

**THE STATE-BUILDING-RECONCILIATION NEXUS: A  
CRITICAL OBSERVATION OF PEACEBUILDING IN  
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

By

Louis Francis Monroy Santander

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International Development Department

School of Government and Society

College of Social Sciences

University of Birmingham

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyses peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, looking at the relation between state-building and transitional justice. It relies on reconciliation, as a socially constructed term, to look at how international and civil society organizations in the country, as well as Bosnian citizens, perceive processes put in place after the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. In doing so, it contributes to debates in literature discussing how to approach peacebuilding holistically, identifying spaces for connecting top-down and bottom-up processes, supporting the establishment of a sustainable peace. The thesis relies on a constructivist framework, seeking to understand the frameworks and mindsets shaping reconciliation as a working concept for international and civil society associations and as an experience for Bosnian citizens. Such constructions are identified through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. The data was gathered through ethnographic fieldwork aimed at interviewing representatives of international organizations involved in transitional justice and state-building, non-governmental organizations approaching working on reconciliation, and Bosnian citizens who have lived in the country after the war. I support the view that a holistic approach to peacebuilding requires connecting state institutions with the building of political communities on the ground to foster a legitimate and viable process of social reconstruction.

**Dedicated to my father's memory,  
Francisco José Monroy Arcila.**

**If I never, ever get to find you, or know the truth about what happened, at  
least I know that you will always be present in this thesis.**

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“My hands are tied  
The billions shift from side to side  
And the wars go on with brainwashed pride  
For the love of God and our human rights  
And all these things are swept aside  
By bloody hands time can't deny  
And are washed away by your genocide  
And history hides the lies of our civil wars”

(‘Civil War’. W. Axl Rose, Saul ‘Slash’ Hudson, Duff Rose Mckagan, 1991)

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## **Glossary of acronyms**

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
HJPC	High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RECOM	Regional Commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights
RS	Republika Srpska

# INTRODUCTION

## **State-building and reconciliation within peacebuilding**

As a critical approach looking at contradictions human creations place on individuals, communities, and societies, this study starts as a debate on the meanings behind such creations, contrasting different understandings and bringing various possibilities of action in dealing with such obstacles. Studying peacebuilding as a creation designed, implemented and evaluated in societies subject to violent conflict, requires such exercise. A common reference for peacebuilding is the Agenda for Peace: “action(s) to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict...prevent(ing) the recurrence of violence among nations and peoples” (United Nations, 1992). Boutros Ghali exemplified peacebuilding’s various tasks: disarmament and demobilization processes, refugee returns, security reforms, electoral monitoring, human rights protection, institutional strengthening and reconciliation among others. By setting peacebuilding as a distinctive activity, grounded in the aspiration of solving conflict, western attention was channeled to issues of war and peace, seeking consensus for peacemaking, development and social justice (Sabaratnam, 2011, p.13)

Peacebuilding’s activity spectrum offers possibilities for narrow or broad definitions, affecting the orientation of peace missions. Paris (2009) describes three peacebuilding transitions, exemplifying different engagements: a social transition from fighting to peace, a political transition from war-time to post-war government and economic transition from war accumulation to equitable, post-war development. Peacebuilding can be defined via narrow approaches of stopping armed violence and maintaining ceasefires or broader approaches of a self-sustainable, durable and positive peace, including state-building, democracy-building, development and national reconciliation (Newman, 2009). Two strands are visible in

achieving sustainable peace: one describing tools and capacities available to the international community, another focused on understanding the conflict in question, its nature, intensity, and level of social support (Cousens et. al, 2001). Conflict transformation frames peacebuilding as constructive transformation of conflicts to create a sustainable peace environment beyond the solving or management of a conflict, addressing multiple components (fixing problems threatening core interests of parties in conflict, changing strategic thinking and interaction between parties) (Reychler, 2001). Peacebuilding can be measured through tangible targets and benchmarks (numbers of refugees resettled, demobilization and disarmament targets, employment figures, and economic development measures) or subject to broader, intangible objectives such as reconciliation and conflict resolution, less conducive to assessment yet prone to combine local conditions with international priorities (Newman, 2009). Peacebuilding takes different meanings, leading to varied courses of action and outcomes that are not only evaluated by those implementing them, but perceived and criticized by individuals, communities, and societies subject to such initiatives.

This duality between objective and narrow peacebuilding views and subjective and intangible understandings is illustrated in meanings attached to state-building and reconciliation as two peacebuilding activities. State-building has been understood as institution-building: (re)building governance institutions able to provide citizens with physical and economic security (Barbara, 2008, p. 125). It becomes an objective measure of peacebuilding with distinguishable channels: governance reconstruction, service delivery, territorial and border control and establishing capacity for participation in international norms of interaction (Newman, 2009), and a conflict management tool, concerned with long-term and historically rooted processes for building institutions capable, accountable and responsive to citizen needs (Domingo et. al, 2013, p.3). State-building is a negotiation of mutual demands between state

and citizen (Jones and Chandran, 2008) to the point that it is not about the state in isolation, or constructing governance institutions, but a process based on the quality and nature of relationships linking state with society (Rocha-Menocal, 2009, p.2). Reconciliation is linked to legal frameworks of retributive (punishment and perpetrator-focused) and reparative (compensation and victim-based) justice (Nordquist, 2006, p.23). It relates to psychosocial trauma-healing requiring an agreement between adversaries and the establishment of procedures for dealing with trauma at individual, collective and national levels (Francis, 2002). It connects with the concept of 'truth': factual truths, interpretative truths, forensic truths, and socially-constructed truths (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). Both terms show possibilities for broad, holistic peacebuilding approaches connecting state and its institutions with society: in state-building by supporting the establishment of a political community solidifying its relation with the state, and in reconciliation by connecting victim needs and citizen priorities in justice and truth processes with activities for judicial strengthening and transitional justice.

Critical literature (Campbell 2011, Sabaratnam, 2011, Thiessen, 2012) highlights the tendency of implementing narrow conceptualizations, leaving out linkages between state and society with unintended consequences for peacebuilding, complicating prospects for sustainable peace seeking to avoid further violence. In state-building, criticism points towards narrow, dominant western discourses ignoring processes towards a participatory, democratic political community (Brown et al, 2010). Institution-building, as narrow state-building, has become a dominant aim, subsuming the marginalized, the individual, the community, processes for kinship and even the contexts for its establishment (Richmond, 2010a). Institution-centred solutions are criticized as an ideology based on Western experiences imposed from the outside via conditionalities, policy advice, operational projects, elite co-option and military intervention (Tadjbakhsh, 2009, p. 635). Although institutions

and norms are vital contributions to peacebuilding and state-building they are just one aspect within many, turning narrow state-building into a disempowering process that ignores local voices unable to connect with state-building's complex language and frameworks, making it difficult for alternatives to be considered (Richmond, 2011) In reconciliation, narrow views appear in legalistic approaches of 'transitional justice' giving primacy to retributive justice over other forms of reconciliation. This turned transitional justice into a component of liberal peacebuilding (Andrieu 2010, Shaw and Waldorf 2010, Webber 2012, Sriram, 2012). The critique points to lack of empirical evidence on the claim that transitional justice actually leads to reconciliation, pointing to a gap between international aspirations in transitional justice and local communities' needs and experiences (Eastmond, 2010, p.6). Transitional justice, now a compulsory component of liberal peacebuilding, is interpreted as a mechanism concerned with addressing impunity, reintegrating victims and perpetrators and establishing judicial reform. Transitional justice relies on a legalistic and human rights lens but not necessarily as peacebuilding lens (Andrieu, 2010, p.539), a consequence of state-building's influence over transitional justice. A consequence of implementing transitional justice's toolkits has been disconnecting legal norms from local priorities and practices, leading to accountability mechanisms often evaded and critiqued in unexpected directions (Shaw and Waldorf, 2010).

### **State-building and reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina: unintended consequences**

State-building and reconciliation are peacebuilding activities implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 1995 Dayton Accords inscribed a framework for international intervention including social and political reconstruction, judicial reform, state-building and measures dealing with human rights violations. While state-building was orientated by different international organizations such as the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and EU representation,

transitional justice was guided by the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the establishment of civil society organizations promoting reconciliation, democracy and social advocacy. State-building was guided by consociationalism, an institutional prescription for plural and divided societies giving priority to collectivities rather than individual citizens (Rose, 2006). This established a confederal union (the Bosnian State) between two political entities (an autonomous Republika Srpska and a Federation of BiH whose competencies are devolved to ten cantons). Transitional justice was guided by retributive justice, a criminal tribunal set to punish perpetrators, under the tenet that prosecution would individualize guilt, putting an end to demonizing ethnic collectivities (Eastmond, 2010, p.6)

Both processes have been under academic scrutiny, concerned with how narrow conceptualization of state-building and transitional justice affects reconciliation. Bosnia's state-building failure is evident in the ongoing political crisis stemming from Dayton: not only was the agreement imposed by powers external to the conflict but also gave far-reaching powers to the international community which extended over military issues, covering key aspects of governance and state matters (Chandler, 2000). Early postwar reconstruction saw state-building treating Bosnia's state institutions as an empty shell, an externally induced process domesticating Western institutions which lacked local support (Bieber, 2006, p.18). Despite ending violence, Dayton planted the seeds of instability, establishing a decentralized political system undermining the state's authority, evidenced in the co-option of state-building by ethnic nationalist agendas from political elites claiming representation of the country's three constituent groups (McMahon and Western, 2009, p.70). Not only were ethnic divides inscribed into Dayton, but have found various channels for their institutionalization. Education is guided by ethnicity, leading to practices where students from different ethnic groups study separately, open and covert ethnic discrimination takes

place in employment practices of local authorities. Public space is often shaped after ethnic cleansing as roads and squares are often named after historical figures from the locally-dominant ethnic group, media coverage is skewed and ethnically biased, promoting the viewpoints of one ethnic group or ethnopolitical party, often sponsoring ethnic propaganda and hate speech (Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld, 2010, p. 5-6).

Transitional justice has not fared better; critics point to its disconnection from local needs and understandings, its inability to contest ethnopolitical narratives marked by genocide denial and hate speech, as well as constant attempts to keep the country divided. Initial ICTY activities avoided working on the foundations for social reconstruction, such as the consolidation of a national shared history of the war or the creation of domestic institutions for human rights protection (Hoogenbom and Vieille, 2010, p. 190). Linkage between ICTY's criminal trials and reconciliation is tenuous regarding genocide cases, as over-reliance on retributive justice ignored dealing with the broader responsibility of bystanders of genocide, or establishing processes for facilitating victim closure (Skaar, 2013). Although the ICTY dedicated its work to investigating and prosecuting war crimes, there is no evidence indicating that individual Bosnians, Croats or Serbs blame individuals for crimes committed against them rather than collectivities as a whole (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). Clark (2009b) argues we should be more realistic about what criminal tribunals can accomplish in war-torn societies, and such societies cannot rely solely on retributive justice to deal with the aftermath of former atrocities.

Reconciliation (as aim and process in BiH's state-building) has not benefitted from either institutional reforms or transitional justice, appearing as distant goal when observing current trends. For instance, Serge Brammerts, chief ICTY prosecutor recently stated how war criminals are being treated as heroes by nationalists from various ethnic groups, recognizing that the message of denial and revisionism in BiH is stronger than ever (BIRN 2017a). Also,

Croatian nationalist singer Marko Perković was stirring ethnic tensions in the ethnically divided city of Mostar, calling for support of six former Bosnian Croat Generals and politicians awaiting final verdict before the ICTY for crimes committed between 1992 and 1994 (Milekić, 2017) (BIRN, 2017b). Panic (2015) reported on ongoing disputes between protesters and the local community in Prijedor over the recognition of crimes committed in the concentration camps of Omarska and Trnopolje, leading to discrepancies and denial over the number of detainees, deaths, and disappearances during the war. This is further complicated by delays in establishing a law on torture victims which could force politicians to recognize the atrocities committed during the war.

### **Framing the nexus: research questions and project rationale**

Within this complex background, this thesis identifies possible connections between state-building and reconciliation missed by processes implemented in BiH peacebuilding. The connection of high-level political processes within state-building and transitional justice and ground processes for interethnic reconciliation can map the complexities of Bosnia's post-war reconstruction. This stems from a recognition that peacebuilding should broaden from narrow top-down formulas, connecting with grassroots, bottom-up activity, engaging with the local and the marginalized (Thiessen, 2012, p.120). This critical account of peacebuilding points out connections and disconnections between actors engaged and affected by peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina, seeking areas where state-building and transitional justice (as activities of peacebuilding) can become a negotiation between local and international actors. Regarding reconciliation, this thesis accepts a variety of approaches (trauma-healing, transitional justice, inter-ethnic cooperation, truth work) that should not be in competition against one another, but rather seeking an overarching common goal requiring coordination (Brand and Idrizi, 2012, p.5).

This research locates itself between ontological/meaning and critical perspectives, presenting how peacebuilding agents and citizens conceive reconciliation in Bosnia, how agent and citizen conceptions shape policy and NGO work and how these relate or disconnect from local understandings and needs. Analyzing discussions on meanings of issues attached to state-building and reconciliation supports a critical observation of peacebuilding's impact in Bosnia-Herzegovina, adding to liberal peace critiques of how promoting institution/state-building practices through international intervention can negatively impact peacebuilding. Located within international relations, this research questions the relevance of transitional justice and its effect on local views on peacebuilding, interpreting the meaning behind "reconciliation" as conceived by different actors: international officials, representatives of organizations engaged in reconciliation practice and Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizens. Such interest leads to the following main research question:

- *If reconciliation is part of peacebuilding, how has this concept been understood by international and local actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and how can these interpretations demonstrate sites of agreement and tension within post-conflict peacebuilding?*

To address this question I will look into the following sub-questions:

- How are different meanings around reconciliation constructed and implemented by agents involved in BiH peacebuilding?
- How is reconciliation understood and experienced by Bosnian-Herzegovinians in their everyday lives?
- What are the concerns regarding the implementation of processes for truth, justice and reconciliation for Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizens?

- Where do these concerns connect and differ from the priorities of statebuilding actors?
- How can different interpretations of reconciliation and their obstacles establish links between top-down approaches to state-building with bottom-up reconciliation initiatives?

Through a constructivist analysis of reconciliation as a peacebuilding concept and as a term perceived, experienced and critiqued by Bosnian citizens, the thesis distinguishes between project frames shaping work done towards ‘reconciliation’ and the social meaning behind the term, reflecting the worldview of citizens who lived and experienced the country’s social reconstruction after 1995. This difference is not only a semantic exercise in identifying reconciliation but also in looking at its priorities, worldviews, power relations, and possibilities. Reconciliation for peacebuilding agents becomes trauma-healing and restorative work, dealing with the past, interethnic cooperation, and retributive justice practices and promoting peace education. Each approach has potential for connecting high-level political processes with grassroots work, often categorized as thick and thin forms of reconciliation, recognizing that the distancing between state-building and reconciliation work limits and creates obstacles to achieving the claims derived from each practice.

Reconciliation, as everyday citizen experiences, is shaped by forgiveness, youth work, communication and economic development (Nordquist, 2006, Schaap, 2008, Hamber and Van der Merwe, 1998). Some understandings reinterpret technical concepts into everyday terms (truth telling becomes communication, interethnic cooperation turns into dealing with pressing needs, retribution turns into acknowledgment and forgiveness), pointing to some agreement with peacebuilding definitions of reconciliation. For others, reconciliation becomes a concept different and alternative to what practitioners conceive (the rejection of reconciliation as a term applicable in Bosnia, the idea of an organic form of reconciliation

stemming from neighbour relations rather than political agreements) hinting at discrepancies and distancing between peacebuilders and citizens.

Connecting and distancing meanings emerge in the analysis of barriers to reconciliation, placing attention to problems such as the rise of ethnopolitics and its insistence on social divisions, the establishment of mechanisms enabling ethnic distance (media and education) and the rise of new concerns regarding youth extremism, economic and physical insecurity and terrorism. Mapping these barriers leads to identifying common concerns between peacebuilders and citizens regarding peacebuilding priorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as different forms of impact that barriers create for interviewees, marking a distance and a difference between peacebuilders and citizens, leading to questions of legitimacy in reconciliation processes.

To address the research questions, this doctoral thesis reviews literature concerning the foundational concepts of the nexus. It explores the concept of state-building, as one of many activities in peacebuilding, pointing out problems derived from narrow conceptions of state-building that rely rebuilding state institutions as a formula for post-conflict reconstruction. Critical analysis of state-building leads to my concern with how top-down and bottom-up approaches have been presented in theory and practice, establishing a problematic distancing between actors and practices in peace work that demands broader understandings of state-building. This problematic division is reformulated in the study of 'thin' and 'thick' forms of reconciliation. This division is explained through the analysis of different approaches, those located at the top level (thin) and those at the grassroots level (thick) for dealing with issues of relationship-building, different forms of justice and practices surrounding truth. By deepening the critique of the separation between the thin and thick of reconciliation and analyzing what holistic approach to reconciliation and transitional justice entails, this review

advocates for linking thin and thick, recognizing problems with the legalistic domination of the field.

The work continues by describing the methodological framework structuring the nexus, pointing to an interpretative approach to studying reconciliation, relying on a social constructivist perspective to identify different avenues for meaning construction that allow the recognition of linkages, and areas of convergence and divergence in reconciliation. The methodological approach derived from this, points to the importance of meaning construction in reconciliation, relying on case study as a design for the nexus.

A third chapter contextually studies Bosnia-Herzegovina's peacebuilding, marking the reconciliation barriers derived from unintended consequences coming from international intervention in various areas (social, political, economic). The section describes state-building, observing how the establishment of the state architecture in the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) supported ethnically dividing structures, strengthening ethnopolitics, leading to local contestation of liberal peace formulations and the legitimacy of Bosnia's international state-building experiment. The chapter then makes an account of transitional justice, focusing on the primacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the externally-driven insistence on retributive justice as an approach to reconciliation and the various obstacles present in the development of a Bosnian judiciary as well as in attempts at non-judicial transitional justice measures.

Following this context, a fourth chapter begins analysis of fieldwork data. It presents different ways in which reconciliation is thought of by different international and local organizations using it as a working concept in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The description of activities and meanings establishes linkages between thin and thick reconciliation within organizations involved in peacebuilding. The section analyses five approaches: trauma-

healing and restorative work, story-telling and fact-finding, cooperation, retributive justice and peace education. In each approach claims made towards reconciliation are presented, as well as a description of meanings and projects from different organizations, pointing towards the linkages between practices and possible dilemmas presented in the work of peacebuilding actors.

The fifth chapter studies meanings from citizens' stories and experiences. It recognizes that reconciliation stories are framed differently from the technical and operational frames from peacebuilding actors, and visualizes possible connections between citizen interpretations and the peacebuilding initiatives presented in the previous chapter. Thematic analysis looks at eight views: forgiveness, youth engagement, learning, external imposition, everyday practice, communication, economic prosperity and as a pre-war state.

The sixth chapter establishes connections and separations between international, civil society actors and citizen views, looking at identified obstacles to reconciliation: ethno-politics as a barrier to reconciliation, the establishment of education and media structures strengthening divisions for future generations, economic stagnation and lack of prosperity and youth radicalization as a possible source of re-emerging violence. The chapter ends looking at perceptions between international, civil society and citizens on what guarantees legitimacy in peacebuilding and reconciliation work.

The last chapter highlights the need to connect state-building and reconciliation work as subsets of peacebuilding, addressing some concerns expressed in the identification of reconciliation barriers and obstacles to transitional justice work. It focuses on how missed connections between thin and thick reconciliation have affected the delivery of claims made in the name of transitional justice as a peacebuilding activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### **Contribution to literature: bridging different literatures to map peacebuilding**

This thesis recognizes the need for a comprehensive engagement in the study of peacebuilding, recognizing the interdisciplinary origins of ‘reconciliation’. This is what is considered a holistic approach to reconciliation, understanding need to rely on different angles, literatures and fields in order to attempt at a comprehensive view of this phenomenon, where the final research is the bigger picture made up of all the contributions from the different smaller components.

Its main contribution is connecting critical literature from statebuilding and transitional justice in order to methodologically map the complexities of peacebuilding. To attempt this holistic engagement with peacebuilding, it will relate literature from different perspectives: traditional IR literature on liberal peace, statebuilding and peacebuilding, critical literature on transitional justice and its engagement with the rights to truth, justice and reconciliation, psychosocial literature on trauma-healing in post-conflict settings, legal literature referring to reparative, retributive and rehabilitative justice and conflict transformation literature on peace education and its benefits for social reconstruction,

This attempt at interdisciplinary engagement, builds from Millar and Lecy’s (2016) concern with how literature on post-conflict justice and peace, despite being composed from various scholarly traditions, fails to communicate meaningfully between disciplines as different streams appear disconnected from one another. The direct contribution out of this exercise in literature bridging is establishing a map of reconciliation barriers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, done through two simultaneous processes. The first one identifies connections between different sources of ‘reconciliation’ presented in chapters 4 and 5. Here such connections support the idea that effective statebuilding, a process linking top-down institutional reforms with bottom up reconciliation initiatives, can produce legitimacy through the strengthening of

state-society relations. The second process is visible in the identification of barriers to reconciliation, structuring debates around the impact of reconciliation, expressed in chapter 6. By mapping out problems of reconciliation in Bosnia, the thesis looks at areas where disciplines and policies connect and clash, permitting a detailed frame for understanding the impact of peacebuilding. By doing a deeper analysis into the ‘local’ and ‘international’ via reconciliation, this thesis sheds light into various realities that derive from the experience of intervention in the country. It permits the sketching of alternative, yet feasible spaces for sustainable peace existing in modern day BiH, fulfilling a task in the critical theorization of peace research.

# **CHAPTER 1 - ASSEMBLYING THE NEXUS: STATE-BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION DEBATES**

## **Introduction**

This chapter establishes the nexus' foundations, starting with state-building as a peacebuilding activity. Exploring narrow understandings of state-building and limited institution-building approaches explains why state-building is often unfit in societies subject to peace interventions. By critically describing state-building, a division between top-down and bottom-up approaches emerges as a problematic separation between actors and practices in peace work, demanding the need for open understandings of state and peacebuilding. The top-down and bottom-up division is reformulated in reconciliation, under 'thin' and 'thick': a division between approaches located at the high political level and at the grassroots level when dealing with processes for relationship-building, justice and truth are identified. Thin reconciliation addresses state-building objectives (implementation of retributive justice and establishment of formal mechanisms) aimed at collective reconciliation whereas thick reconciliation deals measures towards more intimate, individual and localised spaces.

## **Distinguishing peace and state-building**

Distinguishing peace and state-building clarifies state-building's role in post-conflict reconstruction. Reviews point towards a practical tendency of equating both, leading to highly contested institution-building approaches (Newman, 2009, Brown et. Al, 2010). This suggests the broadening of scopes, accommodating both for the creation of a political community and the development of a state, linked to strengthening state-society relations.

### *From peacebuilding to the liberal peace*

Peacebuilding's technical definition emerges in the United Nation's Agenda for Peace: "comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace...may include...reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation" (United Nations, 1992). U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali exemplified peacebuilding through various tasks: disarming previously warring parties, custody, and destruction of weapons, refugee repatriation, advisory and support for security personnel, electoral monitoring, human rights protection, state institution reform amongst others (Paris, 2004). The 1995 supplement to the Agenda for Peace recognizes the difficulty in reaching the established goals, due to their vague conceptualization, hinting at the creation of structures for the institutionalization of peace (Cousens et. al, 2009). This challenged peacebuilding by recognizing possible strategic incoherence in international assistance processes, placing peacebuilding into a high standard that overestimates what international engagement can realistically construct. As different peacebuilding programmes emerged, a new research field advocated for broadening intervention agendas with comprehensive peace programmes, advancing debates about conflict prevention, early warning, mediation, humanitarian action and human rights as underpinning a deeper role in peacebuilding practices (Sabaratnam, 2011, p.6). Such calls exemplify Johan Galtung's peace work, emphasizing non-elite processes (as opposed to the high political location of international interventions), recognizing the social, psychological, religious dimensions of processes operating at the local level (Call and Cook, 2003).

Such different approaches illustrate the implications that broad and narrow definitions have on sustainable peace. Peacebuilding falls into minimalist and maximalist understandings: from peacebuilding aimed at preventing the recurrence of armed conflict to advocacy for social transformation, addressing fundamental grievances, horizontal inequalities and root

causes of conflict, focusing on the development of capacities and institutions to manage conflict (Wyeth, 2011). Narrow approaches are geared towards negative peace (stopping armed violence, maintaining ceasefires), whereas broader approaches hint at a positive and durable peace (combining institutional strengthening, development, reconciliation and democracy goals amongst others) (Newman, 2009). Broad peacebuilding incorporates activities beyond crisis prevention, particularly longer-term development initiatives and the building of governance structures and institutions, integrating peace with state-building (Lemay-Hebert and Toupin, 2011). Illustrative of different approaches is Barnett et al's (2007) survey looking at international mandates, distinguishing various peacebuilding formats: programmes geared towards stability and security immediately after an agreement's implementation, others focused on building vibrant civil societies or furthering development, democracy, justice and rule of law. Findings from comparing twenty-four mandates discover an ingrained belief by western agencies that liberalization, as a movement from war to market democracy and rule of law, is the best way to reach positive peace in war-affected states. This commonality exemplifies a dominant paradigm in the 1990's and 2000's, 'liberal peacebuilding', a maximalist approach focused on promoting democracy, market-focused economic reforms and institutional reconstruction as driving forces for building peace (Wyeth, 2011)

This faith in liberalization as a formula for sustainable peace supports the emergence of a post-Cold War order promoting democratic peace theory as a peacebuilding formula. Boutros Ghali's peacebuilding implies that democracy naturally creates legitimacy, linking legitimacy to the political and its location in the public arena of voters and elections (Kappler, 2013, p.15). Democratic peace theory promotes the idea that democratic states do not wage war on one another due to various structural, institutional and normative accounts (Bellamy et al, 2004, Newman, 2009). Legislatures, rule of law and electorates can mitigate the decision of

going to war. Integrating liberal states into an international society places international and domestic responsibilities upon political leaders. Inhibiting war, trading through global markets makes the decision of war costly and irrational. A central belief in this theory is that states share common values, are mutually interdependent and eschew the strategy of war to settle differences (Lemay-Hebert and Murshed, 2016). Liberal peace interventions have necessitated integration of neoliberal economic policy and liberal political structures to create market democracy in war-affected settings (Thiessen, 2012, p.116), giving peacebuilding a distinctively liberal orientation in the creation of conditions for recovery and lasting peace (Paris, 2009). Rhetorically, liberal peace is based on core tenets of liberalism: the reformability of individuals and institutions, pluralism and tolerance, and individual liberty (Mac Ginty, 2010). Liberal peacebuilding is held to go beyond traditional approaches of maintaining a negative peace, or on conflict prevention towards engineering post-conflict societies, exporting liberal frameworks of good governance, elections, and human rights, rule of law and market relationships (Chandler, 2006b).

### ***Boosting the liberal peace: state fragility and institutionalization***

The promotion of a liberal framework guaranteeing sustainable peace found in ‘state fragility’ a case for implementation in war-affected states. State failure is the failure of public institutions to deliver positive political goods to citizens, contributing to determining the legitimacy and existence of the state. (Rotberg, 2003). Amongst those political goods are the provision of security, a legal system to resolve conflicts, provision of economic infrastructures, the supply of welfare policies and opportunities for participation in the political process (Bogdandy et al, 2005, p.580). Common to fragility definitions are the presence of weak institutions and governance systems, a fundamental lack of leadership, state capacity and/or political will to fulfill basic functions of the state, particularly providing services to the poor (Rocha-Menocal, 2010, p. 1). State fragility is understood as

establishing conditions for violent conflict and impoverishment within the borders of the state (Brown et al, 2011). 'Fragile states' gained increased recognition in security discourses after September 11th, interpreted through the dominant lens of western security interests, deeming them as breeding grounds, harboring terrorism, turning them into a matter of international security of western states. This state focus emerged as reaction against humanitarian intervention policies of the 1990's, which underestimated the importance of states for maintaining international stability (Chandler, 2005). Bringing back the state in discussions of state failure and state-building became an extension of the agenda of internationalizing the domestic policy-making sphere of non-western states. Although policy and academic debates about state failure existed before September 11th, this event led to the belief that state failure was a major enabler of international terrorist networks, moving international interventions from humanitarian emergencies and threats to regional security to state failure as the key focus for international security (Wolff, 2012, Brinkerhoff, 2005, Grimm et al, 2014). The focus on fragile states emerges as an increasing preoccupation of policy-makers in areas of development, security and foreign policy with states that are peaceful, stable and resilient, tying in international development (international and national) (Rocha-Menocal, 2010). Security that often reflects a conviction that neoliberalism provides basis for peaceful and stable states as well as a more peaceful international politics (Marquette and Beswick, 2011)

Through increased focus on state fragility, state-building promotes further the liberal peace as a response to challenges from violent conflict. Post-Cold War preoccupations with peacebuilding and state failure led to an interest in good governance: the technical and functional requirements of modern statehood. International agencies became involved in legal reforms, state reforms and promoting civil society (Sabaratnam, 2011, p.9); the expansion of this state-building agenda within peacebuilding occurred parallel to the expansion of peace and security agendas, connecting conflict and underdevelopment to the

malfunctioning political society in need of externally driven support. State strengthening programmes within peacebuilding became means for building liberal, democratic free market states, equating peacebuilding with state-building and narrowing state-building as the building of state institutions. The establishment of institutions identified as key in the management of liberal states became the preferred mechanism to support the creation of peaceful political communities in post-conflict states (Brown et al, 2010). Such approach derived from discourses of international state-building identifying the state with a centralised, institutional and legal apparatus, existing in a realm distinct from society. Externally led state models demanded a transition from collapsed 'de jure' state to a Weberian 'de facto' state via institutional development, as a shortcut to the Weberian state (Ottaway, 2002, p. 1004). Institutionalisation, as a model, saw the international community organizing government departments and public agencies to discharge functions efficiently and democratically, focusing more on transplanting best (western) practices rather than solving local problems.

### ***Intrusive liberal peace: unintended consequences of institutionalization***

Institution-building, as a channel for peacebuilding, focuses strongly on rebuilding states and dealing with state fragility. This has not been void of criticism, particularly for its implications for international interventions and their relationship with local communities. Underpinning the criticism of liberal peacebuilding is the reliance on the paradigm of liberal internationalism, recognizing that peacebuilding activities are largely imported to post-conflict societies by the international community, international organizations, donors, and NGOs resulting in a set of activities that reflect western forms of governance and institutions (Sriram, 2009). The main concern regards the type of state being built: a state focused on the history, culture, needs, and interests of local society and its communities or a western, Weberian state, reflecting needs and interests of international interveners. This turns state-

building into imperialism/colonialism from the West towards post-conflict societies, giving peacebuilding a destructive purpose (Paris, 2009). State-building proponents respond to such accusations arguing that this neo-colonialism is unlike previous forms of colonialism due to its altruistic nature, its multilateral form, its inclusion of a non-governmental sector and the inclusion of early exits (Marquette and Beswick, 2011). It is concerning how state-building meets the needs of external actors in the international community rather than the impoverished communities subject to intervention: rebuilding Westphalian state forms, adopting broad concerns about universalizing western liberal ideals, ignoring local concerns of identity and culture (Chandler, 2006a, p.5). ‘State-building as peacebuilding’ falls into a trap: good intentions unable to improve living standards and conditions, or provide autonomy due to the nature of the intervention, which dictates a peace dividend mainly for elites and international actors holding the infrastructure of the state, rather than local communities (Richmond, 2010b).

Distancing international from local understandings of governance and state carries risks for interventions. External support for democratization based on criteria and models from a different historical and cultural heritage than those prevalent in local society tends to promote fragmentation and institutionalization of conflicts rather than stability and democracy (Stilhoff, 2009). Liberal interventionism highlights a belief in the liberal market democracy as a model for domestic governance, superior to all others, giving little space for alternative approaches to dispute resolution, minimizing space for local contributions to the process (Mac Ginty, 2008, p.144, and 2010, p. 579). Rapid institutional transfer results in central institutions and processes divorced from the socio-political and economic dynamics that shape people’s lives, giving little chance for government strictures to establish legitimacy within local population and culture (Brown et al, 2010, p. 112, Rocha-Menocal, 2010). Also problematic is the exclusive focus on state (elite) actors. This excludes forms of political

community and political-economic frameworks, making them matters of secondary consideration, obstacles or spoiler factions (Heathershaw and Lambach, 2008). The gulf between a technical version of state institutions and the forms of language of political community that make sense to ordinary people serves as a reminder that state fragility is not only about capacities, resources, and institutions but also legitimacy. The main critique of state-building's propagation of western liberalism on intervened societies is how it writes off local forms of political organization, interpreting them as tribal, clan-based or simply lacking modern functionality (Thiessen, 2012, p. 117). This separates the organic and mechanic governance institutions from frameworks for governance derived from external theoretical models. Also, the assumption that institutions that resemble the western notion of the state goes unquestionably accepted as legitimate or appropriate in all contexts is problematic (Newman, 2009), leading to interpretations of state-building as a hegemonic agenda aimed at containing conflicts by constructing manageable and familiar institutions.

The inability of institutionalization practices to address local needs often ends in resistance against and mistrust of actors conducting such processes. In many post-conflict environments, liberal peacebuilding is perceived as ethically bankrupt, plagued with double standards, a-cultural, unconcerned with social welfare, insensitive towards its subjects (Richmond, Bjorkdahl, and Kappler, 2011 p. 454). Intervention's external nature affects state-building, external actors end up facing social backlash inherent in the exercise of authority (Lemay-Hebert, 2011). They lack social bonds to allow trust between governments and citizens, leading often to populations resenting international rule. Focusing on institutional aspects ignores legitimacy aspects embedded in the broader social dimension of state-building (Lemay-Hebert, 2009a). Intervention's political focus, state-building, is often seen as unfit to correctly address the social challenges of post-war state-building, as the neo-

colonial taint of intervention seems contradictory to the goal of fostering legitimacy in externally led state-building.

An issue at stake is how interveners and intervened societies perceive one another and how excessive the focus on liberal values affects their interactions. Interveners, seen as imperialists, meet resistance due to the way locals perceive them, which in turn is affected by their view of local populations as retrograde, illiberal and not modern. A heavy international footprint, missing spaces for genuine local ownership generates a confrontational relationship, producing local opposition against neo-colonial interference, negatively affecting the perception of a large international presence (Newman, 2009, p.32). State institutions end up more responsive to external agencies than to intervened communities, creating in populations a sense of alienation from systems of law and governance, disenfranchising locals, making the state into an alien force to the everyday life of intervened societies (Brown et al, 2010, p.111). The ‘local’ ends depicted as a homogeneous and disorderly ‘other’ whose needs and aspirations do not unfold according to liberal standards (Richmond, 2011, p. 37). Narrow state-building deems indigenous forms of social and political organization as tribal, clan-based and lacking in modern functionality, justifying the need for western versions of organization into non-western contexts (Thiessen, 2012, p.117). “The non-liberal other is shown as a barrier to western liberal aspirations of social peace and progress as it lacks institutional, social, economic and cultural capacities” (Chandler, 2006b, p. 9)

This distanced and confrontational relation between intervening actors and subject societies has deep implications for the legitimacy and responsiveness towards peace processes when implemented at the political level (as a top-down approach). The relationship between western liberal interveners and non-liberal, non-western others is marked by the west claiming to possess on behalf of others the know-how to peace, progress, democracy and

development (Parent, 2016). This obscures local possibilities of peace and makes peacebuilding, as something from the outside, not built from within, rejecting local agencies. There is an excessive propensity, from liberal interveners, for top-down peace processes all while giving inadequate attention to grassroots actors (Thiessen, 2012, p.117). This leads to a bifurcation of the political and social spheres of the international and local worlds in state-building, leading to unforeseen consequences for peacebuilding (Lemay-Hebert, 2011, p. 28). State-building demands a focus on the relationship between actors at international, national, local and grassroots levels. This relationship is at the core of legitimacy building as the outcomes and norms of any intervention depend on how much, in the eyes of local populations, peace and development improve their everyday lives (Tadjbakhsh, 2009, p.637).

When institutions disconnect from local traditions and understandings of political community, negative, unintended consequences affect peace interventions, deeming them unfit and illegitimate for the everyday citizen. A lack of fit between political culture and institutions brings incentives for corruption, rule-breaking, poor accountability and bad governance as a political struggle at local or national levels occurs through channels that have opportunistic relationships with governance institutions (Brown et al. 2010, p.111). This encourages instability and violence as excessive institution focus and promotion of liberal democracy that ignores social and economic rights results in exclusionary democracies legitimizing the continued suffering of an impoverished majority (Bellamy, 2004). The top-down institutional format characterizing state-building, fails to consider requirements for a social contract other than political rights for grassroots actors, leading to resistance that rejects an empty institutionalism (Richmond, 2009a, p.55). Lack of authority becomes the main feature of new institutions and their inability to curb the power of different political factions (Ottaway, 2002, p.1015). Converting organizations into functioning and legitimate institutions is a very slow process, often the result of a domestic political process. Ottaway

concludes that the challenge for recovering states is not the creation of institutions but of mechanisms for generating power and authority, which can only be created from the inside. Many of these critiques explain these unintended consequences on the fact that liberal methods are socially and culturally inappropriate. Particularly, in communally organized social structures, democracy, and competitive economic structures are viewed with suspicion due to the liberal omission of welfare schemes in devastated war-zones (Thiessen, 2012, p.117).

### ***Distancing top-down from bottom-up***

A commonality in critical state-building literature is the emphasis on local populations rather than “top” peacebuilding agents. This serves as a response to how institution-building privileges work at high political level. This emphasis becomes problematic by disconnecting high level and grassroots levels through top-down and bottom-up categories. Liberal peace’s imposition is based on its focus on top-down institution-building; despite bottom-up engagement with civil society being part of the process, the focus of international actors is on the development of the liberal state its institutions and a neoliberal economy, justified by the idea that security, order, and institutions always come first (Richmond, 2009b). An alternative to imposed macro-level peacebuilding is the idea of an elicitive transformative approach to peacebuilding ‘from below’ or ‘bottom-up’ as a counter-hegemonic form of peacebuilding (Campbell, 2011). Bottom-up required support to those affected by violence so that they could develop their own diagnoses of the problems they faced and transform relations and structures in which violence was embedded. Bottom-up also refers to citizenship and participation mechanisms within peace interventions. Genuine processes of participation and inclusion require engagement with the social values and practices of the people on the ground, requiring a process of listening, interaction and exchange with locals, particularly when identity, leadership, and power is derived through affiliations to local

places, membership to language groups or residence in particular communities (Brown et al. 2010, p. 112). The arena for bottom-up engagement is the “everyday” space where local individuals and communities develop political strategies towards state and international models of order (Richmond, 2010a, p. 671), a site of needs, rights, custom, agency and political mobilization hidden from mainstream top-down approaches. Richmond’s proposal looks at the representation of interests of everyday political subjects and the way it works in the every day: a dynamic site of resistance and politicisation, solidarity and local agency. An everyday view of peacebuilding includes rights, needs, and welfare in a specifically contextualized process inclusive of custom and tradition (Richmond, 2011, p. 43), a site for engaging with the local: from transnational or trans-local elites to the local, subaltern and what is beyond the artifice of civil society. Mac Ginty (2008, p.142) justifies a local/indigenous approach to peacebuilding for two reasons: participation and sustainability. Participation is not merely involvement of locals in the implementation of peace processes but reliance on local involvement in the guidance of the promotion of development as well as the way development (and peace) is defined. Sustainability sees local communities accessing their own resources and capacities over the long term, reducing their reliance on external support.

This conceptualization of the bottom-up, local sites of peacebuilding engagement has caught the attention of academics, international actors, and practitioners, spawning debates surrounding local ownership. Local, as a ‘range of locally based agencies present within a conflict and post-conflict environment...aimed at identifying and creating the necessary processes for peace...and framed in a way in which legitimacy in local and international terms converges.’ (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, p. 769). Local ownership may be a necessary institutional response to difficulties experienced by peacebuilding missions in their legitimacy deficit, yet it becomes superficial rhetoric to disguise the power grasp of dominant,

wealthy national and international institutions (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.3). A challenge for post-Cold War peace missions has been the legitimization of new transitioning political order on the ground, through the empowerment of people and increasing local ownership (Andrieu, 2010, p.539). Local ownership concerns the voice and ownership of the local in peacebuilding processes as liberal goals have restricted this to the domestication of elites into cooperating with the overall peacebuilding project (Thiessen, 2012, p.120). In this sense, cultural sensitivity combined with a greater sense of local ownership can give a mission a greater degree of legitimacy (Lemay-Hebert, 2011), which is almost antithetical to the liberal peace view that anything outside liberalism is primitive and threatening to peace. An ethical understanding of peacebuilding implies the recognition of local ownership, human rights culture, social and grassroots resources for self-government as significant in relation to the priorities, institutional capacities and international order (Richmond, 2009a). Genuine local ownership implies emphasis upon local formulation and implementation of peacebuilding strategies, encouraging local responsibility and capacity building from the outset of peacebuilding, ending in sustainable national institutions (Newman, 2009). This often means recognizing and drawing upon local institutions of governance and authority, avoiding local institutions known to be abusive, factionalized or weak.

In practice, reliance on 'local ownership' by liberal peace practice co-opts groups into frames and dispositions setup by international intervention. Local ownership becomes a rhetorical device from international actors to build their own legitimacy, avoiding local resistance (Richmond, 2010b). Instead of a natural concept, being local turns into a rhetorical device for actors' positioning in wider peacebuilding networks, reflecting both the needs of different actors as well as the values and labels associated with being local and international (Kappler, 2015). Responses to local ownership, civil society development, and participation, rarely represent a genuine local, commonly depicted as a homogeneous and disorderly other whose

aspirations do not adhere to liberal standards (Richmond, 2011). Liberal state-building barely embraces the language of the local, fitting with a convenient narrative of social impact where state and society work together according to liberal norms, with ‘resilience’ as a process where local communities simply require a light touch intervention focused on self-help, good governance and stability (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, p. 779). Peacebuilding’s participation processes co-opt local elites into western schemes or the steering of communities towards technocratic problem-solving formulas for complex social problems (Mac Ginty, 2008). Ownership is often located in aid recipient governments over policy, but rarely does it refer to citizens on the ground (Marquette and Beswick, 2011). Lemay-Hebert (2011) warns about this tendency: participatory intervention, local ownership, and indigenous empowerment do not fit with the direct governance approach taken by the international administration, whose empty-shell approach (treating institutions as a blank canvas or ignoring domestic institutions for being illiberal) negatively impacts state-building. This tendency to seeing the state as a vacuum demands attention to ‘culturally informed practices’ that help people cope with everyday life, mechanisms that help gain an accurate understanding of the needs of people as well as the obstacles and possibilities for building a supportive state-society relationship (Pouligny, 2010).

Insistence on a genuine local, exploring its meaning and understanding of peace is a methodological consideration put in place by critical scholars. Demanding every day, localised focus extends interpretations of state-building, avoiding restrictive institution-building approaches. Yet, this disconnects from the high political process involved in state-building, by categorizing interventions as top-down and bottom-up, separating international and local both in theory and practice. State-building debates are often framed through opposing distinctions: top-down versus bottom-up approaches, international versus local peacebuilding. A top-down state-building approach focuses on stabilization, security and

creation of government institution, different from a bottom-up model focused on conflict prevention and the creation of local capacities for peace (Haider, 2012, p. 5). Top-down approaches are seen as realist exercise of achieving security and stability through negotiations between power holders and bottom-up approaches emphasizing on sources of conflict, accommodating conflicting communities and engaging with civil society actors in a community-focused approach (Newman, 2009, p. 37). Bottom-up advocates constantly insist on top-down approaches' perpetuation of a negative peace.

Both critical and problem-solving frameworks identify peacebuilding's liberal spirit within international interventions; their separation lies in whether to accept or reject the framework and the possibilities of working within it. Both recognize how needs and interests of those subject to intervention are ignored, sustaining inequalities and reigniting conflict, challenging the idea of quick and easy solutions to post-conflict challenges. The distinction lays in the differences between power-based and ideas-based critiques (Chandler, 2009, pp. 3-7). The first identifies liberalism as an instrumental discourse that covers western self-interest with little concern around security and freedoms of the intervened society. The second focuses on how concepts and ideas are misused in discursive frameworks and policies of the liberal peace. The matter of dispute is whether the liberal peace discourse is amenable to policy change: power-based critiques see no room for reform whereas ideas-based critiques state that policy focus can be changed to make the framework legitimate. Sabaratnam (2011, p.13) explains this distinction, comparing Roland Paris and Mark Duffield's works, highlighting Paris' concern with appropriate timing of liberalization processes, how solving this issue is crucial for stabilizing divided societies; she identifies Duffield's argument that liberal peace lacks emancipation and is merely a regulatory framework of governance and state control, reflecting impositions of western values. For Sabaratnam (2011) this debate evolves into a "metacritique" whose scholarship ends less concerned with policy discourse and more with

challenging the liberal framework. The result has been a distancing between top-down/problem solving and bottom-up/critical advocates, and a disconnection between policy debates seeking to refine peacebuilding methods and academic debates centred on the politics of intervention.

These “top” and “bottom” critiques turn peacebuilding into an option. A top-down “problem-solving” approach deals with ‘top’ concerns of coordination, efficiency and best running of liberal institutions while a bottom-up “critical approach” advocates for a localised, indigenous and more legitimate structuring of peace. Instead of separations, it is important to see the linkages between approaches, connecting different spheres of interaction. Broad peacebuilding requires a viable mechanism for exchange and discussion of unscripted conversations between local (recipients and actors), state elites and international officials in order to determine what type of peace they envisage for their own context (Richmond, 2011). Thiessen (2012, p.118 and 119) calls this “emancipatory peacebuilding”, broadening the narrow top-down state-building focus, holistically connecting it with grassroots, bottom-up activity which engages the local and the marginalized. Peacebuilding becomes a process where political organization and state-building activities are negotiated between local and international actors without relying on pre-determined models and outcomes. It involves versions of human rights and rule of law inclusive of local groupings views as well as the broader international expectations, allowing local conditions and capacities to determine projects and processes to be developed. Peacebuilding processes need to engage with communities and non-customary institutions as well as with central institutions and governments (Brown et al, 2010, p.113). Such positive mutual accommodation applies to interactions between communities, customary governance mechanisms, state institutional forms, international agencies and the broader political dynamics that shape relations between national and international agencies.

### ***Beyond liberal peace: broad peace and state-building***

Moving past liberal peace frameworks' limitations requires broadening up state and peacebuilding, making them inclusive of the needs, perspectives, and priorities of local communities that directly engage and participate in a wide range of peacebuilding activities, besides the building of institutions. A modification of the relationship of peacebuilding with its subjects is required, particularly changing the reductionist processes of peace and state-building, in order to move to a transformative and social form of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2009b). Broad state-building processes involve a reciprocal relation between a state that delivers services to people and a set of social and political groups who constructively engage with the state (Haider, 2012, p. 4). What makes state-building viable, more than simply constructing institutions is that it allows for formal dimensions of the state to interact and affect the lives of populations (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 107). Institutions function only when embedded in networks of social practice and frameworks of meaning that generate social interactions and enable trust. If state-building is related to meaning and social interaction, it requires more than institution-building or setting up "organizations" such as electoral institutions, executive agencies, parliament, police, and judiciaries (Ottaway, 2002, p.1004). Unless these organizations become relevant to populations, believed to provide solutions to real problems, they will not become real institutions. Successful state-building enhances security and conflict resolution by carrying legitimacy in the eyes of the population: only when institutions provide a framework for social groups to express preferences and resolve issues non-violently, will these mechanisms gain legitimacy and efficiency (Call and Cousens, 2009, p. 9). State-building is about establishing, reforming and strengthening state institutions and state capacity but "in relation to an effective political process to negotiate mutual demands between state and citizen" (Rocha-Menocal, 2009, p.2). It is not about the state in isolation but about improving the quality and nature of state and society relationships,

which implies a trust-building exercise between the two, connecting both through essential social provision (Roberts, 2008, p.551).

