informants who talked of the loss of national identity also mentioned the issue of assimilation, and how they disliked that many national minorities tended to speak in their own language - where they did not know Serbian. Thus it is important to once again here stress that these accounts demonstrate how the youth is merely problematising their own position within this multicultural narrative, where there is emphasis on how their identities will be affected.

Another interesting insight that links to the issue stated above came from some informants who talked of the “disadvantage” of multiculturalism in regards to the “closing off of communities, like the case with the Slovaks for example” (Petar, 2017); Petar elaborates on this by saying that the Slovak ethnicity tends to keep close to each other, where they even get married among themselves in order to sustain their ethnic corpus” (Petar, 2017). This was also something that was recognised by Dragana who says that “there are national minorities who switch themselves off from society, and then you have “mini countries” – villages that only contain Hungarians or Slovaks for instance, where they act like they are not living in Serbia (Dragana, 2017). It is interesting that this was mentioned as a “disadvantage” of multiculturalism, because within a “genuine” multicultural society, communities should not tend to isolate themselves; nonetheless this was acknowledged by some of the youth, because they see how their own society is structured, in which certain communities segregate themselves. However this is not due to the “natural causes” of multiculturalism - yet because Vojvodina embraces a “segregated model of multiculturalism” that inevitably tends to isolate communities.

A nice statement that encapsulates a way of theorising upon the “disadvantages” of multiculturalism was provided by Mara who expresses that “I think there are no disadvantages when it comes to multiculturalism, it just depends how people will understand it” (Mara, 2017). This relates back to the issue that multiculturalism in itself does not have any shortcomings - yet its disadvantages are constructed in the way in which people theorise upon it, and how they use it for certain political agendas.

In conclusion, this section has shown the ways in which the youth gives meaning to the notion of multiculturalism, involving its promotion, importance, and very sensitivity. When it came to the promotion of multiculturalism, most informants had polarised views. The majority of informants did think that it needed to be promoted more, because they thought that multiculturalism stood as an important societal value, and that there could never be “too much” of it. Likewise there were a minority of informants who thought that multiculturalism was not emphasised enough, since they did not come across this notion before. Nonetheless there were also informants who thought it was promoted enough, where for some, the further emphasising of this narrative would seem to illuminate the “differences” between people.

Furthermore all of the informants deemed multiculturalism to be important for the region, in regards to tourism, providing the region with its “distinctiveness” and its good image, as well as bringing it closer to European values. Ultimately most informants see multiculturalism as a benefit for the region – an element that provides richness to one’s environment and through which one can learn. Accordingly most informants struggled to talk about the “disadvantages” of multiculturalism - however many informants mentioned that multiculturalism could be crafted into a “disadvantage”, if it was politically manipulated. Finally another shortcoming of multiculturalism was in regards to the possible loss of national identity that was mainly associated towards the Serbian ethnicity.

As a final point, it is clear that most of the informants regard multiculturalism as a societal project. In this sense, the majority of the youth seem to be committed to the idea of what multiculturalism entails – involving respect, inclusivity, richness, and diversity. Similarly this is also why the majority

recognises the “advantages” multiculturalism brings to a community, but also to the region itself - in terms of providing the younger generations with opportunities for the future.

The next section will inquire deeper into the way the youth gives meaning to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism, by looking at how the youth describes their connection to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim.

6.2 How the youth connects to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim

Even though this whole chapter is inevitably structured upon the youth’s switching from Vojvodina’s multicultural claim to its societal reality - depending on how they interpret their relation towards multiculturalism - I have decided to include an extra section that will focus on the youth’s relation towards Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. This is because I think that the way in which the youth relates to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, is vital in regards to illuminating upon the very relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative and its societal plurality. A constructivist perspective alongside a “postmodern subject” on multiculturalism will once again enable the exposing of the heterogeneity in the ways the youth adheres and makes up their association with this multicultural claim. All the different accounts provided ultimately construct the bigger picture of how the youth deconstructs the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative and their societal reality. Thus this section will illustrate the different ways the youth connects to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, as well as present their very concerns and criticisms.

It is interesting to mention that the youth used their “expectation” of what the notion of multiculturalism stood for (unity, harmony, respect etc.), as a vantage point to problematise Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its adherence to their societal reality. In this regard the youth exposed the very gap between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality, by deliberating upon their expectation of multiculturalism as a societal project.

Connecting to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim

Most informants mentioned that they felt like they could connect to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, because it was something they considered as “a normal part of their life”. In this sense the youth immediately connected this claim to their present lived reality. Many informants primarily expressed unfamiliarity with what this ideological project stood for, which is why the youth based their problematisation of multiculturalism on their expectation of what this concept involved. Nonetheless the youth showed that they were aware that they lived in an environment comprising different nationalities, where they were able to relate to what this essentially pertains, as well as recognise the various societal contradictions.

As stated by one informant, “I do feel like I am part of this multicultural narrative...at work I have people from various nationalities...no one asks where you are from etc...also I have a lot of friends from different ethnicities, I mean you can hear the accent or the different language but it’s not something you pay attention to, it just feels so normal...” (Vesna, 2017). Likewise another informant expresses that “multiculturalism is just so normal here...people are used to living like this” (Milos, 2017). Dusko seems to add on to this by stating that “multiculturalism is a habit here and this is just normal, we were brought up in a way not to discriminate...of course there are people who do

discriminate and who were not brought up this way...but I am fortunate enough”(Dusko, 2017). Hence it seems like the youth is able to acknowledge their “multicultural” surrounding, where this is something that is perceived as “the norm”. Equally the use of the word “normal” came up in many accounts that further emphasised this sense of “mundaneness” that the youth related to their ethnic-cultural surroundings. Nikola and Sava further adhere to this by asserting that “we have grown up in a colourful environment, this is something that has underlined our whole life, you grow up with that...my girlfriend is Ruthenian for example and we have been together for eight years (Nikola, 2017); Sava adds on to that by exclaiming, “my wife is Slovenian, and I would want my kid to know the language” (Sava, 2017). Therefore most informants alluded to this multicultural narrative as something that was engrained within their very lives.

Other informants observed their relation with Vojvodina’s multicultural claim by connecting it to their diverse family backgrounds. As expressed by Dana “I do feel like I am part of this multicultural claim because of my family...I have Hungarian, Romanian, German and Serbian blood...so it’s something that is present in my everyday life” (Dana, 2017). Equally Dragana also claims “yes I can relate to this multicultural narrative because of my family and its past, since I have Hungarian, Croatian and German blood, so it is certainly present in my life...(Dragana, 2017). Petar also asserts that “I can connect to this claim because of my family structure, I am a mix... I am half Serbian half Montenegrin...(Petar, 2017). In this regard, some of the informants connected their family structure to their association with Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. This means that the youth related their connection with Vojvodina’s multicultural claim to their personal societal backgrounds that to them personified this narrative.

Another informant interestingly related his “awareness” of multiculturalism (the fact that he recognised Vojvodina’s societal diversity), to his subsequent connection towards its multicultural claim. In this sense, Boban directly related the consciousness of societal plurality to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim that embodies an institutional narrative. As Boban states, “yes it is present in my everyday life because I am aware of this multiculturalism and I am glad to see it; I have acquaintances but I do not have friends from different national minorities...but I do have friends who come from different parts of Serbia – and each of them does have different cultural properties, as well as traditions” (Boban, 2017). This example illustrates the resourcefulness of the youth and how they are able to go around a certain question, providing a certain answer that implicitly shows their lack of knowledge on the topic - however they are able to in turn offer useful insight into a different segment of the topic. In this regard, Boban suggests that multiculturalism also includes people from the different parts of Serbia, “where “multiculturalism” does not have to be tied to nationality” (Boban, 2017). Tanja also alludes to the diversity present among Serbs themselves, by describing “how some of her Serbian friends (who were from a different part of the country) had some different Christmas traditions, involving the burning of wood in front of their house” (Tanja, 2017). This shows that the youth is able to recognise “difference” within their own community that they then connect to the broadness of multiculturalism, depicting “diversity” also among the same nationality.

Concerns and criticisms

There were a majority of informants who expressed their criticisms and concerns in regards to Vojvodina's multicultural claim. This was primarily because this claim did not relate to the youth's expectation of what this narrative "should" entail, in regards to it exemplifying ideals of harmony, appreciation, respect, tolerance etc. – but also embodying a narrative that finds local expression. Likewise this further demonstrates that the youth strongly cares about the region they live in, because they showed effort to problematise and scrutinise this notion of multiculturalism, even though it was something that seemed to be unfamiliar to the youth's everyday reality. Therefore the youth exhibited their sense of commitment to the society they live in, their lives and their future, by truly delving deep into their present lived reality, and revealing their apprehensions with this multicultural narrative.

Accordingly these informants did adhere to the actual "claim" itself, where they unconsciously related the idea of what they thought this multicultural claim "should propagate" (the harmony and unity of the different ethnicities living in Vojvodina), to their everyday reality that conversely seemed to depict a negative connotation of this multicultural narrative. For example Mladen explicates that he is very critical of this multicultural claim, "because he thinks that it is fake" (Mladen, 2017). Mladen goes on to explain why he thinks it is a "fake" narrative by adhering to a situation he found himself in that day; he says "I was sitting at a café and this Roma girl comes up to this guy who instantly rejects her, and tells her that he won't give her money because she will go and buy cigarettes...the girl then comes to me and asks for money...I tell her I will not give you money but I can teach you something...so I start showing her things on my I Pad and she asks whether it was "touch screen" – I could not believe she knew that sort of terminology! I did not give her money because I do not want to give people money out of pity but out of happiness...of course she left after a while, because she didn't get what she came to ask for" (Mladen, 2017). In this regard, Mladen adheres to the brewing prejudices and "guards" people embody within society, against specific ethnic groups - however Malden also alludes to the lack of engagement of these very ethnic groups within society itself. Thus to Mladen this multicultural claim is "fake", because it does not mirror the way society functions. This is because Malden's expectation of this claim is contradicted with his experience within society that consequently makes this claim not fulfil its "societal purpose", which therefore makes it "fake".

