

## REVIEW PAPER

# THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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## ABSTRACT

This particular article will utilize a constructivist approach, in order to analyze the various dynamics of the involvement of civil society in environmental governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically focusing on its position inside the European Union. Based on the philosophical principles of constructivism, this study investigates how civil society, as an active and socially produced participant, influences the complex landscape of environmental regulation in the European Union. The study primarily investigates the constructive mechanisms that promote engagement between civil society and government authorities. It specifically tackles the areas of lobbying, grassroots mobilization, and engagement with partners. Moreover, it analyzes the influence of civil society on environmental policies and their enhancement through the analysis of case studies and theoretical methodologies centered in constructivism. This study intends to clarify the ongoing conflict and constructivism in environmental governance and demonstrate how civil society's constructive engagement facilitates democratic decision-making and contributes to the advancement of sustainability objectives.

**Keywords:** Constructivism, Civil Society, Environmental Governance, European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Grassroots Mobilization



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## INTRODUCTION

At this exact moment there is a growing worldwide and national focus when it comes to environmental protection, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is absolutely no exception. International efforts, coordinated by organizations like as Greenpeace and the WWF, together with advocates like Greta Thunberg, have considerably underlined their critical need for action in combatting climate change and environmental deterioration. These changes indicate a broader societal trend towards increased awareness and concern for the environment, with civil society playing a more active role in environmental decision-making at various levels of governance. The importance of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina for protecting the environment is steadily increasing, primarily because there is a lack of well-established institutional frameworks for environmental preservation and the implementation of environmental legislation. Civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is becoming more engaged in addressing environmental issues such as air pollution, waste management, and forest degradation. This involvement includes the formulation and execution of measures to safeguard the environment (Fagan, 2010). Non-governmental groups, local initiatives, and citizens' movements have a significant impact on shaping political decisions and instigating transformative actions that foster sustainable development.

To further examine how civil society can have an impact on normative frameworks which lead to shaping political decision-making, constructivism is an invaluable approach. Haas (2002) states that constructivist academics primarily examine the institutional, discursive, and intersubjective processes that contribute to the formation of international governance (p. 74). This approach demonstrates that global environmental conferences serve the purpose of informing governments about emerging environmental concerns. Additionally, they play a vital role in developing new norms, certifying consensus doctrines, and setting global standards (Haas, 2002, p. 85). An instance of this is the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which resulted in the acceptance of various significant international agreements, such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity (Haas, 2002, p. 79). The conference also highlighted the significance of sustainable development and emphasized the necessity of incorporating environmental, economic, and social aspects into decision-making processes. This has established a new

benchmark for future international environmental policy. The United Nations has effectively expanded the involvement of additional participants, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and scientific communities, in global environmental governance through these conferences. These players exert a pivotal effect on the formulation of policies at both the national and international levels. Haas (2002) states that these conferences have had a substantial impact on enhancing the involvement of new participants in international environmental policy. Consequently, this has resulted in significant societal transformations and the acceptance of novel principles and criteria in safeguarding the environment.

However, when it comes to the actual situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the overall organization of institutions is evidently divided and frequently inefficient. If we as a society were to even attempt to tackle this issue, we would have to employ the constructivist method, which we will further analyze throughout this article, in hopes to the strengthening of environmental standards and practices, which could ultimately lead the community in enhanced environmental governance. An exemplary instance of robust civic engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the campaign opposing the development of hydroelectric power stations along the Neretva River. The initiative, coordinated by local and international non-governmental groups, demonstrates the ability of civil society to rally and exert influence on political actions aimed at safeguarding the environment (Armakolas & Maksimović, 2013). This example demonstrates the significance of grassroots mobilization in environmental conservation, wherein local communities and civil society organizations collaborate to safeguard their natural resources and preserve ecosystems.

The Kruščica River protection campaign, initiated by the "Brave Women of Kruščica," is a noteworthy example of civil disobedience in environmental protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 2017, these women have been engaging in continuous demonstrations by obstructing machinery and obstructing the construction of two small hydropower plants on the river, which provides drinking water to neighboring communities. Their courageous and resolute nature garnered the interest of global media and organizations, resulting in their receipt of esteemed accolades in 2019, including the Euronatur Prize for Nature Conservation. The accolade underscores their dedication to safeguarding the environment and signifies the triumph of local communities in the battle for natural

resources, despite the influence of commercial investors and inadequate backing from the authorities (Radio Free Europe, 2019). Through this example we can attest to the fact that a well-organized, motivated and active community, can surely have great influence in making decisions which directly affect the environment and the lives of others, even if the support from the government is absent. These women are a symbol of determination and the battle against small-scale hydropower facilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where local communities and civil society groups are assuming greater accountability for safeguarding natural resources.