Broad state-building visualizes society in its scope; focusing solely on building institutions negatively affects state-building creating a gap in state legitimacy. State-building's social dimension is a crucial aspect in any peace operation: lacking the social bond needed to enable trust between a government and its citizens generates resentment by local populations and affects state-building (Lemay-Hebert, 2009b, p. 70). Lemay-Hebert concludes that approaches focusing on political response or direct governance are unfit to address the social challenges of post-war state-building. State-building efforts excessively focused on formal central state institutions overlook non-state players, traditional leaders and informal mechanisms and institutions that may have more meaning to people than state institutions (Rocha-Menocal, 2009, p.3). This is caused by a lack of knowledge to engage effectively with processes and players locally. Broad state-building relies on including political communities outside the state, connecting institutions with society via state-building. This makes state-society relations a key determinant in the legitimacy of state-building. Broadening state-building implies extending its scope, participants and guidance, connecting top-down and bottom-up; shifting the conduct of state-building, recognizing local actors as true partners in state-building rather than as mere recipients of aid (Lemay-Hebert, 2011). It necessitates connecting state-building with nation-building, the efforts to rebuild a sense of community within the population of a polity (Gunnar, 2004). Nation building, as collective identity formation to legitimize public power within a territory, resides on its indigenous nature, drawing on local traditions, institutions, and customs that can support claims to sovereignty and uniqueness (Bogdandy et Al, 2005, p. 586). This requires state-building to consider the complex nature of socio-political cohesion, as externally led efforts affect the

legitimacy of intervention by shaping the conditions under which citizens share common values (Lemay-Hebert, 2009b).

## **Reconciliation**

This section reviews reconciliation as a working concept in peacebuilding. Presenting a variety of meanings interpreting reconciliation highlights a dividing logic of top-down and bottom-up, derived from state-building debates, presented as ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ forms of reconciliation. Such categorization leads to academic calls for a holistic and comprehensive approach to reconciliation, connecting thick and thin perceptions of truth, justice and reparation.

### ***Top-down and Bottom-up reconciliation: ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ choices***

Reconciliation has become an important activity in post-conflict reconstruction, grabbing the attention of donors, and international organizations, visualizing it through a top-down perspective where state-building is means for achieving reconciliation. For instance, the 2012 U.N. workshop ‘Building Just Societies: Reconciliation in Transitional Settings’, defines reconciliation as

“...building or rebuilding relationships damaged by violence and coercion, not only among people and groups in society but also between people/citizens and the state... (With) specific consideration to societal stakeholders that have a great interest in reconciliation and peacebuilding, without having a strong or organized voice, e.g., victims, youth, ex-combatants, displaced people, Diasporas, women, etc.” (Sánchez and Rognvik, 2012, p. 6)

Here reconciliation becomes important for state-building and in developing the role of the government: to facilitate reconciliation processes in order to be accountable to societies and

to build confidence among the public. Another example is the OSCE's "Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area", suggesting high state involvement in reconciliation:

"...an on-going, a non-linear process involving the creation or restoration of relationships on political and societal levels. It was underlined that reconciliation can take place between and within states and is based on notions of trust, equality, acceptance of differences, partnership, mutual or joint interests and positive perceptions of the other." (OSCE, 2012, p. 2).

Reconciliation is set as building bridges between or within states and their societies; adopting reconciliation from a multidimensional perspective with political, social, economic, institutional, scientific, regional and international implications. The fact that reconciliation is placed on the sphere of state and state-society relations displays the close connection between state-building and reconciliation for the OSCE.

Academics working on reconciliation in peacebuilding develop their own bottom-up perspectives (Nordquist, 2006, Fischer, 2011). Authors exploring connections and dilemmas of reconciliation within peacebuilding defend localised approaches where the focus is not just state-society relations but relations between former adversaries, individuals, and communities. Calls for a grassroots approach to reconciliation stem from a critique of international approaches based on legal practices seeking to influence the rules of the game, evidencing that international justice and rule of law initiatives are not politically neutral (Lundy and McGovern, 2008, p. 266). Such critique identifies a tendency to exclude local communities as active participants in transitional justice mechanisms, leading to questions about legitimacy, local ownership, and participation. For them, a full participatory transitional justice process means that locals are included at every stage of the process: conception, design, decision-making, and management.

Reconciliation involves relationship-restoration, bringing people with a conflictive history together into a harmonious relationship or bring people into an agreement on a set of historical events, leading to the capacity to live with one another (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). As such, reconciliation can be between individuals and collectivities, individuals, families and groups. This is interpreted as intercommunal understanding, a form of community building concerned with coexistence and tolerance, which requires clearing of mistrust between previously conflicting parties and rebuilding personal bonds at the local level (Hamber and Van der Merwe, 1998). Here reconciliation, as viewed at the personal level, insists on a localised approach where reconciliation is natural to communities and individuals rather than national groups. This distinction is key in developing projects: national reconciliation is obtained when societal and political processes function and develop without reverting to previous patterns of conflict, whereas individual reconciliation is the ability of every human being to conduct their lives in a similar form as prior to the conflict without fear or hate (Mobekk, 2005, p. 263). The question for theorists and practitioners is where to locate reconciliation, who should be the ones to reconcile and what best conditions and contexts allow sustainable reconciliation leading to a lasting peace. Answers often imply choosing between top-down and bottom-up, labeled as thick-localised and thin-internationalized reconciliation. “Thick” refers to understandings of reconciliation based on relationship restoration, social healing and forgiveness and “thin” to legal mechanisms towards a departure from violence based on accountability (Eastmond, 2010, p.5). Thick reconciliation is understood as unity, harmony, healing, the building of relationships and restorative justice and thin as retributive justice, the punishment of perpetrators, democratization, institutional development and mechanisms to stop physical violence (Hoogenbom and Vieille, 2010, p. 186). Reconciliation is thick due to the emotional component of processes focused on community-level approaches and thin when based on

institutional mechanisms. This interpretation implies a gap between international and local when prioritizing reconciliation practices: a technical-legalistic international language of criminal justice and accountability contrasted with a local needs-sensitive language of trauma-healing, victim acknowledgment and restoration.

Both represent a separation between practices, complicating possibilities for linkages. Thin reconciliation adopts an institution-building framework viewing transitional justice, political dialogue, and reform as means for reconciliation, promoting peaceful democratic transitions. Thick reconciliation promotes local practices of trauma-healing, a victim-based approach to justice and a grounded perception of how to deal at community level with the wounds and barriers left by violent conflict. To clarify distinctions and point to the dividing logic of this debate, “reconciliation” is differentiated between thick and thin in three respects: the building of relationships, justice and truth telling, showing what reconciliation looks like both at “thin-top” and “thick-bottom”.

### ***From coexistence to reconciliation: local or national relationship-building?***

The only academic and policy consensus around reconciliation is that it has to do with rebuilding broken relationships. The base for dialogue is understood as a pre-requisite for reconciliation, the result of an encounter with another person (Sobczak, 2013, p. 58). Reconciliation requires two sides becoming acquainted with and acknowledging each other’s narratives, where national narratives that often become a barrier, turn into the starting point of a reconciliation process (Auerbach and Lowenstein, 2011, p. 212). Here, the establishment of a pre-determined definition of reconciliation will determine whether it is treated as a social phenomenon or as a matter for individual victims and their relation to their perpetrators (Little, 2011, p.84). As a form of dialogue, reconciliation can rely on many means (artistic, economic, judicial) dependent on local conditions. This asks which spaces and depths are

viable for establishing and maintaining communication, as it may be fraught upon, requiring sensitivity to local possibilities and limitations (Komesaroff, 2016)

Understanding reconciliation as the rebuilding of relations identifies various spaces of dialectic interaction: international, national and local levels as well as community, formal, political and non-political spaces. The aim is promoting dialogue and activities dealing with animosities and hatred, allowing some level of reconciliation (from simple coexistence or cohabitation to the reformulation of ties and friendships). It is in this definition where controversies emerge. As pointed by Jansen (2013, p.233), the debates on depth and space for reconciliation have seen the concept interpreted as a western-imposed idea, sometimes demanding processes such as forgiveness, apologies, punishment, and compensation, and in other contexts, and in other contexts, rejecting the concept altogether. Thick and thin forms of dialogue can be reinterpreted as a difference between coexistence and reconciliation (Bloomfield, 2016, p.20). The first understood as a grudging acceptance of the necessity to exist in a shared space, and the second a more complex set of activities to mend-relationships, co-operate and develop harmonious living. Bloomfield concludes that coexistence is a more modest term, with less negative implications due to the absence of ideas about forgiveness and integration. Coexistence sees reconciliation as an absence of violence in the establishment of relations (a form of negative peace) without the need for interaction (Sampson, 2003, p. 181). Sampson sees coexistence as two conflicting parties simply ignore one another, there is neither conflict, nor reconciliation, yet a step forward over a possible threat of ethnic cleansing. The choice of depth in the dialogue of reconciliation can indicate the type of activities supporting dialogue processes. Auerbach (2009, 9. 292) writes about ‘cold’ reconciliation made up of concepts such as societal beliefs and national narratives as focal points for dialogue. In contrast, ‘warm’ reconciliation encompasses processes for empathy, remorse, and forgiveness, which can potentially be integrated into the political

process that leads to reconciliation. The thick and thin choice revolves around the depth of dialogue (whether a simple tolerance and non-violent engagement between former adversaries or cooperation and friendship) and the ideal context for relationship-building (local, community, national).

***Thick relationship-building: grounded transformative dialogues***

Thick relationship-building places communities as reconciliation sites, a space that does not need state-building or institution-building frames but rather reconstructing broken social ties among populations on the ground. Reconciliation as “coming to terms with one’s old adversaries and creating a new partnership” (Jeong, 2000, pp. 192) is explained by the fact that in civil wars, relationships between protagonists are intimate and complex as parties share geographic areas, community spaces, have strong interdependence and social ties between them. Reconciliation, as a conflict handling mechanism, is relationship-building through acknowledging harm, a process of regret and remorse and a readiness to apologize for one’s role in inflicting the injury (Assefa, 2001, p. 342). Reconciliation begins with the premise that relations require particular attention in order to build peace. Addressing the fracturing of relations via peacebuilding activities involves developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society, dealing with the past through healing and acknowledgment. Also, building of positive relationships addressing issues of trust, prejudice, intolerance and accepting commonalities and differences, and significant cultural and attitudinal change: transforming how people relate to one another (Hamber and Kelly, 2004, p.5)

Thick relationship-building implies working with a wide range of actors, particularly local, grassroots actors and NGOs effectively working at the individual and community level. This is the preferred site for addressing ethnic animosities and intolerance, reintegrating relationship-transformation into peacebuilding (Blagojević, 2007, p.559). For Lerche (2002),

reinterpreting Lederach (1997), this process occurs through a workshop approach aimed at changing relational dynamics between participants, where they see beyond victimization and experience reconciliation. Yordán (2003, p. 65-66) also writes about interactive problem-solving workshops where influential community leaders can meet and discuss contentious issues; characterizing this process as open dialogue towards the construction of relational empathy that can de-escalate the conflict, change adversarial attitudes and build a culture of trust and co-operation. The assumption in these workshops is that a trickle-down effect of reconciliation will occur as they include top actors (military, political and religious leaders), grass-roots actors (local politicians, local NGO representatives, and small business owners) as well as middle range actors (journalists, academics, representatives of political parties). These wide-ranging actors are expected to construct solutions to root causes of conflict, using their own cultural resources and then share them with their respective communities, ideally bringing about reconciliation.

This process accentuates on trust: from casual acquaintance or collegiality to a deepened, complete trust.. Localised reconciliation aiming at affecting individuals requires high levels of trust: a confident expectation that the other is accepting, honest, truthful and non-manipulative (Govier and Verwoerd, 2012, p.193). Here, the best form of dialogue towards reconciliation is internal and voluntary rather than external and coerced; when dialogue is external adversaries marshal and mask their arguments, inhibiting change (Assefa, 2001, p. 343). Thick reconciliation links to acknowledgment, contrition, mercy, and forgiveness, features so intimate and individual that cannot be dealt via state-building but through grassroots work: local intervention and dialogue between victims and perpetrators at the community level. Reconciliation equated to apology and forgiveness incorporates admitting the commission of wrongdoings and expressions of regret (De la Rey, 2001, p.13). Forgiveness requires that the offended party accept the offender's acknowledgment of the

wrong together with an authentic expression of sorrow. Reconciliation deals with contrition from perpetrators and forgiveness from victims as essential elements for abandoning cycles of revenge and retaliation towards positive reconciliation (Lerche, 2002). Grassroots NGOs often develop such tasks: organizing workshops to help deal with past trauma, providing spaces to talk about experiences aimed at furthering mutual understanding, developing local initiatives towards forgiveness and attrition (Theissen, 2004, p.9).

***Thin relationship-building: reconciliation as a political and social dialogue***

Thin relationship-building is concerned with top-down, high-level national processes to solve animosities between former adversaries via political agreements. This is aimed at identifying misunderstandings, mutual recognition and the viability of agreements to overcome divisions through political commissions that channel dialogue towards security, trust and socioeconomic possibilities (Nordquist, 2006, p.16-17). This political process involves elements of conflict transformation that move from ethnic hatreds towards agreement on political coexistence and planning of a common future. A politics of reconciliation is based on a discourse of mutual recognition delimiting the terms of reconciliation (Schaap, 2004, p. 524). The expectation is that a process of intercultural dialogue leads to the identification of misunderstandings, a recognition of the other's identity and the possibility of establishing an agreement. High-level transitional justice becomes politics, as differing narratives of the past compete for political dominance, making state-building a policy for revisiting the past and dealing with conflicting beliefs about the past by warring parties (Kostić, 2012, p.651). The assumption is that as the absence of dialogue gave rise to violent conflict, reflexive dialogue between disputing parties can help articulate their views and needs to one another and discover meeting points in their narratives that fit reconciliation (De la Rey, 2001, p.19).

By placing reconciliation in a political rather than a private setting, it becomes relevant to state-building. Van Zyl (2005, p. 214) advocates for a national political process that overcomes divisions between groups, placing emphasis on the need for a constitutional settlement that offers protection and reassurances to vulnerable groups. The government's role in the process is vital, taking necessary measures to demonstrate that democracy serves all citizens and that diversity is a source of strength rather than conflict. This political dialogue towards reconciliation is connected to institution-building as a form of ending violence. Institutions need to be adapted to the process of bridging ethnic tensions, suggesting that: institutions need to be ethnically diverse, they need to promote ties that are acquaintance rather than friendship based, must possess a norm that allows interethnic cooperation and venues that promote mutually dependent interaction among ethnic groups (Pickering, 2006, p, 80-81).

Thin reconciliation suggests that reforming or re-creating a state after violent conflict leads to a recognition of antagonisms and the possibility of them being "reconciled" via the political process. Political recognition is a necessary foundation, established in terms of identity and otherness according to which past wrongs were perpetrated (Schaap, 2004, p. 534). This form of reconciliation requires recognition that political violence was committed, that reparations must be negotiated through politics and that reconciliation is not just a matter between victim and perpetrator but one that matters to society as a whole, a public acknowledgment that steps have been taken towards addressing past injustices and that reconciliation has taken place. Politics of reconciliation are a crucial task of peacebuilding, orientating the political system towards adjustment and stabilization of peaceful relations via addressing of economic, political and infrastructural problems that could initiate an outbreak or recurrence of violence (Francis, 2002). A politics of reconciliation includes encouragement of consensus-building processes that foster inclusion and the reorganization

of social relations through new forms of governance that lead towards peaceful relationships. Francis further adds that this includes structures for maintenance of peace, efforts to enable return and resettlement of displaced and refugees, physical reconstruction as well as the rebuilding of the economic life, social networks, institutions, legal and political systems. This is discussed by Blagojević(2007, p.559) who sees in economic reconstruction a space for interethnic dialogue and exchange towards reconciliation: when introduced into the economic, political and institutional dimension of peacebuilding, reconciliation means that new state measures allow equal opportunity and access to societal resources for different (ethnic) groups. Reconciliation involves governance modes and structures focused on the building of legal and human rights institutions together with fair effective governance and dispute resolution systems (Hamber and Kelly, 2004, p.3). As reconciliation requires addressing root causes and consequences of conflict it must involve processes at the political level: building institutions, community development, legal and political mechanisms to address the past and build effective governance, processes for identification and reconstruction of the social, economic and political structures that gave rise to conflict. The contribution of transitional justice towards reconciliation relies on the idea that new institutional settings should hold institutions accountable for the breakdown of the state, repression or human rights violations and become a pre-requisite for truth and reconciliation (Fischer, 2011, p.411).

Thin reconciliation connects with legal and institutional reforms, mechanisms assumed to transform relations and deal with animosities. Political reconciliation recalls an entire social system by determining the level of reforms in a post-war society: if intergroup relations existed before conflict then state-building should become a form of conflict transformation and if they never existed in the past then it is about a social, economic and political transformation on an unprecedented scale (Lerche, 2002). Transitional justice prioritizes

state-building through the establishment of political reforms, establishing a legal frame for rebuilding relations and achieving peaceful coexistence. Van Zyl (2005, p. 216) explains: reconciliation seen as institutional-transitional justice implies reform and abolition of abusive institutions, responsible for human rights violations. It requires ensuring human rights protection via mandates, training, and staffing of specific institutions. It mandates the removal of persons responsible for corruption on human rights abuse from state institutions. It includes political, legal and social measures against the exploitation of the minority by the majority (policies that raise awareness of insecurities and marginalization, reparations that assure recognition of minorities as right-bearing citizens). In addition, the proactive pursuit of accountability and reconciliation via transitional justice encodes impunity and sends a message about the importance of the rule of law.

### ***Reconciliation as justice: victims and perpetrators***

Justice is vital to reconciliation, linking relationships-building to the question of how to best address a past comprised of violence, gross human rights abuses and configuring relationships between victims and perpetrators. The thick and thin choices focus on questions about best context and mechanisms for delivering post-conflict justice (international, national, local, indigenous), whether justice should be perpetrator or victim-focused and the impact that justice can have on the prospects of sustainable peace, known as the peace versus justice dilemma.

### ***Thick justice: victim-centred reconciliation***

Thick Justice deals with reparative processes recognizing victims' pain and loss as well as plans for a compensation process within the emerging legal system, demanding for attention to the grounded realities of victims. Reconciliation requires empowering victims through social, political and economic means in order for them to leave the role of victim and gain a

position as individual members of a community (Nordquist, 2006, p, 24). Reparations may include financial compensation, memorials, policies, and procedures focused on protection of communities against future violations, a compensatory justice aimed at restoring the dignity and humanity of victims (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). Restorative justice focuses on the victim's right to justice. To achieve reconciliation, recognition of multiple levels of societal repair (individual, family, neighbourhood and society) is needed, requiring hearing the views of victims, prioritizing them over legal and political opinions of social reconstruction (Shaw and Waldorf, 2010, p. 4-5). Here, a localised understanding of justice prioritizes the subjective and contextualized needs of those affected by violence (Garbett, 2004, p.26).

Restorative approaches can be bottom-up, insistent on local needs and customary justice practices. Restorative justice focused on social healing and reconstruction, requires listening to victims' needs and experiences, helping develop a collective memory based on their accounts of what occurred during the conflict period (Betts, 2005, p. 744). By promoting customary law initiatives, it deals with justice issues through local practices and institutions. Customary, localised law is highly flexible and adaptive, accessible and legitimate for the rural poor in post-conflict settings as it deals with issues of great concern to the rural poor (lands, family issues) ( Shaw and Waldorf, 2010, p. 15). It seems to have greater capacity and practices than those offered by conventional justice systems and can be more responsive to local needs, providing accountability for lower perpetrators and bystanders, also providing restitution. For some authors, restorative justice is a form of compensatory justice: De la Rey (2001, p.15) understands reparations as compensatory measures aimed at restoring the dignity and humanity of victims, responsibility of both the state and perpetrators. In reparations, perpetrators should take actions to redress the wrongs committed through dialogue with victims and communities (Lerche, 2002). The idea of reparations may bring

the view that it is the new government's responsibility to offer the material restitution to victims, permitting a view of reintegrating victims back into society, reducing the likelihood of conflict by recognizing the harm they endured (Theissen, 2004, p.8-9). The claim is often that, if carried out well, reparations will enhance the perception of justice, having a positive effect on people's perception of the state, strengthening their faith in democratic institutions (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.11). Restorative justice can also focus on healing and reconciliation at the community level, restoration promotes social healing and victim through the creation of collective memory based on truth telling practices at local and community spaces (Betts, 2005, p. 745). When this is done through public deliberation, it helps create legitimacy within victims and their communities by recollecting facts around the past, different meanings on the violence that occurred, allowing victims' stories to be publicly available, acknowledging the victim's psychological trauma.

### ***Thin justice: perpetrator-focused reconciliation***

Thin justice necessitates institutional arrangements for punishing perpetrators of gross human rights violations, leaning towards a top-down approach to addressing the past. The focus is accountability, reform of national justice systems, the promotion of international transitional justice mechanisms and strengthening of rule of law to generate trust in state institutions. The claim is that punishment creates accountability, restores justice and dignity to victims, creating a break from past regimes, contributing to reconciliation and demonstrating respect for democratic (judiciary) institutions, ensuring that no atrocities will happen again (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.5). Prosecutions focus on perpetrators, the advancement of a just order and the establishment of a rising democracy that succeeds an authoritarian or violent system (Reychler and Paffenholz, 2012). Thin reconciliation connects with state-building goals: good governance, constitutional, legal equality and individualizing accountability that facilitates trust and cooperation (Kostić, 2012, p.651). Prosecutions have great priority for

their potential to deter future crimes, reflect a new set of social norms and a solid process of reforming and rebuilding trust in government institutions (Van Zyl, 2005, p. 211). The concept of transitional justice acquires importance for its ability to highlight practices focused on juridical answers to the ways of past repressive regimes (Andrieu, 2010, p. 539). Transitional Justice has been used for processing war crimes and massive human abuses in conflicts through the establishment of tribunals, lustration of state administrations, reparation and settlement processes amongst other mechanisms. Theissen (2004, p. 2-4) sees the development of retributive justice through the formation of international criminal courts, national prosecution systems, and national courts. The criminal system is responsible for regulating past injustices, transforming violent conflict into peaceful settlement, based on the fact that there is an international consensus that gross human rights violations, genocide, and war crimes, as well as crimes against humanity, must be investigated and punished. Transitional justice affirms the need to build institutions promoting justice and a commitment to good governance. This includes measures against impunity, reintegration of victims and perpetrators and a judicial reform process. It involves mechanisms for international criminal justice or reinforcement of a national prosecution service, often in the form of criminal tribunals and a system to regulate past injustices, investigating and punishing gross human rights violations and processes for transforming violent conflict into a peaceful settlement. In this sense, the claim of the contribution of transitional justice and accountability to the construction of positive peace is on the constitution of a shared political project built on trust (García-Godos, 2015, p. 342).

Retributive justice connects with state-building via punishing perpetrators. Peacebuilding can present democratic justice institutions and procedures as preferred alternatives when compared to oppressive and abusive systems. Retributive justice advocates argue that punishment supports the construction of a morally right order that supports a growing

democracy, in contrast with the institutional structures prevalent in a previous authoritarian system (Huyse, 2005). For democracy and rule of law to be solidly built, legal accountability is required to prevent future crimes (Sriram, 2010, p.279). As prosecutions serve as a crime deterrent, this reflects a new formation of social norms that can help rebuild trust into government institutions, making criminal trials a vehicle to prove to citizens that state institutions are willing to protect rather than violate their rights (Van Zyl, 2005, p. 211).

Thin reconciliation, through retributive transitional justice, is praised for countering collective blaming that persist in divided societies after violent conflict, giving institutions a role in dealing with warmongering, collective victimization and guilt. Retributive justice is understood to help set up criminal tribunals to individualize guilt, putting an end to the collective demonization of ethnicity (Eastmond, 2010, p.6-7). As criminal tribunals marginalize nationalist political leaders and discourage vengeance, they are said to contribute to peace through the individualization of criminal accountability (Hoogenbom and Vieille, 2010, p.189). Retributive justice is assumed to have a cathartic role, appraising desires for vengeance, by creating a view of justice through prosecution, embracing the rule of law and facilitating the creation of judicial structures (Betts, 2005, p. 744). Mechanisms point towards the creation of a human rights culture that supports changes in social structure towards the achievement of reconciliation via the new legislations and measures that can safeguard human rights initiatives (De la Rey, 2001, p.20). A thin-liberal view of reconciliation focuses on a strong defense of equal rights and legal protection, affirmation of the rule of law and a culture of human rights where reconciliation is understood as commemorating the past as a history of human rights violations in order to prevent their reoccurrence (Schaap, 2008). To promote reconciliation this way, it is imperative to condemn inappropriate behavior and discourage people from repeating the sort of offenses

that lead to mass human rights violations, setting up appropriate institutional and social safeguards (Hamber and Van der Merwe, 1998).

***Truth telling: multiple localised truths or top-down national narrative?***

Revealing ‘truths’ is a process linked to reconciliation: knowing what exactly happened in the past, victims having the chance to be heard, and establishing an official narrative that can dispel myths and prejudices created during periods of armed conflict. The thin/thick division questions whether Truth Commissions should be linked to state-building, leading to a national official (documented) version of the truth or whether various truth(s) can be reconciled at the local and community level in order to get perpetrators and victims to rebuild broken ties.

***Thick ‘truths’: dialogue at the local level***

Thick truth telling refers to local dialogue between victims and perpetrators at community level dealing with trauma-healing issues, admission of wrongdoings and genuine expressions of regret. A common claim regarding truth processes is that they positively influence peacebuilding by addressing grievances derived from human rights violations, addressing the causes of violence, promoting non-violent ways of dealing with social conflict (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.9). Adopting a bottom-up approach, truth telling insists on taking account of particular worldviews from which local practices draw their meaning and force, involving issues of silence understood as a practical strategy in vulnerable contexts to avoid embarrassment and conflict (Eastmond, 2010, p. 8-9). Dealing with contrition from perpetrators and forgiveness from victims is essential to leave cycles of revenge and retaliation towards a more positive status of reconciliation (Lerche, 2002). Dealing with the past becomes a search for the truth, not necessarily as a single fact but as an interpretative tool that in some cases can bring victims to a satisfaction of their own questions around the past, leading to reconciliation (Hamber and Kelly, 2004). The value of storytelling in this

context is that narratives help people make sense of themselves and their social context, developing a self-perception and worldview that can solve identity-based conflicts.

### ***Thin ‘truths’: top-down truth telling***

Thin truth telling is represented in top-down processes seeking official records of past atrocities through national truth and reconciliation commissions aimed at recognizing and admitting hidden parts of a society’s past. This institutional approach focuses on establishing an official, state-based, version of the truth around what occurred during violent conflict. Top-down truth telling attempts to create political mechanisms for investigating what happened during the war, the type of atrocities committed, and who was responsible for them. Truth commissions serve as narrative builders, mechanisms aimed at building bridges between victims and perpetrators and presented as necessary to prevent future violence and facilitate healing processes (Andrieu, 2010, p.542).

Truth commissions connect to justice via ‘truth telling’, making them part of an institution-building process praised for its viability within society. Truth commissions are promoted as alternatives to prosecutions, justified on the premise that public and official exposure of truth provides redress for victims, avoid myths that enable a collectivization of guilt and the opportunity for society to engage in a national dialogue that can empower civil society and connect it to the state (Fischer, 2011, p. 410). The mere fact that a government is setting up a truth commission may be perceived as an effort to uncover past crimes, something vital for victims of violence (Skaar, 2013). National truth commissions can promote political reconciliation via dialogue amidst lines of political and social conflict, fostering a deliberative democracy that encourages accommodation of opposing perspectives. Truth commissions can break silences around human rights violation, encourage victims to speak, expose past atrocities from a victim’s perspective, create comprehensive accounts of past abuses,

identifying victims' needs for rehabilitation and reparation (Theissen, 2004, p.6). Establishing an official record can enhance prospects for dealing constructively with grievances and adding impetus to the transformation of state institutions and reforms that ensure the promotion and protection of human rights (Van Zyl, 2005, p. 212). The claim is that truth commissions advance democracy by strengthening rule of law, promoting democratic institutions, practices, and values, settling disputes over history, contributing to a more inclusive, responsible government and pre-empting and deterring future atrocities (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.7)

The liberal assumption behind top-down truth telling is it generates a record, a version of history that helps accountability through resources outside of the criminal justice system but that are still officialized and institutionalized. Such process protects future generations against revisionism and growing desires for revenge created by cultures of impunity, empowering citizens to resist a return to oppressive practices (Van Zyl, 2005, p. 212). Commissions are expected to give a voice to victims in public discourse, which is assumed to help rebut lies and myths around human rights violations. As truth commissions are based on peace agreements, government decrees or parliamentary laws, they help establish a public record of what happened in the past and how to avoid future atrocities, encouraging public debate as to how to best achieve co-existence (Theissen, 2004, p.6-7).

### ***Neither thick nor thin: disconnecting top-down and bottom-up in reconciliation***

Disconnections between thin and thick reconciliation stem from the legalistic foundations of transitional justice. The field is heavily influenced by the international legalist paradigm focused on generating elite and mass compliance with international humanitarian norms (Nagy, 2008, p. 278). This paradigm has extended beyond the push for prosecution through the emergence of the right to truth and reparation via customary international law as well as

the proliferation of quasi-judicial truth commissions. This field has evolved from an almost exclusive focus on legal responses intended to ensure rule of law to a more diverse focus on truth and justice with reconciliation as the desired outcome (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.3). This evolution has led to the recognition that establishing a legal and justice system by itself cannot bring healing despite creating an environment for attributing crime responsibility and punishment for perpetrators (Barakat, 2005). Excessive legalism has made transitional justice and its reconciliation claims appear distant from affected communities, by the complexity of court practices and the technical language it promotes, trials may serve to counter impunity but fail to promote reconciliation and regenerate an inclusive political community (Andrieu, 2010, p.541). The rule of law guidance of international practice has often been rejected in many societies as appropriate means to dispense justice, creating a gap between the meaning of legal justice created from tribunals, and meanings of justice defined by victims and witnesses (Garbett, 2004, p.26). Legalistic definitions of reconciliation direct attention to top-down institutions such as war crime courts or tribunals that have had little regard for local dynamics (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). Despite the field's broadening, incorporating localised efforts, there is still a strong focus on the type of 'silence-breaking' initiatives promoted by retributive justice. Emphasis on legal accountability may result in transitional justice programmes that do not function well in the political and legal cultures in which they are implemented, for various reasons: first, legal systems may have collapsed due to atrocities and judges and lawyers may become targets of violence. Second, legal emphasis may be inappropriate because the formal justice sector was never important in the lives of citizens, who may prefer traditional forms of justice or have never accessed justice. Third, emphasis on individual rights derived from a western liberal conception may not be appropriate in cultures based on group or community identity. Finally, there is the recognition that justice

can end up truly being an external imposition, where states and international actors pursue trials over the strong objection of states or individuals (Sriram, 2007).

Separations in reconciliation come from the excessive influence of legalist approaches, a product of liberal state-building formulas within transitional justice that see thin forms of reconciliation as practical, realist and measurable approaches. Transitional justice strategies share with liberal peacebuilding assumptions about preferable institutional arrangements and a faith that goods such as democracy, free markets, justice can stand in for and create peace (Sriram, 2007, p. 579). For Andrieu (2010, p. 541) transitional justice is an extensive part of the liberal package, under the influence of a top-down state-building approach that treats justice, peace, and democracy as mutually reinforcing imperatives. Transitional justice tools are increasingly embedded in democratization or rule of law strategies: judicial reform, reform of security forces, integration of former rebels and vetting processes are explicitly tied to transitional justice (Sriram, 2009). Such thin practices promote institution-building, giving primacy to accountability and rule of law as main outcomes of transitional justice, leaving aside the more intimate, localised, individual conceptions of thick reconciliation. This prioritizes legalistic views understanding peacebuilding from a state-centric perspective. Legalism turned transitional justice into a top-down activity via various mechanisms. First, it has been institutionalized into expensive supra state and state-like structures such as the various international tribunals. (McEvoy, 2007). It also has been transformed into a series of state-centric solutions (such as judicial reform and rule of law programmes) based on 'state failure' assessments. Transitional justice has a tendency of 'seeing like a state', where strengthening the state has been promoted as a key element for conflict resolution and that what matters most is institution-building. Although transitional justice evolved from its legalistic origins, incorporating various models and disciplines, moving towards a holistic model, the need for looking at the connections between thin and the thick, the top-down and

the bottom-up maintain relevance, as disciplinary and practitioner divides often affect communication and integration between practices and understandings. This separation leads to the question of who is it that needs reconciliation and what are the views of reconciliation of those who need to engage in such process? For Stefanson (2010) the classification of thick and thin leads him to ask whose state-building, political and economic interests do national reconciliation projects serve.

Differentiation between thin and thick as opposing terms complicates reconciliation in theory and practice. In early studies, scholars were torn between two scholarships. One, claiming reconciliation as a difficult and delicate process, not just a matter of rational thought but also one with emotional, warm-healing aspects. The second, arguing that the goal of reconciliation would be better served if stripped of its sentimental wrapping, presented in a more political, realistic concept (Auerback, 2009, p. 292). Thin scholarship's influence on rule of law is taken to such a normative stance that it ends disconnected from the everyday lives of those affected by legal systems, which explains the need for developing thicker forms of transitional justice (McEvoy, 2007). Transitional justice discourses tend to disengage audiences, discouraging them from participation. The difficult choices made in transitional contexts regarding violent pasts, are often translated into human rights discourses and international legal standards that 'thin out' the complexities of conflict-affected societies, divorcing human rights institutions from the wider socio-political and cultural contexts that created the violence in the first place (McEvoy, 2007, p. 413).

Despite the evolution of scholarship, the initial focus on legal approaches has contributed to the distancing academic approaches. Legal scholarship initially dominated transitional justice literature, recently benefitting from contributions from other fields of knowledge, aiming at making the field interdisciplinary (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.3). It is positive that the initial focus on retributive justice and rule of law has broadened towards discussions on meanings

and their relationship. This has led to scholarship has prioritizing activist voices, neglecting empirical research on audiences, leading to silence, exclusion, and lack of reflexivity on power relationships and the privilege that leads to such practices (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). In the study of transitional justice, disciplines talk past one another, failing to communicate as different streams of the literature (for instance, psychosocial versus legal) are disconnected and fail to initiate an exchange of meanings (Millar and Lecy, 2016). Legal literature has emphasized on the need for prosecutions and punishment whilst psychosocial research places attention to conflict transformation, the identification of root causes of conflict and a reparative 'relation-building' approach. The effect of this separation has been the marginalization of other forms of research (constructivism) as well as the impossibility of developing holistic models of practice for post-war societies (Millar and Lecy, 2016).

What these separations tells us about reconciliation and ultimately peacebuilding, is that transitional justice is a discourse and practice embedded with power, yet its implementation is incredibly depoliticised. Narrow legalistic focus on gross human (civil and political) rights violations often ignores issues of structural violence and gender inequality influence subjective experiences of conflict, injustice and their consequences (Nagy, 2008). Thin and thick, translated into top-down and bottom-up approaches, both can potentially ignore, neglect and undermine local agencies as they depoliticise both the conflict they seek to address and the peace they intend to build (Charbonneau and Parent, 2013). These distinctions are flawed when seen as choices and separated spheres of peacebuilding activity (Charbonneau and Parent, 2011). Making bottom-up approaches relevant in peacebuilding does not signify that they are more relevant than their top-down counterparts; this reifies the distinction and misses the intimate connections between them. Identifying how and where the distinctions are made, makes the act of choosing transitional justice measures a political act with concrete consequences. The distinction makes spaces for social action and reaction

surrounding specific meanings of peace and reconciliation, that when defined in elite terms and international circles, usually signals how liberal peace formulas are imposed. Addressing such challenges deals directly with the legitimacy of the global transitional justice project and the efficacy and legitimacy of mechanisms geared towards reconciliation and justice after violent conflict (Nagy, 2008).

Separating reconciliation between thin or thick leads to interpreting processes as dilemmas or trade-offs missing the space for comprehensive, holistic peacebuilding. The achievement of stability may often imply offering impunity to war criminals and warlords who can be legitimized in governance mechanisms (Newman, 2009, p. 33). This preference for stability and impunity forces a view in which justice and reconciliation can be seen as competing peacebuilding objectives (Lambourne, 2004, p.5). Justice and reconciliation are seen both as conflicting as well as mutually reinforcing goals and that publicly revealing the truth has been seen as an obstacle to reconciliation but also as its prerequisite (Skaar, 2013). Truth becomes an obstacle and a prerequisite to peace. This narrow debate frames the option as “peace or justice” as there is a demand for legal accountability in the name of democracy and rule of law at the same time that there is a claim for stability that asks that accountability ought to be eschewed (Sriram, 2010, p. 280). Three dilemmas emerge in narrow interpretations of truth, justice, and reconciliation: search for truth and accountability is destabilizing, obstructing the consolidation of democracy and peace. Peace settlements and their derived transition process depend upon the cooperation of individuals involved in human rights abuses, implying a complex balance: victim’s demands on one side and the inclusion and participation of all actors (including perpetrators) into the new post-conflict system. In addition, some sense of justice is needed for the peace and democratization process but stability and inclusion of all actors make the search for truth and justice difficult. (Newman, 2002, p.32)

A thin/thick understanding disconnects peacebuilding practices creating problems for individual approaches that do not have enough strength to bring their claimed reconciliation outcomes. Disconnecting legal and psychosocial traditions on justice and peacebuilding has promoted contradictory interventions on the ground: legal approaches emphasize on the need for prosecutions and punishment whereas psychosocial initiatives often call for conflict transformation, root causes of conflict and restoration of relations (Millar and Lecy, 2016). Disconnections risk a top-down perspective on reconciliation that ends in victor's side version of truth telling and justice, and exclusive bottom-up approaches that make it difficult for victims to extend their narratives to broader layers of society (Nordquist, 2006, p.25). Localised peacebuilding, despite its defense in academic scholarship, has not extended beyond theory as local ownership, making it a disempowering form where internal political forces are expected to uncritically adopt and implement a blueprint for post-conflict transformation (Parent, 2016, p.512). When top-down approaches are linked to externally run peacebuilding they often end in excessive emphasis on legal accountability, focusing on individual rights and responsibilities, contradicting the collective community identity often found in post-war societies (Kostić, 2012, p.651). Reconciliation cannot be imported, it is in the hands of local policy makers and civil society to examine and build upon their own political and cultural resources in the search for coping and healing mechanisms (Huyse, 2005). When transitional justice mechanisms are implemented under a top-down state-building focus they aim at creating national narratives, failing to affect local dynamics of conflict and the meaning for people living on the ground (Andrieu, 2010, p.542). This is explained by the fact that the language of legalism of transitional justice makes it distant from affected communities, focused on narratives of political violence, ignoring economic or structural causes.

In dealing with the past, transitional justice measures separating reparative and retributive end up either isolating victims and benefitting perpetrators or becoming empty measures for locals. Post-transition justice involves decisions that may trespass the rule of law and human rights as dealing with the past solely by prosecutions means that successor elites may rely on impunity to deal with the past, weakening the legitimacy of the emerging regime (Reychler and Paffenholz, 2001). Although rule of law and human rights are crucial in ensuring justice in a post-war environment, this sort of work falls short in the empowerment and healing of victims, inadequate in reforming and reintegrating perpetrators and avoid emotional issues that lead to revenge and renewed violence (Thiessen, 2012, p. 128). Court decisions can lead to prolonged physical and social expulsion of sections of a population, which then, due to their isolation, create subcultures and networks hostile to democracy and human rights (Reychler and Paffenholz, 2001). Legalist views of justice and individual accountability features de-politicises the conflict as one among individual agents, failing to account why human rights violations were atrocious in the first place, denying that the collective organization behind them (Schaap, 2008).

When transitional justice feels internationally imposed, as with the implementation of international tribunals, it creates gaps with local populations affecting its legitimacy, leading to contestation of sentences and outcomes. A huge risk for transitional justice is presented in the gap between what governments and donors promise and what victims expect and what is delivered: practitioners create expectations for justice and victims often demand a range of outcomes (truth, criminal accountability, memorials, reparations, reconciliation) (Sriram and Garcia-Godos, 2012). Designing reconciliation through distant legal justice is often contentious, as the rule of law orientation of the international community is not locally accepted as an appropriate means to dispense justice (Garbett, 2004, p.25). A gap derives from the difference between international aspirations of transitional justice and the

experiences and needs of local communities, often reflected when criminal trials of perpetrators further divide small multi-ethnic communities by causing suspicion or fear of retaliation or revenge (Eastmond, 2010, p.6-7). This gap is expressed in the existing complications when coordinating between international and national justice systems, mainly due to the presence of national political interests and a politicised national judiciary. Preference among internationals for justice approaches reliant on international human rights law ignores customary legal practices that have more meaning and are more accessible to local populations than the distant accountability of international trials. There tends to be communitarian challenges to international norms when they are in tension with local custom; these ignore traditional norms of justice and reconciliation, limiting the scope for local solutions (Newman, 2009, p. 44). There is a call to avoiding romanticising the local: customary law approach may be expressed in terms of a clash between local culture and universal human rights norms; while customary law is accessible, it may reconstitute pre-conflict structures of exploitation (Shaw and Waldorf, 2010, p.16).

Regarding the right to truth, separating between state-based truth telling processes and local approaches to truth leads to either excluding individuals or collectives from mega-narratives derived from truth commissions or to a thick reconciliation that does not become accepted or acknowledged at the national level. Narrow views on truth and reconciliation see impunity and amnesty as the price for truth telling, a trade-off known as truth versus justice dilemma. Truth telling provokes various reactions in a population and does not automatically guarantee reconciliation (Lerche, 2002). It should create a cultural space where legitimacy is agreed on, as those who cannot forgive must find other ways to deal with their anger. Truth commissions, when done under a top-down approach may offer an official version of the past that may (or not) affect people's beliefs but on their own cannot rebuild social trust and capital (Andrieu, 2010, p.542). Andrieu further explains that legitimating narratives through

truth commissions imposes a top-down authoritative account of the past, often masking the plurality of individual experiences. In cases when their mandate is weak or they lack resources to be truly independent, truth commissions end up simply becoming governmental public relations (Theissen, 2004, p.5). Truth telling in the absence of retributive justice is risky as recounting the past is traumatizing for victims and can recreate their suffering, particularly when they know that wrongdoers will be set free (Elster, 2012).

### ***Connecting thick and thin reconciliation***

Studying reconciliation initiatives requires an in-depth look at the idea of ‘holistic approaches’ to the field in practice and theory. Reconciliation requires linking top and bottom, combining different measures at various levels to support sustainable peace. If state-building requires a broad understanding that avoids excessive focus on institutions, reconciliation requires a broad understanding beyond the political system and into everyday meaning construction. Peace processes encompass much broader layers of society than just governmental institutions, explaining why post-conflict reconciliation requires combining top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding (Nordquist, 2006, p.25). It is an illusion to believe that reconciliation imposed from the top will lead to individual steps towards empathy and trust or that individual or community practices will move towards national reconciliation without a connection to the state (Huyse, 2005). Reconciliation requires a broad definition, including those who are not at the heart of the process: second-generation victims, bystanders and silent beneficiaries of past injustices (Huyse, 2005). This entails an exercise in inclusion to broaden up the reach of peacebuilding practices that can help different actors search for common ground on key terms. The catalog of available options is not a spectrum of opposing options but a series of instruments that need combination according to local needs and context (Reychler and Paffenholz, 2001).

Different authors have proposed ways for a holistic linkage between transitional justice, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, avoiding narrow, single-mechanism approaches. Reconciliation is a 'complex and multidimensional phenomenon' (Clark, 2010, p. 345) with no broad consensus on definitions or conceptualizations. This suggests that reconciliation may be perceived as a process, yet one channeled by different means: a theological lens, political concepts, or psychological aspects (Clark, 2010). 'Holistic' approaches require recognizing intrinsic links between peacebuilding and reconciliation: one dealing broadly with order and stability after the conflict, the other with deep societal wounds that open up after traumatic events (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013). It means connecting post-war security, institution-building and strengthening rule of law with the need for dealing with animosities and wounds that bring new forms of violence. Peacebuilding requires the building of a just society, which includes reparative justice, restoring the rule of law (through prison, police and judicial reform), rectifying human rights violations (via transitional justice mechanisms both formal and traditional) and redressing inequalities and distributive injustices underlying war (Nagy, 2008). Holistic frameworks benefit from conflict transformation, as restoring justice is measured within peacebuilding parameters, connecting 'justice' and 'peace' definitions within war-affected societies (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). Holistic transitional justice complements peacebuilding by broadening its meaning of justice. Combining reparative and restorative views that incorporate discussions about trust-building, societal solidarity and discussing the past, giving a chance for transitional justice to address socioeconomic injustices (Hronešova, 2016). Victims often may not prioritize criminal accountability or a truth commission report and are more focused on finding a job, securing food and healthcare, to which any reparation program must be tailored made, attentive to who victims are and what they need (Sriram, 2012). By avoiding reliance on individual mechanisms, transitional justice practices benefit from creating a thick web of relationships

(De Greiff, 2012). Without such connections, various risks may occur: reparations without adequate truth telling being interpreted by victims as a form of buying their acquiescence. Prosecutions without reparations have no direct benefit for victims, as they do not change the circumstances of their lives. Vetting processes need prosecutions and reparations otherwise the newly built institutions would not be trustworthy in the eyes of victims, the same goes for vetting practices without any corrective forms of justice. The challenge in a comprehensive transitional justice is covering a multiplicity of aims: accountability, truth-recovery, a reparative dimension, institutional reforms and socio-political reconciliation (Fischer, 2011, p.411). Combining legalistic and peacebuilding lens, criticises ‘peacebuilding as state-building’ in transitional justice, and its tendency to prioritize creating institutions such as criminal courts and truth commissions (Andrieu, 2010, p. 539). The commonalities in different ‘holistic’ proposals are a recognition that singular measures are incomplete and insufficient in dealing with the complexity of post-war challenges on their own. ‘Holistic approaches’ require a combination of reparative and retributive measures that explicitly addresses the particular needs and contexts of a post-war society (avoiding one-size-fits-all formulas), and to be seen as legitimate, models require a combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives that work complementary to one another, rather than as two separate spheres. These features, allow holistic understandings promoting an understanding of peacebuilding ‘rooted in and responsive to the experiential and subjective realities shaping people’s perspectives and needs, demanding a shift away from frameworks and activities established in statist approaches’ (Lederach, 1997, p. 24).

When studying reconciliation, a holistic approach to the field requires reducing the excessive influence exerted by legalistic approaches within transitional justice and how this contributes to distancing thick and thin forms of reconciliation. A departure point for such approach is accepting the imperfect context in which transitional justice measures operate, not just by the

massive violation of norms but accepting the challenges and costs embedded in the compliance of such measures (De Greiff, 2012). A holistic view of transitional justice opposes the tendency in practice (generally adopted by governments) that different mechanisms and measures can be traded off against one another. As peacebuilding needs to deal both with war elites who can act as potential spoilers of a process (and whose adversarial relationships need transformation) as well as with the victims and communities on the ground, post-conflict reconciliation requires combining bottom-up and top-down approaches (Nordquist, 2006, p.25).

Studying different meanings of reconciliation leads to identifying the power and force of ideas, frameworks, looking at how these translate into practice, and how they are supported, opposed or ignored by initiative recipients. As such, the idea of thin and thick as different forms of defining and locating reconciliation becomes a range, a spectrum that moves from top-down initiatives interested in normative compliance with human rights and accountability to bottom-up ones interested in more individual, intimate and localised practices for rebuilding relations. The differentiation between the thick and thin comes with perspectives regarding the creation of a shared future between former adversaries: in a thick (idealist) form incorporates the need for forgiveness, empathy, dialogue, truth and justice whereas a thin (realist) view settles for peaceful coexistence, some minimal level of social interaction and cooperation between former enemies (Stefanson, 2010). On the thin side, reconciliation equals a simple coexistence where former enemies comply with the law rather than destroy one another, whereas thicker understandings include processes for forgiveness, mercy, shared comprehensive views of the past and healing amongst others (Skaar, 2013).