Similarly another informant goes on to talk about how he thinks that this multicultural claim is emphasised too much, where he expresses that "in an authentic multicultural society there is no need to emphasis this narrative...it becomes unimportant...but in Vojvodina I think we have become too closed for "multiculturalism""(Dusko, 2017). Mara adds on to Dusko's pessimism by also acknowledging the negative side of society, where she asserts that "people need to change their opinion that is engrained from youth that their culture is "the best", and that they should only accept people from their culture" (Mara, 2017). Luna is another informant who expresses her disillusionment with society, where she states that "I don't think people are aware of this multiculturalism because people do not think of this, many people are closed, and conservative and they don't support things like this" (Luna, 2017). Luna relates this to the past tensions of the wars that took place, which have left a lot of hatred in her opinion. She goes on to say that "the youth is not interested in this at all - they are not interested in things happening around them, or in the

region – because for them the US “brought everything” and they only look up to that and are interested in that” (Luna, 2017). Hence Luna implies that the Vojvodinian youth is apathetic in regards to their surroundings, in which there is trend of “Americanisation” (Luna, 2017). This is something I can also recognise among some of the accounts provided by the youth, since there was a tendency to focus more on the international level when it came to the notion of “multiculturalism” – further involving a hesitation to connect multiculturalism to the region of Vojvodina.

Moreover Jovana and Ivko conveyed their concerns with Vojvodina’s multicultural claim by expressing their opinion that “this notion of “multiculturalism” needs to be brought closer to us, it needs to be connected to us and explained to us; people do not think about this...I mean 90 percent of our class does not know that Ivko speak Hungarian for example” (Jovana and Ivko, 2017). This statement illustrates the youth’s recognition of the lack of engagement of this multicultural narrative on the local level, which possibly further stands to be the very cause of their absence in knowledge in regards to this notion of multiculturalism. It seems like Vojvodina’s multicultural claim embodies an institutional narrative, something that exemplifies an abstraction which is intangible to the regular citizen. Yet through these accounts the youth demonstrate their desire as well as acknowledge the necessity for this narrative to be brought closer to them - they essentially acknowledge the gap between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality. This gap is further personified in terms of the way in which Vojvodina’s society is structured, but also in regards to people’s mind sets and the way people relate to one another that is something that is acknowledged in the accounts provided above.

It is interesting to note that many informants also showed concern with claiming that they thought most of their friends were not aware of this multicultural narrative. As confirmed by Sandra “I do not think people in my surroundings are aware of this narrative, young people especially...it is only if you want to know about this or you work in contexts that promote this” (Sandra, 2017). Moreover Sanja elaborates on this by saying that “I think many people are not aware of this multicultural claim – they precisely do not concretely know how others live here, except Serbs for example” (Sanja, 2017). Thus Sanja alludes to the very issue of how people merely relate to their own ethnicity - in this case she exposes how Serbs will only know how other Serbs live. This further relates back to how the youth generally talk from a “majority standpoint”, problematising the notion of multiculturalism without questioning their position (being the major ethnicity) within the narrative.

Kristina was an informant who also particularised on the youth’s unawareness of this multicultural claim, by asserting that “most of the youth is not interested to know and find out with who they are living with, what people surround them....I mean they know that there are some Hungarians and Slovenians here and there, but I think they have no idea how many national minorities there are in Vojvodina; so I think this multicultural claim certainly exists in their awareness - it’s in their minds somewhere, but they either do not know what it means or they are absolutely not interested in it” (Katarina, 2017). This is something I can also confirm with my own experience when talking to the youth about the various national minorities in the region, since most of the informants I talked to, did not know the number of different ethnicities that lived in the region, or they did not know what national minorities made up that number.

This was something that was also touched upon by Sava, who states that “I think most young people are not aware of this because they are not properly addressed with what this is or what it stands for; most people do not have contact with what this notion of multiculturalism means or entails” (Sava, 2017). In addition Ante also acknowledges the unfamiliarity of this claim relating to the youth, but he also recognises his own unawareness by stating, “I don’t even know anything about multiculturalism, I mean I can put together something and understand something of this narrative, but I don’t think many people think of this and they are not aware of this...I mean when do you talk about multiculturalism – especially us, the younger generation? Never” (Ante, 2017). This once again demonstrates the youth’s sense of estrangement with this multicultural narrative that does not properly engage with the local level. Hence this multicultural claim presents too much of an abstraction for the youth to be able to connect to it from a local level, in which it is consequently not found within the youth’s everyday vocabulary or reality.

There were some informants who went on to further state that they thought most of the youth could connect to this multicultural narrative more positively than the older generations, who were regarded to have problems with relating to this claim. As expressed by Dusan “I have heard some conservative thinking in regards to multiculturalism, especially against the Roma people but this usually comes from the older people, the younger generations do not have a problem with this” (Dusan, 2017). Similarly Jovana and Ivko also claim that “the youth is so open for everything, and they are the ones that are involved with this claim - however the older people are so closed in terms of this...and they are less involved within this narrative” (Jovana and Ivko, 2017). Accordingly this relates to the youth’s openness and acceptance of multiculturalism in terms of societal difference, which was contrasted with the older generations’ intolerance of societal diversity. This intolerance was related to the past Balkan wars and the lingering animosities between the different ethnicities in the region – where some of the youth recognised that the older generations were terminally stuck in the past.

In conclusion, most of the youth adhered to Vojvodina’s multicultural claim as something that seemed to be expressed in their everyday life; this was because the youth unconsciously related “Vojvodina’s multicultural claim” to a narrative that should manifest itself on the local level, since for the youth, this multicultural claim embodies a “societal project”. This is why the majority of the informants stated that they could connect to this multicultural claim, relating it to their personal societal surroundings, involving their family background and friends. This notion of “societal diversity” was something that the youth considered as an “embedded” part of their everyday life. In this sense, the youth was able to recognise their societal surroundings, as well as provide criticisms towards Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. By relating to their expectation of multiculturalism as a societal project, the youth exposed the contradictions of their present lived reality that centred upon people being “closed off”, and not accepting of “difference”. This was something that was primarily expressed in regards to the older generations who seemed to be afflicted by the past animosities of the Balkan wars; consequently this implies that the younger generations connect to Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative in a more positive way than the older generations.

Ultimately the accounts offered within this section illuminate the gap between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim presents an abstraction that does not engage itself with the local level, in which the youth acknowledge the need for this

narrative to be brought closer to their lived realities. The youth based their problematisation of Vojvodina's multiculturalism by relating to their "expectation" of what this notion should involve, where they consequently deliberated their surroundings as well as Vojvodina's multicultural claim through this very perception. As a result the youth conveyed their concern with the way this claim was manifested in their surroundings, where there was also apprehension that this claim (and what it essentially "entailed"), was not something that was familiar to the youth and their environment. This was expressed in a way that pertained to the youths' seeming indifference towards their surroundings. In this sense, the problem seems to not only be because this multicultural narrative presents an abstraction, yet the youth also seem to be responsible for their inherent oblivion within their environment.

The following discussion section will provide a critical exploration into some of the major issues that came up in this chapter, as well as the previous chapter.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This section will primarily offer a summary of the results found, which will involve an explanation and interpretation of the conclusions of this research. Furthermore there will be a critical evaluation of the information provided that will be justified by referencing back to the literature presented in the theoretical and conceptual framework. Ultimately there will be demonstration of the larger significance of this research, in regards to revealing the bigger purpose of this thesis. This section will end with a more personal account of where my worries stand with the region.

7.1 Summary of research results and findings

This thesis dedicated itself to investigating how the (Serbian) youth related to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in regards to deconstructing the very relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality.

By engaging with the context of Novi Sad, probing into the youth's everyday reality, as well as talking to various experts in the region - I was able to unravel the connection between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality. What is more, I was able to see how the youth positioned themselves within the topic of multiculturalism in the region. This was exposed through the way in which the youth talked about their ethnic-cultural surroundings, as well as how they described their connection to such an institutional narrative. This consequently showed what this notion of multiculturalism meant to the youth living in Novi Sad, especially being the generation that is supposed to be unaffected by the past Balkan wars.

Expert opinions on multiculturalism

I was interested in finding out what Vojvodina's multicultural claim stood to represent, how it was described, as well as what it meant to the region of Vojvodina. This knowledge was provided by the experts interviewed.

The experts primarily went on to reveal the "institutional side" of this multicultural claim that presented a "marketing tool" that provided the region with a good image. This in turn brought about various prospects and opportunities, as can be witnessed by Vojvodina's titles of being the European Youth Capital in 2019, and the European Capital of Culture in 2021. In this sense, the notion of multiculturalism stands as a value that is praised in Europe. What is more, the experts went on to further delineate this claim's institutional role by accrediting it as a narrative that formally enabled the different national minorities to maintain their identities in the region, by providing them with various rights and privileges. Accordingly the experts alluded to this claim's sense of "responsibility" in formally and legally abiding towards its societal diversity.

However the experts recognised Vojvodina's provincial government's embracement of a "segregated model of multiculturalism", as a way of enabling the provision of the constitutional rights to the national minorities living in the region. What is more, this "segregated model of multiculturalism" seemed to be a possible way for the maintenance of the "peace" in the region, since there were various manifested tensions that were brought up by both the experts and youth interviewed. Nonetheless the experts mainly condemned this "segregated model of multiculturalism", because it systematically segregated society's functioning that was seen as a negative way of enveloping

societal plurality. The experts mainly referred to the “younger generations” as the ones being more prone to stirring up tension; this was associated with the fact that the different national minorities were “separated” at school from a young age, which encouraged the crafting of various prejudices and stereotypes. Likewise this was also related to people migrating to Vojvodina from the surrounding Balkan areas that were considered to not be “used to” living around such societal diversity that comprises ex-Yugoslavian minorities – especially taking into account the past Balkan wars. On the contrary, the youth seemed to be more set on the older generations propagating intolerance towards societal diversity - as well as being stuck in the past animosities of the Balkan wars.

Nevertheless the experts exposed the vast importance of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim for the region itself. This was associated with the “richness” societal diversity offers to a place, but also to an individual - where there is a constant sense of growing and learning from one another. Similarly the experts recognised the positive side to this multicultural narrative in regards to resurrecting people’s sense of belonging, especially relating to the Serbian ethnicity.

Moreover the experts regarded this multicultural claim as “specific” for the region of Vojvodina, where it was considered to stand as a feature demarcating Vojvodina’s regional identity. This was because of Vojvodina’s particular historic circumstances that have given this claim legitimacy; however it is also because nowhere else in the world will you find a region that embodies 26 different ethnicities, mostly comprising ex-Yugoslavian minorities. In this regard, the experts saw Vojvodina’s multicultural claim to be “Uploaded” - yielded from the region itself based on the fact that it embodies 26 different ethnicities living in the region. However the experts warned caution with openly expressing this sort of connotation that emphasised Vojvodina’s “distinctiveness” from the larger part of Serbia, since it can allude to possible “separatist inclinations” that makes this a sensitive subject to dwell on.

