

*The Politics of Ethnic Identity in Everyday Life at the Local
Level in Croatia*

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DECLARATION:

I hereby declare that this is my own work, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

The starting point in this thesis is a reconsideration of the genre of literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that seeks to explain the causes of conflicts. The point made is that this search for causality not only results in accounts that are 'ethnographically thin', but also constructing an account that focuses on only one moment in the everyday lives of persons in Croatia. Applying a concept of the everyday that allows for moments of conflict – as opposed to considering conflict as something separate – the argument this thesis makes is that there is the presence of an apparently repeated movement to the way objects of shared interest divide and come together. By employing concept of 'scale' [Strathern 1991] this thesis draws out ethnographically the movement surrounding objects of shared interest, through an account of the work that persons do on their family houses, as well as their work on documents, and gravestones. The point this ethnographic account makes is that these objects of shared interest gain this appearance of movement as a result of the debates that surround them. It also draws out how these objects of shared interest are not passive objects, but how they take on the role of actants [Latour 1997] by shaping the form that these debates take. It is only after having drawn out this movement that this thesis then turns to consider the concept of *narodnost* [ethnicity]. The argument made here is that there is a similar movement to the debates surrounding *narodnost* as there are to the movement of the debates that surround inherited family houses and documents. In addition, the actant quality of the concept of *narodnost* becomes visible. Having done this, this thesis then compares the movement surrounding to the debates surrounding anthropological objects of shared interest, and the movement to the debates surrounding objects of interest for persons in Rijeka, Croatia. The point made here is that although there are a number of similarities, there is a notable difference in the way that persons in Croatia approach the concepts of certainty/uncertainty.

*Conflict 'in' the Everyday: Finding An Alternative Perspective on the Debates
Surrounding the Break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.*

Introducing Rijeka

It is sometimes difficult to know when introducing the city where I did fieldwork, whether to call¹ it by the Croatian word of 'Rijeka', or by the Italian word of 'Fiume'². Even though Rijeka has been the 'official' name for the city since 1948, [both in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the current Republic of Croatia], there are still a number of persons who refer to the city as Fiume. In the English language, both words mean 'river' after the river Rječina that runs through, what is currently, the centre of the city. This river has not always been in the 'centre' of the city, since before the Second World War it was a line of division that marked an international border, between Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Then, the city that is now Rijeka was divided into two towns: the town of Sušak to the east of the river, and the town of Fiume, to the west. One could describe the question of what to call the city as being a part of an ongoing debate, and in fact, this issue of 'ongoing debates' is something that one constantly encounters when trying to construct a 'general' narrative of the city: each potential reference point has a number of different, and often conflicting, narratives surrounding it. For example, when one walks around the city it is frequently possible to see one particular artefact, the Morčić, being sold in jewellery shops,

¹ Green (2005) has described facing a similar problem when writing about the location of her fieldwork in a village on the Greek-Albanian border.

² The descriptive terms that is used for persons living in Rijeka is '*Riječani*' but I also often heard persons use the term '*Fiumani*' to describe persons living in the city. This was most audible when persons were referring to members of the most senior generations, who in their words are the 'autochthonous people of the city'.

displayed as a caricature on a drawing [particularly on posters that advertise events during carnival time], or being worn by persons, either as an earring or as a necklace. The Morčić is the ‘official symbol’³ of Rijeka, and I heard two stories in particular about its ‘origins’. The first was that it is a reminder of the city’s victory against the *Turci*⁴ on a plain outside of Rijeka, and the second was that it is an image of a slave-girl who was freed by an Italian baroness. Again⁵ like the question of what to call the city, each story was meaningful to the narrator, and after some time of being in Rijeka, and if I knew the person who was narrating well enough, I found I could almost predict what version they would give.

Nevertheless, although when introducing Rijeka, one could set oneself up to become embroiled in the numerous debates about the city that are audible within the city, one feature that does not seem to be a point of debate is the salience of the sea to life in the city – both in the past, and in the present. This is because Rijeka is located on the side of a steep hill leading down to the coast, and historical narratives (e.g. Lužavec *et al* 1988; Žic 2001) on the city point out that its coastal position has been of ‘strategic importance’ for persons living in the area from the Roman era to the Austro-Hungarian Empire up until the current Republic of Croatia. The city itself is the third largest city in Croatia, with a population of approximately 150,000 people, in the North Western part of Croatia. Quite a few persons living in the city attest that it was during the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that the city grew the most. Certainly, according to the architecture of the city much was built during this period. The port considerably expanded at this time, and as well, a railway line was built that linked

³ As designated by the current City Council

⁴ *Turci* [Turks] is a term that persons often use interchangeably to describe Muslims, and those persons living in the Ottoman Empire.

⁵ Whenever I asked anyone about why there was such a difference in these stories, the answer was invariably the same, a dismissive ‘*to je politika*’ [that is politics]. This detail [that any reference point one might potentially employ to hinge an account of the city has a number of conflicting narratives surrounding it] makes it very difficult to present an introductory account of the city in a conventional sense. As I will discuss in much more detail in a moment there are no fixed reference points.

Rijeka to Venice, Budapest and other cities in Central Europe. Yet, others say that it was during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that the city grew most of all. In the 1950's, Rijeka became one of the main ports in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and its' population grew rapidly. During this era, the expansion of the shipyards, the growth of the oil refineries, the paper factory and the ferry companies all contributed to bring a large number of persons from other areas of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to come to live in Rijeka. It is because of this influx of persons from the other parts of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that many persons say Rijeka is 'specific', explaining that the city is very mixed⁶. However, since the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia all of the factories have closed, except for the oil refineries, and the work of the shipyards has notably diminished⁷.

Although these industries have declined in comparison to the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a large number of employed persons are still working in a job that is in some way connected to the sea. Indeed, most recently there has been increased investment in these industries, where the acceptance of Croatia to start negotiations to join the European union has stimulated 'foreign' investment. When I first came to Croatia in 1998, a large number of the persons I met were unemployed and could not find a job. This has notably changed, where for instance, quite a few of those persons who were informants for this thesis, now work in one of the numerous smaller firms⁸ that act as 'suppliers' to the shipbuilding

⁶ When they employ the term mixed they do so in terms of ethnicity. In fact, this 'mixedness' was one of the reasons persons gave as to why there was no direct fighting in Rijeka during the conflicts during the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

⁷ Not only did the conflicts result in production in the ship yards to diminish, but also the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was for purposes of insurance [as declared by Lloyds of London] as a war zone. This meant that any boats that entered the waters of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were not covered by insurance. Although a number of persons suggest that this is the reason why the work of the shipyard has diminished, another very audible argument is that local politicians are responsible for this, saying that they have stolen money from the shipyards.

⁸ These firms supply draftsmen, air conditioning, and other services needed for ships.

industry, both for shipyards within Croatia and abroad [for example Italy, Germany, Korea, Norway]. As well, a good number of persons [predominately men] work as officers and crew on ships all over the world, where lots of persons I met during fieldwork would mention that either they were about to leave, or had just arrived from the '*brod*' [ship], or that someone close to them was away because they were sailing. Such is the number of persons away on ships, that on Monday evenings one can tune into Radio Rijeka to hear the radio program⁹ '*Pomorska večer*' [sailors evening], which is audible to those sailing via satellite transmission. The city is also a salient communications hub¹⁰ for tourists visiting Croatia, and is the location of the headquarters for the largest ferry company in Croatia, Jadrolinija. Every night during the summer, one can see either the ferries Marko Polo or Liburnija moored right on the *riva*, in the centre of the city. The passengers of these ferries, as well as the passengers of the other smaller ferries and catamarans, are predominately tourists going to visit the outlying islands, Split or Dubrovnik. The salience of the sea to life in the city is not only in terms of working life, since persons say that the sea affects how they feel, influences what they eat, and what they do in their spare time. For instance, a number of persons say that the south westerly wind '*jugo*', a wind that blows in from the sea often bringing with it damp weather, makes their 'bones hurt' and causes them to feel tired and depressed. Others say that their constitution cannot cope with too much red meat and fatty food, explaining that this is because they are 'people of the sea'.

⁹ This informative program gives notice about where in the world Croatian ships are currently sailing, plays recorded messages from wives, mothers and grandmothers of sailors wishing them well and a peaceful sea, and offers information relevant to the lives of sailors.

¹⁰ When I first arrived in Rijeka in 1998 it was not possible to see many tourists visiting the city. This has considerably changed now.

The Balkans?

When I first came to Croatia, in 1998, to teach English, my observation that the sea was a very salient aspect of everyday life in Rijeka came initially as somewhat of a shock. Since I had come to Rijeka with the foregone conclusion that it was firmly in the Balkans, I had expected for persons to be more interested in other things; and had not anticipated¹¹ that they would be discussing and debating the best way to catch fish, the situation at the shipyards, or talking about how they were tired because of *jugo*. Going to the beach, or spending a weekend diving or fishing on one of the nearby islands did not seem a very Balkan practice at all. Indeed, my belief that Rijeka was a part of the Balkans was thoroughly challenged, and when I asked those persons around me what their views were on this issue, I heard a variety of answers. Although I was told quite firmly at points that Rijeka was ‘in the Balkans’, on other occasions I heard that it was ‘in Europe’, ‘in South Eastern Europe’, ‘in the Mediterranean’, ‘in the West’, ‘not in the West’, and ‘in Eastern Europe’. Some persons told me that Rijeka became a part of the Balkans when it became a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946. Others said it had never been in the Balkans, since the city had never been a part of the Ottoman Empire; and that instead Rijeka was a part of the ‘European’ Austro-Hapsburg Empire. Quite a few said that Rijeka was *ponekad* [sometimes] a part of the Balkans, which appeared to depend¹² on what was happening at that time. Even more frequently, though, when I asked this question about whether Rijeka was in the Balkans, persons would not answer the question at all. Instead, they would look at me quite despairingly and ask me ‘what do you want to say with this?’ or respond with ‘aha you want

¹¹ Jean-Klein [forthcoming] describes how one of her students expressed surprise at Palestinians doing ‘peaceful’ things like keeping rabbits. My surprise that persons were not in permanent conflict and were engaged in other activities was similar.

¹² I discuss this further in a moment.

to make us look different', or say that they were too busy to *raspravljati* [debate] such *gluposti* [foolishness].

Nonetheless, although the question of whether Rijeka is in the Balkans is far from 'resolved' in terms of what persons in Rijeka think about this, according to scholarly literature it appears much more settled¹³. As with the other¹⁴ member states of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia is often considered in both scholarly and popular literature as being a part of the Balkans. Writing on anthropological regions (Fardon 1990) makes the observation that regions within anthropological scholarship tend to become known for specific features, and concerning the Balkans, it seems almost trite to make the observation that the region has become infamous for being a place of fragmentation and conflict. Although Bogišić (1884) first coined the term Balkans in 1908 to describe a geographical area, it has since then become 'synonymous with violence, conflict and fragmentation' (Allcock 2004: 2). Meštrović (1994) has pointed out that the term 'Balkanisation' has even crept into English language dictionaries to describe a process of fragmentation, where the fragmented pieces are hostile to one another. In earlier writing, where West's (1947) account *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* is a good example of this genre of literature, the Balkans appears to be a place full of scenes of violent blood revenge (*cf* Tomašić 1946: 43-47). In addition, an image has been formed where this troublesome part of the world appears

¹³ In comparison to the seeming uncertainty about this issue during the time I was living in Rijeka prior to starting the research for this thesis, it was somewhat of a relief to [re]gain a feeling of certainty about it upon my return to Edinburgh. At the outset of the Master's program, which was designed to prepare students for doctoral field research, one of the most pressing concerns faced by those of us on this course was that of 'finding' a region. The majority of my peers knew exactly which region they were going to work in, others had a number of choices and were unsure, whereas I knew where I was doing fieldwork but was not so certain what 'region' this was. Potentially, Rijeka can be located in a number of different regions: the Balkans, the Mediterranean, post-socialist states, Europe. My 'choice' to locate Rijeka in the anthropological region of 'the Balkans' was in the main determined by the fact that my research topic was that of 'ethnicity'.

¹⁴ Of the former Republics that constituted the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Slovenia is rarely included in the category of the Balkans.

to have the potential to impinge on the lives of those living outside of this Balkans. King and O'Brien (1947) write

The turbulent Balkans may be thousands of miles away in distance and even farther in customs and manners from the average Western home, but they are nevertheless a political and strategic frontier with which every man and woman should be familiar who is interested in permanent peace. The intelligent citizen of the Western world may know little of the Balkans' jumbled dynastic history in detail, but he cannot with safety remain unacquainted with the world forces at work there (King, and O'Brien 1947: 4).

Although the above examples come from an earlier era, it appears that this impression of the region has remained largely in place. For instance Whittaker (1999) offers

Now, for almost ten years, Yugoslavia has been the cockpit for the most sustained and vicious of internal conflicts. Nothing so terrible and barbaric has been seen in Europe since the worst of the Second World War, with an entire nation at each other's throats. This is an ethnic contest more elemental and savage than anything seen in El Salvador, South Africa, Cyprus or Israel. (Whittaker 1999: 94)

In 1991, when conflict broke out in the region the term "ancient hatreds"¹⁵ was initially employed to explain what was happening in the region. Here, commentators [particularly journalists] presented these wars as the result of an age-old enmity between the warring factions living there; thus both employing and reinforcing this notion of the troubled Balkans in their accounts. Todorova (1997), who argues against this trope on the region, makes the following statement:

"Balkanization" not only had come to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units but also had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian. In its latest hypostasis, particularly in American academe, it has been completely decontextualized and paradigmatically related to a variety of problems. That the Balkans have been described as the "other" of Europe does not need special proof. What has been emphasized about the Balkans is that its inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behavior devised as normative by and for the civilized world. (Todorova 1997: 3)

¹⁵ According to Allcock (2004), John Major first coined this term ancient hatreds in a speech at the outbreak of the conflicts.

In her argument against this perspective, she states that it is 'a convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that Orientalism provided, exempting the West from the charges of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism and Christian intolerance against Islam' (Todorova 1996: 21). And when one turns to examine the scholarly literature that concerns itself with the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, it is possible to see that this point by Todorova is one that has been widely received by scholars (eg Čapo-Žmegac 1996, 1999; Hayden and Bakić Hayden 1992) working on the region. In a similar vein to Todorova's argument, the majority¹⁶ of anthropological writing (eg Hammel 2000; Kideckel and Halpern *et al* 2000; Povrzanović *et al* 1996) on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia argues the point that the wars were not the result of ancient hatreds.

It is, I argue, extremely important to take a moment to fully recognise the context in which these scholars have challenged this perspective on the Balkans, and to consider how this has had an influence on more recent writing on the region. In order to oppose what was the hegemonic discourse on the Balkans of the time, [that the region was some form of less evolved other to the rest of Europe], scholars have taken a very determined starting position in the accounts they offer about the region. When challenging the ancient hatreds discourse, they have most frequently replaced it with the argument that these conflicts were the result of persons at the local level being animated into conflict by nationalist politicians¹⁷ engaged in nation-building projects. This line of argument is evident in the following statement by Denich (1994), who has argued that 'the transmittal of Serbian and Croatian nationalist ideologies

¹⁶ Although scholars (Allcock 2004; Kideckel and Halpern 2000; Verdery 1993) repeatedly point out that the latest conflicts after the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were not as a result of 'ancient hatreds', the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been described as 'an ethnic shatter zone' (Hayden 1994), and compared with Humpty Dumpty (Allcock 2004). Schwartz (1997) has criticised this image of an 'ethnic mosaic'.

¹⁷ Even though the discourse that these were nationalist conflicts is currently the hegemonic one, this is a position that has been taken to task by some scholars. Perhaps most vocally, Povrzanović has argued instead that it was the experience of conflict that has animated persons into conflict. In this thesis, I also question this perspective that these conflicts were 'purely' nation building ones.

from the intellectual sphere to that of mass politics can be seen as involving the manipulation of symbols with polarizing emotional content' (Denich 1994: 369). And it is also present in the writing of Halpern and Kideckel (2000)

As many essays note, despite all the problems besetting the post-Tito state and the traumatic history of Yugoslavia, *conscious efforts still had to be made to convince, and at times coerce, local citizens to murder their neighbours*. In scenes reminiscent of the Holocaust, some individuals resisted these pressures at their own peril. In this regard Bax points out the role of socio-economic competition, Bennett suggests the manipulation of sentiments of jealousy, and Lausevic considers the uses of rock music videos to whip up ethnic hatred and destructive urges (Halpern and Kideckel 2000: 18. emphasis added).

Here, scholars (e.g. Denich 1994, 2000; Hayden 1995; Halpern and Kideckel *et al* 2000) make the argument that nationalist politicians' created conflict between persons living in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the *basis* of ethnicity¹⁸. This fits in with a highly visible trope within wider scholarly writing that proposes the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism share an extremely close relationship, frequently conflated together in the term 'ethno-nationalism' (*cf* Tambiah 1997). Some scholars (e.g. Alonso 1994; Fox and Starn 1997; Herzfeld 1997) have argued that these concepts are so similar in form that it is often difficult to distinguish between them; whereas others (Hobsbawm 1992; Smith 1991) have made the point that ethnicity offers a 'ready-made' foundation for those engaged in nation-building projects. Such a line of argument is perhaps shown most clearly in the following statement offered by Hobsbawm (1992), where he writes that 'there are plenty of good reasons

¹⁸ Although scholars most frequently attribute the conflicts surrounding the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as being 'about ethnicity', the argument that this was not a conflict solely about ethnicity is becoming increasingly audible. The point made by Duijzings (2000) is an example of this, where he has argued for employing the more 'open and flexible' concept of identity. He cites Eriksen, where he writes '...we ought to be critical enough to abandon the concept of ethnicity the moment it becomes a straitjacket rather than a tool for generating new understanding' (Eriksen in Duijzings 2000: 22), and goes on to make the point that 'a more general and inclusive view is needed which allows us to be alert of lines of division other than the 'ethnic' ones' (Duijzings 2000: 22).

why nationalism thirsts for identification with ethnicity, if only because it provides a historical pedigree 'the nation' in the great majority of cases so clearly lacks' (Hobsbawm 1992: 4). In terms of the writing on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, scholars appear to consider that ethnicity has been the building block for the nation. Thus, in almost total opposition to the discourse that these conflicts were the result of primitive passions, they have presented them instead as being something that has been thoroughly organised and modern.

Yet, in a similar vein to how Fardon (1991) has argued that anthropological regions have guiding tropes, the field of nationalism studies is no different. In Jean-Klein's (2001) analysis of this field, she highlights the presence of a Jekyll-and-Hyde posture in terms of how scholars have approached the study of nationalism. In forms of nationalism that scholars consider to be animated by political centres there is the presence of a deconstructive approach, and in forms of nationalism that scholars perceive to be animated by the grass roots they take on a co-constructive approach. One effect, she argues, of the de-constructive or Dr Jekyll approach, which holds that persons are coerced into conflict by nationalist centres, is that such accounts tend to be ethnographically thin. In relation to the literature on the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, this is an extremely pertinent point. Even though much is written about the role of politicians¹⁹, or ethnic groups in their entirety, in the accounts of the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, there is an almost total absence of 'thick ethnography'. Indeed, another genre of literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has formed in reaction to this ethnographic thinness: that of the Croatian war narratives (Čale Feldman, Prica and Senjković *et al* 1993; Jambrešić Kirin and Povržanović *et al* 1996). Here, scholars set out to 'capture the moment' by

¹⁹ Even though scholars most frequently attribute the conflicts as being caused by the actions of nationalist politicians, there is an absence of ethnographic material about the practices of these politicians.

interviewing persons²⁰ involved in the conflicts. All the same, even though these Croatian war ethnographies go much further in recording the thoughts and feelings of persons involved in the conflicts, with their focus on wartime discourses and narratives, I suggest that there is again an almost total absence of ethnographic material on the practices of persons.

Explaining Conflict

When one turns to reflect upon why there is this absence of ethnographic detail in this body of literature, one immediate answer²¹ that comes to mind is that it is simply not logistically possible for scholars to engage in field research during a period of conflict, such as it was after the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is evident in Duijzing's (2000: ix) description of how he was unable to engage in the fieldwork he had previously intended because of the conflicts. Nevertheless, although this is a perfectly plausible argument for the absence of ethnographic material during a period of all out military conflict, it does not shed light as to why there is still a trend in the major part of this body of literature to produce accounts that are ethnographically thin. A 'clue', I suggest, lies in an opening statement that can often be found at the outset, or near to the outset of these recent accounts. In these texts, scholars set out to provide an explanation of *why* the conflicts happened. One can see that the most audible concerns within this body of writing (Bax 2000; Denich 1994, 2000; Hammel 1993, 2000; Hayden 1994, 1996, 2000), at least in terms of the volume, is as Halpern and Kideckel (2000) write, an investigation into 'the socio cultural processes directly related to the *causes* and nature of the conflict' (Halpern and Kideckel 2000: 4. emphasis added). Much of this literature attempts to explain *why* the dissolution of

²⁰ This focus on narrative is, I argue, the other side of the Jekyll and Hyde posture Jean-Klein (2001) draws out. These accounts set out to give a voice to the victims of the conflicts.

²¹ This was an answer I was given in a postgraduate seminar at the University of Edinburgh,

the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 'ended' in such bloody conflict, illustrated by Muršić's (2000) point that 'I offer what I hope is a rational explanation of why Yugoslavia fell apart' (Muršić 2000: 57).

When reading this body of literature one gets the over-riding impression that, in order to answer the question of 'why' the conflicts happened, scholars consider the conflicts to be an issue that needs to be 'solved' analytically. It would, however, not be possible to describe all of the recent literature on the region in this way, since exceptions can be found in Ballinger's (2003) account of Italians in Istria, Čapo Žmegac's (2002) account of refugees in Slavonia, and Green's (2005) account of a village in Northern Greece. And notably, in these accounts, scholars do not seek to explain the causes of the conflicts, but instead offer an ethnographic account of something seemingly quite unrelated, but at the same time highly relevant, to the conflicts. In fact, there does seem to be an apparent correlation between those accounts that have more ethnographic detail, and those that do not set out to explain the conflicts. What seems to confirm this is that of Bringa's (1995) account²² *Being Muslim the Bosnian way*, which also offers an ethnographically thick description based on fieldwork *prior* to the conflicts. Thus, it would seem that it is the presence of this explanatory move that has a tendency to produce an ethnographically thin account.

This ethnographic thinness is not the only issue I see with those accounts that set out to explain why the conflicts following the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia occurred. Another issue I see is that this line of analysis itself creates a distinction between times of conflict/division in relations and everyday relations. In trying to explain why persons have entered into conflict, or why neighbours became enemies, I propose that scholars

²² That Bringa's (1995) account stands out because of its ethnographic thickness is evident in Rihtman Auguštin's (2002) account of how lawyers and judges working at the Hague War Crimes Tribunal have engaged with this text.

are implicitly treating the presence of conflict and division in relations as something 'different' or out of the ordinary. This is particularly apparent if one holds, as I do now, this body of literature in a comparative position with other areas of anthropological interest, such as the project of kinship, which are seen to be a part of the everyday.

Traditionally, kinship has been seen as the study of the connections between persons, where from the earliest writing about kinship, it has been foregrounded as being a project where persons make connections. This is most visible in the terminology surrounding kinship: 'descent', 'alliance', 'affinity', 'kin ties' and consanguinity all infer a form of connectivity between persons. Other examples of this focus on connectedness are the genealogical diagrams with their circles and triangles that are portraits of the various ways in which persons connect themselves together as kin. But, as Schneider (1984) pointed out these accounts shared the same analytical starting point: that the most salient connection was that of procreation. Although his writing was something of a disjunctive moment in the anthropological project of kinship, the writing on 'new' kinship also focuses on how persons work 'making' kinship connections. The writing on adoption (Weismental 1995), shared feeding practices (Carsten 1995) and time (Weston 1991) have all served to reinforce the point that connections of kinship cannot be considered as being solely formed on the basis of procreation. Connections of kinship between persons can be elicited in other ways. Franklin and McKinnon (2001) write

Following the threads of Euro-American kinship strategies – from biology to blood to genes to codes to information – it becomes evident that in late twentieth century Euro-American cultures, the substantial-codings that might signify kinship include a diverse range of phenomena – including genetic disease syndromes, the "informatics" of computer programming, and family photography' (Franklin and McKinnon 2001: 11).

Yet, as Edwards and Strathern (2000) point out, the project of kinship is just as much about disconnections as it is about connections. Another feature about the anthropological project of kinship, is that it has a tendency to foreground the 'positive' aspects of kinship. Again, terms like 'affinity', 'alliance' or 'amity' and phrases like 'diffuse enduring solidarity' all serve to promote such an impression of kinship. Carsten (2000) has argued that 'although anthropological analyses have tended to privilege its positive and harmonious aspects, kinship is also about disconnection and disjunction – [...] (Carsten 2000: 24. Emphasis added). And although family should be about love, and mutual assistance; in practice this often appears quite the opposite. Peletz (2001) in his writing on ambivalence writes that

Regardless of what constraints have inhibited the theorization of ambivalence, it is clear that our analytic gaze needs to be focused not simply on official structures, ideologies, exegetic idioms, and public contexts but also on suppressed, submerged, and other alternative discourses that bear on the seamier side(s) of human nature and social relations, and that are in many cases articulated primarily in relatively private contexts or with reference to personal experiences (Peletz 2001: 424).

My interest here is not to enter into a discussion of the point about whether the project of kinship is based on amity or connections, but is instead to draw out the point that some scholars are required to highlight that kinship is as much about disconnections as it is about connections. In this body of literature, where connections are so clearly foregrounded, there is a notable absence when compared to the writing on the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is that one does not see scholars asking very often why persons are engaging in the project of kinship. Nor does one see scholars announcing at the beginning of their accounts that they intend to explain or understand why persons are engaging in the project of kinship. Instead, one gets the feeling that as an 'everyday practice' kinship is just something persons do.

One could not, however, argue that the question of 'why' is entirely absent in the anthropological literature on kinship. It does creep in at points. An example of this, I believe, can be found in a genre of literature closely connected to the study of kinship: that of property relations. Some of the literature on property relations has argued that property has an extremely salient place in the project of kinship. For instance, this line of argument is visible in Leach's (1971) insistence that 'kinship systems have no 'reality' at all except in relation to land and property' (Leach 1971: 305), Goody's (1962, 1983) writing that argues that kinship systems are formed around property, as well as in the writing by scholars such as Sabeau (1990), and Segalen (1984) who have all focused on the place of property in kinship relations. It is in this genre of writing that some scholars have offered the argument that the inheritance of property creates tension between kin. There appear to be one of two explanations offered by these scholars about the causes for this tension, where again one can see that when there is the presence of a tension or conflict in relations, which are in this case kinship relations, scholars feel the need to explain why this is happening. Firstly, they (e.g. Sabeau 1990) claim that the inheritance of property between kin creates tension because it brings persons together who have not seen each other for a long time. The second argument that these scholars make is that this tension is created because of persons desire to increase their share of the inheritance. For example, Segalen's (1984) suggestion that source of tension in family relations in Brittany comes from a desire to increase their share in the house. Once more the effect is an implicit analytical separation between the everyday and division/conflict/tension in relations, where when there is the presence of conflict scholars approach it as something that needs to be explained.

Conflict and Division 'in' the Everyday

The interest I have in highlighting the implicit separation that I feel is present in some of the literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is that this separation is problematic concerning the ethnographic account I offer in this thesis. Just as recent literature on the region has stressed that the conflicts following the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were 'modern nationalist conflicts', as opposed to ones of ancient hatreds, my initial choice of the concept of the 'everyday' was in reaction to the focus on conflict, and resulting ethnographic thinness, that I had observed in the literature. In order to be able to present an ethnographically thick account I was determined to 'avoid' conflict, so I could avoid engaging in this explanatory project. But, something I came across again and again during fieldwork was that conflict and division in relations was very much a part of everyday life in Rijeka: it could not be avoided. Indeed, as I describe²³ in this thesis, persons sometimes told me that argument in the everyday was the only way to do things sometimes. And according to what I observed in Rijeka, persons do not approach²⁴ conflict in relations as something they feel needs to be explained or resolved.

At the outset of field research, whenever I spoke to someone about the wars, or about any other form of conflict/discord/division that they said they were encountering in their relations, I would invariably ask them why they thought this was happening. Their reaction was not one of irritation as it had been when I had asked about whether Rijeka was in the Balkans or not. Rather, it was one of confusion that I was asking such a question, where they would most often look puzzled and say 'that is how we are' or 'that is how things happen

²³ This is particularly visible in Chapter Four in the way persons engage in the project of *papirologija*.

²⁴ I would like to state straight away that although persons consider conflict/discord/division in relations to be 'not out of the ordinary', they also consider it to be difficult, upsetting and makes them nervous. Thus, they consider conflict/discord/division in a similar way to the way anthropologists perceive it on a normative level, in negative terms.

here'. The only 'explanation' I heard in response to this question was a geological/biological one. The causal link made here was that the underlying rock formations in the region have some unique minerals embedded in them, which enter the drinking water through the water tables, and subsequently make persons more prone to conflict in their relations. The overriding feeling that persons presented, however, was that no matter how difficult it was, conflict/disharmony/division in relations was all a *part* of the everyday, and not something 'out of the ordinary'. As a result of this observation, I have been compelled to re-think the concept of everyday, and subsequently in this thesis widen it to include times of conflict and division in relations.

When one considers the concept of the everyday to include conflict and division in relations, I argue that in the case of everyday life in Rijeka, persons are themselves making a very clear conceptual distinction between relations where there is conflict and where there is no conflict. This further unsettles an analytical approach that makes a pre-determined conceptual separation between conflict and division and the everyday at the outset of analysis. By creating this distinction at the outset of ones analytical work, I suggest one is unable²⁵ to follow when and how persons determine themselves that their relations are in conflict. In terms of the way the scholarship on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has approached the concept of ethnicity I suggest that this is particularly pertinent. Implicit within this analytical trope that ethnicity has been a useful building block for nationalist projects scholars have started their accounts with the position that persons have *already* divided. Here, they posit that at the local level "ethnicity" was an already present

²⁵ The search for causality to the conflicts further compounds this issue, since any account that sets out to explain why persons have divided has implicitly acknowledged that division has already occurred. The effect again being that from the outset scholars are unable to follow how persons are dividing.

‘fault line’, where there is a tendency in these accounts to offer at most, if at all, only a few sentences to a description of “ethnicity”²⁶. For example, Bowman (1994) describes

The major nationalities can – for the most part – be differentiated in terms of religion and/or language: thus Slovenes are Catholic who speak Slovenian, Croats are Catholic who speak Serbo-Croatian (the ‘Croatian’ language is mainly distinguishable from the ‘Serbian’ by the fact that the former is written in the Latin script and the latter in Cyrillic), and Serbs speak Serbo-Croatian and are members of the Serbian-Orthodox church (Bowman 1994: 151).

And it is from this analytical starting point that scholars offer their accounts of the conflicts between the ‘Serbs’, ‘Croats’ and ‘Muslims’.

In Strathern’s (1996) account of *Cutting the Network* she has demonstrated that the act of stopping the flow or cutting relations is but a moment in everyday relationality. In order to

²⁶ The certainty visible to the concept of ethnicity in the literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is, I would argue, not so visible in wider anthropological writing on ethnicity. Scholarly interest in the concept of ethnicity has been particularly apparent after Barth’s (1969) call to consider it more in terms of a process of boundary maintenance, rather than as it had been until that time as a reified and primordial object. Williams (1989) has argued that prior to ethnicity the concept of race was a point of interest for scholars, and Cohen R (1978) has argued that on an evolutionary level, the concept of ethnicity comes between the concepts of tribe and class. However, since Barth’s (1969) influential writing on the concept of ethnicity, as Williams (1989) has argued, in wider anthropological theorising ethnicity has become ‘a lightning rod for anthropologists trying to redefine their theoretical and methodological approaches and for lay persons trying to redefine the bases on which they might construct a sense of social and moral worth (Williams 1989: 401). Visibly, though, the question of ‘what is ethnicity?’ still remains a point for considerable debate. Cohen (1974) has described it as a ‘variable’, and Comaroff (1998) has offered ‘there is still a notable lack of agreement on even the most fundamental of issues: what is ethnicity?’ (Comaroff 1998: 49). And when one takes Astuti’s (1995) account of the anthropology of ethnicity into consideration, it seems that anthropologists consider the concept of ethnicity to take quite on a number of quite different forms. She writes

Ethnicity has been seen as a basic and irreducible primordial attachment (*cf* Geertz 1973; Isaacs 1975); as a biologically evolved phenomenon (Van den Berghe 1981); as a form of kinship reckoning (Keyes 1981); as a dependent variable that only becomes salient under specific historical circumstances (*cf* Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Hechter 1986; Stack 1986; Vincent 1974); as cultural totemism (Schwartz 1982); as a phenomenon of boundary maintenance (Barth 1969); or as a case of “endurance” of a minority people within dominant nation states (Castile and Kushner 1981; Spicer 1980) (Astuti 1995).

be able to follow the significance of when relations are cut one must follow the ethnographic context in which this occurs. This entails taking a much more holistic ethnographic perspective, which does not solely focus on those moments when relations are cut or persons divide. By employing an analytical starting point that only focuses on division, which I suggest much of the recent literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia does, one has in one's own analysis stopped the flow. In effect, one is setting oneself up to potentially create division through one's own analytical work. It is as a result of the issues that I have discussed above that my intention in this thesis is to offer an ethnographic account that draws out how and when relations divide, which is set within the wider ethnographic context. And it is in doing so I make the argument that persons in Croatia elicit, enact, and divide their relations through engaging in debate over an object of shared interest: be it ethnicity, houses, documents, or gravestones.

Inherited Family Houses: Objects of Shared Interest

In order to draw out this debate, the ethnographic optic I initially take is that of inherited shared family houses, since in terms of the everyday interests of persons in Rijeka, inherited family houses command a lot of attention. Talk about these houses is more than audible in the cafes on the main pedestrian street *Korzo*, where one can often find persons speaking to friends about their houses, taking a rest from a visit to a lawyer concerning an issue about their house with a large folder of papers on the table, or steeling themselves with a drink and last minute advice from their companions in advance of a family discussion about the house. The amount of attention that these houses command is also more than apparent during the spring and summer time. Compared to the bustle and activity on *Korzo* on a weekday, the street can seem quite empty at the weekends. Whenever I asked someone where

everyone had gone, they would invariably say that they had probably gone to their family houses.

These houses are shared between a number of owners [up to 34 in one case], who are most often siblings, and in contrast to the flats that persons live in, they are property that has often been 'owned' by the family for a number of generations. During the 1940's, the Communist Party nationalised all property, where it became owned by the *narod* [people]. Anyone whom the Communist Party decided owned property in excess of their requirements had it confiscated, and divided up. In addition, anyone who the party felt has been collaborating with the fascists [or *Ustaša*] during the Second World War had their property confiscated. Thus, larger houses were divided into floors with separate flats, and tracts of land were taken from their owners by the Party, with new apartment blocks and skyscrapers built on them. One can often hear older persons reminiscing about how the part of the city where they live used to be surrounded by fields and meadows, where they say that because of all this building the climate has changed in the city. Their explanation being that the recently added concrete does not let the air circulate as it used to. Thus, for many persons, during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the only property that they owned was located outside of the city. These were houses that they had inherited from family or *vikendice* [weekend houses] that they had purchased. In the 1980's, this changed somewhat because persons got the right to buy their own flats. But it was not until the 1990's, that a law was passed in the *Sabor* [parliament] concerning the de-nationalisation of property, where 'on paper' property was returned to its previous owners. I write 'on paper' because even though this property was returned to its' previous owners, those persons who had been given the flats in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have retained the right²⁷ to live in them.

²⁷ Until recently, their offspring have been able to inherit this right.

Therefore, although other persons have become the owners of these flats, they are not able to visit, or use these flats, and therefore cannot take possession of them²⁸. In a fair number of cases, it is also unclear as to whom, or where, the owners actually are. After the end of the Second World War when the city had been united, or reunited [depending on whose perspective one takes], many persons who declared themselves to be Italian²⁹ left the city due to a fear of Partisan reprisals over their suspected role as collaborators with the fascists. Due to unsettled property claims between the current Republics' of Croatia and Italy, according to the current law on property ownership, Italian citizens³⁰ are not allowed to own property in the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, although those persons who left during the Second World War might be presently recorded as owners on the documents of these flats, they are not allowed to possess them. As well, I met a number of persons who owned only half their flat, or a few

²⁸ In the scholarly writing on property relations there has been some discussion about the distinction about the concepts of 'ownership' and 'possession'. Hann (1998) has made the point that a comparative analysis of 'property relations' is often tricky because of the differences in meaning surrounding the terms connected to property. He argues 'nuances such as the distinction between 'own' and 'possess' are notoriously difficult to render in other languages; there may be significant difficulties even in translating between related European languages' (Hann 1998: 6). But Strathern (1998) makes the potential difference between ownership and possession most explicit. She has argued 'a property relation may or may not be construed as one of possession, that is, an extension of or gathering into the self' (Strathern 1998: 217), and it is from this point that she goes on to propose

In English one can thus say thus say that all property claims engage relationships; only some are about 'relationships'. One can say the same for ownership: any property claim can be perceived as implying ownership (of rights, interests etc), but only some imply 'ownership' (possession, certain kinds of title, or whatever) (Strathern 1998: 218).

In Croatia, persons also make this conceptual difference between ownership and possession. To own [*budi vlasnik* – be an owner] is not the same as to possess [*usvojiti se*], which when translated literally is 'to draw into oneself'. Although owners talk of owning the house, where they have a *claim* of ownership to the house, they never refer to themselves as possessing it [*usvojiti se*]. This is a very important point for the account I offer in this thesis.

²⁹ The term given for persons who left Rijeka at the end of the Second World War and moved to Italy is '*Esuli*'.

³⁰ Citizens of Slovenia are also not allowed to own property in Croatia. This is because there are still debates about the payment of reparations due to lost property from the Second World War. One of the conditions for Croatia entering the European union is for these issues to be resolved. Recently the Croatian government has announced that it will pay reparations to Austria for the loss of property. Many persons disagree with this arguing that according to this logic Albanians should make a claim for reparation, since they are 'descendants' of the Illyrian's who lived in the area of what is now Croatia a thousand years ago.

rooms in their flat. Many of the changes that occurred when Rijeka was re-built after the Second World War have not been recorded in the land registry. A similar thing occurred in the 1990's, where once again a large number of people left Rijeka to go to live in other parts of the 'former' Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. One consequence of this is that a number of the buildings in the city are in a state of extreme disrepair, where persons say that since they are not owners of these flats, there is no point doing any work on them.

In comparison to how persons speak about 'their' flats in Rijeka, a point that they constantly made when speaking about their houses - and was not solely made by those persons whose houses I visited, but seemed to crop up whenever the topic of conversation would turn to such houses - was that such houses were the source of constant work. During the spring, I often spent time walking around the 'Uvala', one of the 'villages' where such houses are. Differing from the times I had been there in the winter, when most people were not there and the houses were shuttered and closed, there seemed to be scene of great activity. Some of the houses in the village had been damaged by the harsh winter that year, and almost every house had someone working on them. At some of the houses, the owners were working on the house themselves, and at others *majstori* [builders] hired by the owners were working on them. Whenever I spoke to someone, the topic of conversation would almost invariably turn to the inclement weather that had been that year, and when I asked them if their house had any *šteta* [damage], quite a few people said that they had, one neighbour telling me that it happened every year, and every spring he had work to do. But lots of neighbours said that it did not really matter that there had been such a bad winter that year, they would still have work to do offering that a house is never finished. This statement that houses were never finished was something that all persons say. Indeed, not once have I heard, when someone is speaking about their house, him or her state that they considered the work on their house to be *gotovo*

[finished]³¹. Even when a particular project on the house had ended, for example the building of a new floor, their owners would often outline the next project that they intended to embark upon.

This point, that houses were a place for work, was highlighted to me one weekend when I had gone to stay at Tara's house, where due to a national holiday, we had gone to visit her house for a long weekend. We had left Rijeka with her brother on the Wednesday evening, and her parents were to join us on the Friday. We had done nothing in terms of working on the house on Thursday, and on Friday. Except that we had spent, what was no more than half an hour, moving a pile of firewood from inside to outside of the shed. The wood had got damp in the winter, and Tara's brother had said we ought move it into the sun to let it dry out a little. Tara's parents were due to arrive at about seven in the evening, leaving Rijeka after her father had finished work. But at about three in the afternoon, whilst we were sitting outside of the house drinking coffee, their car pulled into the driveway. Having got out of the car, her father started to pick up some old sheets of newspaper that were on the grass beside where they had parked. And having picked up the bits of newspaper, he started to walk towards us, looking very displeased. 'What have you been doing' he asked us. 'This garden is full of rubbish. It is a *sramota* [shameful]. Have you done anything?' 'We moved the wood like you said we should' explained Tara's brother. 'Is that all?' her father asked. 'Yes, but it took us far longer than we had expected' Tara said. At this point her mother also appeared looking quite displeased. 'You have not been doing anything, have you?' she said. 'When will you realise that you have to work on houses? They cannot just be left alone'. A few hours later, I was sitting in the kitchen with Tara's parents, and Tara's mother started to explain why she had been so cross. 'A house always demands work. You can never relax when you have it.

³¹ This impression of houses as being a source of work is something that Bringa (1995) has pointed out in Bosnia, where she says that 'for many (if not most) people building a house was a life project' (Bringa 1995: 85).

Something always needs to be done', she told me. And as she was explaining this to me, her husband commented 'it's true what she is saying. A friend of mine once said to me that a house is never completed, once you have a house it is never finished'.

Asides from this point that houses constantly require work, another feature that one can hear persons make about such houses is that they make problems. The point that houses make debate and problems *u obitelji* [in the family] appears to be such a regular feature of everyday life, that when persons lament that they are having problems 'because of the house', those listening would react quite impatiently, saying that they did not understand why they were surprised with comments like '*što si očekivao?*' [What were you expecting?] or '*zar si mislio da ćete vi biti drugačiji?*' [What? You thought you would be different?], or '*to nije ništa novo*' [that is nothing new]. Indeed, such is the ordinariness of having problems because of the house, that it was those houses where there was no debate and no problems between the owners that were the focus of much interested scrutiny for others. Concerning such houses [where there appeared to be no problems], I would hear others comment that they probably did not have all the relevant information, where they often concluded '*nikad ne znaš što će se zaista dogoditi*' [you never know what is really happening]. Even young persons, who did not yet own a house, said that they were anxious about inheriting their 'family house'. Their argument being that there seemed to be no way to avoid such problems with their 'family' about the house. To confirm this, they would cite examples of their *obiteljska povijest* [family history], where members of their family were no longer on speaking terms because of a house. One man told me 'what worries me is that it seems inevitable to fight over the house, and I fear that I will have this argument with my sister one day. I don't want to, but I can't see how we will avoid this. It always seems to happen. My mother is not speaking to her sister because of this'. It is in the following chapter, Chapter Two that I set out to describe in much more the

work projects and problems surrounding these houses, and the salience of debate³² in the way that persons negotiate and enact their family relations. Concerning the work projects on the house, persons are constantly debating what work should be done, who should be doing it, and who has the right to make decisions about the work project on the house. In fact, I argue that this constant debate³³ creates an impression of movement.