The idea of spectrum turns the study of reconciliation into a search for common ground in key terms (truth, justice, reparations, etc.) at all levels and must be broad enough to include those who are not part of the centre of the process (second generation victims, bystanders of

human rights violations and silent beneficiaries of past injustices) (Huyse, 2005). Top-down and bottom-up need not be seen as antagonistic or unrelated; both are complementary mutually related and supporting which makes the establishment of frameworks for interaction between the two an issue of legitimacy in peacebuilding (Bloomfield, 2006, p. 25-26). What is clear is that reconciliation needs both top-down and bottom-up approaches to be effective, proceeding in both directions simultaneously: structural/political (top-down) and cultural (Bottom-up) forms of reconciliation are understood as complementary and mutually supportive (Fischer, 2016, p.25). The question underlying this recognition is whether and where bottom-up, top-down approaches converge, and how initiatives were taken at the top level relate to those undertaken at grassroots levels by civil society actors. It is clear that reconciliation, as a process rather than an end goal, can use many channels. The prioritization of objectives, mechanisms, and practice deemed effective will necessarily depend on local conditions (Komesaroff, 2016). The particular focus of this nexus is to figure out how to establish and maintain a process of communication between different understandings of reconciliation, maintaining sensitivity to local possibilities and limitations. Ultimately, the nexus recognizes reconciliation's concern with dialogue:

“it involves a sharing of meaning-generating perspectives....a stream of meaning...out of which may emerge some new understanding. (An) open dialogue occurs between discrepant discourses and meanings produced, different from the pre-existing meanings within each of them.” (Komesaroff, 2016, p.5)

Connecting reconciliation and state-building requires channels for communication that open up ways of dealing with the past, addressing issues relevant to people and building a political community around them. Peacebuilder Judith Brand mentioned this in an interview “reconciliation is knowing that we share the same values that we do not want to harm each other and this is where trust is built. This is part of this civic trust model which implies more

openness to discuss issues, admit them, question them and be open and talk about the serious issues.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Connecting state-building and reconciliation: The nexus as a framework for critical analysis**

Seeing the nexus as a framework for visualizing connections linking state-building and reconciliation processes, its main objective is determining spaces within such linkages supportive and problematic for peacebuilding. The nexus makes peacebuilding its object of analysis, observing two key components: state-building and reconciliation. Taking the Agenda for Peace’s definition, the nexus sees peacebuilding as a wide range of activities that in conjunction support sustainable peace. As Cousans, Kumar and Wermeser (2002) point out, activities encompassing peacebuilding (state-building, reconciliation, human rights, elections, etc) are not inherently equivalent to peacebuilding unless they design themselves as part of a strategy. For this reason, the nexus seeks connection, cooperation and communication between its constitutive parts.

As a critical peace research exercise, the nexus takes concerns regarding liberal peace (the problem of liberal co-option, imposition of western frameworks, lack of legitimacy and fit, the external nature of peacebuilding interventions) and uses them as indicators of whether peacebuilding is broadly or narrowly defined. This thesis recognises the need to move beyond universal blueprints for peacebuilding, incorporating an empathetic multilevel procedure that gives grassroots a voice that takes into account local community concerns above liberal (Western) goals (Thiessen, 2012). As definitions of peacebuilding (in narrow or broad terms) help determine its effectiveness (Newman, 2009), the nexus sees both the institutionalisation approach in state-building and the legalistic nature of reconciliation

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, 07-06-2016

(through the concept of retributive transitional justice) as expressions of narrow peacebuilding. It also sees the connections and opportunities between top-down and bottom-up processes (such as thin and thick reconciliation) as spaces for broader (holistic) peacebuilding.

The two components viewed by the nexus, state-building and reconciliation, are present in the U.N.'s understanding of peacebuilding, both have received significant attention and implementation by international donors, agents involved in peace work as well as civil society actors. Both are identified as requirements for sustainable peace, subject to both top-down and bottom-up approaches. As primary concepts in this research, their potential for hindering or aiding peacebuilding allows for thinking about a holistic approach, where peacebuilding activities support the restoration of legitimate political authority and the incorporation of voices from below (Newman, 2009). This entails reconciling global objectives behind peacebuilding with the local conditions for their realization (Thiessen, 2011). A holistic interpretation of peacebuilding represents an effort to characterize the context in which different measures and activities operate; this requires drawing on local knowledge and culture for sustainable peace (Nagy, 2008). Connecting top-down and bottom-up requires observing issues of local ownership, agency and legitimacy, central to peacebuilding.

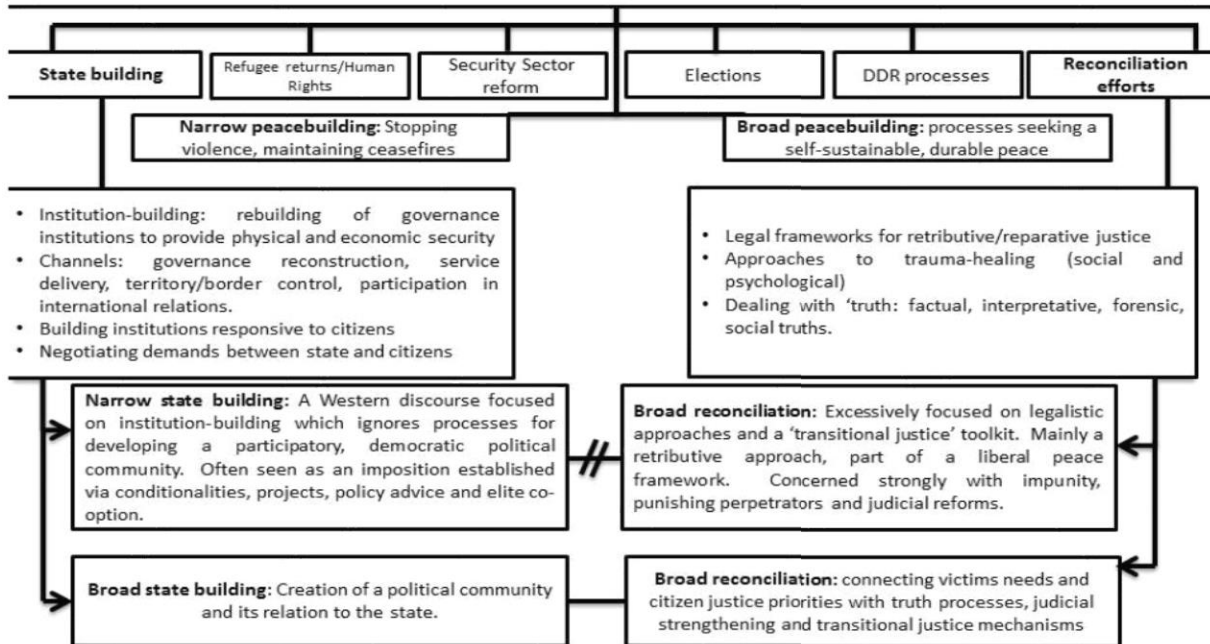
A holistic approach privileges connections between peacebuilding activities appropriate for dealing with identified needs in a post-conflict context. For Fischer (2011, 2016) holistic peacebuilding requires connecting accountability, truth recovery, reparations, institutional reform and ground reconciliation. A holistic approach entails criticising the view of peacebuilding solely as top-down state-building, and extending it towards discussions on transitional justice (Andrieu, 2004). Connecting state-building and transitional justice allows linking of political, economic, cultural, psychological and sociological dynamics that

contribute to social transformation. In transitional justice, a holistic conception of this work contributes to seeing complementation between different mechanisms, rather than the traditional legalist understanding of different measures being traded off against one another (De Greiff, 2012).

With this holistic spirit in mind, the observation of connections between state-building and reconciliation distinguishes between broad and narrow forms of both practices. Broad state-building moves beyond institutionalist approaches, towards the construction of a political community and the strengthening of state-society relations. In reconciliation, such relations are seen in the interaction between citizen needs, citizen justice priorities, truth processes, judicial reform and transitional justice measures. On the other side, narrow state-building limited to an institution-building approach, will often miss processes for participation, local ownership and agency, turning this activity into an imposed Western discourse tied to conditionalities, policy advice and elite co-option into the liberal peace. An indicator of narrow state-building is the distancing of top-down and bottom-up approaches, leading to institutions disconnected from local views of political community, in a lack of fit between institutions and political culture that is evidenced in practices of corruption, rule-breaking, and lack of accountability. In reconciliation, the limitation derives from a legalistic insistence on retributive approaches and individual transitional justice mechanisms focused solely on pursuing accountability. This turns transitional justice also into a Western discourse of distant justice, disconnected from the realities and needs of victims and citizens on the ground.

## The state building and reconciliation nexus: a framework for analysing post-conflict peacebuilding

**Post-conflict peacebuilding:** actions to identify and support structures which will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict, preventing the recurrence of violence among nations and people (U.N. agenda for Peace)



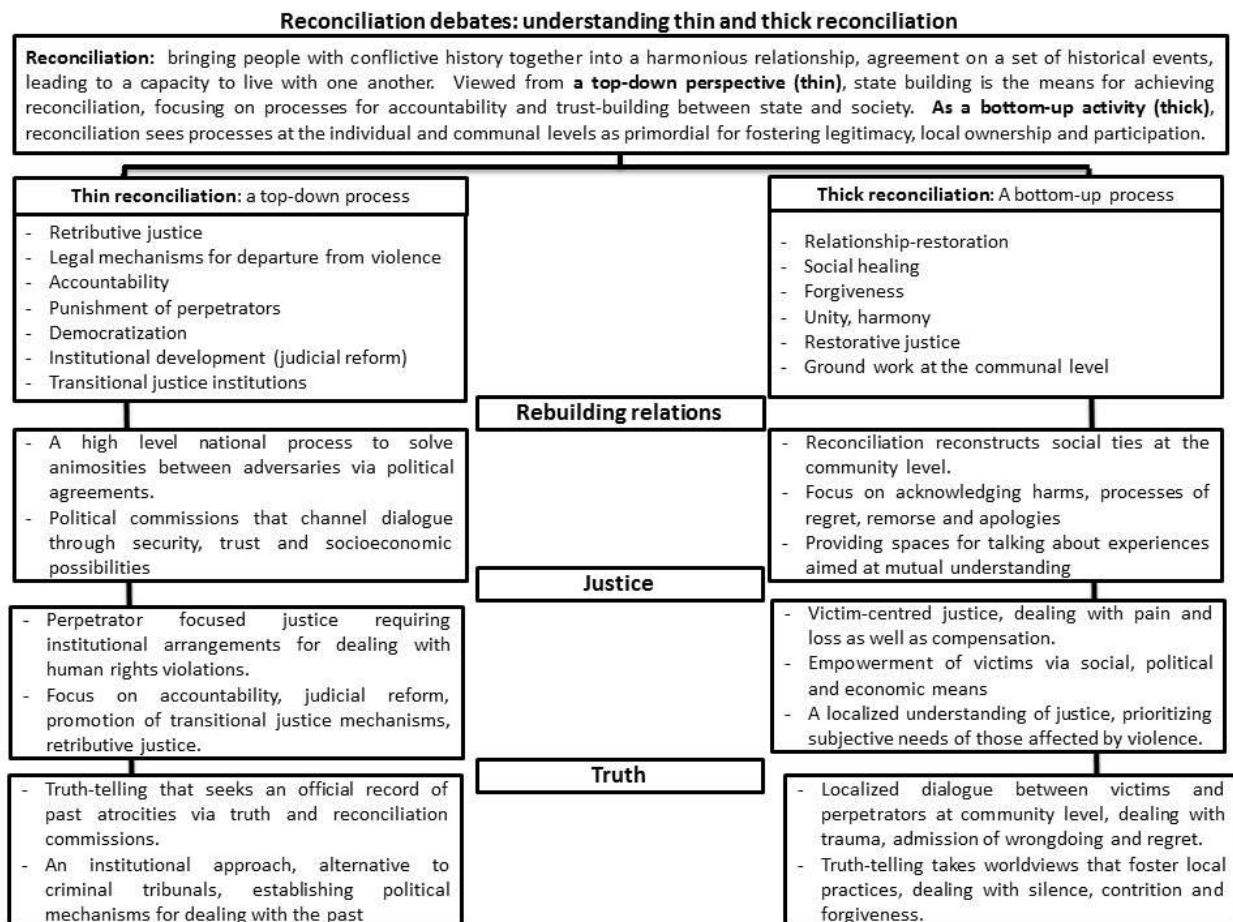
When the nexus addresses debates around meaning of reconciliation, it relies on secondary concepts (thin and thick) determining different practices determining narrow and broad peacebuilding. As reconciliation focuses on restoring broken relations, and state-building's deals with strengthening of state-society relations, the nexus uses thin and thick categories as spaces in which relations are being dealt with in peacebuilding. The process implies seeking connections and tensions between thin/top-down approaches to reconciliation that see state-building as a main channel, and thick/bottom-up approaches concerned with local voices, interests and needs where working with individuals and communities becomes priority. Thin reconciliation relies on institutional creation and reform, promotes accountability and rule of law as key aims of peacebuilding and promotes practices of transitional justice. Thick reconciliation relies on grassroots work, promotes trauma-healing, forgiveness and community-building as key goals of peacebuilding.

Both thin and thick, as practices working towards reconciliation, are analysed through different goals, serving as a test of claims awarded to reconciliation work. As a process for rebuilding relations, reconciliation becomes thin by promoting high-level political dialogue and creating commissions to rebuild relations amongst leadership between different opposing groups. It becomes thin when the scope of relations becomes localized, dealing with animosities between victims and perpetrators on the ground. If reconciliation and transitional justice contribute to positive relations, cooperation and peaceful dealing of animosities, the nexus asks how high level processes can support the needs and issues identified at the local, and community level, particularly those from victims of the conflict who may not have a place in the deliberations of high level politics.

As a form of promoting justice, thin reconciliation deals with perpetrators and punishment, creating a record against impunity and seeking state-building practices where institutions effectively address past atrocities. In its thick version, reconciliation centres its attention on victim needs, often adopting a reparative, socioeconomic and rehabilitative approach that requires understanding local needs and interests regarding justice. Here, if the claim is that reconciliation seeks to give a sense of justice that enables trust into an emerging post-conflict regime, the nexus asks about interactions between perpetrator and victim centred forms of justice, and between retributive, reparative and socioeconomic justice.

On the issue of truth, thin practices seek officialising a version of the truth than can serve as a deterrent of myths and contradictions regarding the past, promoting institution-building via establishing truth and reconciliation commissions. In its thick version, thee search for the truth seeks to deal with different accounts and versions of the past, which are often contradictory and prone to tensions, as a way of bringing in forgiveness, acknowledgment, regret and victim recognition. If the claim is that dealing with the past and promoting truth telling helps reconcile victims and perpetrators, then the nexus asks how peacebuilding deals

with dilemmas inherent in facing different forms of truth; those from legalistic, forensic and scientific processes contributing to an official ‘accurate’ truth, and those socially contracted, grounded in the experiences of individuals and communities.



## **CHAPTER 2 - METHODS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter establishes the nexus' methodology via a social constructivist approach identifying avenues for meaning-construction, recognizing linkages and areas of convergence and divergence in 'reconciliation'. A methodological discussion is presented on what meaning-construction implies for reconciliation and how through case study research, the nexus links different reconciliation views from participants.

### **Connecting thin and thick reconciliation through meaning**

Holistically approaching peacebuilding means bridging gaps between top-down and bottom-up practices, understood as thick and thin reconciliation. As projects are determined by specific definitions of reconciliation (rebuilding relationships on the ground, establishing national agreements between conflict parties, seeking justice, doing truth-telling or fact-finding), exploring existing frameworks creating specific forms of 'reconciliation' establishes different connection points.

Exploring meanings goes beyond semantics, identifying how the concept is built, what the structures underpinning such construction are as well as the goals for those implementing it: "the success of reconciliation is closely tied to its linguistic expression and the extent to which it reflects or challenges existing social divisions" (Little, 2011, p. 85). Reconciliation is also an experience for individuals and communities, marked by encounters and emotions shaping the content and extent of reconciliation, illustrated as a day-to-day phenomenon. Studying reconciliation requires mapping out the complexities of its meaning, identifying points of clarity and consensus whilst pointing out areas requiring explanation (Christie,

Wagner and Winter, 2001), a key task for developing theories, policies, and practices for promoting peaceful societies.

Research design considers the technical and everyday language of reconciliation. Reconciliation framed by peacebuilding priorities, projects, outcomes, and indicators looks at transitional justice operationalized into top-down or bottom-up projects, identifying different forms of implementation. A problem faced by transitional justice, perceived as a channel for achieving reconciliation, is that the term ends up narrowly defined, its scope specifically shaped (retributive justice) and intertwined with possible narrow formulas (institution-building). Transitional justice initiatives aimed at establishing a national narrative and creating new national mythologies are often criticised for failing to affect local dynamics of conflict and the meaning for people on the ground (Andrieu, 2010, p.541). Trials may end up being effective in countering impunity but insufficient in promoting reconciliation or establishing an inclusive political community. Narrow definitions can make claims on truth or justice based on different meanings (retributive, reparative, rehabilitative, socioeconomic, etc.) potentially generating tensions, exacerbating conflict, undermining peacebuilding (Sriram, 2007, p. 582.). Concerns with narrow transitional justice stem from the field's legalistic origins, prioritizing a top-down process carried out through war crime tribunals with little regard to local dynamics (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013). Even though transitional justice broadened from its legalistic origins, it still promotes a focus on breaking silences, advocating for retribution. Recognizing narrow forms is vital when reconciliation is dictated externally via distant legal justice, creating a contentious and tense relationship between internationals and local victims (Garbett, 2004, p.25) Prioritizing trials to find guilty parties, combating impunity and re-establishing social order cannot overshadow processes for societal repair at the individual, family, neighbourhood and societal levels.

Everyday reconciliation experiences, and meanings created from worldviews of those experiencing it, reveal a different form. Reconciliation understood through meanings arising from individual speech acts, dependent on complex horizons combining the life-worlds of individuals entwined with the intuitive background knowledge of participants (Komesaroff, 2016). In studying reconciliation, “it is in the internal, localised experiences where key characteristics of conflict come from” (Lederach, 1997, p. 23). Experiences of trauma from adversarial pasts and everyday encounters with perceived enemies become dynamics driven by real-life experiences require peacebuilding to be “rooted in and responsive to the experiential and subjective realities shaping people’s perspective and needs...” (Lederach, 1997, p. 24). When understanding reconciliation, it is vital to recognize that the moral roots of the term imply that people will bring their own ideological bias to the subject, making individual definitions of the term a construction informed by people’s basic beliefs about the world (Hamber and Kelly, 2004). Defining reconciliation recognizes its inextricably and immanently rhetorical nature, as individuals locked in conflicts employ speech to turn historical justifications for violence towards mutual oppositions that set the stage for civil disagreement and common understanding (Doxtader, 2003, p. 268).

Emotions play an important socio-political role, influencing reconciliation. Individual feelings emerge from and are constituent of social and institutional processes binding society together, understanding emotion as derived from social context rather than individual psychological conditions (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013). Emotions help constitute the type of identity attachments binding communities together, traumatic events can pull people together, giving them a common purpose. As thoughts and values are only possible via the meaning provided by language, then political recognition sought through reconciliation needs dialogue confronting meanings and interpretations, allowing shared ways of being (Schaap, 2004). Thoughts, feelings, and values are possible only via meanings provided by

communication. Language exists between members of a community, containing shared ways of being. The value of language and communication is a social good, enjoyed in common with others, making it a base for the building of relationships.

These reconciliation sources turn the nexus into a device discovering points of convergence and divergence present in how reconciliation is operationalized and experienced in Bosnia-Herzegovina. By mapping meanings, reconciliation turns into a phenomenon, a process which entails the transformation of something (a state of mind, an event or a relationship) into something completely new (Doxtader, 2003), and a form of communication, a speech act that seeks a kind of agreement on issues (political, social, existential, ethical...) (Sobczak, 2013, p. 61). The nexus links different meanings and underlying frameworks, identifying agreement and tension (through definitions) between actors embedded in peacebuilding (international actors, civil society, and citizens). Constructing meanings through technical, theoretical or everyday language not only identifies where participants come from and how they construct meaning but also uncovers themes and ideas connecting different spheres of peacebuilding. This highlights opportunities for joint understanding or further tension in peacebuilding, relating to the concept of 'common meanings': ideas and values of identifiable actors that show their efforts to agree among themselves and avoid steps of confrontation, as the creation of common meanings implies a voluntarism based on pre-existing and informal constructions (Williams, 2003, p. 39).

### **Operationalizing the nexus: Bosnia-Herzegovina as case study**

Bosnia-Herzegovina's peacebuilding is viewed as a case study, in-depth investigation of various examples of a current social phenomenon utilizing a variety of sources of data (Jupp, 2006). Case study design permits empirical investigation of a phenomenon within its real-life context via multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 1993). Reconciliation becomes the studied social phenomenon and different approaches, forms of implementation and grounded understandings become data. Case study requires intensive field research for data gathering, requiring researchers to immerse themselves in the culture of the studied group, developing an open-ended and exploratory research process (Goel and Singh, 1996).

The nexus is developed in three moments: an exploratory visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2014, establishing interviews with international officials and NGOs. Another visit in 2015 where I worked in a peacebuilding environment, annotating experiences regarding achievements, obstacles, and dynamics of NGO-based reconciliation work. Ending in 7-month ethnographic fieldwork, developing semi-structured interviews with international organizations, NGOs, and citizens, complemented by active participation in reconciliation-orientated activities. Case study design benefits the nexus by its holistic and embedded quality for its units of analysis. For De Vause (2001) case studies consist of various components, turning research into the building up of the bigger picture made up of information gained from many levels, where the final case study tells more than what each constituent element can. The bigger picture comes from connecting different meanings and backgrounds (trauma-healing, legalistic approaches, truth telling and fact-finding, cooperation, relationship-building, etc.)

The nexus recognizes that reconciliation cannot be observed without tackling identity issues and narratives upon which they are built (Auerback, 2009). A narrative is a story; stories tell things that occurred or are occurring to the research subjects. Important is recognition that narratives take place over a specific time, entailing ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and political implications, often derived by metanarratives (Auerback, 2009). Narratives add to the critical spirit behind this work; reconciliation narratives often generate critiques of reconciliatory processes and greater or lesser degrees of non-reconciliation (Little, 2011). As such, the function of reconciliation narratives is not only producing accord but also opening up forms of disagreement.

This narrative component takes a social constructivist form, seeing story telling as a process intrinsic in human social activity, where stories give meaning to the activities making up social reality (Linklater, 2007). This is highly relevant to discussions regarding the misinterpretation and complicated translation of ‘reconciliation’ in the Bosnian languages, addressed empirically in chapter five.

This narrative consideration forces the nexus to collect life stories of citizens who lived the process of post-war reconstruction. Interviews ask about what happened in the lives of citizens from different backgrounds and ethnicities during the period of 1995-2016. Questions seek information about their education and work history, views on the political and socioeconomic changes occurring in that period, the way citizens experienced and understood the term ‘reconciliation’ in their lives and the challenges and obstacles in their personal development as a consequence of post-war reconstruction activities.

## **Data collection**

Two issues require attention in the nexus' methodological framing: accessing research subjects and personal engagement with Bosnia-Herzegovina. The method utilized was critical ethnography within peacebuilding, requiring experiencing 'reconciliation' to identify contradictions emerging from different meanings and practices. A duality of roles was adopted: as a researcher seeking participant interviews, and as agent exploring reconciliation initiatives.

Regarding the researcher role, accessing participants started by contacting via e-mail international and local organizations in BiH who stated 'reconciliation' as an approach to their work. This study of mission/vision and values of different organizations helped visualize different angles and meanings on reconciliation, (legal practices, trauma-healing, peace education, community-building) getting me involved in forums, activities, workshops extending my participants' network. Additionally, I was involved in everyday activities and spaces encountering citizens: I enrolled into a language center to learn local languages, meeting local students who later became interviewees, contributing to snowball sampling with their friends and family. I participated in university and student-based activities (street demonstrations, memorial practices and student social activities) connecting with young people in the country, extending further my contacts within participants with little recollection of the war, providing insights into growing up in postwar BiH. Sampling also meant I travelled throughout the country, establishing a balance between urban and rural participants, seeking equal distribution between participants in Republika Srpska, Brčko District and the Federation, and between the three main constitutive identities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As a peacebuilding actor, activities led me to research participants working in reconciliation (snowball sampling), and obtaining documents and reports evaluating and analyzing projects. This allowed me to further contact and work with different organizations giving me access to their staff, documents and activities. This allowed contact with experienced individuals (local and international) promoting different ways of doing reconciliation, helping my identification of different frameworks of practice. Fieldwork allowed me to join different NGOs in their work: a youth-orientated organization working on historical memory, a teacher-training center for peace education, an initiative for teaching mediation to high school students, various feminist and gender-focused organizations as well as organizations working with missing people and dealing with the past.

This duality demanded self-reflexivity, making me recognize my position of power within the research and the type of connections made with participants. It also made me inquire about how I was being perceived (as a researcher from a western university, as a potential peacebuilder in the country, and as a Colombian, an identity that helped me gain sympathy and interest of citizens for the narrative side of the nexus). My concern with duality reflects Madison's (2005) insistence on the role of the critical ethnographer as someone who engages in self-reflection in order not to resist domestication, making accessible voices and experiences of subjects whose stories would be otherwise out of reach.

Another issue is translation and interpretation. Throughout the research process, I sought to learn local languages (Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian), but considering the nature of the research and addressed themes, it was challenging to acquire such a high level of language proficiency to interview participants in their native tongue.<sup>2</sup> My language skills allowed me to identify themes, using language in day-to-day needs but not to the point of having fluid conversations

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<sup>2</sup> It is politically contentious to state that there is one 'Bosnian language' in BiH. People usually refer to the 'Bosnian languages' referring to the three official and national languages of Bosnia: Bosniak, Serbian and Croat (Kamusella, Nomachi and Gibson, 2016, p. 545)

on state-building and reconciliation. For collecting data regarding the ‘working concept’ of reconciliation, translation was not needed, as international organizations and NGOs use English as a working language, permitting access without a problem. The linguistic barrier proved at times to be a difficulty, solved through translators. In this sense, I adhere to Temple and Young’s (2004) view: social constructivism as an epistemology demands that translators form part of the process of knowledge production, acknowledging the power relationships within research. This means identifying translators as decision-makers in research on the cultural meanings carried by language. During interviews requiring translation, I was able to find people who were bilingual and at some level involved in activities mentioned in the interview. It was important to me that they could understand the context of research and engage in a dialogue about the interviewing/translation process in itself. When requiring translation, I established an initial dialogue with translators not only explaining the background and logic of the research but also in making them comfortable with the topics part of the interview discussions (not only for the highly sensitive issues that could emerge but also from their ethnic positionality). In contexts needing translation, translator and interviewee knew one another as colleagues or through a working connection between them (in one interview a beneficiary of a particular initiative served as translator). This facilitated a common understanding between interviewer-translator-interviewee of relevant terms, contexts and ideas for the interview process.

Organization of semi-structured interviews in this research ended with ninety-one interview moments: five focus groups and eighty-six individual interviews. One hundred and four interviewees were approached: seven academics and researchers, thirty-seven citizens, forty-three NGO representatives and seventeen international organizations’ representatives. Twelve individuals were treated anonymously as requested.

Data was Categorized between information from academic experts in BiH confirming ideas regarding theory and facts about the post-war history), information from international organizations (donors, international NGOs and agencies linked to the peacebuilding process), civil society organizations (identifying themselves as local or locally constituted) and citizens<sup>3</sup>.

### **Data analysis**

Considering the two sets of data collection, (the implementation of reconciliation projects and the collection of ‘life stories’), this research differentiated between technical language and everyday language in interviews. This can be appreciated in the difference between chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, one concentrated on the peacebuilding language that turns reconciliation into a series of thin/thick projects defining reconciliation and the other presenting a more natural, everyday language explaining how individuals experience reconciliation. Separating both two chapters derived from different terminology and expressions in both data sets: one relied on scientific/professional terms such as trauma-healing, reparative or retributive reconciliation, pedagogical and practical reconciliation amongst others. The other was linked to emotions, talking about communication, neighbour relations and even resistance. Despite differences, some connections are appreciated, appearing as a translation from peacebuilding technicalities to everyday expressions: for example, both chapters have education and youth engagement as common denominator.

As the nexus was structured towards identifying areas of convergence and divergence in different interpretations, it bridged the two data sets through thematic analysis, connecting them through one single form of analysis, rather than mixing thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis, as a method for identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning in a dataset,

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex I, interview information, pages 282-285

focuses on illustrating themes important in the description of the studied phenomenon (Joffe, 2012). Thematic analysis comprises of several steps: data collection through ethnographic interviews leading to the identification of patterns in transcribed conversations. Identification of data related to the classified patterns, the establishment of sub-themes emerging from informants' stories and that put together create a comprehensive picture of a collective experience, the building of a solid argument that justifies the choice of themes and establishment of a storyline that connects different themes into statements (Aronson, 1995).

The reason for combining the two data sets into one form of analysis (thematic rather than narrative) has to do with the fact that interviews brought out many commonalities when identifying reconciliation obstacles. These themes established clear connections between peacebuilding and the everyday contributing to one of the objectives of the nexus: seeing how different approaches and views bring areas of convergence. Although thematic analysis identified similar problems in both datasets, they also showed how same problems are faced in different ways. For instance, concern with ethnopolitics is an issue shared by interviewees in both datasets. However, for internationals and NGOs this has to do with barriers to projects and their relation with political actors, whereas for citizens, this same issue is expressed as concerns with employment, social stability and barriers to personal development. In this sense, thematic analysis helped identify common problems, but in exploring themes and how they are described by the datasets, it established the divergence and impact of such differences. This emerges in discussions about legitimacy and views between dataset participants, at the end of chapter 6.

For one dataset, data collection identified the sources from where specific organizational and project-specific definitions of reconciliation come from (legalistic, psychosocial, conflict transformation, economy literature). Interviews explored the technical language that defined reconciliation into projects, formats, indicators and outcomes. These types of interviews were

based on publications created by organizations themselves, many seeking local outreach. Analysis focused on how different organizations within a specific practice of reconciliation expressed a method for doing their work, identified common challenges and portrayed a specific 'field' in peacebuilding. These interviews focused on the rationale for reconciliation projects, looking at their history (expressed in the mission, vision, and values within an organization) and identification of achievements and obstacles in the development of projects. Data reflected technical, academic and practitioner-based sources for understanding reconciliation, their trajectory as peacebuilding projects and an assessment from interviewees of what is the state of reconciliation, taking into account all previous elements.

The other dataset's interviews asked participants about memories of life after Dayton. It gathered stories dealing with ethnic identification, of experiences within education promoting or inhibiting reconciliation, of the challenges in society, the political system and the economy to reconciliation and evaluation of the most important issues and events in the eyes of interviewees affecting post-war interethnic relations. Participants were asked for their opinions of the type of organizations making part of the other part of the research, about their legitimacy, perceptions and relations between citizens, NGOs, and international organizations.

Communication between the two approaches is mediated by thematic analysis, identifying common themes emerging between the two processes, enabling an interpretative dialogue between forms of reconciliation embedded in projects and initiatives in peacebuilding and those identified as everyday experiences. This dialogue serves as the basis for establishing the connections between projects and experiences, between frameworks and memories, and between a wide array of interpretations of reconciliation dispersed in the spectrum of thick and thin. Such connections and oppositions present areas of convergence and divergence, illustrating where state-building work on transitional justice and understandings of

reconciliation encounter engagement opportunities. The nexus allows for sketching debates on reconciliation, mapping the complexities of meaning, identifying points of clarity and consensus and sketching areas that require further explanation (De la Rey, 2001, p.1). Through perceptions of locals and internationals around truth, justice, and reconciliation, peacebuilding can be observed, not as a formula but as a day-to-day reality. The nexus focuses on constructions of reconciliation by different actors and the alternative spaces this creates, avoiding divisions of top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding. It looks for common spaces between international and local and the various versions of peace emerging from these connections. This helps open up the peace research agenda, giving room to voices of dissent about dominant peace models and investigating the potential for alternative coexisting forms (Richmond, 2007).

### **Epistemology, positionality and research journey**

The study's reflects a post-positivist stance regarding social research, accepting that knowledge is cultural and adopts many forms. As qualitative research places importance on the validity of multiple meaning structures, investigation rests upon recognizing the importance of the subjective, experiential lifeworld of human beings, establishing avenues leading to the discovery of deep layers of meaning (Burns, 2000). The thesis accepts basic premises of post-positivist methodology: knowledge is subjective and value-laden, data is dependent on the relationship between researcher and researched, research should favor naturalistic research avoiding manipulating either setting or subjects or putting the data into pre-defined categories, knowledge perceived as subjective, holistic and not based on a cause and effect logic, acceptance that scientific methods are social constructs (Guthrie, 2010).

The epistemological convictions guiding this recognize constructivism's iterative, interactive, hermeneutic and open nature. By accepting that knowledge is subjective and that a single

reality is replaced by intersubjective competing worlds of knowledge, the investigation treats worldviews as mediated by different social identities that characterize society and reflect different levels of social power (Holland and Campbell, 2005). This admits that both researcher and researched are actively engaged in the construction of their world, accepting that there will always be different ways of seeing things and a range of interpretations can always be made (Harper and Marcus, 2003).

This research seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, taking as a departure point the establishment of the Dayton Peace Agreement as an indicator of a post-conflict stage. As a researcher this demanded active participation in the life of those being researched, trying to know those involved in the process of peacebuilding, their values, beliefs and emotions (Nachmias, Nachmias and DeWaard, 2014). Central is recognition of field research as main strategy for data collection, understood as the study of people acting in the natural courses of their daily lives. Fieldwork is expressed engagement as a researcher in critical ethnographic practice, studying Bosnia-Herzegovina as a natural setting for observing reconciliation, and as a practitioner in reconciliation initiatives.

Both modes demand explanation of my position as a social researcher and my interest in reconciliation. My research is framed by academic interests in conflict resolution and peace studies within International Relations, particularly with the study of post-conflict settings and how different activities are deployed to support sustainable peace, avoiding re-emergence of violence. My training in political science, international relations and conflict, security, and development studies have led to an academic interest in peace processes and interventions, taking my research into the Western Balkans, particularly Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This interest came out of academic and personal curiosity surrounding processes for ending violent conflict and the emerging challenges after signing a peace agreement. This is marked by the fact that I was raised and professionally trained in Colombia during times of intense

armed conflict, putting me at centre-stage of complex human rights dilemmas regarding truth, justice, reconciliation, rehabilitation and the possibilities for action in a prospective post-conflict scenario. My area interest in the Western Balkans began as curiosity with how transitional justice was developed as a field of practice and academic concept, constantly encountering Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina as case studies on transitional justice's complexities. The personal and academic observation of post-conflict peacebuilding in this region of the world has led to asking questions about barriers emerging within international intervention, state-building and peacebuilding in divided societies emerging from war, placing me as an academic observer of Balkan experiences.

More profound are my personal reasons. As Colombian, I was exposed to wartime realities and experiences, marking my curiosity and interest in life during war and the difficulties societies face when enduring armed conflict. I lived the 1980's drug wars, the 1990's move from cartels to escalating guerrilla warfare, and various (failed) attempts at peace negotiations in the 1990's and early 2000's. While writing this thesis, Colombia achieved a landmark in its violent history: the signing of a peace agreement between FARC-EP and the Colombian government, an issue that constantly made me contrast the Balkans experience with the realities of the Colombian conflict. Witnessing degradation of conflict in Colombia, sparked my interest in political science and international relations, influencing my decision to work and study in the field of human rights and conflict resolution.

Additionally, I am a victim of violent conflict, particularly affected by the phenomenon of forced disappearance in the midst of Colombia's war on drugs. My father was forcefully taken from me when I was sixteen years old, a turning point in my life that ignited a curiosity with the dynamics of violence in armed conflicts and with the limits and possibilities that victims have within peacebuilding. These difficult circumstances have turned this academic project into a personal one, an exercise in personal trauma-healing, seeking to connect and

understand how people deal with human rights violations, injustice and how they move forward amidst painful and challenging circumstances. I personally wanted to meet people facing the difficulties of the Bosnian war and its atrocities, how they coped with them, their resilience and the processes to move away from victimhood and into empowerment (as active citizens, survivors, and story-tellers). To gain personal learnings from this process, I immersed into civil society work, participating in victim-centred events, meeting many individuals whose stories, trajectories and experiences contributed to this research. The choice for taking an ethnographic stance derives from the need to personally experience the dilemmas, advantages and challenges of reconciliation work in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I have no ties to the country other than personal and professional interests in its study, yet with an underlying need to establish connections with survivors and those devoted to supporting reconciliation.

These motivations guided my ethnographic fieldwork, leading me to accompanying NGOs devoted to truth telling, trauma-healing, and reconciliation-promoting work. Also, connecting with citizens, as active listener of their narratives, concerns, and expectations, learning from their experiences to make sense of their traumas and needs. The journey began in 2014, with a one-month field visit, meeting and interviewing NGO and International organization representatives, asking about their work, what they found challenging and getting a feel for the field of transitional justice and reconciliation. This served as an initial guide for doing field research in Bosnia-Herzegovina, creating categories regarding transitional justice work: working with retributive justice processes, working in political and social advocacy for transitional justice and various approaches to memorialization and remembrance. What was clear from this visit was the need to participate in reconciliation-focused work, to understand the challenges and aims of organizations dedicated to projects that sought the rebuilding of relations within society.

The second visit in 2015 led to an internship with the Centar Za Izgradnju Mira (Center for Peacebuilding) in Sanski Most, Northwest BiH. Through this I was able to experience the work of an NGO dedicated to reconciliation, talk to local citizens regarding their experiences with the organization, listen to their stories and participate in the organization of what I consider to be community-building work. I helped organize an IFTAR dinner for the Bosniak community, supported the establishment of youth art projects geared towards building work skills for students in the area and giving workshops for my colleagues in areas that required training. This experience helped gain insight into the rural life of Bosnia-Herzegovina, about the concerns that this community had (youth unemployment, the distancing relations with nearby Bosnian-Serb towns) and the everyday problems of NGO work (fundraising concerns, the distance between rural, more local organizations and the more professional. urban ones). By connecting with local citizens, this visit helped me understand the importance that ‘life stories’ played in establishing the nexus.

The third experience, forming the core ethnographic experience for this study, is the seven-month fieldwork conducted between April and November 2016. Its focus was to conduct semi-structured interviews with international organizations and NGOs dedicated to ‘reconciliation’ and ‘peacebuilding’ as stated in their mission, vision, and objectives. It also required collecting reconciliation stories from citizens living in The Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska, and the Brčko District, seeking knowledge of what life was like after the war, the advances and challenges in peacebuilding and what they thought were the main obstacles to achieving reconciliation in the country. And to continue my experiential journey into transitional justice, actively participating in the work of international organizations and NGOs.

This last aim supported my snowball sampling as I was actively participating in talks, workshops, and seminars with practitioners in the field: a six-month internship with the Post-Conflict Research Center, doing publications and field visits in support of activities for remembrance and memorialization. Here I participated in visits to organizations such as the OSCE, the ICTY-Outreach office, the BiH State Court and the International Commission for Missing Persons. I worked as a mediation trainer for the Nansen Dialogue Center Prijedor as well as the United World College (Mostar), delivering workshops for teachers and students engaged in peace education. I participated in memorialization visits by the Association for Social Research and Communications, meeting victims and organizing memorial trips to areas known for genocide denial. I supported the International Commission for Missing Persons in the commemoration of the day of the Missing, meeting citizens and raising awareness of the problems of enforced disappearances in BiH. I again supported the Center for Peacebuilding Sanski Most in their 2016 Iftar dinner, participating in community-building. I worked as a local reporter for the Sarajevo film festival, focusing exclusively on the festival's 'Dealing with the Past' segment, often interviewing film-makers devoted to transitional justice issues. Finally, I participated in the OSCE's youth training in security and defense policy, where I had the chance to visit and talk to staff connected to the Defense sector in Republika Srpska as well as join students from various universities in their training on combating extremism and terrorism in BiH.

Highlighted from this journey is an attempt at comprehensive engagement with reconciliation practices. The fieldwork focus was to participate in events encompassing different ways of engaging with truth, justice and reconciliation processes in order to experience the frameworks, processes, and outcomes of projects surrounding reconciliation. Such a wide array of experiences allowed me to meet people from different backgrounds, ages, and experiences, contributing particularly to the search for life stories of reconciliation.

Reflecting back, adopting the role of practitioner in the field of reconciliation as part of the ethnography, permitted a useful approach to different forms of non-academic literature, (policy/think-tank/reflective accounts), of participants and of dynamics that helped visualize different modes of doing reconciliation. Although this duality of roles (researcher/practitioner) forced a rethinking of positionality and participant access, it strengthened this process by allowing an understanding of different ways of meaning construction, even those diametrically opposed to my academic framing. This was not without problems, when engaging in memorialization practices I often faced local resistance, questioning my presence as an international in Bosnia-Herzegovina, leading to concerns about Bosnia's research fatigue and whether there was anything innovative from my engagement.

Although provisions were established for dealing with the language barrier, this research could have benefitted more from further exploration of different towns and more remote areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The design and planning of this research initially focused on balancing and maximizing representation of all three constitutive people in BiH, but this proved to be not as important as a better balancing between urban and rural settings. With this in mind, the research did attempt at contacting participants in remote areas with some degree of success, yet as I adopted the role of an international practitioner as part of the research this took me mostly to urban centers and small cities rather than the more remote areas of the country. This second role led to accessing more educated, liberal-minded citizens whose voice became prominent in the analysis and findings of this thesis.

# **CHAPTER 3 - STATE-BUILDING AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT**

## **Introduction**

The following chapter describes post-conflict peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), critically commenting on reconciliation barriers emerging in such process. Starting with state-building, this section looks at how state architecture established in the Dayton Agreement affected the development of a political system, supporting ethnically dividing structures, strengthening ethno-politics that contested liberal peace formulations and the legitimacy of international state-builders. It follows with an account of transitional justice, focusing on the role of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as a guiding international model, the externally driven insistence on retributive justice and the various obstacles arising from the development of judiciary institutions and attempts at non-judicial initiatives, processes strongly influenced by international assistance.

## **State-building: From Dayton's consociationalism to the EU member-state-building**

By describing BiH's state-building, this section analyses the impact of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) on the political reconstruction process in BiH: its reliance on an external consociational framework for state-building and the creation of a complex, multi-layered political system that permitted the continuation of ethno-political practices, corruption and stagnation. Discussing the institutionalisation focus adopted by international intervention permits critical analysis of Bosnia's semi-protectorate status and the problems derived from the strengthening of the powers of the international community as well as the contestation of intervention by political elites in the country. It ends looking at the change in approaches

from the OHR ‘imposition’ approach to the EU ‘local ownership’ approach, discussing problems derived from a technical and depoliticised form of state-building.

***Dayton: ending war, complicating peace?***

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) ended the Bosnian war, inscribing the components of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s (BiH) state-building. Amongst Dayton’s achievements, it is worth highlighting putting stop to the bloodshed, creating conditions for life to return to normality, the establishment of several sets of municipal and national elections and integration of BiH’s three armies into a single multi-ethnic Bosnian army (McMahon and Western, 2009, p.72). Dayton provided a high level of internal security, facilitating a widespread return of refugees and displaced persons. Dayton was negotiated by nationalist parties involved in the war, securing power as ethnically based political parties (Chandler, 2006a). The war gave rise to power structures within each ethnic group, whose interests opposed to normalizing the political life of the state (Cox, 2001). During Dayton’s talks, three nationalist parties represented these power structures: the Party for Democratic Action (SDA), the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), all insisting on regional autonomy. Parties with formal ownership to Dayton had little to say over it; the DPA was externally managed driven by an external agenda, affecting the unfolding state-building process (Chandler, 2006b).

Dayton’s wording describes a complex state architecture through a consociational formula, dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic structures. Consociationalism, a model for managing conflict in divided societies, focuses on two stipulations: power-sharing and territorial governance (Yakinthou and Wolff, 2012). These complement each other by giving potentially separatist groups a stake in politics at the centre, lowering the contentiousness of politics by allowing groups to govern themselves, particularly in policy areas they consider

essential for group self-preservation (Yakinthou and Wolff, 2012, p. 4). This approach prioritizes identities emerging as predominant from democratic elections. An experiment in transformative conflict settlements, Dayton assumed that established institutional arrangements would enable conflicting parties to transform conflict via peaceful, political and democratic means (Weller and Wolff, 2006). Consociationalism relies on institutional prescriptions for divided societies focused on collective rather than individual rights (Rose, 2006). Its objective was establishing broad agreement across ethnic groups, differing from the majoritarian mechanisms typical of non-consociational democracies. Dayton's Annex 4 (the Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina) established a federal state comprised of two entities: Republika Srpska (RS) mostly Serb-inhabited, and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (FBiH) predominantly inhabited by Bosniak and Croat populations. This second entity was further divided into ten cantons, eight of which are dominated by one of two ethnic groups (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2006). The constitution established a tripartite power-sharing system at the central state, ensuring inclusion of all ethnonational groups in the political system, preventing decisions being made by just one group. Veto mechanisms were established against decisions believed to put at risk any of the three main constituent group's national interests, (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2006). Decentralization and power-sharing, main principles of consociationalism, allowed each entity to have its own government, police force and educational system; within the federation, power is further decentralized to ensure that Muslims and Croats are able to rule themselves. To prevent one group from dominating, quotas were adopted in national institutions (McMahon and Western, 2009, p.73). Dayton's consociational formula (inclusive of ethnic veto points and ethnic, territorial and institutional divisions) emerges from a primordial conflict understanding by international actors where three ethnic groups pursued war, an interpretation that turned ethnic identity in BiH into contingent and variable (Pinkerton, 2016). This prioritized ethnic identities, institutionalizing

ethnic divisions into BiH state structures, leading to ethnopolitical parties maintaining dominance in the system despite lack of accountability and failures in governance. Dayton established a

“System that functions on the principle of allocation of (unequal power) according to ethnicity and thus administrative decisions. What was supposed to be decentralization of the state, ended up creating further political and social cleavages between the former warring sides” (Čustović, 2014, p. 1.)

Dayton is criticised for its external nature, inscribing ethnic divisions, impeding reconciliation and establishing excessively bureaucratic structures. As the government is ethnically divided, the convergence of similar policies between parties is severely restrained; absence of political will from all sides to work together led to perpetual stagnation of a slow decision-making process (Parent, 2016, p. 515). Dayton’s structure breeds corruption, weakens political moderates and stunts economic growth: every public office is allotted according to an ethnic quota, a spoils system that has permitted extensive patronage networks, corruption, and inefficiencies (McMahon and Western, 2009, p.73). Governance institutions appeared unable to function from the start; elite cooperation took a long-time and excessive executive representation of the three main constituent ethnic groups led to an ineffective and excessive state apparatus (Weller and Wolff, 2006). Consociationalism enables political dysfunction, helping cement the war’s ethno-nationalist chaos, its tendency towards social exclusion and exclusive ethno-nationalist power sharing. Ethnic self-rule was emphasized at the expense of shared rule in post-war BiH, questioning the viability of a common state for several years (Recchia, 2007, p. 8).

This precipitated BiH’s ongoing socioeconomic crisis, limiting avenues for citizens to exercise political agency. Political clientelism, created through party affiliation, is often the

only employment avenue, and as membership is paid through ethnonational identification, ethnopolitics became the only politics in post-Dayton BiH (Majstorović et al, 2015, p. 662). This was reflected in the views of some of my interviewees. Practitioner Djana Pegić blames Dayton for creating barriers for projects as a result from excessive layers of government in the country:

“We are divided into so many cantons and this is a nightmare. We are doing this project with UNICEF in the Federation and RS but it is so exhausting to do paperwork, organizing talks and meetings with local authorities. Cantons are like little countries and have nothing to do with the Federation: they are completely independent. You have to do everything as if it was a different country.”<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, youth worker Maja Kapo expresses:

“This is the problem, so much paperwork, so much administration. The problem with the state organization is that everyone is trying to cheat on you and the only way to stop them is to threaten them with lawsuits, only then they will stop. It works the same with issues of pensions and health, suing definitely works here.”<sup>5</sup>

Hronešova (2016) comments that a common reparative strategy that victims in BiH have chosen is litigation before domestic, regional and international courts, something more effective than social mobilization. In BiH, the state system created a deadlock for future transformation of an ethnically divided public sphere, where change is dependent on the agreement of all constituent nations of the country, something that is highly unlikely (Kappler, 2013, p. 12.) Power sharing in ethnically representative institutions has become dysfunctional: negative consensus has prevailed, Parliament and Presidency constantly blocked along ethnic lines, impeding decision-making (Marko, 2006). Ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> Interview, 13-10-2016

<sup>5</sup> Interview 28-07-2016

homogenisation became the rule, affecting minority returns, the establishment of a post-war education system and the composition of executive and judiciary branches within the entities: no “Non-Serbs” were represented in government, judiciary and police in RS during the early years and no Serbs were incorporated into Federation structures (Marko, 2006).