Even though the experts recognised the importance and “uniqueness” of this narrative for the region of Vojvodina, they offered their concerns with this claim’s lack of engagement with the local level. This was associated in two different ways. The first way concerns the lack of this claim’s adherence to the region’s demographic picture that depicts a decreasing number of national minorities, and a possible future “Serbianisation” of society. The second way apprehends the absence of this narrative to engage itself with the local level, in terms of stimulating interaction, communication, and dialogue between the different national minorities. Vojvodina’s “segregated model of multiculturalism” was seen to perpetuate a destructive way of relating to society’s functioning, where it was further considered to be an obstacle in tackling the above mentioned issues.

This was especially mentioned in regards to the country’s past regional tensions and animosities that have left various prejudices among the people. Hence a “segregated model of multiculturalism” seems to only stagnate the present situation and make it possibly worse for the future. Consequently the experts articulated the urge for the “up keeping” of multiculturalism in the region, since it is esteemed as an important societal value. This was correlated with the need for “interculturalism” that would encourage synergy among the different ethnicities living in the region. Likewise this was also related to the necessity for people to understand what this notion of multiculturalism entails, and the benefits it has for society. Thus even though the experts recognised Vojvodina’s multicultural

claim's institutional power, they also provided their criticism with this claim not going far enough in employing itself on the local level, and being a narrative that is manifested among the people living in Vojvodina. This gap was further illuminated by the youth.

Problematizing the notion of multiculturalism

While the experts provided their knowledge on Vojvodina's multicultural claim, where they subsequently exposed the claim's disengagement with the local level – the youth was also forthcoming in thoroughly deliberating Vojvodina's multiculturalism by relating to their surroundings and present lived reality.

There are “three levels” through which the youth engaged with problematising the notion of multiculturalism. The youth either related to multiculturalism by talking about Vojvodina's multicultural claim and how they thought this narrative was expressed in their life - or they engaged with the topic by reflecting upon their very societal realities, in terms of their family and friends. However the youth adhered to these two levels by engaging with a third level that involved the youth's intrinsic expectation of “multiculturalism” that based itself on a “societal project”, involving ideals of equality, harmony, respect, and acceptance. This consequently crafted a certain way the youth thought of (“expected”) Vojvodina's multicultural claim to be, as well as the way it should be reflected locally among society. In this sense, the youth utilised their expectation of multiculturalism as a vantage point to judge as well as problematise Vojvodina's multicultural claim and their very surroundings. Accordingly by basing their problematisation of multiculturalism on their expectation of what this notion should involve – the youth exposed the very societal contradictions of their present milieu.

By delving into the discourse of the youth, it seemed like I was tapping into the youth's thought process, where some informants already had conclusive opinions on the topic, while others were still in search for what they thought of Vojvodina's multiculturalism. There were nonetheless informants who had never thought of the subject itself. Therefore this offered a fruitful storyline, whereby most informants tended to switch from talking about Vojvodina's multicultural claim to its societal reality. In this regard the youth provided different ways through which they related to Vojvodina's multiculturalism – by either connecting to its claim, talking about their present societal reality, or by problematising the relation between the two.

In general one can argue that the youth has regional consciousness, since they were able to provide specific features that for them made up the place they lived in. Through providing similar accounts of the region's characteristics and activities they engaged with in the city, the youth revealed their shared socio-political space that seemed to entail a “customary” way of relating to their city surroundings.

Nonetheless the youth initially revealed their detachment from the topic of multiculturalism, where it became clear that this was not something that embodied their present every day “practice” or vocabulary. The youth tended to relate “multiculturalism” to a more international level that subsequently showed their sense of hesitation with relating it to the region of Vojvodina, as well as their own reality. Furthermore the youth demonstrated a lack of awareness when it came to events that joined the various different nationalities in the region. However even though the youth

originally seemed to be detached from the topic of multiculturalism, they were keenly prompted to problematise what this notion meant to them and their region. Thus one can argue that the youth had awareness that Vojvodina was represented as a “multicultural region” - however the youth lacked knowledge in regards to what this ideological notion specifically entailed. In this sense, the youth based their problematisation of multiculturalism on their expectation of what this societal project should involve.

Something that was noticed throughout the accounts of the youth was that they were talking from a “majority standpoint”. This means that they were deliberating multiculturalism from a privileged position (having the option of identifying with the Serb ethnicity), where they did not question their own role within this topic. This further relates to the youth’s conversational sense of “othering” that can be seen through the informants’ expressions of “them” or “they” to refer to the various national minorities in their surroundings. I think this is important to mention, because it encapsulates the youth’s dialogue and standpoint that exemplifies the “major ethnicity”, which inevitably crafts the discourse around “us vs. them”; this can be further correlated to personify Vojvodina’s present societal reality that is structured upon a “segregated model of multiculturalism”, which leads to the systematic segregation of the different ethnicities in the region.

The majority of informants said they were aware that Vojvodina was being represented as a “multicultural region”, where they talked about the notion of multiculturalism as pertaining to “many different cultures in one place”. This connects to the vast propagation of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim. Moreover the youth was communicative in describing certain situations that to them stood out to embrace this notion of “societal plurality” – however most of these situations alluded to “larger” events that indicated the indifference of the youth towards this notion of multiculturalism. The youth was also keen in connecting to this notion of multiculturalism by talking about their social circles in regards to their friends and family, where they alluded to their mixed family backgrounds. Nonetheless this was limited to either one of their parents or one of their grandparents being from a different nationality, where the youth tended to socialise within their own ethnic circles.

Multiculturalism as a societal project

The way in which the youth gave meaning to Vojvodina’s multiculturalism was by relating it to an “everyday reality” - something that was embedded within the youth’s daily practices. The youth connected this to the environment around them that “personified” societal diversity, because all the informants mentioned that they were habitually around many different nationalities in their university classes, at work, or at certain events they went to. This once again relates to the idea of what this notion of multiculturalism “should” entail - where the youth related to their expectation of multiculturalism as a societal project, and then reflected that onto their present milieu. However it is one thing to be aware that you are surrounded by different ethnicities, and another thing to actually engage with the different nationalities on a more social and personal level. The youth demonstrated their “actuality” of being around societal plurality - however they also related to this through their expectation of multiculturalism as pertaining towards a certain “normality” of everyday life, which through the accounts of the youth, seemed to contradict their very reality. This was because the youth revealed that they mostly had acquaintance based relations with national minorities, where

they went on to further expose various societal ambiguities that opposed their intrinsic expectation of multiculturalism as a societal project.

Accordingly a gloomy atmosphere prevailed when the youth started to deconstruct their current societal realities that depicted various contradictions. The youth primarily expressed their dislike towards the way the different national minorities stuck to one another, where there was a collective distress towards the Hungarian national minority's disincentive of speaking Serbian. This discrete "guard" among the different national minorities that was personified through the lack of concern for others was recognised as a characteristic among the different national minorities in the region. This attitude was even given its own concept – "the Balkan Syndrome". The youth further illuminated upon this discussion by denoting the way in which the educative system was structured, where there was no effort in merging the various different ethnicities from a young age. This was certainly "the fault" of Vojvodina's "segregated model of multiculturalism". However the youth also expressed how they thought that the people around them were "closed off", and reserved towards "difference" that was mainly associated with the older generations. Consequently even though the youth did not directly adhere to the "segregated model of multiculturalism", they went on to expose the workings of society that demonstrated the segregated way the different nationalities seemed to function with one another. In addition the youth was able to acknowledge how the Serbian ethnicity related to other national minorities, which was correlated to the negative way of essentialising and grouping national minorities through various stereotypes and prejudices; this was related to the consequence of the past Balkan wars that have tainted people's way of relating to one another that was once again connected to the older generations.

The youth thus revealed the present atmosphere of intolerance in the region. Many informants gave examples that went on to illustrate the tensions among the different ethnicities – especially with how Serbs related to other national minorities in the region. This also involved examples that demonstrated the youth's uncomfortable encounters with some national minorities. Similarly the youth also expressed their distress with people who recognise others based on "where they come from", and not regarding them as mere equal individuals. The "groupism perspective" was also condemned by the youth, as well as once again mostly related to the older generations.

The youth further deliberated upon this notion of multiculturalism by expressing their concern with the younger generations' lack of interest with their surroundings. This was expressed through the informants worry with their fellow friends not being aware of what this notion of multiculturalism entailed - as well as the youth's general sense of disengagement with the context around them. However the youth that was interviewed showed that they were able to problematise their surroundings, even though they initially showed a sense of estrangement with the concept of multiculturalism. In this sense, the youth was able to give meaning to this notion of multiculturalism by revealing their very criticisms and concerns of how this idea manifested itself on the local level. This exhibited the youth's ability to problematise a notion that they felt detached from in their everyday reality, which shows the youth's very apprehension and concern they have for the place they live.

Furthermore the youth gave meaning to the notion of multiculturalism by recognising its vast importance for the region and their future. Likewise the youth considered "multiculturalism" to

embody a “specific feature” of the region of Vojvodina. The youth stated that multiculturalism had significance for the region in terms of providing it with future opportunities and prospects; this was also consequently related to the benefits this notion had for society itself, in regards to offering cultural and societal richness. Accordingly the youth regarded multiculturalism as an “absolute advantage”, where its shortcomings were correlated to the potential political manipulation that could initiate some sort of nationalist or separatist idea. Similarly another possible disadvantage was related to the loss of the Serbian national identity. Fundamentally, prominence was given to people’s outlook on multiculturalism, in regards to one’s mind set and attitude that could lead to a specific idea on how one conceptualises societal diversity.

Multicultural claim and its societal reality

This research has shown that Vojvodina’s multicultural claim does not inform us about the workings of Vojvodina’s societal reality. A multicultural claim merely delineates a definition of a certain societal “reality” that depicts ethnic diversity – however it does not problematise ethnic-cultural diversity.

The provincial government of Vojvodina has decided to construct a claim to embrace the presence of 26 different ethnicities in the region. Vojvodina’s multicultural claim is further justified through the regions’ past historical circumstances that have simultaneously led to the crafting of its societal substance. Nonetheless one can argue that Vojvodina’s societal reality contradicts its multicultural narrative. This is because there are various brewing societal tensions, a decreasing number of national minorities, as well as a segregated way of life.

This demands inquiry into the very “expectation” of a multicultural claim. In itself, a multicultural claim signifies a sense of “inter cultural collaboration” that is personified through diverse forms of communication and interaction. For example this was also something that was echoed through the accounts of the youth, who conceptualised Vojvodina’s multicultural narrative as a “societal project” that should involve ideals of diversity, equality, harmony, acceptance, and learning.

This is why the youth went on to express their criticisms of Vojvodina’s multicultural claim, because it presented an institutional project that was so detached from their idea of multiculturalism, as a societal project. Accordingly the youth articulated this narrative’s “abstraction”, where it did not go far enough in terms of engaging itself with the local level and the people. Therefore just like the experts exposed the disjuncture between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality, where they urged for the up keeping of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism – the youth also illuminated upon this gap that lacks the expression of this narrative within society itself.