Unauthorized or illegal logging has been as another issue that Bosnia and Herzegovina is faced with, mostly driven by the rising worldwide demand for timber and inherent vulnerabilities in the forestry industry. Unauthorized exploitation of forest resources results in forest degradation, endangers biodiversity, and accelerates the emission of carbon dioxide, therefore directly exacerbating climate change (WWF, 2012). In response to this issue, a pilot project for forest certification was initiated in the canton of Tuzla in partnership with organizations including IKEA and WWF. This initiative encompasses the certification of almost 50,000 hectares of forest in compliance with global criteria for sustainable forest management, which includes the adjustment to the recommendations set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The objective of certifying the woods in Tuzla Canton is to halt all logging activities and avoid the distribution of unlawfully obtained timber in the European Union markets. Simultaneously, increasingly transparent approaches to forest resource management are to be implemented (WWF, 2012). Additionally, this initiative significantly contributed to the preservation of biodiversity and the mitigation of negative environmental consequences that resulted from the inappropriate use of forests. The feasibility of accomplishing significant progress in the areas of forest conservation and the suppression of illicit operations has been demonstrated through collaboration with local people and relevant organizations. In particular, the process of identifying forests with a higher conservation value was enhanced, and the foundation was laid for the long-term ecologically sustainable management of forests.

One further striking example of the influence carried by civil society is the case of the ArcelorMittal giant in Zenica. Acknowledged as the main contributor to pollution in the area, the steelworks have regularly encountered protests along with backing from the local community. In 2008, Eko Forum Zenica in Zenica began adopting strategies to mitigate

air pollution resulting from industrial steel manufacturing. The forum has orchestrated large-scale demonstrations, marches, and several tribunal proceedings to compel the corporation to decrease its emissions and adhere to environmental standards. Additionally, the Eko Forum has lodged a criminal complaint against the corporation for 'extreme pollution', employing legal methods to protect the right to a pristine environment (Arnika, Eko Forum Zenica, & Transition, n.d.). Although the authorities exhibited a slow response and disregarded several suggestions put forward over the years, these endeavors successfully diverted public attention to the alarming air pollution in Zenica and made some advancements in the quest for environmental justice. Notwithstanding ongoing challenges, the endeavors of civil society against a major industrial polluter in Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplify how focused pressure can force transformation.

In the current global context, Bosnia and Herzegovina is under increasing pressure to conform with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the European Union environmental policy, particularly in the area of environmental protection under Chapter 27. The participation of civil society in environmental decision-making is crucial for achieving these goals, especially in relation to the sustainable use of resources, the fight against climate change, the protection of ecosystems and the promotion of transparency and accountability in environmental management (Sida, n.d.; Norad, n.d.). In post-conflict countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, environmental protection measures confront additional obstacles due to the relics of armed conflict, underscoring the need and urgency of implementing sustainable development goals (CE OBS, n.d.).

Focusing on these aspects further highlights the need of developing and implementing regulations that permit long-term and sustainable development in accordance with Bosnia and Herzegovina's international responsibilities, including the partnerships essential to achieve these goals (Norad, n.d.).

Finally, this article presents a fundamental research question, namely: In the given context of membership to the European Union and sustainable development, what is the role of civil society in influencing environmental policy and management in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

The topic is developed in such a manner, where the complex institutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina is kept in mind, as this coun-

try can be seen as a post-conflict nation that faces substantial challenges in various segments to this day, one of which includes the enforcement of environmental norms and laws. The purpose of this investigation is to assess the unique role that non-governmental organizations play in the environment protection and policy reform, as well as to assess their effectiveness in influencing local and national governance structures. Additionally, as previously stated, this paper will implement a constructivist methodology to investigate the interactions between international organizations, state agencies, and civil society. We examine the extent to which Bosnia and Herzegovina's environmental programs are successful in relation to the EU's standards, with a particular emphasis on sustainable development. Our study aims to investigate the interactions between civil society and state authorities and to illustrate how civil society can facilitate democratic decision-making on environmental issues while ensuring transparency, accountability, and sustainability in the policy-making process. In this article a qualitative research approach is used in order to assess pre-existing secondary sources and relevant literature, to be able to analyze the participation of civil society when it comes to environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thanks to this method, we rely on a comprehensive examination and assessment of a diverse range of documents, including laws, strategic frameworks, publications from non-governmental organizations, and scientific research that relate to environmental policy and the involvement of civil society in this area. For us to be able to understand the role of civil society and very specific issues of environmental management in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The initial phase of the research involved analyzing credible and relevant literature to grasp significant concepts and theoretical underpinnings. Scholarly studies on the constructivist approach in foreign policy are closely examined. The literature also includes data and analysis from non-governmental groups and international agencies such as the Stockholm Environmental Institute and UNDP, which provides substantial empirical material for this research. Moving along, another crucial step involved analyzing important documents and strategic concepts that have an impact on environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. More specifically, a special emphasis is given to a publication such as BiH ESAP 2030+. The documents are analyzed to ascertain the extent to which concerns such as gender equality, social justice, and environmental sustainability influence policymaking, and how civil society contributes to shaping and executing these policies. The third stage of the methodology entailed a comprehensive examination of concrete

illustrations, with a specific emphasis on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the process of making environmental decisions. The analysis focuses on specific instances, such as the opposition from local communities to the building of hydroelectric power plants on the Neretva River. Thanks to this, we aimed to further understand the full extent to which decisions with lasting environmental consequences are influenced by non-governmental groups and the people they represent. The research encompasses both the assessment of existing literature and documents, as well as a thorough analysis of the present challenges and potential for future development of environmental policy in the country.