Although Dayton hinted at a state-building process that could give space to a multi-ethnic, cooperative Bosnia, its state dispositions enabled ethnically based political agendas contrary to the agreement. The Bosniak state-building priority was establishing a strong central state, being the largest ethnic group in BiH, Bosnian-Serb agendas moved from complete rejection of Dayton to fierce protection of Republika Srpska (RS) as a Serb entity. Bosnian-Croat agendas depended on geographical location: Croats living in multi-ethnic areas of Central Bosnia seemed to be moderate, supportive of the Federation whereas those living in more ethnically homogeneous areas tended to denounce the inexistence of a Croat entity as Dayton’s failure (Keranen, 2013). After the war, ethnically homogeneous territories (cantons and entities) had greater legitimacy and power than the state, as excessive divisions of competencies between various layers of government and the dominance of entities reduced incentives for committing to the state (Bieber, 2006, p.21). Central state institutions became a threat to authorities in RS but vital to Bosniak interests in the Federation. Linking veto rights with decentralization made BiH’s institutional setup problematic: power-sharing was assumed on the premise that all communities consent to major decisions by the State, but was impeded by constant threat and use of veto powers, pre-empting decisions from being taken, blocking the work of national-level institutions (Bieber, 2006, p.21). Political power in Bosnia was not dependent on formal constitutional authority but on the control of political parties, directed against (ethnic) political opponents (Cox, 2001). Main political actors had no incentives to submit to institutions they could not control, localising political authority and

weakening central structures. Edvin Cudik, a Sarajevan practitioner facing administrative harassment for his memorialization work, identified such localisation of power:

“We constantly have problems with municipalities who do not respond to us. They know who I am; I used to be a soldier. The municipality once said ‘I will not give any *chetniks* any information or anything about memorials; you look Serb like the *chetniks*. In other cases they referred to us as *vlah*, this is a Turkish name which is offensive and it refers to Serbs in Ottoman time, it is a very insulting term for us.”<sup>6</sup>

What allowed such fragile state to survive was the NATO presence in BiH, providing effective security (Weller and Wolff, 2006). Although legislative advances occurred during early years (custom agreements, security services, institutional reforms) they were less example of local communities taking ownership over Dayton and more a result from international intervention (Weller and Wolff, 2006).

### ***International institution-building in Bosnia-Herzegovina***

Another Dayton legacy was the structuring of an international peacebuilding operation for post-conflict reconstruction, focused primarily on state institution-building. Dayton led to parties agreeing to a massive state-building project including the OSCE (electoral programs), the UNHCR (minority and refugee returns programs), an International Police Task Force led by the U.N. and the creation of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to coordinate activities and organizations involved in the civilian implementation of the agreement (Sloan, 1998). Not only was the international community involved in technical tasks (demining, elections or demobilization processes) but also in creating democratic institutions, promoting human rights, refugee returns and capturing war criminals (Keranen, 2013). International

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<sup>6</sup> Interview 27-05-2016

agencies involved in BiH state-building, despite having different approaches, contributed to the view of Bosnia remaining as a single state and its pre-war multi-ethnic character was to be restored. This was projected via the idea of the DPA's irreversibility, directing the involvement of the OHR and the international community as a whole (Keranen, 2013). Therefore, all local actions deemed challenging of international state-building were interpreted as Anti-Dayton in nature, issues to tackle in BiH.

Defence of a democratic, market-orientated (liberal) peace relied on institution-building, assuming that institutional engineering by external actors could build western state models and norms. This Bosnian experiment meant moving from a point of conflict (the war experience) towards an envisioned future of security, political stability and socioeconomic prosperity to be reached (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2006). Moving from one end to the other meant focusing on institutional evolution as the core task of intervention. This was an externally induced process, where some institutions from the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina were domesticated and located in the Federation or the central state (Bieber, 2006, p.18). Right from the start, ethnic state-building agendas took hold in BiH: The Bosniak Party of Democratic Action dominated the central state administration whereas Bosnian-Croat and Bosnian-Serb nationalist parties minimally invested in the Bosnian state, keeping entities and cantons strong.

The lack of support and reliance on ethnopolitics by nationalist political leadership led to prolonging international supervision of the OHR, turning Bosnia into an informal international trusteeship. Extension of transitional international administration began after 1997 elections resulted in the triumph of nationalist-orientated political parties (Chandler, 2006a). The justification was strict reliance of the international community on the wording of Dayton, which had become rigid in terms of self-rule but highly flexible in relation to the powers of the international community. Flexibility was evidenced in the extension of OHR

power: in 1996, the Florence ministerial meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) discussed the extension of international involvement for a two-year stabilization period. The Paris meeting of the PIC in late 96 ratified this decision, demanding the OHR to create two yearly action plans, reinforcing its powers to make recommendations to state and entity authorities in cases of dispute. Then, during the 1997 Bonn summit the OHR was increasingly fortified: the establishment of the OHR's Bonn Powers meant that the High Representative was able to impose legislation that could go against the wishes of elected bodies, allowing the OHR to dismiss elected representatives and government officials deemed as obstructing the Dayton agreement (Chandler, 2006c).

The Bonn powers became a landmark in OHR strengthening and contestation against international presence (mainly the OHR) in the country. They appeared as the logical effect of the merger between conflict management and economic reform as well as the growth of international political discourses about 'sovereignty as responsibility' seeking a legal political orientation for an increasingly interventionist climate (Sabaratnam, 2011, p.9). Introducing Bonn powers shifted the equation of international presence, favoring civilian efforts, bringing the country closer to a protectorate status (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.12). These powers sought a weakening of ethno-nationalist elites by intervening agencies, leading to the dismantling of illegal financing channels, reform of local military and police and advancement in structural reforms in public administration and judiciaries (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2006). Enforcing Bonn powers made local politicians unaccountable, withdrawing from any responsibility to their constituencies, leading to opportunistic stances promoting nationalist ideals that spoke to their supporters (Dobbins et. al, 2008). The OHR's gradual evolution into a protectorate led to higher contestation from leadership in Republika Srpska (Cox, 2001).

The OHR began imposing laws on media and legislature reform, property rights and implementation of a common currency, inhibiting local ownership of institutions, having distorted effects in the political development of BiH. A human rights representative illustrates this:

“...we had the OHR with the power to implement every law, its powers as a protectorate, one that was never officially recognized here, nobody called it as such. Having a protectorate meant having a plan and presenting results, but they were in power to do as they wanted but at the same time they do not want any responsibility acceptance.”<sup>7</sup>

As the international community intensified intervention, this triggered fears among Bosnian-Serbs and Bosnian Croats that peace implementation would strengthen the capacity of Bosniaks to impose their will on the rest of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Fischer, 2016, p.5), leading nationalist forces in the two communities to constantly challenge the foundations of the Bosnian state.

### ***EU power transfer: a new (problematic) era in state-building***

The extension of OHR's mandate and the establishment of the Bonn powers created a conflict between international interveners and local political elites, ushering in an era of changes towards an “EU-member-state-building” approach favoring “local ownership”, marking a difference from the more imposition-based OHR approach. This new phase saw a dramatic reduction in international involvement, a diminished role for the OHR in Bosnian politics with the idea that international influence should be exercised through the more indirect EU accession process (Majstorović et al, 2015, p. 664). This period saw an increase in power of ethno-nationalist parties and sharpening of rhetoric designed to keep the population divided

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<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, interviewed on 23-07-2016

and fearful of ethnic others. Two events illustrate the backlash and distancing between internationals and local elites, particularly in RS: The OHR dismissal of hard-line RS President Nikola Poplasen in 1999 and the establishment in 2000 of Brčko as a special district in Bosnia managed by the international administration and independent from Dayton's entities. Both events led to disapproval by the government of RS and its constituencies of the role of the OHR (Keranen, 2013). Poplasen's dismissal was denounced unconstitutional by the RS National Assembly whereas the decision to turn Brčko into an internationally supervised district was received with disillusionment by Bosnian-Serb leaders who had worked with the international community in introducing multi-ethnic policing and local administration. This tension reached new levels when the OHR linked police reform with the process of EU integration, which was accompanied by processes for decentralizing the state as a way of disciplining Bosnian-Serb leadership. The outcome was delayed agreement in police reform due to boycotts and mass demonstrations in Banja Luka and the rest of RS against OHR power, marking the beginning of the decline of OHR authority. Sretčko Latal, a well-known civil society practitioner, explained:

“The point of mistake was the demand for police reform affecting Serbs and Croats. At that time, after some successful reforms, the next big thing was police reform. The OHR through Ashdown persuaded the EU to put police reform as conditionality for accession. At this point, the Serbs said no, it was a challenge. They were already engaging with the Srebrenica Commission [recognizing genocide victims] so the police reform was seen as too much, ‘this is not a part of Dayton’ they insisted. It is at this point where we started losing the Serbs.”<sup>8</sup>

Gradual handover of power from the OHR to the European Union (EU) began in 1999, later formalized in 2002. This process was characterized by EU distancing from using

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<sup>8</sup> Interview, 27-04-2016

administrative powers by the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) who would later become head of the OHR, and a shift to informal mechanisms for Europeanisation of the Bosnian institutional framework (Chandler, 2006b). It is visible in the EU's own assessment, their desire to avoid 'imposition', moving towards 'local ownership':

'EU conditionality has begun to facilitate a relatively smooth transition beyond international trusteeship in BiH, once the HR/EUSR started to communicate it assertively and it was clearly linked to the perspective of EU membership. The recent shift towards more effective domestic decision-making thanks to the 'pull factor' of European integration has made it possible to progressively phase out the OHR's controversial 'Bonn powers'... EU peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina [sees] effectiveness as a tool for fostering viable public institutions in BiH and for providing assistance in ways that develop rather than undermine domestic capacity' (Recchia, 2007, p.28)

Regulation mechanisms moved from the Peace Implementation Council to the EU, making Dayton subordinate to the requirements of eventual EU membership of BiH. An expansive EU role in BiH emerged since 2000: in 2003, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) was established, and in 2004, the European Union Military Force (EUFOR) was deployed, replacing NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR) (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2006). The EU mission focused on providing support for the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP) facilitating institution-building towards harmonization with EU standards towards accession. The launch of SAP in 2000 meant intensive engagement by the EU in BiH as the prospect of future membership constituted a shift in EU strategy in Bosnia, seeking to restore the EU's reputation after its failure to stop the war (Juncos, 2012).

EU-Member state-building required a more technocratic approach, focused on accession criteria and EU standards, avoiding a political stance in BiH and relying on “local ownership” as a guide for intervention. Ownership increasingly became central to the EU’s engagement in BiH. The need to close the OHR office as a condition for EU membership made clear that the EU wanted to take less responsibility for Bosnia’s political destiny and to include BiH as member-state (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.12). This was another engagement with the liberal peace, an EU attempt at becoming a homogeneous actor in Bosnian peacebuilding with an ambition to unify BiH, looking for a single interlocutor to negotiate with rather than with many representatives from different levels of governance (Kappler and Richmond, 2011). EU engagement relied on “local ownership”, a key challenge in Bosnia’s reconstruction and one that many agencies explicitly refer to (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.12). The ‘lack of ownership’ points to the need for cooperation with local authorities and population, a political process that should spill from politics to other social elements. For the EU, ownership referred to making politicians responsible for their own actions, making state-building a process of knowledge transfer from EU to local partners (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.13). Local ownership represented an expectation from international actors of local elites to accept and implement peacebuilding reforms conceptualized and controlled by outsiders (Parent, 2016, p. 514). Policies on democratization and reconciliation became EU devices for claiming legitimacy rather than imposition. Junco (2012) deems contradictory the EU’s demand for compliance and the promotion of local ownership. The EU engaged only with political elites, leaders of nationalist parties, yet genuine engagement with citizens rarely took place, as most had been done via the NGO-based civil society. EU’s interaction with local populations was rather limited, evidenced in a late acknowledgment of the need for public outreach to inform people of the work done in BiH (Kappler, 2012, p.619). There may have been a dialogue between EU and Bosnia to identify priorities in the partnership process,

but the pace of the reform was non-negotiable and the content given by the need to comply with EU criteria and its own objectives and not by local interests.

Distancing between EU and political elites is visible in the 2006 failure of the April package for BiH Constitutional Reforms. Reforming Dayton was identified as a necessary step towards EU partnership, generating divisions between local political elites. The reform package included strengthening the Council of Ministers and creation of two new state ministries (agricultural policy and science, technology and environment). Entities would retain their place in the constitution but the Council of Ministers would be allowed to negotiate, adopt and implement all measures for compliance requirements set out in the European integration process (Belloni, 2009). The aim was improving institutional capacity, state efficiency through speedier decision-making and solving the problem of exclusion from the political representation of citizens not belonging to the three constituent peoples. In April 2006, the House of Representatives rejected the constitutional package. Bosniak and Bosnian-Croat representatives insisted on eliminating the entity-based state structure and entity voting, mostly prompted by concerns over the upcoming general elections in October of that year (Juncos, 2012). International efforts failed as both EU and US suggested quick fix-solutions to the parties, mediators had little to offer in exchange for reform as well as the sense of emergency created by international actors was not enough to coerce nationalist leaders into accepting the reforms package. (Bieber, 2010). The success of EU peacebuilding is limited, evidenced in lack of progress regarding accession and a constant stalemate between the EU and its SAP partners (Kappler and Richmond, 2011). In response to Europe's peacebuilding framework, local peacebuilding agency was expressed as resistance constantly reclaiming the state from external interests, evidenced in processes like the April reforms failure. It was hoped that the EU would find a middle way to ensure the transformation of political affairs of BiH (and being less imposing than the OHR). This

approach failed as EU popularity declined as people realized that EU-sponsored changes were not significantly improving their lives, contributing to a reduction of people's trust in the public sphere and frustration in the political dynamics within it (Kappler, 2013, p. 15). This has led to an awareness, in the BiH public as well as the international community that the EU is not prepared to intervene as much as the OHR does, in turn leading to a positive appraisal of the OHR (for the Bosniak population) when contrasted with the non-intervening EU.

### **Transitional justice: from the ICTY's retributive focus to a 'distant' approach to addressing the past**

This critical account of transitional justice in BiH focuses on how establishing the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as a perpetrator-focused mechanism for dealing with past atrocities, became a guiding model for transitional justice in the country. An externally driven insistence on retributive justice disconnected from victims and local understandings of justice, becoming an obstacle for other efforts such as the development of judiciary institutions and non-judicial initiatives led by civil society organizations, all processes influenced by the view from international organizations.

#### ***Establishing justice: (distantly) creating the ICTY***

Transitional justice, dealing with past atrocities, was externally brought to Bosnia-Herzegovina via the ad-hoc International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), following resolution 827 by the United Nations Security Council. The ICTY was established to help end wars in the Balkans, facilitating reconciliation, assuming that condemning ethnic prosecution and insisting on individual accountability for crimes, transitional justice would transcend identity politics, advancing to a liberal order (Skaar, 2013).

The ICTY became a cornerstone for transitional justice, an experiment on dealing with justice, truth and reconciliation. Its establishment in 1993, during the height of the Bosnian war, follows a western policy preference for legalized accountability in dealing with the past, particularly investigation and prosecution of war crimes and finding missing persons (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013, Fischer, 2016). As an international criminal tribunal, it was designed to examine and assess testimonies on past atrocities presented during trials, assuming that settling accounts through institutionalized legal means would help societies reconcile. The ICTY was inscribed into Dayton's legal framework, which included various human rights and humanitarian law treaties applicable to BiH (European Convention on Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Geneva Conventions). As prosecuting war crimes became a post-conflict obligation, the governmental bodies of Dayton's entities were required cooperation with the ICTY, particularly transferring those indicted for war crimes (Moratti and Sabic-El Rayess, 2009). The EU defined government cooperation with the ICTY as a precondition for accession, along with establishing rule of law and fighting corruption (Fisher and Petrović-Ziemer, 2015).

As main transitional justice instrument, the ICTY led the way in prosecutions and documenting the past in BiH, as national institutions were unable or unwilling to perform such tasks. Often was the case that proceedings conducted in BiH during and straight after armed conflict often failed to meet standards of a fair trial or coordination between the national courts and the ICTY (Court of BiH, 2015). The Tribunal became a point of reference for state institutions, civil society and domestic judiciary in war crime prosecution, contributing to capacity building for the judiciary (Fischer, 2016, p.27). The aftermath of the Yugoslav conflict (and the BiH war) was the elevation of criminal justice issues to the universal level, based on the argumentation that states had the duty to prosecute (Fijałowski

and Grose, 2015 p. 2). The Court's main achievements are bringing justice to victims and establishing facts about the wars in the former Yugoslavia (Banjeglav, 2016, p.81). According to a former ICTY member, its main achievements are investigating in detail and rendering judicial findings on the vents in the Balkans since 1990. Establishment of individual responsibility as a prerequisite for establishing accountability and for reconciliation. Giving access to confidential army and security services archives, contributing to truth telling, giving more than 5,500 witnesses and victims a chance to face the accused and tell the court and public what had been done to them and supporting domestic prosecutions and courts, developing an environment of mutual assistance with the judiciaries in the Balkans (Hoffman, 2016, p. 62-64). Another very important achievement was its prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, recognizing rape as a crime deserving international attention by the highest international court (Simić, 2016, p. 104).

As external and international state-building project, the ICTY received criticisms related to its institution-building focus. The court, located far from the affected conflict zone (placed in The Hague) and with foreigners guiding the judicial process, failed to connect with local populations, to the point that the best rapport achieved was with state institutions that have been hesitant to cooperate (Kostovicova, 2014). Its external imposition of a universal jurisdiction disrupted delicate domestic reconciliation processes between conflicting parties, leading to different responses to indictments (Kostić, 2012, p.651). Decisions were easily politicised, Serb leadership blaming the Tribunal of ethnic bias, due to high counts of suspects from a Serb background. This led to political elites and media in Bosnia-Herzegovina to perpetuate national narratives undermining the Tribunal's work, using indictments to bolster prevailing national narratives rather than further reconciliation (Zyberi, 2014). International efforts to establish war crime accountability led to their hijacking by political elites for nationalistic goals (Eastmond, 2010, p.8). Such efforts were perceived as

an attempt to counter criticism for western inaction during the war. Efforts also clashed with local ideas about justice as the ICTY established a discourse of guilt and innocence in BiH, an arena in which nationalist elites hold political stakes. In this regard, Nenad Vukosavljević writes

“...in the initial years of its work the Tribunal entirely neglected the need for communication and presence in the public of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The consequence was a lack of understanding of the importance of the work The Hague performs, and this provided space for the creation of images which portrayed The Hague as a politically biased court....the bias always appears to be to ‘our’ detriment [speaking of ethnic constituencies]. I have never heard of someone thinking that the court is biased in favor of his or her own people.”  
(Vukosavljević, 2007, p. 149).

The outcome was reinterpreting transitional justice through dominant ethnopolitical narratives insistent on collective guilt and innocence. Local dynamics in transitional justice tend to emphasize tensions emerging from confrontations between local and international approaches to justice, resulting in local contestation framed as resistance to hegemonic practices and values (Arnould, 2016). Due to the divided character of Bosnian society, the contestation of war crime trials by political elites led to situations where adjudicated cases, proven beyond reasonable doubt, remain contested in public political narratives where those found guilty of war crimes are cheered as heroes within their own ethnic groups (Porobić-Isaković, 2016). Hodzić writes in this regard

“It is obvious that the influence of propaganda directed against the tribunals by government institutions, the media, and non-governmental organizations controlled by people indicted by the tribunal or potentially indicted as well as

political leaders from the former Yugoslavia, both at the highest and local levels is very strong. They managed to convince people that war equals war crimes, that everything that happened in the war can be marked as a war crime if you belong to a certain ethnicity.” (Hodžić, 2007, p. 130.)

What is clear from this contestation is that the narratives presented by the courts did not resonate in the public and populations that were main targets of these trials, explaining the limited success of the ICTY in countering war crime denial in BiH as well as the region (Dragović-Soso, 2014). Legal narratives about victims heard in The Hague do not reach perpetrator communities but transferred to the communities of victims, maintaining a sense of perpetual victimhood (Ristić, 2014). These factors contributed to distancing between ethnic groups, complicating reconciliation. Criticism reflects problems with ICTY’s legitimacy in BiH whose rejection by the local population derived from an idea of justice that comes only from technical and judicial understandings from UN diplomats and experts in jurisprudence, distant from the more long-term justice needs of victims in the country. This experience shows that justice cannot be externally forced, as law-related processes require a form of legitimacy to bring social solidarity and reconciliation, one that international tribunals hardly achieve (Arenhövel, 2008, p. 578).

### ***Developing Bosnia’s judiciary***

As political parties and their supporters locally contested transitional justice, it was clear that certain cases required processing in Bosnia-Herzegovina so that justice and truth would not end up so distant from society and for the fact that the ICTY would not be able to handle such a huge number of cases. The court began establishing measures for securing the fairness of trials, leading to a case-by-case supervision, before cases were sent to BiH for prosecution (Porobic-Isaković, 2016). This meant slow jurisdiction transfer between the ICTY and

Bosnian courts: From 2006 until late 2011, only 83 cases were transferred to courts with territorial jurisdiction (Orlović, 2012). The establishment of the ICTY in 1993 left little energy and resources for the development of Bosnian courts as the tribunal began referring war crimes back to BiH's domestic courts. The judiciary became overwhelmed by the number of cases, added to the problem that Bosnia's courts were weak and susceptible to interference from ethnic nationalist elites (McMahon and Western, 2009, p.75).

By establishing the war crimes section of the Court in BiH, the Bosnian judiciary would be strengthened and equipped to deal with in-country war crime prosecution. The War Crimes section, inaugurated in 2005 as a permanent level organ, was supported by the ICTY to deal with grave breaches of international humanitarian law (Fischer, 2016, p. 27). Designed as a hybrid court and complemented by war crimes sections in the office of the prosecutor, a registry and a witness protection unit. By late 2000's the amount of war crime cases were estimated in the thousands, the most complex ones were assigned for prosecution at the Court of BiH while the rest were distributed between the judiciaries of the two entities and the Court of Brčko District (Orlović, 2012).

Despite international support and gradual handover of cases in national and local courts, the process has been fraught with criticisms and complications eroding the acceptance and legitimacy of the judiciary. The main obstacle has been the obstruction typical in the country's political process. Despite the design in 2008 of a National Strategy for Prosecution of War Crimes in the BiH Parliament, failure for implementing this strategy derived from political obstructions advocating a change of law and the signing of agreements that disallow extradition of Bosnia's citizens charged with war crimes trials (Karup-Druško, 2014). For this reason, many convicted for war crimes have found shelter in neighbouring countries, often relying on dual citizenship. Excessive layers of government also led to discrepancies in the application of criminal law in BiH. Orlović, (2012) explains that the Court of BiH applies

the Criminal Code established in 2003 while courts at a cantonal level as well as the court of Brčko apply the criminal code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1976. From an interpretation from the BiH Court, local courts decide independently which criminal code they wish to use for war crime prosecutions, leading to discrepancies in sentencing as the 1976 code imposes maximum sentences of 15 years for war crimes whilst the 2003 code establishes a maximum of 45 years. More concerning is the fact that as the ICTY mainly focused on ‘big names’ (political leadership that ordered atrocities) many low-level perpetrators are free and often in positions of power in the post-war period. In this regard, Vukosavijević writes

“Local prosecutor offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina only act in places in which the crimes happened during the war and were for the most part in the position of starting investigations of local powerful people. Those who gave orders for prosecution and murders during the war have become mayors, chiefs of police stations or successful businessmen and war heroes in the post-war times” (Vukosavijević, 2007, p. 150).

Of particular concern is the status of war reparations in BiH. Obstructive politics in BiH constantly delay development of reparation procedures, creating differences between the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska in treating victims of human rights abuses. Practitioner Amir Zulić has particular concerns about this:

“The problem has to do with the legal system and the divisions between entities. The administrative divisions make this country function as if there were two countries inside it, so there is always a problem with the law, a discrepancy on its

application between entities and this is why we do not have a law for our recognition.”<sup>9</sup>

The problem begins with the ICTY’s lack of a system of reparations, forcing victims to rely on national courts for seeking financial recompense and reparations (Garbett, 2004, p.29). The initial quest for reparations in BiH began with a lawsuit against Serbia before the International Court of Justice, who in 2007 ruled unfavorable to Bosnia establishing that Serbia would not be responsible for crimes committed in BiH (Hronešová, 2016).<sup>10</sup>

The development of reparations was done via the system of social security and veteran protection, giving certain rights to victims and veterans to improve their living standards. This ended in reparations being managed at the entity level, creating a power imbalance between civilian victims and war veterans (Lai, 2016). Porobić-isaković (2016) explains such discrepancies: victims are recognized by BiH legislation and eligible for compensation as long as they can medically prove that at least 60% bodily damage has been suffered, a requirement established in both entities as well as in the Brčko District. The exception to this is for victims of sexual violence and rape who do not need to prove bodily damage, yet this stipulation applies only in the Federation, whereas in Republika Srpska such victims are not recognized as a separate category. Another source of discrimination comes from the way victims and veterans have been treated through the reparations process. There is no uniform approach to reparations between these two groups, which has led to an imbalance between them (Hronešová, 2016). Veteran associations tend to be politically connected to nationalist parties and can get financial support from cantonal and local budgets. Victims lack such

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<sup>9</sup> Interview, 29-06-2016

<sup>10</sup> Bosniak presidency member Bakir Izetbegović requested revision of the Court’s ruling before expiration of the ten-year limit for appeals on February 2017. The response heightened tensions between leaders in RS and the Federation, as officials from Serbia and RS stated that Izetbegović’s call was illegal and unconstitutional, calling on the citizens to challenge the appeal’s legitimacy. Milorad Dodik, president of RS called the move as an act of hatred against Bosnian-Serbs. Consequently, and due to the tensions created from the call, the International Court of Justice rejected the appeal. This not only has brought back political tensions, but also affected foreign investment in the country.

political connections, find it difficult to mobilize and set up associations and find obstacles when creating coalitions or dealing with state authorities. In their case, they are often provided with limited funding from government budgets and lack the expertise to apply for international funds and projects that can help them.

### ***Non-judicial transitional justice***

Despite the limiting and excessive focus on retributive justice established by international transitional justice, various attempts at truth telling, memorialization and other activities emerged. Practices have grown from civil society initiatives, finding opposition from political actors and citizens, in promoting truth commissions or doing bottom-up transitional justice work.

The international community and donors in BiH, adopting features of the top-down approach of judicial transitional justice, fostered the earliest truth commissions. The Western Balkans saw the introduction of truth telling mechanisms when the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) attempted the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission focused on civil society (Porobić-isaković, 2016). According to USIP (2002), the Yugoslav Truth and Reconciliation Commission, inaugurated by Serbian President Vojislav Kostunica, sought to research the social and inter-communal conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from 1980 to 2000. Despite efforts in conforming an interethnic team of investigators, the Commission disbanded in 2003 over disagreements regarding its mandate, lack of political will, funding and civil society support.

Discussions on truth commissions emerged in the early 2000's, leading to the 2005 Srebrenica Commission in RS, yet very little official efforts were done in the region and in BiH for establishing an official truth and reconciliation commission. The Srebrenica Commission (focused on investigating events leading to the 1995 Srebrenica genocide) was

established by the government of RS (after pressure from the OHR), leading to a historical account of certain killings, missing persons and mass graves. Its work was deeply politicized by RS authorities and its effects on public opinion were very little (Porobić-isaković, 2016). The lack of success in creating truth commissions in the Western Balkans has to do with political conflicts surrounding their mandate and purpose, the lack of legitimacy of domestic political actors involved in their creation and the negative impact of the ICTY on the prospects of a truth telling commission, due to the excessive focus on factual-judicial, top-down truths (Dragović-Soso, 2014).

The most recognized attempt at a truth commission has been the RECOM regional initiative, beginning as a series of regional NGO-based discussions, consultations, and roundtables on truth telling around 2010. RECOM moved from an NGO coalition in 2010 from Balkan organizations to an initiative with a statute, mandate, and vision by 2011 (Orlović, 2012). Important was the gathering of 543,870 signatures in the Balkans for its support and declarations of support from state officials in BiH, the EU institutions and the OSCE, establishing resolution 1786 supporting the initiative. Fisher (2016) recognizes RECOM's potential for restorative justice and the space for engaging with a wider variety of actors than in other initiatives as it includes peace practitioners, human rights activists, journalists, academics and other types of groups. Yet, she highlights the need for consensus on its scope and mandate and the need to convince political leaders and society of the advantages of a regional truth commission. A truth commission proposal in BiH has faced many critics: human rights activists, relatives of victims and some politicians have constantly asked who will appoint the commission members and what the criteria will be used in selecting witnesses. Others doubt whether a society where there is still no rule of law and consensus on the past is ripe for a truth commission (Englbrecht, 2011, p. 20)

However, it is political leaders and citizens where RECOM, as well as most NGOs, find obstacles to developing truth telling and other ground initiatives for transitional justice. RECOM has constantly encountered obstacles in the many elections and presidential changes in BiH as soon as an agreement is reached with a president a new election follows, another politician is appointed and a new agreement is therefore needed (Kandić, 2014). Despite gathering signatures for social support, a consultative process and the drafting of a statute, to this date RECOM has not been officially established. Alternatively, many NGOs have engaged in truth telling initiatives establishing alternative platforms for survivors to tell their stories. This has meant documentation of survivor narratives, remembrance and memorialization projects and organizing discussions and conferences discussing the past ((Porobić-isaković, 2016).

The problem with bottom-up, NGO-based initiatives is that actors and projects are usually connected to international donor agendas, an extended branch of the liberal peace. Due to the contestation and rejection of state-building in BiH politics and society, NGOs seem to inherit that legacy of resistance and lacking local legitimacy. Concerns about the external origins of Bosnia's civil society sector are rooted in the arrival of big international NGOs in the late 1990's. The NGO model was confusing as emergency relief operations tried to substitute for civil society right after the war, leading to a pursuit for international funding that made civil society a contested and problematic sector (Deacon and Stubbs, 1998). Civil society development has also suffered from the problems of "local ownership" as international donors have recognized being the driving force behind civil society development via project funding and grant application processes devised in western countries (Barnes et. al, 2004). The lack of domestic agenda and its donor-driven nature has posed legitimacy problems for Bosnian NGOs. Changing donor practices particularly affect these organizations, also, lack of coordination between international aid agencies, excessive competition for funds and

dependency on international donor priorities and models, creating a problem for their long-term sustainability and their acceptance with communities on the ground (Sterland, 2006). All these different disconnections, in language, in ownership and legitimacy have made of 'reconciliation' a complicated term to apply in BiH. After the war ending in a foreign-sanctioned stalemate, many Bosnians treated reconciliation as a western-imposed idea, some supporting it as desirable in principle and route towards a unified BiH but for others there was no wish for future co-existence in a state called Bosnia and Herzegovina despite wanting good neighbourly relations between polities (Jansen, 2010, p. 37)

## **Summary**

This chapter narrated peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The state-building intervention emerging after Dayton focused on building institutions of governance and consociationalism. In addition, a transitional justice process led by the ICTY, characterized by an initial focus on individual accountability for war crimes, the strengthening of the judiciary for the prosecution of war crimes and the development of a western-prone civil society sector.

Both processes affect prospects for interethnic reconciliation on the ground, not only by creating a distance between the three constituent peoples of BiH but also by creating problems of legitimacy and ownership that establish another division between top-down practices fostered by international actors and local, bottom-up ways of dealing with these processes.

The Dayton Peace Agreement, which reflects an international understanding of the war as a confrontation between identity groups, created structures of governance reliant on an ethnic key that promotes divisions in politics, administration and the economy. The reification of existing ethnically based identities has led to three different ethnic state-building agendas and structures that turn Bosnia-Herzegovina into a weak state with excessive and competing

layers of government. This affects the prospects of political reconciliation and makes decision-making in the country a stagnant, blocked endeavor.

International intervention in the country meant turning BiH into an informal protectorate where the Office the High Representative increased its powers of governance. This led to contestation from political leadership in the country, boosting the use of ethnic constituencies and nationalist rhetoric to gain acceptance with society, deeming intervention illegitimate. At the same time, these politicians remain unaccountable to the people and avoid responsibility for the country's problems.

The change towards EU member-state-building approach logically moves from the imposition "Bonn powers reliant" approach of the OHR to a more technical, standards-based state-building that uses EU accession as an incentive for political dialogue in the country. Despite such shift, ideas of local ownership and technical (depoliticised) state-building have not been able to move forward the necessary political reforms that can get the country out of the deadlock, as observed in the failure of constitutional reform in the country.

Transitional justice, a branch of state-building focused on dealing with past atrocities and fostering a justice sector in the country, has also been externally driven and distant from society. This has led to contestation and criticisms of ethnic bias, the establishment of narratives of collective guilt and victimhood that keep citizens divided and mistrustful of the other. The excessive focus on ICTY's retributive justice meant missing discussions on reparations and victim participation but also allowed ethnopolitical contestation of indictments and processes. Denouncing ethnic bias or lack of interest from the ICTY over victims from a particular ethnicity strengthens dividing narratives in BiH, leading to stances where war criminals are glorified as heroes and victims sidelined.

The development of the Bosnian judiciary, although being an opportunity for local ownership of war crime processing, was so delayed and obstructed by politics that it has created divisions regarding the implementation of laws for victims, reparations and the processing of war crimes in national, entity and cantonal courts. This has created yet another division between war veterans and victims, impeding dialogue and communication between these two groups.

Finally, the development of civil society initiatives towards truth telling and reconciliation, have not been able to impact local populations, mainly for lack of engagement and obstruction from ethnopolitical parties who dominate the different layers of government in BiH. Additionally, this NGO model exported to the country has been completely dependent on international donors, creating a sustainability crisis for many NGOs and a problem of legitimacy within the eyes of a population that does not trust projects funded by international organizations.

# **CHAPTER 4 - IMPLEMENTING RECONCILIATION: MEANINGS AND APPROACHES IN BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA**

## **Introduction**

Highly debated in academic and policy circles, reconciliation is developed through various approaches. In trauma-healing, it deals with “psychological wounds that make continued relationships difficult” (Jeong, 2000, p. 192), placing reconciliation in an individual sphere where victims of violence deal with personal trauma, encounter the other, the perpetrator, re-establishing relationships through empathy, understanding, and forgiveness. A collective-focused reconciliation is described in Schaap’s (2004) factors: restoration of an original harmony or state of relationships, intercultural dialogue that recognizes misunderstandings between conflicting parties, developing shared horizons and opening of communication channels between grieving parties, developing shared ways of being. Here, reconciliation lies within political and cultural dialogue, collective processes for mutual understanding, placing its relationship rather than individual component at the forefront. Reconciliation deals with reparative justice’s handling of human relations: justice empowering victims socially, economically and politically so they can make decisions about their needs and encounters with perpetrators, developing legal and non-legal mechanisms for these groups to meet (Nordquist, 2006, p.24).

Different reconciliation modes frame different objectives, mindsets and outcomes. Reflecting on these, this chapter presents different ways reconciliation is thought of by organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). By describing these views, the chapter establishes possible linkages between thin (state-building) and thick (localised) reconciliation, critically observing

the connectedness, similarities, and discrepancies between practices. The chapter presents five approaches: Trauma-healing and restorative work as victim-centred approaches to reconciliation; storytelling and fact-finding as researching, documenting and interpreting truths; cooperation focused on getting people to work and participate together; retributive work as a perpetrator-focused dimension and peace education; fostering reconciliation-prone values. The discussion of each approach includes its claims on reconciliation, a description of meanings and projects from interviewed organizations, highlighting possible connections between thin and thick practices and dilemmas for peacebuilding.

### **Trauma-healing and restorative justice: bridging relationships through individual and collective approaches**

Reconciliation as individual and collective trauma-healing relies on psychosocial projects supporting victims in recognizing and dealing with trauma as well as reparative processes seeking state compensation, recognition, and support to victims of past abuses. Trauma-healing focuses on victims, giving them a voice and dealing with sources of trauma, moving victims towards becoming active citizens in social reconstruction. It requires “social safety”: acceptance for the expression of the emotions occasioned by trauma and the opportunity to talk about what has happened to try to make sense of it (Francis, 2002, p.34). Dealing with “therapeutic effects of interpersonal contact among former adversaries” (Millar and Lecy, 2016, p. 302), makes reconciliation a psychological process inclusive of a range of projects with collective outcomes.

Healing moves from individual awareness of trauma towards reconciling with the other, potentially moving from an individual recognition of injustice towards a possible relationship-building process. Reconciliation deals with residues of conflict that brought suffering to a great number of people (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013, p. 81). It deals with

scars left in the relationship between victims and perpetrators of conflict, bridging gaps between them. Emotions become socio-political forces where individual experiences of conflict translate into collective and political formations, shaping reconciliation processes (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013, p. 82). Trauma-healing approaches in post-conflict interventions are criticised as a pathologizing western understanding of reconciliation, often bringing very little help to victims. Psychosocial initiatives tend to be narrowly focused on the vulnerability of affected individuals and collectivities, ignoring their resiliency and personal growth, making these a set of ‘pathologizing’ initiatives (Parent, 2016, p.512). As national reconciliation projects seek to address health implications of the effect of violence in victims they connect with conflict prevention seeking behavioral and attitudinal change, creating a politics of ‘emotionology’. Trauma-healing as a reconciliation approach resorts to emotions as a form of mobilization and identification, blurring the line between the political and therapeutic (Humphrey, 2005). Injustice is reconceived as psychological injury and exclusion is made into a question of interpersonal communication. Consequently, “the state, through affirming the self, has adopted the politics of emotionology as a new source of legitimacy” (Humphrey, 2005, p. 206)

Postconflict settings require acknowledgment of the connectedness between the dire socio-economic conditions left from the past and the trauma experienced by affected populations, for this reason, trauma-healing needs linkage with restorative justice. Restorative justice entails repairing damages to those who suffered atrocities, requiring support, compensation, and empowerment through victim-focused justice. Restorative reconciliation gives victims socioeconomic and political power to leave victimhood, becoming decision makers of their own situation and their relation to perpetrators (Nordquist, 2006, p.24). It deals with structural injustices and living standards, equating reconciliation with social justice and development (Andrieu, 2010, p. 543). Reparations make victims beneficiaries in

peacebuilding, combining needs and recognized rights that improve the social and psychological situation of victims (Hronešova, 2016). It contributes to the legitimacy of political transformations by addressing victims in this process (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.11). Reparations help inclusiveness, making citizens equal participants in a common political process supporting recognition, civic trust and solidarity, aimed at restoring the dignity and humanity of victims, responsibility of both state and perpetrators (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). National reconciliation projects have begun promoting restorative over retributive justice in peacebuilding. In doing so, 'restoration' gravitates towards the healing of harm to individuals and their social relationships, ignoring the human rights implications violence has on societies: "the focus on health and healing helps make violence, and therefore the question of rights, disappear from the narrative of reconciliation, by focusing on the effects of violence rather than on its causes." (Humphrey, 2005, p. 204).

### ***Practicing trauma-healing and restorative justice***

Trauma-healing and restorative justice in BiH are implemented via psychosocial workshops done by NGOs and International Organizations accompanying victims, dealing therapeutically with trauma, raising awareness and pushing for legislation that establishes compensation, reparation, and welfare for victims and their families. Such practices are disconnected despite targeting as beneficiaries victims of mass atrocities.

Trauma-healing seeks to avoid feelings of anger and revenge, requiring trust-building as "the traumatic experience teaches us that we cannot trust those who hurt us and therefore we are...ready to strike back" (Puljek-Shank, 2007, p. 182). Traumatic experiences create stress affecting the way we relate to others in our everyday. For practitioner Amela Puljek-Shank, healing moves from individual to group settings, connecting trust-building and reconciliation:

“Trauma cuts normality completely and you become aware of how tragic life can be, and then it clicks, life is unpredictable and you do not trust life. Building trust begins at the individual level and it becomes a difficult decision to face trauma as people end up stuck in a victimhood cycle where they repeat stories of their trauma”<sup>11</sup>.

Trust begins at the individual level, facing grieving, loss, helplessness, and fear. Moving towards collective trust-building begins with creating a supportive environment, where individuals find someone to confide in, “see(ing) society in a different light, understanding the narrative of a group and how it led to individuals taking a specific course of action in the war.”<sup>12</sup> Reconciliation becomes a skill in constant practice, “requires us to hear the other, hear the pain and suffering, recognize the human in the other” (Puljek-Shank, 2007, p. 193). During the interview, Puljek-Shank recognized how reconciliation occurs individually and collectively: individually implies accepting trauma as part of life and learning how to deal and heal, reducing grief. Collectively requires recognizing the face of the other, coming to the possibility of forgiveness and finding spaces for recognizing your neighbours and their backgrounds. Personal reconciliation is fuel for collective reconciliation; you cannot have true reconciliation unless it begins at a personal level. Maja Kapo, also a psychosocial practitioner explained

“Trauma-healing begins with oneself, as there is a constant tendency to point to others (nationalists, war criminals) as responsible for one’s trauma, making it a never-ending process of blame. Dealing with individual trauma is about people

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<sup>11</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

<sup>12</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

taking responsibility for their own issues. Only when the individual faces his/her own traumas can reconciliation take place.”<sup>13</sup>

Trauma-healing fosters reconciliation by moving from individual to group settings; individuals dealing with trauma encounter the other, allowing the possible building of relationships. For practitioner Sinisa Sagević, psychotherapy workshops allow interethnic work, which “includes representatives of the different ethnic groups who would openly talk about their war experiences, each one would talk for about ten minutes and then open the floor to discussions between them and with the different association.”<sup>14</sup> For Sagevic, public appearances help audiences change perspectives about the other, as victim stories are similar despite belonging to different ethnic groups. Here, addressing youngsters is a priority; victims help in recognizing that “all people get hurt, that there were innocent people on all sides, people who can talk about their stories”. Sagević identifies political potential as events help victim associations, traditionally divided along ethnic lines, recognize the pain endured by the other side and bring knowledge on reconciliation, changing the ways victim associations work in BiH.

Restorative practices support individuals who experienced loss, either physical or material, through compensation, legal support, and political recognition. For Amela Puljek-Shank, this work “responds to people in need, regardless of their religious background...we stay in places where the contexts have not changed in order for us to leave.” For her organization<sup>15</sup>, restorative work entails bringing people who experienced harm or conflict together to respectfully hear each other’s experiences and emotions, agreeing on appropriate responses to their harm, training about living and working together, addressing conflict in various settings, and training people on issues of oppression and colonization to understand restorative justice.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, 28-07-2016

<sup>14</sup> Interview, 10-06-2016

<sup>15</sup> The Mennonite Central Committee, a faith-based peacebuilding organization.

This work is geared towards raising awareness and moving to reconciliation. For Amir Zulić, working with concentration camp survivors

“We try to contact as many people as we can, people who can get the magnitude of what happened to us. Form psychotherapists, doctors and even people who can help us with food and the things that the government has not been able to do for us. An organization that wants to help survivors and we do all this without the government’s help.”<sup>16</sup>

He highlighted how as an organization they were often doing the work of the government, pressuring for legislation that supports victims, and lobbying for a victim’s law:

“We are fighting the government to recognize us as prisoners of war who suffered a lot of trauma. The lack of laws makes us feel as if we have not existed in the last 20 years as if we have been forgotten and erased...We want compensation, but there is no money from the state and there are too many people who are in our same condition. The problem goes deeper and it has to do with the legal system and the division between entities...There is always a problem with the law, a discrepancy on its application between the two entities and this is why we do not have a law for our recognition.”<sup>17</sup>

He connects restorative justice with interethnic reconciliation:

“There are no differences between us; we constantly share many things. We get all these excuses regarding the law for our recognition and compensation. In regards to reconciliation, we do work with Serbs and with Croats from Northern

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<sup>16</sup> Interview, 04-07-2016 (Supported by a translator member of the organization).

<sup>17</sup> Interview, 04-07-2016 (Supported by a translator member of the organization).

Herzegovina; we are a big union of people sending a message of peace. We work with all of them...”<sup>18</sup>

The International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP)<sup>19</sup> takes another reparative approach, promoting legislation, fostering advocacy and technical support in locating and identifying the missing. ICMP’s restorative approach is described in its public involvement strategy, encouraging “active participation of civil society and in particular families of the missing, through programs aimed at empowering them, through education and training... The provision of education programs for families of the missing and their active engagement is critical to mounting any effort to address the issue of missing persons.” (ICMP, N.D.) ICMP’s restoration seeks to educate families of the missing on their legal, social and economic rights and supporting their involvement in forensic procedures for identifying the missing. Matthew Holiday highlighted that ICMP seeks a connection between state institution-development surrounding the missing and the ground realities of families of the disappeared. Working with politics was vital:

“you need to work with them to establish dedicated national institutions like the Missing Persons Institute to adopt legislation that enshrines rights of victims and obligations of the state, a law on missing persons...That is the kind of top-down approach but it doesn’t work if you don’t work from the bottom-up at the same time. You need to work, if you are applying a modern scientific method using DNA testing, to reach out to families, to receive reference samples or without them we couldn’t identify any of the missing”<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, 04-07-2016

<sup>19</sup> ICMP works with the State in institutional development for dealing with the missing., the establishment of an Institute for Missing Persons, a law on missing persons, the completion of the Central Records for Missing persons as well as establishing funds for the families of the missing are part of their restorative work.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

His statement refers to a technical necessity for including victims, yet elaborates on involving victims in top-down processes:

“Families of the missing need to be empowered to claim their rights because they are a powerful driver of the process; they are the ones who need to lobby the authorities. The ICMP works behind the scenes, we push, encourage and sometimes criticise the state but the families can make that vocal public voice, push the authorities to search and identify the missing. We spend programs focused on not only building state capacity but also building and empowering the capacity of the families. It is important to link them with the associations who can help and encourage them to form a legal identity and have a common voice.”<sup>21</sup>

Reparative justice is claimed to contribute to relationship-building, placing reconciliation in a reparative process within the law and the ways in which legislation can help rebuild relationships. Reparative processes seek to give victims social, political and economic power to leave views of victimhood, moving towards becoming empowered decision-makers of their own situation (Nordquist, 2006, p. 24). Track Impunity Always (TRIAL)<sup>22</sup> adopts such vision by helping victims of international crimes, advocating for greater justice and training human rights defenders. They offer comprehensive legal support to victims appearing before international legal organizations; accompaniment, listening to their accounts, gathering evidence and connecting this with retributive work. Their restorative approach calls BiH authorities to put into practice court rulings in favor of victims, aligning national legislation with international human rights standards (TRIAL, N.D.). For Adisa Fisić, TRIAL sees reconciliation as a long process that cannot be done in limited timeframes: “Our contribution to reconciliation as an international NGO is to fight for victims’ rights, so that they exercise

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

<sup>22</sup> TRIAL focuses on providing legal assistance to victims, litigates cases and develops local capacity for prosecutions.

rights which have been established internationally in treaties signed by Bosnia”<sup>23</sup>. She emphasized that this process was about justice, youth work, and support for victims of sexual violence, free legal aid and pushing for prosecutions of wartime sexual crime cases.

Reparation comes through fighting for compensation:

“...last year [2015] we got a big achievement in a judgment from BiH courts for victims in criminal proceedings. Usually, victims were referred to civil proceedings for compensation and this would cause re-traumatization and added cost to victims as they had to go to another court system and many times, they simply could not afford this. It is important that compensation claims are decided directly in criminal proceedings”<sup>24</sup>.

Ms. Fisić’s view connects retributive and reparative justice:

“Transitional justice consists of judicial and non-judicial measures. One measure is wartime case prosecution done via the ICTY and the Bosnian Courts. This step is important, as here is where facts need to be established. However, we also need non-judicial measures; this is why we organize training for NGOs and lawyers on rights and war victims in BiH. We need young generations to know what happened and accept the facts as we have independent sources to read about the war...”<sup>25</sup>

### ***Thin and thick in trauma-healing and restorative practices***

It is clear that “thick” trauma-healing together with “thin” state-building restorative justice identify victims as direct beneficiaries of reconciliation, helping them deal with traumatic pasts, offering psychosocial and political support that helps them relate to others through

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<sup>23</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

<sup>24</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

<sup>25</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

healing. This approach can connect thick and thin reconciliation in the move from individual to collective trauma-healing, opening individual experiences to bigger groups and audiences. Such move requires support from “thin” state-building justice: supporting victims within the criminal justice system, providing compensation and reparation at the state level, adopting legislation addressing victims’ needs. It requires a functioning political environment for victims, who not only require psychosocial support for individual grievances but also providing socioeconomic justice that empowers them away from victimhood and towards active citizenry. Linking thick (localised trauma-healing) and thin reconciliation (legislative and political changes for restoration) connects grassroots psycho-therapeutical work with victims and state-building work promoting justice geared towards establishing laws to protect victim and minority rights in BiH.