Consequently there was an outspoken recognition of the disconnection between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality – whether this was based on the expert knowledge relating to the concern for the very existence of societal diversity – or on the youth’s idea of multiculturalism pertaining to a societal project. What is more, there was an acknowledgement of societal stagnation and people’s disengagement that seemed to be related to the cause of Vojvodina’s embracement of a “segregated model of multiculturalism”. Finally both the experts and the youth recognised the fluidity of societal diversity, where it was accredited as a notion in constant need of nurturing.

The next segment will critically engage itself with the theory outlined in the conceptual and theoretical framework. It will illustrate how this thesis positioned itself within the main theoretical debates of the literature involved. Similarly there will be an examination of how the delineated theory has aided this thesis to delve into its analysis, as well as the possible ways this theory was limiting to this thesis' research.

7.2 Critical evaluation of theoretical approaches used

This thesis employed a constructivist lens alongside a "postmodern subject" in regards to examining the notion of identity and multiculturalism in the region of Vojvodina.

I firstly decided to use a constructivist perspective because of its scope in regards to looking at identity as a fluid and malleable notion that can take on various different dimensions. The very domain of identity is constructed - it is a social process, meaning that people will relate to their sense of belonging in various different ways, meanings, and degrees. Using a constructivist perspective allowed me to acknowledge that some people refused to constrict themselves to a certain identity category, simply because they did not want to label themselves as "something" in particular; or because they came from a mixed family background, where they felt more than just being "Serbian". On the contrary, there were informants who associated to the construction of being "Serbian". Likewise some other informants enveloped a broader sense of belonging by connecting to their "Vojvodinian identity". Hence by utilising a constructivist perspective, I was able to recognise the different processes people used to relate to their sense of identity and surroundings.

Taking this into account, the very notion of "multiculturalism" can be regarded as *social mechanism* that is expressed in society, which in the case of Vojvodina, can be seen as a process affecting one's sense of belonging. This is firstly because people live in an environment that embodies ethnic-cultural diversity, and secondly because the propagation of this multicultural claim finds "contextual" expression, in regards to providing people with more opportunities for example. Hence this is why the youth was able to connect to Vojvodina's multicultural claim and deliberate how this notion expresses itself in their daily lives. Moreover this further relates to the fact that the youth regarded "multiculturalism" to be a specific feature of the region, pertaining to its regional identity. This inevitably also impacts the way people think of what it is to be "Vojvodinian", which can be seen through the way the youth talks about Vojvodina in regards to the larger part of Serbia.

As a result, this thesis also acknowledged Stuart Hall's "postmodern subject" that offers a certain perspective relating to how a researcher can recognise how one's cultural system (the community they live in and their environment), can impact the way people craft their identity. As stated by Hall, a postmodern subject recognises that identity is not fixed, in which it is "formed and transformed continuously in relation to ways we are represented and addressed in the cultural system that surrounds us" (Hall, 1992: 277). What is more, a "postmodern subject" enables one to realise that identity is never neutral, since it is something that is influenced by people's environment; in this regard people will relate to their identities in different ways, depending on the situation they are in. This can be witnessed from the possible ways the youth exposed their identities in the interview setting – some could have emphasised their Vojvodinian identity since I was inferring upon Vojvodina's multiculturalism, where they possibly felt like they needed to put forwards their more "authentic" sense of belonging that exposed their regional identity. Others could have preferred to

not label themselves to a specific identity category because they felt alienated from the topic itself, where the youth's disillusionment with the region's political situation could have impacted their decision to not categorise themselves to a specific ethnicity represented within the region itself.

Accordingly I decided to use a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject", because of the importance of one's cultural constellation in regards to how one could relate to their identity and surroundings. In this sense, the "postmodern subject" adds to the constructivist perspective by recognising the different types of social and cultural processes that can affect a person's sense of identity. Therefore a constructivist perspective provided me with an outlook towards how I would look at the domain of identity, whereas the "postmodern subject" offered me a tool to be able to recognise the different processes affecting one's sense of belonging. For example this can be witnessed by one of the informant's frustration towards the political situation in the country, and how he thought he had no sort of future; this could reveal the reason why the informant could not see the purpose of this multicultural narrative, and why they consequently choose to embrace a more open and fluid sense of belonging. Ultimately the embracement of the "postmodern subject" also enabled this thesis to acknowledge the broader socio-political and cultural context of Vojvodina – representing an autonomous region within Serbia that implicitly has an effect in regards to how people choose to relate to their sense of belonging; different people will have different sentiments to the region's historical background and political position within its present socio-political and economic status.

This notion of a "symbolic community culture" is something that many scholars (in the conceptual and theoretical framework) have accredited as an important factor pertaining towards one's sense of belonging – however this was not made clear enough by the present literature involved. For instance Roger Scruton is a scholar who recognised this process, whereby he describes how individuals act as autonomous beings that desire to attach themselves to something greater – a sense of community or nation that can envelope this fluidity when it comes to one's sense of belonging (Roger Scruton, 1986: 156). Likewise Ernest Gellner also acknowledges how identity is formed in relation to a "system of cultural representation" (Gellner, 1983: 6). Accordingly all these authors adhere to this broader sense of a "cultural constellation", involving one's social reality but also one's political geography and values of the place they live in that affects an individuals' sense of identity. Nonetheless this was not given the right amount of importance, since these authors focused on "one aspect" of a person's identity. This is why this thesis demonstrated the significance of using a constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject". Through the discourse of the youth, it was clear that the way they related to their sense of belonging, their surroundings, as well as how they related to multiculturalism itself, was based on their personal backgrounds and experiences that were constructed through the youth's existence within Vojvodina's cultural system of representation - involving its specific history, geography, political situation, and social montage.

Furthermore it should be mentioned that I tried to show that Hall's "postmodern subject" encapsulates a bigger conception than his "sociological subject", which detects the way in which people interact between each other, and how one's identity is consequently formed through the relations he or she has with others. Hall's "sociological subject" seemed to be initially important within this thesis, since it bases itself on the relations people have with one another that would relate to the youth's encounters with the different national minorities in their surroundings.

However this only presents a part of the one's "cultural constellation", whereas Hall's "postmodern subject" encompasses a more comprehensive way of looking at the way people adhere to their identity. Similarly through their accounts the youth showed that they did not have close friends from the different national minorities that deemed the "sociological subject" limited to their own ethnic circles. This therefore made the "postmodern subject" more significant in regards to capturing the bigger societal assemblage of the youth.

A constructivist perspective alongside a "postmodern subject" was also used in regards to the notion of multiculturalism. This enabled this thesis to acknowledge the different ways the youth adhered to Vojvodina's multiculturalism – relating to how the youth essentially problematised their "multicultural" surroundings, as well as how they constructed their relation towards it.

Kees Terlouw and Bouke von Gorp utilise a constructivist perspective in exposing ways in regards to how one can look at regional identities. Their concepts of "Uploading" and "Downloading" were useful when it came to theoretically acknowledging how the youth regarded Vojvodina's multiculturalism. Through the way the youth related to "multiculturalism", it became clear that they considered Vojvodina's multiculturalism as something "specific" for the region. This consequently meant that they saw multiculturalism as feature that was yielded from within the boundaries of Vojvodina - "Uploaded" by the region based on its particular historic circumstances (Terlouw and von Gorp, 2014: 856). In this sense, it can be inferred that the youth consider Vojvodina's multiculturalism to envelope a "regional identity" of Vojvodina. As much as these concepts aided this research with analysing how the youth conceptualised Vojvodina's multiculturalism, by providing tools through which this thesis could look at how the youth regarded this notion of multiculturalism – they were also limiting in the sense that they only related to how one can consider a feature, such as multiculturalism in this case, to have come about. Consequently these concepts only provided this thesis with a way of talking about and relating to how the youth described the way in which they saw multiculturalism to have "come about". This was significant in terms of recognising the way in which the youth contemplated "multiculturalism" to have been materialised and constructed by the region. Nevertheless these concepts merely seemed to offer descriptions of ways in which certain features were generated – which is why with this research utilised these concepts in showing how the youth regarded this feature of multiculturalism - however with the aid of the "postmodern subject", this research went further into exploring how the youth problematised this very notion and their relation with it.

In addition Anssi Paasi is a scholar who also talks about regional identity, as well as acknowledges the importance of regional consciousness. This thesis recognised that the youth had regional consciousness, since they were able to provide various features and characteristics that for them made up the region of Vojvodina. What is more, these features, characteristics, as well as the activities the youth engaged with denoted similar accounts that in turn crafted a seemingly "standard" way the youth engaged with the city of Novi Sad. This is because these comparable accounts indicated towards a shared "socio-political space" that the youth engaged in. Hence through their very descriptions, the youth crafted their interpretation of Vojvodina's regional identity. Nevertheless Paasi seems to offer a different way of adhering to regional identity, where she exclaims that regional identity "joins people and regions together and provides people with regional values" (Paasi, 2013, pg. 1213). This suggests a "top-down" perspective in regards to a

“regional identity” having the power to delineate the very “regional values” that consequently seem to join people together. In this sense, Paasi does not take into account the diversity when it comes to people’s perception of regional values, and how in actuality a regional identity and its very values are constructed by the people living in a specific place, and not vice versa. This is why this thesis merely recognised Paasi’s linkage between the importance of regional consciousness relating to a regional identity - where this research went on to demonstrate how the youth constructed their very surroundings through their discourse and relation to the notion of multiculturalism.

It is important to acknowledge that most of the current literature on multiculturalism envelopes an institutional domain, since the very notion of multiculturalism depicts a formal way of abiding towards ethnic difference within a society. Many scholars have alluded to “multiculturalism” enveloping a “new” word that is trying to bring about a novel way of recognising and managing societal plurality. For instance Joseph Raz is a scholar who asserts that multiculturalism is a way of looking past nationalism and patriotism - a conception that acknowledges the abundance of societal diversity and associates a way to positively manage this “reality”; hence the very notion of multiculturalism presents a “renewed sensitivity that is trying to undo some of the harm done by nationalism” (Raz, 1998: 195). Nonetheless multiculturalism still presents a political thought that bases itself upon a formal way of managing ethnic difference. This is something that is recognised by Meer and Modood who express that multiculturalism accommodates cultural diversity by engaging in ways that can address citizenship rights and privileges of the different ethnic and national groups (Meer and Modood, 2012: 177). This means that the domain of multiculturalism bases itself on formally abiding towards making sure the various different national minorities are provided with inclusive rights and privileges needed to make them feel like citizens of the country they are living in. Furthermore Kymlicka in his article on “*multicultural citizenship within multination states*” also discusses multiculturalism within the domain of politics, in regards to embracing better ways towards managing ethnic diversity that would involve finding more inclusive forms of citizenship (Kymlicka, 2011: 282 -284). In this sense, even though most literature on multiculturalism centres upon an institutional domain, these authors allude to its implicit connotation with the locality of these people’s lives, through the way in which this narrative involves itself with making the different ethnicities feel more involved and included within the place they live in.