At first, the point that these houses are a family project initially seems to fit in very closely with the majority of anthropological writing (e.g. Bahloul 1996; Bloch 1995; Birdwell Pheasant and Zanuiga 1999; Carsten 1997; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Levi-Strauss 1987; Pine 1996) on houses. Although not all anthropological accounts of houses focus specifically on the relation between houses and kinship (e.g. Gudeman and Riviera 1990; Keane 1993; Weiner J 1991), those that do, often describe these houses as being the most important site for the *production* of kinship relations. Carsten (2004) asks ‘why begin a book on new kinship with an exploration of the house? The answer I hope is obvious: because for many people all the different processes involved in living in houses, taken together, make kinship’ (Carsten 2004: 55). This is where there is a difference between this writing and the houses I describe in this thesis. Although these houses draw out particular relations as ‘family relations’, the laws of inheritance determine that for persons to inherit the house they must already be kin. This requires persons to work on proving they are kin, and subsequently work on proving that the relation of kinship was already present. Therefore one could not describe these houses as being sites where kinship is made.

³² Some evidence of analysis of this debate is already visible in the literature, where Jansen’s (2005) discussion on the debates on national numbers, Čapo-Žmegac’s (2002) account on the debates of Vojvodina Refugees, and Ballinger’s (2003) discussion of the debates over memorial sites are examples of this.

³³ It is because of the important role that debate has in animating relations that much of the ethnographic material I present in this thesis is in the form of a dialogue between persons. I have done this in order to draw out the form that these debates take.

Yet, the most salient difference I see between this writing on houses and the houses I present in this thesis is the way in which these scholars writing on houses consider them to be containers. For instance³⁴, Birdwell Pheasant and Zanuiga (1999) write ‘they [houses] often operate as unobtrusive, “natural” and self-evident containers of human activity, and frequently appear to be taken for granted by their occupants’ (Birdwell Pheasant and Zanuiga 1999: 9). Although these scholars consider the houses they describe to have a dynamic quality, they are only dynamic in the sense that their owners might move physically move them (Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995) or that they grow as the family grows (Bloch 1995). One feature I closely focus on in this second chapter is that the debate surrounding houses in Rijeka not only occurs when the owners are physically present at the house, but also whilst they are in Rijeka. Subsequently, it becomes apparent that houses are animating their owners whilst they are away from the house.

This feature is notable because it differs with the suggestion made in the literature that houses are like containers. One could not describe these houses as containers. Instead, these houses not only animate the debates between the owners, but as I discuss in detail in this chapter, they also set the form that these debates take. Latour (1997) employs the term ‘actant’ to describe actors that can also be ‘non-human, non-individual entities’ (Latour 1997). He defines ‘actant’ as ‘something that acts or to which activity is granted to others’, and this ‘can be literally anything, provided it is granted to be the source of an action’ (Latour 1997). I consider the houses I describe in this thesis to be actants. This point is critical in terms of the argument I present because I propose that no matter what the object of shared interest is, be it houses, documents, the Morčić or ethnicity, as an actant they give a form to the way the debates are enacted. The movement in these debates is not a haphazard one. And it is this

³⁴ Carsten and Hugh Jones (1995) also make this point that houses are like a container.

quality that they have as actants, I argue, that invokes a sense of repetition for the observer concerning the movement these debates take.

A Repeated Movement

In order to discuss this sense of repetition further, at this point an appreciation of the concept of 'scale' (Strathern 1991) is essential. She offers the example of the outline of the coast on a map. Even though one can change scale [as in take a larger or smaller scale] the points that make up the outline of the coast remain the same in form. One will not apprehend exactly the same image, because the change in scale, and thus change in perspective, results in information loss. In her account of '*Partial Connections*' she examines a number of different anthropological scales, and points out that one gains a sense of repetition in terms of the analytical moves that scholars make, as well as the positions they take. Similarly, I also argue that there is the presence of a repeated form to way that persons in Rijeka enact their relations, which is visible on a number of different scales. Evidence of the repeated nature of this movement in the debates is already visible in some of the literature. Green (2005) discusses this explicitly in her ethnographic account of the area of Pogoni on the Greek/Albanian border, but it is also implicitly visible in Hammel's (1993) writing on the movement of people in the region, as well as in his earlier writing (1972) on the *zadruga*³⁵ and his argument that the *zadruga* is a cyclical process. It is also apparent in the historiography of the region, and in fact is apparent in the way Rijeka has been divided and (re) united. But, I suggest that in order to fully apprehend the repetition that I perceive to be present in these debates that persons have over objects of shared interest, it is necessary to consider two points at the outset.

³⁵ As I discuss in much more detail in Chapter Six, *zadruga* are a form of household that are considered to be unique to the region.

Firstly, I propose that it is important to reconsider the concerted effort by scholars to negate the discourse on the Balkans that these conflicts were the result of ‘ancient hatreds’. One effect of promoting the conflicts as a modern nationalist conflict and as something ‘new’ to the region, is that one’s gaze is drawn away from observing this sense of repetition³⁶. In Jean-Klein’s (2001) writing on nationalism studies, she has pointed out the presence of a political correctness, which focuses the gaze of scholars in a particular direction. I suggest that in terms of the literature on the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia there is also an air of political correctness (*cf* Bennett 2000), since to argue that there is the presence of a repetition feels like a not very politically correct move. It could be taken as implying that the region is prone to conflict, one that appears to support the ancient hatreds theory. Yet, I feel there is a large difference between proposing that a movement is being repeated, and proposing that this repetition is because of primitive passions. And as I mentioned at the outset of this introduction, there were moments when persons resolutely said that Rijeka was in the Balkans, where as a concept³⁷ it did seem to be more present in some moments³⁸ than others. The nervousness everyone said they felt during the N.A.T.O. bombing of Serbia in 1999 was one such occasion. It seemed to be the only topic person’s spoke about, and one could not escape it wherever one went: the supermarkets, cafés, and shops all had the radio on playing the latest news of what was going on. When I would ask someone why he or she felt nervous, considering that Serbia is not so geographically close, they would often respond that it was ‘because we are in the Balkans, anything could happen’. This feeling of nervousness was also present during the summer of 2004 during the debates over international borders in

³⁷ Todorova’s work has I argue been immensely valuable in distinguishing between the Balkans as concept, and Balkans as geographical region.

³⁸ In Green’s (2005) discussion of literary descriptions of the Balkans, she says that some authors have described the region as being enveloped with a fog that lifts every now and then, which again creates an impression of movement. This movement is what I am describing here.

the Bay of Piran, or Bay of Savudrija³⁹. A number of persons around were extremely concerned about the prospect of there being a war with Slovenia because of the reported daily tussles between Croatian and Slovenian fishing boats about fishing zones. When I, again, asked why they were concerned, that it did not seem probable to me that war would start because of a small bay⁴⁰, they would say ‘that it was what we thought last time. This is the Balkans’. What I observed was a definite correspondence between those moments when persons were in agreement that Rijeka was ‘in’ the Balkans, and when there was the threat or presence of conflict.

The point I make here is that these moments when Rijeka became a ‘part of the Balkans’ are on one scale all a part of this movement to the debates that I intend to describe in this thesis. And in order to be able to follow the movement that these debates take, I suggest, one should reconsider conceptualising the Balkans in static terms, in terms of whether it denotes a ‘site’ of conflict or not. Instead I argue that, as Green (2005) has done, it is necessary to examine at what moments in everyday relationality the concept of the Balkans becomes meaningful, and is employed by persons themselves. Such an analytical approach not only allows one to see the movement concerning how persons in Croatia engage with the concept of the Balkans, and how they invest meaning into this concept, but it also affords one to apprehend the sense of repetition in the debates.

Shifting States Between Certainty and Uncertainty

This closely connects with the second point that, I propose, should be considered in order to be able to apprehend this sense of repetition to the movement in these debates around an object of shared interest. This is how should, as someone writing about them, approach

³⁹ This bay has two different names, which are applied depending whether the person talking about this bay considers it to be a Slovenian bay [Piran] or a Croatian bay [Savudrija].

⁴⁰ This bay is roughly the size of 20km squared.

these objects of shared interest analytically? Although this is a point I discuss indirectly in Chapter Three, through a description of the process of inheritance, it is one I examine now in detail through the optic of the literature on post-socialism. The proposal I make here is that instead of looking directly for the meaning in these objects of shared interest, one should follow how persons engage with, and are engaged by, them.

Many persons say that one consequence of the changes in ownership rights over the last sixty years in Croatia is that it has created total chaos. One man I spoke to compared it to being like an enormous ball of spaghetti, which could never be sorted out. Other persons expressed amusement at the recent funding given by the European Union to try to sort out the *katastar* [land registry], saying that ‘they’ had no idea what they were getting into. A feature that makes this sense of confusion all the more apparent is the fact that the laws on property ownership are amended by the *Sabor* [parliament]⁴¹ so frequently that lawyers complain that they themselves find the law on property ownership confusing. This point persons make that life is very uncertain is not solely directed at issues surrounding property relations. If anyone in Rijeka was to be asked the direct question of how they consider present life to be different in relation to the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they will invariably offer a narrative about the uncertainty of the present. Indeed, it is very difficult to be in Rijeka for any length of time, without hearing someone speak about the *situacija* [situation]. I had asked one person I knew, Šime, how it was going at his work, since he was working in the ‘state-owned’ boatyard Viktor Lenac. Viktor Lenac had been given a number of government-backed loans in order to try to save it, but this money never seemed to help. The boatyard was on the verge of bankruptcy, at least according to newspaper reports, and at the time everyone

⁴¹ This is evident by the weekly publication of the *Narodne Novine* [National Gazette], which is a document of about thirty pages of fine print outlining the changes that have been made in the law that week.

was debating whether it would [and should] be closed. Šime told me that the situation at work was extremely tense, and that he and his colleagues were beginning to 'lose their nerves'. He said 'the *situacija* [situation] is a nightmare, we are working without pay, and most people I know are so nervous that they are taking sedatives'. He had not been paid for a number of months, and was waiting for the day when the *država* [State] would announce they could pay the people working there. He explained, 'when we get paid, then I will resign. I am frightened that if I resign before I get paid, I will never see the money they owe me'. It was not only those who were working at the boatyard who said they were feeling nervous about the situation there. Quite a lot of the persons I knew were working for smaller firms, whose main client was the boat yard. They were also not being paid regularly because the boatyard owed their firms money, and were extremely worried that they might lose their jobs if the boatyard collapsed.

'Why?' I kept asking persons 'do you just not stop working?' Many gave the same response as Šime had done. If they resigned, then they had no chance of seeing the money they were owed. Others said that that they would resign if they thought their boss had 'stolen' the money. But they said they did not believe this, explaining that they could understand why there were not being paid; it was just how the *situacija* [situation] was these days. It would be possible to give numerous further ethnographic examples of how persons recounted the problems they had in *svakodnevni život* [everyday life] in terms of the *situacija* [situation]: from the man whose street name had changed and did not know what his address was anymore, to the person who went to work one morning to find his office had closed and his boss had 'disappeared'. These narratives would all 'say' the same thing: it is because of the *situacija* [situation] that '*ništa nije sigurno*' [nothing is certain].

This trope where persons consider uncertainty to be an ‘effect’ of the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a point that, to begin with, seems to fit in very closely with the body of anthropological scholarship that focuses on post-socialism. In this genre of writing, scholars (e.g. Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Hann 1993b; Hann *et al* 2002; Hann *et al* 2005; Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002; Humphrey 2002a, Mandel and Humphrey *et al* 2002; Verdery 1996, 1999;), point out that the end of socialism has resulted in much change in the lives of people in postsocialist ‘states’. In the introduction to a report by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology concerning a five year research project on property relations in postsocialist ‘states’, Hann (2005) writes ‘at any rate, hundreds of millions of people have been obliged to rebuild their lives under conditions in which, along with the norms of property, basic norms of solidarity and morality have been undermined or shattered’ (Hann 2005: 10). And scholars suggest that one consequence of this change is that of uncertainty, which is visible in Humphrey’s (2002a) account of everyday life in Russia. She writes.

A decade has passed since the end of the communist regimes in Russia and Mongolia and the disintegration of the structures that gave meaning to so many people’s lives. The collapse of party rule, the ending of full employment, massive inflation after decades of stable prices, a labyrinth of new and widely disobeyed laws, and the chasm of unbelief opened after the rejection of Soviet ideology all combined *to cast people into a state of radical uncertainty* (Humphrey 2002a: xvii. Emphasis added).

Like the narratives I heard about life ‘after’ the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the impression one gets from this body of writing is that persons living in these postsocialist times are now working to make sense of the uncertainty that this ‘change’ has brought about. In this body of literature, the concepts of ‘market’ (e.g. Humphrey and Mandel 2002 *et al*) and ‘money’ (Pine 2002; Verdery 1996) are perhaps the most widely discussed,

where one gets the feeling that persons are looking to make sense of these new concepts that have appeared after the 'end' of socialism.

But in the account I present in this thesis, I argue that although at points persons are seeking to create a state of certainty, according to the debates surrounding inheritance they are also, at other points, looking to create, and locate, uncertainty in these objects of shared interest. And indeed, when a person finds certainty, I argue that it is only a momentary state, since the actions and narratives of other actants creates uncertainty. I propose that what is visible in these debates surrounding the house, is that persons are constantly oscillating, or moving back and forth, between these states of certainty and uncertainty. This, I argue, contrasts with the movement that is visible in the literature on postsocialism, where scholars present a unidirectional movement in terms of persons working on finding certainty in a time of uncertainty.

This unidirectional⁴² movement of trying to make certainty out of uncertainty appears to fit closely with wider anthropological knowledge practices, where one could say that scholars are also working on presenting a form of certainty in their texts. This difference in movement between scholars seeking to find certainty, and between persons in Rijeka who oscillate between looking for certainty and looking for uncertainty, has been of considerable issue whilst I have been contemplating how to present an introductory account of everyday life in Rijeka. As someone writing an anthropological text on Rijeka I would like to start from a point of certainty. According to anthropological convention, finding certainty appears to be most often attained by forming, and thus presenting, one's 'understanding' around a set of fixed reference points that are meaningful for the persons one has spent time with. The

⁴² Burawoy and Verdery (1999) argue against seeing the transformation between socialism and post-socialism in unidirectional terms. Although I am making a similar argument in terms of not considering the movement between certainty and uncertainty as a unidirectional movement, I am also, I feel, saying something slightly different. This is that persons are not always seeking out certainty.

problem in this case is that although one can present the reference points that are meaningful to persons in Rijeka, the moment one tries to affix a certain explanation to these reference points, such as the Morčić for example, one's own account 'enters the debate'. Any of the parts of a 'traditional' anthropological introduction, such as an historical account of the region, serves to fix⁴³ these reference points, which in Rijeka would be the subject of considerable scrutiny and debate⁴⁴. In addition, the fact that there are there multiple potential meanings to these reference points means that if one chooses only one of them in order to present a certain account, one is highly aware that one has put to one side the other potential meanings. A consequence of one's 'understanding' or narrative about a reference point 'entering the debate' is that one loses one's sense of certainty.

For a long time, I have found it difficult to find a way as to how I could bring these two knowledge practices together in the form of an anthropological text. And it is in Riles's (forthcoming) discussion on failure that I have found the solution to this problem. Riles (forthcoming) has suggested that one possible method in which to resolve one's own analytical failures⁴⁵ might be to use the analytical tools that one's ethnographic subjects are using within and against one's own analytical tools. This is the technique I have employed in this thesis. As I draw out in Chapter Three, although persons in Rijeka have considerable

⁴³ In doing so I argue that the sense of movement from the debates surrounding reference points of interest to persons in Rijeka would also be lost.

⁴⁴ See Ballinger (2003) and Karakasidou (1997) for accounts of the debates over historical narrative in the 'region'.

⁴⁵ In Chapter Three I describe how I spent considerable time trying to understand how the process of inheritance worked. I tried to do this by trying to infuse a sense of certainty into the laws of inheritance, where I attempted to employ the Articles within these laws as static reference points from which to build a solid understanding, and subsequently solid narrative, of the process of inheritance. Not only did this attempt utterly fail, but also those persons who had observed my frustrated efforts dismissed it as being a pointless exercise. They argued that the salient quality of these laws was not what they meant, but how those persons who were making a claim on the house used them, and how the judge used them. What therefore I argue appears to be analytically meaningful for persons in Rijeka is the way that persons employ reference points, rather than what they 'mean'. Indeed, I suggest that persons are often working very hard to avoid making any potential reference points appear certain. My attempt to infuse the Articles in the laws of inheritance with a sense of certainty could be definitely counted as having failed.

interest in debating these reference points, their focus of analytical interest does not lie in affixing a certain meaning to these points of reference. Rather, the meaning that they invest into these reference points is dependent on the position that they have taken in the debate at a particular moment in time, and is often one that changes⁴⁶. During the time I have spent in Rijeka, I have heard the same person offering a number of quite contrasting, and often contradictory narratives about the same point of reference. I argue in this thesis that the interest that persons have in these reference points is to employ them as instruments in order to keep the debate, and thus their relations, animate. If, as someone writing on Croatia, one momentarily suspends one's own interest of forming an account as to what these reference points mean, one is able to gain an alternative perspective on them. By considering them in an opaque fashion, one can then follow how and when persons employ them in the debates in everyday life. For example, persons often employ their houses as a means with which to animate debate in their kinship relations. I suggest that it is through a detailed ethnographic analysis of when, and how persons in Rijeka engage with these reference points that their 'meaning' also emerges. For instance, I observed that the term Balkan was always more audible in everyday life during times of conflict, or potential conflict. It is from this 'understanding' that one is then able to re-turn to consider anthropological interests, and compare how this meaning relates to the way anthropologists engage with these concepts. This, I argue, entails taking a dynamic analytical approach to these reference points, where in

⁴⁶ Kolind (2002) has pointed out something similar in a summary that he provides of his preliminary findings from his fieldwork in Bosnia Herzegovina, that

Another preliminary finding is that the cultural categories and discourses people draw up when they are trying to rebuild meaning and ontological stability are not that consistent or homogenous when it comes to actual practices. People use the different discourses according to the situation, and what is seen as contradictions in relation to feelings and statements from the outside is not necessarily experienced as such (Kolind 2002: 10).

order to describe what they mean to persons, one has to follow ethnographically how persons animate them, as well as, how they are animated by them.

One example of what happens when one does this is the alternative perspective that one gains on the narratives that persons in Rijeka offer about life after the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The literature on socialism talks of postsocialism⁴⁷ as being a time of transition or transformation (*cf* Burawoy and Verdery 1999), and therefore creates an impression of change. Yet, although persons in Rijeka talk about the uncertainty of the present, they also say, and often *at the same time* that absolutely nothing has changed, frequently offering that ‘it is the same as before’. Indeed, I often heard when someone was saying that life in the present was so difficult and uncertain compared to life in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, others retort that they did not know what they were talking about because from what they saw nothing had changed. This discourse about things having not changed is particularly audible when persons are talking about the wars following the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Here, they often posit that the fact that nothing has changed whatsoever is proof of the futility of the conflicts. As one neighbour told me ‘when Croatia became independent I was sitting with some friends who were very hopeful things would change for the better. But I warned them; I said then that things could never change. At the time they were angry with me, but now they say I am right’. Some of the examples that persons gave me as evidence of how things had not changed were: ‘now it is better to be a Croat, and then you had to be a member of the party’, ‘now you have a cross on the wall, then you had Tito’, ‘now you must read the bible, then you had to read Marx’. Although persons say that the important reference points have changed in ‘name’, they also say that what you must do with them is the same.

⁴⁷ The prefix ‘post’ onto the concept of socialism also contributes to this impression of change.

This is an observation, which I suggest, engages directly with some of those discussions visible in the literature on post-socialism (e.g. Humphrey, Hann and Verdery 2002) about the ‘place’ of this term in this field of study. Humphrey describes how younger people have started to reject this term because they find it constricting, and offers that ‘if people themselves reject the category, we as anthropologists should not cling to it, but pay attention to whatever other frameworks of analysis arise from within these countries themselves’ (Humphrey, Hann and Verdery 2002: 14). Certainly, I would suggest that there is a form of ‘information loss’ (Strathern 1991) when one employs this term. It has an actant quality on one’s analytical gaze. By employing the concept of *post*-socialism one is already focused on difference, and one’s ability to apprehend similarity is restricted. Yet, if one makes the term opaque, one is able to observe that persons described the present situation⁴⁸ in relation to the ‘era’ of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as being different at some points, and also the same at the others. And it is then that one is able to follow ethnographically the movement as to how and when persons invoke this sameness and difference.

It is as a result of my intention to focus on the movement to the debates surrounding these reference points, or objects of shared interest, that I do not translate the concept of *narodnost* into ethnicity in the following chapters. This is in order to ‘purposefully’ keep it ‘opaque’, so that the reader is able to follow the movement as to where and when it becomes visible in the text. Another term I do not translate is that of *Papirologija* [paper-ology] in Chapter Four, in order to hold it in a comparative position with that of *narodnost*. I do

⁴⁸ I observed a similar sense of movement to when persons were invoking this difference and/or similarity between the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the present as there was with the way the employed the concept of the Balkan.

something similar with the other concepts⁴⁹ that I heard persons frequently employ, and are thus ones that frequently appear in this thesis. Nevertheless, I do translate these concepts with the intention of making it easier to read for speakers of the English language. In order, though, to make it visible that they are concepts that persons are using themselves I employ the signalling device of putting them in inverted commas and start them with a capital letter. Other words I have left in Croatian. My reason for this is so that readers who speak the Croatian language can see how I have translated⁵⁰ them.

With the intention of further outlining the form to these debates, in Chapter Four, I offer an account of the way persons work on their documents. This work I suggest is similar to the work on houses, albeit on a different scale. Again, although the work persons do on finding the documents they need initially appears haphazard, when one looks closely there is a form to this movement. Even though persons describe the project of *papirologija* [science of paper] as one of total chaos, they appear to know exactly what techniques and manoeuvres are needed to acquire the document that they want. In fact, they say they approach it like a science. One such technique is that of finding a *veza* [connection], who can assist in this project. As I describe, there are a number of protocols as to how one should approach finding a *veza* [connection]. Not only is it my intention in this chapter to draw out once more the actant quality that objects of shared interest have, which is in this case are documents, but I also consider the distinction between the ‘State’ and ‘Civil society’ that is sometimes present in anthropological scholarship. Like anthropologists, persons in Rijeka are both looking for, and invoking this difference when working on their documents, and I argue that when persons are invoking the ‘State’ in a causal fashion they are doing something. This I suggest is salient

⁴⁹ Some examples of such concepts that are frequently visible are ‘*dokaz*’ [evidence], ‘*svađa*’ [argument], ‘*pravo*’ [right]

⁵⁰ The meaning that one invests into a word through the act of translation can animate debate. By leaving the original Croatian in the text I am showing my explicit position.

to those accounts in the literature on the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that suggest political centres and the 'State' have animated conflict. Once more, the ethnographic context in which persons invoke the 'State' in this way needs to be thoroughly examined.

One critical feature about these debates in every day life is the salient role that observers have in animating debate. Concerning the debates surrounding shared family houses, the owners would spend much time discussing how such observers would read the house, and interpret their claims to the house. As I describe, the potential readings of these observers are a critical catalyst for debate between the owners. This interest persons have in what 'outside observers' think is not only present at shared family houses, but is something that I have frequently experienced during the time I have spent in Rijeka. When I first arrived one of the most frequent questions that persons asked me was 'what do you think of Croatia?' I never knew what to say when someone asked me this, because I found that no matter what I said, my answer would provoke debate. If I gave a list of the positive qualities of Croatia, then they would tell me that I had not lived long enough in Rijeka to know what it was really like. If I took the other tack, and responded to them that I saw there were some problems, then those listening would tell me – more or less politely - that I was a colonialist and like all the rest from the '*Zapad*' [West]. I soon learnt that whatever answer I gave the person who had asked this question, they wanted to debate my response. At first, I did not really 'understand' why persons would always want to debate my response, and it was during the time I spent in the graveyards that it became clearer. It was here that I observed this role that observers have in animating debate most clearly, and is something I discuss in detail in Chapter Five through a description of funerals and the day of *Svi sveti*⁵¹.

⁵¹ This is a national holiday, All Saints Day [October 31st]

Undoubtedly, this salient role that observers have in animating debate has a number of implications when undertaking anthropological research and analysis in this particular ethnographic setting. The first is that of the need to apply discipline in order to avoid being drawn into the debates present in the field. Riles and Jean-Klein (2005) write of the need for scholars to apply discipline so as not to be drawn into engaging in the projects that persons in the field would perhaps choose for them. I would argue that it requires considerable discipline to avoid getting drawn into the debates in this particular field of relations because this interest persons have about what observers think has an almost magnetic quality. Indeed, I would suggest that one gains a sense of repetition⁵² in the literature concerning the debates that one encounters in the field. Some scholars writing on the region (e.g. Cushman 2005; Rihtman Auguštin 2002) have also made a similar point concerning this sense of repetition⁵³ in the literature.

⁵² Despalatovic (2000) makes the observation that scholarly associations on the region appear to have become fragmented on 'national lines', and the description by Povrzanović (2000) of an American scholar's visit to the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb seems to attest to this point

Disappointment soon became mutual and turned into mutual irritation. For the American scholar we became just another bunch of Croats, technically colleagues but predictably other in their partiality and their pathetic need to prove that Milosevic's politics caused the war. For us he became yet another arrogant Westerner who "wanted to know" but reduced local scholars to readily accessible, polite, English-speaking natives (perfect informants!) whom he talked with only to confirm well-known explanations whilst complying with his funders' condition of "meeting people from both sides (Povrzanović 2000: 152).

It is not only, however, I suggest that one gains a sense of repetition in that scholars have appear to have divided in a similar way to persons themselves. As well, the positions and points for debate seem familiar.

⁵³ This sense of repetition is also visible in wider anthropological scholarship, where both Jean-Klein (2003) and Riles (2000: 5) have made the point that scholars are sometimes engaging in a similar kind of analytical work as their 'informants'.

Some Methodological Implications

Another point about observers is that their observations also animate considerable debate. During the time I spent at family houses, persons would often describe the questions of neighbours as a form of *provokacija* [provocation]. I argue that a similar reaction is visible in terms of the debates about ethnicity in Rijeka. As I draw out in the following vignette, I soon learnt, when I was directly engaging with the concept of ethnicity in my field research, that my questions would often provoke much debate amongst the persons present.

‘So what exactly is your research about?’ asked Vlatka. Vlatka was the cleaner in a restaurant, where I had been waiting to meet someone I had wanted to interview. I knew her very well, and during a quiet moment she had come and sat down at the table where I was. ‘Well I guess it is about *narodnost*’ I told her. ‘Aha, you need to know what *narodnost* people are?’ she asked. ‘I am Catholic’ she said. As she said this Matko, a waiter working at the restaurant, was passing and asked ‘what is this Vlatka, you are Catholic?’ ‘She needs to know about *narodnost*, and I am helping’ Vlatka replied. ‘Well saying you are Catholic does not help, that is what religion you are, not your *narodnost*’ Matko said. ‘It is the same thing’ said Vlatka. ‘No it is not’ Matko replied. ‘It is whether you are a ‘Serb’, ‘Croat’ or ‘Slovenian’.’ ‘Yes, but it is the same thing’ said Vlatka. Matko became quite irritated with Vlatka’s insistence that this was the same, and as he was remonstrating with Vlatka, one of the owner’s of the restaurant joined us. ‘What are you arguing about’ he asked. ‘*Narodnost*’, said Vlatka. ‘I won’t have *politika* [politics] in my restaurant’ he announced. ‘We are not arguing in that way, we are arguing about what it is’ Matko explained. ‘That is simple’ he told us. ‘It is whether you are a Catholic, Orthodox or Muslim’. ‘It is bloody not’ said Matko. ‘What did you declare yourself as being? That is *narodnost*’. ‘Oh well, then I am Croat’ said Teta. ‘Is that what you wanted to know?’

This role that observers have in animating debate has a number of methodological implications. In particular, one should I suggest, as a researcher, be extremely aware that one's own line of questioning can animate debate between persons.

One more methodological implication for this ethnographic context concerns the practice of interviews, where asking persons for a narrative on something is extremely problematic. By asking someone for their thoughts on a particular issue, one is, as the interviewer, instantly positioning them into the role of observer. As Keane (1993) has pointed out, when persons speak about their houses they are doing something, rather than solely offering a description of their house. Many persons found taking this position of observer to be an incredibly vulnerable and risky move, and would be immensely hesitant about being interviewed. When I used a Dictaphone in an interview setting, the person I had interviewed would, without fail, telephone later on to make sure I had destroyed the tape, often saying that if what they had said got into the newspapers their house would be mined. I had naively assumed that as I spent more time with persons during fieldwork they would become less hesitant about being interviewed, and would be more trusting of the confidentiality of their interviews. But I found that this not to be the case at all, in fact their hesitance became much more pronounced as time progressed and they came to know about my personal relations in the field. No longer was I an outsider but had clearly got my own connections in the field, connections whom sometimes they personally knew. For this reason, towards the end of this research I ended up abandoning the practice of making interviews⁵⁴, and concentrated on participant observation. The material I have gained from interviews has been immensely useful, but again I have had to discipline myself to be aware that the interview context is an active process in the way persons are presenting themselves and their relations.

⁵⁴ The material I have used from interviews comes from the outset and middle of fieldwork.

This hesitance, which I encountered when asking persons for interviews, is an issue that I focus on indirectly in Chapter Six, where I describe what happens when houses are divided. There were points in the debates that I observed surrounding family houses when persons said that they were very close to entering into a *svađa* [argument] with another owner. In Rijeka, persons make a very clear distinction between the concepts of debate [*rasprava*] and argument [*svađa*]. As I trace, when persons enter into an argument they are no longer debating an issue of shared interest, where they might move their position⁵⁵ within this debate. Rather they say that in an argument they are ‘taking a stand’ and remaining ‘fixed in one position’ in relation to whatever the object is of shared interest. Often persons declare at this point that they are going ‘to show themselves’, where this is frequently the moment where relations are cut, and the house is divided. It is here where persons become most visible as individuals, and it is this moment that one could describe as being the point when the house becomes Balkan. It is when relations are cut and the house divides.

In order to appreciate this, I suggest, it is extremely important to not make a conceptual difference between the house and its owners at the outset. Much of the writing on houses, and property relations does this, whereby scholars consider the house and the owners to be ‘separate’ from one another. However, some scholars writing on houses (Weiner J 1991) have questioned this separation between persons and things. And Pottage (2004) writes in the introduction of a collection of essays on legal techniques that they are all ‘concerned to apprehend legal and social action without presupposing a categorical division between persons and things’ (Pottage 2004: 1). This analytical starting point, where the distinction between persons and things is collapsed, in order to then examine the techniques that persons use to find a distinction between the ‘persons’ and ‘thing’ is critical in terms of the account I offer in

this thesis. Indeed, I suggest that the only point when persons possess the house is the moment when the house is divided, and like the concept of certainty being a momentary state so possession is only temporary. This momentary possession where persons are certain they possess the house is visible in the narratives of observers. The absence of debate, and thus absence of movement, results in a moment of seemingly clarity, which is more than audible in the accounts neighbours offer about houses where the owners are in an argument. Again, the role of observers in recognising that the owners are in an argument is critical. It is this recognition, particularly by judges in the court, which I argue is critical in cutting the relation.

In Chapter Seven, I finally turn to explicitly engage with the concept of *narodnost*. It is at this point where I draw out ethnographically how I perceive the way persons engage in debates over the concept of *narodnost* to share a similar form to the way persons engage in the project of shared family houses. It is here where I use the account I have offered of the house, and of documents, as a framework for this account on the debates surrounding *narodnost*. In doing so, I describe how and where I feel these accounts fit, and argue that although there appear to be a number of similarities there is one seemingly pertinent difference. Asides from those times when my questions about *narodnost* provoked debate, persons were most of all working extremely hard to avoid debating this concept. This, they said, was because when they were drawn into such debates, they were apprehensive that it could very easily become an argument because it was *politika* [politics]. Throughout this thesis, the reader will observe that persons in Rijeka consider the concept, as well as engaging in the practice, of *politika* [politics] in thoroughly negative terms [in the normative sense]. Indeed, as I discuss in this chapter, most persons consider *politika* [politics] as being ‘the root of all evil’.

Within the main body of literature on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, this unwillingness to engage in *politika* [politics] is not very visible. But in

Povrzanović's (2000) argument against the trope that persons were manipulated into conflict by political discourses, she also describes how this project is something that persons were working to avoid⁵⁶. In this thesis, I also question this trope that persons were manipulated into conflict by discourses from political centres. But, from the description I offer in this chapter about when persons employ the concept of *politika* [politics], I propose that considering politics in a way that implies 'formal' or 'official' politics is restrictive. Verdery (1999) in her discussion of dead body politics in postsocialist 'states' writes that

Politics is not restricted to the actions of political leaders but can be engaged in by anyone, although such actors often seek to present their goals as in some sense public ones. That is, some of the work of politics consists of making claims that create an issue as a "public" issue (Verdery 1999: 24).

Like Verdery's (1999) description of politics⁵⁷ in postsocialist states, where she argues that politics is a practice that anyone can engage in, I make the argument from the way persons employ this term that the project of *politika* [politics] is a practice that in Rijeka anyone can

⁵⁶ This point is also visible in the genre of writing of Croatian War Ethnographies.

⁵⁷ There is initially also a seemingly similar movement to Verdery's (1999) dichotomy of 'public'/'private', since persons often say that *politika* [politics] is the practice of 'showing oneself'. Although Shreeves (2002) has discussed the concept of public/private in the context of post-socialism, and argues that it has a specific meaning in this particular context I am uneasy to employ it concerning the unwillingness of persons to engage in the project of *politika* [politics] in the context of Rijeka. This is because persons in Rijeka do not employ this distinction very audibly, or frequently. Persons in Rijeka do not talk about their hesitancy to engage in this project because it places them in the 'public' sphere, but instead because of the way it changes their relations. Another distinction that is very similar to the 'public/private' distinction in the literature on post-socialism is that of 'formal/informal' spheres of economy. One can see a wealth of writing (e.g. Humphrey 2002a; Verdery 1996; Kaneff 2002) in this body of literature on the practices of persons in the informal sphere of economy, where persons also display an unwillingness to engage in the formal sphere of economy. However, recently, Rasanaygam (n.d.) has questioned the efficacy of 'dual economy models'. He writes

It is just that dual economy models as they have been applied to socialist or post socialist societies tend to focus on the nature of the activities themselves, attempting to identify certain activities as taking place within a field of state regulation and others as existing outside of it. However, this is *too static an approach* to account for the lived reality of how enterprises, households and entrepreneurs actually operate in Uzbekistan (Rasanaygam n.d.: 22. Emphasis added).

From my observations of everyday life in Rijeka, I would argue a similar point in terms of this approach being too static. As I discuss in Chapter Five concerning the way persons work on their documents, the divisions between 'domains' constantly changes where persons themselves are looking for them.

engage in. It is a project that most often appears to result in persons entering into an argument, and cutting their relations. As I describe in this chapter, now – ten years after the conflicts – it is a practice that persons in Rijeka wish to avoid by avoiding engaging in debate over the concept of *narodnost*. One could say that persons no longer⁵⁸ have the same level of interest in *narodnost* as they did ten years ago.

A Slippery Quality.

One term that is sometimes visible in anthropological literature is that of ‘slippery’ and the sense of constant movement definitely gives the region a slippery quality. In the concluding chapter I consider this slippery quality further, where I compare these two sets of knowledge practices concerning debate. I suggest that this slippery quality comes from the apparent similarity to these debates, but building upon what I have mentioned earlier in this introduction, when one holds up Croatian knowledge practices and anthropological practices in a comparative position there are a number of apparent differences. Both fields engage in debate, but the way the debate is enacted is not the same, and neither are the points of interest. In terms of positionality, in the field of anthropology, scholars are expected to both take and show their position at the outset of the debate; whereas I suggest that in Croatia declaring ones position and showing it clearly is the way in which persons transform a debate into an argument. It is the method by which persons cut their relations. Although there are other

⁵⁸ It is extremely important to highlight the point that the majority of this fieldwork was carried out in Rijeka, and to point out once more that there was no ‘direct’ conflict in Rijeka following the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Concerning the point that persons consider Rijeka to be specific, as a result of it being so mixed, many persons say that persons in Rijeka do not have the same interest in finding difference on the basis of *narodnost* as in other parts of Croatia. They also say that the way persons engage with the concept of *narodnost* is specific in Rijeka. Although, I was ‘based’ in Rijeka for this fieldwork, and spent most of my time in Rijeka, the majority of the houses that I visited were in areas where there had been direct conflict. Notably, persons in the ‘villages’ where these houses were appeared to be much more interested in the concept of *narodnost* than in Rijeka. However, although they were more frequently audible I observed that the debates [and arguments] in these ‘villages’ about *narodnost* took on the same form as the ones in Rijeka.

differences, as well as similarities, that I discuss further in the final chapter, this observation that taking a position is the way to initiate an argument has had been influential on the way I have approached writing this thesis. For a long time, it has felt as though I have been writing 'back to front'. An anthropological introduction, where one is expected to show one's position, is from the perspective of Croatian knowledge practices more of a concluding act – albeit a temporary one. Similar to the project of *politika* [politics] it is a way of cutting relations. To present a narrative in this way – especially in the medium of a document – is, from a Croatian perspective, a move that could be described as one of 'throwing down the gauntlet'.

One 'effect' has been that the text in the following chapters takes on a fragmented form. In my endeavour to 'hold' relations that appeared to be constantly moving and changing still, I have inserted numerous subheadings into the text. Like the reference points, or objects of shared interest, that I describe in this thesis, I would suggest their actual content, as in what they actually say, is less meaningful than what they serve to do: hold the text still. It is possibly preferable, at least in terms of presenting myself as having complete authority over the text, to describe these sub-headings as a stylistic device: as an immediate example of how one's own analytical techniques can cut into the flow of relations in one's ethnographic material. This would, however, not be the most accurate description concerning their presence. A much more precise description is that like the objects of shared interest persons engage with and work upon, this text has taken on an actant quality whilst I have been writing it. The effect of presenting relations, and showing the positions of persons in Rijeka, has animated me into fragmenting the text. Once again, I suggest that it draws out the magnetic quality of the debates in the field, and the need to be disciplined in one's anthropological project.

Discussing the House

'Different' Houses

I was often struck when visiting coastal villages by the different architectural styles of the houses in these villages. Not one house looked the same as the others, where they were of all shapes, sizes and colours. Some were very tall and thin, and had a number of floors, others were very compact and box like in shape, and yet others were almost sprawling. Each house had a different style of roof, where some had square concrete roofs, others had terracotta tiled v-shaped roofs, and others had long black tiled roofs that almost touched the ground. Again, there was a wide variety to the colours of the façades of these houses: some were blue, some yellow, some red and some white. Whenever I pointed out this impression of 'difference'⁵⁹ to someone who lived in one of these villages, they explained that these different architectures reflected the region that the owners 'came from'. Here, they described how a large number of persons had brought land in the last fifty years, and built new houses in the style of architecture of the region from where they came, rather than in the architecture of the region where the houses were situated.

One also gains an impression of variety⁶⁰ when one enters the interiors of such

⁵⁹ Often when I offered this observation of 'difference' to persons in these villages, they complained about it, telling me that their village no longer looked like a 'typical' [*tipičan*] coastal village. Many persons told me that there were features typical of particular regions in Croatia. For example, I was told that houses in the mountainous region *Gorski kotar* have very long metal roofs, which almost touch the ground to protect the house from snow in the winter. Often, the inside walls of these houses are covered in a wooden panelling, and here people made the distinction between panelling that is placed on the walls in a horizontal or vertical fashion; horizontal panelling being a feature of houses from this region. Older houses along the coastal areas in the northern part of Croatia, *Kvarner* are often made of stone that is sometimes covered in a white façade. The 'correct' colour for shutters and external woodwork on these houses should be either green or blue, since persons said these are the colours of the *Primorje* [coastal area].

⁶⁰ It is because of this that, I suggest, it would not be possible to provide a description of 'family houses' in the same way, as Littlejohn (1967) has, for example, offered of an account of the *Temne*

houses. Although most of the houses I visited had a kitchen area, which was often the living area as well, a bathroom and bedrooms, the way these rooms were arranged was different in every house. Again, when I pointed out this difference, persons would frequently reply that this was '*normalno*' [normal] telling me that each house is *specifičan* [specific] to the family who owned it.

Debate: A Defining Feature

Yet, one feature shared by all the houses I visited (and shared by those houses I heard about in Rijeka) was the debate. The 'topic' that animates debate between the owners concerns the work projects that either they are planning to undertake, or are actually carrying out on the house. This is a topic which they discuss irrespective of whether they are either actually at the house, or away from the house in Rijeka. My principal interest in this chapter is to describe these debates ethnographically. The argument this account makes, I suggest, is that persons are constantly looking for difference in their interests. It is this point that I then take to some of the anthropological writing on houses.

Telephone Calls

I had gone to Mima's house to get some books, which she had said might be interesting for my '*rad*' [work]. When I rang the doorbell to her flat, she had beckoned me inside whilst speaking on a portable telephone. She pointed to me to go to her kitchen, and I

house. Nor would it be possible to describe the spatial arrangement [cf Vom Bruck 1999 for a discussion of this point] of these houses in the way Bourdieu (1990) has described the Kabyle house. In all of the houses I visited, there was no pattern to the way these rooms were organised. Persons kept pointing out the 'difference'. For instance some persons had summer kitchens in the 'garden' of the house, whilst others did not. Jonsson (2001) has argued in his analysis of houses in Mein, that 'houses and households point to divergence, tensions and transformations, so it is counterintuitive for a historical analysis to propose an entity such as the 'Mein house' as a shorthand for a uniform society (Jonsson 2001: 645). This is very similar to the houses I describe in this thesis, in that they point to the 'difference'.

went and sit at her kitchen table. The conversation she was having was quite a heated one, and after some time, she finished the telephone call, telling me that she was having problems with her sister. 'Again we have problems because of that house. We were going to do some *radovi* [work] on the house this spring, but again she has changed her mind. It is always like this', she explained. She owned a house with her brother and her sister, and had mentioned previously that it was just one *stvar* [thing] after another, explaining that if she was not having problems with her sister, then she was having problems with her brother.