Disconnections between practices bring questions about how probable is the move from individual to community and national reconciliation. Victims need psychosocial support to overcome trauma, at least learn how to live with it, but it is difficult to move from individual perceptions to a collective or a national level. By connecting trauma-healing with restorative justice, thick practices relate to high-level political and judicial processes. Reparations schemes open questions about perpetrators and victims, making this a political choice (Hronešova, 2016). Establishing reparations creates hierarchies of victimhood; this requires sensitively designed reparations that connect with the reintegration and de-radicalization of combatants that can also help victims. When governments offer material restitution to victims and alternatively offers monetary support to perpetrators, it creates grounds for invidious comparisons (Lerche, 2002). In BiH, hierarchies of victimhood are perceived in the study of sexual violence. Rape victims in BiH are distinguished by their ethnic or national identity, connecting them with a notion of an ideal or authentic victim subject (Simić, 2016, p. 108). Simić explores this problem, stating that Bosniak experiences of rape were

appropriated for a national-building project as an authentic representation of collective trauma, making Serb women's experiences something ignored, rejected and made insignificant.

“Thin” processes advocating legislation and implementation of policies for reparations, rehabilitative measures, victim support and minority rights protection can be geared towards grassroots trauma-healing. If organizations developing psychosocial support disconnect from political processes, they will be affected by lack of support and will from authorities at national, entity and local level in establishing legal and policy frames for restoring and repairing the damage done to war victims. Connecting thick trauma-healing with thin justice creates a space for a comprehensive approach. The socioeconomic character of violence should be a defining feature of transitional justice where the idea of dealing with the past can connect to reparation (Lai, 2016). As socioeconomic injustice is present and rooted in war-affected societies, ‘doing justice’ entails not only political but also economic restructuring processes.

### **Storytelling and fact-finding: paths towards different ‘truths’**

“Truth” is a component of transitional justice and reconciliation. It seeks to acknowledge hidden parts of a society's past, distinguishing between court testimonies and truth telling processes: to “tell one's story to somebody who is interested, carrying an important part of a country's and community's common history” (Nordquist, 2006, p.23). Different truths are present in post-conflict work: factual evidence, subjective accounts shaped by specific positions within a social system; versions of the truth change as social and historical circumstances shift over time (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). Truth requires reflection when linked to reconciliation: victims may be satisfied by facts but facts also heighten wishes of revenge (Van Zyl, 2005). Through storytelling and testimony, people use narratives to make sense of themselves and their socio-historical context, making narratives central to self-

perception and worldview (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). Truth telling often leads to controversy, inciting desires for revenge or become contrary to justice as pardoning perpetrators for telling the truth might imply impunity. Fischer (2011, p. 410) warns against claims that official exposure to the truth provides immediate redress for victims and their social healing although acknowledges that nationalist myth-making (an effect of war) requires instrumentalizing facts to prevent reoccurrence of violence.

### ***Telling truths in practice***

Dealing with truths, and narratives of violent pasts are important elements within post-conflict reconciliation, particularly in divided societies that rely on opposing and at times conflicting interpretations of motivations, dynamics, and effects of wartime violence. Truth recovery implies covering objective and forensic truths, narrative truths, social, dialogical and restorative truths (Fischer, 2011, p. 411). Such different approaches to post-conflict truths have been adopted by organizations in BiH under visions such as ‘dealing with the past’, projects for documenting interpretative truths, the pursuit of forensic ‘judicial’ truths that can lead to retributive processes and efforts towards establishing official truth commissions in the country. Adnan Hasenbegović, from the Centre for Nonviolent Action, connects reconciliation, dealing with the past and truth telling;

“Dealing with the past is a crucial component of reconciliation. This requires a focus on the war period and on particular issues of war crimes and the process of transition from one era to the other. This requires dealing with polarized perspectives as well as the mainstream nationalism that permeates our politics.”<sup>26</sup>

For Hasenbegović dealing with the past comes not only from recent wars but also from World War II issues surrounding national identities in the Western Balkans, focusing on the question

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<sup>26</sup> Interview, 25-04-2016

of ‘who is the enemy?’ Answers come with strong narratives leading to mistrust, explaining why CNA views a regional need to re-establish communication, engage in the humanization of the enemy, making people aware of how they become victims of manipulation. For Hasenbegović, storytelling

“Requires working with various narratives of the past...We talk about the facts and then on explanation and understandings of what happened. Various actors produce different narratives of victimhood here in Bosnia so we have to include all stories in this process. One thing is the facts that can be established through the Courts but our view of the truth is much wider, we work with interpretative truth.”<sup>27</sup>

For the interviewee, in BiH, there is no reconciliation as people have a polarized perception of the war:

“via storytelling we present stories of individuals, via movies and publications, stories of refugees, of ordinary people who show through personal experience their process of reconciliation...this helps on our focus on empathy. In reconciliation, it is key for people to see the suffering that occurred from the other side.”<sup>28</sup>

CNA’s storytelling includes war veterans, a group traditionally sidelined in peacebuilding. In “Four views”, a veteran-orientated truth telling project, stories are shared in public forums, bringing former combatants from BiH and neighbouring countries together to speak about their reasons for going to war, what motivated them and how they see it nowadays. It seeks opening space for dialogue and deconstruction of enemy images (Franović, 2015). By listening to veteran stories, audiences who normally boycott and protest peacebuilding

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<sup>27</sup> Interview, 25-04-2016

<sup>28</sup> Interview, 25-04-2016

forums, end up listening and respecting presenters, coming up with questions and expressing admiration for the speakers' courage:

“We needed it [the seminar] in order for the combatants to get to know each other better, to gain a better sense of their varying narratives, build mutual trust and thus become a source of support for each other and to empower them for public speaking.” (Franović, 2015, p.6).

Although this adopts a psychosocial format, contribution comes when “we decided to listen closely and expand the circles of war veterans motivated to work on peacebuilding. We expected that the initiated cross-border collaboration of former enemies would gain its own momentum and live beyond us and our guidance.” (Franović, 2015, p.6). This resonates with Skaar's (2013) transitional justice claim: truth telling contributing to the psychological healing of individual victims, promoting social healing and group reconciliation.

Another approach is recollecting stories of the past, interpretative truth telling as a way of informally documenting truths. Interpretative approaches are claimed to host elements of culture and identity, local ideas, knowledge, and structure that approach peacebuilding in a way that is inclusive of marginalized individuals, groups and communities (Canteh-Morgan, 2005, p.72). Leslie Woodward and Velma Sarić, NGO directors in Sarajevo adopt such approach. For Woodward, reconciliation needs to go beyond encounters between victims, perpetrators, and processes of confession and forgiveness<sup>29</sup>. “It is a process of internal healing but beyond this, it entails interethnic cooperation and mutual understanding, of people standing against what is wrong.” She views this work as a web-weaver of reconciliation, building connections between international and local in amplifying the voices from all sides of the conflict. Storytelling gives an opportunity for people to tell their side without blaming:

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<sup>29</sup> Interview, 24-04-2016

“Our approach is unofficial truth telling as there can be both official and unofficial processes that need one another. Official truth telling is the work of the ICTY and ICMP as they work with concrete facts and data. The unofficial side, what we do is all about documenting stories and points of view. We are creating a record, a database of our rescuer stories so we can leave a legacy of stories of others, a sort of track record.”<sup>30</sup>

She was emphatic that truth is subjective and often up to the implementer to help interpret it, yet interpretive truths that bring people together, create a sense that interethnic cooperation is more frequent than people think: “big groups of friends that span the interethnic divide, we want to show that this is the norm rather than the exception.”<sup>31</sup> Velma Sarić focused on theoretical/methodological frames underpinning Ordinary Heroes, a project telling stories of interethnic help during the war. Her work is “base for local young people, directing them towards a working model of reconciliation to work with<sup>32</sup>.” Ordinary Heroes emerged as visual exhibitions and conferences on survivor stories, initially displayed in Sarajevo for students and locals, later expanding to smaller communities, connecting with rural youth who were unable to travel. This developed into workshop manuals, screenings and debates, mechanisms for measuring impact, competitions for stories of moral courage and establishing Balkan Diskurs, an online platform for reporting on local stories of reconciliation and youth relevant themes.

Important for truth telling is fact-finding, discovering forensic ‘judicial’ truths, which relies on objective methods connected to retributive processes. Fact-finding includes selecting relevant facts in trials, their legal characterization, assigning blame in courts and normative versions of events that contribute to forging a common historical memory of the recent past

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<sup>30</sup> Interview, 24-04-2016

<sup>31</sup> Interview, 24-04-2016

<sup>32</sup> Interview, 06-06-2017.

(Fijalwoski and Grose, 2015). It is claimed that this type of truth provides information that can persuade perpetrators and victims to confront their own narratives of past events. The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's (BIRN)<sup>33</sup> takes this approach. Vital to BIRN is Balkan Transitional Justice, a regional initiative seeking to improve the public's understanding of transitional justice.<sup>34</sup> Erna Maćkik explained the connection between truth telling and transitional justice: work begins with the establishment of the State Court and Prosecutor Office in Bosnia, the focus was reporting on War Crimes and the way state-level institutions were doing this work, as international justice left several sensitive topics unaddressed<sup>35</sup>. BIRN's evolution led to campaigns against media censorship on war crime verdicts, demanding indictments to disclose full names of war criminals, a practice banned by national legislation. Maćkik sees BIRN's website as a fact-finding achievement: a database of local and international war tribunal hearings. BIRN reports on every hearing, using it as material for lessons learned on war crime prosecutions. A particular focus on victims of wartime sexual violence made BIRN the first organization to report on how the Hague Tribunal was disposing of artefacts that served as evidence for sexual war crimes due to lack of storage space. They make educational documentaries for victims and institutions, their screenings involve proceedings in missing person cases, with audiences made up of victim associations, judicial institutions, and the police. Maćkik sees fact-finding as dealing with political issues:

“Brings factual information into the public sphere. In this way, victims can find a voice in the process. We do not just bring one victim, from one side, we bring as many victims from all sides, from both entities, and through this, and we show

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<sup>33</sup> An international journalist organization promoting public debate around key issues in Balkan countries' societies.

<sup>34</sup> BIRN sees Balkan Transitional Justice as provision of information about transitional justice to connect state with the public.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016.

that victims are the same. What we do is bring a different narrative from that of the politicians, a judicial narrative in order to bring these stories everywhere.”<sup>36</sup>

Maćkik believes

“Reconciliation can mean a lot of things but in the context of Bosnian society, I don’t really know what it is because victims in different areas ask this question about reconciliation. It can be about having all war criminals, from all sides prosecuted and sentenced. Also, we have reparations and every pillar of transitional justice in theory but we do not have this effectively here in Bosnia. We have some war crime cases, we have some reparations but there is no state law on these issues or a law on torture.”<sup>37</sup>

She emphasized that “we do live together, victims from Prijedor, Srebrenica or Višegrad, they live together, and they communicate with their neighbours. We have connections here on an everyday basis but we do not have a systematic reconciliation.”<sup>38</sup> ‘Truth’ is a more constructive concept for her:

“If you accept the truth then it really helps. I do not think we are ready to accept the truth, here when dealing with the truth, you have very specific truths and we have three truths to deal with in Bosnia, a particularly hard issue. All three groups have a truth and in that sense, question is whose truth will be accepted and by whom? It is not the time to accept the truth here. We bring what we can from factual truths to the public. What we do is report on facts, something that is

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<sup>36</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>37</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>38</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

undeniable, like the genocide on Srebrenica. Hypothetically speaking this could be the starting point for a truth and reconciliation commission in Bosnia.”<sup>39</sup>

Another route is via officially sanctioned truth commissions. Such mechanisms have different goals from tribunals: to investigate the fates of individuals and the nation as a whole rather than to prosecute and punish (Huyse, 2001), including full disclosure of human rights abuses, ensuring that facts remain alive in the memory of a collectivity. Dzenana Karup, advocate for RECOM<sup>40</sup> was emphatic truth telling is a misused concept in the country. Its aim is to achieve objective facts, an idea that originally came from civil society organizations in the region, followed by donors later incorporated into the program; “the idea is that we, ourselves, via regional cooperation, make reports based on objective facts that deal with war issues.”<sup>41</sup> Karup sees as achievement how

“RECOM has gathered victims from all different groups, from all sides, all in one place. For instance, here in Bosnia, we began as a consultation process between victims from all three ethnic groups and this has grown to become a process for victims of all states that were part of the former Yugoslavia. It is a process of establishing connections across ethnic divides.”<sup>42</sup>

Reconciliation for RECOM is a term sustaining objective fact-finding:

“The most important element of reconciliation is facing with the past, a process that has not been completed in Bosnia. Even though the ICTY determined all of this, we cannot talk about reconciliation here, both in Bosnia and in the region

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>40</sup> On RECOM See Chapter 3 page 100.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, 03-07-2016 (Interpreted by Karup’s assistant Ada Hasanagić)

<sup>42</sup> Interview, 03-07-2016

without looking at a process for facing the past. They are closely connected.

Until all ethnic groups face past crimes, reconciliation will never be achieved.”<sup>43</sup>

The Centre for Democracy and Transitional Justice (CDTJ), in Banja Luka, supports RECOM.<sup>44</sup> Zlatana Gruhonjić stated that CDTJ adheres to RECOM’s focus on regional cooperation based on facing with the past and reconciliation.<sup>45</sup> For her, transitional justice is a regional process because the issues being faced derive from different countries part of the former Yugoslavia. Data collection regarding concentration camps is “something concrete to put in the hands of institutions, all facts collected and put into one place. This is a tool for institutions for future attempts to do something.”<sup>46</sup> Beyond institutional work, Zlatana sees that “what we do is try to provoke a talk, a debate about war crimes, detention places and about the people that were captured.” Her intention is to get the conversation going beyond the (shrinking) circle of NGOs working on dealing with the past and transitional justice, to get a political stance on the matter. Zlatana views reconciliation as peaceful cohabitation. Her colleague Zoran Vuckovac understands it as a ”process where we try to balance between different ethnic groups in recognizing the crimes they did in the past, to arrive at a situation in which each ethnic groups not only talks about their own victims but also on the crimes committed in their name, to recognize and go further.”<sup>47</sup>

### ***Telling thin and thick truths***

Looking back at fact-finding and truth telling, it is evident that both approaches, one of finding thin, factual accurate “truths” that cannot be subject to denial and the other that identifies multiple grounded “thin” truths; seem to be either complementary or conflictive.

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, 03-07-2016

<sup>44</sup> CDTJ focuses on gathering factual data regarding detention camps, victims, reasons, conditions inside them and the type of mistreatment that was done.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, 14-10-2016

<sup>46</sup> Interview, 14-10-2016

<sup>47</sup> Interview, 14-10-2016

The recognition of formal and informal, thick and thin, approaches to dealing with “the truth” may imply a contradiction between facts obtained via judicial and technical means and the way interpretative forms of understanding the truth allow for documentaries, stories, films and other resources to be shared and discussed. Focusing on victims requires dealing with difficult past truths. Interviews show the need for an appropriate environment for discussing truths and for different sides not only to hear opposing narratives but also to be open to accepting atrocities committed on their behalf by members of their own ethnic group. The enabling of such environment makes truth telling a political matter, affecting both types of work. For thin, fact-finding, of objective, and accurate accounts of the past, the political challenge will be the level of acceptance from authorities of their findings and their “undeniable” truths. For thick narratives dealing with multiple truths, the challenge has to do with society, on whether audiences are willing and open to hear and understand differing accounts and accept them as realities that may go according to their own ethnic stories and interpretations of what happened.

### **Getting people to work together: cooperation**

Getting people from different backgrounds, with a history of antagonism to “work together” may be a pragmatic stance in peacebuilding but one that deals with the core of reconciliation: the (re)building of relationships. Cooperation centers on finding common interests between individuals and communities, engaging in community building. When ethnic cleansing occurs in a conflict, states face the difficult task of rebuilding normal communal relations and as such reconciliation often means “... creating a new partnership” (Jeong, 2000, p. 192). For cooperation, it takes two to reconcile, the victim and the perpetrator, individual and community, group and nation. Reconciliation becomes a political, relational concept providing tools for rebuilding relationships. A structural concept useful in political contexts and not only in private settings, this structural capacity for building relationships makes

reconciliation relevant in political discourse (Nordquist, 2006, p.17). The content of reconciliation is the nature of the relationship itself. It occurs on the everyday contact with the other rather than in political commissions or criminal tribunals. The purpose is to influence relationships at the level where they were before injustices started, in the everyday living of communities. Relationship-building relies on cooperation: actions from separate individuals or organizations, which are not in pre-existing harmony, where they are brought into conformity with each other via negotiation, developing mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic persons or groups (Lerche, 2002). Cooperation is an active exercise in trust-building, to work together in common tasks, moving towards common goals people must trust each other in many respects (Govier and Verwoerd, 2002). If people are able to cooperate as members of groups, groups should be confident in the trustworthiness of others to make working together possible, any suspicion on lacking credibility, motivation or competence makes cooperation difficult and uncomfortable.

### ***Cooperation practices***

Cooperation has both political and economic implications. An approach insistent on the need for improved communications and a better understanding of groups, where greater cooperation and coexistence are shaped at the individual and political level (Hamber and Van Der Merwe, 1998). It requires acknowledgment that intergroup relations require social and economic transformation on an unprecedented scale, calling on an entire social system that addresses pressing needs (Lerche, 2002). For Kemal Salaca, director of the War Veterans Association -Juvenile Volunteers of War Canton Sarajevo<sup>48</sup>, due to the lack of a strategic plan to help war veterans, his organization focused on eliminating ethnic obstacles to getting people together. “Our work is based on building this multiethnic association as I had this idea of bringing people who were underage fighters during the war into one association in order to

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<sup>48</sup> This organization seeks to create a membership association of war veterans, minors recruited into the BiH Army, who have social, economic and health difficulties.

find a strategy to help them.”<sup>49</sup> The goal is to reintegrate these veterans into society as this is a population that is commonly unemployed, whose high school education was interrupted by war and tend to face deep psychological traumas that led to alcohol and drug dependency. The association moved from gathering veterans and creating a supporting community to engaging in peacebuilding: as the project brought former underage fighters from all different sides and ethnicities, they began working on peace activities and projects, receiving UNICEF’s sponsorship. Their project “From children of war to children of peace” organizes public speaking events for former veterans. But different from other speaking events, in this one there is a commitment from veterans to live together as a community and plan public speakings together. The goal is that they realize they have another choice different from the typical mono-ethnic status that marks life outside the main cities. For Salaca success in cooperation comes from one rule: that people refrain from talking about politics within the association and to focus on a common goal, promoting peace. Beyond the success of getting UNICEF supporting the association, “we want war veterans from the region to be able to work globally, making this a long-term plan.”<sup>50</sup> Salaca sees underage fighters as particularly misunderstood in Bosnia, firmly believing that the idea of being forced into war is not accurate at all but rather that most children took arms voluntarily to protect their families, making many of these children volunteers for the different armies fighting a war. For this reason, he states, “our goal and mission is to resolve this myth of the forced child soldiers and bring it down, making the international community more aware of the complexities that we had to face.”

Cooperative work, dealing with citizen needs, often connects with community-building approaches that help collectivities on the ground to recover, to enable social cohesion and support and prosper after having faced atrocities. Such approach is taken by the Center for

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<sup>49</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>50</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

Peacebuilding (CIM), in Sanski Most, focused on “mutual listening, understanding, and compassion through rebuilding relationships.”<sup>51</sup> Mevludin Rahmanović, Imam and CIM’s founder, stated that as a religious leader he decided to do something about the issues of war and “show people through example and talk about what happened, not forcing people to forgive, but to understand that revenge and hate are not taught by religion.”<sup>52</sup> Their first projects were only with Bosniaks in western Bosnia-Herzegovina, dealing with intercommunity conflicts, fostering reconciliation first within this community as a test to see how this work would move forward. CIM moved to working with youth work across ethnic lines, working with groups from a Serb background, a personal challenge to its founders, being both former victims of Serb aggression, a very personal and challenging feat: it took

“Six or seven years to be able to bring religious leaders together, they would normally never sit together as there was this silent conflict between them. We now have very nice communication with religious leaders, we organize receptions for Eid, Christmas and we have various receptions with religious leaders, they greet each other which is a huge step for us.”<sup>53</sup>

This work evolved locally into an informal religious council within Sanski Most and through Iftar dinners, they promote an interreligious, intercultural event for Muslims and non-Muslims. Their aim is for the community to see them as partners, a group that they can cooperate with: “our goal is to involve the community in everything that we do.”<sup>54</sup> Tamara Cvetković, CIM’s coordinator, and project manager views interethnic cooperation as dialogue and conversation within and between communities in order to promote positive change. This requires them “to be realistic and include all sides in our work. I find that we are always talking about sides here and they should not exist. We need to change our opinion, our

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<sup>51</sup>CIM is dedicated to interethnic and religious dialogue, counseling and conflict-resolution skill building seminars.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, 19-06-2016

<sup>53</sup> Interview, 19-06-2016

<sup>54</sup> Interview, 19-06-2016

perception in the first place.”<sup>55</sup> CIM cooperates with the municipality and local citizens, leading to locals knowing the organization well. “We do peace activities, peacebuilding, psychological work, change is done through us. We make trust via dialogue to get solutions and this is a good step.” Tamara recognized the importance of youth, and as a young person herself recognizes the impact that reconciliation practices can have on strengthening communities: “when we spend time together we see this need to talk. This is the result of reconciliation, to be able to speak about everything, creating a safe space. It is a long process...we need to learn together.”<sup>56</sup>

A socioeconomic, transformative view of cooperation can be appreciated in Stefan Mueller’s vision, stating that GIZ<sup>57</sup> develops an angle on reconciliation, despite focusing on economic development. For him the Open Regional Funds, available for different sectors of the economy (trade, legal reform, public service development, EU integration, and biodiversity) work on the condition that they include the work of minimum three different countries of the region. GIZ’s reconciliation is based on cooperation between different countries at different levels, for instance, the ‘Peaks of the Balkans’, a tourism project linking hiking trails between Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, leading to GIZ supporting talks about the regulations regarding border crossings between authorities of the three countries. For Mueller, Reconciliation is “exchange and communication. This is the first level of relationship-building: communication and creating a benefit via joint action.”<sup>58</sup> The focus is improving the quality of life in communities, helping them gain income. Cooperation is located at the highest political level. Projects are done via intergovernmental negotiations, ensuring a diverse ethnic composition of the Open Regional Funds. In Bosnia, there are various projects

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<sup>55</sup> Interview, 19-06-2016

<sup>56</sup> Interview, 19-06-2016

<sup>57</sup> An international cooperation agency, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Its expertise includes economic development, employment, energy, environment, peace, and security. GIZ focuses on bilateral cooperation to promote regional cooperation between Southeast European countries.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, 27-05-2016

developing GIZ's interethnic perspective: energy efficiency projects requiring action plans at the community level supported by the Ministry of Energy, promoting adult education that gathers learners from all ethnic groups to further their education, particularly for those who left school during the war. Mueller emphasized two key cooperation projects: the strengthening of public institutions at the state level, a project concerned with power distribution, involving the Bosnian Central Bank, the Office of Statistics and public procurement agencies. This project gets agencies to work together, an issue identified as a huge task due to corruption and nepotism in the Bosnian political system. The other is local self-government and economic development. Here, the agency establishes partnerships with local communities and connects them with networks of public support abroad. By pairing communities in different countries for various development projects, GIZ seeks to support and promote community development in a way that crosses interethnic boundaries.

### ***Reconciliation via youthwork***

Approaching youth brings the prospective and forward-looking dimension of reconciliation into practice, involving youth in a critical understanding of the past, connecting communities in projects that attract young people's interests and preparing future generations in social and political advocacy. Youth exchanges and youth camps are viewed as processes that help build 'together' what was destroyed in the past (Theissen, 2004, p.9).

Interviews identified the importance of youth work, getting young people, from different ethnic backgrounds to get together, know one another, eliminating ethnic and religion-based stereotypes and form common friendships, breaking social divisions in the country. This is developed through youth camps and peace gatherings entailing interethnic encounters and cooperation. Dina Vošanović, from Svitac<sup>59</sup>, said

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<sup>59</sup> A youth-orientated organization located in Brčko.

“We try to forget this issue of identities and nationalities here yet it is not necessarily about forgetting the past. It is more about working with the people and the creation of a neutral environment. It is successful to have many people from different nationalities who are not aware of their differences. When we make this happen, we see that there is no need to talk about the war anymore.”<sup>60</sup>

One of Svitac’s most attractive youth activities is its summer camps, established since 1999, offering youngsters a chance to travel and take part in cultural, artistic and educational activities where they meet people across the ethnic divide as well as volunteers from all over the world. This expanded into integration activities inside and outside Brčko, extending its population’s reach. For Vošanović, the acceptance of Svitac’s work in the local community means not only fostering interethnic cooperation between students and young people but also building trust with parents and the community at large:

“The work was focused on non-formal education and at the time of its foundation [1998] it seemed like a mission impossible to get the trust from parents in the local community but Svitac kept following its path and evolved, now we work with kids, youth in non-formal education programmes supported by the European Volunteer Service. People come here and talk about other cultures, other countries and give local kids an outsider view so that they are open to new ideas and experiences.”

Jasmin Jasarević, director of the Association Proni Centre for Youth Development,<sup>61</sup> sees this work based on “the idea...that people with the same interests can connect and work together in order to avoid this gap created by nationalism.”<sup>62</sup> Proni’s model, developed out of a methodology from Swedish and Northern Irish organizations, began by opening two offices

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<sup>60</sup> Focus group, 09-09-2016

<sup>61</sup> Proni is a local organization that seeks to overcome interethnic barriers among young people in Brčko.

<sup>62</sup> Interview, 10-10-2016

(for Bosniak and Serb communities), to begin youth activities. Starting with separate work to gain trust from the local youth and then moving to an interethnic group where young people could integrate and do educational and working placements in areas such as sports, arts and skills development. Youth work connected with peacebuilding, talking about how to deal with the past and the future, Proni offered training on peace and reconciliation. These would put three people together, developing planning inclusive of all sides. For Jasarević success of this cooperative model led to political impact:

“We even worked with the three presidents here in Brčko, we did training and supported development planning so that they could see what the people in local communities needed. This all ended up in the creation of a law that defined the roles of the Brčko government and the management of the district.”<sup>63</sup>

Nansen Dialogue Center Prijedor (NDC)<sup>64</sup> also approaches cooperation, viewing reconciliation as communication and dialogue, for participants to engage in understanding one another, breaking down images of the other and supporting processes for rebuilding relationships as well as exploring alternative solutions to joint challenges. NDC presents dialogue as a practical tool, a communicational means to empower people in conflict situations (Savija-Valha and Šahić, 2015). For NDC, dialogue is a two-folded task aimed at reconciliation of antagonistic ethnic groups and transforming the society and state into democratic ones. Cooperative dialogue is a strategy of engagement for multi-ethnic social environments, characterized by antagonism and divisions, seeking co-existence between various political truths through practices that persuade people to broaden the range of their commitments to others, building inclusive communities. Tanja Milovanović stated, “The essence of reconciliation is dialogue and communication and during the post-Tito era Bosnia

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<sup>63</sup> Interview, 10-10-2016

<sup>64</sup> NDC’s work is geared towards intercultural and interethnic dialogue processes at local, national and international levels, conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding. For more, see <http://www.nansen-dialogue.net/index.php/en/who-are-we/vision-and-mission>

has struggled to understand this, as a culture of dialogue was unknown to us.”<sup>65</sup> She mentioned that in Bosnia people talk to persuade but not to understand one another, making communication a strategy for convincing. NDC provides information to people on the benefits of dialogue, on shared beliefs and on information regarding the most pressing issues in the country. Tanja explains that cooperation is an important focus in youth work to avoid the inter-generational passing of trauma;

“Working with youth means to develop joint activities and get participants and various actors to work together. We offer support for group engagement and they often continue to do activities without us, sometimes they get together and plan a project and find a way to get grants to be able to do more joint activities.”<sup>66</sup>

The focus is dealing with prejudice and help people to overcome it:

“Whenever we have the opportunity to provide for spaces to deal with prejudice, and particularly in promoting the existence of multi-ethnic settings where different perspectives can engage in dialogue, this is what helps. The step after this is for this dialogue and outcomes to move away from participants’ communities and find a way to reach other areas and other individuals. We try to avoid for these processes to be stuck in the communities.”<sup>67</sup>

### ***Cooperating at top and bottom***

Cooperation in pursuit of common interests seems like a practical engagement within peacebuilding, an opportunity to connect thin high-level politics with thick, grounded practices of reconciliation. Practices at both levels focus on solving immediate concerning issues. Whether it is national projects that support sharing of resources, information and activities between countries, getting young people to encounter “the other”, destroying

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<sup>65</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

<sup>66</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

<sup>67</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

stereotypes created via education and the inter-generational passing of trauma or simply discussing possibilities for joint projects and solutions to local problems, cooperation seems practical and forward-looking. Interviewees interpret reconciliation as

“An approach that not only tries to find a solution to the issues underlying the conflict but also to alter adversaries’ relationships from that of resentment and hostility to friendship and harmony. For this to happen both parties must be equally invested intensively in the resolution process.” (Assefa, 2001, p.120)

The question is to what extent these practices truly connect and if localised, thick, youth experiences of dialogue find active audiences at state levels where thin reconciliation is located. Connections not made only through grants and projects but by turning local concerns part of the political agenda, producing policies responsive to the needs of the people who have actually “worked together”, overcoming differences and promoting a specific vision of change. Youth engagement is important, asking the question of whether these localised, thick, interethnic encounters are enough to overcome prejudice. Bearing in mind different sources for the intergenerational passing of trauma and stereotypes (media, parents, the education system, and politics), leads to questioning if thick projects are durable enough for young people to break stereotypes and work together.

### **Punishing for reconciliation**

Retributive justice is a highly discussed and written about topic in reconciliation. The reconciliation claim is that prosecutions have a cathartic role appeasing desires for vengeance, creating a sense of justice through prosecution (Betts, 2005). Tribunals can contribute to peace, marginalizing nationalist politicians, potentially moving from violence to rule of law (Hoogenbom and Vieille, 2010, p. 189). It also establishes deterrence, facilitating the creation of judicial structures. The main retributive argument is that violent pasts need settling before a transition process to peace really begins, requiring retributive justice

(Eastmond, 2010, p.6) done via punishing perpetrators through criminal tribunals. The justification is that prosecutions individualize guilt, ending collective blaming. Retributive justice punishes perpetrators of the old regime, reconstructs a morally just order, establishes a young democracy and helps heal wounds and repair private and public damage (Huyse, 2001). Prosecutions can comfort victims, reflect a new set of social norms and begin a trust-building process between society and state institutions (Van Zyl, 2005). Trials become expressions of societal desire for distribution and reaffirming essential norms and values that when violated give rise to sanctions. Trials demonstrate to victims that state institutions will seek to protect rather than violate rights, restoring victims' dignity and reduce desires for anger or grievances.

### ***Practicing retributive justice***

As mentioned in Chapter three, the main source of retributive justice in Bosnia is the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). An ICTY promotional leaflet states:

“Justice is an indispensable ingredient in the process of national reconciliation. It is essential to the restoration of peaceful and normal relations between people who have had to live under a reign of terror. It breaks the cycle of violence, hatred, and extrajudicial retribution. Thus peace and justice of hand in hand.”

Antonio Cassesse, former ICTY President.

An anonymous ICTY-Outreach representative stated that both transitional justice and the ICTY had been given excessive expectations surrounding their work on the ground and particularly reconciliation: “We have been the major actor of transitional process; we have

been partners with initiatives on the field and are trying to explain the limitation of the mandate.”<sup>68</sup>

Transitional justice was

“A complex process that is not limited to the judicial component of it. So many processes have not even started or are barely just starting. We are talking about the right to truth, re-satisfaction of the victims of institutional reform issues. The ICTY started the process by initiating war crime trials but people were misled into this idea that it would bring reconciliation or to go beyond its mandate which is simply to pursue war criminals.”<sup>69</sup>

For the interviewee, the ICTY contributed to dealing with the past and reconciliation via war crime trials. Yet, there are other processes that need to go together (better engagement with the media, reforms in education, and support to political processes for reconciliation and truth finding), requiring local stakeholders rather than the international community:

“We are fighting denial by the facts; we talk about judicial facts, established with high standards, beyond reasonable doubt. When you talk with facts this is a powerful tool. We do not go into political debates away from our mandate, when you face numbers with numbers and evidence it is hard to deny that.”<sup>70</sup>

Although the ICTY maintains that its work helps establish a historical record of the former Yugoslavia during the 1990’s, in political life it is in the interpretation of these given facts that is most important (Clark, 2010, p. 348). Advocating for retributive justice is Elmina Kulasić from the Association for Transitional Justice and Remembrance (TJAR):

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<sup>68</sup> Interview on 11-10-2016

<sup>69</sup> Interview on 11-10-2016

<sup>70</sup> Interview on 11-10-2016

“In Bosnia, truth and reconciliation have many meanings for each group in Bosnia due to the aftermath of the war. If we look at the ICTY, it was created in 1993 and shaped the narrative in terms of how we reckon with the past and how we approach truth telling through legal means rather than working directly with survivors, and that has been the approach since 1993, focusing on perpetrators and doing fact-finding.”<sup>71</sup>

This approach shaped NGO work, influencing fact-finding activism. For her the starting point has been a legal, case-related approach to atrocities in Bosnia, as it is the safest way of dealing with the past. Kulasić deems problematic the ICTY’s initial lack of engagement with locals, leading to peacebuilding developing a local approach focused on victims, survivors and their views, as the legal system did not work directly with survivors. She recognizes a gap between approaches, a legal approach with established processes and facts and a field in need of training on how to approach survivors, the human side of the process. Reconciliation

“Has to do with the acknowledgment of atrocities that took place. There needs to be a starting point for this, as we cannot engage in reconciliation without a widespread acknowledgment of the committed crimes. Recognizing that society needs to accept what happened, that there are victims and that we are still searching for remains.”<sup>72</sup>

BIRN also supports retributive justice, particularly war crime trials. Erna Maćkik stated, “After so many years we have had a lot of experience not just on war crimes but also on other pillars of transitional justice. We have connections with media, prosecutors, NGOs, victims associations.” Maćkik explained the difficult process for establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the Bosnian judiciary, and how their work for monitoring

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<sup>71</sup> Interview, 20-09-2016

<sup>72</sup> Interview, 20-09-2016

retributive justice started: “We are constant, we go every day to the courtroom, we constantly do crime reporting, we have good relations with the Public Relations office in the State level Court, perhaps less with the Prosecutor’s office. We are persistent.”<sup>73</sup> BIRN actively works assessing Court reporting, looking for openness, transparency and less space for mistakes. This is balanced with their monitoring of Bosnian media’s war crime reporting. There is space for factual mistakes in this line of work, which explains their training focused on how to conduct professionally when reporting legal issues, leading to a positive assessment of the evolving professionalization of war crime reporting.

“In the beginning [2007] prosecutors were quite angry at the media for making mistakes on reporting their work” as journalists often misunderstood the judicial process in Bosnia, and “we ended up doing a series of training to solve the training issue. Two years later we saw the process and the relationship more positive although there was a tendency of reporters calling prosecutors directly at their homes of mobile phones to clarify things.”<sup>74</sup>

What she sees now is judges and prosecutors being open to giving information via their website, a clear sign of progress. Maćkik connects this to truth telling: “We need first a Bosnian commission rather than a regional commission, RECOM. We need to start from here and move to the regional level and not the other way around...We also need laws at the state level, built into BiH for this and once this is achieved then we can focus on the region. We need to start locally.”<sup>75</sup>

Judicial reform is important for transitional justice and retributive work, particularly strengthening judicial institutions that can continue dealing with the tasks of transitional justice. In BiH, retributive justice moved from ICTY to strengthening and development of

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<sup>73</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>74</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>75</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

the judiciary, a task supported by the Swiss Embassy's Cooperation Agency through its "Political stability and effective democratic institutions" project.<sup>76</sup> Haris Lokavić explained the embassy's support of the judiciary via their "Human Security" programme, which includes demining and landmine awareness, assistance to justice in war crimes processing via training judiciary staff focused on judging properly and professionally. This includes providing support to victims and witnesses as well as NGOs involved in the judicial process and supporting the judicial system by creating witness support offices at the institutional level. Also, the embassy supports BIRN in the covering of war crime trials, and ICMP in identifying missing persons; supporting the drafting of the national transitional justice strategy, bringing in the UNDP and the Spanish Embassy for financial and technical support. For Lokavić, retributive work requires connections with other areas:

"The translation of reconciliation in local languages is complex and conflictive; it is full of rhetorical questions, about how assistance to war crimes helps reconciliation. Justice is a necessary tool but it does not help people reconcile in villages in the North of Bosnia for instance. We need to initiate work in all levels, ministries, working together, employment offices of entities and local municipalities. People know each other very well. There are also small actions, contributions by organizations like summer camps, transitional justice schools, youth activism, and support for human rights discussions. Attempts to bring people closer and cross borders."<sup>77</sup>

The Norwegian Embassy also adopts a retributive line via the "Norwegian support to improving judicial efficiency", a policy emphasizing constant support for projects to reform

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<sup>76</sup> Work guided by principles of governance, safety and security at the local level, strong civil society development and development in mine affected communities. Key is the strengthening of the central state and its administration, support to judiciary reform and social inclusion.

<sup>77</sup> Interview, 22-10-2016.

the judiciary in Bosnia, channeling funds via the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia (HJPC). They recognize as challenging the complicated administrative and legislative organization of the country. Anne Havnor, Deputy Head of Mission, clarified the Embassy's retributive work: "reconciliation underpins what we do and is the basis for selecting our partner organizations; we demand from them an active approach that includes work that goes across ethnic and national lines in the country and the region."<sup>78</sup> In supporting transitional justice,

"We are a major bilateral donor for judicial efficiency and capacity building processes here in Bosnia. We are trusted partners with the High Judicial Prosecution Council. Our gender and justice project, which we headed, led to cooperating with the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and cooperation with the local office of the Atlantic Initiative on putting in practice Security Council Resolutions on women, peace, and security."<sup>79</sup>

The project has three strands: judicial abilities surrounding cases of domestic violence against women, sexual harassment in the judiciary and gender bias. Organizing these strands requires harmonious work and cooperation between organizations and the HJCP. Havnor commented, "We work on this gender dimension to support women victims of domestic violence as well as survivors of wartime violence, and in this sense, we concentrate on the delivery of justice to both women and men victims of gender violence."<sup>80</sup>

A common concern with retributive work is the improvement of procedures in the justice system, both for transitional and ordinary processes. In this sense, TRIAL supports judicial reform, monitoring criminal proceedings and improving procedures in retributive justice.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

<sup>79</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

<sup>80</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

TRIAL has been concerned with the non-implementation of existing legal framework for transitional justice. They report that

“Although the Criminal Procedure Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides for a detailed legal framework for the exercising of rights of victims, including victims of war crimes, to compensation for the harm they suffered, in practice, there have been no known cases of decision making on property claims filed by such persons...What is mentioned as the cause of this problem is primarily judiciary practice, i.e. failure of prosecutor’s offices and courts to meet their obligations prescribed by law.” (TRIAL, 2016, p. 12).

Adisa Fisić stated their need to work closely on the legislative aspects of transitional justice, looking at the effects war crime proceedings have on victims.

“We work with the state, with various stakeholders such as judges and prosecutors. Communication is positive, we do positive work with the judiciary. Unfortunately, the situation there develops not very quickly, the general administration here is very complicated so seeing changes in the law is a very long process. You must be patient. It took two years to change the BiH criminal law in order to define issues such as rape and wartime disappearances.”<sup>81</sup>

She highlighted areas of legal work TRIAL is dedicated to;

“We do advocacy for changing the law on identity protection during criminal proceedings as well as the issue of moving from criminal to civil proceedings. Here many victims reveal their identity and this is a concrete problem we want to

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<sup>81</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

change. There are many issues surrounding victims we focus on, we need more implementations on decisions in favor of forced disappearance cases.”<sup>82</sup>

Also sponsoring transitional justice is the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>83</sup> The OSCE’s retributive role emerges in its Rule of Law approach:

“Monitor trials involving war crimes, hate crimes, and human trafficking, and documents the work of the judiciary. It also administers the War Crimes Processing Project, an initiative to help the country’s justice sector expedite the fair and effective processing of war crimes cases...” (OSCE, N.D.)

Its priorities are justice sector, institutional and legislative reform. Samra Ramić and Nihad Gavranović explained

“We realize that there are tons of actions that we work on that fit reconciliation. We work with the local community and reconciliation in the broader sense starts there. You cannot work on reconciliation solely at the state level, you need it at the local level if you want to foster stability. When we talk about stability for reconciliation, that means the provision of an environment conducive to employment, good governance, where citizens are involved in decision-making, working with marginalized groups, all these things that contribute to social cohesion and reconciliation.”<sup>84</sup>

For them, OSCE activities aim at building trust in the system, between the government and the people, which makes dissatisfaction with the government at the local level an essential issue to tackle. Gavranović talked about three legacies for transitional justice that the OSCE tries to tackle; “inheritance of the previous governance system, an inadequate local system

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<sup>82</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

<sup>83</sup> The OSCE’s mission is the promotion of reconciliation and assistance to Bosnian authorities in its path to political and socioeconomic integration.

<sup>84</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

unresponsive to the people and the constant need to build social cohesion.”<sup>85</sup> The OSCE’s support focuses on making adequate local administrations to be more responsive to people, leaving aside bad past administrative practices and creating a better space for politics in BiH. Ramić complemented, transitional justice “is in all that we do: human rights, rule of law, education, good governance. Removing discriminatory dispositions in education and in the laws in the different constitutions.” Gavranović added “we work on removing discriminatory dispositions in legislation. We gather people who can raise concern about the discriminatory dispositions and guide them into the process of raising awareness and creating change.”<sup>86</sup> Ramić focused on local ownership:

“We called the prime ministers of all the cantons in the Federation. We focused on the constitutions of all the cantons, pointing to the discriminatory provisions. The Prime Minister’s recognized which constitutions were problematic. Our ambassador then gave us political support and after this we moved to technical work, facilitating. The result has been amendments to the constitution that do not have any discriminatory dispositions. In this sense, the cantonal government did the job, not the OSCE.”<sup>87</sup>

### *Needed connections between international and local in retributive justice*

These organizations’ retributive focus insists on how the legislative and judicial processes deal with war crimes processing, victims of sexual crimes, discrimination, and the need for an effective and transparent judicial process. Activities are placed upon the state level, as thin reconciliation. The ICTY’s role is highlighted by most actors as the initiator of transitional justice and guiding mechanism for judicial sector development in dealing with war crimes. This approach requires working directly with the Bosnian state, offering the opportunity of

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<sup>85</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>86</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>87</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

bringing to its attention the justice needs of the population and particularly a focus on victims whose needs are to be prioritized by transitional justice and peacebuilding. The dilemmas have to do with an excessive international focus disconnecting with victims, ignoring their realities, thin reconciliation disconnected from the realm of the thick. This is an inherited legacy from the ICTY to organizations doing transitional justice who need constant outreach with locals, requiring engaging with victims, not only in explaining complicated, technical terms of transitional justice but involving them in the process, not only as witnesses and sources of evidence against perpetrators but as active influencers in the decision-making processes for legislative and judicial reform. Regarding the ICTY's view that they are creating an official 'judicial' truth, it is in the interpretation of the facts that truth telling takes place, and in the case of BiH, as different interpretative frameworks on the ground do not converge, then facts alone will not help form a shared past between communities (Clark, 2010). This is vital for connecting thin and thick reconciliation, requiring more prioritizing. The concern over transitional justice not only involves perpetrators or international jurisprudence but also with the acceptance and legitimation of such processes by locals and how transitional justice moves from pure legalistic views to addressing other forms of justice such as socioeconomic justice. Arenhövel (2008, p. 581) warns that when integration of society as a whole is endangered, transitional justice needs to be seen as a prerequisite for democracy; with higher levels of societal mobilization and fragmentation, a higher need for transitional justice. In this sense, the legitimacy gap in transitional justice is highly problematic for the democratization process in BiH.

### **Peace education: teaching and learning reconciliation**

Education as a peacebuilding arena accepts socialization as a channel for reconciliation values. Social change within education begins by conceiving education programmes as a way to begin understanding oneself, becoming aware of own approaches and behaviors.

Change moves towards becoming aware of one's relations with other people, analyzing then and opening spaces for analyzing different forms of social relations (Zenzerović, 2007, p. 96). As education is vital in socializing young people, it potentially becomes space for interethnic cooperation and practical site of reconciliation ideas of tolerance, acceptance and "recognizing the other". Peace education connects to truth telling: creating credible accounts of human rights and spaces for learning the past to preventing future repetitions of atrocities (Mendeloff, 2004). Education is a place for questioning and reshaping discourses at the political and societal level, helping overcome victimisation (Fischer, 2011, p. 419). This sees reconciliation as a long-term process, combining factual truth with narrative-dialogical truths to avoid polarization. Education becomes space for planning for security and peacebuilding, as curricula teachings and practices can reinforce ideological, racial, religious and political differences, a security issue in the form of peace education (Nelles, 2006).

### ***Delivering peace education***

BiH peace education practices adopt an informal pedagogical approach, outside the classroom, to address the past, looking critically at recent historical issues as well as looking for youth cooperation through the teaching of democratic values. Connecting fact-finding and peace education is Fama's work, developing multimedia projects focused on the siege of Sarajevo and the fall of Yugoslavia. This collection serves as a virtual bank of knowledge bridging divides between remembrance and knowledge.<sup>88</sup> Suada Kapić, Fama's Executive Director responded online: "Our contribution to reconstruction is orientating at the methodology of laying down the facts, causes, and consequences of the fall of Yugoslavia... We believe that credible archives and formative multimedia projects have to serve the

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<sup>88</sup>Fama's work is seen as a "new approach to documenting facts and evidence and mapping-out root causes and consequences of events in a genre accessible to a wide-spectrum audience". (FAMA, N.D.)

alternative education of citizens and especially young people.”<sup>89</sup> Reconciliation is “establishing normal, functional relations in society after war destruction of the very fundamentals of the roots of society”<sup>90</sup> and it particularly requires “education, unique educational platform about what happened and how it has happened without allowing any manipulation of facts so people can first accept and after accepting establish functional relationships.”<sup>91</sup> For Kapić, Fama aims to establish factography (as opposed to the political manipulation of history, common in BiH’s political and educational systems), conceiving Fama as alternative education via media dissemination and special public lectures realized in collaboration with other organizations from the civil sector. Fama’s future vision is to have a mass approach to education favoring younger generations.

Youth leaders have a lot of input on the role of peace education in the country as most advocate such practices. Aleksa Matić, from Banja Luka, recognizes that within society, there is high acceptance of the idea of reconciliation except when it comes to politics. “We share a lot, we share a language, we share the same difficult economic situation and lifestyle...There is no real problem between us when it comes to communicating but when it comes to politics it gets difficult....”<sup>92</sup> As a young leader recognizing the problematic politics in BiH, Matić created a peace education platform. He participated in the Be a Man Club – Banja Luka, a series of high school clubs that develop educational workshops where students connect with one another and work on gender awareness as well as sexual education.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, Matić got involved in projects with the Institute for Youth and Community Development:

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<sup>89</sup> E-mail correspondence dated 05-10-2016

<sup>90</sup> E-mail correspondence dated 05-10-2016

<sup>91</sup> E-mail correspondence dated 05-10-2016

<sup>92</sup> Interview, 17-10-2016

<sup>93</sup> See <http://www.yeu-international.org/en/publications/newsmail/small-stories-that-can-change-the-world/be-a-man-club-stop-violence-against-girls-and-women>

“My role is as a volunteer peer educator. The main project that we work on is called ‘react as a human’ focused on fighting against violence against women...We work on equality issues for women as these problems have become obvious over here. Women may be recognized by the law but in practice aren’t as equal as men here.”<sup>94</sup>

This work requires “do(ing) street actions, education campaigns like our “react as a human” campaign, whose mission is to make a platform to prevent violence.”<sup>95</sup> As a result, form various pilot projects; Matić started doing high schools peer education in areas with high levels of violence. This entailed raising awareness on social issues, coordinating youth programs on issues such as bullying and violence and the organization of workshops, field visits, and parent meetings. This meant getting youngsters, involved in violence, to join programmes like the ‘Be a Man Club’. As a step forward, the “coalition under the scope” was created, a group of young people engaged electoral monitoring in six different areas of BiH (two Croat, two Serb and two Bosniak). The program’s objective has been peer education and training in the political and electoral processes in BiH, youth serving as watchdogs against electoral fraud and other irregularities in Bosnia’s electoral processes.