### **CRITICAL ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BIH IN THE ABSENCE OF STRATEGIC APPROACH**

The paper "Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance" written by Thomas Bernauer and Carole Betzold provides valuable insights that are particularly relevant for understanding this topic in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bernauer and Betzold (2012) contend that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other non-state actors are more influential in the development and implementation of environmental policy. The authors highlight the role of civil society in facilitating the execution of environmental policies by offering precise information and legitimacy, particularly in situations when governments have limited resources. However, it is worth noting that states are conventionally regarded as the primary actors in this domain (Bernauer & Betzold, 2012). This phenomenon is especially noticeable in climate negotiations, where over 1,500 non-governmental organizations actively participate as observers or even as members of national delegations. This level of involvement is almost unimaginable in other global policy domains like trade or security, as emphasized by the authors (Bernauer & Betzold, 2012).

Nevertheless, Bernauer and Betzold (2012) highlight certain deficiencies of civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) typically assert that they represent the interests of the general people. However, their actions and choices are sometimes not grounded on a thorough public discussion or transparent democratic processes. These findings may raise concerns about the credibility and accountability of the individuals or organizations involved, potentially impeding their capacity to wield substantial political influence (Bernauer & Betzold, 2012). The authors emphasize that the slow advancement in addressing various environmental problems is not primarily due to a



lack of information or public participation, but rather results from governmental decisions that impede the execution of efficient community efforts (Bernauer & Betzold, 2012). And if we have a look at Bosnia and Herzegovina, these findings certainly hold significant importance. The intricate political framework of the state and the challenges in implementing environmental safeguards, as already mentioned, make the involvement of civil society of paramount importance. It can help fill gaps in existing structures and exert greater pressure on government agencies to adopt and enforce efficient environmental protection measures. Nevertheless, in the worldwide setting, it is crucial to carefully assess the capacity of civil society to actively enhance the democratization and efficacy of environmental governance.

Another good read would be the article titled "Pathways to Implementation: Evidence on How Participation in Environmental Governance Impacts on Environmental Outcomes" written by Nicolas W. Jäger et al. For this particular article, it serves as credible and relevant resource for understanding the effects of engagement in environmental regulations on environmental outcomes. The study examines the impact of different types of participation, specifically in the realm of environmental management, on the advancement and successful execution of more efficient policies. The outcomes are especially critical for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the active participation of multiple stakeholders in environmental decision-making is essential to tackle various environmental concerns. Jäger et al. (2020) examine how different types of participation, including the level of communication, the variety of participants, and the transfer of power, impact the quality of environmental decision-making and its execution. The research findings indicate that involvement in environmental standards can be positively influenced, especially when participants actively participate in decision-making processes and engage in extensive communication with one other (Jäger et al., 2020). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there are ongoing environmental problems including deforestation and water pollution, these types of engagement can play a vital role in improving and successfully carrying out environmental policy.

For example, the authors mention "the strongest effect on the environmental standard of governance outputs was observed for the degree of power delegated to participants to shape the output" (Jäger et al., 2020). This part is especially important for BiH, due to the fact that the participation of local communities in the environmen-

tal decision-making process is lacking more often than not. In the case of the Neretva River we can most certainly see the possibility of achieving more ecologically sustainable results, and it is through hydropower development and local communities and non-governmental organizations. As already observed, these have an active role in the decision-making process.

An article from Radio Slobodna Evropa reports that the local community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed substantial worries about the possible environmental repercussions of the hydroelectric power station on the Neretva River. The project is being carried out by Chinese investors in collaboration with their local partner, Vuk Hamović. Consequently, this led to environmental impacts, including a clear threat to biodiversity. The river is currently experiencing significant strain due to a variety of human activities. Moreover, regional non-governmental organizations have voiced their discontent with the absence of transparency and public involvement in the deliberation of this project. Despite this criticism, investors argue that the hydroelectric power project will yield substantial economic advantages and bolster the nation's energy security. This particular case highlights the importance of participation of local stakeholders in decision-making procedures, since the absence of such involvement might result in discontent and conflicts between local populations and investors, and the most important being the overall destruction of the environment.