This thesis acknowledged the institutional realm of multiculturalism by exposing Vojvodina’s multicultural claim as a narrative that represents the region’s composition of ethnic diversity. Moreover through the accounts offered by the youth, it became clear that Vojvodina’s multicultural claim embodied an abstraction - a narrative far removed from the youth’s present lived reality. This is because Vojvodina’s multicultural claim was depicted to represent an institutional narrative. However this research did not offer an exploration into how a national minority engages with the topic of multiculturalism and whether they feel represented within this narrative – yet it delved into the discourse of the youth as representing the “major ethnicity” in the region, in regards to how they conceptualised this multicultural narrative - their position, surroundings, and relations with people around them. Hence this research did not merely focus on the formal narrative of multiculturalism, but it probed into the exploration of how this narrative finds local expression.

Denis Sindic is a scholar who demonstrates the importance of adhering to the subjective level in terms of one’s sense of belonging. Sindic goes on to discuss notions of citizenship by acknowledging

people's psychological notion of belonging that is based on a shared sense of identity with a community (Denis Sindic, 2011: 203-204). This thesis recognises the significance of seeing how the youth subjectively conceptualises Vojvodina's multiculturalism, relating to their present "multicultural" milieu, as well as how they consider Vojvodina's multicultural claim to be manifested within their lives. Accordingly this research illustrated the "local reality" of Vojvodina's multiculturalism (of the "Serbian" youth) that exposed the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality. Thus instead of merely focusing on one level – either concerning the institutional level or the more local level of multiculturalism – this thesis connected the two levels through the accounts provided by the youth.

It was through the discourse of the youth that the gap between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality was exposed. This is significant because it demonstrated a different perspective than the majority literature on multiculturalism, since this theoretical notion was deconstructed through a localised discourse that went on to illuminate the possible disconnection between a multicultural claim and the way it finds local expression. Therefore this research goes beyond the present literature on multiculturalism, by showing that even though this institutional narrative associates itself with working upon some sort of "locality" of the different ethnicities in the region - the very "societal reality" can implicate a very different picture than what this claim is attempting to achieve.

Finally, this research adds to the current literature on multiculturalism, by exhibiting that the concept of "multiculturalism" does not have to be associated with a formal domain, where it exemplifies an institutional project. Yet this research has shown the importance of this narrative finding local expression. Consequently the very notion of multiculturalism can be considered as a "societal project" that engages itself with the local level, in terms of stimulating dialogue and interaction among the different people living in the region.

This calls upon the larger implication of the relation between a multicultural claim and its societal reality. The next segment will be dedicated to examining the larger significance of this thesis, by connecting the various themes and concepts used towards revealing the bigger purpose of this research, for the domain of academics, but also for the region of Vojvodina.

7.3 Larger significance of research

The bigger aim of this thesis was to primarily deconstruct the relation between a multicultural claim and its societal reality. In this sense, this thesis demonstrated that there can be a gap between a multicultural claim and reality itself. This is because a multicultural claim certainly requires having some sort of societal substance to legitimise its existence – however it does not have to engage itself with the local level.

Accordingly one can argue that multiculturalism in itself is a “buzzword”, which is currently regarded as fashionable terminology to utilise within the political domain. Subsequently governments will embrace “multicultural claims” because they stand as positive narratives to signify the “harmony of people living together”. Every society could nowadays be regarded as “socially diverse”, meaning that a multicultural claim is constructed for strategic purposes, being a beneficial marker that for example, represents the image of the region. However a multicultural claim presents a narrative that is formally embedded in which it does not always mirror the reality on the ground. This can be witnessed from the case of Vojvodina - since “reality” in itself is much more complex and fluid than an ideological idea of societal plurality. Therefore one can argue that a multicultural claim does not implicate a multicultural reality and vice versa. It is often the case that it is assumed that a certain institutional claim associates to a specific reality; certainly the Vojvodinian provincial government could not have constructed its multicultural claim if there was no authentic basis to connect it to – however this multicultural narrative does not reveal anything about the local multicultural reality. Moreover a local multicultural society does not have to ground itself on a formal level - as can be witnessed by the many ethnically plural countries that do not have a constructed claim around that basis.

By talking to the (Serbian) youth, this thesis was able to infer upon the relation between Vojvodina’s multicultural claim and its societal reality. This was significant since it primarily deconstructed the notion of “multiculturalism” through a local discourse that revealed the possible disparity between a multicultural claim and its societal reality - further illuminating upon the very contradictions of Vojvodina’s societal actuality. Moreover this research showed that the very notion of “multiculturalism” can have local expectations, where it does not have to merely placate itself to the institutional level - yet it deems itself as an important societal project, where people require it to find local expression. This also relates to the issue that a multicultural claim necessitates being in “coherence” with its local reality, since its very foundation lies on the presence of the different ethnicities in the region. This concerns the fluid nature of societal diversity that can transform itself from day to day, where it requires nourishment for its consequent maintenance.

What is more, this research demonstrated the importance an institutional domain has in regards to what model of multiculturalism it chooses to embrace. For instance Vojvodina’s provincial government’s adoption of a “segregated model of multiculturalism” systematically segregates the different national minorities. One can go on to discuss the possible reasons for the embracement of this “segregated model of multiculturalism” - however the gist of this is that the very institutional notion of multiculturalism is not neutral, since it can be crafted around a model that can negatively affect the way society is structured. Accordingly this shows that the institutional domain can envelope a model of multiculturalism that is not advantageous for society’s functioning. The larger

significance of this is that the institutional domain needs to be responsible for the way in which it makes sure society is structured in a productive way. In the case of Vojvodina, the “segregated model of multiculturalism” was exposed as a negative way of embracing multiculturalism that certainly has consequences for society. This is primarily because the different national minorities live a “segregated life” in terms of education, habitation, and rights. Even though the people are ultimately free to choose how they would like to lead their life - this model inevitably separates the national minorities from one another.

Furthermore this research revealed that a multicultural claim needs to consider the societal fluidity of ethnic diversity. In this sense, there needs to be a nourishment of societal plurality that will in turn provide this narrative with substance it requires to survive as an institutional claim. As shown from the Vojvodinian context, there is an urge for the up keeping of the region’s societal diversity whose very existence seems to be under threat. As previously mentioned, a multicultural claim does have the power to affect the very structure and functioning of a local reality, however it requires being more in line with the present lived reality of the different nationalities in the region. This also implies that for a multicultural claim to thrive, it needs to engage itself with its local reality in regards to stimulating local dialogue, interaction, and communication among its citizens. Accordingly multiculturalism cannot merely persist without propagating “interculturalism” that will essentially ignite synergy among the different national minorities living in the region. It can thus be argued that multiculturalism requires interculturalism in order to survive – where the notion of interculturalism that promotes the dialogue and interaction among the different ethnicities, should be regarded as a necessary component of multiculturalism that ensures that the very conception of multiculturalism finds local prosperity. Additionally this notion of interculturalism supporting multiculturalism could be seen as having greater significance in regions that have been affected by war and conflict, since these populations will be tainted with various prejudices and animosities that require consolation. Consequently stimulating communication and dialogue among populations that have been affected by preceding conflict is necessary for there to be a “forgiveness” of the past, as well as an atmosphere of harmony and acceptance. Hence in the case of Serbia, this notion of “interculturalism” seems to be vital in regards to impacting more prosperous communication, relations, and interaction between the different ethnicities living in the region.

This thesis also exposed the larger significance when it came to “the youth” and their very ability to problematise the concept of multiculturalism. Even though the youth revealed that their present lived reality did not comprise the “true essence” of a multicultural society – as they saw it through their own expectation of what multiculturalism entailed, the youth showed that they had regional consciousness as well as a potential towards making a future difference in the way people relate to one another. The youth further exhibited their extent in deliberating their surroundings, by expressing their concern with their fellow friends showing a sense of “indifference” towards their present surroundings; the youth related this to their friends having a general absence of knowledge in regards to what this notion of multiculturalism involved. However the interviewed youth also initially showed a lack of knowledge relating to what this conception involved – where they were able to eventually problematise the notion of multiculturalism by engaging with their present settings, their everyday practices, as well as the stories they heard from others. Accordingly this shows that one is able to gain a lot of insightful information about a concept that can involve a lot of theory, by engaging with the youth, and how they make up this notion of multiculturalism. Hence by

placing this notion within a local context, one is able to reveal upon the very sensitivities, functioning, and habitual nature of this notion of multiculturalism.

Ultimately the final point I would like to make recounts the way the youth related to their identity and sense of belonging, which provides a larger significance in regards to what this notion of multiculturalism should entail. The youth demonstrated various different ways one can relate to their sense of belonging, as well as the diverse ways one can describe their connection with multiculturalism. Thus it is through the youth's discourse that they established the importance of how identity can encompass a variety of different sentiments and adherences, whereby the very purpose of multiculturalism should provide people with the ability to adhere to it in the way they feel most comfortable with. This is an issue Kymlicka discusses - however the author goes on to talk about this in terms of crafting identity domains that can inclusively embrace a "multicultural" sense of belonging. This means that there should be an assembling of citizenship domains that are more in line with ethnic plurality, where every person can subsequently feel like they belong. This is certainly advantageous however Kymlicka adheres towards one's "need" of attachment and embracement of a certain identity domain. Equally even though Denis Sindic adheres to the more subjective level of people in terms of their sense of belonging, he also bases his analysis on how conceptions of citizenship within multi-ethnic societies should allow commitment in identifying with a specific form of citizenship. This is something the youth contradicts throughout their accounts, because they demonstrate a fluid way of relating to one's sense of belonging, where one does not have to ascribe themselves to a certain identity category to feel like they can connect to and relate to the notion of multiculturalism. What is more, for the youth multiculturalism should entail a "societal project" that is based on ideals of diversity, equality, acceptance, and harmony in which there is a continuous flow of engagement with people. Certainly this is something the case of Vojvodina contradicts since it envelopes a "segregated model of multiculturalism" that in its spirit classifies each person to their own segregated ethnicity. Nevertheless through the way the youth connected to multiculturalism (in terms of belonging), they demonstrated that multiculturalism should be based on a certain way one leads their life that envelopes an embracement of societal diversity, an attitude for learning, as well as desire for equality and harmony.