She started to make some coffee, and whilst she was doing this, she said, 'you know, I ought to phone my brother and tell him what is happening. It will only take a minute'. With this, she went into another room to make the phone call, and after a few minutes she came back into the kitchen. 'He will phone her now, but say that he has not spoken to me. It will be interesting to hear what she says to him', she said. A little while later, whilst we were drinking coffee, and she was explaining the books she had found for me, the telephone rang again. The telephone call lasted for some time, and afterwards she explained that it had been her brother, 'they have had an argument. My sister says she knows that he is on my side about the works. She is claiming we pressurised her into deciding something that she did not want'. Mima was extremely frustrated by this point, explaining that they had met numerous times to discuss the work, and that in her mind her sister had agreed quite willingly that the work needed to be done, 'all winter we have been speaking about this, and now she changes her mind, just a few weeks before the works are supposed to start'. A little while later, the telephone rang again and after quite a short conversation Mima ended the call. 'My brother', she sighed, 'now we all have to meet up again tomorrow to talk about this again'.

I witnessed a similar scene quite a number of times, where whilst visiting someone at their flats, another owner of their house would phone with a point or query about the work on

the house. This always seemed to set off a flurry of phone calls between the ‘owners’ of the house, either to tell another ‘owner’ what had happened, to exchange information about who was saying what, or to discuss a plan about what to do.

Obiteljski Ručak [Family Lunch]

Such telephone conversations would often lead to the *odluka* [decision] that the owners should meet up to discuss the house. Frequently, during the week, persons would mention ‘in passing’ that at the weekend, they had *Obiteljske obaveze* [family obligations] where they had to go to an ‘*Obiteljski ručak*’ [family lunch]. These lunches were either held at someone’s flat, or at a restaurant, and were normally for a ‘special’ occasion such as a national holiday [for example, Christmas], or because another relative had come to visit Rijeka, or because someone in the family was celebrating something like a birthday. Discussing the house was another reason that persons gave for holding or attending a family lunch, and no one ever spoke about the prospect of such a lunch with any sense of enthusiasm⁶¹. Often they would comment that they would have to *izgubiti se* [lose] their Sunday afternoon ‘debating about the house’, and would air the worry that this *možda bi se moglo pretvoriti u svađu* [could turn into an argument].

At one such lunch that I attended, the meal passed without any mention of the house, although afterwards some persons said that they had been nervous throughout the whole lunch because they knew the conversation was coming. The persons sitting at the table had been discussing various relatives, and what they were doing, as well as what was happening at their places of work. It was not until after the meal had finished, and everyone was drinking coffee that one ‘owner’ mentioned the house, with the ominous phrase: ‘What should we do about

⁶¹ A number of persons said that it was better to have such a lunch in a restaurant, rather than at someone’s flat because it was a neutral place. Another favourable point that I heard about having such a discussion in a restaurant, was that since it was a public place, the argument could not get too out of hand and persons would have to control themselves.



the house?'. The opening point in the discussion about the house had been whether the house should be rented out to tourists during the following summer. Some of the 'owners' suggested that if it was not to be rented out to tourists, then they wanted to make some repairs on the structural parts of the house, such as putting a new roof on the house and repairing some of the cracks that were appearing on the façade of the house. Those, who wanted these repairs to be carried out, argued that this structural work needed to be done with the money that had been earned from letting out the house during the previous summer. Others, however, were not concerned with these structural problems, and wanted to do work inside of the house. For example, one person wanted to change the new tiles on the floors, whilst another wanted to buy some new items of furniture. These divided interests about what work should be done on the house, resulted in quite heated discussion between those present, where those attached to each plan defended their positions quite rigorously. This they did on the basis of who was an owner, and who owned the most percentage of the house. One of the 'owners', Neno, who owned more of the house than the others, had been particularly keen on the idea of putting new tiles on the floor, and had as well been completely *protiv* [against] the idea of letting the house out in the summer. 'Listen, I have a larger part of the house than all of you' he explained, 'so I have more *pravo* [right] to decide' he said. 'Well, if you own more of the house, then you should be paying more for the work' another owner, Maria retorted, 'and that is not true exactly, because you only have one quarter of the house, so we could have more 'Right' if we join together'.

After some time, where those who thought the house should be rented out, explained the benefits of renting out the house to tourists, Neno accepted. He did not accept this decision in an enthusiastic tone, saying that he only agreed because he did not want to be 'the one who made problems'. After this decision had been made, the rest of the conversation was spent discussing in what way the house should be rented out: should rooms be rented out either

individually, or should the entire house would be rented out to an agency? Again, this was a point for considerable discussion, where in the end the ‘owners’ agreed to disagree for the time being. As we were leaving the restaurant, one owner mournfully said ‘this will not be the end of it’, and when I asked her why, she said that she was sure Neno would change his mind. She told me that it was absolutely *bez smisla* [pointless] to prepare the house for tourists, because she could see he was only in agreement *momentalno* [momentarily].

I observed that persons were constantly discussing their houses in this way with the other ‘owners’: either on the telephone, at family lunches, or during visits where someone would say that they had gone to another owner’s flat for the specific reason to *pričati o kući* [to talk about the house].

Radna Akcija [A Working Action]

When persons had agreed about the plans for a particular work project, and a date had been set for when this particular project would be carried out, most frequently the whole ‘family’, would go to help. Working parties would consist of the ‘owners’, and their spouses, and children if they had them. Friends did not attend these working weekends, with many persons saying that this was an *obiteljska stvar* [a family thing]. Again, persons I knew well would comment that they were extremely unwilling to go, describing the prospect of going to work on the house in a tone of dread. They made remarks such as that they had spent the whole week working, and now would have no chance of relaxing at the weekend, or that they were worried that the debate could get out of hand and there could be a *svađa* [argument]. When I asked them why they went, if they were so unwilling to go, they would invariably say that they did not want problems *poslije* [later on]. ‘If I don’t go, then I won’t have the right to say anything about what they have done’, one man told me, ‘it is better I go, and put up with them. Also then I won’t have to hear for the next year about how I did not go. My sister will

remind me of this all the time'. Another woman also told me that she went to avoid any problems that might be later. 'I know what my brother is like. He would use it later that I was not there, and tell everyone that whilst he was working on the house like a slave, I was relaxing in Rijeka. If I don't go, he will say I don't have the same right as he does to make decisions about the house'. Often persons would say that they would lose the 'Right' to make decisions about the house if they did not go.

A Working Weekend

At one such working weekend, I had gone for the weekend to help the 'family' prepare the house for the summer, which mainly consisted of painting. This particular house had three owners, Tome, Ana and Ingrid. Tome and Ana were brother and sister, and Ingrid was their deceased brother's wife who had been killed a number of years previously. They all owned a third of the house, and accompanying them for the weekend was Mate, Ingrid's son, as well as Tea, Tome's wife.

We were woken up at six o'clock in the morning by Tome, in order to start work. Some of the others complained to me later about this early start, saying that they would have liked to have slept for longer. When I asked why they had not done so, they told me that they would have felt very *neugodno* [uncomfortable] to have remained sleeping with the knowledge that Tome was working. Most of the painting we were doing was in the colour white, and I had been set the task of painting the railings on the fence outside of the house. We set to the painting, where everyone was industriously working somewhere around the house. We had not really been speaking very much to one another, but after about an hour of painting, I heard Tome call from the garage that everyone should come.

I called Ana and Ingrid, who were working nearby and we went to the garage. On the

work bench in front of Tome, there was a big tub of blue paint, and beside it two smaller ones: one pot of black paint, and one pot of white paint. 'We decided before to paint the shutters blue' he said, 'but what I want to know is what shade of blue we want'. He put a spot of white paint into the pot and started to mix it with a stick. The shade of blue that the paint had been originally was quite dark, and the effect of mixing in the white paint had made it much brighter. 'What do you think?' he asked, after he had mixed it. 'Remember that when it dries it will be a little darker' he told us. Ana looked at the pot of paint and said that she thought it was too bright. 'I don't like it' she said, 'I would prefer it to be a little darker'. Ingrid said that she didn't agree, that it was quite nice as it was. And I could see that this irritated Ana. 'No, I definitely don't like it. Put some black in' she said. 'Ok', Tome said, 'let us see what it looks like with the black paint and then choose'. He added some black paint from the paint pot and started to mix it in. As he was doing this, his wife Tea, who had been working at the back of the house in the garden, came in. 'Hello. What are you all doing here?' she asked. 'Choosing the colour of the paint' Tome replied. She looked in the paint pot and said 'oh that is far too dark. It is almost black. I don't like that colour, and then when it dries it will only get darker'. 'That is what I said, that it is too dark, but she does not like it' said Ingrid. 'No, I don't like it because it is not right for the house' said Ana, who was beginning to lose her temper. 'My mother hated this bright blue. She would have hated it on the house'. 'Well, I have no 'Right' to say anything, but I think it is too dark' said Tea, and started to walk out of the garage back to the garden. Ana responded 'she is right, she has no right'. 'Listen, all I want to do is paint the shutters, and not argue all day about the colour paint. I will choose the colour myself and then you can complain afterwards. I should never have asked you' Tome replied.

I left the garage to go back to the railings, and a few moments later Ana came to join me. 'Bloody witch' she said, 'I knew this would be like this. Has she no respect? I mean what right does she have to decide these things? How I wish my mother was alive now to see this.

And the worst thing is that it will always be like this, whilst we are *povezan* [connected] to this house. It is things like this that makes me want to sell it'. For the rest of the morning we continued our painting, and stopped at about two o'clock for lunch. During lunchtime, there was no mention about the discussion concerning the colour of the paint for the shutters. Throughout the morning, whilst Ingrid had been preparing lunch there had been quite a steady stream of visitors, and during lunch, Ingrid had been telling us stories that she had heard from the neighbours about the other neighbours.

However, after lunch, Tome finished preparing the shutters and had started to paint them. I noticed that at the other end of the house Ingrid and Mate were in deep discussion, where every now and then they would turn to look at the shutters. And then Ingrid went to where Tome was working and started to speak to him. Their conversation became more and more heated, until Tome called everyone to come over to the shutters. When Ana appeared, Tome announced 'I have received a complaint about the colour. Ingrid says it is too dark and that she does not like it'. 'But we discussed this' Ana said. 'Why do we need to speak about it again?' 'Because it is disgusting. It is so dark' Ingrid replied. 'And, I told you when it dries it will get darker' Tome said. Again, the discussion continued until Tome said that he had listened enough, and that he would paint the shutters the colour he had prepared. 'If you don't like it then you can paint them again yourself' he said to Ana.

A little while later, Mate came to where I was painting the railings to tell me that Ingrid had made some coffee if I wanted, and whispered that there were '*problemi*' [problems]. 'What do you mean?' I enquired, and he told me that Ana was very upset. 'About the shutters?' I asked. 'About everything. She is saying she is fed up with this house, and wants to sell it'. When I went into the house, Ana was sorting out a cupboard in a kitchen. 'I hate it here now' she said. 'It is always like this. Stupid arguments about something', and continued that she could not wait to go back to Rijeka. When I asked her what was the most

difficult thing about being at the house, she told me that it was because it made her miss her parents and her brother very much. 'I miss them all the time, but when I am here it is worse' she explained. 'I argue about the house with my brother because I am thinking how my parents would want it all of the time. It is their house. He cannot see this, he says they are dead and when we have to make a decision we should not be *sentimentalan* [emotional]. But how can I get over this *sentiment* [emotion]?' she said. And holding up a cup, she told me 'look at this. This was the cup that my mother always drank her coffee from. Every time I see this cup I think of her, standing by the stove cooking her coffee. This will always be her cup'. Continuing, she said that it was when she heard Tome's wife and Ingrid making a decision about the house, that it made her so angry. 'They have no 'Right' This is not their house. They can go to their own house and behave like this if they want, but not here. This is the house of my family'.

On the Sunday, we did very much the same as we had done on that day. Everyone was working on a particular job, and would confer every now and then to make a decision about something. In the afternoon we started to prepare things in order to go back to Rijeka. At about five o'clock, we locked the house, and having promised Tome and Tea we would phone when we arrived in Rijeka, we got in the car to go. '*Hvala Bogu* [Thank God]' said Ingrid, 'I cannot wait to get home. I already feel better'.

At all the working weekends that I attended, and in all of the discussions about houses that I observed in Rijeka, there seemed to be a similar form to the movement in these debates. Persons would work alone on a particular task until a decision had to be made, and then they would call the others to come and discuss what they should do. It was in these discussions, about the work projects on the house, that persons would be looking for a difference between their own interest, and the other owners interests. And it is here, where because of this way

that such houses were the figure of debate between the owners even in their physical absence, that I suggest it would be difficult to consider them analytically as taking on the form of a container (*cf* Birdwell Pheasant and Zanuiga 1999; Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995) within which persons undertake the project of kinship. This search for difference is a project that persons are constantly engaging with away from the house in Rijeka.

Houses: A Joint Project

A conceptual starting point that everyone whom I spoke to about shared family houses held, was that the work on the house should be a *zajednički rad* [joint work]. Firstly, persons held that any major decision about the house was a decision that should be made *zajedno* [together; literal translation ‘as one’], and that no one had the ‘Right’ to make an important decision *sam* [on their own]. If, for example, at a working weekend, one of the owners were not present, they would often be contacted on the telephone to give their opinion about what should be done. At one weekend, I had gone to a house where the owners had decided to build a new floor on the house. A friend of one of the owners, who was an architect, had drawn out the plans for how this floor would look, and all winter they had been discussing points such as whether there should be a new balcony, and where the windows should be. Although the owners had employed builders for the *grubi radovi* [rough work], everyone had met to help with the *fini radovi* [detailed work], such as tiling and painting the inside walls. In order for us to start this work, the plumber who had been working during the week had to be finished, and when we had arrived on the Friday evening he had announced he was not quite finished. The problem, he explained, was that he had not wanted to make a decision about where to put the radiators. This, the owners had all agreed was a *laž* [lie], and was just an excuse for why he had not finished on time, but it meant that they had to [re] - decide where to put the radiators.

One of the owners had not been able to come that weekend because of *obaveze na*

poslu [work obligations], and the other owners spent much time discussing whether to contact him or not. 'We must tell him, he has the same 'Right' to decide this as we do' said one of the owners. 'But,' another interjected, 'if he really wanted to decide this then he should have come. We all have work obligations. 'How could he have known? The workman should have been finished by now'. 'Ok, then you phone him and ask him where he thinks they should go. I am not going to waste my time and money on the phone discussing this. He lost his right to decide this when he said that he could not come. He told me that we should do what we thought is the best'. 'Never mind that' she replied, 'I still think he should know, and say what he wants', and with that she went to phone him. After a few moments she returned, and the others asked what he had said. 'He told me that he did not really care where the radiators were, and that he is too busy to think about this' she reported. 'I knew it. Lets just stop wasting time and make the decision'.

Not only did persons consider that major decisions about work projects should be made 'Together', but also that important work projects⁶² should be carried out 'Together'. As I mentioned earlier, although persons would often display an immense reluctance to go and work on the house, they would always attend these work projects. Sometimes, however, an

⁶² Although many persons said that the work on the houses should be a '*zajednički projekt*', the 'owners' of family houses do go to visit their houses alone. However, when they did visit the house without the other owners, they would say that they were going for a *odmor* [holiday]. Especially during the summer months, when most persons would take their *godišnji odmor* [annual holiday], the owners of the houses would visit alone. The question of when someone would go to the house on their holiday is also the source of debate. Quite often persons would complain that they wanted to go to the house alone with friends or family, but that another owner was down at the house. Frequently, someone would say that another owner was doing this '*namjerno*' [on purpose] in order to be difficult and make problems, or that they were there *čuvaju kuću* [guarding the house]. In those instances when I visited the house with someone, who was without the other owners, very little work was done, and what work was done was normally a 'minor' job such as tidying up the garden, or changing the washers on the taps. One man told me that he would do little jobs around the house just so that he could tell the others that he had done something. 'If I do nothing, then they complain I don't care about the house, and I have to hear that houses always require work. This way, I do something and they cannot say anything' he said.

owner would do something on the house when they were 'On their own' and this, I observed, animated some of the most heated discussions between the owners.

Trying to Steal the House?

During one weekend, I had been staying at a house with a group of persons, which one man shared the house with his cousins. He had decided that it might be good to sort out the rubble at the side of his house. We had all offered to help him, and had spent the afternoon moving bricks and old bits of rusty metal to a nearby skip. After we had finished, the side of the house was looking much better, and we all agreed that we had done a good job of work. A little while later, the phone rang, and we could hear that our friend who owned the house was starting to speak agitatedly on the phone. After he finished the conversation, he came out to join us at the front of the house in a most displeased mood. 'What is the matter? Has something happened?' one woman enquired. 'No, except that my cousin is a lunatic. Can you imagine he is angry with me because we cleaned out the rubble? He told me I should have waited until he was here. He said that he might have wanted to keep some of it, and that I had no right to throw away things without his knowledge'.

The issue for discussion between the 'owners', when someone had worked alone, was the reason why they had been working alone. Here, persons often said that they were very suspicious of the motives behind someone's solitary work on the house. One weekend when I was visiting Tina's house, I had decided to walk around the house, where I had noticed that near a drainpipe someone had done some work. There was freshly laid cement, and etched into the cement were some initials and a date. When I returned to inside the house Tina was alone in the kitchen, and asked me where I had been. I explained that I had been looking at some etchings on the house. 'What etchings?' she asked, and I could tell from the tone of her voice that something was wrong. I described how near the drainpipe there was some fresh

cement with the date and some initials. 'Show me' she said in a very serious manner. I took her to the back of the house, and when she saw the etchings she started to shout 'that bastard. How dare he provoke me with this? I could kill him'. She was extremely upset by this, and went to the garage where her brother was. I did not follow her, but a few moments later she returned with Anton. 'Did you do this?' she asked him. 'Of course I did' he said. 'What is the problem?' The point she made was that he had no right to work 'On his own' on the house, because they owned it 'Together'. 'What you think I am trying to *usvojiti se* [make it as my own] the house? You are not normal. The drainpipe was falling off, and I put it back' he replied walking off back to the garage. 'So why did you put your initials there?' Tina asked. 'Because I wanted to record what date I put the cement there, and who and done it' Anton replied, 'I really did not mean anything else. Please don't *izmišlja stvari* [make things up] that are not there'.

Many times when someone had worked alone on the house, the other owners would say that they suspected they were trying to *oteti kuću* [steal the house], saying that they suspected that an owner was trying to *usvojiti se* [make it their own] the house, or that they *hoće kuću za sebe* [want the house for themselves]. On those occasions when I witnessed someone confronting another owner about work they had done on the house alone, they would respond by telling them to stop provoking them. One man told me that it was impossible to do anything when he was alone at the house because his sister was incredibly *paranoična* [paranoid], explaining 'every time I do something, she thinks I am trying to steal the house. If I do some repairs, she sees this as *dokaz* [evidence] that I am trying to steal it. I tell her all the time that I am just mending something, but she never sees it like that'. Another woman told me, that whenever her husband had done some work on the house, her brother would make pointed comments that he knew what was happening. 'He tries to provoke me into an

argument about this. I have no intention of trying to take the house from him, but he thinks that the work we do are signs of our intentions to take the house. I cannot stand his provocation' she said.

However, although these alternative impressions about why someone had worked alone on the house animated considerable debate between the owners, similar to the way persons said they changed their mind about work projects on the house, they would often say that later they had *predomislio se* [changed their mind] about why another person had worked alone.

Affines: Looking for Difference

Whenever anyone spoke about specific kinship relations, they would often make the point that this relation 'should be' like this or like that. For example, I was often told that the relation between grandparents and grandchildren was a 'special relation'. One woman told me 'this *odnos* [relation] between a grandchild and their grandparents should be one of true love. There are no obligations in this relation'. Persons spoke about the relation between a parent and a child differently, where they often referred to it in terms of obligation. A number of persons said that when someone's parents were elderly, it was their child's obligation to look after them; as well as the obligation for parents to help their children in any way that they could.

However, two 'relations' stand out in terms of the frequency that persons speak about them, and these are two particular affinal relations: that between *nevjesta* [daughter-in-law] and *svekrva* [mother-in-law], and *šogorice* [sisters-in-law]. I often heard persons describe⁶³

⁶³ The presence of the tension in the relation between sisters-in-law has been well documented in the literature on the region, where scholars have offered a number of interpretations for why there is this tension. In his account of quarrels in a Balkan village, Balicki (1965) has also pointed out this tension between sisters-in-law, where he has suggested that the quarrels between sisters-in-law are a salient reason why houses so often get divided. He writes

Informants state, however, that these open quarrels arise only if the relations between the

these relations as being very *napet* [tense], and ones where there were nearly almost always problems. Persons often said that the tension in this relation was ‘normal’ because it is *običaj* [tradition] for sisters in law to argue, whether they shared a family house or not. The reason why persons said these relations were so problematic was because of the ‘difference’ in them, whereby the point that persons in this relation were *drugačije* [different] would often lead to arguments.

In anthropological studies of kinship, there has been a vast amount written about the concept of affinity (eg Dumont 1984), and a shared conceptual starting point that appears visible in much of this writing is that there is already a difference⁶⁴ between affines, or that affines are working on making difference. As I describe, through a focus on the relation between *šogorice* [sisters-in-law], persons appear to be looking for difference in this relation. The impression one gets is that persons are working on locating *razlika* [difference], which

women are ambivalent already, and full of suspicion. From there as the men frequently take sides with their wives, brother turns against brother and son against father. The situation becomes ripe for division, and further quarrelling takes place between close kinsmen for economic reasons involving partition. Briefly the fission process is generally set in motion by the in-married younger wives for non-economic issues, and is continued by the males for economic reasons (Balicki 1965: 1462).

As well, Rheubottom (1976) has made a similar point from his observations in Crna Gora [Monte Negro]. He writes

Crnogorci hold that it is women who create dissension which leads to household division. It is the sexual bond, they suggest, that draws the husband into his wife’s misery and which reluctantly convinces him that they must divide (Rheubottom 1976: 233)

And Hammel (1973) has also argued that

Although the causes for the dissolution of *zadruga* were many, ranging from too much property to too little, and were based on all manner of personal interest and dispute, division was almost always blamed on the women - because they protected and sought advantage for their own children, because the sisters wanted land dowry to make a better match, because the women jealously guarded their “egg money” or their land dowry if they had it, and so on. Whether the real causes of dispute lay between wives or not is difficult to say, in the face of Yugoslav machismo, but it is clear that structurally the disputes pivoted about wives or wives-to-be and that woman provided the points at which fission took place.

⁶⁴ This perception that there is already a difference in affinal relations is something that I see shares a similar form to the difference scholars consider is already present in terms of ethnicity.

appears to be particularly evident during work projects at the family house.

'Differences' in the Kitchen

Often at these working weekends, the most senior [in terms of age] woman⁶⁵, who was an 'owner', would cook lunch. Sometimes, however, if the most senior woman was occupied with another project on the house, then one of the female affines' would cook lunch, or women would take a break from what they were doing on the house to cook lunch together. It was during these times of cooking together that I observed women would spend a lot of time talking about different recipes, and how different dishes were prepared. When I asked women at the house about how they cooked a particular dish⁶⁶, they would not only describe the way they cooked the food themselves, but were also able to describe in minute detail how persons in their family prepared, or had prepared, these dishes. Such recipes, they told me, had been passed down from generation to generation, and although the same dish would be cooked, every family had a slightly different⁶⁷ way of doing so. At one working weekend, I was sitting with the family at lunchtime, who were discussing the different ways of preparing *maneštra* [minestrone]. One woman explained 'my grandmother blends the beans whereas my

⁶⁵ At not all of the houses, but in the majority, it was women who prepared the food.

⁶⁶ One very important point about food in general in Croatia is many people told me that there was a marked difference in the diets of people who came from the different parts of Croatia. As one elderly gentleman told me 'they [people from the continental part of Croatia] eat much more meat than we do, and everything is much fattier. We eat less meat and more fish'. This point that people from the *Primorje* [coastal part of Croatia] eat more fish and less meat than on the continent was reinforced by another person's statement 'how these *Slavonci* [people from Slavonia] are still alive I do not know. If the doctors say that you lose a day of your life for every fatty meal you eat, then in theory they should all pass away when they are very young. There is no way I would be able to eat food like this on a regular basis. We *Primorci* [people from the coast] don't have the constitution for such a diet'.

⁶⁷ Bringa (1995) has made a similar point in her observations in Bosnia, where she explains that women who had moved to their husband's village always felt that things were done differently. She writes

Even older women who had lived in Dolina for more than thirty years would still refer to the "customs" in their native village (which would be different from those in Dolina) as the "customs among us where I am from" (Bringa 1995: 99).

aunt does not. It makes a difference and I prefer it when they are not blended’.

It was during this time of meal preparation, when sisters-in-law were preparing the food together, that this ‘difference’ between sisters-in-law became extremely explicit⁶⁸. One time I was in the kitchen with Natalija and Tina helping to prepare lasagne. Whilst we were doing this, they were discussing how the preparation of lasagne was a lot of hard work. And as Tina was slicing some carrots, Natalija took one look at her efforts and asked ‘what are you doing?’ ‘Slicing the carrots. You do put carrots into lasagne don’t you?’ she replied. ‘Of course I do, but never like that. I always chop them up into little cubes. We always eat them like that, Mate [her brother; Tina’s husband] hates them when they are sliced. Didn’t you know?’ Natalija said. ‘No I didn’t know, he has never complained about this’ answered Tina. ‘Well he obviously didn’t want to say, but I know’ replied Natalija. I could see that Tina was highly irritated by Natalija’s comment, and as Natalija turned her back on us to do something at the sink, she rolled her eyes and started to shake her head. Later, she told me ‘if I don’t prepare the food in exactly the same way as they have always prepared the food, then there is a nasty atmosphere. She sits at the table inspecting each piece of food like it is poisonous and

⁶⁸ The difference I see here with some anthropological accounts is that scholars see the difference as already being there, where persons are reinforcing this difference. For example, Bahloul (1996) offers the term ‘intimacy of distinction’ in her description of a Jewish-Muslim household in Algeria. She writes that the distinction between the occupants of the house was drawn out in the different ways they approached activities in the house. She says

Emphasis on Jewish-Muslim harmony in the house does not mean that the distinction between these groups has been forgotten. This was harmony but not anarchic mingling; distinction without hostility. The boundaries between Jewish and Muslim were subtly inscribed in the necessary movements of everyday life, the places where these occurred, and the content of interactions (Bahloul 1996: 83).

Appadurai (1981) in his article about gastro politics in India offers the following conclusion

In all three [household, wedding feast, temple], to one or another degree, food transactions serve to regulate rank, reify roles and signify privileges. In all three arenas, transactions are built around the contrasts between host and guest, giver and receiver, insider and outsider’ (Appadurai 1981: 508).

In the case of Croatia, persons spent their time looking for the difference.

asks me how I made it. Then she says in our family we make it in a different way. She never says outright that her way is better, but I feel she is saying this from her tone of voice’.

Houses: Making Divided Interests Visible

‘Difference’ not only becomes visible during the preparation of meals, but also in discussions about work on the house. Often persons would make the point during such discussions that affines ‘*nemaju pravo*’ [they don’t have the right] to make decisions about the house because they are not ‘owners’. One woman told me, that when her sister-in-law had suggested that they build a fence around the house, she had said to her that she should go and do this at her own house. She said ‘she can go and build a barricade at her house for all I care, but she has no right to suggest this here. It is not her family house, she has her own one to work on’.

However, even when an affine was an ‘owner’ of the house, others would still point out that there was difference. This, they explained, was because affines did not have the same *osjećaj* [feeling] towards the house as they did. At one house, I was sitting in the kitchen with Ana and Petra, who were sisters-in-law. Petra’s husband had been killed a number of years previously in road accident, and she shared the house with Ana and her brother Tomislav. They were discussing whether to make new curtains, or not, because Petra felt that the current curtains were getting old, and were quite ugly. It was not a heated discussion, and Ana was explaining to Petra why she felt they should not be changed. ‘I understand that they are not the most beautiful curtains in the world’ she said to Petra, ‘and that we could definitely get some more beautiful ones. But you have to understand that my mother made these curtains. I remember when she made them, she made them with that very old sewing machine over there. It would not work properly, and my father and *pokojni*⁶⁹ Miro [Petra’s deceased husband]

⁶⁹ When persons spoke of someone who was deceased they would always insert the term ‘*pokojini*’ before their name. This, they said, was in order to show those listening that this person was deceased.

spent a lot of time mending it'. Petra responded that she knew the *priča* [story] about the curtains, but just thought it was time for a change, making the point that the house was not a *muzej* [museum]. 'I suppose we have different feelings towards this house' Petra said, to which Ana agreed. 'This is the truth, I have such strong feelings. You cannot have these because it is not your family house'. The discussion ended with both of them agreeing to talk about it *poslije* [later].

In such situations when an affine was an owner, I also heard other owners make the point that still they had not got the 'Right' to make decisions about the house. One woman I spoke to, on *Korzo*, was recounting to those of us sitting at the table about an argument she had been in with her sister in law, who also owned the house. 'We will have to sell it. We cannot go on like this. She absolutely does not have the right to meddle with the house in this way' she explained. The 'cause' of her consternation was that during the spring her sister-in-law had visited the house alone, and had decided to change the coverings on the chairs around the dining table. Vanja had discovered this when she had been to the house the previous weekend. 'Are they really disgusting?' one person asked. 'No, they are not so bad. But they are not right for the house. As I told her, they don't suit the house' she replied, 'and do you know what she said? That she had the right to do that. Can you imagine? I mean who is her God'. 'But she is right, she does have the right' another friend interjected. 'What do you mean?' asked Vanja 'she is the owner as well' this friend responded. 'On the papers it says she owns a quarter of the house'. 'Maybe she has the right *na papirima* [on paper], but she has not got any feelings for that house. It is not her family's house, it is my family's house' Vanja argued, 'she should show respect for my feelings. I mean maybe those covers were really important to me. She did not even ask me. What will be next? She should ask'. 'Are you *u svadi* [in an argument]' asked another friend. 'No' Vanja replied, 'we are still speaking. But soon we will be if it carries on like this'.

Thus, at almost every turn persons seemed to be pointing out difference in affinal relations. Even on those occasions when I was visiting a house where the sisters-in-law were 'from' the same place, were of a similar age, and had a similar education, rather than, as I had initially anticipated, there being a lack of tension because of this apparent absence of difference, I observed that it was the inverse. Persons seemed to be working even harder to find it. For instance, one woman told me 'my sister-in-law actually makes me feel quite mad with her cleaning. She comes from a part of Rijeka where they are very worried about how clean everything looks. It is not that I don't like things to be clean, but her cleaning is obsessive. When we go to work on the house she is cleaning all the time, and I have to clean with her. When I suggest that we drink coffee, she says that we can drink coffee when we have finished cleaning something. I want to scream at her that it already is clean, but I help her clean it anyway'. Indeed, the women seemed to be always looking to the house for a point of difference between them, and I heard numerous reasons for this difference: the other woman's family were *vjernici* [religious], or *partizani* [partisans], or she had been *razmažen* [spoilt] because her family were *bogataši* [rich persons].

Not Wanting to be the Same

Quite often, when a woman was recounting a problem she were having with her sister-in-law, she would end her account with the conclusion '*drugačije smo*' [we are different]. And I frequently noticed that when she offered this statement that they were different, she would do so in what appeared to be an almost cheerful tone. Such an impression, that this was a 'positive' thing, was further confirmed when one takes into consideration the point that lots of persons say that it is 'not normal' for sisters-in-law to *not* argue. This was particularly visible when I had accompanied one person, her husband and sister in law to their house for the weekend. On the Saturday morning I had gone to the village with my friend and her sister-in-

law for a coffee in one of the cafés. As we arrived at the café, we noticed that some of her relatives were sitting at one of the tables, and after we greeted them they invited us to join them. We sat there talking about life in the village and in Rijeka, where everyone was exchanging information about certain events in the village. After we had nearly finished our coffee, my friend said that she would quickly go to the butcher to get some meat for lunch. Her sister-in-law said that she would join her, and they went off together to the butcher. One of the relatives sitting at the table commented to us all 'is it nice to see how well they get along', to which the others agreed. Turning to me, she said 'this is very rare. *Šogorice* [sisters-in-law] almost always fight. It is not often you see two getting along so well'. Another person sitting at the table replied that she wondered if something was not wrong, because she thought that them getting along so well was not healthy. The others agreed with this woman's comment, where instead of them saying like the first woman had, that it was nice to see them getting along so well, they felt more that something was not right. They were all in agreement, that there was something wrong with sisters-in-law who did not argue, and had a harmonious relation. The impression they offered was that as sisters-in-law, they *should not* get along. The effect, I suggest, that this constant reference to difference in the relation had was to make this relation extremely visible. Not only this, but this constant reference to difference between the women made the persons in this relation also became very visible.

A Momentary Sameness

There was one moment during these working weekends, however, when the owners nearly always agreed that they should 'show themselves' as being the same. This was when they were speaking to neighbours.

At one working weekend, I had been given the task of weeding a flowerbed that was

beside the garden fence, and whilst I was doing this one neighbour appeared at the fence. 'That is a never ending battle' he remarked. 'I never see the point in it. I know it makes the garden look nicer, but these flowerbeds only make more work. I notice everyone is very busy, what is this? Some sort of *radna akcija*?' 'Yes' I replied. 'What is it for? No one has done any work on this house for ages' he asked. As I was about to reply that the house was being rented out to guests for the summer, a voice from behind⁷⁰ me said 'what? Does one need to work on ones house for a reason? Finally, we have the time to do something. There is always something'. It was Jelena, one of the owners of the house. 'That there is' replied the neighbour. 'Still it looks like you are doing a good job. The garden is looking very nice. I was just saying that it is a lot of work'. 'It is, but it is worthwhile work' replied Jelena curtly, 'how is your family? Are they keeping well?'

After about five minutes of talking about what his family was doing, this neighbour went on his way. 'Bloody *špijun* [spy]' Jelena muttered when he left. 'He just goes around collecting information. Never tell him anything. In fact never tell any of them anything. They are all the same'.

Whether the 'family' was discussing the house at the house, or in Rijeka, the activities of *susjedi* [neighbours] were a frequent focus of interest in these conversations. Many persons told me that neighbours⁷¹ were something you could not live with, and something you could not live without, explaining that for all the problems they made, they were also the persons who would help you the most if you had a problem. In these conversations about neighbours, persons would take an interest in what the neighbours were doing, and it was in these conversations that one of the owners sometimes said they had

⁷⁰ Nearly every time when I was at a working weekend and a neighbour engaged me in conversation, one of the owners would come and join us.

⁷¹ Sorabji (1994) makes a similar observation about neighbours in Bosnia.

bumped into a neighbour either at the house, or in Rijeka. A point that 'owners' would very often make to the others was 'not to tell them what we are doing', which was a point that everyone would agree upon. When I asked persons why they avoided giving their neighbours any information about what they were doing, they told me that it was for the best because then they could use this information at a later point.

However, although persons were in agreement about not giving too much information to their neighbours, this point that the neighbours would see them as the same, would initiate much debate. The question of 'what the neighbours would think?' was one that I heard very often in debates over the work on the house. Very often, when defending their viewpoint in a debate, a person would refer to the neighbours' perspective and the point that 'they will think we are' like this or like that.

What 'We' Look Like

When a person is speaking about their house they often describe their house in terms of what 'we' [the family] look like to the neighbours. For example, one day I was walking around the village where Tina's house was when I bumped into one of her neighbours. He lived in Zagreb, and I had not seen him for a while, so I asked him how he was, to which he replied he was not very well. 'I have been having work done on the house, and it is a catastrophe' he said, 'I knew I should have been here when they were working, but I thought I would risk it. You should always be at the house when you are having work done'. 'What happened?' I asked. 'These bloody idiots have made it look disgusting. I have the ugliest chimney in the region' he told me, 'come and see'. We went to his house, and as we were walking there he was telling me how now 'we' look like *Bosanci* [Bosnians]. There on the top of the house was the chimney, which was made of cement and consisted of five layers of cement one upon the top of each other. 'Isn't it *ružan* [ugly]?' he asked. 'It is not that bad' I

said, and trying to, what I thought, make light of the situation I told him ‘the best thing is that because it is on your house you don’t have to see it. Your neighbours will see it’. ‘Exactly’ he said, ‘it is horrible. I will have to get a new one. Everyone will call this house *bosanska kuća* [a Bosnian house]’. ‘You will not buy a new chimney’ a voice said to him from behind us, ‘we do not have enough money for this. It works perfectly well, and we are not wasting money on buying a new chimney’. It was his wife, and after we had greeted one another, she said to me ‘the fuss about this chimney is amazing. He cannot stop talking about it. You know he is a little obsessed about it. Every time we drive anywhere at the moment he points out chimneys to me’. ‘Dear, I know you are right, we cannot afford a new chimney. But can’t you see? We should have done this properly. We should have been here, and then I could have made sure they did not put such an ugly thing on the house’ he replied.

What ‘They’ Look Like

I observed that this neighbourly interest in other persons houses was ever present, where persons were constantly ‘talking about’ their neighbours houses. Quite often a person would give me an impromptu ‘guided tour’ of the village where their house was, explaining to me who lived in the different houses. In these accounts about a neighbour’s house, a person would nearly always⁷² not present a conceptual difference between the house and the family. Rather they would speak of them as being the same.

‘*Ma, vidi ovog monstruma*’ [just look at that monster], it cannot be legal’ Ivo lamented. ‘No it is most certainly not. It is much too high. According to the law, it should be the same height as the other houses. It is almost twice the size’ Ksenija replied. Over the

⁷² There was a time when neighbours did speak about houses separately. This was when they knew the owners were in a *svađa* [argument]. I discuss this in detail in Chapter Six.

winter, a new house had been built in the village, and the new house had been the source of quite a lot of consternation for the other people in the village. Ksenija had already heard about the building from another neighbour, who had phoned to tell her. But as Ksenija had said, although she knew it would be something horrible, she was not expecting to see this. 'I mean we all know who they are, and that they were never going to build a normal house. I was sure that they would have those disgusting balustrades on the balcony, and that it would have to be something enormous. But the colour, what sick sort of character wants to paint their house that colour'. 'It is the fashion at the moment, all *hohštapleri* [show offs] want that sort of colour these days' remarked Ivo. The new house was a bright, almost fluorescent blue colour. As we were standing looking at the house, another neighbour who was walking past came to join us. 'strašno [terrible]' he said. 'It gives you a headache just to look at it. You know there is a web site that has photos of the most disgusting houses on the *Jadran*⁷³. I think we should send a photo of this one'. 'It still absolutely does not make any sense to me why they want that colour' said Ksenija. 'Oh come on, they are from Zagreb. And you know who they are. One friend of mine told me that in his village they are all painting their houses these sorts of colours. He says you need sunglasses when you go outside, even when it is cloudy' replied the neighbour. 'I understand that. But these houses are not in Zagreb. Let these *Purgeri*⁷⁴ paint their houses that colour in Zagreb for all I care. It should be forbidden here'.

In comparison with the debates between the owners about the house, there was a difference to these narratives. This was that neighbours were not looking for the difference between the owners, where the accounts they offered presented the owners and the house 'Together'. Thus, from these neighbours' accounts the house momentarily appeared almost as a 'canvas' (Gullestadt 1984) that depicted the family. Yet, as Keane (1993) has discussed in

⁷³ *Jadran* is one term persons use to call the sea around Croatia.

⁷⁴ *Purger* is slang for persons who 'come from' Zagreb. It is most often used in a derogatory fashion.

his account of Anakalang houses, where informants appear to offer a text like account of the house, some anthropological analyses of such accounts 'tend to reduce it to the service of a single function, usually that of talking *about* the world (Keane 1993: 103). When one considers this point in relation to what persons were doing when they spoke about their neighbours' houses, I always found that neighbours were looking for and pointing out the difference between themselves and the 'family' they were observing. This is a movement, which I suggest is similar to the way persons gave accounts of their own houses; in particular when they were speaking about the history of the house.

History of the House

I was sitting in a café with Matko and his brother, who had been discussing whether they should re-roof their house. They were quite undecided about what to do, and at one point Matko had in a joking tone asked me what I thought. I said that I had no idea, but asked whether it was an old roof. 'Yes' his brother said, 'my father and his brothers built it in the 1950's, and it has not been touched since. No one has done any work on it'. 'But that is not true' responded Matko, 'Uncle Zdenko spent hours working on it one summer. He changed half of the tiles'. 'How you make things up!' his brother replied, 'when was Uncle Zdenko ever on the roof? I never saw him once there'. 'You were in the army that summer, you could not have seen him. He was definitely there' explained Matko. 'Well if he did do some work on the roof, he did a very bad job of it' his brother retorted. At the outset of field research when I had gone to visit a house, I used to ask one of the owners about the house about its history, such as when it had been built, or who had done what work on the house. Whenever I did this, it almost always provoked debate between the owners, where others would contradict the account that one owner had given. Indeed, such had been the vehement nature of the debates provoked by my questions about the history of houses, that I had stopped asking persons such

questions.

However, quite often when I was at a house, someone would start to offer a history of the house on their own initiative. They would explain when various parts had been built, and who had been involved in these work projects. And these narratives would provoke debate and discussion from the other owners who were within earshot. Indeed, these narratives were never offered in a hushed tone [like when persons had complained to me during a working weekend that they could not stand to be at the house anymore], but were instead always within hearing distance of the other owners. Like the accounts of the neighbours, where they were foregrounding ‘the difference’ between themselves and the house they were speaking about, I suggest that when a person was offering an account of the history of the house, the other owners would find a point of difference in their account. Again, this point of difference was a matter for debate. Thus, I put forward that it is not only that persons were always looking for the point of difference in these work projects on the house, but as well, that the reaction of those listening to this suggested point of difference is extremely salient.

Anthropological Houses: A Comparison

Although persons in Croatia have divided interests in their houses, the point of difference or division is not a settled one. It is, instead, something that they are looking to find, and once they think they have found it, it is something that the other owners then discuss. Persons ‘never’ seem to find a fixed point of difference. This is visible, I suggest, even in terms of the ‘ownership’ of the house. Even though as an owner, each person has a fraction of the house, no one is ever certain how persons will divide. Many times, I heard persons state that they owned a certain fraction of the house, only for the others to respond that if they joined together then their fraction would be larger. Thus, I suggest that persons can never be certain where this point of difference will be found.

It is here, where I now want to turn to examine how this impression compares with some of the anthropological writing on houses. In Levi Strauss's (1983; 1987) writing on house-based societies, he makes the argument that houses create a fragile unity between the opposing principles of alliance and debate. And this is an argument that a number of scholars have taken up, particularly those who have dedicated themselves to a critical examination of his writing in the collection of essays *'About the House: Levi Strauss and Beyond'*. One criticism these authors (eg Janowski 1995; McKinnon 1995) make of his writing on house-based societies is his notion that the house 'unites' contradictory principles. They propose, instead, that houses can 'contain' a number of different principles, which shift according to the context that one observes them in. For example, Riviere (1995) in his writing about houses in Guiana discusses the distinction of inside and outside of the house. He writes

The outside, the other, is crucial to the reproduction of the inside, for while they are opposites they are equally complementary, one cannot exist without the other (see Overing 1981). However, it is not in everyday life that the opposition between them can be overcome and mediated. In both localities it is only under certain ritual conditions that it is possible to transcend the difference, although in contrasting ways. Thus in Guiana, through ritual the outside is brought inside, and for the period of the ritual a unitary world is created (Riviere 1995: 205).