In a research article titled "Analysis of international public funding flows for the environment, climate change, and sustainability: the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina" by Amar Čausević, Sanjin Avdić, Bernardas Padegimas and Biljana Macura, we can have a clearer picture of the pressing issue and see more clearly how everything affected environmental issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authors mention that Bosnia and Herzegovina had received a sum of US\$545.6 million in international funding for achieving environmental goals over a defined time frame. A substantial portion of these money is designated for water supply and waste management, with limited emphasis on biodiversity conservation and safeguarding natural resources (Čausević et al., 2022). As they note, "Since the end of the Cold War, the Western Balkans region, which borders the EU, has seen a significant inflow of bilateral and multilateral development aid (including environmental finance). Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is one of the biggest recipients of foreign financial assistance in the region" (Čausević et al., 2022, p.2).

Moreover, the authors state how the government in Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks a legal framework to effectively be able to manage the interconnection between the environment, climate, and sustainability. Meaning there is an evident lack of strategy, with the exception of a few state- and entity-level strategic papers that address water, waste, and the environment in general. Without a coordinating structure, it is difficult to implement a principle that allows different governments to effectively grasp how the agendas of different DPIs (Developmental Policy Instruments) connect with national and international policies, plans, and demands. By addressing and providing support for these concerns, we may enhance the necessary institutional and legislative environmental frameworks and enhance the implementation and enforcement of diverse environmental policies (Ćaušević et al., 2022, p.3).

In this article, the authors have mentioned the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan for 2030. For this specific topic, an article titled "Mainstreaming Equity Considerations into Environmental Policymaking: The Case of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Environmental Strategy and Action Plan" gives a much clearer picture when it comes to gender equality, social justice, and poverty reduction (GESEP). It provides us with a straightforward formulation for environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many will agree that such difficulties are at times disregarded, especially in rather standard approaches in environmental policy. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) fully funds the project and has established explicit and ambitious goals to involve various social groups through a participatory method, with a particular focus on individuals who have traditionally been excluded from the decision-making process (Strambo & Solujić, 2023).

With the help of this analysis and or guideline, there are to be specific measures that would ultimately lead to achieving environmental sustainability, whilst simultaneously improving the overall health of citizens. Additionally, the idea is to promote cooperation among the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District when it comes to environmental conservation. Moreover, when BiH's journey to the EU is also at stake and of importance when speaking about this, which is why this particular article is of great importance for that as well. The reason behind, it is actually in accordance with the goals of the Green Agenda meant for the Western Balkans. Ultimately, this would significantly contribute to Bosnia and Herzegovina becoming more determined to

achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and to fulfil the commitments of the Paris Agreement. Despite the lack of an official candidacy for EU membership, the implementation of the Green Deal in Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to have a significant impact on future environmental finance flows. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans represents the European Union's most recent economic development plan for this region, based on the Green Deal project.

As mentioned in the article, according to a poll carried out in December 2022, 28% of the respondents reported that the program has clearly improved their overall understanding of the connection between GESEP and the environment. Additionally, the project was able to raise awareness among the members of the implementation team. According to the authors, 80% of the participants stated that they plan to use the knowledge they obtained from this project in their future activities related to GESEP and environmental issues (Strambo & Solujić, 2023). On the other hand, the article reveals how the legislation for development planning in Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently included gender equality as a fundamental element. Currently, the legislative frameworks mandate the inclusion of vulnerable groups and the evaluation of the effects of proposed development plans on men, women, and vulnerable groups as prerequisites in the regulations for planning development interventions. This represents a significant advancement in the process of creating policies, as it requires the explicit integration of GESEP into all development initiatives. The extent to which this framework facilitates more inclusive strategic development planning will depend on the practical implementation of these recommendations (Strambo & Solujić, 2023).

If we take a look at the existing literature, and overall awareness when it comes to the environment and/or climate change, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is still more to be explored and surely said. This article is a contribution to this corpus of knowledge, regarding the importance of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina in this matter, as there is a scarcity of such studies. Especially, due to the fact that BiH is sadly confronted with numerous environmental challenges, such as the depletion of natural resources, severe and likely never-ending air pollution, as well as insufficient enforcement of environmental legislation, despite the fact that leaders around the globe are trying to prioritize the achievement of sustainable development goals and the mitigation of climate change. Despite the international obligations and the pressure to adhere to European Union regula-

tions, the level of comprehension among citizens and decision-makers regarding the importance of sustainable development remains somewhat low. In this article, the civil society is seen and portrayed as a critical stakeholder in the mitigation of institutional deficiencies and the enhancement of environmental awareness. This study is particularly relevant within the context of the current literature due to the distinctive circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are characterized by political instability and institutions that impede the implementation of environmental protection measures. The research investigates the effectiveness of these measures in the context of adaptation to European regulations and underscores the importance of civil society as a critical member of the team responsible for developing long-term environmental protection strategies.