Another young leader is Sabahudin Mujkić,<sup>96</sup> for whom reconciliation is important in Bosnia to counter ongoing propaganda focused on ethnic divisions. Reconciliation is “accepting others if people can live and work together in the cities why can’t they do it in the rural areas. That is why we need to address it more in the peripheral areas.”<sup>97</sup> Reconciliation work needs to start “in school, with classes to learn how to address this. If radicalization is becoming a

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<sup>94</sup> Interview, 17-10-2016

<sup>95</sup> Interview, 17-10-2016

<sup>96</sup> Coordinator of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). ESN assists national authorities, higher education institutions and educational stakeholders with the implementation of EU’s Erasmus+ activities, which seek an integration and cultural exchange between European students.

<sup>97</sup> Interview, 19-10-2016

serious problem, just like landmines and drugs, then we need to learn about it.”<sup>98</sup> Sabahudin explained that despite opposition from different authorities,

“ESN is trying to get sections for Erasmus in Banja Luka and in many areas of Republika Srpska, to counter the influence of nationalism in education. ESN’s work not only focuses on promoting the Erasmus+ programme in Bosnia-Herzegovina but in “promoting BiH internationally as well. We go to conferences where we represent our country and promote views other than just the war. We try to work with our Balkan neighbours in order to move social issues in the country, we try to work conjunctly.”<sup>99</sup>

Youth work practitioner Dijana Pegić<sup>100</sup> replaces reconciliation with coexistence; “reconciliation is deeper work than coexistence. It is a term applicable to adults but not to children, for them reconciliation is not applicable as they do not have issues to reconcile with. What we focus on with children are values such as coexistence, tolerance and the need to not have prejudice.”<sup>101</sup> Genesis works with small communities, bringing children together, creating ethnically mixed groups to do peer education workshops, movie production projects and educational activities where children of different backgrounds meet and work together. Pegić told me Genesis’ story, an organization working for 20 years, which allowed them to be trusted locally despite its connections with international donors. Key to Genesis’s work has been the establishment of a multi-ethnic team, uncommon during early post-war years where most teams worked mono-ethnically. This sent a message of cooperative education work, “focused on children, not on ethnicities”. Pegić stated,

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, 19-10-2016

<sup>99</sup> Interview, 19-10-2016

<sup>100</sup> Representing the Genesis project. A local organization in Banja Luka developing an education platform for children that includes peaceful conflict prevention and resolution, landmine awareness, interactive education for children’s rights, gender equality, and peacebuilding.

<sup>101</sup> Interview, 13-10-2016

“We believe that working together is unavoidable and because of this belief, we were led to work not only in Republika Srpska but also in the Federation. It took a while but this process was a result of an identification of the needs of children and our needs as an organization to work in various areas. Politicians have made us doubt that coexistence is possible but when you work with children you can see how open-minded they are and how willingly they are to remove prejudices and stereotypes. This is a population where you can see significant changes.”<sup>102</sup>

The Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) also engages in peace education, recognizing that because of war, ethnic divisions have found their way into ethnic groups and local communities and have ended up in the creation of a system of mono-ethnic schools within Bosnia’s educational system (Nansen Dialogue Center, N.D.). High school segregation, mono-ethnic education and lack of contact between students increase ethnic divides for the future. In Srebrenica and Bratunac, NDC engaged in seminars organized in high schools titled “Peace and Intercultural education in the High School Srebrenica” focused on integrative approaches to education in this geographical area. NDC began extracurricular joint activities for Bosniak and Serb pupils in Kravica and Konjevic Polje viewed as spaces for interethnic dialogue and cooperation. Other projects aim at increasing interaction between Croat and Bosniak pupils in Stolac, and a space for student and teacher dialogues on the school system and its prospects for reconciliation. A key achievement for NDC was working with the OSCE on integrating human rights education and minority rights into the school system, a program focused on supporting minority returns processes into the school system. Tanja Milovanović explained that youth work in BiH requires long-term engagement, at least of a 3-year framework per project.<sup>103</sup> Most activities from NDC have to do with interethnic contact between different students and young people in BiH. One key

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<sup>102</sup> Interview, 13-10-2016

<sup>103</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

area is working with high school teachers in planning and development of education focused on conflict resolution:

“Working with teachers is vital, as often when you work with teachers who are interested in the development of joint activities, your work is already done by them in terms of organizing students and supporting them. We try to include anyone who simply wants to be involved.”<sup>104</sup>

NDC’s approach to combating prejudice in BiH recognizes that “the issue is everyone has prejudice, we see it within us. Our work is simply to help overcome it. Whenever we have the opportunity to provide for these spaces, and particularly in promoting the engagement of different perspectives in dialogue, this is what helps.” Jasmin Hasić, HIA’s representative<sup>105</sup>, explained their one-month program in human rights, which usually involves groups of 20 people: 10 Bosnians and 10 from the United States, who discuss human rights within the Bosnian context<sup>106</sup>. HIA develops fellowships with Bosnian and international students, lectures on human rights and genocide issues, memorial tours, meeting with key decision makers and representatives of political institutions in the country. HIA’s growth has led to the establishment of a network in different countries, sharing information and publishing on peace and reconciliation issues, enabling international cooperation between Bosnia and other countries. Fellowship participants are expected to put together projects to highlight their learning; giving lectures at universities, fundraising events, media presentations and activities that benefit their future careers. One of the most attractive benefits of HIA’s work is the promotion and implementation of projects that include grants, study trips, participation in international conferences and internship opportunities for Bosnian students.

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<sup>104</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

<sup>105</sup> HIA focuses on establishing peace in Bosnia via education, networking and cooperation of youth and the study of cultural, religious and ethnic tolerance.

<sup>106</sup> Interview, 07-09-2016

For Hasić, key in the HIA's work is its inclusive approach to students in Bosnia. He says,

“We work with all the cities. I cannot think of a region without a fellow here in Bosnia. Most advertising happens within universities, for that reason cities with universities are the prime target as this is a university-led project...targeting happens at Universities but we do pay attention to regional representation apart from all the other [ethnic] representations that we need to take care of, as it is a constitutional matter that spills onto the NGO level.”<sup>107</sup>

HIA's view allows for engagement with other organizations, seeking to break ethnic and regional divides. This idea of extending networks via recruitment has led to HIA developing a program with the International Višegrad group, connecting Bosnia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in the teaching of holocaust studies in central Europe, creating a curriculum for Genocide and Holocaust Studies, trips to participating countries and joint lecturing from local professors. HIA cooperates with BIRN in the screening of documentaries about the Rwandan genocide as well as working with Transparency International on educational projects, via connections established with former HIA fellows.

### ***Peace education: alternative versus mainstream***

Peace education gains space as an alternative, non-formal space promoting reconciliation, dealing with localised, community-focused, and thick reconciliation. It attempts to engage students (from all levels), teachers and parents in promoting tolerance, combating prejudice and violence as well as techniques for conflict resolution and transformation. It čings a pedagogical view of reconciliation, potentially bringing other approaches into education. It connects with truth telling, bringing different perspectives of history and culture that combat

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<sup>107</sup> Interview, 07-09-2016

nationalist narratives separating youngsters via mono-ethnic and segregating educational practices. It promotes crossing inter-ethnic boundaries, seeking contact between students and teachers from different ethnic backgrounds, leading to cooperation and mutual understanding, shaped by the promotion of values linked to positive conflict transformation.

The dilemma is to what extent informal approaches counter mainstream practices promoting nationalist, separatist ideologies in the educational system. The main challenge with NGO or informal models is often lack of coordination, communication and cooperation between non-formal and formal education systems, obstructing the building of a holistic approach to peace education (Sommardahl, 2015, p. 421). There are many opportunities within this informal system to promote reconciliation values, yet risk the peril of being not long-term enough to counter mono-ethnic or segregationist models of education. This becomes worrying as young people in BiH have a higher chance of radicalization due to lacking memory of national unity that previous Yugoslav generations have. Focusing on this concern, Nelles (2006, p.37) sees as a competing risk for NGO peace education projects, the existence of ethnically-based learning centres, churches and mosques sometimes supported by external resources. This contributes to radicalization of adults and youth, inculcating xenophobic ideas that affect the rise of religious or ideological extremism on BiH via education. Youngsters are separated by their schools, media, and politics and in some cases parents. Peace education disconnects from thin reconciliation, the creation of education laws advocating changes in curricula, in models for mainstream schooling and for the teaching and learning practice in BiH. NGOs in this approach are dedicated to working with local teachers and students, working against nationalist politics that use the education system as a structure that promotes ethnically based education and that uses school segregation an opportunity to keep people divided.

## Summary

This chapter presented five understandings of reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, highlighting meanings and forms of implementation, looking at how projects connect or disconnect high-level initiatives from grassroots work.

Trauma-healing connected with restorative justice, not only places direct attention to victims as reconciliation beneficiaries but also potentially moves individual healing towards collective reconciliation. This requires “thick” work with victims, dealing with needs and trauma, as well as “thin” work, providing legal structures for compensation, reparation, and support. Grassroots psychotherapeutic practice requires support in legislative work, creating frameworks for supporting victims and minorities in BiH. The establishment of a reparations process supportive of all war victims, from all sides, requires taking into consideration victims’ needs identified by therapeutic trauma-healing work.

Dealing with the truth occurs via fact-finding and truth telling. Both sources of truth, factual and subjective, are important for reconciliation and need to be uncovered and disseminated equally. They risk conflict and confrontation, requiring strong connections between these thin and thick realms of truth, requiring a dialogue-prone environment that can come from a political process open to different versions of the truth. This is challenging in two ways: in getting BiH authorities to accept objective accounts that contradict their own political and historical stances. More difficult is getting society to listen and accept multiple truths, requiring accepting narratives where one’s own ethnic group may be responsible for past atrocities.

Less controversial is cooperation, a more practical stance on reconciliation. Pursuing common interest links reconciliation with citizen needs in areas of economic and social

development, dealing with pressing issues. Of particular interest is working with young people, developing a forward-looking approach different from that of “dealing with the past”. Yet cooperation, whether done via political national dialogue and regional development projects or on the ground, gathering people from different ethnicities in everyday routines, requires connecting thick and thin practices, aiming at making local needs part of the policy process in BiH, where development projects that connect authorities reflect the needs of the reconciled citizens on the ground.

Retributive justice, perpetrator-focused justice coupled with judicial reform emerges from international practice, supported by donors and the international community. As a mainly thin type of reconciliation placed upon state/institution-building, it potentially establishes prosecutions to individualize responsibility for war crimes and avoid collective blaming. Yet, in the traditionally distant language and practice of international justice is where disconnection with the “thin” emerges. Not only is this related to criticisms of the ICTY as a (geographic and symbolic) distant justice, but also has implications for the development of the judicial sector of Bosnia, distant and expensive to access for many citizens.

Finally, peace education is introduced as a creative approach promoting tolerance, acceptance, and coexistence among Bosnia’s youth. It offers a wide array of spaces and opportunities to foster interethnic encounters, teaching practices of conflict transformation such as peer mediation, the study of human rights and genocide awareness together with more informal pedagogical practices. This thick approach focused on teachers, students and parents on the ground necessitates connecting with state-building practices in education, in confronting and establishing a dialogue that deals with sources of tension and segregation in schools and universities. Avoiding politics and focusing only on students and informal spaces risk the peril of not being a sustainable enough approach to counter segregation,

mono-ethnic education and the using of education as a tool for nationalist and separatist political practices.

## **CHAPTER 5 - EXPERIENCING RECONCILIATION: GROUND MEANINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explores citizen understandings of reconciliation, looking at personal stories and meanings displaying everyday experiences. Reconciliation stories reflect mind-sets different from peacebuilding projects; everyday sources are not necessarily grounded in technical frames but in what makes sense to people in their day-to-day lives. Being a morally loaded concept, individual understandings of reconciliation show people's sources for ideological bias to the subject, definitions are informed by their basic beliefs about the world (Hamber and Kelly, 2004). Looking at citizens' reconciliation experiences in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), views how these interpretations are connected or disconnected from peacebuilding constructions established previously.

Stories come from conversations and semi-structured interviews with Bosnian citizens during fieldwork, focused on personal experiences, how interviewees lived reconciliation and what importance this concept has for them. Interviewees come from cities and towns in Republika Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Brčko District, and people from different ethnic, social and working backgrounds. Through recurring themes from personal narratives, eight reconciliation understandings can be identified: as forgiveness, as youth engagement, as a form of learning, as an external imposition, as an everyday practice, as communication, as economic prosperity, and as a pre-war state of affairs.

### **“Forgive, never forget”: acknowledgment, remembrance, and recognition**

“Forgive, never forget” appears written on walls throughout BiH, referring to the memorialization of Srebrenica, genocide in Prijedor, concentration camps, and atrocities contested between communities. The phrase illustrates dilemmas of forgiveness in reconciliation: should there be a policy for forgiveness in postconflict contexts? Can one demand forgiveness for those who experienced extreme violence and calamity?

Forgiveness and recognition are transitional justice issues with implications for rebuilding relationships between former adversaries. Forgiveness is “a transaction between the forgiver and the forgiven, a shared acknowledgment of past wrongdoing, an acknowledgment of appropriate punishment and a demonstration that contrition and repentance have been met by mercy” (Newman, 2002, p. 35). Forgiveness constitutes thick reconciliation together with apologies, contrition, and mercy (Fischer 2011, Skaar, 2013). It entails relationship-building between forgiver and forgiven at the individual level (Nordquist, 2006, p.16). At societal levels, reconciliation implies changing attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships towards sustainable peace (Skaar, 2013). Although indispensable for reconciliation (Schaap 2004, Huyse 2001, Christie, Wagner and Winter 2001), forgiveness and recognition can trigger conflict as the desire for recognition of one group can provide the basis for an entrenched vision of politics, leaving out possible encounters with the other (Schaap, 2004). Nonetheless, acknowledging wrongdoing and responsibility and taking the initiative to restore a relationship can bridge gaps with those who were hurt, increasing societal trust (Govier and Verwoerd, 2002).

Some interviewees defined reconciliation as forgiveness and remembrance: acknowledging what happened, apologizing for what was done, repairing harms and being open to forgiveness. Forgiveness is linked to ways of dealing with hate and desires of revenge within

victim communities. For Adnan Hasenbegović, living in Sarajevo, reconciliation “means forgiveness, it is when people can forgive perpetrators for what was done in the past, to move forward, a space for victims.”<sup>108</sup> Similarly, university student Emina Sabljaković views forgiveness to bridge the gap between generations:

“After the war, well we cannot forget. We must try and forgive. The younger generations, we had nothing to do with the war. I am sad for what happened, and we should try to reconcile. If we reconcile it does not mean to forget everything. It’s just to make sure it does not happen again. For newer generations, so that they do not feel the same and try to improve things in this country. This is not forgetting, reconciliation is not forgetting. These are two different things.”<sup>109</sup>

Both quotes refer to remembrance, memory and the possibility of forgiveness for what happened in the past. Forgiveness turns reconciliation into a relational concept, leaving aside individual understandings: it takes two to forgive and reconcile (Nordquist, 2006, p.16). Reconciliation becomes a delicate political act that can end up as an imposition on individuals, going against the nature of reconciliation. For Aleksa Vučen, a Prijedor teacher, forgiveness requires additional elements when working at individual and group levels: victim acknowledgment, their inclusion into the community and public apologies seem to be vital in Prijedor due to the glorification of war criminals as heroes of Republika Srpska, a barrier to forgiveness:

“I would focus on 4 pillars: confrontation, acceptance, apology, and forgiveness. In Prijedor, a town of 9700 inhabitants there were 53% Muslims before the war according to our Census in 1991, now it has gone down to around

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<sup>108</sup> Interview, 25-04-2016

<sup>109</sup> Interview, 20-07-2016

2000 Muslims here. Ethnic cleansing has occurred here, there are allegations of around 3000 people executed by Serb forces, of Croat and Muslim descent. Nothing has been said. We have a monument of the defenders of Prijedor. These were Serb soldiers. When you put yourself in the position of Croats or Muslims here it is horrendous: if you are a Bosnian who returned to Prijedor you do not have a recognition of the atrocities committed against you yet you see a monument for your killers which is o.k. in here. How can you integrate here with this?”<sup>110</sup>

Integration rises as the outcome of forgiveness, supporting the building of a relationship between forgiver and forgiven. Sarajevan schoolteacher Kenan ĆengiĆ is also concerned about this possibility of integration, due to constant reminders of the past, often politicised in BiH. Forgiveness implies getting rid of divisions imposed by war, emphasized during the post-war era. He is concerned with ongoing political practices of division that inhibit dialogue towards reconciliation:

“We need to unlearn the things that the war taught us. Let go of hate born in the war, all that resentment. We have to learn how to forgive. For instance, in regards to Srebrenica, every year we have a big event and every year its commemoration becomes a very big deal. Srebrenica did happen, but its politicisation gives many a reason to hate. Their logic [victims] is that I am fighting through my hate because of what was done to me during the war. This is a victim syndrome that happens over here, it happens to people and leads to a constant state of judgment because of fear, many Bosniaks suffer from this syndrome.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

<sup>111</sup> Interview, 21-05-2016

This last response reflects a particular problem with remembrance in BiH, related to an overload of information regarding the war, making citizens tired of commemorations, of remembrance practices and of what seems to be a never-ending discussion about the war. In this regard, Hodzić writes on BiH memorialization

“I think people do not see the point because we evidently have an overload of information about the war...regardless of how much you are affected by it and are personally concerned, you will in time get bored and tired with it. What determines this discourse of discussing the past is that the past is still being used for the purpose of hatred, the purpose of reheating the fear, the purpose of deepening the divides and people are fed up with it.” (Hodzić, 2007, p. 146).

In their study of monuments as practice of remembrance in BiH, Franović and Vukosavijević (2016, p. 221) state that the overall impression is that it is more important to remember who the enemy is than who the victims were. This turns enemies, whole ethnic groups, into shapeless frightening masses. The diversity within ethnic groups is ignored; those who warned and opposed warmongering politics are ignored and categorized within the mass that should be feared. What BiH remembrance avoids is the suffering of others, mentioned only as enemies.

Forgiveness and recognition are deemed vital for intergroup reconciliation in BiH; forgiveness can become a marker for political reconciliation, as a willingness to reconcile signifies a political context in which an idea of justice can be staged (Schaap, 2008). Although reconciliation can bring spaces for forgiveness these should not pressure victims into forgiving. This happens at their discretion (Bloomfield, 2006, Hamber and Kelly, 2004). Franović and Vukosavijević (2016, p. 226) warn that as reconciliation in BiH is equated to forgiveness this makes it a very unpopular term. They highlight tensions between dealing

constructively with the past and the idea that reconciliation will lead to forgiveness. The tension requires attention to understanding reconciliation as a process of learning how to live with the memory of crimes part of BiH's history and identity as well as a liberation from the ethnopolitical narratives that citizens were exposed to during the war. Key to permitting a space for alleviating this tension is the underlying need for reparations, apologies and constitutional recognition towards reconciliation. Recognition takes on primordial political importance (Assefa, 2001); what needs to be recognized is not just victims' suffering but their sense of being equal rights bearers as citizens. Transitional justice requires recognized victim protection, engaging in modes of redress that diminish their suffering and restore rights violated in the past (De Greiff, 2012). Acknowledgment recognizes the significance and value of persons as individuals, citizens, and victims, requiring a sense of justice through prosecutions combined with appropriate reparations that demonstrate a government's commitment to seeing victims as beneficiaries. Unfortunately, as discussed later, lack of reparations in BiH has led to double-victimization, reducing the window of opportunity for political forgiveness.

### **Youth engagement: forward-looking reconciliation**

A contemporary question in transitional justice is how to effectively and meaningfully include youth in outreach activities. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the delays in establishing effective outreach for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are denounced as its failure, affecting its local legitimacy (Clark 2009a, Sriram 2010). Outreach is defined as "a set of tools that transitional justice measures put in place to build direct channels of communication with affected communities, in order to raise awareness of the justice process and promote understanding of its work" (Ramírez Barat, 2012, p. 2). As children and youth are highly vulnerable groups in society, this has led to their recognition as important stakeholders in transitional justice, yet in practice, they tend to be left out due to

their age and social status (Ramírez-Barat, 2012). Two key transitional justice activities are the inclusion of the perspectives of youth within transitional justice mechanisms, and the need for developing creative engagement strategies that facilitate the genuine participation of youth in the process whilst also protecting them from harm (Ladisch, 2012). This entails a paradox in striking a balance between effective participation and protection against the harm of youth and children in transitional justice.

Various interviewees call for youth participation in reconciliation processes to help youngsters deal with the intergenerational passing of trauma. Part of peacebuilding are inter-generational reconciliation processes dealing with individuals and groups who have to come to grips with prejudices, memories and have had to grow up in polarized societies due to past grievances and divisions (Nordquist, 2006, p.13). Despite not having a recollection of wartime events, youngsters are at times, forcefully influenced by parents, the political system, ethnic peers, and schools to accept the trauma that was inflicted upon previous generations who lived the war. Ada Hassanagić, in Sarajevo, mentioned: “we can see in the children born after the war, elsewhere (outside Sarajevo) you can really see kids having this accumulated hate from their parents and from society. In these cases, it is very common to see their parents belonging to a political party.”<sup>112</sup> This shows how history can become a new reason for conflict and an individual and social challenge in postconflict settings, requiring inter-generational reconciliation (Nordquist, 2006, p.13). In BiH, hate can be passed down from parents to children and teachers to students: Muslim kids learn that Serbs joined Croats in a great aggression and Serb kids taught to blame Serb-hating criminals and terrorists (Nelles, 2006). Filmmaker Emir Kapetanović, in Sarajevo, evidences this:

“There is this case of students in Mostar who wanted to go to Sarajevo as they were tired of the same school trips to Split in Croatia but the teachers were

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<sup>112</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

reluctant to approve this. You can see how someone always works systematically to divide kids. The older generation has a united past but people now work on dividing kids and we have the risk that their goal of a divided society will be fulfilled.”<sup>113</sup>

Interviewees linked reconciliation to the idea of ‘not being made guilty’ of what previous generations, also insisting on participating in political processes derived from peacebuilding so that these consider their needs. Interviews show concerns with a lack of connection with young people in transitional justice, youth problematized as an age with little agency, subject to divisions from a war they had nothing to do with. Sarajevan Emina Sabljaković expresses frustration with the lack of opportunities for young people in reconciliation:

“Young people do not have an opportunity to decide. I cannot decide much apart from voting but that does not change anything. We all try to do what we can. This is not just young people. All people who come here who want to do something positive with the country. However, if we do not give opportunities to young people then, what can we do? We cannot keep electing the same thing...People do not have many opportunities to change things. At least young people should be given an opportunity.”<sup>114</sup>

Amina Isaković, also from Sarajevo, is equally concerned with polarization caused by ethno-politics:

“I do not see these differences in people; people my age were not involved in this war as aggressors. Now you see it on T.V. this year during elections as Dodik talks a lot about his referendum. This creates new problems for younger

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<sup>113</sup> Interview, 25-10-2016

<sup>114</sup> Interview, 20-07-2016

generations, creating hate. They want to separate us but we will not let this happen. They must stop spreading this hate.”<sup>115</sup>

Lejla Crnkić, a Sarajevo University student, denounces the unavoidable impact of the dividing mentality on Bosnian youth:

“We don’t need so many parties, or three presidents to represent us, maybe one day we will have just one. We do not need this system that turns schools into one roof. We have been talking about the past for twenty years and in order to fight you need two sides so that is why I switch off. We must stop this fighting and this constant talking about who was the one who started the war.”<sup>116</sup>

The disconnection between the thin and thick can be appreciated in the fact that most opinions reflect a complete indifference from high-level politics and peacebuilding with the issues of youth yet recognize the value of grassroots projects that seek to integrate young people. Two clashing interview responses reflect this. For Kemal Salaca, working with former underage fighters and a former underage fighter himself during the war, concern with how youth is ignored in transitional justice is accentuated:

“...bear in mind that we had between seven and ten thousand underage fighters during the war here in Bosnia, no organization, domestic or international, saw us doing the war. All of this was an ignored issue back then. I believe it is a myth that child volunteers are all forced, the truth, and particularly here in Bosnia, most of the children fighting took arms voluntarily to protect their family. Mainly children were volunteers.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

<sup>116</sup> Interview, 10-10-2016

<sup>117</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

In contrast, Aleksandra Kuljanin's story shows evidence of reconciliation efforts that can affect children and youth:

“Three years ago I was working for this NGO, Youth Sports Game; it travels around Bosnia doing competitions for children... In 2014, we were in Livno, this western town in the middle of nowhere... We were on a playground, kids playing football. When Bosnia was playing in the World Cup, this team had half-Croatian and half-Bosnian jerseys. There were two best friends, one Croat, one Bosnian and one with a Bosnian player on his jersey and the other with a Croat player. They hugged. Their name was the Fire-dragons. This came as a combination as Croatian is known to be “fuelled by fire” and Bosnians are known as the Dragons. They had their identities, their favorite players but they were together as friends, playing together. That's reconciliation, be what you want to be and respect the others whatever they are.”<sup>118</sup>

Transitional justice, as social reconstruction, is said to be both backward and forward-looking (Van Zyl, 2005, Hoogenbom and Vieille, 2010). It deals with the past and looks towards the construction of spaces for peaceful cohabitation and cooperation for future generations, as with the football story. Interviewee calls for forward-looking reconciliation require giving youth a space in Bosnian politics free from ethnic divisions, manipulations from politics and concerned with their future prosperity. The contrast between Kemal Salaca's insistence on how youth has been ignored in transitional justice and the positive turn in Alexandra Kuljanin's experience means that youth remains a critical population for engagement for peacebuilding and that approaching youth in peacebuilding creates the ground for connecting the top-down and the bottom-up. As hinted in the quotes, the entrenchment in ethnic cleavages and promotion of ethnopolitics will particularly affect young people's chances for

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<sup>118</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

prosperity in BiH, leading to a “youth drain” in the country, a problem addressed in the following chapter.

### **Linking past with future: learning about reconciliation**

Including education practices in reconciliation means promoting pedagogies that enhance communal learning among youth groups, fostering interethnic bonds through mutual learning and participation in education. It requires opening up spaces that allow listening and disseminating narratives of the past that lead young people to discussions about what happened and how that situates them in society. Education is conceived as a primary vehicle for re-humanizing and trust-building processes to take place (Clark, 2010, p. 346)

Placing education as a channel for reconciliation recognizes its potential for truth telling and remembrance that promotes interethnic encounters between students. Education can institutionalize remembrance, creating historical records of past violence and shared history of groups in conflict, opening possibilities for future reconciliation (Subotić, 2016, p.122). By contributing to credible accounts of past violence, post-conflict education can help demystify contested pasts. Comprehensive educational reforms are critical steps towards justice based on trust, respect, and dignity, requiring profound political change (Subotić, 2016, p.122). Education reform is a mechanism that can contribute to transforming relationships between people, bringing opposing sides together and promoting reconciliation (Jones, 2016, p.193). Yet, educational reform can fail in this potential when structured by universal frameworks underpinning human rights and citizenship that ignore the complexities of everyday lives of children in post-war contexts.

Reconciliation, by seeking a forward-looking perspective, necessitates embedding in educational practices that take into account realities experienced by students. For interviewees, this means having a schooling experience that encounters the other, not only by

breaking ethnic boundaries by meeting the other but by actually learning and living together with other communities. They insist on more exposure to complex concepts like transitional justice, reconciliation and the work of the international community, not only to bring awareness of what has been going on in the country but also to encourage a critical mindset that can challenge divisions arising from ethnopolitics in the country. Education was prompted as key for promoting reconciliation, yet deemed as a concern by many interviewees. Aleksandra Kuljanin in Sarajevo mentioned “For reconciliation we need education, we need to change our textbooks, make them universal. This takes many years as education has degraded. I received a better education in the nineties than the education that kids have nowadays.”<sup>119</sup> Sabahudin Mujkić, a university leader promoting cultural exchanges between Bosnia and other European countries, also insists that education should address the dividing issues in the country. Concerned about youth radicalization in the country, he believes that to achieve reconciliation,

“We need to start in school, with classes to learn how to address this. I remember we used to have classes about landmines and awareness of them, about drugs and youth. Therefore, if radicalization is becoming a serious problem, just like mines and drugs, then we need to learn about it. Young minds are getting attracted by quick money and there are always these rumors running around of how joining the Wahhabis in the country pays.”<sup>120</sup>

The potential in education for establishing interethnic bonds between young people, countering ethnic, social and political divisions, is present in Nejra Kadić’s story about moving from a segregated school in Gornji Vakuf, where students from different ethnic groups study in separate classrooms, with different teachers and curricula. She transferred to

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<sup>119</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

<sup>120</sup> Interview, 19-10-2016

an international school in Mostar, which provides interethnic and international student environments:

“I went to high school in Mostar. And when I arrived there, I thought I was a very open-minded individual mainly because of the suffocation that came from studying in a two schools under one roof system. By going to Mostar and meeting so many others, not even just Croats and Serbs but other students, this made me aware of how biased I was, that I was not really that objective. I was so ready to integrate with all of these people, but when I got there, I saw how one-sided things were for me. I noticed it. I reached this level of understanding of who I am and how long that route was. Spending time with Serbs and Croats and realize all the stories about their victims and their stories made me feel this reconciliation. We ignore so much about their atrocities. We build so much on issues like Srebrenica and the guilt of the Serbs that we forget that they have their own episodes, their own atrocities, and their own tragedies. In Mostar, I was able to break out from all of this.”<sup>121</sup>

An innovating space for change is the education system, where ideas and concepts can be promoted in a democratic and peaceful manner. To overcome victimisation, societies need multi-level approaches geared towards questioning and shaping discourses at political and societal level through education (Fischer, 2011, p. 419). An example of this is Nevena Medic’s story; a youth leader in Srebrenica promoting rescuer stories in schools confronts different narratives on history present in high school students’ minds:

“...we had a positive experience with high school students with ordinary heroes’ projection, discussion afterward were fruitful. I thought high school students in

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<sup>121</sup> Interview, 21-07-2016

Bosnia are not encouraged to talk a lot, it is a system where the teacher holds a lot of authority and you are not allowed to speak a lot. The teacher is telling his thoughts to the class and in that moment I saw the students so open and emotionally engaged. I did not know this, as all the things we hear in media is that Serbs are genocidal or that this is the only one who is to blame is the people where I grew up. And I see that there is a different perspective and that it is not presented in education or media, that people did not want that war that we had positive examples of people helping each other, being friends in this area with this constant understanding of why we should not be friends with each other.”<sup>122</sup>

Post-war education can potentially promote truth telling, allowing dialogue amongst students. Inclusive education can help peacebuilding by promoting encounters with students from different backgrounds, as long as it acknowledges the complex realities faced outside the classroom. Interviews show concerns with the influence of ethnicity in Bosnian education, perpetuating divisions for future generations. They also reflect practices that work in facilitating student encounters and understandings of how the other lives and understands reality. In between, is a discussion of segregationist trends in Bosnian education promoted by policies focused on divided curricula, institutions, textbooks and pedagogical practices, an issue addressed in the following chapter.

### **Reconciliation: An imported, imposed term without local meaning**

Bosnian transitional justice has been externally led, raising questions about legitimacy and relevance for intervened societies. Scholars question international peacebuilding for failing to affect local dynamics of conflict and meaning for locals (Sriram 2010, Eastmond 2010, Andrieu, 2010, Shaw and Waldorf, 2010). Forged by western liberalism, from perspectives

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<sup>122</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

located outside areas where violent conflict occurs, transitional justice is accused of producing subjects and truths blind to gender and social injustice (Nagy, 2008, p. 275). Scholarship criticises inclusion of transitional justice mechanisms into strategies of externally built peacebuilding projects resulting in a primary focus on legal accountability, individual rights and responsibilities, which might not be seen as just in societies focused on collective community identity (Kostić, 2012, p.651). The existence of a global discourse on reconciliation, serving as a master narrative that offers a remedy to harm done and healing in post-war societies, often ignores local contexts, leaving out conditions, uncertainties and power asymmetries in the process (Eastmond, 2010, p.4). Kurtović (2015) explains that after the war's foreign sanctioned stalemate, many Bosnians treated inter-national reconciliation as a western-imposed idea; some saw it as desirable in principle yet others had no wish for future co-existence in a state called Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unsurprisingly, for some interviewees, reconciliation is an external term, difficult to translate into Bosnian languages and cultural understandings. Reconciliation is alien not only for its external imposition but because it clashes with the political and cultural interests that caused the war, entrenched in the country's political system. The problem begins with a semantic issue highlighting the problematic diffusion of 'reconciliation'. The term reconciliation indicates a restorative moment, reconstruction of a past situation. The term '*Pomirenje*' in BiH evokes peaceful acceptance rather than mobilization or action (Jansen, 2013, p. 236). The word in English has a rich cultural history derived from its birth in theology, philosophy, law, history, and psychology, differing somewhat from its correlates in other languages (Komesaroff, 2016). The term's broad scope (in English) raises the question of whether it is too far-reaching and diffuse to be put into action. Sladjana Milunović in Sarajevo explained:

“In Bosnian reconciliation is translated as '*Izmirenje*' or '*Pomirenje*' which mean closeness. This is why the word is hardly accepted in the country, as ethnic

groups do not believe in the closeness of their relations. What is being sought is coexistence, being able to live together, but not necessarily in a close relationship.”<sup>123</sup>

The interpretation and translation of reconciliation from English to local languages has an important political impact, as expressed Sinisa Sagević in Sarajevo:

“For many the term reconciliation (closeness) as a word may feel like an offense, they can tell you that ‘if we did not fight why do we have to reconcile’. It is a term that does not affect you. You find this at the municipal level where people say they do not need reconciliation, people think that they do not have a problem yet they ignore the bigger picture, the social process.”<sup>124</sup>

For Sarajevan Aida Murtić, reconciliation’s external, linguistic nature is problematic:

“When I hear these buzzwords I constantly try to translate them into my language, but when I cannot translate them properly I think there is a problem, they are a foreign concept. I cannot find a translation for reconciliation; it is a term that is part of a foreign agenda so our language cannot grasp it... I do not know if we have these concepts present here. We did not achieve justice in the way we wanted it but we did get a cooperation in everyday reality. People exchange goods and meet with each other. But in regards to justice, what is justice? It is not fair; I did not get justice for my lost childhood. Justice isn’t there, agendas change so much over here; there have been so many changes when it comes to justice issues.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>124</sup> Interview, 10-06-2016

<sup>125</sup> Interview, 09-08-2016

Understandings of reconciliation between older generations facing war, identifying the need to reconcile with their neighbours, differ from younger generations' perceptions who may not see the need to reconcile if they had no major role in the war. For Boris Predić, a young citizen in Prijedor reconciliation is a fake, opportunistic term: "People were forced to reconcile by the United Nations. It is a business. The peace thing is imposed. You see people working together only because there is profit, only because there is some interest. In reality, the presidents of the three ethnicities run the whole show." Anja Kresojević, in Mostar, believes reconciliation is not only alien but also imposed between generations

"This word is problematic. Many have used it and abused it particularly NGOs, it is all done for money and projects. What is it? We lived together before and then we had wars. This made everything bloodier. To use the word reconciliation is like what are you talking about? There are obstacles placed to this from war. How would you feel if your neighbour shot you? What about people who lost their families? You cannot force reconciliation on them. They remember what happened; they were backstabbed by their own neighbour. Before the war, you had your life and war came and you lost everything, which makes you hate the new system...Reconciliation does not make sense, you just have to accept that there will be things that will not pass. There is mistrust, from the war, stuff you hear, stuff you saw. For the younger generation, reconciliation doesn't make sense either...There is no physical danger or threat."<sup>126</sup>

The term has been interpreted either as an unfair ethnic blaming or as a way of hiding the challenging priorities in political and economic arenas in BiH. In this regard, national reconciliation projects, by assuming a health and trauma-healing discourse make violence and the issue of rights, disappear from the narrative of reconciliation, dealing with the effects of

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<sup>126</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

violence but often ignoring its causes (Humphrey, 2005 p. 204). Such is Slobodanka Sodić's interpretation, a schoolteacher in Prijedor and Banja Luka, who resists reconciliation, denouncing the concept's imposition, stigmatizing Bosnian-Serbs within her own community and the nearby Bosniak community of Sanski Most:

“We don't need reconciliation here. It was all just money to be spent really all these reconciliation projects. As students do not have a real problem with this. Students here have friends from various backgrounds, and out of those projects our kids did not change and Sanski Most kids didn't change either. I have had enough of living with this bad impression of Prijedor. No one talks about how there are no Serbs in Sarajevo or Sanski Most for that matter. In Banja Luka, there are no Muslims but here in Prijedor is the best place in this sense. Serbs in Prijedor get this reputation because of what happened in the 1990s. My neighbour helped me and we helped them in times of crisis and that is how it works over here.”<sup>127</sup>

In addition, Nejra Neimarlija in Sarajevo sees reconciliation as learned from the outside, losing its appeal in the country:

“As a citizen, it makes me think that we had to be taught about it from the international community. In our situation, with a bad economy it does not have a priority. It should be done but not directly... Reconciliation was needed five to ten years ago, but now, twenty years after the war, in order for there to be reconciliation we need to build trust, we need to admit, to recognize crimes between ethnic crimes. You cannot have reconciliation during Srebrenica's mass graves issues; with victims present see how nationalist groups in RS keep singing

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<sup>127</sup> Interview, 26-06-2016

songs during the war and being proud. Reconciliation is not done by external support, this needs to be done by us. We need to build peace, reconciliation is a very hard topic, in the context of this people that lost their families, it is hard to talk to them about it, and this is something that can be dealt with easier with young people as the future of the country.”<sup>128</sup>

Denouncing reconciliation as a foreign term shows locals’ dissatisfaction with peacebuilding. Interviewees insisted there was no real need to reconcile, as people seemed to work well together. For others reconciliation needs to occur between politicians striving to separate people in BiH. Jansen (2013, p. 233) also encounters in his study Bosnian citizens who treated inter-national reconciliation as a western-imposed idea, arguing that if it should be implemented in the country, it should be preceded by apologies, punishment and compensation. Contesting reconciliation reflects disappointment with what happened in BiH after the war: economic stagnation, high levels of corruption and entrenched ethnopolitics. The concern with politics as barrier to reconciliation becomes a marker for the distance between ordinary citizens and those working for international peacebuilding agencies. The impossibility in reducing ethnic and nationalistic stances in political discourse and decision-making in BiH mark this disillusionment with international intervention and its insistence on reconciliation, which seems at odds with what has been the main unintended product of years of international state-building: ethnopolitics.

### **Reconciliation: everyday neighbourly practices**

In contrast with the previous section, some hint at an organic, everyday reconciliation. As reconciliation focuses on rebuilding broken relationships after violence, it is logical to locate it at the community level, in mixed areas, where everyday interests lead to people meeting up,

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<sup>128</sup> Interview, 23-07-2016

finding organic ways to relate again, and pursuing common needs. Reconciliation becomes a search for common ground on key terms (Kelly and Hammer, 2005). A major aim of reconciliation is to influence relationships at the level where they were before injustices started (Nordquist, 2006, p.19). Local communities are the spaces for reconciliation, as some interviewees often understand the Bosnian war as a war between neighbours. This bottom-up perspective hints at reconciliation being developed among those who have suffered the most, not just between political elites, calling for an integration of broad layers of the population into a timely process. Thick, community-led processes can occur outside or in absence of state-wide legitimacy (Bloomfield, 2006, p.26). This resonates with Hamber and Van der Merwe's (1998) reconciliation as local community building, concerned with coexistence, recognizing that harms of the past have broken down the network of interdependent relations in communities. This shapes reconciliation as clearing up mistrust and rebuilding personal bonds at the local level. In BiH, due to the mono-ethnic formations established after Dayton, developing local spaces for the creation of shared interests among persons of different ethnic backgrounds is accentuated in practice (Pickering, 2006). Localised reconciliation is geared towards building trust levels rather than a complete agreement or harmony in relationships. A realistic goal is to sustain a relationship with enough closeness and trust to handle conflicts and problems due to arise in the course of time (Govier and Verwoerd, 2002).

Reconciliation is grounded in neighbour experiences, everyday encounters marking citizen routines in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Despite over-emphasis on ethnic divisions, blaming and victimization, some interviewees see reconciliation in the normality of relations with people around them, from other ethnic groups and occupations. This shows a contrast between international initiatives for reconciliation aimed at merely allowing people to cross the boundaries between sides, rendering them slightly less opposed and a reconciliation simply understood as a practical dimension of everyday life (Jansen, 2013). The post-war interaction

between ‘sides’ did not disappear during the 1990’s although it had been drastically reduced because of the war, which saw the imposition of a national matrix onto life practices. Although there is recognition that seeing neighbours and “the other” as simple human beings takes a lot of effort (due to unaddressed pasts, ethnic rhetoric, and messages from media outlets), daily spaces for socialization can lead to reconciling and accepting the other as a part of the community and as fellow human beings. In Goran Djurić’s vision, a young citizen of Tuzla, his city is an example of everyday reconciliation:

“Reconciliation requires people to socialize more, reducing the boundaries between us. Moving away from all these stories of shooting. People are now moving around and meeting one another. Our hatred against politicians, I guess that unites us for sure, this hatred brings us closer...let me make one thing clear. Tuzla was very different place during the war, we did not have these ethnic differences and they did not affect us as much. We were together. We were all protesting together before the war.”<sup>129</sup>

Masa Nurkić, in Sarajevo, illustrates common ordinary forms of reconciliation, without politics. Reconciliation:

“...means being at peace with what has happened. To leave the past behind and to move on with your life...There are many tasks to be done, and I remember in Srebrenica knowing about two guys, an Orthodox and a Muslim, they do not see differences between them and they work for the welfare of their city. This is what is needed; we need to live together harmoniously... Here in Sarajevo, it is different, people can be friends with one another. There are still mixed marriages although much lesser than during the war. In terms of reconciliation, I see in

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<sup>129</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

today's children a chance of mixing and being together, kids who simply do not see these ethnic differences.”<sup>130</sup>

In addition, Selma Hodzic, a Mostar photographer, describes instances of natural reconciliation that can side-line imposed divisions from ethnopolitics, referring to the 2014 floods in Bosnia where citizens helped one another without any regard for ethnic backgrounds:

“When there were problems in Bosnia, with the floods, people helped one another. No one went around asking who were the ones being affected. Now in this election [2016 local elections], for instance in Stolac, it is key to see who is who. We are not fighting but politics are separating us, here its two schools, two hospitals, two universities for everything, but normal people still talk to one another.”<sup>131</sup>

Pointing towards natural normalization of relations between citizens and organic forgiveness is Slatan Zubić's story, a schoolteacher in Sarajevo who used to be a soldier during the war. He reconnected with the people he used to shoot at, insisting that it is politics and not ethnicity, which divides people:

“I was a soldier in this brigade called the special force. As part of my work, I had to attack a village by order of my commander. When the war was over, I thought about what I had done, I was shooting at people I did not know. As a soldier, I had to listen to my general. But when the war was over, through Dayton, I just said well it is over, it is O.K. those people are my friends. I went to Lukovica and sat down with people I used to shoot at. We played, drank together as I knew the

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<sup>130</sup> Interview, 23-05-2016

<sup>131</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

war was not a good thing but a way for politicians to get rich and normal people to get poor.”<sup>132</sup>

In addition, Tatjana Milovanović, a young Bosnian-Serb law student in Brčko, exemplifies how people can organically encounter reconciliation in a youth-gathering environment:

“The first thing that comes to mind was Kemal’s story. He lost his mom and lost his leg. When he met me, he had never before ever met a Serb. He only knew that Serbs killed his mom. We spent three days together in the mountains. I saw this change in him. It seemed unreal. His attitude towards me was of reservation but as we talked about silly things, he changed and by the end, he was dancing with us. We ended up hanging out together”<sup>133</sup>

Stories show everyday encounters where relationships are rebuilt at the community, neighbourhood level. The processes of socializing and meeting others, of bringing support as in the 2014 floods, or even discussing naturally painful events can imply a recognition of the other and the need to pursue common aims. Such narratives point to an organic, Bosnian-made reconciliation that challenges the idea that reconciliation is simply an externally imposed conception or a process that requires operationalizing in technical projects and NGO frameworks. Face to face encounters across ethnic boundaries occur (yet may not be made visible to others) trespassing the harsh divisions in politics. In BiH, there is a deep-seated cultural knowledge of living with difference and competence for managing potential conflict in interpersonal relations (Eastmond, 2010, p.9), which is often avoided by media, education and politics. Non-violent coexistence can be interpreted as achievement, yet the scale of wartime violence, complicates its potential to guarantee peaceful relations. Cooperation, the development of shared aims and projects that help locals find solutions to possible conflicts

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<sup>132</sup> Interview, 20-06-2016

<sup>133</sup> Interview, 01-08-2016

arising from the future may be a complementary avenue. (Govier and Verwoerde, 2002). These interpretations of everyday reconciliation, of neighbour relations suggest a possibility of such a move, in times where it is recognized that political cooperation and social integration in Bosnia is hampered by hatred, mistrust and fear among members of each ethno-communal group (Yordán, 2003, p.64).

### **Telling necessary truths: inter-ethnic communication**

Reconciliation requires dealing with past narratives. Whether it is consolidating official versions of what happened or dialogue between different versions of the past, the truth is pre-condition for reconciliation. However, different from documenting and disseminating truths, locals see reconciliation as opening up communication channels with neighbours, groups, and ethnicities. It is not about accountability or rule of law but communicating again with the other to coexist and cohabitate towards the future.

Transitional justice advocates promote truth telling as an alternative to tribunals and dilemmas between truth, justice, and reconciliation. In addition, there is interest in understanding truth telling as spaces for dialogue, beyond institutions and closer to normal communication between human beings. Deeply divided societies are marked by an absence of dialogue as a source of conflict. Communication is presented as an antidote, reflexive dialogue that allows disputants to articulate to each other and discover meeting points towards reconciliation (Christie, Wagner and Winter, 2001). If reconciliation seeks to bridge divides, it requires improved communication and better intergroup understanding that allows cooperation and coexistence at individual and political levels (Hamber and Van der Merwe, 1998). Sustainable peace requires taking into account the worldviews from which local practices draw meaning and moral force, implying face-to-face interactions across ethnic boundaries that emphasize what is shared rather than what is divisive (Eastmond, 2010, p.9).

Communication is understood as receiving and exchanging information in a meaningful way that contributes to building trust (Govier and Verwoerde, 2002) crucial to bridging the credibility gap between former adversaries.