In the case of houses in Croatia, I would argue that persons have not got 'as far' as in these accounts. By this, I mean that they are looking for the point of difference, which they then present as something that is constantly changing in the ensuing debates. The tension, I argue, concerning these houses is that although the owners 'suspect' there is a difference, or divided interests in the house, they do not know where these points of division are for certain.

However, these points of suspected difference were often the same at all of the houses that I visited. The question of whether an owner was working for their own interest, or for the interests of the family was one I heard at every house I visited. Although these scholars stress

the dynamism of houses, it is the project of kinship that appears to give these houses their dynamic quality, where in these accounts the house is very much animated by the project of kinship. For instance, Carsten and Hugh Jones write (1995) ‘houses *only* walk or run when their occupants change or require a larger site, perhaps as a result of marriage or the birth of more children. The process of kinship and the process of the house are so thoroughly intertwined as to be one process’ (Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995: 40. Emphasis added). As such, the impression one gets is that the house is solely animated by the project of kinship, where the alternative, and changing, impressions of the house come from the movement in the project of kinship.

In the case of houses in Croatia, I suggest, that although persons employ houses as instruments to animate the project of kinship (and are thus in turn animated by the project of kinship), there is also a reversal. Houses are also critical in providing the figure around which the debate occurs. In Jean-Klein’s (n.d.) account of ‘spaces’ in Palestine, she discusses the movement of both persons in their houses, as well as the movement in reading Arabic texts. She argues that rather than this movement being ‘formless’ and totally fluid, instead she takes this movement as ‘a matter of the animation of already existing, very precise formal types’ (Jean-Klein n.d.). In terms of the debates over the house, the alternative positions that persons can take in their debates, for instance the question of whether a person has worked alone, are positions that ‘come from’ the house. As well, the narratives that persons offer about the history of the house are ones that come from the house. Thus, as much as the house is an instrument in the project of kinship, which persons can call upon to animate the debate, it also offers a figure⁷⁵ to the form that this debate takes.

Another point about these houses is that they give a form to those who are observing, such as neighbours. Not only do houses make the potential points of difference visible ‘in the

⁷⁵ But like Jean-Klein (n.d.) has pointed out about the house and kinship in Palestine, it is most certainly not the only figure.

family', but as well the houses make the 'family' visible to those observers. In Leach's (2002) writing on the *garamut* drum, he writes that persons in Reite say that 'a man is like a drum'. And through an analysis of how people construct this drum, he argues that '*garamut* construction brings forth a form of relations. This elicitation is possible because the object is not simply produced through a complex technical process, but because the technology of production is also the technology of elicitation' (Leach 2002: 730). The importance of Leach's (2002) observation for the point I make here is, that like the point that the form a man takes is elicited through the work on a drum, I argue that through the work 'family relations' do on their houses, they also bring forth a form of sociality: 'family'. I would suggest that persons are extremely keen that their neighbours recognise them 'as one'. The point I make here is that those observing are critical in their recognition of the house as a 'family house'.

Ostavinska Rasprava [Debates about Inheritance]

Worries about Inheritance

Dunja was fifty-five years old, and worked as a secretary an office. Whenever I met her, she always seemed to be running somewhere. Whether she was rushing to go to the market to buy food for lunch, or hurrying on her way to work, she was constantly commenting that she never had enough time for herself. Life, she said, was passing her by, and she was worried that soon she would be too old to do all the things she wanted to do. 'When I was younger, I always wanted to see the world' she told me, 'but now it is impossible. I won't even have enough money to retire. The *situacija* [situation] just gets worse and worse'.

I had not seen her for a few months, and by chance had met her on *Korzo*. She was on her *marenda* [morning food break] at work, and had popped out from her office to buy something for one of her children. 'Let's have a coffee', she said, and sitting down in one of the nearby cafes, I asked her how she was. She told me things were worse than ever. 'My mother died not so long ago, and now I am in big trouble', she said. 'I know it is a bad thing to say, but in many ways her death is a relief. She was so ill, and in so much pain. It was no life for her'. Her mother had been ill for a very long time with cancer, and Dunja had been the one who had looked after her. She had often said how it had been difficult, but that there was no one else to help her. Her brother, she explained was a *gastarbajter* [guest worker] and worked in Germany. 'The problem is the house,' she explained, 'I will inherit the house with my brother, and this will be a disaster. There will be so many problems because of this'. I knew

from earlier that the house was on the coast, and was a place that always made her feel better where she said she recharged her batteries. When I mentioned that I thought it was somewhere she liked to go, she told me ‘I did, but not anymore. I don’t know what it will be like there now? His wife is awful as well, she is such a *zmija* [snake]. There will be no *mir* [peace] in that house anymore’.

Who can Inherit the House? Nasljedni Red [The Order of Inheritance]

When the owner of a house dies, those who are ‘*na redu*’ [in line] to inherit the house are called by letter to a court hearing entitled the *ostavinska rasprava*⁷⁶. This debate is normally held a few months after the previous owner has died, and it is during this discussion when the judge will make a decision about how the house will be divided. The ‘figure’ around which this debate of inheritance occurs is the Law of Inheritance [*Zakon O Nasljedstvu*], and it is this debate I focus on in this chapter. I suggest that in a similar way to the debates about the house, the question of how the house will be divided is not one that is settled at the outset. Rather, person’s work on settling this relation by providing the *dokaz* [evidence] to *potvrditi* [prove, literal translation ‘make hard’] their claim. Again, like in the work projects on the house, persons are constantly looking for a point of difference between their own and other person’s claims to the right to inherit the house. This, they must transform into ‘Evidence’ in order for the judge to recognise their claim. It is in this chapter where the salience of paper first becomes visible in giving form to the claims that persons make. Although a person can say that they have the ‘right’ to inherit the house according to their feelings, they must convert this claim onto paper. It is this point, at the end of the chapter, I discuss the concept of substance in anthropological writing on kinship.

There are a two extremely salient points about the inheritance of *nekretnine* [property]

⁷⁶ The literal meaning of this term is debates or discussions about inheritance.

in Croatia that should be mentioned at the very outset of this chapter. The first is that owners of houses rarely leave an *oporuka* [will] stating how they would like the house to be inherited, where not once during fieldwork did I meet, or hear of, anyone who had left a will. Many persons said that leaving a will was ‘*bez smisla*’ [pointless], because even when someone had left a will, it was something that could always be contested.

The second critical point to the inheritance of property in Croatia is that all property has a part to it entitled the *nužni dio* [necessary part]. This refers to a part⁷⁷ of the house that the owner is never able to divide, and this part of the property is divided between those who are termed by the Law of Inheritance as being ‘required’ to inherit the property. It is because of this ‘Necessary part’ that even in those situations when the deceased has prepared a will, certain kin are still eligible to inherit a part of the house. Those persons who fall into this category of being ‘required’ to inherit a part of the property are: the children of the deceased, their adopted children and their offspring, their parents and their spouse. Siblings of the deceased can also be required inheritors, if they can show they have been unable to work on a long-term basis, and have no other means of income.

When I spoke with a lawyer about the ‘Necessary part’ of property, she told me that it did not matter what affective relationship the deceased had with these relations. In terms of the inheritance of a house they always had the right to inherit at least one sixteenth of the property. Indeed, she told me it was almost impossible for somebody who had siblings to inherit a house on their own. The only way, she told me, that an owner can attempt to *isključiti* [lock out] particular kin from inheriting the property is if they are able to prove that those eligible for the ‘Necessary part’ have engaged in any of the following: that they had either legally or morally upset the owner; intentionally committed a crime against the owner, their spouse, children or family; committed a crime against the Republic of Croatia, or engaged in a

⁷⁷ This part of the house is not defined in the physical schema of the house. Therefore persons are unable to say that a particular room is part of the ‘Necessary part’.

sordid or unproductive style of life. However, she said that these *optužbe* [charges] were almost impossible to prove, since in order for them to stand in court they had to have been documented.

Law of Inheritance

According to the law of inheritance⁷⁸, the *rod* [kin] of the deceased are divided into five levels, where a seemingly quite settled structure lays out the process of inheritance. At each of the five levels of inheritance it is clearly defined who is able to inherit the house, and how much of the house they are entitled to inherit.

Level One

The first level consists of the children and the marriage partner of the deceased, who all inherit the house in equal parts. If the deceased had children from a previous marriage, and the property of their marriage partner comes to more than the parts that would go to the children, then every child, irrespective of which marriage they are from, receives twice as much as the deceased's marriage partner.

Level Two

The second level consists of the deceased's parents and marriage partner. The parents of the deceased inherit the house if the deceased had no children. The parents inherit one half of the house, and the marriage partner inherits the other half.

Level Two (i)

⁷⁸ Although I set these laws out, I do so for the purpose of displaying their main components. As I discuss in further detail in a moment, persons themselves are not so interested in an analysis of the law in this way.

If one of the parents has already died, then the part of the house they would have inherited, goes to their children [brother and sister of the deceased, their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Level Two (ii)

If both parents are already dead, then their children move to the first level. In all cases where the children inherit a part of their fathers estate then they inherit their fathers part, and their mothers part. If the parents have no other descendants, then their part goes to their closest kin.

Level Two (iii)

If both parents have died, and have no other kin, then their part goes to the marriage partner of the deceased.

Level Three

In the third level, if the deceased has no marriage partner, and no children, and no parents, then the house goes to the deceased's grandparents. One half of the inheritance goes to the mother's side, and the other half goes to the father's side.

Level Three (ii)

If one grandparent has died then this part goes to their children and offspring.

Level Three (iii)

If both grandparents have died on one side, then the property goes to the grandparents on the other side.

Level Four

In the fourth level, if both sets of grandparents have died then the property goes to the great grandparents of the deceased. Half of the property goes to the great-grandparents on the father's side, and half to the mother's side. Of the part that goes to the great-grandparents on the father's side, one half is inherited by the family on the father's side, and the second half of the father's grandmother. The same occurs on the mother's side.

Level Five

Finally on the fifth level, the offspring of the great-grandparents inherit the house.

Although the levels of inheritance initially appear to offer quite a clear structure as to who can inherit the house, there are a number of additional articles within the law that also determines how a house is to be inherited. For instance, there are a number of reasons as to why the deceased's spouse can lose his/her rights to inheritance. An example of such a reason is if the deceased has placed a case for the annulment of the marriage, or if other kin are able to make the claim that such a case had been made. The laws of inheritance also allow the court to decide to give a person more or less than the share as determined by the levels of inheritance. For example, if the deceased's spouse has no income, and is inheriting the property with the deceased's parents or siblings [*Level II*], then they can request the court to offer them more than the amount that is normally their part. This also works the other way around: if the deceased's parents have no income, and are called to inherit the house with the marriage partner, then they can make a claim to the share of the house that the deceased's spouse would normally get. Visibly, the question of who gets to inherit the house, and considerations of how much their share will be becomes much more complicated. The process of inheritance becomes further complicated, when one takes into consideration the articles in the laws of inheritance that refer to the 'necessary part'.

When I first came across the law of inheritance, amidst all the debate in everyday life it appeared to take on the form of a very settled figure, from whose reading one could determine how houses would be divided. Yet, like the way I described in the last chapter how a persons presentation of a narrative of their own, or others', houses provoked debate, whenever I presented my analysis about the process of inheritance from my reading of the law of inheritance to others, this would invariably provoke debate. Those listening would challenge my conclusions about the division of the house by presenting an alternative account of the process of inheritance, from their own knowledge of the law. Additionally, whenever I explained to anyone my frustrations about not being able to 'pin this law down' they seemed quite non-plussed about what it was I was trying to do. One friend in particular was especially critical, telling me that he had no idea what I was wanting to get from looking at the laws in this way. 'Your research is so odd' he said, 'there is nothing to see in these laws, it is just how they are'.

Talking about the Law: Comparing Iskustvo [Experience]

Instead, persons have an alternative focus of interest in their analysis of 'the law', where instead of analysing the law as an inert figure in the form of the text, they were more interested in discussing how the law worked 'in motion'. Rather than focusing on specific articles of the law, persons would very often compare either their own, or other persons experiences concerning the *ostavinska rasprava* [Debates about inheritance].

'Like I don't know' Tomica said. We were sitting in a café on *Korzo*, listening to an account one of his school friends was giving about the problems he was facing '*zbog nasljedstva kuća*' [because of the inheritance of the house]. 'It is *uvijek ista priča* [always the

same story]' Tomica replied, 'one work colleague had almost exactly the same problem. One of her relatives started to claim that she had the right to inherit part of the house. She was totally mad and had no right, but she made a petition to the court'. 'And what happened?' asked Tomica's friend. 'Well the judge told her that she had no right, and threw her claim out. But it *pojeo njezine živce* [ate my colleague's nerves]. She was so worried about what *igra* [game] this woman was playing. You never know whether they have some *veza* [connection] who can help them. Luckily in this case the judge was normal'. 'That is my *briga* [worry]. You never know what might happen. Even though it is not at all true, who knows what the judge will see. The worst of all is that I found out from one of my *poznati* [acquaintances] who his lawyer is'. 'Who?' Tomica asked. Upon hearing the lawyers name, Tomica replied 'that is not good. That one is known for such *slučajevi* [cases]' 'I know' his friend replied 'God knows what they *spremaju se* [are preparing]'.

Only very rarely in such discussions about the debate of inheritance did I hear persons refer to specific articles of 'the law'. Most often in these discussions, persons would speak about the lawyers, judges and speculate about possible *igre* [games] the other *stranke* [parties] involved were playing. The outcome, they said *ovisi* [was dependent] on a number of variables, which were specific to each situation. These could be the judge, in which *županija* [county] the *općinski sud* [county court] was in, or if persons had lawyers. As well, persons said that the law was something that changed all the time, so that even if you were sure that the law said one thing at one time, it could always change. As a result, many persons said that they felt that any attempt to predict what would happen during the process of inheritance on the basis of the laws of inheritance was something of an act of *špekulacija* [speculation].

Tko ima Pravo? [Who has the Right?]

Like at the house, where persons spend a lot of time discussing who has the 'Right' to

make decisions about the house, the concept of *pravo* [Right] is one that is extremely audible when persons are discussing who will inherit the house. In these discussions, I observed that persons try to locate difference in their conception of 'Right' between *pravo na papirima* [right on paper] and 'Right' in terms of *sentiment/osjećaj* [emotion/feeling]. In order for someone to consider that someone else has the 'Right' to claim inheritance to the house, they should have both the 'Right on the paper' and the 'Right according to feeling'. For example, one woman was talking to me about how one of her cousins had been telling a neighbour that she had the 'Right' to inherit the house. She told me that this neighbour had phoned her in order to warn her about her cousin's possible claim to the house. 'She can tell everyone she wants that she has the 'Right' because she has *osjećaj* [feelings] towards the house. But can she show this 'On paper'. As if I don't have the *osjećaj* [feelings] towards that house? I also have the 'Right according to emotion'. But I also have the 'Right on the paper', and I can prove it'.

In her writing on the way Euro-Americans recognise kinship, Strathern (1992b) makes the point that Euro Americans consider kinship to be that which connects the domains of nature, and the domains of society. She says 'this is a combination Euro-Americans reproduce several times over in their ideas about relatedness between human beings, and it is such reproductions and repetitions that constitute cultural practice' (Strathern 1992b: 17). And later she adds that 'insofar as kinship is thought of combining social and natural domains, and is thus the place of overlap between them, the recognition of one component without the other always gives people pause' (Strathern 1992b: 20). I suggest that in a similar way, in terms of the way persons consider the concept of 'Right' to connect both *osjećaj* [feelings] and paper, when persons present an absence of either 'Right on the paper' or 'Right according to feeling' in another person's claim to inheritance, this also gives people pause.

Without Sentiment [Emotion]

‘I don’t count this *konj* [horse] as family. It is like a nightmare’ Tin erupted. ‘Nor do I’ replied his brother, ‘but what can we do. That is how things stand’. ‘Can you imagine what this is going to be like?’ Tin asked. ‘A catastrophe I expect’ his brother said. They were discussing the prospect of inheriting the house with their step-father. When their father had died, this man had - in their words - put some *crna magija* [black magic] on their mother. They had got suddenly married about six months later. ‘This caused a *skandal* [scandal]. My father was not even cold, and everyone thought my mother was pregnant with another man. Thank God she was not’ explained Tin. They told me that because their step-father was much older than their mother, they had always felt safe that they would never find themselves in the situation they were currently in. ‘How stupid we were’ said Tin ruefully. ‘All those times we said that at least this would never happen, and now it has. I mean, can you imagine? He is going to tell us what to do with our grandparents’ things. *Nema pravo* [he has not got the Right]. I will have a *sлом živaca* [nervous breakdown]’. ‘That is the problem’ replied his brother, ‘*ima pravo* [he has got the Right]’. ‘Maybe it won’t be so bad?’ I suggested. This comment did not help Tin. ‘Not so bad? This man doesn’t know anything but bad. He is the *vrag* [devil] himself. I know what exactly what will happen. That *stari konj* [old horse] will strut about the house, and will try to clear it of everything that is from the family. I will stop him every time. We will be in the court for the rest of our lives’. ‘Oh come on, stop being so hysterical’ said his brother, ‘we will just have to wait and see what happens. As long as we are *zajedno* [together] in this, that is all that matters’.

However, although the absence of one without the other in a persons claim to inheritance often animated debate, as well as foregrounding a ‘difference’ between persons claims, everyone said that what mattered was that persons could prove their claim ‘On paper’. Even though this was a topic for discussion, where persons would question if another person

had the 'Right' according to their observations on whether this person had the 'Right' according to both 'Emotion' and 'The papers', in terms of the actual inheritance of the house, everyone says that it is having the 'Right on paper' that counts. When someone said that they had the 'Right' to inherit the house, others would invariably tell them that it did not matter what they said or felt, instead they said that what was *vazan* [mattered] was that they could show this claim in the court on the papers.

Shameless

'What I don't understand is how that woman can have no *sram* [shame]. She is going around telling everyone how she has the right to inherit the house. What is she to that house? Nothing. It is like I go to my neighbours house and tell them that I have the right to inherit it' explained Luka. He was telling us about how his aunt was claiming she had the right to inherit his parents' house. Luka was an only child, and felt he was *na redu* [in line] to inherit the house alone, but his aunt had made a claim to the court that she should also inherit part of the house. 'That I believed she actually had feelings towards the house, then somehow it would not be so bad. But she has never cared about it at all. She never helped my parents when they were *nemoćni* [powerless]. Out of the blue she is suddenly acting to everyone how she loved my parents, and how the house is a part of her *djedovina* [grandparents/heritage]. She is such an *glumica* [actress]'. He told us how one neighbour had told him that she had seen her weeping with another neighbour outside of the house. 'She absolutely has no shame. She wants to show the world that her heart is breaking. It makes me sick. It makes me so nervous that I am taking *apaurin*⁷⁹ for my nerves' he continued. 'You should not be so nervous', one friend advised, 'it is the same everywhere. People will do anything for *nekretnine* [property] these days, they become like animals. You must be *hladnokrvan* [cold-blooded] about it.

⁷⁹ A sedative that persons often say they take when they are feeling nervous.

Don't let the *sentiment* [emotion] take you over'. 'How can I not be nervous? One friend who is a lawyer says there is a *mogućnost* [possibility] that she will get part of the house'. 'How?' another friend asked. 'I don't know, but he says that if she has the 'Evidence' the chance is there' replied Luka.

One consequence of the importance persons placed on being able to show their claims on paper was, as many persons I spoke with told me, that although they had the right according to feeling to inherit the house, they were working on finding the 'Evidence' they needed on paper.

Pravo prema Sentimentu [Right according to Emotion]

I was walking around a small village with Danica. She had told me that her family had lived in the village for generations, and as I had seen in a number of cases, her surname was the same as the name of the village. Her family had a house in the centre of the village, and as we were walking around she was describing how her *rodbina* [relatives] lived in every house. We got to one particular house, and her mood suddenly became very serious. It was the house where her uncle [mother's brother], who had recently died, used to live. 'This was my grandparent's house, and then after my grandmother died my uncle came to live here. I am *na sudu* [in the court] with my cousins about this house' she said. When I asked her why, she explained that they did not have the 'Right' to inherit the whole house. 'My uncle only came to live in the house, and he had no right to be the owner. It is as much the house of my mother and my other uncle, as it was his. But because of some *muljaža* [cheating] that he got his name on the papers. This is completely *nepravedan* [not right]. Why should my cousins inherit the whole house? They live in Australia, they are not here. My uncle came back after his wife died, and they stayed in Australia. They have been here about three times, they don't have the *sentiment* [emotion] I have. I have lived here all my life. I will show them that this is just as

much my house as it is theirs'. When I asked her how she was going to do this, she told me she had a 'good lawyer' who was advising her on what 'Evidence' she needed, explaining that she was at the moment working on getting the papers that *potvrđiti* [proved] what she was saying.

The reason persons gave for the salience of having one's claim on paper was because in the court, the judge⁸⁰ was only interested in the evidence they could present on paper. During fieldwork I often turned to the *Crna kronika* [Black Chronicle] pages of the local newspaper *Novi List*. These pages offered articles of the accidents, murders and misfortunes that had occurred the previous day in the region. Quite frequently, one could read of a family argument that had turned to bloodshed, where the journalist cited the reason 'that it was because of unsolved disputes over property'. There was one particular 'case' that received a number of articles over a considerable period of time concerning an elderly lady, who had mysteriously disappeared. Immediately prior to her disappearance she had sold her house to a family from Zagreb, who had already paid half of her asking price. On the day of her disappearance she had arranged to meet them at a lawyer to finalise the documents concerning the sale of her house, where the buyers were to pay the rest of the money for the house. These articles offered various hypotheses as to what had happened to this woman: that she had run away, or been murdered. They also offered descriptions of various potential differences between the narratives of the main actors in the story. One such account was about the claim made by the family who wanted to purchase the house. These articles offered the impression of the involvement of some form of foul play, with neighbours describing the missing woman as being an upstanding citizen of the community.

⁸⁰ As Borneman (1992) has written in his writing on the law in Berlin, where it's reading is not entirely arbitrary. Here, both the judge, as well as those in line to inherit the house, rely upon the law in order to determine how the house will be inherited.

Another keen focus in these articles was on what would now happen to the house. The family from Zagreb were keen to receive their money back, but no one could decide who was now the owner of the house. The ownership of the house depended on whether this woman was dead or not. If she was still alive, then the family from Zagreb had a claim to the house. However, if she was dead, then she was no longer the owner and was therefore unable to sell it. One article described how her brother was putting in a claim for ownership of the house, because according to the law if she were dead then he would inherit the house. It was here that the point was made about her brother's claim: the article described how at this point in time the court was working out his claim to *srodstvo*⁸¹ [kinship], where it would determine whether

⁸¹ Those kin, who were determined as having the right to claim inheritance of the house, have already had this claim to be kin settled according to another law, the *Obiteljski zakon* [Family Law]. This law sets out who are family and who are not family. It was written in 1998, and revised in 2003, and focuses on the legal definitions of marriage, motherhood, fatherhood, adoption, and how children should be raised. The definition of marriage is offered as the following: 'marriage is a legally recognized *zajednica* [union] between a man and a woman'. It also specifies that there are a number of relations who cannot get married. They are those who are blood related in a hereditary sense, and the lateral *lozi* [blood relations; literal translation: fruit] of brother and sister, brother and sister on their mother's or father's side, children of the sister or brother or her or his parents, the children of cousins, as well as mother's or father's cousins. Nor can marriage be between the grandchildren of cousins.

Parenthood

When one turns to examine the law on parenthood, it is possible to see that it works on defining whom the parents of a child are, and what the rights and responsibilities are on both the side of the parents and the child. A mother is defined as 'the woman who gave birth to the child', (Article 52) and the 'child's father is perceived as the mother's husband, if the child was born during the time of marriage or in a period of one hundred and thirty days after the end of the marriage (Article 53)'. The law continues that if motherhood or fatherhood cannot be determined by Articles' 52 and 53, then it is confirmed either by the declaration of the parents, or made by a court decision.

The law states that the declaration of motherhood and fatherhood is unchallengeable. Yet it also declares that the declaration of the father is only valid with the mother's agreement. It stresses that it is for the good of the child that the mother declares who the father is, but she is not legally bound to do so. The mother can also tell the registrar who she believes to be the child's father. These declarations of motherhood and fatherhood can be contested if the child is less than twenty-five years old. And as well, the woman who believes herself to be the child's mother can challenge the motherhood of the woman who is written in the registry book as the mother. This is on the condition that at the same time she claims motherhood. Added to this, if the child is over the age of fourteen years old, they have the right to contest the claims of those persons declaring motherhood and fatherhood.

The salience of these definitions for the process of inheritance is that according to the law of inheritance, a person can only claim the right to inherit a house when they have proved their status of kin to the deceased owner. This proof is found in the *Rodni List* [Birth Certificate]. Like most other documents, a Birth Certificate is only valid proof if it is a copy that has been taken from the birth,

his claim to be her brother was valid or not.

Nervously Awaiting the Judge's Decision

A person I knew well, Natalija, had agreed that I could go with her to the Debate about Inheritance over her mother's *nekretnine* [property]. According to Natalija, her mother owned a house, a car, and a flat in Rijeka. She also shared some land with some other kin from the village where she was born. Natalija told me she had never visited this land, did not know where it was exactly, and had only a vague idea about who the other owners were. 'There was a fight about it a few years ago. Some *Tete* [Aunties] wanted to sell it. I don't know what happened in the end' she told me. When we got to the court, we met her brother, and her other deceased brother's wife and children who were sitting on a bench in the corridor. They had all been *pozvan* [called] by the court to attend the Debate about Inheritance. Prior to our arrival at the court, Natalija had told me that she was frightened that there might be an enormous argument in the court. She had told me that she was sure that her deceased brother's wife was planning to ask the judge for more than what Natalija termed was her 'fair share'. This was on the grounds that her husband was dead, and she needed the house for her children's benefit. 'You will see my family at their worst I fear' Natalija had told me earlier, 'we really don't get along'.

We greeted each other, and joined them on the bench opposite. The piece of paper Natalie had received said that the *rasprava* [debate] would be at 10.30 in court number three. And at about a quarter to eleven a tinny voice came over on a tannoy speaker saying '*Obitelji Tomac, sud tri vas čeka*' [Family Tomac, court three is waiting for you]. This broke the ice a little because no one had really said very much to each other. There was quite a tense atmosphere. Natalija had told me beforehand that she was very nervous, saying 'it is not that I

death and marriage register, and has a date on it that is less than six months old.

want more than my fair share of the house. In fact, I don't really want the house that much. But it is the thought of that woman getting it. She is not family. She should not have the right to get what should not be hers'. We all went into the courtroom, which was like a large office. Behind a desk sat the judge, with a clerk sitting beside her. She checked the identity cards of the people there, noting them off on a bit of paper. 'Now we are all here I will first declare what the deceased owned' the judge said. And looking at a piece of paper she read 'she owned one house at the address of _____, one car, a flat at the address of _____, and some land consisting of 1500m² in the county of *Požega*, which she shared with 24 other owners. Do you all agree that this is what she owned? Or is there anything missing?' Everyone agreed that this was all they thought she had owned. Natalija had told me that before the date had been set for the Debate about Inheritance, everyone who was 'in line' to inherit the house had received a letter from the court asking them to send a list of everything that they thought Mrs Tomac had owned. 'Right let us start with the car' the judge said. Natalie and her sister in law both said that they did not want the car and that Miroslav, her brother, could have it. 'And now to the house. According to the law Natalija and Miroslav you have the right to one third of the house each, and Mario and Anton one sixth of the house each' the judge said, 'and that is the same with the flat. Do you agree with this or would you like to divide it differently. I would like to say that Tina has given me a *molba* [request] to take into consideration that the children have no father'. 'I have children too' said Miroslav, 'and my wife is not working. And I would like to say that I am a *ratni invalid* [veteran injured in the war]' The judge responded by telling him that he should have put this in writing in a letter to the court, along with a copy of his wife's *radna knjižica* [workbook]. 'How long has your wife not been working' the judge asked him. 'Four months' he said. 'And is she capable of working?' 'Yes' replied Anton, 'but she used to work for Kvarner Express⁸² and she cannot

⁸² A firm in Rijeka that has gone into liquidation.

find a job’.

The judge sat in silence for a moment, and then said that his status as a *ratni invalid* [veteran injured in the war] changed things, asking him what percentage his injured veteran status was. It was upon hearing this that she said that they could not continue until he had brought the documents that proved his status as an injured veteran to the court. At this point, she said to everyone that the court would inform them all by post of a rescheduled date. Natalija’s sister-in-law commented that this was very inconvenient, and asked the judge when she thought the next hearing would be, saying that soon it was the summer and she was intending to spend the summer on the coast with her children. The judge replied in a curt fashion that she could not do anything without the proper documentation. Natalija was not in a good humour as we left the court. ‘This is going to take months. And until it is all sorted out we can do nothing with the house. We don’t know who owns it’⁸³.

Most persons told me that they wanted to *riješiti se* [solve] the question of inheritance as quickly as possible, and wanted the judge to make a quick decision about the division of the house. This, as I describe in the following example, is because without the paper to *potvrđiti* [prove] that the house had been divided in this way, and that they were therefore *vlasnici* [owners], they could do nothing with the house.

Not being able to do anything

The telephone rang, and when my neighbour Dado answered it, his face fell. It looked like he was receiving bad news. After he put the receiver down, I asked him if everything was all right. ‘This is Mrs Liganj, my daughter and I are coming straight away to the flat’ he

⁸³ At the point of writing this, the ‘case’ has still not been settled.

mimicked, 'now I am in trouble'. I knew about Mrs Liganj, because she was one of the people who claimed to be an owner of the flat where he was living. He and his brother lived in the flat opposite mine in the house. The house consisted of five flats. We lived on the top floor, Niko lived on the middle floor and the ground floor was empty. Niko's father and uncle had built the house in 1926. They had, Niko told me, worked very hard to earn enough money to build this house, a point that would sometimes make him quite tearful. When the Socialists had come into government, they had 'nationalised' all property. And this meant that people were suddenly no longer owners of their houses or flats, but instead they were owned by the *narod* [people]. And those people who had more than what was determined as being their fair share of property had been compelled to give it up.

In terms of the house where I lived, Niko's family were no longer able to live in or use the top floor, and it had been divided into two flats. These flats had been 'given' to other families to live in, who had received these flats on the basis of the number of points they had collected. The law determined that people were awarded a flat according to a points system at their place of work. A person was given points on the basis of a wide number of considerations: for example the number of children they had, whether they were married or not, how long they had worked, and whether they had performed active military service or not. And when someone was given a flat, which was organised by their place of work, they were given the right called '*stanarsko pravo*' [Flat dweller's right]. This was a document that stated that they had the right to live in the flat for the rest of their lives. I heard a lot of stories about how people would exchange flats. For example, one person I knew had exchanged her large flat when her children had grown up for two smaller flats, so that her son could have a flat of his own. And this was how the family of my friend had come to live in the flat where I lived. They had exchanged their old flat for this flat, because the family who had been given the flat felt it was too big for their needs.

When Croatia became Independent in 1991 all the flats that had been nationalised in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia became de-nationalised. This meant that the ownership of the flat went back to the previous owners, from whom the flat had been taken. But people with the Flat dweller's right still had the right to live in the flat until they died, and thus although the old owners became the new owners of the flat, they still did not have the right to live in it. The only difference was that a nominal rent was paid to the owners of the flat as opposed to the state. All the members of the family of my neighbour had died, and with their deaths the right for this family to live there had also died. Indeed, there was much discussion and argument between the surviving members of the family surrounding this particular flat. This was because there had been the potential for them to inherit the Flat dweller's right from the previous occupant, if one of them had registered themselves at the police station as living there. Since they had not, the owners were keen on getting the flat back.

About half an hour after the phone call, Mrs Liganj and her daughter appeared. We sat in the kitchen, and Mrs Liganj asked 'so when are you moving out?' 'Not quite yet,' said Dado 'we are trying to find somewhere else to live'. 'I understand this, but I want the keys. I want us to go the *javni bilježnik* [Notary] to register that you have given me the keys' she said. 'I must discuss with the rest of the family about this. I am afraid without their permission I cannot do this. They own the furniture you see' Dado replied. This comment made Mrs Liganj quite cross, and she started commenting about how this was shameful behaviour. Dado told her that the best was that he spoke with his family and then he got in touch with her about their decision. She was commenting that this was not good enough, when he said 'tell me one thing, I meant to say. We will of course want to see the papers that show you are the owner. I mean can you imagine? We could give the keys to the flat to someone who was not the owner, and then the owner would sue my family. I am sure you don't mind my asking'. This made

Mrs Liganj extremely angry, saying she could not believe it, got up and said she was leaving.

We had often spoken about Mrs Liganj, and the mention of her name had always made Dado say he felt nervous. He said that he felt guilty for living in her flat, but he had nowhere else to go. And he said that every now and then he would feel very angry, that the flat where his grandparents had lived for fifty years could get taken away. 'They worked, they did everything they should have done, and now it seems wrong that there is nothing to show for their work' he said once. But he said he was not frightened of being evicted at the moment because of something that Niko had told him. Niko was Mrs Liganj's cousin, and he had told us that there was an enormous argument between Mrs Liganj's family about who were the owners of the flat. She had four sisters, three of whom were dead, and their children had inherited the flat. There were according to Niko's last count nine potential owners. As a result of these arguments where they were suing each other in the court, the flat had no documents. And this Dado said was a *lijepa stvar* [beautiful thing] because without the documents that proved she was an owner he could not be sued.

Never-ending Debate: Doživotno uzdržavanje [Lifelong Care]

Although persons most often said that they wanted the judge to *prepoznati* [recognise] or *potvrditi* [confirm/make hard] the inheritance of the house as quickly as possible, there was one 'situation' concerning the inheritance of property that seemed to create never-ending debate between the family in the courts: the contract of *Doživotnom uzdržavanju* [Lifelong Care].

'I don't know what to do' Marijan lamented. 'If I do it then there will be such problems'. He was talking about a conversation he had been having with his mother. She was an elderly and quite infirm woman who was living alone, since Marijan's father had died about ten years previously. Marijan was the person who looked after her. He visited her

everyday, did her groceries and took on her frequent visits to the hospital. Although he had a brother and sister who lived in Rijeka, they visited her much less frequently, sometimes at the weekends or on public holidays. The flat that Marijan's mother lived in was one where she had Flat dweller's Right, and therefore she did not own it. But she owned a house in a small village in Slavonija. A few days previously she had told Marijan that she had been speaking with a lawyer, who was writing up a contract of Lifelong Care for her.

The contract of Lifelong Care is a contract⁸⁴ that has been signed between two people, where one has signed a statement saying that they will care for the other for the rest of their life. In return for caring for this person, the carer is able to inherit the whole property. This contract, a lawyer told me, was jače [stronger] than a will, since it could exclude everyone from the property, and most importantly there is no 'Necessary part' to property if this contract had been signed. This was the only way, he told me, that someone could guarantee that only one persons or particular persons could inherit the house, where they could exclude their kin from the house.

Marijan's reaction to his mother's news had been one of extreme dilemma. The issue, he said, was that it just made too many problems. He was concerned on two fronts. Firstly, that his brother and sister would never speak to him again if he was to sign this. And secondly that he never wanted his mother to think that the reason he was looking after her was *zbog kuće* [because of the house]. 'Without it, everything is *čist* [clean]. She can never have that *sumnja* [suspicion] that I am looking after her not because of love, but because of the house'. He told me that he had spoken to her about this concern, and that she had told him that it was ridiculous. The reason why she said she wanted him to have the house because she knew he would take good care of it, like he had taken good care of her. 'The house means everything to her. I know how she likes to have it. I know she doesn't like the things the others [his brother

⁸⁴ It is sometimes possible to see in local advertising newspapers, under the 'services' section, adverts where people are offering to look after someone in return for *nekretnine* [property].

and sister] do there, but it makes me 'nervous'. Even if she says she knows I am not looking after her because of the house, everyone else will. I don't want them to think like this'. When I asked him if he wanted to inherit the house on his own, he told me 'of course I do. My friends tell me I am stupid, and that why should they get the house when they have done nothing for my mother? It is such a difficult decision'.

In terms of the commentaries I heard about this contract, it seemed to be an area of particular tension. This was also visible in the suspicion I saw was shown by a family over the attentiveness of someone, who was not 'family', to their elderly mother. For instance, I was at a family meal when everyone was discussing a health visitor who was visiting their mother. One brother said 'she is really very kind. She really cares for mother. When I went to visit her, she was cooking her lunch. She had even gone to the market on her way to her to buy her some fresh fruit'. His sister remarked upon this 'I don't like it. She is getting too close. I cannot help but think she is after something. She keeps asking about the house. Listen to me all of you when I say, don't tell her too much about the house. We must be careful'. This woman was suspicious about the health visitor's attentiveness to her mother, since she was concerned that the motivation behind the health visitors' attentiveness was to form such a contract, in order to inherit the house. Whilst the family was discussing the health visitor, this sister said that she intended to find more time to spend with her mother.

However, like all documents, this contract could be contested in the court, and thus even when it had been signed between two persons it did not make it definite that someone would inherit the house alone. If someone contesting this contract could prove that the deceased was not of sound mind when they had signed the contract, had been forced to sign it under duress, or had been subjected to mental and/or physical abuse by the person caring for them, then the court could decide to annul it. This challenge, a lawyer told me, had more chance of success, if someone had signed such a contract a few months, or less, before their

death. One woman, Ksenija, had been disputing such a contract that her brother had signed with her father in court. She was extremely angry with her brother because of it, but not because he had taken the house. Instead, she repeatedly told me that this was evidence that he had not loved his father as he should have done.

Stalling Techniques

In those situations where the contract of Lifelong Care was being challenged in the court, it could last for a very long time. Instead of being 'solved' in a few months, like in the cases of inheritance where there was no such contract, these cases lasted for years. Some persons, who were in such a situation, told me that they had been arguing about this in the court for nearly a decade.

'The thing is that when it is *riješen* [solved] it is *gotovo* [over]. You must never let it finish. Every time the judge makes a decision you must make a *žalba* [complaint] contesting his decision' Leo advised. 'I know, my lawyers tell me this, but I don't have the nerves or the money anymore' Štefica said tiredly. Štefica lived in America, and had come back to Croatia to contest the contract her brother had signed with her father. She had explained that he had *okoristio se* [used] the fact that she was not living in Croatia to try to steal the house for himself. 'I sent my father money every month to help him. I know that this bastard took that money for himself. He never did anything to help my father. If anyone deserves the house, it is my father's first neighbour Verica. She did everything for him' she said. 'Well stop if you want, but if you do then that is it. He has won', Leo replied.

Many persons told me that in such a situation the best thing to do was to *žaliti se* [to complain] every time the judge made a decision, where by doing so it was the only way to keep the case '*otvoren*' [open]. 'You have to find a good reason, but there is normally always

one that can be found' one man told me. One technique persons told me that they had used was that to make a complaint that they suspected the judge was not neutral, but most often they told me that they had hired a good lawyer⁸⁵, who had managed to keep the case open because they had found a 'piece of the law' that questioned the judge's decision. A point that a number of persons made was that they were purposefully continuing to make *žalbe* [complaints] about the judge's decision because they had heard either on the 'news' or the 'radio' that the law was soon going to change.

Those persons who had signed such a contract with the deceased often expressed regret about having signed the contract because of the lengthy court case. 'I know what he is doing. All these *žalbe* [complaints]. It could go on forever. In the end I will die of old age before I become the rightful owner of this house' one man remarked about a court case he was having with his cousin. He told me that he sometimes thought he would just give up, but then the anger would take over, saying that he would rather die of old age than let that man get the house.

I argue that in the process of inheritance, the judge's decision that a person has the 'Right' to inherit the house, offers only momentary settlement to where the 'difference' between persons lies. During the discussions about the work projects on the house between the owners, the question of who has the 'Right' to work on the house is one that is constantly being discussed. Indeed, I argue that similar to the way that there were momentary pauses in

⁸⁵ In Riles's (2004) writing on the difference she finds between anthropological treatments and legal treatments of property, she argues that

This helps to capture a subtle but fundamental difference between the instrumentalism that anthropological studies of property impute to the object where they ask questions of whose interests property serves, or how the introduction of property relations changes social practices, and lawyers' own valuation of legal means. The ethnographic experience of training lawyers in the uses of their tools has taught me that lawyers value their knowledge in a particular way - not simply as means to an end, or an end in itself, but as pure problem solving means, as technical instruments (Riles 2004: 790).

In Croatia, I would suggest that persons consider lawyers as the instrument through which to find division.

the debates between the owners about work projects on the house, the moment of inheritance is only a temporary division of the house, where the debate is then continued at the house. In those situations where a person has the potential to inherit the house alone, because of the presence of the contract of Lifelong Care persons were visibly working to keep the case 'open' and unresolved. Another point that I see is similar to the debates surrounding the house is that although the law to inheritance gives a form to a persons claim to inheritance, it is also something that can be animated by a person's claim to inheritance. This relation I suggest takes a similar form to the relation between the house and kinship, where the house is both an instrument in the project of kinship, and instrumental in giving a form to this project.

However, a feature of the process of inheritance, that I want to pay particular attention to here, is the transformation, or conversion, of a persons claim to inheritance into 'Evidence' Although persons may say that they have a claim to the house *prema osjećaju* [according to feelings] in order to inherit the house, they must convert this claim into 'Evidence', where this 'Evidence' must be shown and accepted by the judge. It is the judge's acceptance of this evidence that converts a claim into a 'Right'. It is this point that I focus on in order to engage with some of the writing on the concept of substance and code in the anthropological project of kinship.

Substance and code

Earlier I mentioned that Strathern (1992b) has made the argument that in Euro-Americans claims to kinship there is both the presence of both nature and society. And this combination is most visible in anthropological writing on the project of kinship, in particular that body of writing that considers the question of 'what congeals kin together'? (Weston 2001). Although there has been a general agreement within recent writing on kinship over the point that Schneider (1984) made, that kinship should not be considered as being a project of

procreation, one can see a considerable amount written concerning his treatment of the conceptual division found within anthropological theorising on kinship regarding the 'biological' and 'social'. A point that a number of scholars [Carsten 1995, Weston 2001] highlight is that although he questions the division between the biological and social within anthropological theorising on kinship, 'his own analysis simultaneously [and implicitly] relies on their analytical separation' (Carsten 1995: 235). This is a charge that has, as well, been directed at more recent scholarship on kinship that has also sought to challenge this distinction. For example, McKinnon (1995) in a criticism of Weismental's (1995) writing on adoption argues that 'in presenting this critique, she also reproduces the same opposition in her analysis' (McKinnon 1995: 704).