#### **FROM APOCALYPTIC IDEOLOGIES TO PRUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IDEAS**

Establishing a robust theoretical framework is crucial for evaluating the importance of civil society in environmental management in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This can be achieved by the application of a constructivist methodology, taking into account pertinent ideas and empirical data. Firstly, constructivism is a comprehensive term that encompasses several theoretical concepts. These theories hold the assumption that we are unable to comprehend reality directly. Nevertheless, the social sphere that we may engage with is shaped by our personal relationships. Essentially, we can form the 'social reality' by molding it based on our own perceptions and understanding of the world, which are influenced by our personal experiences and viewpoints. This viewpoint asserts that social reality and our thoughts have a mutually influential relationship in shaping our views. Constructivism in the subject of International Relations asserts that international relations are the result of social construction. States, alliances, and international institutions are the products of human interaction within the social sphere. These constructs are the result of human acts that are shaped by social values, identity, assumptions, rules, language, and various other elements (Varghese, 2023). However, regarding environmental matters, this approach recognizes that policy-making is influenced not only by legal frameworks and regulations, but also by the societal perspectives, norms, and collective values of persons in civil society (Wendt, 1999).

Another crucial aspect the article recognizes, is the importance of role of the civil society, a vital part of the environment and its management. It consists of non-governmental organizations, local initiatives, citizen movements, and other informal actors. As such, they hold a very important role by directly influencing the environmental policies, by actively engaging in the decision-making processes, advocating, and organizing or engaging the community (Betsill & Corell, 2008). Particularly in BiH, the institutions are often rather fragmented, which is why the duty of the civil society is important, and they serve as a mediator between locals and the government. There are studies that support this further, such as a research conducted by Berkes (2007), which definitely underlines how effective a community can be indeed, especially in cases where the government's efforts are constrained. He highlighted the importance of local's knowledge and how beneficial the overall engagement of a community can be for the environmental governance. There is clear evidence that support this, where community-based approaches serve as good examples for positive outcomes and this is mainly thanks to their great integration within the social and cultural aspect. These tactics cultivate a sense of possession and responsibility among the local community, which is essential for the long-term prosperity of environmental endeavors. Studies suggest that the enforcement of environmental regulations is generally more effective when there is active engagement from the general public. This is because these groups have a deep connection to the specific conditions of the local area and have the ability to gather support for initiatives aimed at protecting the local environment (Berkes, 2007).

There is however yet another crucial factor when talking about this topic in particular and it has to do with environmental management which encompasses policy formulation, execution, and assessment. This particular management is faced with plenty of challenges or obstacles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some of which include the lack of poor existing rule enforcement, and low resources for encouraging sustainable practices (Čausevic et al., 2022). The significance of civil society in environmental management is intricately connected to the wider framework of global environmental management. Ulrich Beck's notion of the "risk society," as outlined in his 1992 work, highlights the growing recognition in modern countries of global dangers, such as climate change. Beck's thesis posits that civil society may mitigate these risks by establishing and enforcing novel social norms and lobbying for responsible policies. In addition, John Dryzek (2002) emphasized the significance of de-

liberative democracy in the field of environmental management. O'Flynn (2002) outlines four normative principles that form the basis of deliberative democracy: reciprocity (the organization of public matters should be inclusive and not mutually exclusive), publicity (transparency and absence of secrecy), accountability (politicians are obligated to justify their decisions to others), and inclusion (the interests of all community members must be considered in deliberation) (Bianchi, 2008). It cannot be denied that when a vast majority of people or various groups actively engage in decision-making processes, the chances of it ultimately resulting in legitimacy strengthening. If more people were to participate, such a method would be extremely beneficial for Bosnia and Herzegovina, even if it were tough as it is, given the complex formation of the institutions and government. This doesn't not however mean, that there is no potential for improving the democracy and its procedures to be able to successfully execute long-term sustainable environmental protection measures.

With this article, we examine variables such as the performance of civil society, institutional frameworks, social norms, and the efficacy of environmental management. Thanks to a constructivist point of view, these variables are in fact interconnected, and thus form a very specific and special relationship through social interactions and the exchange of values. As beforementioned, the people, i.e. civil society has the capability to exert a substantial impact on societal norms and attitudes, no matter the topic in question. Then there is the importance of non-governmental organizations combined with citizen initiatives in the decision-making process. If we were to think about this more in depth, we can determine that there are both positive and negative effects to this. On one hand, it increases public awareness, while on the other hand, it can foster institutional structures to improve their transparency and accountability. Enhanced community engagement in decision-making processes can enhance environmental management performance by promoting more effective implementation and compliance with environmental legislation. There simply must be a sort of synergy between the people and the government and/or institutions. Only this way, can they create mutually beneficial cycle of positive reinforcement.

Take for example, how in just one year, a sixteen-year-old had successfully established a reputation that extends well beyond the borders of Sweden. Greta Thunberg is rallying a vast number of youngsters and young individuals from various

European countries such as Sweden, Germany, and Austria, as well as from continents like Australia, Asia, Africa, and America. These individuals are choosing to abstain from attending school on Fridays to advocate for stronger measures in climate protection during the rallies organized by the "FridaysForFuture" movement. Although receiving widespread international acceptance, her work is consistently subjected to heavy criticism, despite her age. Her critics argue that her dedication to climate preservation is disseminating apocalyptic ideologies. While visiting France in July, Thunberg (2019) sarcastically told her detractors, "There is no need to listen to us, we are just children after all". A prime example how society and even if it is under the leadership of an individual, can indeed exert influence, especially over environmental policy.