Interviewees see reconciliation as communication channels between ethnic groups, organic means natural to their ordinary conduction of their lives. This may imply hearing stories and truths that go against their ethnic understanding of the past. The goal is to be able to talk about the past, face different truths without the need for a nationalist and ethnic frame. For architect Aida Murtić, truth and fact-finding are separated but important in interethnic communication:

“For me personally, truth can be rewritten and reinterpreted. There may be several truths so let us hear them out. We do not need a monument to the absolute truth. When it comes to truth as proof, well there is the war tribunal in The Hague... In order to have a truth there must be a process for accepting facts, a process of cultural sensitivity. This means not to question these facts, which is something that we have a problem with, people and politicians challenging these facts. Let us accept it, take it and go, to keep things smooth. You can have your own personal truths but do not challenge the facts. I need to have facts and build from them.”<sup>134</sup>

Daniel Jovanović in Prijedor, also advocates for reigniting interethnic communication that reduces the tendency to blame each other for the past:

“(Reconciliation) is people communicating between each other. Being aware of conflict and letting it go. It also means a lack of this pettiness and stubbornness when talking about war. Stop talking about the bad guy. It is true that if we forget

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<sup>134</sup> Interview, 09-08-2016

what happened it can happen again and it will. It is talking about the truth with information and assuming your personal responsibilities when talking about it. You communicate with others this way. I do not think we are even close to that.”<sup>135</sup>

In BiH, due to difficulties arising from lack of accountability, denial and corruption, communication serves as a needed tool for groups to unite and claim against the elite. There is a mundane reliability in communication: each group must be able to tell the truth to the other to fulfil commitments, act according to agreed timelines and competently perform expected tasks (Govier and Wervoerd, 2002). For interviewees, one vital task is to avoid youth co-option from ethnopolitics. This is Sara Velaga’s case, in Jajce, identifying potential in interethnic communication to unite people against the political attempts to separate them. Her town has recently been the focus of media attention for a controversial decision to turn a multi-ethnic school into a “two schools under one roof” institution, separating Bosnian-Croats and Bosniak students:

“Reconciliation is very important, especially with what is happening in this school in Jajce. You have this society in small places where you can see the real situation of divisions here in Bosnia. So reconciliation should be to accept every story from the war, accept that being a victim it’s just being a victim, we should not be targeting our victims and we separate people by the colour of their skin and nationality and reconciliation should be open minded and getting ready to accept our mistakes and accept apologies from other sides.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Interview, 24-06-2016

<sup>136</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

Ms. Velaga's idea of connecting with victims from the other side, listening to their stories and understanding their needs appears in Tanja Milovanović account of working in North-western BiH:

“When I was working for the ICRC I visited prisoners of concentration camps and the talks and briefings done with them prior to their release. I was present in their locations and heard of all the bad things they had faced. We had communication with torture victims and their families. It was here where the importance of reconciliation was a natural thing to see and something that needed to be done. The question was on how to do it and how to deal with such sensitive issues. It was hard and challenging to speak to victims of concentration camps. In the briefings and follow up it was very hard to listen to different stories, from different people. I am convinced that we need to speak about the things that happen in our society.”<sup>137</sup>

This exposure to other truths seems to be constant in the life stories of various citizens who ended up interested in peace initiatives in the country. Although this blurs the line between being citizens and peacebuilders, it is the acknowledgement of reconciliation, transforming it into a driver of change, which matters for these interviewees. Safet Sarić, from Kladanj, encountered differing narratives in learning about the ICTY in Bosnia:

“I come from a mono-ethnic background. My city is 90% Muslim. Coming from there, I only heard one narrative of the war. In my studies and following the ICTY trial and fieldwork, I realized that there is more to these stories. In my family, we did not discuss things... Coming from such context, I did not have a chance to talk to other communities. I realized that there is more to history than what I had learned in school. For me, this moment of reconciliation was when I realized that

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<sup>137</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

all suffering is the same on all sides. I was working on our first documentary and I hear stories from all three sides, and from different generations, older victims and then youth, people born after the war. We realized that war has influenced everybody. Regardless of the victims' background.”<sup>138</sup>

Similar is Adnan Hasenbegović's story, moving from wartime soldier to post-war peace activist:

“I went to war. So, I have memories of Yugoslavia, this multi-ethnic place, and what a Yugoslav I was. But in the 90s all this changed. I became a soldier, and somehow I was connected with all this ideology, I did not know how it all happened. I was shocked, then this nationalist politics arrived...After the war, I met with peace activists from different backgrounds. And I had the opportunity to see different forms of work. Through this, my identity finally became one; I had found comrades in Bosnia, comrades from the Former Yugoslavia engaged in peace work. After the war, I became related to peacebuilding trainings and moved via different networks of political activism. Here I created a space for influence that even managed to connect me with politicians.”<sup>139</sup>

Citizen views on truth telling point to communication as a basic pre-requisite for reconciliation, giving a different dimension to truth telling and fact-finding from views of truth-orientated organizations seeking official, documented versions of the past or that promote past narratives to younger audiences to dispel myths about ethnic divisions. This communicative truth telling means encouraging natural discussions about the past that are not mediated by politics, nationalist discourses or ethnic frames. Reconciliation is about natural interactions and dialogue that communicate one's grievances against the actions of the

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<sup>138</sup> Interview, 01-06-2016

<sup>139</sup> Interview, 25-04-2016

adversary and imply self-reflection about one's own role and behaviour in the dynamics of conflict (Assefa, 2001).

Communicating with the other requires dialogue between narratives that allows space for moving from victimization, blaming and separation towards mutual understanding, acceptance and visualizing a possible future together (that desired forward-looking component of transitional justice). As presented in the following chapter, the ethnic framing of the past and political dismissal of bottom-up and top-down projects for establishing truth commissions in Bosnia will make it difficult for communicative truth telling to create spaces.

### **Dealing with pressing needs: “economic” reconciliation**

If reconciliation projects are to have a local impact, they require taking into account citizens' needs and concerns. In BiH, concerns about economic prospects and particularly youth, together with economic stagnation and high levels of unemployment are pressing issues for reconciliation, as “economic relations have just reflected the current divisions and not been able to change the overall picture after all the desolate economic situation worsens the prospects for reconciliation.” (Fischer, 2016b, p. 254). Transitional justice requires a socio-economic perspective, improving living conditions and dealing with citizen necessities. This includes thinking how reparative justice can be re-interpreted as social justice for the benefits of victims and citizens overall. From an everyday life perspective, reconciliation with former enemies takes second place after insecurities about the future, as employment opportunities remain scarce in BiH (Eastmond, 2010, p.11).

Economic reconciliation requires a reparative perspective supporting socioeconomic needs of victims affected by war as well as addressing economic needs of society to deal with root causes of conflict and avoid re-emerging violence. Adopting a reparative angle on transitional justice focuses away from fighters in war into changing attitudes and

socioeconomic circumstances of ordinary people that can build bridges between them (Lambourne, 2004, p.4). Reconciliation must address economic and infrastructural problems that can precipitate an outbreak of violence, promoting the rebuilding of economic life as a peacebuilding measure (Francis, 2002, Blagojević, 2007). An economic dimension of peacebuilding implies getting adversaries to work together, ensuring they benefit equally from development policies and practices (Blagojević, 2007, p.558). When integrated into the economic perspective of peacebuilding, reconciliation entails measures that allow equal opportunity and access to societal resources for all ethnic groups.

In BiH, where reconstruction has not provided economic prosperity and effective employment for the population, it has lacked the development of an economic angle on reconciliation, addressing sources of poverty and inequality affects prospects for sustainable peace. Post-war redistribution of wealth created in BiH a new class structure comprised of a small wealthy elite, a large pool of unemployed and increasingly impoverished citizens and an insecure middle class largely employed in the public sector, the remaining privatized and semi-privatized firms and international as well as non-governmental organizations (Kurtović, 2015, p. 645). Access to middle-class jobs depends on people's willingness to participate in clientelist networks forged through family and party connections. Minimal employment is a barrier to minority returns as it is linked to ethnic discrimination: absence of jobs exacerbates divisions, impending integration, reconciliation and sustainable returns (Haider, 2009). Dire employment prospects precipitate comfort with one's own ethnic group and negative views towards the other. Preoccupation with immediate economic needs often leads to lack of interest in addressing societal divisions. In BiH, insecurities about the future remain as economic reforms towards marketization have undermined economic and political reconstruction, job development has not been a priority of economic reforms, making

employment opportunities scarce, forcing Bosnians to rely on an informal market (Eastmond, 2010, p.11).

For interviewees, the need to improve the economy, particularly unemployment, is an important requirement for reconciliation. Lack of economic opportunities mixed with increased levels of poverty and unemployment become sources for renewed tensions between ethnic groups who, through ethnopolitics, find in “the other” the culprit for their own economic difficulties. The lack of support and government inaction is a formula for grievances and clashes between ethnic communities, stirred during electoral campaigns to blame one another. This is evident in Sarajevan Alma Imamović’s views:

“...if we could develop an economy and become stable people then we would forget this nonsense about nationalism. We are tired of being poor but then again it is so easy to manipulate people. I think that the economy can solve anything. If people could develop then they would forget all about this. If we could be a stable state and a developed economy then it would all be OK. But everything here has been forced, like our flag. Normal people would forget about it if life was o.k.”<sup>140</sup>

The divide between relatively prosperous urban areas and deprived poor areas may constitute a marker of where it is easier or harder for reconciliation to occur. This was expressed by Emir Kapetanović, a Bosnian filmmaker reflecting on the social divisions of youth in urban and rural BiH:

“Wherever there is industry, where people work and make money you do not have issues with reconciliation. It is the poor areas that have issues of reconciliation, these areas where people do not want to invest in. You can see

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<sup>140</sup> Interview, 01-06-2016

how people in Sarajevo and Banja Luka travel and meet one another and want to work, work connects us, survival brings our interests together.”<sup>141</sup>

For Kapetanović, reconciliation means

“To stop talking and start working. When people are not hungry and have culture they think more, see different perspectives and they can work on reconciliation. The best is hard work; the only way to bring this is through reconciliation. Lack of food and poverty helps bring conflict and blaming back I think.”<sup>142</sup>

In his interview, he was insistent on how politics places barriers to reconciliation as political campaigns focus more on the fears derived from the war than on pressing issues for people such as building streets, getting electricity to work and other reconstruction issues at the rural level. This problem of how ethno-political divisions affect reconciliation underlies Prijedor’s Aleksa Vučen’s story in North-Eastern BiH:

“There is this guy that my mom met, a Bosniak from Kozarac near Prijedor, an area decimated during the war. This man was working for an organization, rebuilding homes and building around refugee areas. He started working for a company that made the safety nets that you put around building sites. He wanted to start a business. The venture took off. His employment policy is very simple; he does not care about any ethnic backgrounds. This is great. But personally, he has problems in Kozarac for employing Serbs as Kozarac has a high unemployment rate. Yet, he follows his own criteria and point of view despite how it brings him problems. He is not welcome in some areas of Kozarac for being a collaborator with the Serbs.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Interview, 25-10-2016

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<sup>143</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

Restorative justice approaches including socioeconomic needs broaden prospects of transitional justice and peacebuilding in approaching reconciliation. On one hand, citizen calls for dealing with pressing economic needs implies a social justice approach to peacebuilding. This necessitates both economic redistributions via reparations for victims as well as social welfare provisions for those who live in poverty and who end up being double-victimized (Hronešova, 2016). Including this reparative approach to transitional justice provides added space for including public voices into transitional justice debates. Adopting a comprehensive approach to justice and reconciliation requires looking at sources of socioeconomic injustice rooted in the political and economic structure of Bosnian society, leading to exploitation, marginalization, and deprivation (Lai, 2016). Reconciliation and justice entail both political and economic restructuring. As mentioned in “forgiveness” discussions (in the previous chapter) reparations have not developed a sense of socioeconomic justice amongst the population and as will be presented in the next chapter despite the promotion of economic integration into the EU, the Bosnian economy has sustained its dependency on aid and its problematic unemployment levels.

### **Yugonostalgia: reference for reconciliation**

The rise of Yugonostalgia, remembering life under Tito’s rule, is not only a reminiscent look at the past but a critical reflection on the contemporary problems of the Western Balkan countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina included. Yugonostalgia keeps growing as Bosnia’s ethnic, political and socioeconomic problems worsen (Spaic, 2017). Expectations about normal life, established during socialism still shape people’s perception of the post-war period, as the central point of comparison for post-war transformation remains the iconic post Second World War reconstruction led by the Yugoslav communists (Kurtović, 2015, p. 645). What older generations remember is not authoritarianism or political repression but rather how “everyone had free education, a job for life after leaving school, housing, decent salaries, and

pensions, plus a passport that allowed them to travel most parts of the world without a visa.” (Spaic, 2017). Fond memories of older generations become an unbelievable fairy-tale of multi-ethnic unity for those born after the war. In a focus group with international NGO-volunteers in Brčko, I was told, “In Sarajevo I met this girl telling me about Yugoslavia and this idealism around Tito and how he unified it all, but now young people don’t relate to that as they all want to leave, all this no future feeling amongst them.”<sup>144</sup>

There are two things to take from Yugonostalgia’s popularity in BiH. One is the remembrance of older generations of the times where all ethnic groups cooperated and mixed without any tension or violence, aiming at cultural elements that contribute to reconciliation. Second is the critical view of citizens in who, “faced with the present-day realities of rampant unemployment, social dislocation, and weak states marked by widespread corruption—(view) any existence might appear better than the present.” (Lindstrom, 2005, p. 235).

Some interviewees see reconciliation as going back to the way things were before the war, reminiscing about a harmonious cohabitation between different ethnic neighbours during the Yugoslav era. Yugonostalgia implies the feeling that a sense of social justice and equality was better achieved during the socialist era than in the current democratic and liberal-orientated Bosnia-Herzegovina. This nostalgic remembrance reflects citizen discontent with the current state of affairs in the country, where nothing seems to move forward and crisis seems to be the constant scenario. For Anja Kresojević, in Mostar, “the Yugoslavian generation had a very different set of values, no capitalism, Tito was the main figure and many were proud of the Yugoslav National Army.”<sup>145</sup> For Emir Dzino, a Sarajevo filmmaker, the transition to capitalism is a big barrier to reconciliation, recalling Yugoslavia’s stability:

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<sup>144</sup> Focus group, response by Eleanor Pearson, 09-10-2016

<sup>145</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

“Reconciliation is trying to get into the old times, when people were not afraid, a time of social security, where there were no problems with jobs, social security. I may be nostalgic about socialism but it was definitely a time where the state was involved in the economy and helped us. The capitalist economy changed the ways of this country. The biggest fear of the people is around social and economic stability that is what we really need. If you do not have jobs, you cannot have any steps towards stability. If we do not help people and particularly young people, we will be at risk of losing control of the population.”<sup>146</sup>

Seada Velić, a 30-year-old tour guide in Sarajevo, idealizes Yugoslavian life as reconciliation model in the country:

“Life was beautiful before the war but unfortunately parents and grandparents remember this, you know the life under Tito, they talk so much about it. No one cared back then about who you were, or the origin of your name. Everyone had a job; even people with lousy jobs had holidays and could live properly. Back then, it was all much better than nowadays. Now we are individuals, we are not the same, so it all has just crashed. Reconciliation is going to that Yugoslavian unity but all of that is now impossible. We need that feeling everywhere, to be more inclusive, but no one is satisfied here and that is the problem, the same happens with the government in Serbia, the same situation with jobs, politics, and government, it is a save yourself context.”<sup>147</sup>

Nevena Medic, in Bratunac, recalls the Tito era as a time of interethnic cooperation yet is critical about how significant this cooperation really was: “Peaceful coexistence. For instance, I can say that the former Yugoslav republic is an example of peaceful coexistence

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<sup>146</sup> Interview, 16-05-2016

<sup>147</sup> Interview, 02-06-2016

and there is a lot of things that under Tito era were under the carpet and were not addressed properly and society suffered because of it.”<sup>148</sup>

The idea expressed by interviewees of returning to how life used to be points to the current difficulties lived by citizens, victims of unemployment, corruption, divisions and low life quality, all affecting reconciliation. The fact that young people are “Yugonostalgic” hints at a form of inter-generational reconciliation, where young people yearn for a socialist Bosnia romanticised by previous generations. This brings concerns for the present and future of the country: “People may have had dreams and ambitions that once seemed possible in Yugoslavia, but now, these still unrealized dreams seem absolutely unattainable. There is not the possibility of fulfilment that there once was.” (Bancroft, 2009, p. 5). What is concerning from the rise of Yugonostalgia in recent years is the feeling of uncertainty, lack of prosperity and progress that mark the opinions of many Bosnians and particularly young people. As will be presented in the next chapter, this constitutes an obstacle for reconciliation relying on future generations to bridge the gap.

## **Summary**

Opinions and stories in this chapter reflect on what makes sense to people when contemplating the importance of reconciliation. The eight themes show understandings of reconciliation that are natural to people in their ordinary lives. Categories such as youth engagement, learning, communication and economic reconciliation may overlap with organizational views of reconciliation such as peace education, storytelling and fact-finding and cooperation presented in the previous chapter yet show the dimension of the problems that, according to interviewees, are still left unaddressed by peacebuilding. Categories such as forgiveness and the critique of reconciliation as an imposed value, on one hand, reflect

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<sup>148</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

avenues that are still undeveloped in Bosnia-Herzegovina (as is the case with an effective reparations programme, official truth telling initiatives, youth-orientated government policies and a clear strategy for fighting unemployment). On the other hand, it reflects disappointment and concern with the current state of affairs of the country, its reluctance to leave nationalist and ethnic strategies in politics, a dissatisfaction with international organizations and non-governmental organizations often perceived as money-grabbers and profiteers, and the idea that life under a socialist regime is preferred over the current democracy.

Identifying forgiveness and recognition as reconciliation bring to attention the necessary steps needed to allow these to be possible for victims. Processes for a public apology, recognition of the importance of victims and their groups as right bearers in the country, its entities, cantons and municipalities, and the establishment of reparation schemes that effectively redress past wrongs are all conditions that need to be met in Bosnia-Herzegovina, requiring effective mechanisms responsive to victim needs.

Recognizing youth engagement and in particular education as forward-looking expressions of reconciliation and transitional justice implies listening to the concerns of the young. Interviewees are unsure about how stable their future is or how serious they are being taken by the political system that seems more concerned with ethnic rhetoric and nationalist interpretations of the past than with youth problems such as quality education, prospects or the economy and spaces for the professional and personal development of young people. Concerning is the penetration of ethno-politics in the education system, as the stories presented here show how segregation and divisions in the education system (from textbooks and classrooms to the way language, religion and history are being taught), maintain communities in a latent state of tension and confrontation.

The contrast between views that reject reconciliation as an imposed, unnatural term to Bosnia, and those that see it as an organic, everyday process shows how international intervention has negatively affected the population. Some reject western ideas of how citizens should engage with their past and reconcile and others state that there is an alternative to reconciliation projects which has to do with neighbour relations and common practices that have little to do with official discourses on justice and peacebuilding. Contesting reconciliation shows more the disappointment and betrayal of the promises from international peacebuilding rather than a rejection of the term itself. Episodes of extreme urgency, like the 2014 floods, where people naturally come together, without the need for projects and organizations, shows how citizens engage in reconciliation practices as long as they are free from either the ethnic frames of politics or the international standards imposed in the logic of projects and initiatives at the ground level.

This idea of an organic, Bosnian made, reconciliation is palpable in conversations about communication as means for reconciliation. People are more concerned with everyday dialogue that allows them to live, work and cooperate with neighbours than with political dialogue within the political system to deal with the past or face current obstacles in the integration of the country. People live next door to neighbours and need spaces that give them such opportunities, at community and neighbourhood levels. These spaces require protection from nationalist and ethnic-focused discourses prevalent in mainstream politics. Communication requires talking about everyday problems and finding ways to achieve joint solutions rather than engaging in ethnic blaming of the other as the culprit for one's own troubles.

If there is one angle of reconciliation where citizens demand state reform and action, it is in the economy. Interviews reflect a concern with how rising unemployment and economic stagnation leaves a gap generally filled with ethnic divisions and nationalist politics. The lack

of projects that bring job opportunities for most citizens, the lack of policies that tackle unemployment lead to citizens wishing for a better country, or reminiscing of more prosperous times during Tito's regime. The ideas of a youth exodus from Bosnia-Herzegovina, of citizen desperation from the current situation and the exhaustion in people from repetitive ethnic discourses that have permeated Bosnia-Herzegovina since the war, create a distance from politics, international agents, and civil society organizations. Such distance becomes visible in processes of protest and discontent, described in the following chapter presenting concerns about further divisions in the country and the risks of future unrest in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

# **CHAPTER 6 - LIMITING RECONCILIATION: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND CITIZENS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

## **Introduction**

This chapter maps connections and separations between international, civil society actors and citizens through identified obstacles to reconciliation. It begins by analysing politics as a barrier to reconciliation: concerns about Dayton cementing ethnic divisions, the dominance of ethno-nationalist politics and obstacles faced by citizens, a consequence of Dayton's identitarian matrix. Following this, the chapter studies the education system and media as structures perpetuating divisions for future generations: mono-ethnic and segregationist practices in education and politicised media. It follows with observations on the lack of economic prosperity and stagnation affecting citizens, exploring divergences between the intervention's promotions of capitalist practices and pressing citizen needs. As deadlock influences the economy, derived social protest and self-organization during catastrophe are discussed. The fourth barrier is youth radicalization as a new concern for reconciliation; how radical views, expressions of terrorism and influential external ideologies warn of re-emerging violence. The chapter concludes with a section on legitimacy, focusing on how perceptions between international, civil society and citizens establish connection and separation.

## ***Politika: reconciliation's antithesis***

Divisions that benefit ethno-nationalist practices often characterize the world of Bosnian politics. This affects international and civil society organizations' work, having also

everyday impact on citizens. Politics is seen as corrupt, dirty and manipulative. A space thriving on ethnic divisions, perpetuating rhetoric and beliefs opposing reconciliation. For people in BiH, the word 'Politika' expresses a universal disgust with corruption and cynical hunger for power on individual politicians. Additionally, there is a difficulty of discerning any alternatives to 'Politika' or reclaiming political debate as something far beyond self-interest (Jansen, 2010). In this regard, Stefanie Kappler states, "the formal political real is dissociative, it does not resonate with everyday lives and fails to connect to people's needs and priorities. Elites and their internationally mandated institutions lack legitimacy in the eyes of everyday folk..." (Kappler, 2013, p. 11). This becomes a converging concern among interviewees who constantly point towards the political system inscribed into Dayton and its oversized state. As Dayton established a complex excessive bureaucracy, ethno-nationalist practices gradually increased. By relying on mistrust and fear of the ethnic other, dominant parties, counteract reconciliation via ethno-propaganda regarding the past, promoting hate speech. The identitarian matrix, the idea of Dayton's constituent peoples, influences social relations between citizens, affecting how they approach the government, the economy, and their everyday lives.

### ***Dayton: a barrier to reconciliation?***

A shared concern between internationals, NGOs and citizens is the divisions cemented through Dayton: "The Post-Dayton structure of the state and political system itself are the greatest obstacles to successful dealing with the past, which will gush as a torrent with the first more significant revision of the Dayton Agreement, currently impossible to imagine by many." (Božicević, 2007, p. 127). Dayton is identified as enabling religious, ethnic and national differences as salient state-building features, constraining reforms in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) (Majstorović et al, 2015, p. 661, McMahon and Western, 2009, p.72),

ushering in an order of inequality and dispossession of the means of dignified livelihood (Gilbert and Mujanović, 2015, p. 605).

Dayton's reification of ethnicity opposes relationship-building, favouring divisions. Bosnia's public sphere has become increasingly divided as entity structures organize rights and benefits along ethnic lines (Kappler, 2013, p. 11), and ethnic separatism and party politics obstruct state institutions (Englbrecht, 2011, p. 18). NGO coordinator Diana Pegić highlights Dayton's challenges for NGOs:

“We are divided into so many cantons, it is a nightmare. It is exhausting to do so much paperwork, organizing talks with different authorities, meeting local councils. Cantons are like little countries and have nothing to do with the Federation, completely independent.”<sup>149</sup>

For Aida Murtić, a Sarajevo citizen, Dayton is a “dystopian project meant to stop the war but where all of our problems were written in. Dayton created a bigger division by institutionalizing and cementing divisions.”<sup>150</sup> “How to go beyond the structure of Dayton and beyond this political system for ending the war, as it was not aimed at Bosnian constitutional reform?”<sup>151</sup> Asks NGO leader Elmina Kulasić. For her, Dayton established a political system where “parties are ethnically-orientated with a nationalistic rhetoric, particularly around elections.” “The same political elites, warlords, have stayed in the political arena and their agenda was and is still active, affecting reconciliation”<sup>152</sup>, explained practitioner Mervan Miroscija.

Ethno-nationalism, emergent before Dayton and increasing during post-war, brought political and socioeconomic stagnation. For Parent (2016) due to the constant ethnic divisions in the

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<sup>149</sup> Interview, 13-10-2016

<sup>150</sup> Interview, 09-08-2016

<sup>151</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>152</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

political system, the convergence of policies between parties is restrained ending in a perpetual stagnation of slow political decision-making, institutional impairment, and legal sabotage. Matthew Holiday, from the International Commission for Missing Persons, questions how nationalists are voted into power under ‘national interest’: “this trumps everything, regardless of the socio-economic situation in Bosnia. Massive unemployment, no investment and low income, it does not matter. Their protection of national interest trumps everything.”<sup>153</sup> Stagnation comes from entity-strengthening politics reliant on the “letter of Dayton”, confirmed by an international representative:

“Bosnia is stagnating. We focused on state-building and the April package of constitutional reforms [see chapter 3], a step forward in making Bosnia more functional. It did not materialize once Dodik got into power. Republika Srpska (RS) started to build its autonomy within BiH, block state level, openly proposing a referendum for independence. There are no serious reforms in the country, no positive development in EU, NATO integration and state level institutions are intentionally blocked by RS.”<sup>154</sup>

Similar is the view from Aleksa Vučen, a Prijedor citizen: “The mechanism for accession for BiH into the EU were signed by all political leaders as a coordination mechanism to negotiate entry into the EU, yet this has been stalled as if it is not in Dayton then it is not real, this is the excuse that politicians use”.<sup>155</sup>

Political stagnation trumps legal implementation, affecting transitional justice measures. Lack of coherence and cooperation in the justice sector results from the complicated administrative system, political interference, and corruption (Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld, 2012). For Amir Zulić, promoter of proposals for a compensation law for victims

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<sup>153</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

<sup>154</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>155</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

in BiH, “the delay and lack of laws makes us feel as if we have not existed in the last twenty years, forgotten and erased. Politicians have lied to us telling us that there is no space in the state for a victim’s law for us.”<sup>156</sup> Government advocacy and formulation of human rights legislation has been deficient, to the point that it was civil society organizations who contributed to human rights protection for women and children’s rights, issues unresolved after the war. This was expressed by Leyla Sinjancević, working in advocacy for protecting victims of sexual and domestic violence. For her,

“NGOs were the ones doing legal advocacy, working with the police who had no idea how to enforce laws to protect victims of domestic violence. The problem is that even after the law was established, there has been very low capacity for its implementation. The law prescribes protective measures for victims but many are delayed and not put into practice.”<sup>157</sup>

Daniel Jovanović, a Prijedor lawyer explains, “The application of laws is poor, there is a lack of will. The real problem is the political relations between the two entities. Everyone pulls for their own side, there is no compromise between the different nationalities’ politicians and it simply does not work.”<sup>158</sup> Peacebuilder Judith Brand frames clearly the problematic legacy of state-building for reconciliation –focused initiatives:

“The ideas come from the grassroots level and the civil society organizations. The critical organizations push for legislation constantly but what we have is a blockage in the decision-making process of this country, we are simply stuck. For

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<sup>156</sup> Interview, 29-06-2016

<sup>157</sup> Interview, 19-08-2016

<sup>158</sup> Interview, 24-06-2016

instance, the transitional justice strategy that begun at the state level, that one is stuck.”<sup>159</sup>

Legal stagnation complicates dealing with the past as victimhood; political profit and inhibiting dealing with the past are connected. “Victimhood is the core of the system developed by Dayton, as we do not have big changes in people’s perceptions of victimhood this has allowed ethnic divisions used by politicians to maintain themselves active, making it difficult to promote processes for dealing with the past”<sup>160</sup> states practitioner Zoran Vuckovac. “Dayton is a state of three peoples. To exercise rights people need to be defined in ethnic categories, narratives reinforced by the political system. This is difficult for effectively dealing with the past,”<sup>161</sup> agrees Judith Brand from ForumZFD. As Dayton is perceived as an obstacle to progress and reconciliation, constitutional reform is often suggested. Gilbert and Mujanović (2015) question this: a new arrangement would have to be negotiated by parties benefitting from Dayton, who now have little motivation to change it. There is no agreement on what should be changed. Constant blaming on institutions and legal arrangements ignore dynamics prevalent in political parties and voters’ behaviour.

### ***Ethno-politics’ reach: rejecting reconciliation***

Ethno-political groups and their anti-reconciliation rhetoric increased as ‘local ownership’ approaches dominated international engagement. The starting point was 2005: international actors in BiH begin to reduce the footprint of their executive capacities whilst Milorad Dodik’s rise makes cooperation from Republika Srpska halt notoriously (Azinović, Bassuener, and Weber, 2011) Hate speech has become common in politics together with ethnically-focused propaganda. As the state is BiH’s biggest employer, this encourages corruption benefitting from lack of accountability. This presents a challenge for

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<sup>159</sup> Interview, 07-06-2016

<sup>160</sup> Interview 14-10-2016

<sup>161</sup> Interview 07-06-2016

reconciliation; calls for inter-party cooperation are not taken seriously and ethnic divisions and entity separation discourage strategies for working together.

Dominant political parties increased their nationalist stance, messages of ethnic representation and fearing the other. Ideological platforms of prominent parties are identical regardless of their respective ethnicities, comprising of both ethnonationalism and ethno-capitalism (Mujkić, 2015, p. 627). For Lana Prlić, in Sarajevo “centre-right political parties are focused only on working with one nationality while nationalists are calling for the unity of one ethnic group which they claim to represent.”<sup>162</sup> Youth leader Aleksa Matić explained, “Serb political leadership in RS is geared towards independence whereas Croat leadership, sharing the Federation with Bosniaks, feels that they did not get a good deal as they lack their own entity, pushing for this against Bosniak will.”<sup>163</sup> In addition, “The strongest nationalist parties benefit from the status quo, Bosniak parties talk about the need for political unity of Bosniaks and constantly oppose other parties”<sup>164</sup> stated Kenan Cengiç in Sarajevo.

Ethno-nationalists use hate speech and genocide denial, opposing reconciliation. An anonymous international representative stated that political parties “portray themselves as defenders of their own ethnic group but do not compromise at state, entity, canton or municipal level, simply benefitting from ethnic tensions during elections”<sup>165</sup>. Prior to elections, political parties tend to reflectively turn to ethnic-nationalist appeals, activate citizen mistrust yet settle into government pledging to pass reforms but ultimately reneging on agreed principles of reform, interpreting reform specifics as anti-thetical to ethnic interests ‘under threat’ (NDI, 2009). For an ICTY-Outreach interviewee, parties promote “a culture of denial that affects reconciliation, where politicians deny genocide, sending the wrong

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<sup>162</sup> Online response, 06-10-2016

<sup>163</sup> Interview, 17-10-2016

<sup>164</sup> Interview, 21-05-2016

<sup>165</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

message to society, inhibiting change in the field”<sup>166</sup>, reflected in electoral rhetoric focused on fear of the other as a threat to one’s existence. This concerns local leader, Mevludin Rahmanović: “whenever we have polls, we immediately have hate speech, political parties talking about others and demonizing people during funerals and commemorations, opposing to the idea of making all sides equal.”<sup>167</sup>

Besides trumping reconciliation, separatist strategies avoid pressing issues such as unemployment and poverty. The absence of questions of redistribution in policy-making and public discourse indicate how the insistence on the identitarian matrix renders invisible other inequalities (Jansen, 2013, p. 237). Various NGO leaders commented on this. For Mervan Mirosćija, ethnopolitics’ impact everyday life: “we are a state captured by political elites; ordinary citizens affected by daily problems (unemployment, poverty, bad health system, education) do not have the opportunity to think about the problems and leaders just repeat the same story since the 1990’s.”<sup>168</sup> For Goran Bubalo: “during elections, there is no discussion about the economy and development problems of Bosnia, we are still discussing politics focused on national ethnic issues.”<sup>169</sup> In addition, for transitional justice advocate Zlatica Grujonić: “people swap seats and swap sides when it comes to politics, just for power. When Dodik talks about a secession referendum for RS, the opposition party kept quiet, there is no counter-argument as Dodik dictates this process.”<sup>170</sup>

This rejection of political tactics is shared with citizens expressing discontent, feeling immensely affected by corruption. Vesna Vidaković, in Sarajevo, believes that “there is always space for manipulation with three presidents in the country, and with the OHR as well.

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<sup>166</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

<sup>167</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>168</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>169</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>170</sup> Interview 14-10-2016

After Dayton, everyone began pulling for their own side.”<sup>171</sup> Slobodanka Sodic, in Prijedor, stated,

“The political problem is lack of money. Politicians do not have anything to give people in order to buy their votes; they do this with stories of nationalism. Politicians are constantly lying as the only card they have is nationalism, yet hospitals have nothing, no doctors, no resources, our people do not have pensions anymore.”<sup>172</sup>

Slatan Zubić in Sarajevo insisted: “Politicians need to make jobs, but they do not want to as every four years they rely on this rhetoric of ‘they will kill us’. Kids here are without a job, they are leaving to Germany and Dubai, and we don’t have Bosnian people to work with,”<sup>173</sup>

Ethno-political strategies oppose reconciliation: community-building, truth telling, and transitional justice are interpreted as competing agendas. Reconciliation initiatives seeking to reverse ethnic cleansing run counter to the goal of local politicians: keep ethnically pure areas to maintain political and economic dominance (Englbrecht, 2011, p.18). NGO representatives denounce this. For Mevludin Rahmanović, as his peacebuilding work focuses on dealing with truth and war crimes, his organization is perceived as a local contender against political parties. Goran Bubalo denounces how political parties have developed youth groups; political academies that train children to speak the traditional nationalist rhetoric of elections, making youngsters tell the same stories as political leaders tell voters. Dzenana Karup criticises how “politicians from RS do not want to hear about the [RECOM] initiative, they are the ones that do not accept it and without the support of politics, RECOM cannot be formed.”<sup>174</sup> Jasmin Jasarević, in Brčko states, “We get less support now for reconciliation

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<sup>171</sup> Interview, 22-06-2016

<sup>172</sup> Interview, 26-06-2016

<sup>173</sup> Interview, 20-06-2016

<sup>174</sup> Interview, 03-07-2016

work yet nationalist organizations get money supporting political campaigns. We are not welcome here anymore; our ideas of reconciliation are not supported as we are not an ethnic or religious organization.”<sup>175</sup> Peacebuilder Judith Brand encapsulates clearly how politics becomes an obstacle to the connection of state-building and reconciliation work in BiH:

“What we need is to engage in intra and inter-community work. We need a framework for doing this but there is a lack of political will in order to get support for this. If we do not get support from politics, this framework ends interpreted as going against society, organizations who engage in reconciliation work have to face this diverse society and they simply cannot keep working against the political will. There needs to be a political will on creating a society, regardless of entities and ethnicities.”<sup>176</sup>

Ethno-political strategies oppose reconciliation and rely on creating ethnic enclaves, mono-ethnic structures and strengthening entity and cantonal structures. Political parties based on ethnic interests and quotas; establish their rule depending on clear ethnic majorities (Mujkić, 2015). Their strategies, reliant on hate speech and genocide denial, directly oppose reconciliation, yet they are distant from citizens, disappointed with stagnation. This requires exploring how citizens, disempowered by party dominance, perceive ethnic insistence.

### ***Ethnic affiliation: the problem with “others”***

As politics in Bosnia relies on ethnic representation, citizens face imposed ways of identifying themselves. Affiliation becomes enforced by ethno-politicians; an obligatory identification with an ethnic/religious group aligns citizens with political parties. As citizenship is to both entity and state, many feel strongly that ethnic identity is an obstacle to meeting basic needs (ICG, 2014). This reductionist definition of ‘sides’ into Bosnia’s

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<sup>175</sup> Interview, 10-09-2016

<sup>176</sup> Interview, 07-06-2016

identitarian matrix is the ultimate achievement of the nationalist hegemonizing project of the 1990's (Jansen, 2013, p. 232). Dayton's consociational package established Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks as constituent peoples, relegating those who did not or could not identify into these groups to second-class status (Kurtović, 2015, p. 662).<sup>177</sup> Consociationalism also affects members of the three constituent peoples, as Serbs resident in the Federation and Bosniaks or Croats living in RS are excluded from being elected to the Presidency, as entity populations have to vote for 'their' respective candidates (Fischer and Petrović-Ziemer, 2015, p. 12).

Declaring oneself "Bosnian" or "Other" is an option excluding citizens from Dayton's economic, political and social system. Establishing the 'three constituent peoples' relegated those who did not identify with such a matrix to second-class status, barring them from political and socioeconomic life (Majstorović et al, 2015, p.662, Cooley and Mujanović, 2016) Post-war identification connects nationality and religion for administrative, political and economic purposes, invading social relations. Aida Murtić, in Sarajevo, expressed "as I grew up there was this imposed identity, I was very aware of it and rejected this. When people ask me about this identity it is to figure out what they should say to me. For some this category is important, like being a stakeholder in the state."<sup>178</sup> Nejra Kadić, from Gornji Vakuf, explained, "My identity here is ethnic and religious, which I hate. It is a group identity forming a personal identity."<sup>179</sup> Anja Kresojević in Mostar, states that identities "tend to create a polarity in political views. All of us go by ethnic identities and are connected to religion whether we like it or not. Religion and ethnicity go hand in hand, if you

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<sup>177</sup> It is noteworthy how in 2009, the European court of human Rights judged on the Sejdic-Finci case that the Dayton constitution should add others as a constituent people category. Implementation of the Sejdic-Finci ruling remains a main precondition for EU accession, yet there has been no movement to implement the ruling, which has often led to a stall in the process of Bosnia's EU-membership (Majstorović et al. (2015)

<sup>178</sup> Interview 09-08-2016

<sup>179</sup> Interview, 21-06-2016

are a Catholic then you are Croat, and if you are a Muslim you are Bosniak.”<sup>180</sup> Damir Ugljen from Mostar expressed the view that “I do not have an ethnic identity as such but here most people identify themselves with religion and nationality issues, I do not want to declare myself that way.”<sup>181</sup>

This last response illustrates reactions to Dayton’s identification. Some citizens use categories like “Others”, “Yugoslavian” and “Bosnian-Herzegovinian”, resisting the Bosniak-Croat-Serb labels. This is citizen usage of politics, the withdrawal from using ethnic stereotypes and resistance to the dominance of ethnic identities created by war and violence; a way of blaming politicians, rather than ethnicities, for the country’s problems (Torsten, 2008, p.125). Masa Nurkić, in Sarajevo, commented: “For the census, I had to declare my identity within the constitution’s three constituent people. I am Bosnian. My religion has nothing to do with my nationality; I am not practicing my religion. For me this is crazy and it is Dayton’s fault.”<sup>182</sup> For Aleksandra Kuljanin, also from Sarajevo, “Identifying as a Bosnian is a political statement for me and for young people who do not fit into the categories that end up stereotyping people.”<sup>183</sup> In addition, Zoran Vuckovac, from Banja Luka, believes that “others” is

“A form of resistance to the system and its ridiculous levels. People are saying that nationalities are a social construct that needs to be depoliticised. The three identities are the way to be political, by saying that you belong to ‘Others’ puts people on the outside of this system.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>181</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>182</sup> Interview, 23-05-2016

<sup>183</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

<sup>184</sup> Interview 14-10-2016

Aleksandra Kuljanin realized “how people were divided into three groups led and manipulated by our political leaders. I started declaring myself as a Bosnian and I focus a lot on that, I am a Bosnian although many people see me as a Serb.”

Identifying as “Others” and “Bosnian” may signify resisting Dayton’s identities but also facing discrimination through affiliation. Prijedor’s Aleksa Vučen’s response reflects this:

“BiH is a construct that forbids my personal identity. You are not a citizen; you are a Bosniak, a Serb or a Croat. I am not ethnically defined as a Serb, which brings its problems. There is an ethnic quota for local government work which is supposed to guarantee an amount of ethnic representation in local assemblies, leading to manipulation during elections.”<sup>185</sup>

For Anja Kresojević in Mostar “in terms of public administration, there is not much you can do, we just have three options based on ethnicity. Either you identify as belonging to RS or the Federation which limits you a lot, there is a lack of recognition of others (Jews, Roma) which is highly problematic.”<sup>186</sup> For Goran Djurić from Tuzla: “when you apply for jobs in the state sector [identity] becomes a condition and getting the job really depends on your ethnicity.”<sup>187</sup> Damir Ugljen, in Mostar, states that identity “affects my job hunting process directly and also at the institutional level as people who are inside institutions declare themselves within these three options and operate accordingly.”<sup>188</sup> “Everything in Bosnia especially when applying for a job is connected to a national key”<sup>189</sup>, says Zlatan Velagić from Zenica.

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<sup>185</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

<sup>186</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>187</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

<sup>188</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>189</sup> Interview, 13-09-2016

Identity is utilized in education to classify students into ethnic cohorts, complicating reconciliation between Bosnian youth. Kenan CengiĆ, in Sarajevo, expresses “I am defined by the government when I go to college and fill out application forms.”<sup>190</sup> Leila Crnkić, also from Sarajevo, identifies as ‘Bosnian’ in university forms, feeling singled out: “If you are Bosnian, professors think that you are not a real Bosniak, that you are not Muslim, that you are not good enough.”<sup>191</sup> For Tatjana Milovanović, in Brĉko (outside the Federation and RS), registration is problematic: “During my first years I was afraid of writing that I was Bosnian as my faculty was located in RS. I had constant problems with teachers because of what I do (youth reconciliation projects). In the last years, I declared as a Bosnian which is always a problem, ending up identified as a Serb [in administrative forms at university] because of my surname.”<sup>192</sup>

Citizens avoiding Dayton’s identity matrix see this as resisting ethnopolitics, criticising dominant nationalism. Looking into the impact of the Bosnian/Others identity implies observing discrimination featured in the “constituent peoples” provision and how separatist tactics invade everyday life via everyday sources of separation: media and education.

### **Everyday constraints: the dividing power of (ethnic) education and media**

As ethnonationalism dominates politics, education and media have become platforms perpetuating divisions and politicised versions of the past. Ethno-nationalists have constantly expanded the array of national issues and problems to preserve their grip on power (Mujkić, 2015, p. 629). Politicians maintain social divisions by developing networks of “ideological state apparatuses” via education and media. The education system is a platform for politicised pasts. Students receive different versions of history, making it hard to establish consensus about the past. Without reconciling competing versions of the truth it is extremely

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<sup>190</sup> Interview, 21-05-2016

<sup>191</sup> Interview, 10-10-2016

<sup>192</sup> Interview, 01-08-2016

difficult to rebuild human relations (Clark, 2010, p. 348) Education is affected by the administrative confusion from the different layers of governance and by the effects of ethnic cleansing, bringing in mono-ethnic and segregationist practices, impeding reconciliation, contributing to low quality education which affects youth employment. The media is deemed as politically controlled, characterized by negative reporting that ignores reconciliation-prone initiatives typical of transitional justice. It promotes genocide denial and hate speech rather than relevant information for citizens, illustrating Sriram's (2007) concern with how broad liberalisation within an internationalist approach sees free media promoting conflict through hate speech.

### ***Mono-ethnic and segregation practices: impeding future reconciliation***

Post-Dayton politics combined with the aftermath of ethnic cleansing contribute to mono-ethnic and segregationist practices. Dayton's framework made little reference to education when considering national reconstruction, barely acknowledging the right to education and devolving educational policy authority to entities and the three ethnocultural groups (Nelles, 2006). The Constitution of FBiH, in article three clearly states that each canton "can delegate its jurisdiction in relation to education, and it is obligatory to do so towards the municipalities in which the majority population, based on the national structure, is not the population that makes the majority in the canton as a whole" (Parliament FBiH)

By decentralizing decision-making, separate powers to govern education were given to RS and the Federation. Segregationist practices result from two interdependent forces: politicization and fragmentation of education (Bozić, 2006, p. 319). The two aim at reinforcing national consciousness of ethnic belonging linked to a specific territory and excluding the other from education. Transitional justice advocate, Elmina Kulasić pointed out that BiH "has twelve ministries of education, each divided at the entity and cantonal level

plus the two schools under one roof [two schools], a policy originally designed by the OSCE”<sup>193</sup>, creating a segregating setup in education. For an anonymous international representative, the education system “was captured by political parties whose goal has been to bring up voters”<sup>194</sup>. This interviewee’s main concern is lack of political will to eliminate segregation practices such as two schools, as “[politicians] are concerned about losing political influence and voters and so on.” In this regard, Clark (2010) is concerned with how delays in implementing reforms affect the prospect of reconciliation in education. She observes how BiH is the most complicated case in the Balkans in its history teaching and curriculum development. Despite agreements in 1999 and 2000 for the removal of objectionable material from textbooks and the establishment of some intermittent political agreements at national and local levels, progress remained slow. This serves as evidence of how the ministries of education and BiH authorities have not been seriously interested in implementing reform, mainly in the absence of international community pressure, which risks stalling the process. An interviewee from the EU delegation in Bosnia viewed obstacle in “lack of political agreement in education, as three out of the ten cantons do not agree with the educational policy of the other cantons. Lack of state education strategy leads to everything depending on the entity level and its particular line.” This affects NGOs youth approach as exemplified by Velma Sarić, who commented how screening peace documentaries was “constantly blocked by the system and its structure, a result of Dayton.”<sup>195</sup> Due to constant administrative hassle, she organizes screenings with partner NGOs, “taking a grassroots approach, pulling interested kids from schools and showing this as alternative education.”<sup>196</sup>

Wartime genocide established either ethnically clean areas, or areas with a political contest between a majority and minority group, which influenced education. Segregated schooling in

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<sup>193</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>194</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>195</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>196</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

Bosnia resulted from ethnic cleansing and political attempts to ‘unmix’ the Bosnian population (Hadziristić, 2017). As Bosnia’s nationalist leaders undermined visions of a multi-ethnic state, the education system became a political tool for reinforcing identity and division, seeking an ethnically disaggregated electorate (Cardais, 2012). Peacebuilder Goran Bubalo explained, “Now we have completely divided communities, many ethnically cleansed by a nationality. They have their own education perspectives, which is catastrophic. The education system is characterized by ethnic divisions without any opportunities to learn about the other.”<sup>197</sup> Zlatan Velagić, a teacher in Zenica added that

“Mono-ethnic schools and ‘two schools’ are signs of what happened with reconciliation: children are raised to be separated from their neighbours, stressing divisions to the point that young people [referring to non-Bosniaks] in Bosnia believe that Bosniaks are Arabs.”<sup>198</sup>

The OSCE’s two schools policy, devised to encourage minority returns: “became a status quo, a permanent policy as we now have physical separation in schools that affect future generations,”<sup>199</sup> commented NGO representative Elmina Kulasić. “Young people are more divided than the previous generations, they don’t know people from other communities, nor cross ethnic boundaries”<sup>200</sup> commented an OSCE interviewee regarding ‘two schools’. The underlying aim of segregated schooling is the reification of supposedly irreconcilable identities, evidenced in “two schools” in Mostar: while Bosniak students learn Bosnian history, Croat students are taught the history of Croatia (Hadziristić, 2017).

These segregationist practices negatively impact reconciliation, particularly its prospective aspect: youth. An education system keeping young people divided fuels prejudice and

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<sup>197</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>198</sup> Interview, 13-09-2016

<sup>199</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>200</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

stereotypes, becoming an obstacle to reconciliation (Clark, 2010, p.346). Segregationist practices, via the teaching of history, religion and the three local languages (Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian) create their own ways of dealing with the past and truth telling. Various practitioners shared this concern. Mevludin Rahmanović explained, “If you are in RS you will be learning history that is not inclusive. In Prijedor, all you learn about war is about Muslims attacking ‘us’ and Serbs defending the country. In Sanski Most, history is about ‘Serbs coming here to conquer us with the idea of a greater Serbia.’”<sup>201</sup> A Sarajevo practitioner stated “we have here three histories taught in general, this is how we deal with the war”, highlighting the clash between NGOs alternative education approach focused on examples of coexistence and the nationalistic optic taught in schools. For Maja Kapo: “education is also affected by these informal education projects in peacebuilding. They give out these qualifications and diplomas but do not really change the system. It ends supporting divisions in the formal education and no change is really occurring.”<sup>202</sup> These opinions reflect how education created a continuity of social and political divisions where generations are turned into subjects of a highly divided system with little incentive for interaction or development of a unified society (Čustović, 2014).