One term that is readily apparent in this writing on 'new' kinship, which seems to bridge this distinction, is that of 'substance-code' (Franklin and McKinnon 2001). Even though Schneider (1984), in his inception of these terms conceived of them as two different quantities, anchored in this difference between the biological and the social, many scholars working with this term do not make a difference between the two. However, there is mention of metaphor. For instance, Hutchison (1996, 2000) discusses the roles of blood, milk, cattle, gun and paper in her discussion of relatedness amongst the Nuer, where she writes 'for like 'blood', 'paper', too, is capable of spanning, whether as metaphor or medium, the experiential extremes of social intimacy and social distance and of human vitality and human vulnerability' (Hutchison 2000: 71). Recently, however, Bamford (2004) in her discussion of the relation between substance and code has voiced the question of whether kinship connections always need to be perceived of as an embodied connection. She asks

Need kinship always be conceptualised as a material bond between people? Put somewhat differently: is there a way of thinking about consanguinity that does not ground it in bodily connectedness, or at the very least, are there ways of understanding consanguinity which see it as something other than a substance-based link between people?' (Bamford 2004: 289).

In the context of Croatia, I would argue that it would seem not. It is paper that they hold as being salient in giving the form, as well as providing the proof to their claims.

*Finding Dokaz [Evidence] or
Papirologija: The Science of Paper*

Laying out One's Claims

I used to speak Niko, my neighbour, a lot about *papirologija* [the science of paper] in our meetings on the staircase. He was constantly commenting about the unnecessary amount of bureaucracy *mali građani* [ordinary citizens; literal translation: small citizens] had to deal with. One day he had told me that he needed to 'dig out' some papers, saying that it might be interesting for my work to see them. He had a large cupboard full of papers. On the left hand side of the cupboard there were files, organised into the categories of house, health and flat. Beside these files was a pile of little hardback books, which were his schoolbooks, where it was recorded what subjects he had studied, and what marks he had received at school. His workbooks were also in this pile, which recorded where and for how long he had worked. Beside these books, were large envelopes with typed copies of letters that he had written to the *općina* [local council] about problems he had been having with his neighbour about the water bill. In various shoeboxes, he kept the receipts for his water, electricity and telephone bills dating all the way back to the 1950's. On top of the shoeboxes were rigid plastic tubes where he kept his birth certificate, his marriage certificate, his certificate of citizenship and his wife's death certificate. When one looked into this cupboard, it seemed that nearly every aspect of Niko's life was contained within these folders, envelopes, shoeboxes and tubes.

The plan was, he told me, that we would first carry all the papers onto the kitchen

table, where we would sort them out, and then return them to the cupboard. And after we had carried the envelopes, folders, shoeboxes and tubes to the table, he proceeded to take each document out of its container, offering a description of what each and every paper meant to him. Each paper had a different story, which he would recount to me. For example, noted in his army books it described how he had been sent to Italy as a *Partizan*. 'I didn't join for ideological reasons', he explained. 'That came later. I joined because my mother had eleven children and there was no food. I was hungry, and people told me that you ate well in the army. I didn't last long because I was shot in the leg'. And the army book attested to the fact that he had been given early retirement because of his injury. His workbook wrote that his *zanimanje* [occupation] was shopkeeper, and that he had also retired 'early' because of his war injury. He told me he had not been an ambitious man, and that although his place of work had asked him to go to Belgrade to be the manager of a shop, he had refused this request because he had not wanted to leave his family or the way of life he had in Croatia. The letters to the council about the water bill were he said evidence of the complicated behaviour of the *prva susjeda* [first neighbour]. She was a bitter woman, he told me, because she could never come to terms with the fact that she was not given the ownership of his flat.

He had shown me this collection of papers with a sense of pride, where he pointed out that he had every paper that he would ever need; saying that 'you never knew when they might be useful'. He told me that sometimes he wanted to throw some of these papers away, but that *iskustvo* [experience] had taught him that this was not a *pametna* [wise] thing to do. No matter how unimportant that particular paper might seem at the time, there was always the possibility that it might come in very useful later on. When he said this I commented to him that it also seemed a shame to do so, and he became most puzzled. 'Why would it be a shame, they don't mean anything' he said.

The Project of Papirologija

Many persons refer to the project of *papirologija* [paper-ology] as a *znanost* [science] or *umjetnost* [art], and one does not have to be in Rijeka for a long period to witness that this project of acquiring documents takes an enormous amount of time, effort, and knowledge. When I asked persons what this word meant to them, they said that knowing what one must do with one's papers was like a science, where a *osoba* [person] had to be careful and exact in the way how they approached them. Those I spent time with constantly complained about the amount of papers they needed to collect, the manner in which those working in these bureaucratic offices treat them, the awkward working times of these offices, and perhaps most of all the 'never-endingness' of this project. It was not uncommon when I was walking down the main pedestrian street in Rijeka, to bump into someone I knew, looking flustered because they were in the middle of 'sorting out some papers'.

The 'State' and the Project of Papirologija

Whenever I asked someone about their reasons for this seeming constant engagement in this project, the figure that they would cite for animating this project was the 'State': 'the State requires these documents', 'I must because of this stupid State', and 'because the State does not work as it should' were some of the responses that persons gave.

Reflecting Weber's (1970) writing on bureaucracy, where he argues that the 'modern state is absolutely dependent on a bureaucratic basis' (Weber 1970: 211), the idea that bureaucracy is a product of the 'State' is a widely held perception in scholarly thought. Inspired by the work of scholars, such as Anderson (1991), this idea that the 'State' can organise its citizens through deploying writing practices as a mechanism of 'control' has quite a robust tradition within wider anthropological writing (e.g. Scott 1998; *contra* Gupta 2001).

This trope⁸⁶ is particularly visible in the writing on citizenship (e.g. Breger), the census (Kertzer and Arel 2002) and on identity documents (Torpey and Caplan 2001). For example, Torpey and Caplan (2001) have argued ‘the documentation of individual identity has become broadly implicated in states’ strategies for keeping track of their populations, rendering them available to policing practices, and categorizing them according to ethnic and other criteria’ (Torpey and Caplan 2001: 11).

Such a perspective, however, does tend to render an impression of actors taking on a passive role in their dealings with the ‘State’. Similar to Jean-Klein’s (2001) observation about the perception held in nationalism studies that political centres animate nationalist projects, in this writing the ‘State’ is often considered to animate the bureaucratic project. However, like the way persons speak about and debate their houses, where they would refer to the house as the cause of their problems, I suggest that persons also animate the ‘State’ in the project of *papirologija*. Not only are persons frequently initiating the project of *papirologija* themselves, but they are also doing so in a most creative fashion.

Connected to this point, as Hansen and Stepputat (2001) have argued the dominant impression one gets from this body of writing is that scholars know at the outset ‘what’ or ‘where’ the ‘State’ is. Nevertheless, some scholars have come to question this vision of the state. Gupta’s (1995) argument in his writing on corruption that ‘it [the state] must be conceptualised in terms far more decentralised and disaggregated than has been the case so far’ (Gupta 1995: 392), and Das and Poole (2004) have stated in their introduction to the collection of essays analysing the margins of the state, that they want ‘to distance ourselves from the entrenched image of the state as a rationalized form of political organisation that

⁸⁶ Within the literature on the ‘end’ of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ‘state’ bureaucratic procedures are have been closely implicated in transforming ‘the difference’ on the ‘grounds’ of ethnicity into practice. This is perhaps most visible in Hayden’s (1992) on the constitution, where he suggests that bureaucratic procedures are instrumental in excluding persons on the grounds of ethnicity.

becomes weakened or less fully articulated along its territorial or social margins' (Das and Poole 2004: 3). The point I make in this chapter is that in a person's movement in the project of *papirologija*, persons recognise the state at quite specific moments. This is when they say that they are *blokiran* [blocked] in their project, and it is at these moments that the 'State' takes on a very concrete figure.

A Seemingly Haphazard Project: Going to the Doctor

Initially, when one follows the way persons engage with this project, it appears that it is one of total disorder. The acquisition of papers seems to be a totally haphazard project, whereby it appears that whether a person will acquire the paper they need or not is totally based on chance.

We left *Korzo* in the direction of *Socijalno* [Social Services]. *Socijalno* is rectangular building made of cement located on the edge of a car park behind *Korzo*, and when we arrived we found that the office we needed was on the second floor. Like in all these buildings there were lots of people carrying folders, either looking for an office or waiting in the corridors. When we got to the office there was a large queue of people, and one woman explained that they [those persons working in the office] were currently on their *marenda* [morning food break]. After some time, three women appeared and went into the office, and the person at the front of the queue went in. when it came to our turn, my friend Mara explained that she wanted to register that she was unemployed. 'Well do you have the *potrvda* [confirmation] from *Socijalno*?' 'They sent me here' Mara replied. 'Well, we cannot do anything about it until you have that, you better go and get it'.

This office for employment is not exactly in the centre of the city, but not far away enough to warrant a bus. So we set off again passing *Korzo*, and crossing the *Mrtvi kanal*

[Dead Canal] we started to walk up the hill to the office. As we were crossing the railway line, Mara was complaining how it was such a stupid place to have this office. 'Why cannot they put everything in the centre? So many people need to get here, and there is only one bus which is very infrequent'. Again, when we got to the building, there were lots of people inside carrying folders. And when we found the office we needed the woman looked at the papers, and explained that one was missing. 'You need to go to *Narodne Novine* ['State' stationary shop] and get one, and fill it in. I cannot give you the *potvrda* [confirmation] without this paper'. So off we set back down the hill, across the *Mrtvi kanal* and onto *Korzo* this time in the direction of *Narodne Novine*. This shop is located behind *Korzo*, and is where one can buy all sorts of documents. The walk took us about half an hour, and Mara was getting increasingly frustrated about the time it was taking. 'I so wanted to sort this out today, and now I won't. There is no way we will get to *Narodne novine*, and then to *Socijalno* whilst they are still all working. *Socijalno* closes for *stranke* [customers] at two, and it is already half past twelve'. When we got to *Narodne novine*, there were lots of people buying papers. The particular one Mara needed cost about one and a half *kuna*, and when she had brought it she put it into her folder. It was at this point she suggested we might go to have a coffee, where she would fill it in.

Although the 'movement' in these projects initially appeared to very haphazard, as I now turn to describe, like all scientific projects there is a certain *red* [order] to the way persons approach this project. This order, I suggest, becomes visible in the movement of acquiring papers. There are a number of issues concerning a person's engagement in the project of *papirologija* that all persons seemed to share, and it is in this section where I draw them out.

Losing Time: Renewing an Identity Card

One of the first things anyone will tell you about the project of *papirologija* is that it is a time consuming process. This was something I observed first hand when I accompanied Darko to the police station. He had to renew his identity card, and since there is no postal service for renewing identity documents, it is necessary to go the police station in person. The police station works for *stranke* [customers] between nine am and two pm. It is a large windowless room, and around its edges are desks, where the people working sit. Each desk has a number, and deals with a different 'set' of papers. For example, desk number eleven is for car number plates, where you go to get your number plates for your car after you have registered it. We went to join the queue at desk number seven, which was the desk for identity cards. When it came to our turn, the lady behind the desk handed Darko a form, and told him to get a stamp from another person sitting in a booth that was surrounded by people on the other side of the room. The stamp that Darko needed was a tax stamp, and nearly every official form requires that you buy one; without the stamp, the form is invalid. We went to the booth and waited out turn, and having got the stamp we returned to the back of the queue at desk number seven. As we were waiting, Darko filled in the form, and when we reached the front of the queue, Darko removed a handful of papers from the folder he was carrying and handed them to the lady at the desk. Getting these papers had been hard work he had told me earlier, and a significant point about documents is that they are not valid if they are more than six months old. For example, when someone gets a birth certificate for renewing their identity card, they have to go to the birth certificate offices to get a copy, which is less than six months old. If the copy is more than six months old then it is invalid.

The lady took these papers, and started to type his *podaci* [details] into the computer. After some minutes of typing, she returned to look at the papers and closely inspected the photograph that was to be put on the identity card. She looked up and said 'no, you can't

renew your identity card'. 'Why not?' Darko asked. 'Because your photograph is not the right size' she replied. 'How is this so?' he questioned, 'I went to the place I always go to for these photos'. She explained that the rules concerning the size of photographs had changed, because the style of identity cards had altered. And she also told Darko that he would have to buy a new form when he came again because he had written the date, and no changes could be made on the form. Upon hearing this, Darko flew into a rage 'you people just cannot help. You always have to make it so difficult. I phoned a colleague of yours and she told me what I needed, and made no mention of the change in size of photographs. I have brought everything she told me to bring, and now you tell me the rules have changed. Did this happen in the last twenty-four hours?' he asked. Her response was that he had been misinformed, and that the person giving the information obviously did not know what they were talking about. She said 'there is nothing I can do. I cannot renew your identity card with the wrong photograph. Go and get a new photo of the right size, get a new form and then I will renew it'. 'Does this country want us to work?' he shouted, 'now I will have to take more time off work to get an identity card that I don't even want'. He was very angry, and his anger surprised me because he had told me previously that he was resigned to the fact that *papirologija* was always a problem. But his anger appeared to have an effect on the lady working at the desk because she seemed to soften a little. She told him that if he was quick he could get the new photograph, and be back before a quarter past two, which was fifteen minutes after the police station 'officially' closed.

Her reaction surprised me even more, and as we left the police station I asked Darko about why he had got so angry, and why she had suddenly become helpful. He told me that you had to fight in such situations, and that if he had not reacted in this angry way, she would not have let him return fifteen minutes late. 'They expect it', he said, 'if you don't shout, then they ignore you completely'. This comment he made, about having to fight, was something I

had been advised to do on more than a few occasions when dealing with *papirologija*.

Keeping the Order: Registering the Car

The ‘science of documents’, however, is not only formed around a person’s ability to get themselves, and the right pieces of paper to the right offices at the right time. Another reason why those around me voiced the project of *papirologija* as being such a challenging endeavour is because of the way in which all documents are connected. As I draw out in the following example, it is more than apparent that persons have to carefully consider when making a change on one document how this will affect other documents.

I was sitting at a café with Katarina and her husband, where we were talking about what we had been doing that day. ‘I finally got around to renewing my identity card’ Katarina announced to her husband. ‘You did what?’ he asked. ‘I renewed my identity card, you know the old one that has been out of date for ages’. ‘Well, just as long as you did not ask them to change your name or address’ he replied⁸⁷. Katarina had recently got married, and moved into a new flat with her husband. ‘I did, what is the problem with that?’ she questioned, to which her husband pointed out that they would not be able to re-register the car, which was due to be registered that week. Her husband became quite agitated, saying that he could not believe she had done something so silly, and now there would be problems. Katarina was confused by his response, and asked him how could the fact that she had changed her surname and address affect the registering of the car. As she showed us, the person in the Police Station had given her a temporary identity card. Her husband explained ‘the car is registered in your name. You were registered as living in Zagreb on your identity card, and because of that you have Zagreb number plates on your car. Now you have registered yourself in Rijeka you will have to get

⁸⁷ Everyone is required by the law to register themselves at an address, which is the address that is written on all ‘official’ documents.

Rijeka number plates. This means that we will now have to change the number plates on the car and they will have to change all the documents of the car. Do you realise how much time this will take?’ He continued ‘not only this, but I don’t know if it is possible at all. Your surname on all the car documents is Tomas, and it says on your temporary identity card that it is Sergo. There is no photo so how can we prove to the people at the testing centre that you are the same person?’ They concluded that they would try to solve this problem by taking their marriage certificate with them, as well as Katarina’s passport when they went to register the car.

This difficulty that people have in getting hold of their documents, as well as ensuring that a change on one document does not invalidate other documents all contributes to the feeling of immense frustration that those around me displayed when engaging in the project of *papirologija*. Whenever anyone I knew was about to embark on acquiring a document they wanted, they never seemed to be sure that they would actually acquire the document they needed; or they would find out that because of a change on another document they faced serious complications. When I used to ask persons, who said that they had taken a day off work, or had used a free day to sort out their papers, whether they had been successful in sorting out what they wanted, their response was more often than not a list of frustrations. Frequently, they would say that they had to collect some more papers because someone in the offices had said a crucial document was missing. A widely shared perspective audible in discourses on the project of *papirologija* was that these problems were because of the ‘state’. As one informant told me the complications surrounding *papirologija* was a scheme by the ‘State’ to ensure that ‘Citizens’ could not do what they wanted.

Unresolved Papers

It is not only that documents are difficult to get hold of, or that they take time to find,

that made the project of *papirologija* such a problematic endeavour. A complaint I very frequently heard about *papirologija* by someone who was sorting out their papers, was that there was often a difference between what was written was happening on a document, and what was actually happening in practice. I first of all give an example of this inconsistency ‘on the ground’.

I had accompanied someone, who was having the exact coordinates of his house measured by a *geodet* [land surveyor]. He had been having an argument with his neighbour about the boundaries of his garden, and wanted the land surveyor to tell him exactly where his plot of land ended. As we were watching the land surveyor take his measurements, we could see that something was not quite right. Rather than measuring the coordinates and placing markers on the grass, he was constantly looking at his papers in a confused manner. ‘Is there a problem?’ I asked him. ‘Yes, a big one’ he replied. ‘This bloody village is *naopako* [upside down and back to front]. I will have to come back with a colleague to work this out, I cannot do this alone’. The problem was, he explained, that someone had, he suspected, been drunk when drawing up the map, and they had written down the wrong coordinates for the village. This meant that according to the map the houses were where the road was, which resulted in everything being out of ‘synch’. He told me that his boss had told him to subtract ten metres from every measurement, and that would be ‘about right’, which as he said was acceptable for a rough estimate, but unacceptable for more refined measurements that were needed in a dispute between neighbours. I asked him why they did not draw a new map with the correct co-ordinates, but he explained that this would be an impossible amount of work, because all the other documents would have to change. All the ownership papers would then have the wrong or right coordinates written on them, and it was easier this way, he explained.

Not quite 'Clean'

A term persons often used to describe documents that were not resolved, or where something 'did not make sense' was they were not quite 'clean'. In my conversations on *Korzo*, the topic of conversation frequently turned to documents concerning *nekretnine* [property], particularly flats or houses, where they appeared to be an especially problematic area of the project of *papirologija*. Frequently persons would make the point that the papers were not *čist* [clean] when a person was talking about documents pertaining to property. I briefly take some time now to describe the critical documents that are connected to houses. Each house has a number, which is located in the *katastar* [land registry]. The land registry takes the form of an enormous book where each page represents an area of land. The drawings in the land registry are very detailed, and on the occasions when I went to the land registry offices and asked for a copy of the page where a particular house was located, the officials would have to use a magnifying glass to locate the number of the house in question. There are two 'critical' documents concerning house ownership: the *gruntovnica* and the list of ownership. The *gruntovnica* is a drawing of the 'structure' of the house, which describes the size of the house in square metres and the site where the house is located. The list of ownership is a written account of the house or land parcel. On this document it writes what the 'function' is of the land, or building. For example, a building is described as being a family house, or a building for business, and land can be described as a vineyard or meadow. This document also describes who the owners of the property are, and whether the property is under mortgage.

Viewing a flat

'If you ever want to buy a house or a flat you must go to look at the land registry' one man told me. 'You must make sure the papers of the house are 'clean'. And if they are not

clean, no matter how much you like the flat you must walk away'. This term clean was one I heard persons often employ when they were looking at flats they might buy, often remarking that they had found a flat but that its papers were not clean. I found it very informative to accompany persons, who were planning to buy a flat or a house, on their flat searching projects, and one time I accompanied a married couple, Marta and Tome, to look at a flat that they thought sounded 'interesting'. That morning we had arranged to visit the flat with an estate agent. The flat fulfilled the requirements they wanted: it was in quite a new building; it had central heating; a view of the sea and two bedrooms, and I could see that Marta was very excited by it as we were looking around.

Marta and Tome had spent a long time looking for flats, and they never seemed to be quite right. There was only one thing about this flat that was slightly odd, and this was that one of the bedrooms was in a much worse state of repair than the rest of the flat. All the other rooms seemed to have been very recently decorated apart from this one room. We had all remarked upon it, and the Estate Agent had said nothing at the time. However, as we were standing in the living room, Tome asked the Estate Agent whether the papers were clean. 'Yes they are. The owners have full 'ownership'. But there is one strange little thing' he said. Marta's face fell, 'what?' she asked. 'Well, they don't actually own that room', he explained pointing to the room, which had not been decorated, 'the neighbours do'. 'How?' asked Tome. 'Well on the land registry there was some mix up and they got the room drawn on their *gruntovnica*. But they still let them use it. It really is never a problem' he said, 'they pay some nominal rent to use it'.

The next day I went with Marta to the land registry to look at the papers of the flat, and sure enough that room was recorded as being owned by the neighbours. She had asked someone working there whether it was possible to buy the room from the neighbours, and their response had been that it was possible, but extremely problematic. The problem being

that they would have to go to court to sort it out, because the neighbours would not be able to sell only one room if it was not registered as being separate. Therefore the court would have to make a separate entry for this room, which the neighbours could then sell. This, the man working in the land registry told us, could take a very long time. As we were walking from the offices, Marta was extremely forlorn. 'There is no way we can buy it' she told me. 'I am so frustrated by this. Whenever we find a flat there is always some bloody problem. We will never find a flat. This 'State' is in such a mess'. 'Can you not just use the room as the current owners are doing?' I asked. 'We could, but what if these neighbours move out. And then we get some who are not normal. They could block off the room and use it for themselves. It is not worth the risk' she replied.

'Sorting out' the Problem

Nearly everyone told me that *veza* [connections] were the only way to be 'successful' when dealing with *papirologija*. The best way to describe how I observed those around me felt about 'Connections' was that they were something they had to use. One woman told me, when I asked her about the term 'Connections' that 'you have to know exactly where to go, who to speak to, and when they work. If you go as 'just someone off the street' then you have no chance of success. You need *veze*'. Again, the 'State' was closely implicated in this need to use 'Connections', where if it 'worked as it should' then finding a 'Connection' would not be necessary.

The direct translation of *veza* (sing. *veza*; pl: *veze*) is connection, and in the context of *papirologija*, a 'Connection' is a person who connects you to someone else, who can help you sort out your papers. Perhaps the most important quality to note at this point about 'Connections' is that when someone says that they need to find a 'Connection' to help them with a problem they are referring to both a person and a connection simultaneously. Persons

do not make an analytical distinction between the two.

Korzo: A Shared Starting Point

A large part of the ethnographic data I gathered for the purpose of this account comes from the time I spent on *Korzo*, the largest pedestrian street in Rijeka. One of the reasons why I chose to spend so much time on *Korzo*, was that whenever I heard someone mention they had a problem with their documents, the person listening would advise that they should perhaps go and walk on *Korzo*. No matter what time of the day it is (and also at night if the weather is warm), one always gains a sense of activity on *Korzo*. Particularly on a working day, the cafés that stretch along the length of *Korzo* are nearly always full of people, either taking a break from work or from their shopping. Not only is it lined with shops, with the main *placa* [food market] not being very far away; but any ‘events’ such as the carnival parade, the celebration of New Year, or protest gatherings are also held on *Korzo*, and often there are speakers blasting out loud music. Such is the number of people on this street that persons I knew well, told me that when they were in a great rush, they would purposefully avoid walking on *Korzo*, saying that it was impossible to walk through it without bumping into someone they knew.

Sometimes I had arranged to meet someone there, but very often I would bump into someone I knew and sit down to have a coffee⁸⁸ with them. My ‘bumping into people’ was

⁸⁸ I observed that having coffee at a café was often an opportunity for someone to air their problems about something that was bothering them, which could include, but was not exclusively related to ‘family problems’. Some of the writing on coffee shops (eg Dubisch 1996; Kennedy 1986), has described how the practice of visiting a coffee is strictly a male activity. Going for a coffee in Rijeka is not an activity defined by gender. In terms of the distinction Cowan (1990) makes of coffee shops in Northern Greece, between the *Kafeino*, the *Zaharoplastio* and the *Kafeteria*, the coffee shops in *Korzo* were like these *Kafeteria*.

Although, one could not frame coffee drinking relations in terms of gender, I did observe that there was a certain degree of intimacy between persons who were on coffee drinking terms. Often I would hear of someone describe their relation with an acquaintance as ‘someone they knew, but not someone they knew well enough to drink coffee with’.

quite ‘engineered’ where I would often wait to see if I could find someone I knew, and soon I realised I was not alone in doing this. For different reasons, lots of people I met were engaged in the same project, looking to find someone they knew who could help them sort their problems with their papers. Like everything connected with the project of *papirologija*, seeking out a ‘Connection’ can take quite a considerable amount of time. Some persons I spoke to said it had taken them weeks to find the right ‘Connection’. When someone was looking for a ‘Connection’, it was often the case that besides from *Korzo* they would go to a place they knew well, such as a café, to speak to friends or acquaintances about the problem they had with the ‘State’. It was through these conversations with others where they could work out whether that person might be a ‘Connection’. Thus, although a person might not know their ‘Connection’ ‘personally’, they would find someone else who did, or someone else who knew someone else who knew them.

Related to this, I observed that ‘Connections’ are most often formed around the document. Many persons were unsure of who would be necessary as a ‘Connection’ until the moment when they needed to sort out a document. As a result, I often heard those around me say that they never knew who could be helpful, and would sometimes refer to a person whom they had met as ‘a potentially very good *veza*’ who could be very helpful later on. For example, once on *Korzo* I bumped into one man I knew well, who told me in a very pleased fashion that a friend had just introduced him to a judge. He showed me the judge’s business card, and said ‘this is one to keep. She could be very useful’.

Planning Permission

Before turning to analyse how *veze* work in more detail, I now give an example of ‘Connections’ in action.

I was walking down Korzo with one friend, Marko, when we bumped into Vlado who was someone we knew. After we shook hands, I asked him how things were? 'Drugged' he said. He told us that he was taking sedatives to calm himself because his life was over. 'What has happened?' asked Marko. 'Let's drink something' Vlado said 'and I will tell you'. The problem, he told us, was that he had been having an argument with his neighbour about his house, who was now threatening court proceedings. His neighbour claimed that this house was built on his land. 'Ten centimetres, because of only ten centimetres they will knock it down' he lamented. 'No they won't' Marko said 'if it goes to the court they will force your neighbour to sell this piece of land. I heard a story like this, and that is what the judge decided'. 'I am telling you, they will knock it down' Vlado said. 'I don't have planning permission. They are knocking everyone's houses down. They showed it on the news last night how they knocked that Inspectors house down'. There had been a purge that summer to demolish all those houses that had been built without planning permission, and almost nightly on the news, images had been shown of bulldozers at work on these houses. There were reports showing politicians having their houses demolished, as well as planning permission inspectors, and in light of this it did seem that Vlado was right, there was a large chance they would knock his house down. 'And it gets worse' he said. 'My wife does not know. I lied to her. She kept asking me to organise planning permission, and I was so busy with the building that I did not get around to it. So in the end I lied and told her that I had got permission. She will kill me'. It seemed difficult to know what to say that might console him, the situation did appear to be very bad. But Marko, rather than attempting to console him, took out his mobile phone. 'Where are you?' he asked the person on the phone. 'Listen, I am in Café Zagreb, can you come? It is very important' 'My Uncle is coming,' he told us 'I saw him earlier and he might be able to help'. About ten minutes later, Marko's Uncle appeared and sat down. 'What is the problem?' he asked. 'Vlado has a big problem' Marko said, and Vlado proceeded to

explain the nature of the problem. Having heard the story, Marko's Uncle said 'what you need is to get planning permission which has been backdated. And I know someone who works in the planning permission offices who might be able to help with that. And he owes me a favour'. And with that he took out his mobile phone, 'where are you?' he asked the person on the phone. 'Super, can we meet for a drink? I need a favour'. Having spoken on the phone, he said to us 'I will meet him now for a drink, and you wait here. I will be back later'.

We sat nervously for about half an hour, waiting for Marko's Uncle to return. Vlado was a builder, and whilst we were waiting had been promising Marko that he would build him or his uncle anything they wanted if they could sort it out. He had also told Marko that he felt very uncomfortable, that he had not told us this problem because he wanted a favour. Marko's response to this had been that he should not be stupid, if he could help then what was the problem. When Marko's Uncle returned, he told us 'there is one very important thing. Does your neighbour know you don't have planning permission? Has he told you he knows this?' Vlado said that he thought he did not, although he worried his neighbour suspected this. 'Right, well as long as he does not know it can be sorted out for sure. My friend says he can do this, and told me to tell you to phone him. This is his number', he said. 'How can I repay you?' said Vlado, to which Marko's uncle said that they would discuss that later, when everything was sorted out.

When I asked Marko some time later whether Vlado had got planning permission, he said that he had. 'And does your Uncle have a new house?' I asked. 'No' he smiled. 'But his friend is getting a new floor on his house'.

Owing a Favour, but not Money

A critical feature about 'Connections' is that they involve a 'favour'. I would often hear someone speak of a 'Connection' in terms of being 'indebted'. White (2000) in her

discussion of favours in Turkey writes that ‘rather than seeking closure through counter-gifts, people try to keep relations open-ended; that is, to remain indebted’ (White 2000: 127). In the case of ‘Connections’, it is the other way around; it is keeping someone indebted that retains the connection, and thus keeps the relation active. Most persons say that they do not like being indebted, because they were never sure when the person to whom they owed a favour would ask for a favour in return.

One point about the ‘type’ of favour used in repaying a ‘Connection’, is that although goods and services are repayments, money is not involved. Pine (2002), in her examination of money in Poland, has written that ‘the use of money was subject to various unspoken, but commonly understood restrictions. There were situations in which it would have been inappropriate to use money at all, or in which if money did change hands the transaction masked and its direct nature disguised’ (Pine 2002: 76). And certainly, in the case of *veza* the explicit transfer of money would be inappropriate⁸⁹

The Creativity of Veza

It is through this work of finding a ‘Connection’, that I suggest those working with documents are able to animate the project of *papirologija* as a means to their own ends. For example, one man I knew wanted to get a mortgage to buy a flat. He was having problems getting a mortgage because he worked for a private firm, as opposed to a State one. Mortgage providers were very hesitant in giving out mortgages to those who worked in private firms

⁸⁹ Persons find no difference when money is involved, saying that this is *mito* [bribery]. Here they say that the persons ‘in’ the relation do not change. For example, a doctor/patient, or Police Officer/citizen remains the same, where the money does not make them friends like in the case of ‘Connections’ and favours. A site that persons very often connected with bribery was hospitals and doctors. The accounts they gave often offered a similar story, which was that a relative of someone was seriously ill and had been asked by a doctor for money. Persons said that the practice of bribery was totally immoral. However, they also said that in some cases, as when someone was seriously ill, using bribery was a much more effective way of ‘solving the problem’. This, they said, was because ‘Connections’ could often be very unreliable, since the favour was never ‘called’ at the same time. Thus, for extremely serious situations where time was of the essence persons said that bribery was often more effective.

because of the 'risk'. As a result, he was required to show the bank a vast list of documents. One of these documents referred to his salary, which had to be three times more than the proposed monthly mortgage payment. He was not earning this, but he was very delighted because he had been able to persuade his boss to certify *na papiru* [on paper] that he was earning more than he actually was. And as he started to run through all the papers required by the bank, almost at every point he referred to how a 'Connection' had helped him. In the end, I realised that none of the papers he was giving to the bank reflected his 'true' financial status. They were all written in a way to make his mortgage claim stronger. When I asked him about this, about what happened if the bank started to investigate his papers a little more closely, he told me they would not, giving the reason that he had a 'Connection' in the bank, who would ensure this would not happen.

Subsequently, it is not only the case that when a person is faced with a bureaucratic problem - such as a lack of planning permission as in the previous example - that they engage in the project of *papirologija*. They often instigated a bureaucratic procedure with a specific aim in mind, and were able to manoeuvre their documents in the bureaucratic 'system' in order to achieve this aim. Thus, I argue it is not the case that people are engaging in bureaucratic procedures when they were faced with a demand from the 'State'.

Bez Veze [Without 'Connections']

However, I would not wish to offer a portrait of everyday life in Rijeka that gives the impression that everyone can creatively engage with the project of *papirologija* through the use of 'Connections'. The phrase *bez veze* literally means 'without connections', but it is one that is also used to describe something that is not working, not good, or not important. For example if someone did not enjoy a meal or a film, they might describe it as being '*bez veze*'. During fieldwork I met quite a few persons who were unable to find a 'Connection', and it is

in this next part of the chapter where I turn to look at some instances when a person does not have 'Connection'.

Work Experience

One day on *Korzo* I had been sitting with a group of people, where the topic of conversation was what to do that evening. Since it was winter, and very cold, no one felt they wanted to go out that evening, and one person suggested that everyone go to his flat. He told us that he had a very good bottle of French wine, that everyone should come to drink. One person commented 'aha, French wine, very fancy. What did you win on the *kladionica* [betting shop]?' 'No. I did not buy it, I got given it for a favour' said he said, 'I helped a friend with her daughter's work experience. She needed to prove she had done work experience so I signed a form saying that she had been to work at our firm' he explained. 'So she did not actually do any work experience?' I asked. 'No' he replied, 'I only met her when she came to collect the form'. 'Easy for some' another person commented ruefully. 'I had to spend a month working in this terrible office. What I would have done to be able to avoid that. The boss was terrible'. 'Why didn't you try to find a *veza* for that?' another person asked. He told us that he had asked his father for some help with this, but his father had refused. 'I think my father was trying to prove a point. That being an *ekonomist* [economist/business person] was a terrible choice of profession. He wanted me to follow him and become a lawyer. I should have listened to him' he told us, 'look at me. I have no work. The only way to find a job is *preko veze* [through connections]. Upon hearing this, one person sitting there vehemently started to comment that this 'State' was a *katastrofa* [catastrophe], where nothing worked as it should; a point that the others all agreed was the case.

Lack of 'Connections' and Lack of Citizenship

Quite frequently I observed, though, that those persons who could not find *veza*, were also those persons who did not have citizenship. In order for anyone to engage in the project of *papirologija*, they must have a 'J.M.B.G'. Without this number, persons told me they cannot 'do anything'. For instant, they cannot attend school, or access health care. Almost every document requires this number, where even application forms for promotional competitions offered by 'private' companies ask for this number. Persons most often acquire this number when they acquire citizenship, but it is possible for a person without citizenship to acquire it if they have a residency or work permit.

Cannot Find the 'Connection': Failed 'Connections'

A number of persons, who had citizenship to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, did not acquire citizenship to Croatia. Although they were working on their application to citizenship, they said that they had these claims continuously rejected.

Dragan was a school friend of some people I knew, who was trying to gain Croatian citizenship. He had been born in Rijeka, and told me that he had left as a result of what he described as 'political reasons'. His father, he said, had been an officer in the *JNA* [Yugoslavian people's army], and because of this his whole family had moved to Belgrade at the beginning of the war. He had not been back to Rijeka since then, but said that for him Rijeka was always '*doma*' [home]. It was because of this that he wanted to get Croatian citizenship, so he could return to live in Rijeka now the *situacija* [situation] was better. He told me that the only documents he had were the papers given to him by the UNHCR, which allowed him to travel to Croatia for a period of two months to sort out his 'papers'.

One evening I had met up with him and some other friends in order to see how his pursuit for citizenship papers was going. He was in a very despondent mood, saying that he

was on the verge of giving up. He told us that he was being sent from one office to another in order to find yet another piece of paper. 'They never say no in these offices, they just send you somewhere else' he told us. Upon hearing his story, one friend told him 'you are being stupid. There is no way you will get your *domovnica*⁹⁰ [Certificate of Citizenship] with these papers from the UN. Those *babe*⁹¹ don't care in these offices for these papers. You need *veza* and that is it'. 'And even if you complain that they are ignoring these papers from the UN, by the time they come to sort out your complaint you will be too old to move anywhere' another person interrupted. This comment brought much laughter from the people sitting at the table, where they were joking that if he tried to get his Certificate of Citizenship by complaining then he would get his papers when he was eighty years old.

'Don't you know anyone who could help?' someone asked. 'What about your Aunt? Maybe she knows someone'. He was staying with his Aunt whilst he was in Rijeka. Dragan explained that his Aunt was the last person who would help him, saying that she was frightened that he was even staying with her. 'She tells the neighbours that I am the son of a school friend of hers visiting from Germany', he told us, 'she is terrified that someone with *P.T.S.P* [post-traumatic stress disorder] will blow her flat up'. 'You need someone in *M.U.P* [Ministry of Interior], that is the only way' another person said. One person sitting at the table was a Police officer, and someone said 'Hrvoje, you are the *murjak* [slang for Police officer], can't you find someone?' Hrvoje said that he had already tried, and that it needed to be someone in the Ministry in Zagreb. The conversation continued in this way, with everyone suggesting someone they might be able to ask who might know someone in the Ministry.

A few weeks later I saw one school friend of Dragan's, and asked him if he had any news of Dragan. He told me that Dragan had gone back to Belgrade. I was surprised by this, and asked him how it was that no one had been able to find a 'Connection'. 'The whole thing

⁹⁰ Certificate of citizenship. I discuss this in detail in Chapter Seven

⁹¹ *Baba* [pl. *babe*] is a derogatory term to describe for older women.

is a *sramota* [shameful]' they said. 'Our friend has become a real *drot*⁹². He could have helped, but he did not want to. He said it would make him problems at work, because of who Dragan's father is'. 'You are being too hard', said another friend, 'it is perfectly understandable. You don't think about it enough. It could have really made him problems. It is not like he was asking for help with a fine for drunk driving or something. Dragan was naïve to think that he could try now, he should have waited longer before trying'.

Dragan's inability to acquire a *domovnica* reflects many stories I heard about the failure of 'Connections' in connection with citizenship. During fieldwork, I only met one person who had been able to acquire citizenship through 'Connections', where he made the point that this person had put themselves in great danger by doing so. And this was a point I heard repeated frequently: being a 'Connections' for this situation was too dangerous, or as in the case of Dragan helping someone with these papers could make too many problems for the person who was a potential 'Connection'.

Invoking the 'State': Lack of Citizenship

'Can you do me a favour?' asked Ismet, one day when we had met for a coffee. 'Some woman is coming from London to visit us, and I need someone who can help interpret'. Ismet worked for a Roma society, which often had visits from NGO's from outside of Croatia. I agreed and on the day she arrived he told me that we were going to look at some villages outside of Rijeka, in order 'to show her the *situacija* [situation]'.

When we arrived at the first 'village', the initial house we stopped at looked half built from the outside. The 'owner' of the house was waiting outside, and called us in to have a coffee. Whilst drinking coffee, he and his wife were explaining to the N.G.O. from London the problems they were facing. The key problem, he explained to her, was that they did not

⁹² *Drot* is a derogatory term for Police officer.

have citizenship, even though he said his family had been living in this village for more than seven hundred years. A consequence of this, he said, was that he could not buy the house that they were living in. 'What is the point of investing in this house, when I don't own it. They could throw us out anytime they want. It is a risk' he told us. 'And you have tried to get citizenship?' the N.G.O. asked. 'Of course, but the 'State' always finds a reason why we cannot have it' he replied. 'And what is the reason?' she asked. 'Because we are *Rom* [Roma]' he said, 'they do not want us here'. And standing up he retrieved a folder from a shelf, 'but look I am a *branitelj* [war veteran], I fought in the *Domovinski rat* [war] he said, whilst showing us a piece of paper that certified his status as a *branitelj*. As the conversation continued, the discussion turned to how the State's racist policies were a particular problem for Roma living in Croatia. And it was in this discussion that he said 'We are *Hrvati* [Croats] as well as being *Rom*. 'Look, we are Catholics' pointing to a cross, and a Croatian *grb* [crest] hanging on the wall. It was then that he called his daughter to come. She was about five years old, and had been playing outside when we had arrived. 'Look at her. She is a *Hrvatica* [Croat]. Even her hair is blonde. But they do not want her' he told us.

After we had finished our coffee, we were standing outside the house. All the houses in the nearby vicinity were in pretty much the same state of repair. Some had no roof and had tarpaulin tied on them in the form a makeshift roof, others had plastic sheeting in the holes that had been made for windows. Other people were living in metal cargo-containers. There was one house, however, which stood apart from the others in the way it looked. It looked 'finished', was freshly painted, and had a very well kept garden surrounding it. The N.G.O. pointed it out, asking if they this neighbour was also Roma. Ismet answered that he was, and she asked him if he owned his house. 'He does' replied Ismet, whereupon she asked him how it was he had got citizenship and had been able to buy his house when no one else could. 'He has a house like this, and he has a Certificate of Citizenship because he has 'Connections' '

Ismet explained. 'Well can't he help you with this then, if he knows who can help?' she asked. 'He won't help us. He is a *Veliki Hrvat* [Great Croat] now. He does not want to be *Rom* anymore, he has forgotten who he is' Ismet explained.

It was during these conversations with those persons living in Croatia, who did not have citizenship, that the term *narodnost* became particularly visible. Everyone, who was in this position, said it was because they were the 'wrong' [*krivi*] *narodnost*. They would employ the term *blokiran* [blocked], where they would say that they were blocked because of their *narodnost*. I suggest that like at the house, where persons had to have a claim of ownership to the house to look for the difference between themselves and the other owners, those persons without a claim to the 'State' also had to have a claim of ownership to the 'State', that of 'Citizenship'. Without this claim, they did not have the right to work on the 'State'.

Movement

The impression one gets of movement is particularly striking in the project of *papirologija*, where persons seem to be constantly rushing between the various offices in Rijeka. But, there is a form to this movement. It is not a haphazard one, where persons do not know where they are going. There is a certain method in this project. It is when persons are engaging in this project, that the 'State' becomes particularly visible when they are still. Most often persons would invoke the issue of the 'State' as being a problem when they were sitting in a café considering who to find as a 'Connection'. Indeed, often they would offer this point to others when they were looking for a 'Connection'.

'Connections', I suggest, take on the form of 'a difference', where it is the favour in this relation that makes 'the difference'. It is only when difference is found that a person is able to be an 'agent' in the project of *papirologija*. Even then, persons can never be certain of

this 'difference', since the transaction or favour is not exchanged at the moment of finding the connection. However, it does make a point, I would argue, about how persons conceive of difference: as being an artefact that they must find in order to be agents in the project of *papirologija*. Here, they find this difference in others, where to become agents they find difference in the relation (*cf* Strathern 1988). In this way, I suggest that like many scholars persons are also looking for the difference between the 'State' and 'Civil Society', which is a difference that is never settled.

Nevertheless, as I have described this is not the possible for everyone. Those persons who were invoking the 'State' as a problem, and did not have citizenship, were most often those persons without 'Connections'. And thus, they were blocked in the project of *papirologija*. I suggest that they were not able to animate the 'State' in this way because they were not a 'part of' the 'State'. In order for persons to be able to be an agent in the project of *papirologija*, and to be able to find difference 'in' others, their claim to be a part of 'the State' had to be 'settled'.