Various approaches to implementing change (e.g. transition management) as well as models for change at the level of the participants (e.g. models of change) promote a successful transformation towards a sustainable culture. It is important how to successfully combine social and technological innovations and approaches to change and how to recognize and disseminate systemic innovations. The structure of institutions including their organizational forms, as well as the importance of time and its effect on the success of changes are also analyzed. In order to achieve a societal change towards sustainability, there must be a recognition of the ecological limits. It is necessary to optimize the conditions for sustainable production and consumption patterns. Finally, there is a necessity to promote the development and dissemination of models for sustainable lifestyles and cultural sustainability as well as the promotion of lifelong learning and education for sustainability.

### **Civil society as a driver of change**

An existing article by Jens Newig "Does public participation in environmental decisions lead to improved environmental quality?" helps further support this paper. His article carefully analyzes if the involvement of the public truly can make specific changes when it comes to environmental decision-making. One of the important standpoints he makes is that participation had over the years become a pivotal aspect across many European legal systems, however he does state that its effectiveness is still questionable. He goes on to say: "It can reasonably be expected that the 'success' of a participatory process not only depends on the actors involved and the design and mediation of the process, but likewise on a multitude of influencing factors including the political and economic con-



text of the decision" (Newig, 2007, p. 53). This particular statement can be considered important when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we have mentioned prior to this, its political and institutional factors are often times fragmented and complex. It is therefore vital to conduct the study of participatory processes within a broader socio-political framework in order to discover the conditions under which participation can genuinely contribute to improved environmental outcomes. With this approach, we will not only be able to help identify the current constraints but also to design ideas that can help make the implementation of environmental protection regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina more effective.

### **The Role of Education in the Development of Environmental Awareness**

Another key factor would be the role of education in such matters, thanks to which spreading awareness and better understanding would eventually lead to concrete results. Not just in schools, but well-thought-out campaigns with an explicit focus on educating about the necessity of sustainable development and environmental preservation. There is a good example of such initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely "Eko-škole" sponsored by the Center for Civil Society Development (CPCD), while partnering with some local schools and foreign partners.

The aim of the project is to simply educate the future decision-making generations on the power of sustainable development and environmental protection. Through this program, children would build environmental consciousness through practical activities and projects and gain skills to become responsible citizens who care about safeguarding natural resources. This project has shown great progress and is considered a big step in cementing social norms that favor ecologically friendly behaviors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This can be supported with a study by Cincera and Krajhanzl (2021), where they claim that such initiatives end up stimulating and encouraging citizens' role in environmental awareness and just overall engagement in relating activities. This would imply that campaigns of this nature could potentially be significant when it comes to affecting cultural norms, this being specifically relevant for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as these methods could assist and comply with environmental regulations more effectively.

The perception of environmental problems as frightening tends to potentially deter individ-

uals from actively participating in learning more about them. Coupled with the prevailing skepticism about the feasibility of resolving environmental and sustainability challenges, it is comprehensible that young individuals exhibit less excitement for environmental matters. Therefore, it is logical to use environmental education programs to provide specific and inspiring solutions. Education and training crucially contribute to facilitating the transition from basic environmental consciousness to both individual and collective action. Increasingly, education and training programs around Europe are incorporating initiatives and activities focused on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability. Notwithstanding advancements and increasing public attention, the incorporation of environmental sustainability into education policy and practice in the EU is not yet a widespread and integrated aspect. For example, the European Commission initiated a project to tackle climate change and environmental concerns, namely "The Education for Climate Coalition" a collective of students and educators who do their very best to address environmental concerns.

### **Exploration of participatory environmental governance models**

We stressed the necessity of the cooperation between the people and state institutions. This can be surely realized through collaborative efforts and partnerships. The formation of permanent collaboration institutions such as joint environmental committees or working groups could assist overcome institutional fragmentation and enable more effective environmental management in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Combining the constructivist approach with specific tactics and strategies has the potential to greatly strengthen the role of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina for long-term environmental sustainability. Norway serves as a good example in environmental practices, and this is no exception. There was a successful cooperation between citizens and their government which was implemented through joint environmental committees under the name "Environmental forums" or "Miljøutvalg". These committees gathered members from their local governments, civil society, NGOs and even the business community, all who are there to collectively solve environmental challenges. Norway uses forums to stimulate discourse, transparency and community decision-making on environmental concerns, based on its long tradition of participatory democracy. Research panels have revealed that combining a participatory approach with codified cooperation mechanisms can contribute substantially to making environmental

management more effective (Hovik, Sandström & Zachrisson, 2010). This could be vital for Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country attempts to overcome institutional disparities and establish sustainability in environmental protection.

One NGO formed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely Eko akcija, is doing a good job at educating and raising awareness on the pressing issues the country faces when it comes to the environment.