In this sense, the youth revealed the "higher purpose" of the notion of multiculturalism that should comprise an idea or "societal project" through which people lead their lives - a vision that crafts a specific way people relate to their surroundings and the people around them. Consequently through their accounts, the youth implicitly showed that the very notion of multiculturalism does not have to ground itself in assembling citizenship domains that require people to attach themselves to a specific identity category. Yet people should be able to adhere to multiculturalism and their sense of belonging in the way that makes them feel most contented – that should be the very purpose of multiculturalism – entailing a "manner of living" that bases itself on mindfully adhering and embracing societal plurality.

7.4 Limitations and concerns

This thesis merely zoomed into a small segment of Vojvodina's population, which means that these findings cannot be generalised to the whole population, as well as presented to implicate the very relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality. Nonetheless these findings have showed the workings of multiculturalism in the region, from a specific segment of the Vojvodinian population. Thus these results have inevitably offered an insight into the relation between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality from the very perspective of the (Serbian) youth, who through their problematisation of Vojvodina's multiculturalism (that based itself on their expectation of multiculturalism as a societal project), exposed the disparity between Vojvodina's multicultural narrative and its societal reality. Certainly a limitation of this research bases itself on the sample size and representation – involving more people but also acknowledging how an “ethnic minority” relates to and engages with the notion of multiculturalism. For example by zooming into how the Hungarian national minority related to multiculturalism in the region – this thesis would have radiated upon the voices of the minorities that in this very narrative are silenced. It could therefore be argued that a “more valuable” discussion could have been offered if this thesis focused on exposing how a national minority related to multiculturalism. This would have possibly also provided more of a “legitimised” discourse, since it would have depicted the perspectives of the people who are “involved” within this multicultural narrative – especially in terms of the national minority's connection with Vojvodina's multicultural claim, and whether they consider their rights and privileges met. Nevertheless this thesis desired to analyse how the (Serbian) youth who present the ex-Yugoslavian generation (comprising the “major ethnicity” in the region), conceptualised Vojvodina's multiculturalism. This is significant because it shows that there is hope for the future relations between the different national minorities in the region – at least from the perspective of the (Serbian) youth, who do not hold grudges of the past.

Throughout this research, it became clear that the (Serbian) youth represented a population that has not been affected by the past animosities of the Balkan wars. This can be confirmed through the way the youth talked about the present intolerance in the region, as well as the negative attitude associated with various national minorities that they related to the older generations. Many informants even correlated the present way the society functioned, to the past occurrences of the Balkan wars that have affected the way people interact and relate to one another. In this regard, the youth was able to *disconnect* themselves from the way they thought the generations who have been affected by the Balkan wars functioned. Hence the youth exhibited the significance in regards to how a generation that is unaffected by the past Balkan wars can thoroughly deliberate and problematise their surroundings, in terms of recognising the negative sides of their society. This is significant, since even though this generation did not directly experience the past Balkan wars, they still live within an environment that composes the past tensions and animosities of the wars; this is because the youth is surrounded by their parents, relatives, as well as other people who seem to be stuck in the past, and who disseminate a negative attitude towards societal plurality. Nonetheless the youth demonstrated that they did not care to think where someone was from, yet they considered every person as a human being. Similarly the youth was able to show how the ideas of some sort of “Greater Serbia” were far removed from their present mind sets, since they firmly exposed their fears of extremism in regards to nationalism and patriotism. As a result, there is a sense of hope for

the future relating to the present attitude and outlook of the youth, since they will be the ones to constitute the next generation of the region.

Accordingly, I believe a bigger concern relates to the disillusionment of the youth regarding the political situation of the country. This was something that was echoed throughout many of the accounts of the youth that implied upon the political disengagement, disinterest, and corruption that impacted the general sense of cynicism of the youth in regards to their future. In this sense, this could potentially be the reason for the youth's "disengagement" with their present lived reality. Subsequently this calls upon the importance of a region's political and institutional domain that thus relates to the notion of multiculturalism itself. Once again this illuminates the fact that a region's institutional domain inexorably influences the local reality of people's surroundings and their engagement within society.

Vojvodina's "segregated model of multiculturalism" is not beneficial for the future of the region, if it desires to tackle its present societal challenges. Especially since the people within the region are still holding on to the past tensions and animosities of the wars, which means that if the region continues to embrace this model, the situation and sentiments will stay stagnant. Consequently work needs to be done on the local level that will engage people with one another, in regards to encouraging communication, interaction, and cooperation among each other. This "segregated model of multiculturalism" was possibly embraced as a consequence of the conflicts and wars that took place in the Balkans – however it is clear that the region's current local reality is not depicting the "true essence" of a multicultural society. An atmosphere of intolerance prevails. Yet it is important to realise that "people" and their very lives makeup a certain place. Hence contextual work needs to be done locally, through projects that will for instance instigate notions of forgiveness, an acknowledging of the past, and offering a way to move forwards. This seems to be necessary for Vojvodina's future, in terms of its societal plurality, as well as the region's own forthcoming political, social, cultural, and economic progression. In addition I think that this multicultural narrative has the potential to be used as a way to resurrect people's sense of belonging, especially among the Serbian ethnicity. This was something that was also mentioned by the experts interviewed, because there seems to be an embarrassment with identifying as "Serbian", due to the past wars and conflicts in the region that cast Serbia (and its population) in a negative light. In this sense, this notion of multiculturalism can be used to provide people with a "positive narrative" that can offer people an affirmative way of relating to their environment and the people around them.

What is more, another concern lies with the demographic picture of Vojvodina that exhibits a decreasing number of national minorities. A lot of people who have the opportunity to get a European passport from Hungary, Croatia, or Romania etc. leave Serbia to go abroad. This is because these countries promise a much better standard of life, as well as various benefits of living in the European Union, which Serbia does not. I have talked to a lot of young people who were trying to get a European passport by using their Hungarian or Croatian roots to argue that they should get citizenship in those countries. Certainly these countries know that people are now increasing trying to gain citizenship status with their entering into the European Union, which is why there are stricter measures, in terms of knowing the language for example. However this still poses a threat to the future of Vojvodina's ethnic-cultural diversity. There is a real concern that Vojvodina's multiculturalism will simply "die out" in the future. Even though this "demographic process" is hard

to control, I think there should be a primary recognition of this by the provincial government of Vojvodina, in the sense of taking action on working on the region's local level. This involves taking various measures that will nourish this societal diversity, engaging people with one another, as well as making people aware of the "societal value" ethnic-cultural plurality brings to a community. Certainly Vojvodina cannot force these national minorities to stay in the region, however by possibly engaging with the local level in terms of creating an environment where people feel fulfilled, accepted, and respected – people might be more inclined to consider staying. This also relates to recognising this narrative's potential in terms of resurrecting people's sense of belonging.

Ultimately my last worry lies in the hesitation of emphasising Vojvodina's multiculturalism as a "specific feature" of the region. This was something that was witnessed from the accounts of the experts and the youth interviewed, as well as my informal talk with a person working within the sector of culture at the provincial government of Vojvodina. I understand that with Vojvodina's past, people are more sensitive when referring to certain ideas that can make the region "stand out" from the larger country of Serbia; I also found myself careful with how I used the idea of multiculturalism to describe the region of Vojvodina. However I think that this hesitation with stressing this "multicultural feature" of Vojvodina, could potentially limit Vojvodina's multicultural narrative and its very prospect for the future. This is because if this multicultural claim is not amply acknowledged as a feature standing to represent the region, then its consequent application and engagement will not suffice - in terms of being actively used to impact the local level for example. In this regard, this claim will merely stand as a "passive definition" of societal plurality. In view of that it seems like having a "specific claim" is problematic for autonomous regions, since it makes them "stand out" from the larger part of the entity they are part of that can implicitly lead to the crafting of potential separatist sentiments. This can consequently lead to various tensions within the region. Moreover this also assumes problems in regards to the propagation of the claim itself, since it could be considered as a "potential motive" for separatist tendencies, which subsequently limits the prospect of the claim and what it can possibly represent and achieve for a region.

In conclusion, taking into account the above mentioned apprehensions, it seems like there needs to be a more active commitment and engagement with Vojvodina's notion of multiculturalism. This concerns the region's local level in terms of its demography but also people's communication and relations. There is a necessity for people to move on from the past, where this very notion of multiculturalism could be utilised as a narrative reviving people's sense of belonging that has been tainted by the past wars. Moreover Vojvodina's "segregated model of multiculturalism" seems to stand as an obstacle to the region's attempt in confronting its societal challenges. Ultimately the youth demonstrated that they stand to represent the generation that is unaffected by the region's past, where through their ability of recognising the negative ways the people around them associated to ethnic-cultural plurality, the youth showed that there can be hope for the future way people will relate to one another.

This thesis exposed how the (Serbian) youth related to their ethnic-cultural surroundings, in regards to illuminating the very gap between Vojvodina's multicultural claim and its societal reality that depicted various tensions, prejudices, and a segregated way of life. Accordingly this thesis illustrated a local perspective in regards to problematising the notion of multiculturalism, by delving into the "on ground reality" of the youth living in Novi Sad. In this sense, there has been a provision of new

knowledge concerning the notion of collective identity in south east Europe. Furthermore this thesis has exposed an example of the relation between a multicultural claim and its societal reality. Nonetheless more research needs to be done on the topic of multiculturalism comprising different ethnic minorities and how they engage with societal plurality. Consequently this thesis calls upon the need for more research to be done in south east Europe, in terms of analysing topics of multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and identity. This is because the “Balkans” present a highly intricate region that has gone through various forms of political, economic, social, and cultural transformations in the recent years – with its past wars, secessions, political changeovers, demographic alterations - as well as the region’s general striving towards the European Union that therefore deems it a place requiring more research done within the domains of identity and multiculturalism. These concepts necessitate a better understanding in regards to providing the region with more comprehensive and inclusive ways of adhering to societal diversity. It is through this way that the region will be able to embrace better ways of sustaining its politics of multiculturalism.