Interested Observers: Animating the Debate about 'Family Tombs'

An Apparent Difference

I observed when walking around the graveyards, and when held in contrast to the great activity occurring at family houses, that the graveyards seemed a very tranquil place. Although, it is always possible to see activity in the graveyards, where persons are cleaning tombstones, lighting candles, walking about or arranging flowers, the activity in the graveyards seems often to be a solitary pursuit. Most persons working on the tombs are on their own, or are in small groups. Some persons said they went on a daily basis as part of their daily routine to visit the grave of their family, whilst others said that they only went on particular occasions, such as on the anniversary of a person's death, or when it was a holiday. During the working day, it was perhaps more noticeable that there were retired people from the older generations, but it would not be possible to say when I was in the graveyards that I saw one particular generation of person more present than others.

Indeed, I never heard of persons complain in the same way about their family tomb as they did about their family house. No one said that they were facing problems because of their tomb, or that it was normal for a person to have problems 'in the family' because of a tomb. And at first, the impression one gets of the project of kinship in the graveyards is that it seems in almost direct contrast to the impression one gets of kinship at family houses. It is this apparent contrast I explore in this chapter, since I suggest that it draws out the salient part

observers have in the project of 'family'.

Graveyards in Rijeka

In Rijeka there are three graveyards located in three different parts of the city: Kozala, Trsat and Drenova. Drenova is the newest graveyard and was opened in the 1970's, Trsat in 1912, and Kozala in the nineteenth century. The graveyard in Kozala is the largest, divided by wide pathways between the tombs. The Trsat graveyard is very similar but on a smaller scale. However, the Drenova graveyard is slightly different. The first thing one notices is the lack of trees in comparison to the densely wooded graveyards of Kozala and Trsat. There is also a sense of much more space there, and one can see a number of places that are prepared for new graves. In contrast, the graveyards in Kozala and Trsat seemed almost cluttered.

I spent the most time in graveyard in Kozala, where to walk from one end of the graveyard to the other end takes about ten minutes. When one walks through the graveyard it is possible to see a variety of burial sites. There are large mausoleums, often built in the last century bearing the Italian sounding names; more recently constructed family tombs made of marble; as well as wall-like structures that hold coffins and bear a plaque for the family buried there. Most of the inscriptions on the headstones bear a title, which is the name of the family who is buried there. One takes it to be a family because it writes *Obitelj* [family] before the name, such as *Obitelj Mrvica* [Family Mrvica] for example. Underneath the name of the family, are the names of the people who are buried there, as well as their date of birth and their date of death. Often beside these names is a black and white photograph of the person buried there that has been printed on enamel. Not always do the people buried in the tomb share the same surname as the name of the family. Sometimes there is an engraved symbol on the tombstone. Some are 'religious symbols': of a cross, or a crescent; others bear an engraved symbol of corn, and yet others have a star.

Beside the headstone on these tombs, one can frequently see a small urn like container in which people keep matches to light candles, or cloths for cleaning the graves. On top of the marble slab there are often vases containing displays of either freshly cut flowers, or plastic ones. There are also candles, kept in plastic containers that you can purchase at the same time as the candle. These containers come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes: hearts, capellas, pyramids, or lanterns. Sometimes they have a cross on them, or the Croatian *grb* [crest]. The colour of the candles are in the main either red, white, and blue; but I did see some yellow, green and purple ones.

Added to this, one can see a variety to the material that the headstones are constructed with. One can only find stone headstones in the older graveyards of Kozala and Trsat. These headstones are often much larger and more ornate than the headstones made of marble, which are most often rectangular in shape. There are sculpted stone cherubs or crosses on some of them, and a number have a little metal fence around the actual rectangle where the people are buried. They, too, have the name of the family buried there in the form of a title, and according to the dates of when they were buried, they are much older. It was rare to see on these headstones a photograph of the people who were buried there, and in contrast to the colourfulness of the marble headstones I noticed that quite a few of these graves have got no flowers on them. Although some had decorations, many seemed to be almost abandoned.

The headstones that are made of wood are often in the shape of a cross or a green board. The spot where the person is buried is not clad in a marble or stone slab. These graves are also decorated with flowers and candles. Unlike the marble headstones, or the stone headstones there is no title of the family name of the people buried there, and when one looks at the names on the board or cross it is often possible to see that only one person is buried there. One elderly lady, whom I had met in front of her husband's grave, which was decorated by a wooden cross and immaculately kept, told me that she was sometimes ashamed she did

not have marble grave for him. 'People might say that he is not loved because his grave is *jadan* [poor]', she said, 'but it is not true. I am not rich enough to buy a marble gravestone. They are so expensive. I know people who have taken out a loan to have a marble grave stone made'. And pointing to her husband's grave she chuckled 'and I know what he would say even if I could take out a loan. I am a pensioner you know, and cannot take out a loan. He would say why should the living go hungry for the dead? He thought like that you see'.

Working on the Tomb: A Labour of Love

On one occasion when I was in the graveyards, an elderly lady came up to me and asked if I worked for the graveyards. She had seen that I was taking notes. I explained that I was doing research on the graveyards, and was just looking about. 'This is my family grave' she said, pointing to a tomb. The marble was gleaming from polish, there was a flower display on it, and a row of lit candles. I said to her that it seemed like very hard work to look after a tombstone. She agreed with this, saying that it was very hard work but it was work done with love. 'These people are my family. My parents looked after me; they gave me love and respect. And now I want to give them the love back.'

Most frequently in the discourses I heard surrounding family tombs was of *ljubav* [love] for the family. When I spoke to persons outside of the graveyards about their 'family tombs', quite often they would say that they had not been to visit the tomb for a while, and it was something that they ought to go and do. Then, very often, they would offer an explanation as to why they had not been to visit. It was not, they said, that they were unwilling to visit the graves, or were avoiding visiting them; but that they were very busy and often could not find the time to visit them. They would almost always make the point that 'it is not that I don't love them'.

Absence of Debate?

Scholars who have focused on death, such as Bloch (1971), and Bloch and Parry (1982) have shown not only how the dead, and rituals surrounding death, are an extremely salient 'moment' in the project of kinship; but they have also shown how through an examination of 'death rituals' one can gain important insights that trouble certain conceptions about the project of kinship. In Astuti's (2000) account of Dadilhay, an elderly man with whom she spent time, she describes how in life he was able to claim a large number of descendants; whereas, in death, at the point of his burial

Dadilhay's vision was suddenly curtailed. As he was lowered into his tomb, he became part of an excluded and bounded group, a group made up of only one kind of people' (*raza, raiky*). From now on, his sight will only reach those descendants who are or will be buried with him: the children on his father's but not on his mother's side; his brothers' but not his sisters' children; his son's but not his daughters children (Astuti 2000: 99).

It is from this account that she goes on to make the point that in any analysis of kinship 'we cannot restrict our analysis to any one moment in time' (Astuti 2000: 101) because of the possibility there might be a difference. Certainly, for the majority of the time I spent in the graveyards there appeared to be 'a difference'. Persons did not talk about family in terms of being a project that should be about love, rather they talked about family as being a project about love.

However, in terms of the account I present in this chapter, I query framing this perception of difference in terms of time. Unlike Astuti's (2000) account on Dadilhay's changing relations in death, families working on their graves were often working on their houses at the same time. Thus, both work projects should be considered as occurring coevally rather than one before the other.

Where to be Buried?

Whilst walking around the graveyards, I would often come across little signposts. These signs were made of wood, which had a piece of paper inserted into a clear plastic envelope tacked onto them. On these signs it would announce that according to the law on graveyards those people buried in a certain row, or between certain dates were to be moved. These announcements would also request that relatives or friends register at the graveyard offices in order for the person to be reburied in another site. They also reminded people that if they were in arrears with the rent then the occupants of the gravesite would be moved.

Paying the Rent: The Graveyard Offices

It was because of these signposts that I made quite a few visits to the graveyard offices, because I was very interested in why people were being moved. One woman, who was working there, told me that it was in order to clear some space, and that they only moved those people whose family had not paid the rent. She explained that some people did not pay the rent for their family graves, and when this happened, those who were occupying an unpaid for gravesite would be moved into a common grave somewhere else. The first time I had heard about this payment of rent on the gravestones was when I had met one friend on *Korzo*, who said he had to rush to Kozala to pay the rent for his grandmother because they were threatening to '*izbaciti*' [throw her out]. I was a little uncertain about how to respond to this because I had thought she was dead, and he started to laugh at my uncertainty. 'No, I have not got insane, she is dead' he told me. 'No one has paid the fee on her grave, everyone thought everyone else was paying it. And my uncle got a letter today from the graveyard offices saying they would move her'.

The graveyard offices were quite unlike any of the other offices I had visited related to *papirologija*. They had been recently refurbished, with new parquet flooring and fresh paint.

The people working there wore a smart uniform, with a waistcoat with the letter 'K' embroidered on them. And in the corner of the room there was a very large computer, where one of the people working there had shown me a program that had been specifically written for the graveyards. The program could tell you exactly where anyone was buried. It could also offer details, like where there were cedar trees, or where different types of shrubbery were planted. This person told me that all the information they needed was available at the touch of a button. The other thing that I had noticed when I had been there was there was no arguing like I had seen in other offices. In fact, it was when I had been there that I had heard one of the people working there explaining to a customer that they sold the tax stamps in the building. This was in order to save people from walking to a kiosk to go and buy one.

It was during one of these visits to the graveyard offices, one person had handed me a copy of the law on graveyards telling me that it was very important because 'everything that happens in the graveyards is on the basis of this law' she explained. In contrast to the interest that persons showed in the law of inheritance and the way that it worked, I never heard anyone discussing the law of graveyards with their friends in the same way. Indeed, there seemed to be a total absence of debate or discussion about the law on graveyards.

The Law on Graveyards [nn 19/1998]

The law on graveyards sets out that when someone dies, the kin or friends of the deceased have to pay an initial fee for the use of a gravesite. When this sum has been paid, the 'owners' have to pay an annual fee for the upkeep of the graveyard, and if this fee has not been paid for ten years or more, the graveyard manager has the right to declare the gravesite derelict, and can rent it out to someone else. No exhumation is possible, however, if someone has been buried in the gravesite during a period of less than fifteen years from this date. If the former 'tenant' is evicted, then their friends or family are allowed to collect the headstone, the

slab on top of the grave, and any other decorations after they have repaid the debt with interest. If they do not do this, then the graveyard managers can consider these artefacts to be free for others to use. And if they do evict someone, they are obliged to move the persons buried in the 'abandoned grave' to a communal grave. The decorations, such as the headstone, are considered to be property of the family, and thus if the gravesite is sold or given to someone else outside of the family they must prove that they have paid tax on this transaction. As well as this, the graveyard offices have the right to stop the transfer of a gravesite from one person to another if there is a dispute between the two parties.

Graves that have been declared as *Spomenik Kulture* [Cultural Memorials], or as a site where a significant historical person has been buried, are required to receive special treatment. They should not be considered to be abandoned, and the local council is responsible for caring for them. The Croatian Academy of Sciences, and the Croatian Institute for History must decide who these people are. The law also makes two further points about the inscriptions on the headstones: they are not allowed to offend any national, religious or moral feelings, nor are they in any way allowed to be offensive towards the person who is buried there. Finally, the inscriptions on the graves of people to whom the Croatian *Narod* [People] are indebted must have a text, which carefully and appropriately explains their role in the history of the Croatian *Narod* [People]. If there is already an inscription, and it was written in the time of a repressive regime, then it should not be considered complete and should be revised.

Who can be Buried?

Rather than going into a detailed description of the law on graveyards, I would like to highlight two points that are extremely important for the argument I offer in this chapter. The first point is that unlike the law of inheritance, the law on graveyards is not very specific about who can be buried in a family grave. According to article one, those people who have the right

to be buried are members of the gravesite *korisnik* [user's] *obitelji* [family], and direct descendants of the user. However, following what I suggest is a similar form to the inheritance of the house, it is possible for the user of a gravesite to let another person, who is not family, use the gravesite. This is on the condition that they have formed a contract, and that this contract is recorded in the graveyard registry. Persons who are not family are also allowed to be temporarily buried in the tomb, if they have the user's permission. Once again like houses, therefore, one can see the salient role documents have in holding persons together at the tombs as family. Nevertheless, this is where this similarity with houses ends.

This is because a critical point is that the users of the family tomb are not specified as *vlasnici* [owners], as is visible in the law on family houses. Rather they are referred to as *korisnici* [users]. Thus, unlike houses families are not owners of their family tombs, but rather they rent them from the city council. As a result, in terms of this absence of 'ownership', which makes 'the family' visible, there is no ownership of the tomb.

However, there is not a total absence of debate about family tombs, which I found happened at quite specific moments.

Svi Sveti [All Saints Day]

A time of the year when there is most activity in the graveyards is the time preceding *Svi Sveti* [All Saints Day] on the first of November. During the week before *Svi Sveti* I spent a lot of time in the graveyards, helping some people clean their graves. It seemed that everyone was preparing the graves of their relatives for this holiday, and this preparation of gravestones required a lot of work. This time of preparation was different to the rest of the year. Rather than people being in one's or two's tending to the graves, often there were what seemed whole families cleaning their family graves together. It seemed to be very much a 'family occasion', where everyone met to work on preparing the tombstone.

On one such expedition to the graveyards, Hana's family, with whom I was going to clean the grave, had previously arranged what everyone should bring. These preparations had resulted in numerous phone calls between the family members about who should bring or do what. One person had arranged an order with the nearby florist, whom they had asked to prepare some special arrangements for the tombstone. As we were walking through the graveyard, Hana was pointing out the different tombstones and offering a commentary on them. 'This one is very sad' she said pointing to a tomb. It was covered in lit candles, and flowers, and was by far the most decorated compared to the other tombs in its row. 'He was a young boy killed in the war. He was such a nice boy, and had so many friends. Not so much now, but before whenever you came here you would always find one of his friends lighting a candle. It is always so sad to see all these young people here' she said. Later on, we passed another tomb, which looked very unkempt and uncared for. 'Look at that one' she said. 'Do you know whose that is?' she asked. I said I did not. 'That is one of my neighbour's family grave. Look at it. They are never here' she told me disparagingly. As we continued to walk, we bumped into an elderly lady washing a flower vase at one of the taps. 'Good day' Hana greeted her, 'and how are you?' 'Busy' she said, 'this is a very busy time for me'. This lady, Hana informed me, was someone who helped to look after other people's tombs. These were people who could not get to their family tombs for some reason, such as they were working abroad. They gave this lady some money to keep an eye on their graves, and change the flowers.

When we arrived at the family tomb, some of the other members of the family were already waiting. 'First we must wash the tomb and then polish it' Hana announced. I went with her younger cousin to go and fill up some buckets with water. She was not in a very good mood because she had come straight from work to the graveyards. 'I am hungry, and tired, and want to go home. Who knows how long this will take?' she said. 'Why do we need to

polish the grave?' she muttered. When we returned to the tomb, Hanna was in a discussion with a man. They were talking about what cleaning material gave the tomb the best shine. Hana was telling him that she used walnut oil, but he said that he swore by battery fluid. As we were cleaning the tombstone, one cousin became quite tearful. One member of the family, Hana's Grandmother had died during the past year, and this person said that it was so sad that she was now dead when last year she had been helping to clean it. During the cleaning there was much talk about the people who had died, and about how much they were missed.

As we were finishing the grave, we started to put the candles back on the flat part of the tomb which we had taken off whilst we were cleaning. Hana pointed to a candle I was holding, and asked who had put that one on the tomb. Everyone said that they had no idea, to which Hana responded that this was most strange. 'Well maybe someone else put it there' said her cousin. 'Yes, but who?' asked Hana. 'Listen, it is cold, can we just finish and go?' her cousin said. 'Personally I don't care who put the candle on the grave, and even less when I am hungry and cold'. 'I don't care either' said Hana. 'Then why are we talking about it?' her cousin asked. Her cousin started to put the flowers on the grave and as she finished said 'right that is it. I am going now to go and eat something'. But Hana was not satisfied with the way the flowers were arranged, and started to rearrange them on the tomb. She said to her cousin 'you go I will finish'. When her cousin had gone, she started to comment on this cousin's behaviour. I suggested that maybe she was tired from work, but Hana retorted that she had always been like this, and again it was said in a way where her haste in cleaning the grave was proof of how she did not care for the family.

On the actual day of *Svi Sveti*, I went to visit the graveyards, which were full of people visiting the graves, carrying flowers and lighting candles. Unlike the other times I had visited the graveyards, it was not really possible to walk about very easily because of the number of people of there. As I was walking around I met Hana's cousin. 'Sorry I went off like that' she

said. 'She was really raising my blood pressure. It is so easy for her to be the good person who tends to the graves. She is retired, and she has nothing else to do. I have to work, and it takes time to go to the graveyards. I don't have the time to discuss all these things for hours. It is not that I don't care, but I don't have time' she said.

Many times persons told me that *Svi Sveti* is a time for showing one's love for the family, and another occasion which persons told me was for showing one's love for the deceased was at their funeral.

Attending a Funeral

One elderly lady, Mrs Marta, who I had met in the graveyards, told me that one of her friends had died. After giving my condolences, she asked me if I wanted to come to her friend's funeral, telling me that it would be useful for my work. Although I had desperately wanted to, I had always felt very awkward about the idea of going to observe a funeral for fieldwork. I had never felt comfortable with asking anyone I knew if I could observe a funeral, and I mentioned my hesitation to Mrs Marta. Her response was to tell me soundly that it was not a problem at all, that it was quite normal where lots of people come to see a funeral.

The next day I met her at the gates of the graveyards, and we went to main building just beyond the gates. The coffin, that was laden with flowers, was in a little room inside the main building, and there was a queue of people waiting to go inside. We went to join the queue, and Mrs Marta explained that we had to sprinkle some water on the coffin and then give our condolences to the family. The family of the deceased were standing in a row behind the coffin in the room. And having given our condolences we went to stand outside. After everyone had given their condolences, the coffin that was covered in flowers was placed on a cart, which was being wheeled by four funeral attendants. A man carrying a cross with the deceased's name on it stood in front of the coffin, followed by a Priest. As the procession

started, the family who were all dressed in black immediately joined to follow the coffin. Behind the family were the rest of the mourners. After a short walk, we firstly stopped in a chapel where the priest offered his blessings and prayers; and after the priest had finished, the procession continued towards the family tomb. The distance between the tomb and the chapel was quite far, and as we were walking towards the tombstone a band was playing. Although the mood was sombre, everyone around me whispering and talking amongst themselves as we were walking towards the tomb. Mrs Marta was talking to some people she knew about how it was a lovely ceremony. And when we reached the tomb, the priest once again offered some prayers. After he had finished, the coffin was lowered into the crypt, whereupon the family threw some flower petals onto the coffin into the crypt. When they had done this, everyone else preceded to take some flower petals to throw into the crypt. It was at this point where the funeral ceremony finished, and the funeral mourners started to walk away from the graveyards. 'It was really very lovely' Mrs Marta commented as we were walking away. 'Sometimes it can be really very difficult'.

At this funeral, I had not really paid much attention to the commentaries from those observing. However, a few months later, I was with a group of people attending another funeral. As we were following a band in a large procession towards the grave, one man I was walking with turned to another, and asked 'do you think that there will be *narikače*?' 'What are *narikače*' I asked. 'You know, those women who are paid to cry at the funerals. Sometimes the family hires them to show everyone how sad they are' he replied. Later on, when I asked others about these 'paid mourners', I always heard the same thing; they were there to show everyone how sorry the family was. Whether a family hired a band was dependent on the *Obiteljski Običaj* [family tradition].

Another aspect of funerals, again which those observing said was dependent on the

‘family tradition’, was whether there was a photographer or not. Frequently, there was the presence of a photographer or person filming the proceedings at the funerals I attended. These photographers would photograph not only the coffin, but also the mourners attending, and in particular the family at crucial points, such as when the coffin was being lowered into the hole. In all the funerals that I attended, those observing would comment on the family tradition of that particular family.

Should there be a Priest?

When I asked a Priest if there were any fixed points to a funeral, that were always the same at every funeral, he told me that there were none at all. Here, he described the hundreds of different ‘*kombinacije*’ [combinations]. For example, that some might have a lone trumpeter, or others might have a whole band. The point he made was that each funeral was specific to the family.

‘They want a Priest’ Nada said wearily. Her grandmother had just died, and she had, in her words, escaped from her grandmother’s flat. ‘It is terrible. My whole family is there waiting for visitors. You should see it. Every time a visitor arrives, my cousin suddenly starts to give this performance. She is perfectly alright, and then someone comes in, and she starts to wail and cry’ she said. ‘And now they are all arguing. My father has announced he has arranged for a Priest to attend the funeral. Half the family thinks there should be a Priest, and the other half thinks there should not be a priest’. When I asked her if her grandmother had been a religious woman, she told me that she had been *nekako* [kind of]. ‘She attended church on Christmas Eve and Easter but she did not attend mass regularly’ she explained, ‘she always used to complain that half these *pops*⁹³ were *mafija* [mafia]’. The focus of the argument, she

⁹³ *Pop* is slang for Priest.

told me, was that her aunt had told her father he had arranged a 'pop' because of the *susjedi* [neighbours]. This she said had made her father furious, and that as a result they were arguing about whether her grandmother had been a religious woman or not.

Quite a few persons had told me that there had been a debate about whether there should be a Priest at the funeral or not, and this point that it was for the neighbours was one that frequently arose. Another point for debate that I observed, and heard about in the family about the funeral was whether there should be a band. Again, neighbours were often mentioned in these debates. One woman told me that she would have liked to have had a band at her father's funeral, because she did not want the neighbours to think that they were *jadni* [poor]. One man told me that he was still very angry about the expenses at his father's funeral, telling me it was '*bacanje love bez veze*' [throwing money away for no good] just to impress the neighbours.

Osmrtnice [Bereavement Notices]

Another 'site' that animated considerable debate in the family was about the *Osmrtnice* [Bereavement Notice]. A notice one can sometimes see tacked onto a tree in the graveyards is an Bereavement Notice. This is a notice announcing someone's death, and is most often a photocopied sheet of the announcement that has been made in the Bereavement Notice pages in the local daily newspaper *Novi List*. The word *osmrtnice* can literally be translated as 'about death' pages, and are where a person's death is announced. These pages are divided into four sections. In the first section '*obavijesti o smrti*' [announcement of death], relatives or colleagues of the deceased announce their death. It is here where one can ascertain the cause of a person's death. For example, it is possible to see that if they have died after an accident often the death notice starts with the phrase *tragična smrt* [tragic death], or if they

have died after a long and difficult illness, or a short and difficult illness. Quite often those persons who are announcing someone's death place the title of their work under their name. And as well, people will put the maiden name of women who were married.

In the second section *pozdravi* [farewells], people who knew the deceased or knows someone connected to the deceased will leave a message of farewell. Above the deceased's photo they will offer their goodbye, as well as saluting the person with the title of their connection to them. For example, a neighbour might write 'a last goodbye to our dear neighbour', or a kin member might write 'a last sad goodbye to our beloved Uncle'. Underneath their photo, people sometimes place a poem, or address the deceased with a few words. For instance, in one notice a group of employees wrote to their boss '*bili ste nam drugi tata*' [you were like our second father]. It is here where people may also leave a message in terms of the deceased's religious practice. At the end of the message people place their names and their connection to the deceased. An example of this is 'your niece Marijana, her husband Damir and their children Petra and Vlado'.

In the third section, 'memories', people place a message to a deceased person on the anniversary of their death. These messages take on the same form as the messages in the second section. And finally in the fourth section *zahvale* [thanks] the closest kin of the deceased will a few weeks after the funeral, write a note of thanks to those people who helped them, and the deceased during the time immediately preceding, and immediately after, their death. An example is the following:

Thank you.

To all those dear people who understood our pain in the moments of separation from our kind-hearted Josip

Thank you for the beautiful words of comfort, and the honouring speech that showed that a small man like our Josip, was for one moment great and immortal.

Some of these messages of thanks also include a message of thanks to the doctors and nurses who tended to the deceased if they had an illness.

When I asked persons how someone would choose which words to put into the death notice, they told me that families do this according to their 'tradition'. Those persons whom I knew during fieldwork, who had had a bereavement in their family, told me that the question of what to put in the Bereavement Notice had been the cause of considerable debate in the family. Some had told me that they had copied an account from the *formular* [formula] that you could find in the offices of *Novi List*. I visited these offices, and on the counter where persons go to fill in a form to put a death announcement in the newspaper, there were a number of sheets of paper offering examples of the difference combinations that might be used. Again, I suggest that like at the house, there was figure to the form of debate.

The Salience of Observers

Initially, when I visited the graveyards the image that I gained of family appeared totally different to what I had observed at the house. The absence of ownership is critical in terms of this apparent difference, since for the most part there was an absence of 'divided interests' (Strathern 1998) in the tomb. However, there was debate in the family about 'family tombs', which I suggest is animated by the point that persons would be observing. It is the funeral, or the death notice, that works like a document, where a critical point about the debates 'in the family' is that the family has to be recognised 'as one' by the observers. Again, like the debates about the house - where this debate occurs just as much away from the house as at the house - these debates occurred away from the tomb. Indeed, one of the reasons why I suggest that my initial impression of the graveyards appeared so different is because the majority of the debates about family tombs were occurring outside of the graveyards. I had

unwittingly set myself up for this difference⁹⁴ because I had ‘positioned’ myself in terms of fieldwork in the graveyards.

The importance of graveyards and the visiting of family tombs has been well documented in writing on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where scholars have given graveyards and the dead an instrumental role in this process. For example, Hayden (1995) has offered that ‘the transfiguration of the dead into martyrs is perhaps the most powerful mechanism of symbolic politics’ (Hayden 1995: 272); Verdery (1999) has written that the armies were ‘led by their vanguards of bones’ into conflict; and Denich (1994) has suggested that ‘traumatic memories on both sides became instruments in the power struggle’ (Denich 1994: 383). In all three accounts, the efficacy of these bones as being instrumental in creating conflict is presented as coming from their close connection to kinship.

Although these scholars all connect the role these bodies had in animating conflict in terms of kinship, they do so in slightly different ways. Hayden (1994) argues that these bodies elicited repressed memories of genocide at the end of the Second World War, which he argues had an explosive effect. Denich (1995) makes a very similar point where she argues that it was through politicians eliciting hidden memories that there was a process of *ressentiment*.

Verdery’s (1999) argument is, however, slightly different. She argues that the salience of these bodies was that they connected persons to a particular territory, and thus they were embodied forms of a territorial claim. She goes on to make two points about ‘proper burial and Post-Yugoslav politics’ (*ibid*). The first is that ‘Post socialist reburials involve reconfiguring human communities according to new standards of inclusion and exclusion’ (Verdery 1999: 109). The second point ‘concerns proper burial and land claims’ (*ibid*). It is

⁹⁴ It is here where Barnard and Good’s (1984) point about the importance of making one’s methodology explicit in any study of ‘kinship’ is critical. Das (1976) has made a similar point. The way in which one gathers data transforms the impression one gets of the project of kinship most considerably. The initial time I spent talking to persons about their tombs brought very similar data as to when I spoke with persons ‘about their houses’.

this second point that I focus on now. She suggests that

Attachment to the burial sites of kin poses major problems for redrawing nation-state borders, however for its obvious corollary is that people should not move from the *places where their kin are buried*. If they do, then they lose their social bearings - unless they take their kin along or maintain contact with them in other ways (Verdery 1999: 109. emphasis added).

She then goes on to describe the relocation of persons during wartime in Sarajevo. She says that whilst Serbs moved their dead, Croats and Muslims left them behind; and that a 'main demand of Muslims' and a 'critical issue' for 'Croats' during peace talks was that they should be allowed to visit the graves of their kin. It is in the next part that she concludes

I am not going to challenge whether those who use this idiom of proper burial are indeed attached to ancestral graves; I assume many of them are. It is worth noting, nevertheless, that the idiom buttresses certain kinds of land claims [...] Perhaps Muslims and Croats, in holding out for visits to tend their kinsmen's graves, are simply craftier than Serbs, who, in taking their dead along, leave no grounds for claiming access to a former burial place. In other words, Muslims and Croats may be acting from a strategic calculation: they want an excuse to go back. Whether or not their sentiments are genuine or calculated is, however, unimportant for my purposes. What counts is that their calculations use an idiom - in fact a very old one - linking people with the geographical emplacement of their dead, and this idiom is culturally and politically powerful (Verdery 1999: 110).

From my observations of the debates surrounding family houses and family tombs, and the way in which the presence of observers animated the debate in the family, I would like to offer a slightly different⁹⁵ conclusion. The impression one receives from this literature is that it was nationalist politicians who animated this 'dead-body politics'. However, in all three accounts these scholars mention the observers: either those observing these re-burials on the television, or as spectators in a theatre. I would suggest that it was the presence of observers

⁹⁵ This conclusion takes a similar starting point to Jansen (2002), who has argued against affixing a causal role between the Second World War and the conflicts at the 'end' of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He argues that in post war narratives persons are reconfiguring their present position, where the accounts persons offer of the Second World War depends very much on 'who' and 'where' they are giving their account.

that had as much a part in animating this 'dead body politics'

'Arguments': Accepting 'The Difference' and Dividing the House

'We will build a wall like the Berlin wall, an east and a west where no-one will be able to pass through it' Patricija said to her sister. 'And don't think that when it is built, you will be able to come to visit me for a coffee in the morning. You will never be welcome in my half of the house' she continued. Patricija's sister became quite tearful. The conversation had started off in a light-hearted tone, where Patricija's sister had been asking me what I was researching. I had explained that one topic I was particularly interested in was the matter of shared family houses. 'My sister and I share a house with our brother' she had told me, 'and we are lucky because *nismo u svadi* [we are not in an argument]. 'For now' Patricija had replied, 'but we might one day'. They started to talk about the possibility that they might argue, and had both agreed that this was a ridiculous thought. The only thing that they said might cause a *svada* [argument] between them was if their brother got married, and they did not like his wife. Or even worse, if one liked his wife, and the other did not.

It was at this point that Patricija had suggested, in what had seemed to be a teasing tone, that perhaps it might be for the best to sell the house, or divide it, before any of these possible arguments started. Her sister had not taken this well, and had replied almost angrily that if that was what she really wanted then perhaps they better had. And it was at this point that Patricija had started to talk of building walls.

Throughout the previous chapters I have focused on the debates that are audible

around family houses, the law, the State and family tombs. Most persons constantly referred to the ‘never-endingness’ of these projects. Although persons say that the debates over their house have lasted for years, and will never be *riješeno* [resolved], sometimes they would refer very apprehensively⁹⁶ that soon there might be a *velika svađa* [large argument] with the other owners of the house. In Croatia, persons find a very clear distinction between a *raspravlja* [debate], and being *u svađi* [in an argument]. It is how persons find this distinction that I focus on ethnographically in this chapter, where the argument I make is that ‘the difference’ between an argument and a debate is that in an argument ‘both sides’ have accepted ‘the difference’. However, this still remains a point that is never truly settled.

Na Rubu Svađe [On the Edge of an Argument]

‘I must sort out the problem’

Many persons said that after some time of ‘suffering’ another house owner’s ‘behaviour’ that they had decided that they had to *riješiti problem zauvijek* [sort out the problem once and for all]. One man told me that he had decided after years of suffering his cousin’s provocations, that it was time to ‘*srediti situaciju*’ [solve the situation]. ‘I put up with her behaviour for years, her little provocations. And always I told myself in order to calm myself when I got angry that she was ‘*ipak rod*’ [kin after all], and that she had lived a hard life. But then I realised that she was never going to change. That she was making my life hard because of her behaviour, and that she did not care at all’. He explained that he had not wanted to directly attack her, because he felt that this was to be on the same [low] level as she

⁹⁶ Persons spoke about the ‘State’ in a very similar way, where they would express the fear that ‘war was coming again’, or that it was only a matter of time ‘before the problems start’.

was, so he had decided to provoke her. 'After all these years, I know her *mane* [neuroses] and her *slabe točke* [weak spots]. It was not difficult to provoke her into attacking me. And then when she reacted, I *pokazao zube* [showed my teeth; fought back]'

Although this man said he had provoked his cousin into an argument, most persons said that they had *namjerno* [purposefully] waited for the other person to make what they saw was the *prva greška* [first mistake], or the *prvi potez* [first move]. A number of persons said they felt a feeling of *olakšanje* [easing off] when they had decided to 'sort out' the problem. One woman said 'I had solved it in myself. I was no longer in a conflict with myself, and was totally *cist* [clean] about how I felt about my brother and his wife. I just waited for their next provocation, and when it came as I knew it would, I turned into the devil. They were completely shocked, they were expecting I would not react, like always. It just shows how stupid they are, they did not notice how suddenly I had become so kind towards them'. A point that a number of persons made was that when another owner of the house had suddenly started to agree with them, they had been suspicious.

Secret Talks

On one occasion I had gone to with one friend Petra to visit her grandmother. We had to deliver her some medicines that she had asked Petra to pick up from the chemist in the centre of Rijeka. When we arrived at her grandmother's flat, her gncle was sitting in the kitchen drinking a coffee. 'Where have you two been?' Petra's grandmother asked, 'the coffee is getting cold'. 'Fighting the *gužva* [traffic jam] Petra replied, and we started to talk about the terrible traffic jams that were in Rijeka because of the digging. A little while later, Petra's grandmother asked how her recent visit to the house had been. 'Terrible. It just gets worse and worse. We will have to sort it out once and for all. It is just I don't know how'. The year previously Petra had inherited her mother's house with her brother, and she had told me that it

was very difficult. She was finding it particularly difficult being at the house with her brother's wife. 'She is a witch', Petra's uncle commented. 'What would it be like if you had to share the house with her? Then all of her family could become owners' her grandmother replied. 'Mama, there is no need to shout when you say such things' Petra's uncle said, 'at least close the window a little, it is wide open'. 'Don't be silly, who is listening to us?' Petra's grandmother answered, but her uncle got up to close the window. In a very quiet voice her grandmother asked, 'is it possible for her family to get the house?' Petra answered that lots of people had told her it was, but she was not quite sure how. 'I am not so sure' said her grandmother. 'These things work differently for inheritance. I think it all depends when they got married'. 'No, I think it depends on who dies first. If she dies before him, then her family cannot get the house because she was never an owner. If she dies after him, well that is a different story' said her uncle, 'The only way to find out is to check with a lawyer. You must find one, or I can ask a friend who is a lawyer what would happen'. 'I am not so sure,' replied Petra. 'I am not sure I want other people to know I am asking these things. It would cause such problems if my brother was to find out. It is better to wait for a while'.

I regularly heard the point made by owners that they were concerned about what would happen in the family if they sold the house. They said it was because of this fear of what would happen to the family, that often when someone was seeking advice about selling or dividing the house, these conversations were undertaken in a secretive manner. The question of what to do with the house would be spoken of in a very confidential tone in a café or at a friend's flat. And during such discussions the person who was discussing their house would ask those with whom they were speaking not to mention this conversation to anyone, because they did not want the other members of their family to find out.

Doctor's of Kinship: Visiting a Lawyer for Advice

It was during such conversations about dividing the house that often someone would mention the point about visiting a lawyer for advice. And like the secret discussions with friends about dividing the house, visiting a lawyer for advice about the sale or division of the house was also something that members of the family kept very secret. Those I knew, who went to visit a lawyer for advice, told me that that they made a concerted effort to hide the fact that they were visiting a lawyer. Again, the principal reason they gave for the clandestine nature of these visits was that they were especially keen to ensure that the other owners of the house did not find out, since they told me that the purpose of these visits was to check their *mogućnosti* [possibilities]. Frequently, when a person was in a dispute with another member of the family, they suspected that this family member might be visiting a lawyer. For instance, one woman was complaining about one member of her family, whom she said was *paranoičan* [paranoid]. She said 'she keeps telling me that she knows I am trying to steal the house from her. She even asked me who my lawyer was. I don't have a lawyer, and it is so tiresome because no matter what I say she does not believe me. In fact, she tells me that she has heard from other people that I am seeing a lawyer'.

Many persons commented that when lawyers were involved this was the end of the family sharing the house together. It seemed that whenever anyone started to visit lawyers for advice, or to talk to others about the possibility of selling the house, and this came to the knowledge of the other members of the family, they reacted to this news in an explosive way. This concern that the other owners would be very upset, if they were to hear that someone was considering the possibility of selling or dividing the house, was certainly visible in such discussions I witnessed between owners. As I described in the first example in this chapter, even in conversations that had started off in a light-hearted tone, family members would

display strong emotions over the possible division of their family house. In those situations when the other members of the family had found out that a family member had been visiting a lawyer, or discussing with other people about how to divide the house, they often received this as being a clear statement, as well as citing it as evidence, of not being able to share the house together anymore. As one man said 'I was arguing with my brother. We would phone each other and end up arguing about the house. Then someone told me he was speaking to a lawyer, so I thought to protect myself I should speak with my lawyer. Suddenly our argument became more than argument. When lawyers get involved that really is it'. Many I spoke with described feeling *šokirani* [shocked] or *povrijeđeni* [hurt] or betrayed by this. Sometimes, even those who had been visiting a lawyer themselves were surprised by the intensity of their reaction, when they found out that another member of the family house had been visiting a lawyer, or talking to other people about dividing the house. One woman told me 'I cannot explain it. Maybe I am being stupid or hysterical, but when I heard this, that he [her brother] had been to a lawyer, it was like he had put a knife in my back'.

Seeing the Other Side

Sometimes when persons said that they were on the *rubu svađe* [the edge of an argument] with another owner, when I saw them a little while later they would say that things were a little better. A lot of persons explained that they felt they wanted to try '*još jedan put*' [one last time] to see if they could find a way to share the house with the others.

Quite often persons got to the stage of being on the edge of an argument, or would have an argument, and then say that they felt sorry about the situation. One man told me 'I always think of her [his sister] situation, and then I think it is so stupid that we get into an argument where we never speak to each other again'. It was during such conversations that persons would speak about the other owners in terms of understanding, where they would

comment on the other person's perspective on the house.

'You have to see it from his perspective' advised Marica. Marica was an elderly relative of Sandra's, and lived in the village where she shared a house with her brother Hrvoje. 'Perhaps he does not show you he is suffering because of these problems, but I know he is. He loves you, you are his only sister' Marica explained. Sandra had been explaining about the argument she had been having with Hrvoje over the tools in the garage. 'I know it is stupid but that garage is full of rubbish, and we need to clear it out. I know it is not the garage that is a problem. This argument was waiting for us for a long time'. 'And you know how he used to help your father in the garage when he was small. Maybe it is rubbish to you, but to him these tools are memories. You must respect his feelings' Marica said, 'don't stop speaking because of some nails and hammers. That would be stupid'. 'I know' said Sandra quietly. 'If you are going to argue, at least argue about something *ozbiljno* [serious]' Marica continued, 'don't lose your brother over such stupidity'. 'I know' Sandra repeated. 'Tell him you are sorry, and forget this' Marica advised. 'I know. *Ti si u pravu* [you are in the right]. I need a little more time, and then I will talk to him' Sandra replied.

'Something Happened': An Event

In all the cases I observed, or heard of during fieldwork, the process of actually selling a family house was stimulated by an '*dogadaj*' [event]. Persons described this event again in terms of a *provokacija* [provocation], and it was on the basis of this event, that members of the family said that they could not take share the house with their family. One such 'Provocation', where persons ended up selling or dividing the house, and one that I heard repeated on more than one occasion, was that a family member had either changed, or threatened to change the locks on the house, in order to keep the others out of the house.

Promijenili su brave [They Changed the Locks]

On one occasion I was speaking to Jelena, who had told me that she had stopped speaking to her sister because of the house. She said ‘it is really sad that it has ended up like this. But I am so angry and hurt by her. We had been arguing about the house, and then one day we had a massive argument. Everything that we could have said that was hurtful to one another was said. I am not saying I did not say some bad things, I really said some awful things. And she said some terrible things to me. Yet, what was for me the end, why I do not want to speak to her any more, is because she told me that she would change the locks on the house. That for me was the worst thing. I can forgive her for everything else that she said, but to tell me that she would change the locks showed me that she couldn’t love me like her sister if she thinks like that. Until she apologises I will not speak to her, and I know she is asking other people why we are not speaking. Well, she should think a little about what she said to me, and then she would understand’. Another time I was sitting with two women who said they were related to one another as *rod* [kin]. One of the women was highly distressed about an argument she had recently had with her brother about the house. He had also threatened to change the locks on the house. She said ‘the worst thing of all is that I have known him all these years and I never knew he thought like this. I thought we were got along well. But now he has shown that he thinks differently’.

In both these situations, and in many similar arguments that those I knew told me they had experienced with the other owners of a shared house, persons said that it was either that another member of the family had threatened to change the locks, or that they had actually changed the locks on the house. It was this that made them feel that they did not want to have any *posla* [business] with these owners any longer. They said they felt highly insulted by this threat, or actual act, of changing the locks on the house, and saw it as very clear evidence that they could no longer share the house together. I also noticed in situations when an owner

had either threatened to change the locks, or had changed the locks on the house, that after a short period of time the owners were consulting lawyers for advice.

However, even though I heard this talk about changing the locks on the house, I only managed to meet one person who had actually changed the locks on his house. When I asked him why he had done so, he told me that he had felt he had to take a stand against his brothers and sister. He told me that he had been arguing with them for a long time, and that one day something inside him had '*puknuo sam*' [broken]. The final straw, he said, was that he had gone to the house alone without his siblings, and had found that they had rearranged things in the house without his knowledge. This, he told me, made him so angry that he did not know what to do, and in his rage he had changed the locks. It was not until his siblings had gone to visit the house that they found out he had changed the locks, and the argument that ensued was what he described as being the end of the house. What nearly everyone mentioned who had experienced such an argument, where the locks of the house had been changed, was that they had *izgubio sam kontrolu* [lost control of themselves].

It was in such situations that the owners would call the police, explaining that one reason why they did so was because they were frightened of what might happen. One man told me that in an argument he had been in with his brother in law he had called the police. 'I was not frightened for *za sebe* [myself], that he might attack me. I was frightened *od sebe* [of myself]. I was like a *bijesna zvijer* [rabid beast]. It was a true *žuta minuta* [yellow minute – blind rage]. He provoked me so much that I thought I would kill him. I told him to leave the house, that I could not control myself for much longer, and he refused. So I called the *murija* [slang for police] and told them they had better come because there would be a murder. They came and wanted to arrest my brother in law. When I told them I was the one who might be the murderer, they told us that we should sort things out'.

Pokazao se [Shown Oneself]

The reason why a person offered that this was the 'end' of the house after such an event was that someone had 'really shown themselves'.