After exploring their webpage, one can easily locate an article headlined "The climate crisis is here now – what do you do?" The article warns about the continuously increasing threat of climate change and its many impacts. It puts emphasis on all of society to take immediate action. Much like this paper already highlighted, the author of the article also stresses one key aspect, which is in-depth engagement with the authorities, to educate and keep them informed. He goes on to mention that the first step should be safeguarding rivers against tiny hydropower plants, as these can damage water bodies and aggravate the consequences of floods. The article claims how it is crucial that policies are applied fast and uniformly, as we must immediately translate them into actual policies that are effectively and consistently implemented. It proposes other initial steps and solutions for the government and the citizens, such as implementing the Forest Law in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important that the responsible authorities in both regions stop deforestation. When it comes to water in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they propose that in order to conserve drinking water supplies, authorities at all levels should continually protect the water protection zones of drinking water sources. In doing so, they should not shy away from employing existing or stricter legal procedures and heavier fines, which would result in preventing health risks.

### **Integrating International and Local Efforts for Effective Environmental Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

OSCE is another organization that outlines the efforts to improve environmental protection through various initiatives and projects. The OSCE works together with government agencies and civil society organizations to improve environmental governance. In one of their documents "Zaštita okoliša" the conducted research focuses on severe air and water pollution and poor waste management as important environmental concerns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which negatively affect the health and safety of citizens and limit the country's sustainable development. A main objective of

the study is to increase the capacity of the Aarhus Centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These centers act as a link between citizens, authorities and the commercial sector in the environmental sphere. In addition, the OSCE Mission is training a new set of lawyers through the Environmental Law Clinic initiative, which aims to promote legal protection of the environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to other initiatives, the Mission arranges public campaigns and practical acts like as cleaning up public spaces and replanting, which directly contribute to promoting environmental consciousness and citizen engagement. This paper could be a major supplement to your research by showcasing how global organizations can promote environmental projects and cooperate with civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By relating this source to your thesis on the need of cooperation between state institutions and civil society, the argument for forming such partnerships as vital for enhancing environmental management in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be strengthened. This document and the organization's work is a great example of the constructivist approach and how it can be applied in praxis.

The Regional Environment Centre (REC) website contributed an article entitled "AIRO: Jačanje uloge organizacija civilnog društva u promoviranju demokratskih principa i postupaka vezanih za SEA, EIA i zaštitu okoliša" where they display the many objectives of their project. They clearly outline 4 aims, that include developing a network of civil society organizations that can understand and voice the principles and procedures of EIA and SEA and advocate for their implementation. Secondly initiate activities to improve the regulatory framework for EIA, SEA and issuing environmental permits, strengthen the capacity of CSOs to influence environmental protection policies and actively monitor their implementation, and increase public awareness of the importance of participation in decision-making processes. The project is founded on numerous basic ideas such as participatory democracy, openness and accountability. The principles stress the necessity of incorporating local communities in decision-making processes that effect their environment and quality of life, in order to ensure that residents' perspectives are taken into consideration in environmental choices. The operation of the project comprises training CSO members to equip them to participate in SEA and EIA processes and to effectively convey their interests to local authorities. It also encourages the expansion of cooperation between local administration and civil society, thereby strengthening mutual understanding and trust. This sort of cooperation

helps non-governmental organizations to more effectively collect environmental norms and legislation and disseminate them to the public to create awareness of the need of environmental protection. The major objective of the project is to foster long-term connections between civil society and local administrations, which is of great importance for encouraging sustainable development and improving environmental standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a rather holistic approach and would increase the ability of institutions and ensure that environmental policies suit the needs and interests of local communities, ultimately safeguarding the environment and increasing the quality of life in the long term.

### **Local Community Involvement in Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Planning**

There is another significant step towards involving local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the processes of sustainable development and the fight against climate change, and it is the call on the Greenworks website to select local self-government units for the preparation of the Sustainable Energy Development and Climate Change Action Plan (SECAP). Their purpose is to pick local communities that are ready to implement strategies that integrate sustainable energy development with climate change adaption measures. This is built on several key ideals, such as participation, accountability and openness. According to this organization, these principles are of considerable relevance since they underline the necessity of involving all stakeholders, notably local communities and civil society organizations (CSOs), in the planning and decision-making processes. Through this method, local communities are not only informed about the difficulties created by climate change, but also actively participate in developing specific solutions that match their individual requirements. A particular focus here is the emphasis on intense cooperation of local authorities and non-governmental groups. Upon reading this invitation attentively, various issues arise. Although the appeal promotes cooperation between local authorities and civil society organizations, it is still not apparent how comprehensive these processes are and to what extent local communities may influence the final decisions. It remains uncertain if these initiatives will be truly participative or whether civil society groups and local communities will only operate as official partners with no real impact in the decision-making process. Although the appeal principally focuses adaptation to climate change, monitoring and assessment of the effects of these

plans, which are vital for long-term success, are not clearly prioritized.