8. Appendix 1: Main interview informants

Name	Gender	Occupation	Place of interview
Marija	Female	Student	Café at city centre
Vesna	Female	Works at the Red Cross	Her house
Jovana	Female	Working in humanitarian sector	Her house
Srdjan	Male	Working in administrative sector	His house
Anja	Female	Student	Café at city centre
Bogdan	Male	Student	His house
Milos	Male	Student	Café in the city centre
Dana	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Novi Sad 2019
Jelena	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Novi Sad 2019
Dragana	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Café at the University
Boban	Male	Student	His house
Dusko	Male	Working for Red Cross	The Red Cross in Novi Sad
Nikola	Male	Student	Café in city centre
Dragan	Male	Student and volunteer at the Red Cross	The Red Cross in Novi Sad
Petar	Male	Student	His house

Sonja	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Café in city centre
Mara	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Café in city centre
Sandra	Female	Student	Café in city centre
Sanja	Female	Student	Café in city centre
Mladen	Male	Student	Park in the city centre
Tanja	Female	Student	Café in city centre
Luna	Female	Student	American Corner Novi Sad
Ivko	Male	Student	American Corner Novi Sad
Jasna	Female	Student	American Corner Novi Sad
Dusan	Male	Student	Café at the University
Katarina	Female	Student and volunteer at Novi Sad 2019	Café city centre
Sava	Male	Student	Café at the University
Vukan	Male	Student	Café at the University
Marko	Male	Student	Café at the University
Ante	Male	Student	Café in the city centre

9. Appendix 2: Expert interview informants

Name	Occupation	Place of interview
Bojan Panaotovic	Director of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad	Cultural Centre of Novi Sad
Tijana Palkovljevic Bugarski	Director of the 'Serbian Cultural House' in Novi Sad	The 'Serbian Cultural House' in Novi Sad (Matica Srpska)
Aleksandar Popov	Director of the Centre for Regionalism in Serbia	The Centre for Regionalism in Novi Sad
-	A Coordinator of Novi Sad 2021	The American Corner in Novi Sad
-	Professor of Demography	The University of Novi Sad
-	Professor of Geography and Demography	The University of Novi Sad
-	Assistant Professor of Demography	The University of Novi Sad
-	Assistant Professor of Tourism	The University of Novi Sad

10. Appendix 3: Informal talks

Name	Gender	Occupation	Place of talk
-	Females and males	Working at the student cafes	At the student cafes on campus at the University of Novi Sad
-	Female and male	Working at the Student Information Point at the University of Novi Sad	At the Student Information Point
-	Females and males	People selling newspapers and magazines, people selling things at street stands	In the centre of Novi Sad
-	Female	Working for EHO: "Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation" (poverty reduction, promotion of human rights, and building of a cohesive civil society)	EHO Office in Novi Sad
-	Female	Person working for the Ministry of Culture of the Provincial Government of Vojvodina	Over the phone

11. Appendix 4: Quantative survey done by “ninamedia research” in Novi Sad (August 2016)

Stavovi građana Novog Sada o multikulturalnosti



research



Uvod

Cilj istraživanja: stavovi građana Novog Sada starosti 18-30 godina srpske nacionalnosti o multikulturalnosti.

Metoda sakupljanja podataka je bila CATI. Kompjuterski podržano anketiranje putem telefona (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) je istraživački postupak u kom računar asistira anketarima prilikom anketiranja, birajući brojeve telefonskog imenika grada Novog Sada (gradski i vangradski deo).

Softver za unos podataka: WARP IT, profesionalni licencirani program za istraživanje tržišta sa velikim opsegom mogućnosti prilikom postavljanja projekta.

Softver za analizu podataka: SPSS

Realizovan uzorak: 175 ispitanika

Geografska odrednica: teritorija grada Novog Sada (gradski i vangradski deo)

Objašnjenje čitanja tabela:

Primer tabele ukrštanja pola sa odgovorom na pitanje koji kao ponuđene modalitete ima "da" i "ne".

	Muški pol	Ženski pol
Da	24,0%	26,3%
Ne	76,0%	73,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%

U redu se nalazi naziv odgovarajućeg modaliteta koji predstavlja demografsko obeležje. U koloni se nalaze modaliteti odgovora na pitanje iz istraživanja. Tabela se čita po koloni, zbir je 100%, što predstavlja rezultat za subpopulaciju muškaraca (zbir 100% odgovora "da" i "ne" za muškarce).

Sociodemografske i socioekonomske karakteristike ispitanika

		N	%
Pol - Gender	Muški - Male	100	57,1
	Ženski - Female	75	42,9
Obrazovni status – Educational status	Osnovna škola – Primary school	27	15,4
	Srednja škola – High school	85	48,6
	Viša škola, fakultet + - Higher education, University	63	36,0
Tip naselja – Type of habitation	Gradsko - City	151	86,3
	Vangradsko – City outskirts	24	13,7
Total		175	100,0

Kada Vam kažem multikulturalnost, šta Vam prvo pada na pamet? (%)

What firstly comes to mind when you think of multiculturalism?

	N	%
Ne znam – I dont know	55	31,4
Više nacija na jednom mestu – more nationalities on one place	36	20,6
Kultura - Culture	30	17,1
Novi Sad	13	7,4
Tolerancija – Tolerance	11	6,3
Ostalo - Other	7	4,0
Nacionalne manjine – National minorities	6	3,4
Raznovrsnost - Diversity	6	3,4
Višejezičnost - Multilingualism	4	2,3
Različite religije – Different religions	4	2,3
Vojvodina	3	1,7
Total	175	100,0

Ostalo: globalizam; obrazovanje; EXIT; - folklor; mediji, svet; muzeji.

Other: Globalisation, education, EXIT, folklore, media, the world, museums.

Šta su za Vas lično odlike multikulturalne sredine?

What are characteristics of a multicultural community?

	N	%
Ne znam – I dont know	58	33,1
Tolerancija, poštovanje, uvažavanje, sloga – Tolerance, respect, harmony	54	30,9
Više nacija na jednom mestu – More nationalities on one place	17	9,7
Prihvatanje različitosti – Acceptance of difference	15	8,6
Sloboda veroispovesti, upotrebe maternjeg jezika – Freedom of religion and mother tonuge language	13	7,4
Ostalo - Other	8	4,6
Kulturni sadržaji – Culutral manifestations	6	3,4
Višejezičnost - Multilingualism	4	2,3
Total	175	100,0

Ostalo: edukacije; manifestacije; kulturni ljudi; obrazovano stanovništvo (2x); koncerti i takmičenja;

Other: education, manifestations, cultural people, educated people (x2), concerts and competitions.

Prema Vašem mišljenju, da li je Vojvodina multikulturalna sredina?

In your opinion, is Vojvodina a multicultural?

	N	%
Da - Yes	159	90,9
Ne - No	9	5,1
Ne znam da procenim – I cant judge	7	4,0
Total	175	100,0

Ukrštanje ciljnih grupa sa pitanjem

Hybirdization of target group with question

	muški pol - Male	ženski pol - Female	osnovna škola – Primary school	srednja škola – High school	viša škola, fakultet+ - Higher education	Gradsko - City	Vangradsko – City outskirts
Da - Yes	91,0%	90,7%	74,1%	94,1%	93,7%	92,1%	83,3%
Ne - No	4,0%	6,7%	14,8%	3,5%	3,2%	4,0%	12,5%
Ne znam – I dont know	5,0%	2,7%	11,1%	2,4%	3,2%	4,0%	4,2%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Objašnjenje donje tabele: Stav da je Vojvodina multikulturalna sredina prisutniji je kod građana srednjeg i visokog obrazovanja, kao i stanovnika gradskih naselja.

The opinion that Vojvodina is multicultural is most dominant with people of a middle and higher education, as well as with people living in the city.

Prema Vašem mišljenju, koji grad je multikulturalniji?

In your opinion, what city is most multicultural?

	N	%
Novi Sad	120	68,6
Podjednako - Equally	23	13,1
Beograd - Belgrade	14	8,0
Ne znam da procenim – I cant judge	10	5,7
Nijedan - None	8	4,6
Total	175	100,0

**Ukrštanje ciljnih grupa sa pitanjem
Hybirdization of target group with question**

	muški pol - Male	ženski pol - Female	osnovna škola – Primary school	srednja škola – High school	viša škola, fakultet+ - Higher education	Gradsko - City	Vangradsko – City outskirts
Novi Sad	69,0%	68,0%	48,1%	71,8%	73,0%	71,5%	50,0%
Beograd	7,0%	9,3%	14,8%	8,2%	4,8%	7,3%	12,5%
Podjednako - Equally	16,0%	9,3%	18,5%	9,4%	15,9%	13,9%	8,3%
Nijedan - None	2,0%	8,0%	7,4%	4,7%	3,2%	2,0%	20,8%
Ne znam da procenim – Cant judge	6,0%	5,3%	11,1%	5,9%	3,2%	5,3%	8,3%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Da li među članovima Vaše porodice/prijateljima ima osoba koje nisu srpske nacionalnosti?

Are there people in your inner social circle (family/friends) that are not from the Serbian nationality?

	N	%
Da - Yes	136	77,7
Ne - No	39	22,3
Total	175	100,0

**Ukrštanje ciljnih grupa sa pitanjem
Hybirdization of target group with question**

	muški pol - Male	ženski pol - Female	osnovna škola - Primary school	srednja škola - High school	viša škola, fakultet+ - Higher education	Gradsko - City	Vangradsko - City outskirts
Da - Yes	75,0%	81,3%	70,4%	82,4%	74,6%	78,1%	75,0%
Ne - No	25,0%	18,7%	29,6%	17,6%	25,4%	21,9%	25,0%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Objašnjenje donje tabele: Na pitanje „Da li među članovima Vaše porodice/prijateljima ima osoba koje nisu srpske nacionalnosti“ odgovor „Da“ u većoj meri daju žene, građani sa srednjom školom, kao i stanovnici gradskih naselja.

The answering of “yes” to this question involved a bigger quantity with females, citizens with middle education, as well as citizens living in the city.

Prema Vašem mišljenju, ko sve može da utiče na promociju multikulturalnosti?

In your opinion, who can affect the promotion of multiculturalism?