'I always suspected that he might be like this' explained Vera, 'and he has now really shown himself for who he is'. She was talking about her brother, with whom she had shared a house for five years. During these five years she had told me that there will little *znakovi* [signs] that this would happen. 'You always hear about the problems people have with such houses, and how persons who were really close are now in an 'Argument' because of a house. But you always hope that it won't happen to you. I know I did. And now it has happened'. The incident that had been the 'final straw', and what Vera said confirmed her suspicion, was that her brother had demanded money from her for refurbishing the kitchen. 'I knew it was a mistake when I agreed with him to do work in the kitchen. I had explained to him that I did not have any money for work on the kitchen, and also that I thought it was unnecessary work. The kitchen furniture was old, but it still had use in it. He had told me not to worry. That it did not matter', she said. 'And now the work has been done, and he tells me I have to pay for half'.

Her 'suspicion' was that his wife had persuaded him to do this, since she said that she could see he had been very uncomfortable when he had asked her for the money. 'When I told him that I did not have the money, he became angry with me. He told me that why should he pay for the work, words which come straight from her I am sure. Even then, when he was angry I could understand him. I understand that she had put him in a very difficult position', she continued. 'But then he really *stvarno se pokazao* [showed himself]. He told me that we could not share the house anymore like this, that he wanted better things for the house. And he told me that my lack of money was just an excuse, he even told me that it was a lie. That I was just a mean person. That I cannot understand, and that I will not accept. He knows where I

work, and he has known me all my life. I have never been mean. That was it. I told him that even if I had the money, I would refuse to pay him anything. That I work to pay for his wife's luxury? He must be mad'. Vera said that after this argument they had not spoken to one another, remarking that '*sad smo u svadi*' [we are in an argument now]. She continued to explain, 'I always worried about whether we might get into an argument, and how I would be completely lost if we did. He is my only brother. But although I cannot say I am not sad, I don't feel I have lost anything. If this is who he really is, someone who will attack a person like this, then I have lost nothing. Then it was only time before he would show himself for who he really is'.

Many persons said a similar thing to Vera about when they entered into an argument with another owner: that this person had really shown themselves, and in doing so had confirmed what they had always suspected. They gave a number of different reasons for why they had shown themselves in terms of their 'character': *agresivan* [aggressive], *psihički poremećen* [psychologically disturbed], *grabljivac* [greedy]. Here, they would say that the argument was a confirmation of this. Often when persons were speaking about such an argument, or about the moment when they felt a person had really shown themselves, they would make the point that '*sve je jasno sada*' [everything is clear now].

'Svatko drži svoju stranu' [Everyone is on their own Side]

When someone said that they had *prekrižio* another owner in an argument, then there was little chance that they would *podmiriti se* [settle accounts]. The term *prekrižiti se* means to make the sign of the cross, but in this context infers that someone has crossed out the other person. Many persons would say when they had crossed someone out, that this person was now dead in their heart. In such cases, they would explain that they would never speak to this person again. One woman told me that she had 'crossed out' her sister, explaining that she

would never forgive her for what she did. 'I know she has her story, and I have mine about what happened. And I know she won't move from her side, and I won't move from mine. There is nothing to be done. Neither of us will move from our positions'.

Working on One's Position: Na Čijoj si Strani? [Whose Side are you on?]

Darko and I were sitting in a café on Trsat with his sister, and had been discussing the heat wave of that summer until his sister had brought up the matter of her argument with their other sister. During the summer holidays, both of Darko's sisters had been at the house together, and had according to Lara they had entered into an argument because of her sister's constant provocations. 'How many times do you I have to tell you? I am not on anyone's side. I really don't want to hear about it' explained Darko to his sister. 'yes, but you know how she is, she is such a difficult person' replied his sister. 'You are both difficult, you are both the same. That is the problem' Darko retorted, 'please, lets not talk about this'. Lara agreed to not speak about her argument with their sister, and for the rest of the conversation we spoke about the impending school year. Later on, as we were walking away from the café, Darko explained that the worst thing for him about the argument between his sisters was that they were constantly trying to draw him into it. 'I really don't want to take sides. But they are trying all the time. And they are constantly suspecting that I am secretly on the other's side. If they carry on, soon I will be in an 'Argument' with both of them' he said.

A number of persons complained that when other owners of the house were in an 'Argument' they were constantly trying to get them to take sides. One woman told me 'it always happens like this. My cousins' are always having arguments, and almost the first thing they want to know is whose side you take. It is so stupid. Everyone wants to know, even neighbours ask whose side I am on. Why should I have to take sides about their stupid arguments? And then if they see me speaking to the one they are in an argument with, they

instantly suspect I am on their side'. However, although persons complained that they hated the pressure to take sides from those persons who were in an argument, they also said it was '*razumljivo*' [understandable]. For instance, one person, Marta, explained that when she was in an argument with someone, that she felt very alone. 'I always want to know I have *podrška* [support]. When someone says that they absolutely agree with you, then you feel stronger. However, most people don't do this. they are frightened, they don't want to stand up and be counted. So they pretend to be on both sides if it is an argument between people they know. Most are '*licemjeri*' [face-changers; two faced]'.

U svađi smo [We are in an Argument]

Not on Speaking Terms

One of the most apparent indicators that persons are in an 'Argument' is that they say they '*više ne pričamo*' [are no longer on speaking terms].

I was on the bus with Mira travelling to the centre of the city. Three stops before our stop Mira agitatedly said that we had to get off at the next stop. When I asked her why, she replied that she could not explain now but would explain when we got off the bus. When the bus reached the next stop, and we got off the bus she remarked that her cousin was on the bus, with whom she was in an 'Argument'. 'When I see her I want to be sick,' she told me, and showing me her hand said 'look how I am shaking. I just have to see her and I become so nervous'. She explained to me that they were in an argument because of the house, and that she would never speak to her again. 'I hate it when I see her. Luckily we don't see each other very often like this'.

Many persons said that they went to quite a lot of effort to avoid someone they were in an 'Argument' with, offering the explanation that whenever they saw that person they felt

extremely nervous. One reason persons offered for calling the police when another owner had changed the locks was because of 'evidence'. It was during this time, like at the moment before persons inherited their house that they would work on finding the 'Evidence' to prove their claim of 'difference'.

'Na Sudu smo' [We are in the Court]

Although 'according to the law' if the family decides to sell the house they do not have to go through the court to sell it, I never heard of a situation when this had occurred. Even when the owners had decided 'amicably' that they would sell the house, they would still go to the court to get the judge to decide how the house should be divided.

Calling the Police

I was sitting with some persons I knew in a café where the subject of the Police came up in conjunction with house ownership, and it became apparent they were called for an altogether different reason.

Domagoj was explaining to us how he had been to visit his house, and had found that his brother had changed the locks. He had explained that he had gone to the house for the weekend, and had tried for ages to get into the house. 'At first I thought the lock had broken, and that there was something wrong with my key. And then I realised, the lock was different. I was mad,' he told us. 'I would have killed him if he had been there'. 'What did you do?' asked one person who was listening. 'I broke into the house by smashing the window' he replied. 'Did you call the Police?' they asked. 'No, I did not want them there filling in their forms and asking questions. My brother wasn't there, what could they have done?' he answered. 'You are so stupid' one friend replied, 'you should have called them. This was your

best opportunity to sort out that house, and you missed it. That was really so stupid'. 'What opportunity?' I asked. 'Dokaz' [Evidence] this friend replied. 'They would have come, and reported what had happened as 'Evidence' in the court. You should always call the Police. In many ways, when a person changes the locks it is the best thing that can happen. They have no right to do so, and this can be used against them'.

This was a point that those I knew, who had been to visit a lawyer for advice, had said their lawyer had told them. When I checked this with a lawyer, he told me that a Police report that another owner had done something to the house, such as changing the locks, was excellent Evidence in the court. Indeed, in some of the conversations I had with owners they said that although they had been very stressed at the time when another owner had changed the locks, with hindsight this had been very fortunate because they had been able to acquire 'Evidence'. In those cases where the owners were in court, or preparing for a court case, it seemed that the Police were called very often to the house.

The 'Value' of Work: Old Receipts

Another document that this lawyer recommended a person should keep as 'Evidence', as well as something lots of people told me that they did, were receipts of the work that an owner had paid for on the house. As I draw out in the following example, receipts could be used as 'Evidence' in a court to inform the judge's decision on how the house should be divided.

'Did you keep the receipts of what you did?' Anton asked. 'No, I knew I should have done so. But I never thought it would come to this' replied Tanja. Tanja was in the middle of a court case with her brother about her family house, where they had asked the court to divide

the house between them. She had been explaining to us what was happening in the court, and was airing her fear that she would not get as much of the house as she had anticipated. The problem, she had told us, was that her brother was claiming that he had paid for the re-roofing of the house, which she said was a blatant lie. She had paid for it when the work was being done, and he had said he would pay her back later. He had never done this. ‘How could you have been so stupid?’ Anton asked her. ‘You should always keep receipts of the work you have done. I keep all my receipts. I have them dating back for years. Then if anyone was to ask me how much I have invested in the house, I can show them precisely’. Tanja explained that she had found a roofer, whom she had paid *na crno* [cash in hand], and there were therefore no receipts to prove his work. This was a point that Anton said was the reason why he never did this, commenting that when something was done like this then it could never be proved in court later on.

I asked Tanja what this meant in terms of the judges decision about the division of the house. And she explained to me that if her brother could prove he had paid for the re-roofing, which was a substantial amount of money, this could affect the way the house would be divided. She told me that either the judge could ask her to pay for half of the roofing, or if the house was to be sold, then she would get less money. As she was telling me this, Anton explained that he had worked out that he had about ten thousand Euro’s worth of receipts. Anton concluded that her brother’s ability to claim this was dependent on whether he had a friend, who was a builder, who could make some false receipts.

The House

For a moment, I would like to turn to what is happening to at the ‘site of the house’ whilst families are working on trying to divide it. This is because one extremely noticeable feature about the house is that when a family is involved in a court case, no-one is visiting it.

Not only did I observe this from families, who were in such a situation, but also from commentaries surrounding houses in the villages that I visited. Often when someone was describing to me who lived where, they would point to a house that was shuttered and closed, and say that this family never came to the house because they were in an 'Argument'. Indeed, I found that it was almost possible to predict who was in an 'Argument' from the way their house looked. Those houses that looked abandoned were not at all abandoned but were being fought over in the court.

When I used to walk around villages with someone who had a house there, they would often point to such a house and tell me that the family was no longer 'zajedno' [together]. Then they would proceed to give an account of what had happened, referring to the 'individual' owners by name, and what their part had been in the 'Argument'. I argue that what became apparent is that when persons spoke of their neighbour's houses in this way, the owners of these houses had become much more visible as 'individual' persons. They would no longer speak of the owners and the house in terms of sameness.

Divided House

When the owners wanted to divide the house they most frequently did this by selling it. In situations where there are a large number of owners, the possibility to divide a house into separate parts for each for the owners is much more limited. As one woman said 'I share the house with so many other owners that if we divided it, I would own one room'. Whenever anyone was speaking about dividing their house, they would say that dividing it in this way was always problematic. And thus, in the majority of the cases I observed, people sold their houses, and often said that they would use this money to invest in building a new house. But it is possible to see some houses that are physically divided, either by a wall in the middle or into two separate floors. When a house is physically divided it has to go through the court,

where each separate part of the house gets its own ownership documents. It was because of this, that many families said that dividing a house was a problem. They voiced this as being a very expensive and time consuming process, where first the court has to decide how the house will be divided, and then a property surveyor has to actually measure and inscribe this division onto the house itself. I spoke to a house surveyor about this and he reiterated this point. But he also said that invariably the owners of these divided parts of the house end up in another argument, because something is still 'shared', where they cannot sell their part because no one wants to buy a 'bit' of a house. This was reflected in the commentaries I heard about dividing the house, where family members' said that although a wall would physically divide the house, this would still be a problem because the family would still be all 'under the same roof'. As one woman said 'nothing will change, except the house will be smaller. I want these people out of my life forever. I don't want to sit in the garden knowing that they are there'. In those cases where the house had been physically divided, the owners said that they found it extremely painful.

One person I knew, Slavica, had a divided house, where the other half was owned by her brother. They both had separate entrances, the balcony was divided by a metal rail, and she told me her brother, like her, had two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. The most notable feature about this division was the roof. Her half of the roof was covered in tiles where a few were missing, and the guttering was very rusty. Whereas, on her brother's side the guttering looked brand new, and the roof looked like it had recently been re-tiled. She had told me that it was not so difficult for her to visit because he lived in Germany and only came in the summer. 'I try to not be here when he comes. It just makes me so sad. Friends tell me I should be here when he visits, to prove to him that I don't care, but I hate it too much'. When I asked her if there was anything about the house that particularly difficult, she told me 'everything is difficult, but now I cannot go to the room where my mother used to do her

sewing. It is locked away from me. I find this painful, to the point that I think that I would like to sell my part of the house to someone else. Going there reminds me of how it used to be when we were young, got along together, and how we don't get along now. It brings back too many painful memories'.

In some of the houses I have looked at, and in the accounts that people have given me, when persons inherit a house they immediately physically divide it according to the number of owners that they have. For example, one man told me of how he inherited a house with his brother, after his father died, and they had agreed to divide the house into two halves. Although they still share the garden, the house was divided, where he became the owner of one floor, and his brother the owner of the other. He told me that this was an arrangement that suited them both very well, and said that he was fortunate because he had inherited the property with only one other person. This made things much simpler because it was easier for him to come to an agreement about how to divide the house when there was only one other owner.

Similar to the moment of inheritance, where the judge would recognise the claims persons made to 'ownership' of the house, there is a similar moment at the point of division. However, rather than this recognition of the judge putting persons together on the paper, at this point persons separate themselves from the papers. Very much like Riles (2000) has described the Whippy family where they would know in advance how the land would be divided, all the houses I heard about that were divided, had divided according to the potential divisions on the papers at the time of inheritance. However, this difference between the owners has to be *potvrđen* [made hard] to be certain. Again, someone else has to recognise the difference for the connections to the house to be lost.

After Division: Getting along Better

After the sale of the house one could say that this is where this account ends concerning the relation between families and houses; but although this is the end of the family and the house, one could by no means state that this is the end of these relations. After some time, and the initial shock and distress of selling the house had passed, a lot of 'former house owners' said that their relations with the other owners had improved greatly. The reason they offered why was always the same, they were no longer *povezan* [connected] in this way by the house. For example, I was sitting with Mara and a friend in a café on Korzo, where Mara's friend was talking about the problems she was having because of sharing her house with her brother. 'My sister and I had terrible problems because of the house. We weren't speaking to each other at all. Then we sold it, and I have to say that things are much better between us now. I really advise you to get rid of everything that connects you. It is so much easier than' Mara advised. 'I know', she replied. 'Everyone says the same thing. But it is just so difficult to do'.

When I had asked Mara why her relation with her sister had improved, she told me that it was because they were no longer *povezan* [connected] by the house. 'Now we can see each other when we want, there is no obligation anymore to meet because of the house' she told me. It was during such conversations on *Korzo* that it became apparent that after the house had been sold, there was a certain amount of confusion about what their relation to the other owners was now. Whenever I asked someone what they were now to the previous owners they would often say that they were not sure: sometimes they said they were still family; other times they would say that they were *rod* [kin] but they were not sure if they were family; or that they were now *rod* [kin]. Although the difference had been momentarily settled, at the same time the certainty that they were 'as one' had also gone.

Household Organisation in the Balkans

It is at this point that I would like to turn to the writing on the region about the 'zadruga', because I see a similarity here to the arguments I observed in fieldwork about the house. There is a wealth of literature dedicated to research on household organisation within the South Central European region. In this writing, researchers have explored the key principles that organised people into large or complex households in the past. Kaser (1996), in his introduction to a special edition of the journal, *The History of the Family*, suggests that four types of household organisation systems were prevalent in the region. These were 1) the neolocal-nuclear household system, 2) the patrilocal-life cycle complexity household formation system, 3) the neo- or uxorilocal-nuclear household formation system, and lastly the patrilocal-household cycle complexity household formation system (Kaser 1996: 381-383). Perhaps the most attention has been given to the last of these four types, since some authors make the argument that patriarchy was one of the key organising principles of past 'Balkan society'.

This suggestion that the region is organised on patriarchal structures has a long genealogy in the literature. Earlier for instance, Tomašić (1946) made a similar point when he said 'the basic unit of this social system is the extended family, ruled autocratically by its oldest male member' (Tomašić 1946: 132). They suggest its importance stems from the important role that they assign to pastoralism in the region. Kaser, Halpern and Wagner (1996) argue that 'there are many indications that the Balkan family pattern is indeed of archaic origin and that its existence is connected with a pastoral economy and a general patriarchal pattern' (Kaser, Halpern and Wagner 1996: 428).

Staking a Claim

There is one particular ‘form’ of household organisation that has received the most attention, and this is the *zadruga*. This writing points out that the term *zadruga* is not a term that people themselves used to describe a particular form of household organisation, but rather was created by earlier researchers as an aid to help them describe a particular form of household organisation. Kaser (1994) explains this when he writes, ‘this term is a literary, not a folk term, and is often misleadingly used’ (Kaser 1996: 65fn), and Rasan, Stevanović and Ilić (1999) write ‘the term was first imposed by historians, ethnographers, and folklorists, but later adopted by the peasants themselves’ (Rasan, Stevanović and Ilić 1999: 180). As a result, with the aim for more accuracy in this genre of writing, some authors have called for a general rejection of this term. Čapo-Žmegac (1996) writes

In all discussions concerning the *zadruga* I would insist on terminological and definitional clarity which, if applied consistently, would lead to the abandonment of the use of the term *zadruga* in comparative historical research on family forms (Čapo-Žmegac 1996: 377).

And yet even though there are these problems of when to declare a household a *zadruga*, it is still the focus of much attention in the writing. As Rasan, Stevanović and Ilić (1999) write ‘the *zadruga* is a powerful ideal image of a household that has been of interest to both indigenous and other ethnographers’ (Rasan, Stevanović and Ilić 1999: 181). When one considers these debates in terms of the fact that the *zadruga* is a literary term, I suggest two questions arise: Why, if it is the case that the *zadruga* does not fulfil its objective of being an aid to describe a form of household organisation, has it been surrounded with such contentious debate? And as well, why if after nearly one hundred years of debate has the term not simply been abandoned, as some authors have proposed it should be? As Kaser (1994) says ‘the origins of the Balkan joint family household, often referred to as the *zadruga*, are still *unresolved*’ (Kaser 1994: 45. emphasis added).

The Zadruga

A major point of contention is that since the *zadruga* is presented as a past form of household organisation, there is discussion about when a *zadruga* can be located in the census records. Locating its presence from the data in census materials seems entirely dependent on the researchers own image of the form that the *zadruga* actually takes. As Hammel (1972) has commented

A good deal of the often acrimonious debate, so tinged with accusations of political orthodoxy or dereliction, is characterized by an abundance of hypotheses in the absence of fact, or by an abundance of fact in the absence of coherent theory (Hammel 1972: 336).

Although Karadžić defined it as a household organised on kinship principles, another researcher, Bogišić, stressed the importance of legal and economic cooperation between the members of these households. The two different *foci* of interest of these two earlier researchers, and their arguments about what should be viewed as the key to the organisation of a *zadruga*, has been the stimulus of much of the debate between current researchers working in the region. Whilst some writers pursue the idea that it is organised on the basis of kinship principles (Kaser 1996), others argue against this focus on kinship (Čapo-Žmegac 1996), saying that it neglects the legal and economic concerns of the *zadruga*. They, in turn, declare that where there is no evidence of legal and economic cooperation between the household members, it is not possible to conclude that a household is a *zadruga*. For instance, Čapo-Žmegac (1996) argues

Such is the case especially in historical research, where scholars rarely have at their disposal all the information necessary to establish with certainty the presence of *zadrugas*. In most cases all that they have available are household listings (local censuses) offering a reasonably comprehensive picture of the size and composition of the household (Čapo-Žmegac 1996: 379).

Thus, the main area of contention surrounding the term *zadruga* is when the difference can be

offered with evidence found in the materials.

Zadruga and the Region: Eliciting Difference

One reason the literature offers as to why the *zadruga* appears to have provoked so much scholarly debate is that some authors have presented the *zadruga* as a form of household organisation that is unique to the region. One can see that a connection is made between the *zadruga*, a patriarchal form of kinship and the region, whereby the form of kinship scholars locate in the *zadruga* is presented as organising social relations in the region as a whole. Most frequently, it is presented as evidence for the argument that the way people engage in kinship in the 'Balkans' takes on a different form to the rest of Europe.

Such a notion of the region being different on the basis of a particular form of household organisation is visible in the following exchange between Čapo-Žmegac (1996) and Kaser (1997). In a critique of Kaser's work, Čapo-Žmegac (1996) writes

The Balkans become essentialised through being constructed as being radically different from the cultures of the authors who are engaged in such work. Indeed it is from this relative position that Kaser defines the Balkan region. He upholds the opposition 'we' – inhabitants of Central Europe – against 'those' who 'we' call Balkan (or southern central Europe) (Čapo-Žmegac 1996: 15).

She goes on to argue that

The values of patriarchy become used as explanations for the metaphors that are often used in the media about the 'tribal' or 'barbaric' wars in former Yugoslavia; deviations which are unthinkable and have no comparison with western civilisation. This simple explanation calms the worries of western civilisation, since it affords a position of distance from all the things that happened in former Yugoslavia' (Čapo-Žmegac 1996: 16).

In response to this, Kaser (1997) writes

The author has given the harshest warning to members of international research circles

who 1) write and recognise that historically, Balkan culture is different to other European cultures and 2) who suggest that Croatia and Croatian families are part of this tradition of the Balkans and Balkan families. This is totally understandable since Croatia has in the last decade become in many ways distanced from the Balkans (Kaser 1997: 126. emphasis added).

He goes on to posit that a reaction like this is ‘something that stems from a fear of difference’ (Kaser 1997: 128. emphasis added). Therefore a *zadruga* that is presented as a patriarchal household is perceived as feeding into the notorious image of the Balkans that I discussed in the introduction of this thesis. As such, an analytical connection has been made whereby the *zadruga* is perceived as a model for the region. Consequently, the crucial point according to the arguments about the *zadruga* is not the *zadruga* itself, but what this difference says about the region.

I would suggest that from the perspective of persons in Rijeka these ‘discussions’ about the *zadruga* are not one of debate, but one of argument. This helps to draw out how persons in Rijeka conceptualise this distinction between an argument and a debate. In the debate over houses, although persons suspect that ‘difference’ is present, they are not certain. It is when one of the owners presents difference to the other owners that the debate starts, where they discuss whether or not there is a presence of divided interests. However, they are never certain that difference is present.

In terms of an argument, all the persons involved are certain that difference is present. An event like the changing of the locks on the house, where an owner has clearly shown themselves and thus a difference of interests in the house, shows that difference is present. Like the writing on the *zadruga*, the owners are working on reinforcing their positions with evidence of ‘the difference’. Nevertheless, as with the writing on the *zadruga*, they are never certain of where this difference is actually located. It is only when those observing recognise it that it becomes momentarily settled.

Causal Connections

I would like to end this chapter on the notion of causality that is often present within the writing on the 'end' of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Many scholars, and the volume edited by Haplern and Kideckel (2000) is an artefact of this approach, turn to the events from the 'past' to explain the conflicts. Here, they are looking for a causal link between the conflicts of the Second World War and the conflicts during the 1990's. A number of these scholars, who were working on the *zadruga*, have turned their interest to these conflicts; where they appear to be engaging in a similar debate to the debates they have had over the *zadruga*. It would be tempting to affix a causal link between these debates. However, I would argue otherwise. Instead, I would argue that this writing shows a repetition of form to the movement in these debates. The similarity 'comes from' this similarity in movement, rather than because of a causal link.

The Politics of Ethnic Identity in Everyday Life at the Local Level in Croatia

Parking Places: Who has the Right?

Early on the Sunday morning, when I was staying at one family house, the whole 'household' was woken up by angry shouting outside. Just behind the house was a small parking area, where a number of neighbours parked their cars. This parking area was always a source of dispute between the neighbours, particularly in the summer months when there were more cars than usual. 'I have a gun in my car, if you continue with this nonsense I will use it' one neighbour shouted. 'That's it. Now I am phoning the Police. You cannot threaten me like this' the other neighbour retorted. 'Unbelievable' Monika commented furiously, 'if they want to butcher each other about those parking places, why do they have to do this so early in the morning?' The whole 'family' had congregated in the upstairs hall to look through the window to see what was going on. And with this comment, she started to open the window, announcing that she was going to tell them to go and kill each other in front of their own houses. 'Don't' said her sister, 'don't get involved. Look you can see the man is mad, he is out of control. It could be dangerous', and turning to her husband she said 'perhaps you better go and try and calm them down'. 'No chance, I am not going to get involved with this. It is better that they don't see we are watching. Otherwise if the Police come, we will have to give a statement', he replied.

A little while later two Policemen arrived, and from our vantage point we were unable

to hear what they were saying. They remained for some time, writing notes in their notebooks, and then left. 'The show is over' reported Monika, and everyone began to disperse from the window. Later on, one of the neighbours, who had been arguing that morning, came to fence at the front of the house, and started to speak to Monika's sister. They were engaged in conversation for some time, and when he had left, she came to explain what was happening. 'Someone scratched his car in the night, and he is sure that Mišo did this on purpose. Yesterday they had an argument about the parking places, and he thinks Mišo scratched his car in revenge. The Crime Police are coming later to investigate' she told us.

We returned back to our jobs, interrupted every now and then by a neighbour to find out about the 'argument' between Mišo and Dejan, and at about three in the afternoon Monika's brother in law announced that he had just seen the Police arrive. Quite a few other neighbours had gathered in the parking area, and we went to join them. Mišo and Dejan were both there, accompanied by some friends, and the police started to ask what was going on. Dejan explained that someone had scratched his car, and Mišo immediately interjected that he had been accused for this. The Crime Police looked at the car, said that the damage was so minimal that it did not warrant an investigation and announced they had better things to do. They told everyone that it was better that they went home, and suggested to Dejan and Mišo to sort their problems out without all this fuss. With this they got into their car and drove away. After they had gone, Dejan turned to Mišo and told him 'the best is that you go and park your car somewhere else. I built this space, you don't have the right to park here'. 'And you will tell me what my right is. You of all people tell me what rights I have here. Let me tell you, you have no right. Go back to your bloody Serbia and go and make order there. In this 'State' you have no right' he shouted, and with this started to exclaim that he would not let a *Srbin* [Serbian] tell him what to do. One of Dejan's friends walked up to Mišo, 'he has the right. He has as much right as you. He is a citizen here. Do not tell him that he does not have the right',

Mišo shouted 'I don't care what it says on the papers. He has no right, he will never have any right to tell me what I can do in this 'State'.

It was at this point that one of the neighbours, who had been observing the argument, started to furiously shout 'shame on you both. You bring this 'Politics' into your argument. I am so fed up with listening to stupid idiots arguing about their stupid *politika* [politics]. Any little discussion becomes 'Politics'. And you think you have the right to discuss who has the right. Well I tell you, neither of you have the right. You are both stupid for behaving like this'. And with this he stormed away. Monika's brother calmly said to us, 'he is right you know. Forget this 'Politics', it only makes problems'.

Divided Interests 'in' the 'State'

Following a similar form to the way debates around inherited family houses make the family visible to both the family and 'outside' observers, I argue that the figure around which persons debate and work on the *narod* [people] is the 'State'. Scholars interested in the 'end' of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, often suggest that the form the 'State' takes in the Republics that 'replaced' the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a specific one: where the state and ethnicity have been conflated as one. The most visible argument in this body of writing is that these Republics, which scholars suggest are built along the Herderian or Romantic principle of 'people', are 'ethnic states'. In these accounts they frequently refer to the term '*narod*' [people], where Denich's (2000) explanation of this relation is an example of this:

To understand Yugoslav debates about ethnicity and statehood, an American must recognize the different meanings assigned to the concept of "nation" and therefore, to the "nation-state". In South Slavic languages, the word *narod* (like the German Volk) means both "people" and "nation". Thus the word "nation-state" is attached to a specific "nation," or "people," conceived as an ethnic population. [...] the equation provides no way to detach nationality from ancestry. Missing is the basic American assumption that nationality is derived from citizenship, whether by birth or personal choice (Denich 2000: 42).

This absence of difference between ‘State’ and ‘ethnic population’ is where some scholars suggest lies the problem ‘in’ the region. Evidence of this is absence of difference is most frequently offered with the point that the term *narod* [people] is located in the laws of citizenship. For instance this is visible in Hayden’s (1992) writing about election campaigns

Each promised to deal firmly with the local minorities and to institute programs that would affirm each of the several republics as the nation-state of its dominant, ethnically defined nation (*narod*) (Hayden 1992: 655).

Nevertheless, within this writing about the ‘end’ of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the relation between the ‘State’ and ethnicity is not a settled one. This is due to scholars having a different understanding of the concept of *narod*. For example, Mursic (2000) has written

When foreigners translate those terms [*narod*], they may make mistakes. For example, Tone Bringa writes that in the former socialist states of Eastern Europe the term *narod* was supposedly used in the sense of Western “ethnic groups”. Is this so? (Mursic 2000: 68. Emphasis added).

It is because of discussions above about the translation of the term *narod*, that I make the suggestion that as persons working on the ‘region’, we should perhaps not try to look for difference or sameness in the relation between the ‘state’ and the ‘*narod*’. As Strathern (1992c) has argued

Instead of dismantling holistic systems through inappropriate analytical categories, then, perhaps we should strive for a holistic apprehension of the manner in which our subjects dismantle their own constructs (Strathern 1992: 76).

It is following this point, that I follow ethnographically how persons themselves look for difference in the concept of *narodnost*; and it is for this reason that I do not translate this term in the account I offer in this chapter.

This, I do, by firstly starting with an account of how persons came to ‘inherit’ the ‘State’: in their claims to citizenship. I would like to make it explicit, at the outset of this account, that the data about the ‘moment’ of inheritance came from interviews with a range of persons about their recollections of making a claim for citizenship. A number of persons expressed a great sense of hesitancy in speaking to me about this time; where those persons who did, repeatedly asked me during these interviews to ensure that their name was never known to others. Jansen (2002) has argued that we should not take reflections on the time of conflict at ‘face-value’ because persons are making their ‘present’ in these narratives. My interest in drawing out these narratives is not, however, to affix a causal link between these narratives and a person’s present, but to point out that there are certain shared points in these interviews: between what persons were speaking about, and also with the way the house is inherited.

Making a Claim: The ‘End’ of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

On the 8th of October 1991, a vote was passed in the Croatian *Sabor* [parliament] that the Socialist Republic of Croatia would sever all ties with the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was on this day that Croatia ‘officially’ stopped being a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and became the Republic of Croatia. On this day, not only did the government change, but also so did all the documents. And everyone I interviewed said that this change had resulted in an immense feeling of ‘uncertainty’. One woman told me that nobody had any idea about what was going on during this time. She said ‘normally when you go to these offices about some papers, if they are in a good mood the people working there might tell you exactly what papers you need, and where you have to go to get them. But, it was different this time, when you went to these offices they would tell you that they had no idea themselves. Everyone was so nervous, they did not know what they had to do, or what

anything meant anymore’.

One person told me that she had been working as a waitress in France during this time. She told me the following: ‘on my journey back I was carrying my red passport of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I had an aeroplane to Italy, and when I got to the passport desk in the Italian airport, the lady at the desk called two Policemen. They led me into their office, where they started to question me about why I did not have a Croatian passport, and was travelling with a Yugoslavian passport. I told them that this was the only passport I had, but they were not happy. I really did not know what to do, they were telling me this passport was no longer valid, and that I was travelling with invalid documents. I thought I would end up in prison, and started to cry. I said to them ‘listen three months ago I went to France, and my country still existed. Now it has gone. I know as little as you do. It was such an odd feeling, I mean when you go abroad you don’t expect that while you are away your country will disappear. In the end, I think they felt quite sorry for me, so they let me go on the condition that I travel straight back to Croatia’.

Many persons in Rijeka said that their main preoccupation at this time was to sort out their papers, and in particular to acquire their *domovnica*. The *domovnica* is the certificate of citizenship, and is the ‘certificate of proof’ that a person is a citizen of the Republic of Croatia. According to the laws of citizenship, there are three main pre-requisites that a person has to fulfil in order to gain citizenship. These are that a person’s parents are Croatian citizens, ‘that he or she is proficient in the Croatian language and Latin script’, and ‘that a conclusion can be derived from his or her conduct that he or she is attached to the legal system and customs persisting in the Republic of Croatia and that he or she accepts the Croatian culture’.

Unlike the laws of inheritance, where most persons said they had not read them, a number of persons said they had read the law of citizenship; and many persons said that they

had decided that because of these three pre-conditions, as well as residency⁹⁷ not being a condition for citizenship, that the most salient point about acquiring a Certificate of Citizenship was what *narodnost* they declared [*deklarirati se*] themselves to be. Although others sometimes disputed this point, saying that citizenship was not based on *narodnost*, and would in turn question this point in the interview, persons would offer ‘Evidence’ of accounts of other person’s ‘situations’ where this had been the case. What most persons said was that they had felt that the best *narodnost* to declare in terms of acquiring a certificate of citizenship was *hrvat/hrvatica* [Croat].

(Knowing) ‘what’ to be

Persons spoke in terms of knowing what *narodnost* they were with differing degrees of certainty. Some persons said they were extremely certain, others quite certain and yet others said that they were extremely uncertain. It was here where I heard persons make a similar conceptual distinction between *pravo na papir* [right on paper] and *pravo prema osjećaju* [right according to feeling] as they do at the house. Those persons, who said that they ‘knew what they were’, would point out that they were completely *čist* [clean]. However, those persons who said that they were uncertain said that this was because ‘according to their feelings’ they had no idea what *narodnost* they were. And this they said was because, according to the papers, they could be any number of *narodnosti*, where they said that they had felt compelled to make a choice. The instrument that everyone said that they used to measure whether they, and others were ‘clean’, or not ‘clean’, was ‘the family’, saying that

⁹⁷ Residency is not a pre-requisite for citizenship, and is most clearly shown in Article 16 in the laws of citizenship. It writes

A member of the Croatian *narod* who does not have a place of residence in the Republic of Croatia can acquire Croatian citizenship if he or she meets the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, point 5 of this law, and if he or she issues a written statement that he or she considers himself or herself to be a Croatian Citizen. The statement of Paragraph 1 of this article shall be given before the competent authority or before the diplomatic or consular office of the Republic of Croatia abroad

narodnost was something you 'got' from your family. Thus, persons said that the *narodnost* they declared themselves to be *ovisi* [was dependent] on the *narodnost* that their parents, and grandparents declared themselves to be. For example, one man told me that on his father's side his grandfather was German, and his grandmother Croatian; whereas on his mother's side, his grandfather was Slovenian, and his grandmother was Italian. In order for him to be Slovenian, he explained, his mother would have had to declare herself Slovenian first; in order for him to be German, his father would have had to declare himself German. Persons made no distinction in terms of gender here.

In terms of making the declaration, in these interviews, persons said that they had gone to the office and signed a document stating what *narodnost* they felt they were. Like at the house, they then had to prove this claim on paper. Therefore, I suggest in a similar form to how persons made their claim to the inheritance of the house, where persons work on finding the 'Evidence' to *potvrditi* [make hard] their claims, persons told me that when they had to apply for their Certificate of Citizenship they took the papers that confirmed their claims.

When one takes a look at the citizenship documents for the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, one can see that *narodnost* is a category that was required to be filled in. Thus, when a person had to show their parents' documents in their application for citizenship, they told me that those officials reading these documents could see quite clearly what *narodnost* their parents were. However, persons said that they used all sorts of documents to prove that their parents were 'Croats'. One woman, who said she felt she could be either 'Serbian' or 'Croat', recounted the following: 'I could always declare myself not Serbian because I did this when I needed the papers really fast. I lost my identity card. I could not write any cheques. So I had to have my identity so I declared myself 'Croat'. It was really scheming. It is not true. Because when my parents got married on their marriage certificate my father wrote Serb and

my mother said well if you are a 'Serb' then I am a 'Croat'. Just out of spite. As a result of this paper I could declare myself as a 'Croat'. But I had to go to this dark building, up these narrow stairs, where there was this very proud officer standing at the door, looking very mean and very big. There was this very fierce *baba* looking very serious, and I was feeling so small. Then I signed this declaration that I felt that I was a Croat. The lady was looking at me like I know you are not, you piece of scum. But I got my papers much quicker because I had declared myself'.

This person said that the crucial document that had enabled her to get her citizenship was her parents' marriage certificate, in which her mother had declared herself as being Croat. She told me that this declaration by her mother of being Croat had been a 'very lucky thing', and said that this was the reason why 'they' had been unable to refuse her citizenship, because the proof was in the document.

Dokaz [Evidence]

Persons said that someone's *narodnost* was dependent on how they chose to show themselves, and how they were able to show themselves. And like with any paper in the project of *papirologija*, they were often arranging themselves to show themselves to be a particular *narodnost*. In an interview with someone who had been working in these offices at the time, she told me, 'you would not believe what people were doing in order to get citizenship then. They were divorcing, marrying, adopting children and so on. None of it was actually true, but they were doing this so it was recorded on some document somewhere, which they could then offer as proof'.

One piece of 'Evidence' that I often heard persons say was particularly salient in proving their claim to a particular *narodnost* was their surname. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, persons consider surnames to come from where a person says that they are from, and

everyone I met had an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of the different *narodnosti* of different ‘villages’. Very often someone would say that a ‘village’ was ‘clean Hungarian’, or ‘clean Croats’; or that another village was *podijeljen* [divided] between *hrvati* [Croats] and *srbima* [Serbs]. It was because of this, that a number of persons I knew said that they had changed their surname ‘on the papers’ to prove their claim to *narodnost*.

Asking others

However, it was not only that persons had to declare being a particular *narodnost* when making a claim to citizenship. A point that many persons made, was that it was during this time that everyone was asking ‘what’ they had declared themselves to be. Indeed, most said that it was this point, that everyone was asking them, that had made them so ‘nervous’. In particular, those persons who said that ‘they did not know’ felt particularly nervous; because they said that if they did not declare themselves, then others would guess for them. The same woman, who had told me that she had acquired citizenship because her mother had declared herself as ‘Croat’ on the marriage certificate, said ‘for me, my father is a Serb, but this name came from *Lika*, but it is also a Serbian and Croatian last name. No one knew what I was in amongst my new friends in the faculty, no one knew, when I told them they knew. But they actually didn’t know, because my name didn’t tell them. This game was going on, people were guessing or judging. People were changing their names; men were taking their mothers last names. I know a few people who have done this’.

I observed, outside of the interview context, a similar sort of the questioning in terms of *narodnost*. However, rather than this taking the form of a direct question in terms of ‘what are you?’, which indeed I never heard anyone ask, persons were discussing the *narodnost* of someone else.

Working on the 'State': Are they what they say they are?

In previous chapters, I have described how when a person inherits their house their claim to 'the house' is not a settled one, but instead one that has to be continually worked upon. The other owners of the house are constantly questioning the interest that a person has in their house. Persons were constantly questioning and debating with others the claims that others had made in terms of *narodnost*. They never directly asked the person they were interested in what *narodnost* they were, but would often ask someone where they were 'from'⁹⁸. These discussions followed a very similar form to those I had heard about houses in the sense that persons would be looking for difference 'in' the person they were speaking about.

Who are they?

The discussion of someone else's surname⁹⁹ in reference to 'what' it said about their *narodnost* was something I heard very often outside of the interview context.

One day on *Korzo* I was sitting with Mija and Dado, who were neighbours. They had been talking about another neighbour who was making problems with the water bill. The

⁹⁸ Schwartz (1997) has said that although scholars are keen to deconstruct the root 'metaphor' persons use, that he observed that persons in Macedonia constantly spoke of roots. I often heard persons employ the term roots in connection with their claim of 'where they were from'? I suggest that this question of where a person was from was a form of 'Evidence' to support their claim. Like documents, the point of where someone was from was a way of showing someone else who they were; and like documents, persons claims to where they were 'from' could be arranged to show themselves in a particular way.

⁹⁹ Although I heard persons discussing someone's surname in terms of *narodnost* they were, on the main, discussing persons whom they did not know personally. This, persons told me, was different to how it had been 'at the beginning of the 90's', where they said that everyone they knew had been asking them constantly. I suggest that when one turns with this point to the house, this was rather like during the process of inheritance: for persons to know whether their interests were 'shared' or 'divided', they had to firstly know what claim they were making.

building where they had a flat only had one water meter, and how to divide the bill was a constant point of debate. The bill was divided equally between the number of persons in the building, where each 'household' paid a monthly sum according to the number of persons who were living in the flat. One of the neighbours had recently started a 'car washing' service 'on the side', and was therefore using much more water than the others. Their question was whether to 'report' him or not, and what implications this would have on them if they did. Mija was adamant that he should be reported, but Dado was more hesitant saying that he was worried the neighbour might make 'a revenge' on them.

'We must report him' said Mija, 'why should I pay for his business? He is making money out of us. We are paying for his costs in his business, he has no shame that man'. 'Yes, but he is dangerous. He is *Mafija* [mafia], and not even Croatian Mafia but Serbian Mafia. They are completely mad. I don't want him to be my enemy' replied Dado. 'Well, he cannot be very strong Mafia if he is working by washing cars. And anyway he is not Serbian, he is from *Zagorje*' Mija retorted. 'That is not true. He is definitely Serbian, I know because my cousin told me that his father used to work in my Aunt's firm. And he is definitely Serbian', Dado stated. 'That is all talk. Look at his surname, it is not exactly Serbian. These are just stories' Mija replied. They discussed this point about whether he was Serbian or not, until Dado said that he would ask his cousin to 'dig' a little.

However, unlike this example where these Dado and Mija were 'interested' in the *narodnost* of their neighbour for a reason, even more frequently I heard persons discuss the *narodnost* of others for no apparent reason.

All Bakers are Albanians

'It must be that he is Albanian' asserted Niko to another neighbour. 'if he is a baker

then he must be Albanian. All bakers are Albanian'. Recently, a new neighbour had moved into a neighbouring building. 'He is not, I asked his where he is from and he told me he was from Dalmatia' replied this neighbour. 'He must be. I am sure of it' said Niko, 'I think he did not tell you. He was lying. But if he is a baker he must be an Albanian'. 'Why would he lie? What does he have to hide by being Albanian?' replied Niko's neighbour. 'Maybe he is uncomfortable, maybe he thinks you will judge him' said Niko. This debate over whether the new neighbour was an Albanian lasted for about half an hour, where Niko was adamant that the new neighbour must be an Albanian, because he was a baker, a thought he would not change until the neighbour could offer the proof that this man was not Albanian.