Despite the importance of this appeal as an important step towards sustainable development and the fight against climate change at the local level, it is crucial to ensure that the processes are truly participatory and inclusive and that the results are carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure long-term sustainability. Greater coordination between diverse environmental protection measures can help to boost the success of these initiatives and ensure efficient use of resources.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this article, we have been able to analyze the crucial role of civil society in the creation and implementation of environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina more in depth, and even underlined the necessity of adopting a constructivist perspective into this process. It has proved that civil society is able to solve flaws in institutional environmental management, while the country has a complex political and institutional structure. By implementing participatory mechanisms such as joint environmental committees and working groups, interaction between citizens and state institutions can be increased to enable more efficient and long-term sustainable environmental management.

An essential finding of this study is that there is a need to institutionalize interaction between civil society and state bodies. Norway, with its "Miljøutvalg" model, gives a compelling example of how such cooperation may be successfully implemented in reality and enables local communities and state institutions to confront environmental challenges collaboratively. Implementing a similar model in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have the potential to considerably boost the effectiveness of environmental policy and enable more efficient execution of environmental protection regulations. In addition, we have stressed the need of education and awareness raising to improve the role of civil society. Initiatives such as "Eco-school" have already proven beneficial impacts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there is a need to extend such programs to teach a new generation that recognizes the necessity of sustainable development. Combining institutional collaboration, participatory democracy and education gives a strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only with such a comprehensive policy can long-term environmental sustainability be realized and that Bosnia and Herzegovina actively



participates in global efforts to protect our planet. Therefore, this study offers not only theoretical conclusions but also realistic recommendations for practical implementation that might serve as a guide for future environmental protection policies and activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Initiatives such as the project to enhance civil society groups in the sphere of environmental protection and climate change represent a vital step towards strengthening civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project, published on the Greenworks website, entitled "Initiative to Strengthen Civil Society Organizations in Environmental Protection and Climate Change", aims to strengthen the environmental protection capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and support the fight against climate change. These programs offer civil society with the instruments to play an active part in policy monitoring and implementation, thereby contributing to a more effective solution to the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. Linking such operations with previously reviewed initiatives, such as those focusing on environmental impact assessment (EIA) and energy sustainable development, ensures a holistic approach to environmental protection. Such synergy between different projects contributes to comprehensive and sustainable development, where CSOs play a crucial role in defining and implementing environmental policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We conclude that such projects are of essential relevance for long-term sustainability, because they build the capacities of civil society and improve participation in decision-making regarding environmental protection.

For instance, results of Norad's initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicate how the international aid may make a big contribution to enhancing the environmental protection capacities of civil society organizations and local government authorities. Norad gave an example of help in the implementation of key projects, by granting financial aid and technical assistance. In the long run, they were able to help promote sustainable development and adapt to climate change in the country. This indicates how there is always going to be a need for cooperation between national initiatives and international support, and this is highly reinforced by such programs, since big progress in environmental preservation can be reached mainly through their joined efforts. Practical examples from Norad suggest that the long-term effectiveness of environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina often depends on sustained cooperation with foreign partners. These instances demonstrate that such cooperation is important to properly establish and

sustain environmental projects. It is a model that can assure the success of future projects in this industry.

Throughout this article the investigations and analysis have, among other, showed that transparency and accountability in the decision-making processes are and will always be crucial to successful implementation environmental protection measures and counteracting the consequences of climate change. We continually underscore the crucial role of civil society in these processes and underlines that their committed participation not only assures the successful implementation of laws, but also permits the adaptation of these laws to the specific requirements and difficulties of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By enhancing the ability of civil society groups, monitoring of law implementation can be increased, generating support for essential reforms and reaching long-term, sustainable advantages. It is equally crucial and we realize the need of uniting the different actions of civil society to promote environmental conservation. By integrating these activities, a holistic and integrated approach to environmental preservation may be ensured, with civil society playing a significant role in devising and executing effective environmental projects.

To conclude, when it comes to the fulfillment of the SDGs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this would entail a deep understanding and integration of environmental protection policies with those of the European Union, in particular within the framework of Chapter 27 as already mentioned – civil society being the backbone. The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina rests on the ability to overcome past challenges by tackling new global threats – climate change. By modifying the current legislative framework and formulating new ones, one crucial step would already be taken. To ensure that environmental policy does not remain rigid, but is dynamic, responsible and in line with the principles of sustainable development, Bosnia and Herzegovina must understand the need for adaptation and innovation in a fast-changing world. Now more than ever, we must pursue this approach not only to preserve environmental resources, but also to maintain societal stability and long-term prosperity. Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country with such a rich heritage, especially natural heritage, it has an amazing opportunity to take on the leading in the sustainable development. However, this is only attainable if the government constantly takes the route of substantial reforms and efficient execution of sustainable policies. Now is the time to establish the groundwork for a happier, greener and more sustainable future for all its citizens.



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