	N	%
Mediji (tv, novine, internet, radio) – The media (tv, newspapers, internet, radio)	88	23,2%
Svaki pojedinac svojim ličnim primerom – Each individual with their own example	80	21,1%
Porodica - Family	56	14,7%
Školski sistem (škole, fakulteti) – Schooling system (schools and universities)	50	13,2%
Poznate ličnosti (sportisti, glumci, pevači) – Famous people such as actors, sports persons, singer	25	6,6%
Političari-političke stranke – Politicians and political parties	23	6,1%
Crkva - Church	14	3,7%
Evropska unija – The European Union	12	3,2%
Nevladine organizacije - NGOs	11	2,9%
Ne znam – I dont know	11	2,9%
Država/državne institucije – The state and public institutions	7	1,8%
Niko, ne može se uticati – No one, nothing can affect its promotion	3	,8%
Total	380	100,0%

Pitanja koja su Vam ponuđena označavaju različite stepene prisnosti u socijalnim odnosima. Molimo Vas da odgovorite koliko ste vi lično saglasni da osoba druge nacionalnosti:

Answer how much you do you agree with a person from a different nationality being:

	Živi u istoj državi kao i ja – Living in same country as me	Živi u istom gradu - Living in same city as me	Da živimo u istoj ulici - Living in the same street	Da mi bude kolega na poslu – Being my colleague at work	Da mi bude prijatelj – Being my friend	Da mi bude partner-bračni partner – Being my marital partner
Da - Yes	99,4	99,4	98,9	99,4	97,1	84,0
Ne - No	,6	,6	,6	,6	1,1	8,0
Ne znam – I dont know			,6		1,7	8,0
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%



Ukrštanje ciljnih grupa sa pitanjem Hybirdization of target group with question

		Muški - Male	Ženski - Female	Osnovna škola - Primary school	Srednja škola - High school	Viša škola, fakultet + - Higher education	Gradsko - City	Vangradsko - City outskirts
Živi u istoj državi kao i ja – Living in same country	Da	100,0%	98,7%	96,3%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	95,8%
	Ne		1,3%	3,7%				4,2%
Živi u istom gradu – Living in same city	Da	100,0%	98,7%	96,3%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	95,8%
	Ne		1,3%	3,7%				4,2%
Da živimo u istoj ulici – Living in same street	Da	99,0%	98,7%	96,3%	100,0%	98,4%	99,3%	95,8%
	Ne		1,3%	3,7%				4,2%
	Ne znam	1,0%				1,6%	,7%	
Da mi bude kolega na poslu – Being my colleague at work	Da	100,0%	98,7%	96,3%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	95,8%
	Ne		1,3%	3,7%				4,2%
Da mi bude prijatelj – Being	Da	97,0%	97,3%	92,6%	97,6%	98,4%	98,0%	91,7%

my friend	Ne	1,0%	1,3%	3,7%	1,2%		,7%	4,2%
	Ne znam	2,0%	1,3%	3,7%	1,2%	1,6%	1,3%	4,2%
Da mi bude partner-bračni partner – Being my marital partner	Da	85,0%	82,7%	85,2%	84,7%	82,5%	84,8%	79,2%
	Ne	9,0%	6,7%	3,7%	8,2%	9,5%	7,9%	8,3%
	Ne znam	6,0%	10,7%	11,1%	7,1%	7,9%	7,3%	12,5%
Total		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

U kojoj meri smatrate da je za Vojvodinu važno da neguje multikulturalnost?

To what degree do you consider multiculturalism as important for Vojvodina?

	N	%
Uopšte nije važno – Its not important at all	1	0,6
Nije važno – Its not important	4	2,3
Niti je važno, niti nije – Its not not important nor is it important	9	5,1
Važno je – Its important	49	28,0
Veoma je važno – Its very important	107	61,1
Ne znam da procenim – I cant judge	5	2,9
Total	175	100,0

**Ukrštanje ciljnih grupa sa pitanjem
Hybirdization of target group with question**

	muški pol - Male	ženski pol - Female	osnovna škola – Primary school	srednja škola - High school	viša škola, fakultet+ - Higher education	Gradsko - City	Vangradsko – City outskirts
Uopšte nije važno – Not important at all		1,3%		1,2%		,7%	
Nije važno – Its	3,0%	1,3%		3,5%	1,6%	2,6%	

not important							
Niti je važno, niti nije – Its not not important nor is it important	6,0%	4,0%		4,7%	7,9%	5,3%	4,2%
Važno je – Its important	29,0%	26,7%	37,0%	24,7%	28,6%	27,8%	29,2%
Veoma je važno – Its very important	58,0%	65,3%	51,9%	63,5%	61,9%	60,3%	66,7%
Ne znam da procenim – I cant judge	4,0%	1,3%	11,1%	2,4%		3,3%	
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Objašnjenje donje tabele: Stav da je za Vojvodinu važno da neguje multikulturalnost u većoj meri zastupaju žene, stanovnici vangradskih naselja, dok sa porastom stepena obrazovanja dolazi do porasta broja ispitanika koji negovanje multikulturalnosti smatraju važnim za Vojvodinu.

**prilikom interpretacije odgovori „važno je“ i „veoma je važno“ posmatrani su zbirno.*

**the answers of “important” and “very important” were considered together within this interpretation.*

The opinion that Vojvodina should nourish its multikulturalism is represented in a bigger degree with women, citizens living in city outskirts, where there is an increase in the number of informants who think that the nourishment of multikulturalism is important for Vojvodina with the rise in education levels..

Hvala na pažnji.



Vojvode Milenka 21/I | 11000 Beograd, Srbija | +381 (11) 362 12 75

Vojvode Mišića 9 | 21000 Novi Sad, Srbija | +381 (21) 475 42 00

www.ninamedia.rs

12. Appendix 5: Bibliography

Belgrade Centre of Human Rights, (2017). Retrieved from: <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/eng-lat/>

B92 (2013, January 28) "New Posters for the Vojvodina Republic". Retrieved from: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=01&dd=28&nav_category=11&nav_id=681363

B92 (2008, October 15) "Vojvodina Statute Adopted". Retrieved from: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=15&nav_id=323596

Centre for Regionalism (2017) Retrieved from: <http://www.centarzaregionalizam.org.rs/index.html>

"Collins Dictionary" (2017) *Definition of Multiculturalism*. Retrieved from: www.collinsdictionary.com

Conversi Daniele (2000) "Central secession: Towards a new analytical concept? The case of former Yugoslavia". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:2, 333-355.

Ficks Emma (2015) "Snippets from Serbia", pages 1-200.

Gellner Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell.

Gluscevic Sladjana (2017) "The disappearing of Vojvodina's multiculturalism" *Autonomija* newspaper: VOICE: Retrieved from: <http://www.autonomija.info/voice-kako-nestaje-multinacionalna-vojvodina.html>

Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2013) Retrieved from: <http://www.vojvodina.gov.r/en/autonomous-province-vojvodina>

Hall Stuart (1992) "The Question of Cultural Identity" from *Modernity and its futures* pp.274-316, Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University.

Judah Tim (1997) "THE SERBS: HISTORY, MYTH AND THE DESTRUCTION OF YUGOSLAVIA". *The Economist*. 'Understanding Yugoslavia'. Yale; 368 pages. Retrieved from: <http://www.economist.com/node/597397>

Kokovic Dragan and Zolt Lazar (2006) "National Identity, Ethnic Distance and Value System Theory of the Citizens of Vovjodina". *Multicultural Vojvodina: within European Integrations*, pages 117-141 , Novi Sad.

Kymlicka Will (2011) "Multicultural citizenship within multinational states". *Ethnicities* 11(3) 281–302. Queen's University, Canada.

Leve Lauren (2011) "Identity". *Current Anthropology* vol. 52, no 4, 513-535. University of Chicago Press.

Matica Srpska (2017) Retrieved from: <http://www.maticasrpska.org.rs/en/matica-srpska/>

Meer Nasar & Modood Tariq (2012) "How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?" *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33:2, 175-196.

Mitchell Katharyne (2004) "Geographies of identity: Multiculturalism unplugged" *Progress in Human Geography* 28,5 Progress reports, pages 641-651. Department of Geography, University of Washington.

Novi Sad 2021 (2014-2016). Retrieved from: <http://novisad2021.rs/en/>

Novi Sad 2019 (2017). Retrieved from: <http://opens2019.rs/en/>

Oberschall Anthony (2000) "The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23:6, 982-1001.

"Oxford Dictionary" (2017) Definition of Multiculturalism. Retrieved from: www.oxforddictionary.com

Paasi Anssi (2002) "Bounded spaces in the mobile world: deconstructing 'regional identity'". Department of Geography: University of Oulu, Finland. pg. 1-12.

Paasi Anssi (2013) "Regional Planning and the Mobilization of 'Regional Identity': From Bounded Spaces to Relational Complexity". *Regional Studies*, 47:8, pg. 1206-1219.

Paasi Anssi (2003) "Region and place: regional identity in question". *Progress in Human Geography* 27:4, pg. 475-485.

Petsinis Vassilis (2008). "Serbs and Ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina: Ethnic Conflict Placed within a Framework beyond Groupism". *Sociologia* vol.40: SAIA Research Fellow, Institute for European Studies and International Relations: Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava.

Petsinis Vassilis (2004) *The Serbs and Vojvodina: ethnic identity within a multi-ethnic region* (Doctoral dissertation of Philosophy): Centre for Russian and Eastern European studies, University of Birmingham.

Petsinis Vassilis (2003) "Vojvodina's national minorities: current realities and future prospects".

Portmann Micheal (2016) "Ethnic cleansing in peacetime? Yugoslav/Serb colonization projects in Vojvodina in the twentieth century", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 18.4, 447-462.

Raz Joseph (1998) "Multiculturalism". *Ratio Juris*. Vol. 11 No. 3, pages 193–205. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Scruton Roger (1986) "Authority and Allegiance" in Donald, J and Hall, S. (eds) *Politics and Ideology*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Sekulic Dusko, Massey Garth, and Hodson Randy (1994) "Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia". *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 83-97.

Sindic Denis (2011) "Psychological Citizenship and National Identity". *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology J. Community Appl. Soc. Psychol.*, 21: 202–214. Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Skoric Marko (2006) "Prejudices and Stereotypes as elements of the Anthology of Ethnicity". *Multicultural Vojvodina: within European Integrations*, pages 285-303, Novi Sad.

Statistical office of Republic of Serbia (2012) "2011 census of population, households and dwellings in Republic of Serbia": Ethnicities data by municipalities and cities.

Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2014): Official Gazette of AP Vojvodina, number 20/2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&j=EN>

Strika Zoran (2017) "Vojvodina's multiculturalism – reality or a myth". 0.21.rs. Retrieved from: <http://www.021.rs/story/Info/Vojvodina/173992/Multikulturalnost-Vojvodine-stvarnost-ili-mit.html>

Terlouw Kees and van Gorp Bouke (2013) "Layering spatial identities: the identity discourses of new regions". *Urban and Regional Research Centre Utrecht, Department of Human Geography. Environment and Planning A 2014*, vol 46, pages 852 – 866.

Tripkovic Milan (2006) "Multiculturalisation, Regionalisation and Integration in Vojvodina and Serbia". *Multicultural Vojvodina: within European Integrations*, pages 9-42, Novi Sad.

University of Novi Sad (2017) Retrieved from: <https://www.uns.ac.rs/index.php/en/>

Van Bochove Marianne, Burgers Jack, Geurts Amber, de Koster Willem, and van der Waal Jeroen (2015) "Questioning Ethnic Identity: Interviewer Effects in Research about Immigrants' Self-Definition and Feelings of Belonging". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* vol. 46(5) 652– 666).

“Vanishing Vojvodina”. The Economist. May 18th 2010. Retrieved from:
<http://www.economist.com/node/16155218>

Xiaomei Zhan & Shimin Wang (2014) “Political Identity: A Perspective from Cultural Identity, Social Sciences in China”. 35:2, 155-173.