I heard numerous such debates about another person's *narodnost*. As well, persons were constantly questioning whether others were doing something in order to show themselves in terms of *narodnost*. This, they would offer in disparaging tones, saying very often that they were 'certain' someone else was doing something to show to others 'what' they were. For example on the day of *Vela Gospa* [August 15th] many people make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin Mary on Trsat in Rijeka. On this day, the quarter of Trsat is full of people going to visit the shrine. As I was walking through Trsat with one person, she said 'look at all these people. On every car you will see a cross, and on lots of them you will see the Croatian emblem. It is almost like a duty if you want to be a good Croat. Maybe not so much with the older people, but the younger ones are here just to show how good they are'.

It would be possible to offer countless examples of how persons were debating another person's *narodnost*, but I suggest that they would all say a similar thing: they were always doing this with someone who claimed to be the same *narodnost*: where like with *veza*, they were looking for the difference in others.

Ambiguity

Some scholars refer to the way persons constantly question other person's *narodnost* in terms of an 'ambiguity'. For instance, Duijzings (2000) has written of his field research in Kosovo Croats that 'what I found most striking in this area was the ambiguity and convertibility of identities. I was often asking myself 'Who is actually what, and what were they originally?'' (Duijzings 2000: 42).

Closely related to this point, there has been some mention within this body of writing on the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that persons are hiding themselves (*cf* Duijzings 2000). This line of argument takes a similar perspective to Scott's (1985) about persons hiding themselves as form of resistance. I certainly heard persons constantly commenting that someone else was 'lying', or 'acting'. This was present when persons were talking about their houses, their funerals or in terms of their claim to being a particular *narodnost*. However, I take issue with the point made in the literature that persons are hiding themselves.

One of the critiques Jean-Klein (2001) has offered about the field of nationalism studies is that this body of writing has a tendency to take a split stance to nationalist projects. This, she says, takes the form of a Jekyll-and-Hyde figure, whereby scholars examining nationalist projects are engaged in either a project of co-construction or a project of de-construction. She also argues that these studies do have a shared point, which is that both 'sides' do not account for the point that persons may be engaging in an enactment of certainty in these projects. And it is here where she suggests that the concept of ambiguity has often been employed, as well as being a focus of interest, in this writing. It is here where I would like to build on the argument that she makes after this point, where she argues that persons are engaging in acts of certainty in terms of 'everyday life'. Similar to the point she makes, I argue, in light of the examples above, that persons were also working on certainty in these

debates about someone else. By presenting someone else's uncertainty about their *narodnost* to an observer, I argue that a person is offering an account of their own certainty. Through looking for difference 'in' others, persons are showing themselves to be the same.

Strathern (1988) has argued that Westerners tend to take the analytical starting point that a society is made up of individuals. Persons in Croatia do not take this starting point. They can show themselves as *sami/individualci* [individuals], but this all depends on how they chose to show themselves. And this I suggest that they do through talking about others. Thus, when persons are commenting that someone else is lying, they are also engaging in a form of showing themselves. Gilson (1976) in an earlier account about 'lying' has argued that it is necessary to examine the context in which this lying occurs. As he writes 'it is here, in the examination of the lie in action, that we learn the full meaning of the classification "that it a lie" '(Gilson 1976: 192). It is only by showing uncertainty in others, that they are showing certainty in themselves.

Although I heard persons constantly talk about the *narodnost* of others, where again like the work on the house and the work on documents it appeared that this was a never-ending project, there were moments when persons would say they refuse to speak about such things. And it is in the next part of this chapter where I turn to examine this 'refusal' to speak about some things.

2001 Census

I show this point of 'not wanting to talk about it' first of all with an account of the 2001 census. The census took place at the end of March 2001, where 'official census takers' visited every household, and filled in the census form based on the occupant's answers to the

questions they asked. The census takers¹⁰⁰ themselves mostly consisted of students, or persons who were not working at the time. The main topic of discussion concerning the census, that was audible at this time, was whether persons had to be actually present when the census taker came to take the census, or whether one person in the household could act as spokesman for everyone else. The cause for this discussion was that lots of people were not actually living at the place they were 'officially' registered, and they were concerned about where they actually had to be at the time of the census: where they were living, or where they were 'officially' living? I did not know of anyone, who was in this situation, who went to the place where they were registered, and those speaking for the household told the census taker that they were away either on a 'business trip' or 'visiting people abroad'.

Those persons, who were taking the census, told me that they felt uncomfortable asking going as strangers into people's houses or flats, and they felt particularly uncomfortable about the questions in the census. Yet, nearly everyone I spoke to told me that they understood why the 'state' needed this information, they required it for their plans. What made them feel uncomfortable was that they had to tell someone else what they considered to be intimate details about themselves, and their family. As one man told me 'it is the thought of telling someone else, who could then tell other people what I said that makes me *neugodan* [uncomfortable]. They [census takers] keep these details written down about who said what somewhere I am sure'. Thus, it was the lack of anonymity with regards to the census takers that persons said troubled them. And perhaps as a consequence of this feeling, nearly everyone I spoke to told me that they had told the census-takers what they thought was '*najbolje*' [for the best]. One man told me 'they ask you about your financial situation? I am not telling the 'State' the truth about this. What happens later? The Financial Police come to

¹⁰⁰ From my conversations with persons who were census takers during the census, they told me that the most crucial qualifications to be a census taker was a degree and tidy handwriting.

your house, and investigate you because you have been stupid enough to tell them in the *Potpis stanovništva* [census] something that they did not already know’.

In terms of *narodnost*, this approach of telling the census taker what was for the best seemed to be no different. Although persons had the option not to offer any information about their *narodnost*, or their *vjere*¹⁰¹ [religion], most persons said that they felt it was better to say that they were something. Everyone I spoke to made the comment that they were concerned about what might ‘be’ later on. One person told me that during the census she had declared her daughter as being Serbian. She said ‘when I did this I suddenly felt really worried. I know they say that it is anonymous, but you never know. I asked the woman who was filling in the form to change it, to put her down as a ‘Croat’. It is better, it might cause her problems later on’. Persons also felt might that by not ‘declaring oneself’ this might make problems later on, and many persons told me that they felt that declaring oneself as ‘Croat’ was the ‘right’ answer for the question in the census concerning *narodnost*. A person who was a census taker made a similar point. She told me that very often people declared their *narodnost* as ‘Croat’, when she felt they were something else. She said that she did not question it, but just wrote down that they were ‘Croat’, when she said that she felt quite sure they were not.

From my discussions with people about the census it seemed that the accounts people were giving the census takers were often fashioned in a way that befitted what was the least problematic for the householders. Like all other projects concerning *papirologija*, the way people filled in the census was seemingly a case of presenting the ‘right’ story, which would make the least problems¹⁰².

¹⁰¹ In the census there was a distinction between ‘religion’ and *narodnost*.

¹⁰² Bringa (1995) has written about how in the Ottoman Empire brothers were often declaring themselves as different religions in order to be able to declare the family as one ‘religion’ or the other.

Census Results

When the proposed date came for when the results were to be published, an announcement was made in the press that they were not ready. One man told me that he suspected that the main problem was that when these results were compared with the last census, they would reveal a large number of missing people. His hypothesis was that the 'politicians' were waiting for the right moment to announce them. Due to this delay, I found that I was impatiently waiting for these results, an impatience that I noticed was not shared by those around me. As one friend asked 'why are you so interested? It is all *politika* [politics]. What does it matter?' Whenever the topic of the census was brought up in conversation, a topic I had often started myself, those around me would say that they were interested in things like how many people were illiterate, or how many people in Croatia did not have bathrooms.

However, when the results were announced I was attending a Minority Rights Forum in Rijeka, where the census was one of the most talked about topics. The delegates attending the Forum said the census results were a matter of great concern. The main problem, they said, was that the number of people who had declared themselves as being Serbian had dramatically fallen. One man, who was involved in the Serbian society, announced in a press conference at the Forum that the census was an act of 'ethnic cleansing'. He said that those people who had left Croatia in wartime, and were now refugees in Serbia or Bosnia, had not been counted. He explained that he had collected copies of the census and organised for them to be handed out to these persons living in Serbia and Bosnia. However, of the forty eight thousand filled-in census forms that he had given back to the census offices in Zagreb, eleven thousand had been rejected on the grounds that they had not been filled in properly. This, he said, was tantamount to an act of ethnic cleansing, because through this process, people who had the 'Right' to be Croatian citizens were not being counted.

But I noticed that it was not only the number of missing people that was a cause of

concern for the delegates. Another term I heard them employ was '*asimilacija*' [assimilation], where the delegates presented the census as an example of how people had been assimilated on the basis of *narodnost*. A representative for the one of the Roma organisations in Rijeka said that he 'knew' that there were about seven hundred Roma living in the county of Primorsko-goranska, but that only seven people had declared themselves as Roma. The rest had declared themselves as Croat. His explanation for this was that they were too frightened to declare themselves as Roma in the census. And this fear to declare oneself as anything but Croat, was a point that all the delegates agreed upon.

Outside the Forum

However, when I left the hotel where the Forum was being held, and went to a café to meet some persons I knew, their reaction to the census results was slightly different. Some had heard on the local radio a report about the Forum, which had pointed out that the number of people who were missing in the census was an important topic. 'Why are they upset about this? Of course they are missing. There was a war' one man commented. As the thread of conversation moved away from the concerns of the Forum, to the census itself, I observed that the most referred to point about the census in this conversation was what the results actually were. Although one man announced, in what seemed quite a proud way that 'his town' was one of the most *čist* [clean] towns in terms of *narodnost* in Croatia, no one seemed to be particularly interested in talking about the census. They dismissed it as being 'unimportant', and more than one person told me it was 'Politics'. Again, I found that I was the only person who wanted to talk about it.

Politika [Politics]

No one said anything complementary about 'Politics'. When I asked anyone what they

thought about 'Politics' they often told me that phrases like '*politika ti je kurba*' [politics is prostitution] or '*politika ti je zlo*' [politics is evil] were the most fitting to describe politics. Indeed, many persons said that they tried to avoid it all costs, and would say that they avoided reading the newspapers, or watching the news because it was all 'Politics'. Often the mere mention of 'Politics' would stir a person into a furious monologue, whereupon more often than not they would say that it was because of 'Politics' that there were so many problems in Croatia, and it was because of 'Politics' that the *situacija* [situation] was as it was.

Rolling Stones Square

'Can you imagine what *gluposti* [stupidity] I have just seen' a friend commented as she entered the flat. 'They are having a concert to get people to sign a petition that asks to change the name of *Titov trg* [Tito's square]'. 'What name do they want' I asked. 'Rolling Stones Square' she said. Over the next few days, I heard much discussion about the plan to change the name of the square. I had read the interview one of the organisers had given in *Novi List*, about how they wanted to change the name of the square to Rolling Stones to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Ri-Rock. The organiser had said that the Rolling Stones were the greatest rock influence in the world, and that it was apt to rename the square Rolling Stones Square.

Everyone had a point of view about this notion, and I heard a wide variety of viewpoints about this idea. Some said that it was good that the name of the square was changed because Tito was a criminal, who should not be commemorated. Others said that Tito was very important, and that it was a *sramota* [shameful] this was even being discussed. And yet others told me that although they did not think Tito was a very positive person, he had all the same been very important. They could not understand why every time the names of streets had to be changed to heroes, or to positive figures in Croatia's history. Others said it was a

plan to try to get the Rolling Stones to hold a concert in Rijeka. They said that the organisers hoped that by naming a square after them, they would come to a renaming ceremony. All in all these debates were held in a good natured manner, where people were exchanging opinions with each other about this plan to change the name of the square.

However, on the night of the signing of the petition it was reported that certain politicians had been to sign the petition. They had given their reasons about why the name of the square should be changed. And one friend's commentary about this presence of politicians was one I heard everywhere. 'Look at them. They have come to get vote [the elections were to be held shortly afterwards]. They want to get the young people to vote for their parties, so they have come to support them. It makes me so angry. Does he think we are all really that stupid' he said. The presence of these politicians at the signing of the petition concert made people really very angry. This was evidence, they said, of once again politicians getting involved in everything. And was an example of them using what anyone else was doing for their own *korist* [purposes]: what had been a thing of harmless fun had become 'Politics'.

'Politics' is, however, not a practice that only persons consider 'politicians' to engage in. Rather, they said that it is when someone *koristio se drugima za sebe* [uses others for oneself], with '*prazne priče*' [empty stories]. As I draw out in the next example, it was because of '*politika* in the state' that persons would often enter into a debate that would turn into an argument.

CNN Croatia

It was quite late in the evening, and I was sitting with some persons in another friends flat. Everybody was sitting about talking, there was some music playing, and the television was switched on without the sound. At one point one friend said 'look, look there is an advert for Croatia on CNN', and he grabbed the remote control to increase the volume. The images

shown were of Dubrovnik, castles in Slavonia and scenes from the islands. 'The pictures make it look like paradise here' one friend laughed. 'Of course they do, it is an advert. They are not going to show them pictures of the refinery in *Mlaka*¹⁰³ are they?' said another. 'Come to Croatia, and experience the stink of the poison gas from *Mlaka*' he continued. 'I would like to live in the Croatia on CNN. Everyone is smiling and happy' another friend said wistfully. 'Oh come on, it is not real' retorted another person, 'it does not exist'.

A few people started to comment on how photographs could make something look so different to what it really was. 'It is all propaganda' said Time, 'like in the war'. 'You know, I heard that in some villages they were burning tyres to make the destruction look worse than it was for the television cameras' he continued. His friend, *Joze*, who was sitting next to him, asked him 'and where were these villages?'. 'In *Lika*' he said. 'So you are saying that people in *Lika* were burning tyres to make the war look worse than it was?' he asked coldly. 'Well not all of them, but yes I think some were' he said. 'I cannot believe you say this. I just cannot believe it' *Joze* uttered. 'Well, that is the power of propaganda' Time replied. 'My family come from *Lika*. My Aunt's house was blown up. I know what happened there. And you dare to give this shit about propaganda. You think they had time to go and burn tyres when they were trying to save their own heads. You are mad' *Joze* replied. Those people who had not been following the conversation, looked up to listen to what he was saying. *Joze* was furious. 'I am not saying everyone did it. But I am saying that some people did it' Time told him. At this point *Joze* lost all control, and started to shout at Time telling him he thought like a bloody *Četnik*¹⁰⁴. 'You think like Milošević' he shouted. In response, Time stood up and put his coat on, saying that he would not stay and listen to these insults.

After Time had gone *Joze* was shaking with anger, commenting that he could not believe Time thought like this. 'I did not know he thought like this, I thought he was my

¹⁰³ *Mlaka* is the area of Rijeka where there is an oil refinery.

¹⁰⁴ A *Četnik* is a term that persons use to describe 'Serbian' soldiers.

friend' he said. Others tried to play down what Time had said with statements like 'You know his 'Politics' is strange', 'he has problems at work, he is very stressed' or 'he is drunk, he will be sorry in the morning'. But Joze continued 'that 'rubbish' tells me he won't listen to my insults, and what is he doing with his talk about tyres. I will tell you he is insulting me with these *provokacija* [provocations]' he announced. To this day, their friendship has not been repaired, Joze refers to Time as his *bivši prijatelj* [former friend], and on the occasions when they are together in one place they do not speak to each other.

Being in Agreement

Most persons told me that because of the potential that such talk would turn into an 'argument', where they would end up speaking with the other person, that even when they felt that someone was provoking them they would try to control themselves and agree.

On one occasion, I was sitting with a friend in a café. The radio was turned on and the news was being broadcast. The newsreader was describing the anniversary of the N.A.T.O. bombing of Serbia, and as the newsreader was reading out the report, the man behind the bar shouted 'super' very loudly. We were the only customers in the café, and he started to engage in conversation with us. 'Isn't it great?' he said. 'How they suffered, now they know what is like to have someone bomb them. Now they know what it is like not able to sleep at night because of fear. Mr Clinton is our hero'. The man I was sitting with replied, 'it is great. I quite agree. It was great they suffered'. The bartender continued about how he had seen with his own eyes what these *Srbima* [Serbians] had done. 'It is because of people like you we have a free country' he replied, and muttered to me about how we should leave at once. After we left, he commented. 'Never ever argue with people like that' he warned, 'They are truly dangerous. It is all 'Politics'. Persons like that are provoking you, they want you to *pokazati sebe* [show yourself]. Just agree and try to get away'.

Although persons would say that they did not want to speak about such matters because it was ‘Politics’, as I turn to describe now they would also say that others had the right to speak in this way.

Who has the Right?: Thompson

Marko Perkovic or ‘Thompson’ is a singer in his late thirties. He took the nickname Thompson from the gun he used during the war, and seemingly had a very clear approach towards the ‘values’ he promoted during his concerts and in his songs. He was a self-described *Veliki Hrvat* [Great Croat]. Whilst he was performing a concert tour around Croatia, there was a lot reported about Thompson in the newspapers. In particular, these articles focused on a concert held in the *Poljud* football stadium in Split, where there were photographs of people offering a right-handed salute in a similar style to the right handed salute offered by Nazis. These photos provoked quite a lot of debate, where persons were debating whether his *stav* [position] was connected to that of the *Ustaša* in the Second World War. Thompson, had not made his position explicit, although in numerous interviews he had been asked to do so. Some said that he was a patriot, and had no connection to the Second World War. The question of why persons were interested in this point, was over the ‘State’. Here, persons were debating over whether the ‘State’ should allow such a concert, since they said that a law had been passed banning any public displays of ‘right wing’ activity. Those that said he should be banned said that he was promoting the values of the *Ustaša*. Many of those commenting on these images in the newspapers, said that they confirmed their feelings that Thompson was promoting a ‘right wing political message’ about *Hrvati* [Croats]. A number of people told me, when speaking about Thompson, that they were concerned so many teenagers were attending his concerts, saying that this was not good for the future of Croatia. They felt he was only spreading hate between people, and could not understand why

the 'State' allowed such a concert. Other persons, however, argued that he was not promoting such values, and was a patriot not a *Šovinst* [chauvinist].

When he came to sing in Rijeka, I attended his concert. Lots of people told me that this would be an occasion where I would see lots of *Veliki Hrvati* [Great Croats]. When I entered the concert hall, the first thing I noticed were the stalls selling *Ustaša* memorabilia. There were T-shirts with the head of Ante Pavelić printed on them, key rings with the *grb* [crest] of Croatia where the chessboard of the crest of Croatia started with a white square rather than a red one, or black hats with the letter U stamped on them. Inside the concert hall, at the back of the stage, there was a large banner with the phrase '*Bog i Obitelj*' [God and Family] written on it. The concert hall was about three-quarters full, and there were people of all ages attending. The majority were wearing everyday clothes, but a small minority were wearing uniforms that bore a remarkable similarity to the uniforms that *Ustaša* wore in the Second World War. At the back of the concert hall were a large number of *Specijalci* [Riot Police] standing in a row. Apart from, perhaps, the large number of Croatian flags being waved by fans in the audience, and the few who were dressed in *Ustaša* uniform, the whole concert seemed like any other concert I had attended. People were singing along to the music, and were cheering and dancing to songs that they particularly liked.

After the concert, I went to meet some other persons I knew, where I explained that I had been to the concert. They were very interested to know what I had thought about the concert, and whether I thought there was 'Evidence' that he was right wing. The 'Evidence' they were interested in was whether he had shown himself by saying anything about this to the audience. As we were talking about this, one man sitting there, Petar, that this was all 'Politics' and he did not want to speak about it. Slavko, who was sitting at the table said that he would talk about it if he wanted to, and that he had every 'Right' to talk about what he wanted. Petar responded by saying that he was fed up with listening to this 'Politics', and that

he was asking him to stop it. At this point Slavko erupted saying 'you think this is 'Politics'. You think a man singing about how he guarded his village is 'Politics'? I know, I have the *iskustvo* [experience] because I guarded my village, and I have the right to talk about someone who was singing about guarding his village'. Rather, than continuing with asking Slavko to stop talking about 'Politics', Petar turned to him and said 'I am really sorry. I didn't know. I apologise'.

Iskustvo [Experience] and the 'Right' to Speak

At the outset of fieldwork many persons I knew well told me that if I wanted to look at problems concerning *narodnosti* I should go to do fieldwork somewhere else rather than in Rijeka. They would sometimes say a few words about *narodnosti*, and then quickly say that they did not really have the 'Right' to talk about such things. This was offered, again, in a way to stop the conversation. Whenever I asked them why they did not have the right to speak about it was invariably the same. It was because they had been in Rijeka during the war, and had not had 'Experience'¹⁰⁵ of the war as other people had done. Frequently, they would point out other regions of Croatia, and say that I should ask people in Lika, Dalmatia or Slavonia about the war because people living there¹⁰⁶ had 'Experience'. It was because of this 'Experience' that they said people there thought very differently to people in Rijeka. It became apparent in these comments there was a moral tone, where it was the 'Experience' of wartime that gave people the 'Right' to talk about the war.

¹⁰⁵ Again, I see a parallel with the debates within the writing on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Firstly, in terms of who has the 'right' to speak about the conflicts [*cf* Povrzanovic 2000], where scholars discuss the 'insider' 'outsider' positions. A second parallel is that these scholars are arguing about whether the conflicts caused by 'political nationalist discourses' or 'experience'.

¹⁰⁶ During the time I spent visiting family houses I did spend considerable time in some of those 'places' where persons said that there were considerable problems concerning *narodnost*. The impression I got was that in these places although 'the debate' was more pronounced in everyday life, the way it worked was the same as in Rijeka.

The direct translation of *iskustvo* is experience, and when someone referred to 'Experience', or their lack of 'Experience', they often made reference to the losses in their *obitelji* [family] that they had, or had not, suffered. One such discussion I had witnessed where someone had referred to 'Experience' was about the topic of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal. He had said that Carla del Ponte was a friend of the 'Serbs', and pointed out how the spokeswoman spoke in Serbian. Somebody sitting at the table remonstrated with him, telling him that he should stop talking about it, referring to 'Politics'. His response had been one of extreme anger. 'What I am not allowed to talk about this?' he shouted. 'Of course you are, just I don't want to talk about it' this man said. 'It is so easy not to talk about it. It makes people uncomfortable. It is an uncomfortable topic. Like it is uncomfortable for me that both my brothers were killed by those *Četnici*, and it is uncomfortable for my mother that she has lost two of her sons'. 'Look at these people', he said directly to me, 'they did nothing in the war. They have no 'Experience'. And now it is uncomfortable to talk about it. My brothers died so they could be uncomfortable'.

Some 'Sameness' and 'A Difference'

Persons said that this not being 'certain' about what happened to others in the war made them feel very uncomfortable, where you always had to be careful *not* to tell a person, who was wanting to talk about such things, that they were doing so because of 'Politics' because it might be that in fact they were speaking from 'experience'. The sense I gained was that this question about whether persons were speaking about the *narod* [people] in this way, either because of 'Experience' or because of 'Politics', evoked a similar sort of reaction as the one when someone said that they thought someone was working 'alone' on the house. Like working alone on the house, which everyone agreed persons should not do, doing 'Politics' was something that everyone agreed persons should not do.

This is where I find sameness between what persons were doing at their houses, and what they were doing when they were talking about the 'State'. If an owner suspected that another owner had been working alone on the house, then they would quite often voice this suspicion; and if they did not at the time, they often mentioned that they would use this 'later' as evidence if they needed. When they did voice their suspicion to another owner they had been working alone, then the other owner would most often vehemently deny that this was the case. This was the same in terms of talking about the 'State'. As well, when persons were talking about the house, some persons considered that others did not have the right to speak about the house: affines who had inherited the house. Although, they had an equal right 'on the paper', persons would make a distinction in terms of feelings towards the house. Even if some affines were 'owners', sometimes other owners argued that they did not have the same feelings to the house as they did.

However, where I find 'a difference' is in terms of making certainty and uncertainty. Persons said that they were certain that affines did not have the same right, pointing out 'the difference' between them. Yet, in terms of who had the right to talk 'about the State', persons would present this in terms of great uncertainty. They said that they did not know, but unlike with affines where they were working hard on finding 'the difference' I did not get the impression that they were interested in looking for 'the difference'. Rather, they simply said that they did not want to talk about it. Or to rephrase this: they were saying that they did not want to make 'the difference'.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered an account of how persons engage with the concept of 'narodnost' in 'everyday life'. I suggest that there is a similar movement to these debates as at the house. Persons have to make a claim to be a part of the house, and although this claim was

momentarily 'settled', it is a claim they continually work on by 'deconstructing' the claims of others. Yet, there is a slight, but critical difference. Although they are constantly discussing the *narodnost* of others, and showing their 'interest' in the 'State', persons are trying to not animate debate about the 'State' in a way which draws out potential divided interests in the 'narod'. I would argue that instead they are trying to avoid animating debate about such interests, because to animate debate is to potentially make 'the difference' again.

It is from this position, from the ethnographic account that I have offered in this thesis, that I engage with two points in the literature specific to the region, as well as one in the wider writing on the concept of 'ethnicity'. The literature on the region predominately places a focus on the 'State' and the role of the 'State' in animating 'division' between persons on the basis of *narodnost*. Much of the writing examines, or refers to state writing practices as making this division. There is a large amount of writing that focuses on topics such as the census (Hayden 2000), and 'national statistics' (Hammel 1993). As Jansen (2005) has described, a large number of scholars have used these numbers to support their positions in their debates on the conflicts. Here, this writing treats the 'change' in national numbers as evidence of the presence or absence of enmity between persons on the basis of 'nationality' prior to the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The argument that Jansen (2005) makes, is that these numbers should not be treated as an independent variable, but a dependent one in any analysis of the conflicts. Here, he has argued that the salience of these numbers should be 'cut down to size'. The point I make from the basis of my observations in Rijeka is that persons are not looking to state writing practices when they look for difference in terms of *narodnost*. Rather, it is 'state writing practices' where potential differences lie. As with the documents of the house, which displays ownership in terms of a fraction, persons can never make a certainty that this is where 'the difference' in interests will actually be. Instead they have to look for it, and by looking for it they are working on making it. In terms of where they

look, they are looking in other persons. This is where they find difference, and this is where, in accordance with Jansen (2005) who writes of the need to consider the context in which these numbers work, I think scholars should be looking for a further understanding of the conflicts.

However, where I find difference in Jansen's (2005) point, and the impression I formed in Rijeka is where he writes 'our studies do more justice to the lived experience of national belonging if they highlight *the relative significance of national differences while never losing sight of their genesis, their contingency, and their contextual meaning* among a variety of socio-economical and political factors' (Jansen 2005: 62. emphasis added). Here, 'the difference' is already there, and I argue that instead, as persons in Rijeka are doing, we never treat 'difference' as an artefact, but as a project that persons are constantly working upon. Although it may be momentarily settled, and give an impression of fragmentation to those observing, it is never finished. Connected to this, a point that is most visible in terms of the scholarly use by the majority, but not all, of the terms 'Croat', 'Serbs', or 'Muslims'. I would argue against the use of such terminology since from my observations in Rijeka, both from the work on the house and the work on the 'State', it is the recognition by others of 'the difference' that transforms or 'turns' the debate into an argument. Although persons are constantly using the terms *Hrvati* [Croats], *Srbi* [Serbians] or *Muslimani* [Muslims] when presenting difference in *narodnost*, they are doing so because they are engaging in the project of finding difference. As persons working on the region, I do not think we need to engage in this form of project.

In terms of the wider anthropological perspective of ethnicity, where deconstruction has become a technique that scholars employ to show the constructed quality of ethnicity, I argue that in the case of Croatia [if one is to certainly conflate *narodnost* with ethnicity for a moment] such a technique is extremely problematic. Not only is one engaging in the same

kind of analytical work as persons themselves (*cf* Jean Klein 2003); but also I argue that the effect of such an approach is to animate persons to work all the more harder on their claims.

'On being Uncertain': Finding Difference in the Debates

'Lines of Division'

In this thesis, I have argued that much of the literature treats the 'lines of division' between persons on the basis of ethnicity as something that was 'already there', and certain before the conflicts. It has been my intention in this thesis to offer an alternative image of difference in Croatia, where I have argued instead that persons are constantly looking for difference in others. This, I have described through offering an ethnographic account of the work that persons do on inherited 'family houses', and the work they do on the 'State'. The point that I have offered from this account is that difference is something that is never settled, but instead an artefact that persons are continually negotiating in the debates they have about the work projects on the 'house' and the 'State'.

I have also argued that these debates persons have in Croatia about these 'figures of interest' not only animate relations; but as well, these figures of divided interests offer a shape to the way these relations are animated. Thus, for example debates about family relations animate the house, but as well, they are animated by the house. Here, the house gives this shape to the way the debates work by offering a figure of where potential differences between persons might lie. I have also argued that within scholarly writing on the 'State', state writing practices have been closely implicated in creating division between persons on the basis of ethnicity. The argument I made is that persons do not consider the 'State' as a 'central figure' in everyday life, but instead are looking for the 'State' in other persons. It is on the basis of

this observation that I proposed it is not possible to argue that the 'State' animated division between persons, but rather offered a form to where potential differences might lie between persons. As with the work projects on the house, persons were working on finding difference in others claims to the 'State', and thus they were animating this project themselves. This, I suggest, is critical in terms of an understanding 'how' division works in Croatia, and a point that supports Jean-Klein's (2001) argument about not treating the 'everyday' as an a-political or 'banal' site for state-building projects. The 'everyday' life needs, I argue, in ethnographic terms to be treated seriously.

It is in this chapter, where I firstly offer a summary of the argument I have offered in the preceding chapters. Having done this, I turn to engage with the concept of uncertainty; and how persons in Croatia consider the relation between certainty and uncertainty. It is my argument that persons do not always consider 'certainty' to be a positive quality, and often prefer to remain 'uncertain'; and bearing this point in mind I then turn to compare how the anthropological debate works and debate works in Croatia. Although I find a number of similarities, I also argue that there is one critical difference.

Summary of Chapters

The two figures that I have concentrated on ethnographically in this thesis have been shared inherited 'houses' and the 'State'. In the case of shared family houses, I have described in Chapter Two how the house makes family relations visible; both to 'outside observers' and to those who are a part of the house. It is in this account of the house, where I argued that within the project of kinship, persons focus on finding potential *differences* of interest, rather than *shared* interests. Thus, rather than such debates being a part of the 'seamier side' of kinship, as Peletz (2001) has described, such debate is what persons in Croatia consider to be

a 'normal' part of the project of family. The owners of family houses are continually looking for potential differences of interest in the other owners claim to the house, and in doing so are at the same time constantly unsettling other persons claims to the house.

In Chapter Three, I described how, like the work projects on the house, persons can never be certain of how they might inherit the house. Even though persons may be certain in terms of their feelings that they have the 'Right' to inherit the house, they must prove this point on paper. It is here, where I argued that paper is the 'substance' (Strathern 1988) that persons consider to be critical in holding persons together as 'family'; whereby it is only evidence on paper that the judge considers when making decisions about who will inherit the house. Although difference at this moment of inheritance between the owners appears settled, it has been my argument that this is only a temporary settlement. This is because when persons come to inherit the house they own it but do not possess it; and are thus displayed on the documents of the house in the form of a fraction where they are never certain about which part of the house they own.

It was taking this point about the salience of paper in everyday life, that in Chapter Four I turned to examine how persons engage in the project of *papirologija*. I have argued that, again, there is a sense of never-endingness to this project, where persons are continually working on sorting out their claims. These claims take on the form of 'papers' or documents, and again there is an uncertainty for persons as to whether they will be able to settle their claims. Although the way persons engage in this project initially appears haphazard, I have argued that persons take a methodological approach to 'sorting out' their papers. The approach that most persons employ to 'sort out' their papers is to find a 'Connection' who can help them with this project. The argument I made was that 'Connection' take on the form of 'a difference', where again persons are looking for difference 'in' persons. It is through finding

this difference, which they do by making a favour that they are able to creatively engage in the bureaucratic project for their own interests. However, once again these differences are never certain. Some persons are unable to engage in this project because they do not have citizenship. I have argued that in order for persons to find difference, they have to be part of the state in terms of being a citizen; a point that closely follows debates about the house.

A critical figure, or set of figures in these debates about the 'house', or about the 'State' are those persons who are observing. I have argued, based on my observations in the graveyards in Chapter Five, that the presence of observers has a critical role in animating the debate in family relations about potential differences in interest. Not only do they 'recognise' the family 'as one', but they also offer a vantage point (Strathern 1988) for the family within the debate. Here, owners can present their conclusions of potential differences 'in' relations from the perspective of neighbours to the other owners of the house, and what they might conclude from their readings of the house.

Although there is a sense of never-endingness to these debates, where the owners of inherited family houses say that these houses are never finished, sometimes there is an 'event' where the debate can 'turn into' an argument. In Chapter Six, I outlined this 'process', where I described how persons say that it is when another owner has 'really shown themselves', that they are no longer able to share the house together. Here, they say that everyone has taken a 'fixed position' in relation to the house, and it is at this point where most often the owners divide these houses. Even though the owners are fixed in their relation to the house, they still engage in work on the house: this time, however, in the court. It is here where they work on finding the 'Evidence' to prove their position in relation to the house; and it is when the judge has recognised this difference that the house divides. It is on this basis of this observation that

I have argued, that it is when persons accept 'the difference' between them that the debate changes into an argument.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Seven, I have argued that a similar form is visible in the debates that persons have about the 'State'. It is this work on the 'State' that makes *narodnost* visible to other persons, as well *narodnost* to persons within the 'State'. In a similar way to the way persons work on the house, persons are also constantly pointing out difference in other persons on the basis of *narodnost*. Here, I have argued that they look for difference in the claims of other persons; which again is an unsettled difference. However, where I have argued that I find a critical difference to the debates about the house, and the debates about the 'State' is that persons do not want to engage in debate about who has the right to talk about the 'State'. This, they refer to as potentially being 'Politics', which like when working on the house 'alone' persons consider to be a particularly problematic project. My point was that persons are avoiding talking about the 'State' in this way, because they are unwilling to draw out potential differences between persons in this way. And I argued that this is a point that the literature working on the region needs to further consider, since there is the issue that by continually recognising difference between persons they could be implicated in re-animating the debate on the 'State'.

Taking Difference as being Certain

One point, which I have made in a number of places in this thesis, is the difference I find between some of the scholarly writing on the concepts of kinship and ethnicity, and the way persons approach these concepts. This is, again concerning 'difference'. My argument has been that some scholars working on these concepts have treated 'the difference' as already being there or certain between persons. In this conclusion I argue that scholars should perhaps be a little more uncertain about this difference. This, I suggest, entails taking the consideration

that 'being uncertain' should not always be placed in a negative light; where in contrast to the following point by Kertzer and Arel (2002), not everyone wants to be certain.

Anthropologists have long been intrigued by the human compulsion to divide the observed world into categories, and by people's discomfort with those people, animals, or other objects who do not seem to fit into a single category (Levi-Strauss 1966; Douglas 1966). This human drive lies behind the universal efforts not only of elites and state officials but also people of all kinds to divide the social universe into neat categories (Kertzer and Arel 2002: 34).

Indeed, I suggest that sometimes persons are working hard to remain uncertain. In Appadurai's (1998) account of 'Dead Certainty' he has argued that during times of great uncertainty, persons look for a form of dead certainty. This, he presents in terms of *anomie*, where it is because of a lack of structure persons look for structure and certainty in the most extreme ways. One of the examples he uses to support this argument is the case of ethnic cleansing in the wars during the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this thesis, there were points that persons used the term clean to describe either their feelings, a document, or another person's *narodnost*. As Appadurai (1998) has mentioned, persons use this term when they are certain about something.

It is my argument that it is when persons say that they are 'clean', or certain, that they are agents in these projects. But although they have an agency in these projects, I would argue they are talking about being agents in quite a specific way: and they do so in negative terms. Rather than finding this agency through others, by showing themselves in looking for difference in others, they do so by showing themselves directly to others. Persons were constantly showing their own interest through finding difference 'in' others' interests at the house, but it is when they show their own interest in the house *directly* to others that they become agents. The case of changing the locks on the house is an example of this, and takes the form of 'Politics'; and is when persons say that someone has 'shown themselves'. As I have described, persons find 'Politics' to be an extremely problematic project, where they say

that one should not show oneself in this way. This point of not wanting to show oneself directly is visible in the terms '*mali*' [small] and '*veliki*' [great]. In Chapter Four, when my neighbour Niko was talking about his papers he complained about *mali građanin* [small citizens] having to suffer so much paperwork; as well the death notice of Josip in Chapter Six referred to him as being a small man. When persons speak about someone being small, they talk about someone who is ordinary, and who does not show themselves to others. On the other hand, when persons were speaking, often in disparaging terms about *Veliki Hrvati* [Great Croats] they spoke of them wanting to show themselves. One can also see this difference in terms of 'Connections' and *mito* [bribery], where although *mito* [bribery] was a more certain way of ensuring a bureaucratic problem, persons said it was morally wrong.

In Croatia, it is when persons are working on certainty, and when they accept there is 'a difference', that the debates about the house or the 'State' 'turn into' an argument. Here, they make a very clear distinction between these two concepts: 'debate' and 'argument'. This does not appear so clear in scholarly writing, and it is now in this final section, that I tentatively put forward one reason as to why this might be so.

Proposing 'A Difference' in the Debates

One of the most salient issues that I found in this project has been the impression of sameness I found in the way persons in Croatia and anthropologists working on the region engage in the 'debate'. For instance, the question of whether the conflicts that followed the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were caused by 'Experience' or 'Politics' is one that persons are themselves debating. However, this issue is not only limited to the writing on the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, because like

'everyday life' in Croatia the anthropological project works on debate. I see a number of parallels.

When persons make a claim to citizenship, or to the inheritance of a house, they consider the claims that are made on paper to be the critical 'Evidence' to support their position. This is very similar within the anthropological debate. It is the claims scholars make on paper that other scholars consider to be critical. In their role as 'judges', those observing find the difference from the position that a scholar takes in their texts, and it is from this that they make their judgement. Another similarity, I argue, is visible between the movement in these debates is that looking for difference between persons keeps the debate 'going': both scholars and persons in Croatia are interested in finding difference between persons.

As well, in both cases, the project of kinship 'is' made by the recognition of others in the debate; and in the anthropological case the debate in the project of kinship was almost lost after Schneider's (1984) account. Weston (2001) has written the following about its effect:

In institutional terms, the main impact of the critique of kinship appeared to be prohibitive: Don't come to the curriculum committee with a new course on kinship. Don't locate your dissertation in a dying field. After all, there's hardly any 'there' to study. The decline in interest could be charted by many measures, including conferences organised, courses listed, publication and dissertation topics, probably even specializations listed in the American Anthropological Association's faculty guide (Weston 2001: 149)

I would argue that the debate nearly ended because the strength of his argument resulted in an apparent absence of divided interests. One can also see that to keep one's claim in the debate one has to show one's continual interest in the debate. Like the project of the house, this is a continuous work project.

Nevertheless, although there are a number of shared points to the way the debate 'works' in Croatia and the way the debate 'works' in anthropology, I find there to be one extremely salient difference. Crook (n.d.) has described in a comparison between

anthropological and Melanesian knowledge practices that it is an 'ultimately partial' one.

Here, he makes the point that although one can make the comparison, such a comparison becomes invalidated when one takes into account the fields in which these practices work:

They operate in relational fields differently figured: anthropologists have to reveal their own part in the knowledge, that is, what they have added which is distinctively their own contribution. To achieve the same effect for Angkaiyakmin would lead to shaming accusations that they were following their own path rather than the path of ancestors (Crook n.d.).

I suggest that the way anthropologists engage in the debate would be considered in by persons in Croatia as being an 'Argument'. I first became aware of this 'difference' when giving a paper at a post-graduate seminar on ethnicity.

Prior to giving this seminar on ethnicity I had experienced a strong feeling that I was about to do something not quite right, Although I wanted to take a fixed position on ethnicity in my account, I was also very conscious of the fact that prospect of giving a certain paper on ethnicity felt quite the wrong thing to be doing. In the seminar, I gave a very uncertain paper on ethnicity, where I complained that everything in Croatia appears to move concerning ethnicity. Therefore, it was not only difficult to find a certain starting point, but also to fix anything down. During the period of 'question time' the audience were extremely supportive concerning this feeling of uncertainty, where they offered suggestions about what I might do, and how I might feel more certain. And at a later point in the day, one person came up to me and gave the advice that 'not to worry, it would all be much easier when I had found a *position* to work from'.

I argue that not having a firm position within the debate creates a terrible sense of uncertainty, where I suggest that scholarly debate relies on the point that within the debate scholars should make their position clear to others, where scholars are encouraged to reveal their position directly. Although they do this through eliciting connections and disconnections

within the text in terms of citations, one is also expected to state one's own position. This entails not only being certain about other scholars positions, but in addition where the points of difference or points of sameness lies. Persons, however, in Croatia do not place their direct focus of interest directly on others persons positions, where often they move positions in the debate about the house. Instead, their focus of interest is in looking for differences in their divided interests in the 'subject'. Although this debate reveals their potential position, it is not a fixed one, until they have really shown themselves: which is when a debate 'turns into' an 'Argument'.

This sense that one should have a certain position in the debate is a point that at times I have found problematic in terms of 'regions'. Although scholarship has discussed cultural divisions on the basis of a geographical basis, it is regions of specialty that I consider here. In Strathern's (1991) writing on 'Partial Connections', she makes the argument that each region of specialty makes the form look different, where a change in the context creates a sense of 'information loss'. At the outset of this project I was quite determined that this was a project about 'ethnicity'. It was during fieldwork that this sense of certainty became less and less.

In Handelman's (1987) about uncertainty he has made the following point

Today we are anthropologists of the economic, political, urban, ecological, symbolic, religious, historical, humanistic, medical, playful, visual, applied, and other specializations. [...] Nonetheless, the mirror's shards have not only retained but also have clarified and strengthened their senses of certainty. The compartmentalization's of the discipline have produced specialists, and vice versa, and specialists are experts in the creation of certainty about the validity of the knowledge they are expert in. The creation of certainty reifies the phenomena of the social world (Handelman [2001] 1987: 2).

This was the exact 'problem' I encountered, that I found there was not a neat division between the way persons work with these concepts, although they make a distinction between these 'concepts' in everyday life, where such differences can be found is the subject of considerable debate. Although the project of the house from the perspective of the region of kinship looked like a project of kinship; when I turned to examine it from the perspective of

ethnicity it looks like a project of ethnicity: it could be either. Persons do not find difference between these projects. It was because of this sense of uncertainty that I spent a large part of the writing up process trying to find 'my' region: in terms of 'kinship' 'ethnicity' 'property' 'nationalism' 'the State' and 'houses'. Each time, I would make the conclusion that this was not a 'thesis' about property, about houses, about kinship or about ethnicity. As a result I was never certain, and still am not certain, about which analytical region I would declare this thesis to fit into.

It was only by 'abandoning' the idea that I should be firmly rooted in one 'analytical' region, that it was possible to follow these debates. I would have been unable to do this if I had remained firmly fixed in the region of 'ethnicity'. And thus the only point that I am extremely certain about is that I take a position similar to Leach (2003) when he writes 'if we are to pursue an interest in the creative and dynamic potential of people's activities it will be necessary to put all these separated entities back together' (Leach 2003: 24).

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