Segregationist practices constrain youth employment. This is of concern to many citizens experiencing a low-quality education, leading to difficulties in acquiring long-term employment. According to Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld (2012) although high unemployment is explained by general lack of jobs, there are two main concerns: young people with no qualification are most affected by unemployment, and labour-force qualifications are of poor quality, deemed as low education, creating graduate profiles that do not match the needs of the market. For Sabahjudin Mujkić in Sarajevo, “in high school we didn’t get much understanding of things, teachers didn’t help us much as they always had

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<sup>201</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>202</sup> Interview, 28-07-2016

their own ethnic side.”<sup>203</sup> For Emina Sabljaković, also from Sarajevo, poor quality is evidenced in lack of practical education: “schools don’t have materials for chemistry, if you practice sports you are missing equipment, there is never money to send students to competitions, and it is always like that.”<sup>204</sup> Aleksandra Kuljanin remembers how at university “we ended up having three-hundred students for one teacher. Sometimes we were taught only by teaching assistants as our teachers were politicians themselves doing work in parliament.”<sup>205</sup> Anja Kresojević, in Mostar, states, “the high school level is all wrong, they teach useless facts that don’t benefit you nor allow you to understand the world.”<sup>206</sup> Selma Hodzic shared this: “education here [Mostar] does not produce a person to have vocational skills, so you have to learn these by yourself.”<sup>207</sup> Teacher Zlatan Zubić’s assessment reflects these concerns with Bosnia’s low-quality education:

“The problem is that schools are not the best place to prepare kids for the economy. Pupils do not study anything applicable in the real world. We do not have any offer to the economy in contrast with other European systems where students get work experience; learn vocational skills and ideas about jobs. In Bosnia, this does not exist.”<sup>208</sup>

As low-quality education affects citizens, it also lacks educational provisions for minorities, despite efforts encouraging minority returns. As ethnopolitical elites motivate ethnoterritorial homogenization, areas with significant returnee rates often see education for minorities particularly limited (Savija-Valha and Sahić, 2015). Post-Dayton education policies, curricula, and textbooks restrict access to schools for minority returnees by underpinning ethnic divisions. The system ends discriminating against either minority returnee children (by

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<sup>203</sup> Interview, 19-10-2016

<sup>204</sup> Interview, 07-08-2016

<sup>205</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

<sup>206</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>207</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>208</sup> Interview, 20-06-2016

not providing any provisions that can include their own cultural learning) or students who do not belong to the three constituent groups (e.g. Roma) (Nelles, 2006). In the case of Roma youth, they have always been more disadvantaged than other Bosnians and as their perspectives are usually not incorporated in discussions on educational reform in BiH, this affects their inclusion into the system (Nelles, 2006, p. 235). Ivona Celebić, educational researcher in BiH, explained how the power distribution between one dominant majority group and a smaller minority group in many areas affects multicultural practices in schools, opposing legal dispositions for inclusive education. An international representative commented: “In the RS and Federation there is the problem of minorities having no access to some subjects in school (history, language, social studies, and religion) which are a basis to preserve their identity. There are issues for Serbs in the Federation, Croats in RS and wherever you have a physical minority you will have a problem with their education provision.”<sup>209</sup> Community leader Mevludin Rahmanović told how “In RS you will be learning history that is not inclusive, Bosniaks do not have the right to learn their own language in various areas.”<sup>210</sup> His concern reflects the impact of mono-ethnic practices in schools and their exclusion of Bosniak minorities in RS. Various citizens mentioned this: Aleksa Vučen stated, “In Prijedor, Serb majority schools rely only on Serb literature for teaching, how can a Bosniak student study this?”<sup>211</sup> Such provisions allow teachers to actively influence students’ political affiliations: “I saw faculty professors associating themselves with these political parties, imposing their views in class and influencing people to choose a party”<sup>212</sup>, says Aleksandra Kuljanin. Dragana Sređić, in Prijedor, remembers how “in schools teachers forced us to write only in Cyrillic. People in Serbia speak a little bit

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<sup>209</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>210</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>211</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

<sup>212</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

differently and tried to force us to speak like that”<sup>213</sup>, and Leijla Crnkić studying IT in Sarajevo noticed “that every professor and their teaching assistants are members of this one political party, the SDA, so there is always this constant talk about religion in class, they have all this official Islamic stance.”<sup>214</sup> Dragana and Lejla’s views reflect Bozic’s (2006, p. 323) concern with education becoming a mechanism for translating confessionalism into nationalism, where each group (Bosniaks and Serbs in her study) strive to establish primacy in the two main entities.

### ***Politicised media: promoting divisions, ignoring reconciliation***

Politician’s grip over media also unites international and Bosnian civil society organizations, deeming it a device promoting ethno-political agendas on citizens. The media’s lack of independence contributes to accountability issues in BiH, avoiding questioning the intentions of nationalist parties. Mainstream media outlets in Bosnia appeal to narrow ethnic audiences and neglect substantive investigative reporting (Freedom House, 2015). In the case of reconciliation, media that promotes genocide denial, hate speech and negative reporting encourages ethnic blaming and separation.

The main concern for internationals, NGOs and citizens alike is how media is politically influenced and managed. The European Commission (2014) is concerned with government financing of media, as public broadcasters not part of the public broadcasting system are financed from municipal and cantonal budgets, remaining under strong political influence. In RS, authorities fund both public and private media, which adds to the problems of lack of transparency and clear criteria in distributing subsidies to media corporations. Velma Sarić, founder of an NGO media outlet, sees media as a channel for stability and reconciliation, recognizing the international community’s attempts at supporting independent media. Yet,

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<sup>213</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

<sup>214</sup> Interview, 10-10-2016

based on experience, “political power has owned media, turning it into satellites for manipulation. Media lives for sensationalism and do not have an agenda to help reconciliation. It is on the budgets of politicians as the main broadcasters are part of the budgets of governments.”<sup>215</sup> Peacebuilder Goran Bubalo, promoting his Network for Peacebuilding, recognizes “much money invested in media after the war, T.V. and radio stations, newspapers, [was] a complete failure.”<sup>216</sup> In his view, the outcome has been political parties controlling media, publishing what politicians dictate, becoming the mainstream. An international representative, recognizing early post-war efforts towards media development, expressed “media are part of the problem, not the solution. They are the ones that help politicians address a certain group, spreading the messages and voices of their political masters.”<sup>217</sup>

Political domination of Bosnian media constantly challenges civil society and international actors’ work. A characteristic of politicised media work is negative reporting; promoting information that sustains divisions, fearing others and a portrayal of the past opposite to reconciliation. Selective and biased reporting result from ethnic control in the media. Inter-ethnic incidents are particularly exaggerated by media to perpetuate the division and segregation that characterizes Bosnian society (Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld, 2010). According to the ICTY-outreach office, the issue is lack of power to deal with politicians, as expressed anonymously:

“The problem is the sphere of influence, if you control media and you speak through it, there is nothing we can do. Politicians control media, we just have our

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<sup>215</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>216</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>217</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

projects and our means to share information but we cannot deal with politicians who engage in denial of what we do.”<sup>218</sup>

Community leader Mevludin Rahmanović is concerned with the disregard of local media for any work that brings people together or peacebuilding efforts:

“They come and ask us for interviews searching for negative news as good, positive news are not important. Their first pages are all about killings and ethnic violence. Half of the newspapers are all about black chronicles, ten pages of negative views, on T.V. is the same.”<sup>219</sup>

His colleague Wahidin Ohmanović stated, “Most media in BiH is being misused to create divisions between people and should also be judged as they are responsible for the tensions in the country.”<sup>220</sup> An OSCE interviewee illustrated how politicised media operates:

“We had the Patria incident, focused on a video broadcasted recently by media where Serbs are singing chants near Srebrenica, yelling ‘This is Serbia’ against a Bosniak group of citizens and Bosniaks reacting against this. The video was from 2009 but media presented it as latest news [in 2014].”<sup>221</sup>

The interviewee concluded that media’s open manipulation required the OSCE focusing on media responsibility with media workers, often requiring difficult interethnic cooperation.

As politicized media challenges peacebuilding, counter-projects created a contest for Bosnian audiences between media’s negative reporting and civil society efforts for promoting reconciliation and transitional justice information. Velma Sarić spoke about her NGO’s efforts to create news platforms for young people as checks and balances towards the

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<sup>218</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

<sup>219</sup> Interview, 19-07-2016

<sup>220</sup> Interview, 19-07-2016

<sup>221</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

government:

“Our Balkan Diskurs and our Blogging for the Future projects seek to establish a platform to address issues such as sexual harassment, corruption in the healthcare system and problems that affect young people. We want to create something independent where you can address issues without bias. We report on the manipulation of victims from politicians for example.”<sup>222</sup>

An OSCE interviewee mentioned reliance on social media and hate speech diagnostic tools to help group cohesion and outreach with the support of local radio and T.V. stations, contrasted to the lack of reporting from mainstream media of public condemnations over hate speech acts, focusing solely on messages sent out by politicians. NGO coordinator Tanja Milovanović, is critical of media’s lack of independence, deeming it “profit-oriented organizations who live off of producing conflict.” In her organization “we spread a lot of information through social media and meeting with directors in chief of media outlets.”<sup>223</sup> She recognizes that doing this work leads to people taking risks in promoting information due to the tendency in BiH of harassment of journalists. Journalists are constantly targets of death threats and pressure on editorial boards to revise their statements. Human Rights Watch (2015) reports that in BiH during the first 7 months of 2014 around 20 cases of attacks and threats on journalists were reported, 14 cases of intimidation and one death threat, a phenomenon in BiH and other Balkan states.

This contest between politicised media and peacebuilding points towards public outreach and its reception by citizens. NGO leader Elmina Kulasic highlights the innovation from multimedia projects that do reckoning with the past and the promotion of documentaries,

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<sup>222</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>223</sup> Interview, 04-05-2016

short stories and social media for transitional justice. Still, she warns, “Working with media in Bosnia is a constant challenge and organizations have to be very careful with the way they spread information”<sup>224</sup>. Velma Sarić’s *Balkan Diskurs* deals with reconciliation stories for young people, turning young people into reporters about local problems: “this is our work with local communities.”<sup>225</sup> Despite many projects, from photography and digital media to online platforms and media networks, the concern is with lack of reach with Bosnian audiences. Citizens are aware of media’s politicization and are often distrustful of any reporting from media, as Bosnians perceive this negative role, perpetuating fear through the way it reports events (Nansen Dialogue Centre and Saferworld, 2010). Peacebuilder Goran Bubalo believes that NGO media outlets “are never read by ordinary people, so they do not have any audience. Ordinary people watch mainstream news, controlled by political parties and not these independent sources.”<sup>226</sup> An international representative recognizes citizen dismissal of any type of media, which in turn has made it “difficult for any NGO to get some positive space in BiH media.”<sup>227</sup> Also for the OSCE interviewee: “citizens are used to reading sensationalist-type headings on negative incidents and this is what they choose to focus on.”<sup>228</sup>

Education provisions maintaining young generations divided and mistrustful of the ethnic other, together with media’s ongoing push for ethno-nationalist messages that encourage division and persistent negative perceptions have contributed to eroding citizen trust in the state and its agents. This dangerous gap between state and society, through the effects of ethnonationalism, encounters in economic concerns surrounding corruption, unemployment

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<sup>224</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>225</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>226</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>227</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>228</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

and citizen dissatisfaction, sparks of resistance, showing new possibilities for political activism and reconciliation.

### **Solving pressing needs: vital pre-conditions for reconciliation**

Although there is an undoubted consensus about the importance of fostering a healthy economy in BiH to move towards reconciliation, the distance between supporting capitalist practices and the growing citizen needs for employment, stability, and prosperity, marks a concerning space for resistance and rejection of peacebuilding. The ethno-nationalist grip on the economy, the entrenchment of nepotism, patronage networks, and clientelism have affected citizens to the point that they have found unification, not under reconciliation efforts from international or civil society actors, but rather through anti-government protests and neighbourly support after devastating floods.

### ***The economy as (stagnant) site for reconciliation***

A common agreement between interviewees is the idea that reconciliation requires improving the economy. Economic prosperity is viewed as an indicator for peace and development, opposed to BiH's corruption, unemployment, and stagnation. Yet, a divergence exists between transiting to neoliberal market capitalism and problems derived from ethno-capitalist practices.

Linking economic prosperity and reconciliation is an idea sponsored by international agencies in BiH. For Stefan Mueller, from GIZ, projects for economic development are underpinned by the principle that dealing with nepotism and corruption, investing in local community support and bringing in foreign partners to work with local stakeholders brings different institutions together to solve economic issues. Haris Lokavić from the Swiss Cooperation agency, states that his organization focuses on improving employment centres, reforming job-

training programs and including vocational training in education, all areas for encouraging reconciliation. An interviewee explained that an area for supporting the OSCE's reconciliation-focused mission is employment, which includes youth, self and women's employment, promotion of enterprise creation, the rebuilding of industry and the establishment of funding partnerships. This person concluded that getting people working together and establishing a healthy economy could help decrease ethnically motivated crimes. For an international representative, the organization works supporting the financial sector, economic administration, and budget management, monitoring in particular the government budgeting process.

Although prosperity is presented as a pre-condition for reconciliation, there is an evident recognition that reconstruction has not brought expected results. A constantly reported problem is Bosnia's corruption and lack of transparency stemming from its complex, over-bureaucratic political system. In a survey made by Transparency International's (2014), 34% of respondents stated that corruption increased in the two previous years and that 63% believe that corruption is a serious problem in the country. The report identifies the political system as a source of corruption, regarding it as excessively complex, dysfunctional and ineffective. Its complexity allows patronage dynamics in the appointment of public sector officials and excessive red tape, affecting business creation. Particularly worrying is Bosnia's youth unemployment rate, the rate in the Federation is higher than in any EU member states (67.1% contrasted to EU youth unemployment rate of 44.4%) (Halimić et. al, 2014). This crisis relates to ethno-politics: "the issue here is that one group of people [politicians] hold everything, businesses, they keep people on a short leash. The economy is an artificial situation they made in order to make money out of it" stated Zenko<sup>229</sup> a pensioner in Sarajevo. Slobodanka Sodić, in Prijedor, believes that "international organizations did a lot

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<sup>229</sup> Requested to keep his surname anonymous. Interview, 22-05-2016

of work for them, politicians, but not us. All these investments are not useful for us.”<sup>230</sup>

“The international community via agencies and donors made a big mistake, building separated businesses according to ethnic groups”<sup>231</sup> stated an OSCE interviewee who sees in state-building the gateway for ethnically based corruption. Community leader Mevludin Rahmanović explains how “our politicians use ethnicity as the reason why we are poor. In RS, it is always about blaming the others for the economy. When you don’t have money you need someone to blame.” He blames Bosnia’s massive state as a cause for stagnation: “we have more than one hundred and forty prime ministers and its crazy, it is killing us, and this country cannot afford that.”<sup>232</sup>

The vast number of layers of national, entity, cantonal and municipal governments, together with the preponderance of ethnicity in politics support corrupt practices, affecting employment. For Freedom House (2015) unemployment is caused by a large informal economy, outdated labour regulations and government gridlock preventing implementation of economic reforms. The report mentions the economic effect of ethnic polarisation: individuals facing discrimination in employment, housing, and social services when they reside in regions not dominated by their ethnic group. Prijedor’s Boris Predić mentions this: “to get a job you need to belong to a political party. The Major needs to approve local jobs so you must have political connections in order to be employed. This goes for all nationalities in Bosnia.”<sup>233</sup> Masa Nurkić, in Sarajevo, experiences the same:

“Here you either need to be politically connected or pay a lot of money to get a job, most of the times without social security or without a guarantee that you are going to keep that job. The problem with this political connectedness is that one

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<sup>230</sup> Interview, 26-06-2016

<sup>231</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>232</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>233</sup> Interview, 18-06-2016

day you have a boss who belongs to a specific political party and then once the party in power changes, all people change.”<sup>234</sup>

This phenomenon is given meaning under the colloquial term '*štela*': a connection that one needs in order to access public goods or services, such as acceptance to a school or a university, healthcare, access to authorities and services and visas (Koutkova, 2013). It represents a practice, an exchange, an informal institution that regulates employment in BiH. For this reason, Bosnians can 'have a *štela* (a connection in the government or with internationals), 'have someone do a *štela*' (a transaction for a public good or service) or 'be part of a *štela* (the informal system in public administration or within international circles). Sarajevan Aleksandra Kuljanin defined the concept of *štela*:

“we use this word here, *štela*, it is linked to corruption. *Štela* is when you have someone to get to your workplace, a contact, a connection. You cannot get into university if you do not have a *štela*, nor can you get a job. People are sick of that. *Štela* comes from this idea of joining a political party or associating yourself with these imposed categories [ethnic identities]. It does not matter what your level of expertise is or how great your qualifications are, without *štela* you just cannot move forward.”<sup>235</sup>

In employment issues, the political connectedness of the job market puts people in survival mode, fostering pessimism about the future: “without money here it is very hard and you always need connections. The negative impact is obvious, you see people looking for food in the garbage, and you constantly fight for your own jobs. We are all surviving, working many jobs to make ends meet, sometimes you rely on loans”<sup>236</sup> said Mustafa Niksić in Sarajevo.

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<sup>234</sup> Interview, 23-05-2016

<sup>235</sup> Interview, 03-08-2016

<sup>236</sup> Interview, 21-06-2016

“People take loans to bribe politicians to get low-level jobs in administration. They see this as a way of achieving security without having to work hard”<sup>237</sup>, states Sretčko Latal, a civil society leader.

A sense of failure and disbelief in prosperity promises explain citizens’ bleak views about Bosnia’s future and the belief that it is up to them to survive as politicians, civil society and internationals ignore pressing needs. Mujanović (2013) mentions how slow growth and insufficient job creation occurred in BiH after the 2008 financial crisis, mainly caused by Bosnia’s dependency on the economy of developed European countries and foreign aid. NGO leader Goran Bubalo mentions this: “we are a failed country; we survive on money from donors and diaspora when we work with municipalities they keep promising that when we have a good economy we will reach reconciliation.”<sup>238</sup> Diaspora remittances contribute to Bosnia’s development; yet contribute to lack of accountability, as expressed in Allen Dindić’s comment: “In my town, Sanski Most, you see clean streets and development but it isn’t the government who did this, it was diaspora, it is their money. Half of the Bosnian money comes from diaspora directly to the people as the government does not give support to this.”<sup>239</sup> During 2015 Bosnian diaspora sent more than 1.8 billion euros in remittances and charity donations, significantly influencing the country’s economy, yet state institutions are known to be reluctant in providing investment opportunities for diaspora (Kureljusić 2016). The lack of solid economic connections between state institutions and diaspora is commonly seen as a missed opportunity for development. “The other source of income comes from our diaspora and what they spend in the country. What we all want is for us to go outside [leave

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<sup>237</sup> Interview, 27-04-2016

<sup>238</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>239</sup> Interview, 02-09-2016

the country] and for our parents to stay, [for us] to come once or twice, all people do the same thing”<sup>240</sup> said Slobodanka Sodic in Prijedor.

This last quote shows how citizen drain becomes a survival strategy, putting at risk future reconciliation. According to Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld (2010), the ‘economic situation’ is the main immediate concern for most people as high unemployment and social frustration lead to public unrest, identified as risk and a potential conflict trigger. The current aspiration of many Bosnians is to leave the country in search for a better future, leading to the question of who will be left to reconcile with? For Hadrovich (2014) the youth unemployment crisis undermines educational reforms and opportunities for innovation and prosperity, creating a brain drain for young people. Employers find themselves at odds with the market, as they do not have a viable population of qualified individuals, as young people move to the west, tired not only of the economy but also of the imbalanced political system established in Bosnia. “There are people who want to leave because of the economy, and politicians just talk and do nothing,”<sup>241</sup> says Sarajevan Masa Nurkić. She is worried that Bosnia will be left with “incompetent people, those who can be manipulated. In high positions, you find very incompetent individuals as in this country if you are intelligent this is when you have problems.” For Sanski Most’s Allen Dindić, citizen drain exemplifies social stagnation: “I graduated with a class of thirty people from university, now there are only three people left in the country. Those of us still here live in this constant fear of the economy, what the future will be like for children, fear that is breeding ground for radicals.”<sup>242</sup> Azinović and Jusić (2015), writing about foreign fighters, explain how youth unemployment influences Bosnians’ departure towards Iraq and Syria as many foreign fighters come from geographic, social and economic margins, lacking an adequate income. As many lack

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<sup>240</sup> Interview, 26-06-2016

<sup>241</sup> Interview, 23-05-2016

<sup>242</sup> Interview, 02-09-2016

marketable skills or work experience, they are encouraged by radical organizations' offers to acquire abandoned houses from Syrians who fled from the war. An extra incentive is the offer of incomes higher than those in BiH.

### ***Facing pressing needs: Bosnian solidarity during protests and catastrophe***

As unemployment and social crisis took their toll, citizen unity emerged via protests and relief efforts. Anti-government protests and responses to catastrophic floods in 2014 presented a glimpse of unity and cooperation. Despite these circumstances, as ethnopolitical manipulation took its course, the reconciliation momentum was lost.

Despair from unemployment and stagnation fuelled the 2014 "Bosnian Spring". Demonstrations born out of street protests saw the strongest expression in the Federation, burdened by the huge administrative apparatus and levels of government (Kurtović, 2015). The protests represented a unified rebellion against nationalist political elites whose goals are viewed as contrary to citizen wellbeing (Demhaja and Peci, 2014). Demands were clear: unemployment, rising poverty, and favouritism that placed dominant parties at the centre of patronage systems. NGO leader Sretcko Latal described the moment's build-up: "protests began in 2008 after the murder of a minor and led to a slow build-up of the movement, the peak was a demonstration focused on politics, demanding resignations in Parliament."<sup>243</sup> The first spark occurred in 2013: "the issue was that babies could not get an identity number of passport due to lack of agreement between politicians in the parliament. A few babies had diseases that could not be treated in BiH and died as they could not leave the country,"<sup>244</sup> stated Vesna Vidaković in Sarajevo. This process saw people protesting in Parliament, leading to a political agreement between politicians favouring a law for identity cards. For Gilbert and Mujanović (2015) and Majstorović et al (2015), these episodes belie the image of

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<sup>243</sup> Interview, 27-04-2016

<sup>244</sup> Interview, 22-06-2016

BiH's population as ethnically divided, passive and defeated. Ethno-national rhetoric was perceived less successful at demobilizing political opposition, giving rise to possible new areas of activism, different from traditional requests for updating Dayton. The protests temporarily suspended hegemonical ethnocultural narratives, briefly opening spaces for social justice demands (Mujkić, 2015).

In February 2014, protests began in Tuzla, spreading to various Federation cities. Safet Sarić, from Kladanj, comments: "the people of BiH, many fed up with how the political system leads to the dire economic situation, erupted into resistance. The protests in Tuzla were mainly economically driven."<sup>245</sup> Goran Djurić stated "Tuzla is a common place for protests, we have been let down by politicians and private business owners. It is a place with so much corruption so it made sense for protests to begin here."<sup>246</sup> Protests presented Bosnians as politically active citizens, which came as surprise to local, national and international actors convinced of the political apathy of locals (Kappler, 2015). The protests rebutted the notion of the apathetic local and a reversal in the representation of citizens. Amazed by the momentum generated by the protests, Emina Sabljakovic remembers that "in these protests, nobody identified themselves as Croats, Muslims or Serbs, they all said 'we are the people of Bosnia, we are citizens and we are going to change things.'"<sup>247</sup> For Mustafa Niksić, in Sarajevo "it was a glimpse of hope, I was happy about this, this spark, but then quickly came the disappointment."<sup>248</sup>

Disappointment is explained by political manipulation and emergence of violence during the protests. Political manipulation is a common explanation: for Vesna Vidaković, who rejected the protests: "in the end, they didn't achieve anything, people crashed everything and news

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<sup>245</sup> Interview, 01-06-2016

<sup>246</sup> Interview, 01-09-2016

<sup>247</sup> Interview, 07-08-2016

<sup>248</sup> Interview, 21-06-2016

showed how we were destroying the country. This was a space for manipulation by media and NGOs owned by the big people.”<sup>249</sup> For Brčko-based Tatjana Milovanović

“Protests were poorly organized which was a benefit for politicians. In the first days of the protests they [politicians] were scared but as they were faceless and without structure, politicians used them to their advantage and this is why vandalism was inserted into them.”<sup>250</sup>

NGO leader Sretčko Latal also suspects political manipulation: “violence was used for one reason: to kill the idea of future protests. There seems to be links to some parties and leaders with these violent disruptions.”<sup>251</sup> “There was this narrative of people from RS coming here and damaging the protests. This is a huge lie,”<sup>252</sup> comments Amina Isaković.

An important distinction is needed: whereas the Federation saw the majority of protests and violence, in the RS these went almost unnoticed. Aleksa Matić, in Banja Luka explained: “people [in RS] were sceptical of protests because they come from politics from the other side. Protests came from Sarajevo and people didn’t trust them, so no one protested here as it was perceived as a threat from the Federation.”<sup>253</sup> For Zoran Vuckovac, also from Banja Luka: “protests did not take place here because our power structures are highly centralized. There were some issues in outskirt areas but they were diminished by media and no one could learn about them.”<sup>254</sup> OSCE’s Samra Ramić also commented, “Federation people reacted with protests whereas in RS people behaved as if it wasn’t a problem. In RS, as a more centralized entity, there is a high level of fear; as the Federation is decentralized, people tend

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<sup>249</sup> Interview, 22-06-2016

<sup>250</sup> Interview, 01-08-2016

<sup>251</sup> Interview, 27-04-2016

<sup>252</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

<sup>253</sup> Interview, 17-10-2016

<sup>254</sup> Interview 14-10-2016

to react more freely.”<sup>255</sup> It is important to mention that, as public sector workers have been dependent on the support of political structures put in place, low-level employees have been politically vulnerable as authorities threaten with job loss and firing to quiet criticism and dissent (Kurtović, 2015, p. 645).

Democratic plenums established during protests were seen as innovative mechanisms demanding political accountability but altered by ethnopolitics. These were a series of open meeting points where citizens were allowed to speak for two minutes and formulate demands (ICG, 2014), focusing on the privileges of political elites, corruption, transparency, social welfare and government resignations (Lai, 2016). Lai adds that demands were concerned with the socioeconomic wellbeing of society and accountability of political elites responsible for mismanaging resources. Mostar-based Damir Ugljen remembers arriving in BiH during protests: “I found something positive, people were organizing plenums to criticise corrupt politicians, people talking about politics but this did not last long.”<sup>256</sup> International practitioner Valery Perry explains:

“The plenums show the waiting for a paradigm shift in Bosnia, but simply that, waiting. It was everything done at once, with many expectations but it collapsed. The lack of checks and balances in Bosnia makes it easy for political parties to capture the state no matter what.”<sup>257</sup>

Social leader Sretcko Latal remembers:

“Plenums seemed useful for about two days and then people just left. These developments seemed to offer a sort of message that went ignored, one aimed at local civil society as protesters stayed away from opposition parties and from

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<sup>255</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>256</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>257</sup> Interview, 27-07-2016

NGOs which have a reputation among people for doing nothing, seen as detached from the local population.”<sup>258</sup>

“The plenums were open to everyone, evident in social media, which was an open call for anyone to join, yet the response of NGOs was that they were not asked to join. They could have worked on issues of transparency as they were best suited for the issue but the big ones simply did not show up,”<sup>259</sup> stated Valery Perry. Although plenums raised citizen concerns, the process did not develop into a broader power to change the political situation, creating the risk that the long-lasting political deadlock and citizens’ lack of trust in institutions increase the widespread sense of despair (Fischer, 2016a, p.8).

Shortly after the protests, floods devastated towns of the Federation and RS, leading to people from all ethnic groups uniting, supporting victims. This catastrophe showed again the corruption and ineptitude of the government’s poor response, leading to citizen self-organization and grassroots humanitarian work crossing ethnoterritorial boundaries (Majstorović et. al, 2015). Citizens, mistrustful of the mismanagement of aid money by institutions, supported and established charities to circumvent bureaucracy and avoid the difficulties that NGOs often struggle with (Gordy, 2016). Sarajevan Najra Krvavac remembers, “There was us, a group of actors who organized relief efforts by ourselves. We got organized simply as the state was not doing anything, we shared resources and we were on the field for one whole month.”<sup>260</sup> Emir Kapetanović, in Sarajevo, reflected:

“With the floods, we could see how easy it was to be a good citizen, in Bosnia we are united when there is a common threat. People after floods were more led to

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<sup>258</sup> Interview, 27-04-2016

<sup>259</sup> Interview, 27-07-2016

<sup>260</sup> Interview, 20-05-2016

fighting the floods together. No one asked questions about ethnicities and people connected across entity and ethnic boundaries.”<sup>261</sup>

For Sarajevan Mustafa Niksić: “This was surprising, people helping each other. But only in a very critical situation does this happen.”<sup>262</sup> Seada Velić, in Livno, remembers: “people helped with food and clothes but others were stealing all of this, taking it for themselves. I wanted to help but not through any organization because they will just take the donations for themselves.”<sup>263</sup>

Both floods and protests show possible Bosnian solidarity into new forms of political activism but also illustrate how ethnopolitics manipulates and misdirects citizen initiatives. The wave of protests in 2014 showed signs of different modes of political organization and action possible in BiH’s ethnically divided society; during the protests the hegemony of the ethnocultural justice narratives were temporarily suspended, opening the space for the emergence of social justice demands across the ethnic spectrum (Mujkić, 2015, p. 627). The protests showed Bosnians becoming politically active, politicians forced to make concessions and some even resigning. All issues that surprised many local, national and international actors who had previously agreed on the political apathy of citizens (Kappler, 2015). This emergence of a civic movement in BiH contrasts with the twenty years of intervention that has not achieved the construction of locally owned, accountable democratic structures. Kappler (2015) emphasises that this episode reflects the need to reconsider labels of local identity and an understanding of politics that is less binary in nature, responding to contextual challenges posed by the socio-political environment of both BiH and the region. Protests and response to the floods are evidence of the growing concern with the lack of progress and the deadlock of the economy. Particularly concerning are the expressions of violence erupting

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<sup>261</sup> Interview, 25-10-2016

<sup>262</sup> Interview, 21-06-2016

<sup>263</sup> Interview, 02-06-2016

from the protests and how their relation to political interests represent a warning for peace efforts in the country. To explore this in-depth it is important to address extremism, radicalization and terrorist violence as new challenges to reconciliation.

### **Extremism and youth radicalization: new challenges to reconciliation**

A current worry for internationals, civil society and citizens is radicalization in Bosnia, particularly amongst youth. The rise of youth radicalization, together with the impact of terrorism, expressed in the departure of Bosnian citizens as foreign fighters together with the emergence of local extremist groups, are connected with the divisions characterizing society together with unaddressed issues of the past. Equally problematic is the lack of agreement in dealing with these problems. Different responses between the Federation and RS pave way for separatism and prospects for re-emergent violence in the country.

As elections, media, education, and politicians have fostered divisions in BiH, young people are identified as the next challenge for reconciliation and at the peril of radicalization. The erosion of pre-war social, moral values and norms has led to an increased involvement of young citizens in violence and adoption of radical ideologies, understood as the only ways to affirm and protect individuals or a community in BiH (Azinović and Jusić, 2015). The deadlock between the two main entities, constant stagnation, and rising unemployment have become decisive factors in the flow of recruits to extremist groups, including ISIS (Borger, 2015, De Borja, Tcherneva and Wesslau, 2016). The persistence of narratives around the war, passed from generation to generation, create a sense of anger and mistrust amongst youth. As younger generations have no recollection of a peaceful coexistence in Bosnia, their interpretation of past events as narrated by relatives, added to ethno-political rhetoric, nationalist propaganda and a segregated education system have led some young people to mistrust other ethnicities, of believing that Bosnia is on the brink of another war, mobilizing

towards ethnonationalism. Regarding young people, Sarajevan Najra Krvavac stated, “Many of them are indolent and geared towards politics. With them, we will not see any mixed marriages, as they are all nationally aware. They have no identity outside ethnicity, no real sense of belonging.”<sup>264</sup> This perception is reflected in Halimić et al (2014) surveying young Bosnian’s attitudes towards a wide array of issues. In regards to youth identity, the study concludes: “Youth in BiH feel a stronger attachment to religion than people or state they belong to.” (Halimić et. al, 2014, p. 90) This is particularly accurate when describing how rural youth are tied strongly to nationality and religiousness. Through her work with young people, practitioner Diana Pegić identifies how “in thirteen-year-olds you can start seeing the influence of national tensions. This is a result of their social situation, of media and news which often leads to developing radical attitudes.”<sup>265</sup> “Young people live their whole life without seeing people from another group. This is scary,”<sup>266</sup> says Sarajevan Amela Puljek-Shank. Zlatan Velagić in Zenica is concerned with how “children are not immune to radical ideas. A skilled orator can easily pull them to its circle, especially in our society which lacks in education.”<sup>267</sup> For Emina Sabljaković, the use of derogatory terms among youth is concerning “I can tell you that when you hear young kids calling themselves *chetniks* and *ustašas*.<sup>268</sup> This comes from their parents, their home, people who are bitter about what happened.”<sup>269</sup> Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld’s survey (2010) highlights this concern: a visible respondents’ concern is with youth expressing ethno-nationalist views, becoming perpetrators of inter-ethnic incidents, a ‘second generation nationalism’: teenagers

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<sup>264</sup> Interview, 20-05-2016

<sup>265</sup> Interview, 13-10-2016

<sup>266</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

<sup>267</sup> Interview, 13-09-2016

<sup>268</sup> Derogatory terms, used in BiH to refer to nationalistic intolerance, linked to an outdated historical ideal. The term *Chetnik* became “synonymous with radical nationalism and, in many communities, with Serbian-perpetrated genocide.” (Manisera, 2016) Ustaša is used as a reference for Croats in BiH, a term linked to the Ustaša-Croatian Revolutionary Organization, a Croat nationalist organization during World War II (Mulaj, 2008).

<sup>269</sup> Interview, 07-08-2016

exhibiting ethno-nationalist behaviour and using slogans and derogatory expressions from the past.

The emergence of radicalization, together with practices linked to extremist violence is a consequence of unaddressed pasts, political separatism and lack of secure employment prospects amongst youth. Apart from ethnicity permeating education, local actors (parents, faith leaders, teachers) avoid encouraging positive interethnic interaction, which means that fears and negative attitudes towards the other are communicated by parents and media, contributing to radicalization (Nansen Dialogue Center and Saferworld, 2010). Researcher Majda Halilović explains that issues of radicalization and terrorism in BiH come from “a combination of war injustices, disillusionment with politics and this need of belonging via different identities.”<sup>270</sup> Peacebuilder Goran Bubalo explains, “Lack of economic progress, the growing dividing rhetoric against other religious groups and issues such as the proposals for a separation referendum, the ongoing issue about our separate languages, all of these are spaces for further radicalization.”<sup>271</sup> Youth leader Jasmin Jasarević thinks, “People are taught to go back to their nationalist groups. There are no genuine, organic Brčko political parties but affiliations of those parties in Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Mostar. They insist on fighting and dividing, cheating and promoting hate speech.”<sup>272</sup> The wartime push for ethnically clean spaces sponsors radicalization as explained by Mostar’s Damien Ugljen: “Ethnically pure towns are fertile grounds for terrorism. Here in Mostar, there are some closed groups where you are not allowed to talk with or discuss things with. If you are part of them you stick with them and do not go out of them.”<sup>273</sup> Ethno-national divisions also encounter new spaces via foreign interests in the country. Anne Havnor, of the Norwegian embassy in Bosnia, explained

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<sup>270</sup> Interview, 19-09-2016

<sup>271</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>272</sup> Interview, 10-09-2016

<sup>273</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

“Increasing polarization among ethnic lines has influence over the vulnerability for radicalization as this feeling of marginalized communities is used for Wahhabis to influence here in Bosnia, but also keeping in mind the influence of Saudi Arabia as well as Turkey in that matter.”<sup>274</sup>

This was researched by De Borja, Tcherneva and Wesslau (2016), reporting how Russia, Turkey and to a minor degree Arab Gulf states are increasing their influence in the Balkans: Moscow tries to undermine western influence and promote an anti-EU message within governments in the region, whilst BiH, balances political responses between the West and these powers.

The combination of different complex issues found in radicalization new forms of violence. Bosnian researcher Majda Halilović highlighted the appearance of a radical discourse in BiH, which may not be immediately synonymous with terrorism but shows the “recent challenges to the BiH way of life, people trying to ‘purify’ us and change society. Concerning is the way women are particularly treated in certain communities, children, all of which leads to an excluded way of life.”<sup>275</sup> This emerging radical discourse has become a particular social and political problem via the expansion of Salafism in BiH, with three implications: First, Salafi interpretations of Islam do not accept the secular notion of the state, challenging provisions in the BiH constitution referent to family, gender equality and the right to education. Second, most foreign fighters recruited for Syria and Iraq are recruited from the BiH Salafi community and third, the spread of Salafism introduces a new division into the fractured Bosnian society that further erodes the secularity of the state and reinforces stereotypes about Islam among Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs (Bećirević, 2016). Amela Puljek Shank, in Sarajevo, expressed “we are divided into *chetniks*, *ustasas*, and Bosniak radicals. They breed

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<sup>274</sup> Interview, 31-08-2016

<sup>275</sup> Interview, 19-09-2016

families to hate each other with fundamental views depending on religion that go back to ideas of ancient hatreds. Added we have this Islamization that came in the 90's as we got help from mujahedeen"<sup>276</sup> The OSCE's Samra Ramić is concerned with expressions of youth radicalization that are not all necessarily "done on a religious basis. We have football hooligans who are also radicals, this is a serious issue." She explained how there was a "*chetnik* forum" in the city of Višegrad, an NGO registered at entity level that "[was] proclaiming serious hate messages and concerning ideas. Radical groups involving 20-year-olds."<sup>277</sup> Haris Lokavić from the Swiss Cooperation Agency is particularly concerned with "extremism via foreign fighters returning and becoming citizens, it shows the influence of Arabic countries, for them, BiH is a sphere of influence."<sup>278</sup>

Some incidents of ethnic violence and terrorism are worth highlighting as alarming for citizens, NGOs, and internationals alike. Although deemed as low-level violence they signal increasing hate crime, radicalization, and attraction towards extremist groups among youth. Jukić (2015) reports that on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Nerdin Ibrić, a Bosniak man, attacked a police station, ending in one death and two injuries. Jukić's article centres its attention in the different responses to the incident: RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik immediately reported the incident as a terrorist attack and blamed Bosnia's state institutions for what occurred in the RS town of Zvornik. The Islamic community in BiH condemned the attack, highlighting concerns for Bosniaks living in RS at risk of harassment from the authorities. Valentin Inzko, High Representative in Bosnia insisting on the need for Bosnia's institutions to be more coordinated in their work.

An incident catching many interviewees' attention as a signal of radicalization in BiH and example of divisions misinterpreting situations on the ground is expressed in Ruvić's (2015)

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<sup>276</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

<sup>277</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>278</sup> Interview, 05-10-2016

report on the momentary appearance of ISIS flags in the town of Gornja Maoča in Northeast Bosnia. The article focuses on how the town is under constant patrolling by RS authorities, due to suspicions surrounding possible recruitment of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria. There is a distinction between the Bosnian practices of Islam, characterized by a secular “modern” stance, and a stricter, Wahhabi-orientated practice (seen in Gornja Maoča), highlighted by citizen Allan Dindić: “Gornja Maoča may not seem so important for most of the population but they are dangerous. One thing is being a Bosnian Muslim and another these radical fanatics that you get over there.”<sup>279</sup> For Anja Kresojević in Mostar, “Gornja Maoča is an example of what happens. If you are unemployed in these remote villages and someone comes and gives you 100 euros it all makes sense. Low education, all this is easy to brainwash people, added to the economic needs and the rhetoric of supporting your brothers in Syria, this is the formula.”<sup>280</sup> In the case of Zlatan Velagić, in Zenica, Gornja Maoča is “mostly blown out of proportion by media here, we do not have problems as the Middle East with Islamic terrorism. Yet this is a fertile land for that, a land which fights against education cannot do much against radical ideas appealing to simple minds which are easier to understand, they will thrive as long as this country continues degrading education.”<sup>281</sup>

As divisions influence different issues, it is concerning how the Federation and RS interpret separately issues of radicalization, violent incidents, and terrorism. De Borja, Tcherneva, and Wesslau (2016) write how religious-inspired terrorism in BiH risks damaging the already frail, post-conflict community relations, illustrated in the negative rhetoric between RS and the Muslim majority in the Federation concerning terrorism. Touma (2017) reports how despite Bosnian authorities tracking down foreign fighters and terrorism suspects, the main problem affecting counter-terrorist policies is the lack of coordination between the many

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<sup>279</sup> Interview, 02-09-2016

<sup>280</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>281</sup> Interview, 13-09-2016

security and police agencies in the country, a responsibility assigned to the State Prosecutor's office through its Terrorism Task Force. The 2016 OSCE report on BiH hate crimes highlights that despite continuous training efforts on tackling hate crimes, the limited progress in this comes from an inadequate legal framework, particularly avoiding investigation of bias in dealing with hate crimes, treating them as minor offences. Many denounce the excessive focus that counterterrorist debates have placed on Islamic radicalization. For OSCE representative Samra Ramić, "Radicalization is not about Islamic terrorism, it is a broader issue that should concern every citizen. There is a lack of recognition of how radicalism is an issue for the future in BiH, outside Islamic groups."<sup>282</sup> For Allen Dindić, from Sanski Most, "all these *chetnik* groups, they are forbidden in Serbia but are present in RS, but people do not care about this, we are just used to it all."<sup>283</sup> Croat extremism is a concern of Anja Kresojević in Mostar: "there is this idea of an independent Croatia as the best nation of people; you see this sentiment strongly in church."<sup>284</sup> She concludes with how ethnic divisions push radical ideas: "all sides have extreme views and without education, it is so easy to get into this, elders and priests in communities make people feel represented by them, they got legitimacy through this formula."

Such different interpretations affect decision-making towards radicalization and extremism. Measures against radicalization in RS are viewed as mechanisms against Bosniaks living in the entity. Researcher Majda Halilović explains: "RS often relies on police to 'radar' these issues and seeks this as a way to oppose Muslims in BiH. They use this to portray Muslims as problematic others and end up getting public support for this."<sup>285</sup> She concludes that focusing on Salafist extremism in RS serves to ignore the *chetnik* problem in the entity: "these issues of problematic groups are put aside by this one problem of the Salafists. This is

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<sup>282</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>283</sup> Interview, 02-09-2016

<sup>284</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

<sup>285</sup> Interview, 19-09-2016

a view adopted by the international community which ends up putting aside other forms of radicalization.” “This is all big talk that comes from RS against radicals, it is all propaganda as you do not see the same in the Federation”<sup>286</sup> states Sanski Most local Allan Dindić. NGO leader Goran Bubalo sees in Milorad Dodik’s discourse on RS separation an influence on radicalization:

“With all this talk from Dodik about a referendum and separation this poses a great risk for many here considering the rising radical rhetoric in many communities. Bosniak politicians are not doing anything to help maintain RS here either which complicates things further.”<sup>287</sup>

Practitioner Jasmin Jasarević is concerned with the lack of a national policy surrounding this issue, going back to stagnant politics: “we have a lot of conferences on hate speech, but what we want is the state to take responsibility. There is no involvement of public institutions, which is where we want policy done.”<sup>288</sup> Haris Lokavić, from the Swiss Cooperation Agency, recognizes that although foreign fighters have been criminalized by law in BiH, “there is no official de-radicalization stance and particularly in prisons. There is little communication between prison authorities and security authorities in BiH. We simply do not have a program on de-radicalization here.”<sup>289</sup>

The problem of radicalization and extremism combines factors presented previously: ethno-political divisions maintain prejudice between young people, education, and media reducing contact between youngsters and the lack of economic prospects and employment opportunities have made some turn to radical groups. A cycle of divisions perpetuates this problem: as communities mistrust one another and have little prosperity, blaming each other

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<sup>286</sup> Interview, 02-09-2016

<sup>287</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>288</sup> Interview, 10-09-2016

<sup>289</sup> Interview, 05-10-2016

for their situation sparks violence. As a response to such violence, further divisions, blaming and lack of coordination between authorities repeat this cycle. The political deadlock and antagonistic stances between RS and the Federation's authorities further complicate the issue.

### **What is legitimate in reconciliation? International and civil society organizations in BiH**

Having analysed different barriers to reconciliation, how these are perceived by different actors in the country and how they connect or separate peacebuilding agents and citizens, a final analysis of how these actors perceive themselves and each other is required. This section starts with how internationals justify their work in BiH and how NGOs and citizens view them. Then it looks at civil society on sustainability and legitimacy issues, particularly how citizens and internationals perceive NGOs.

#### ***International presence: supporting or hindering reconciliation?***

Looking at the themes from field interviews, for international actors, with a long-term presence in BiH, legitimacy derives from good communication, pushing accountability and anti-corruption into the political agenda and promoting local ownership. For international actors, communication is highly relevant for legitimacy. For an international representative: "what gives legitimacy is your private personal authority and also honesty in communicating with locals, what we have learned in BiH is not to be diplomatic but tell people honestly what you can do and want to do in order to avoid high expectations."<sup>290</sup> For Haris Lokavić from the Swiss Embassy, "our approach is to communicate, speak about partnerships. We do exploratory work, dialogue with civil society and stakeholders for development and cooperation before launching a program."<sup>291</sup> Communication amongst internationals is a requirement for coordinating reconciliation efforts:

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<sup>290</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>291</sup> Interview, 05-10-2016

“A main issue for the international community is lack of communication between international actors. We try to fix this, coordinate efforts with certain projects. There is a lot of work on hate crime and hate speech, yet if all efforts really contributed to communicating their work, the impact would be bigger,”<sup>292</sup> said Samra Ramić from the OSCE.

Constantly pressuring for accountability, rule of law and transitional justice is another perceived legitimacy source. The OHR sees its contribution as bringing attention to ethnopolitics: “As RS is trying to dismantle or discredit state-level institutions, we are trying to counter that by monitoring, bringing this to the attention of the international community, forming a structured dialogue on justice and helping them deal with the challenges and open issues in the judiciary”, stated an interviewee. For an OSCE respondent, “when we work with different sectors of government, we incorporate the idea of accountability. We encourage the development of citizen groups and watchdogs as well as communicating via social media what is happening at the local level.”<sup>293</sup> Transitional justice orientated organizations seek to bridge gaps with citizens in their work: “we are fighting denial by the facts, talking about judicial facts beyond reasonable doubt. We do not go into political debates,” stated an ICTY-Outreach interviewee. Connecting with victims is a vital requirement for their legitimacy: “We need to understand their situation as they are disappointed with the legal proceedings and system. They hear about us via victim associations, contact us and we look at the process in courts”<sup>294</sup>, stated Adisa Fisić from TRIAL. For the journalist organization BIRN: “we are an energy that can help victims and

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<sup>292</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

<sup>293</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>294</sup> Interview, 23-06-2016

others, such as detainees, to make sure that the law works for them, to see that crimes are being prosecuted”<sup>295</sup>, stated Erna Maćkik.

International approaches are characterized by local ownership. From an institutional focus, local ownership is understood as a political process, expected to spill over into various elements of society, both socio-political and economic (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016, p.13). For reconciliation, local ownership is about fostering partnerships with local organizations. “We try to have local partners on board, on the project board and management. Our preferences are given to projects with institutions to show ownership of processes”<sup>296</sup>, stated Haris Lokavić from the Swiss Embassy. For Nihad Gavranović, of the OSCE,

“Our approach is working not only with organizations that are solely socially-minded but with those working wide range of issues (marginalized communities, people with disabilities, environmental issues). We see success in securing local ownership, from authorities and NGOs to create some sustainability for the ideas that we promote on the ground.”<sup>297</sup>

This reflects Lemay-Hebert and Kappler’s (2016, p.12) view that local ownership is viewed as the main challenge in Bosnia’s reconstruction by international players, as many agencies explicitly state a lack of local ownership over peacebuilding, ascribing it to the nature of (complex and problematic) cooperation with local authorities. In addition, the local population appears divided about the need to strengthen ownership or ask for stronger degrees of intervention.

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<sup>295</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>296</sup> Interview, 05-10-2016

<sup>297</sup> Interview, 06-09-2016

Understanding international's views of legitimacy requires observing their approach to political actors, as most reconciliation obstacles stem from politics. Establishing partnerships with public institutions or between these and civil society actors is the most common response. Kappler (2015) explanation of the local connection for peacebuilding projects: international donors imply a higher legitimacy for their projects by localising their strategies in different shapes and forms. This form of legitimacy is derived from a project's local identity and its rootedness in local networks. This localisation of internationally designed projects occurs either via consultations with local stakeholders or by employing local staff. For Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHWB), serving as a meeting point between institutions and civil society is vital, obtaining legitimacy "through networking, to be the buffer zone that speaks the language of the people and decision makers. Implementing projects requires solidifying strategic alliances with associations and public institutions,"<sup>298</sup> stated Aida Vezić. Something similar is expressed by the OSCE: "our parliamentary work supports the process of shaping laws in key areas of governance, developing partnerships via our civil society contact, sponsoring a bottom-up approach where we organize work where citizens are involved in the planning of activities", stated an anonymous interviewee. For the ICTY-Outreach, legitimacy requires supporting the BiH State court: "we collaborate with them at the professional level, exchange information daily, answer requests for legal assistance, exchange evidence, witness protection measures. We train them and help develop effective research tools for their own cases"<sup>299</sup>, stated an interviewee.

All of these justifications have generated different responses from civil society actors and citizens alike, highlighting tensions and support. The international community, being distant from the every day and not experiencing the daily problems of the country, reduced its legitimacy (Kappler, 2013). Regarding 'local ownership', this term often refers to difficulties

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<sup>298</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>299</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

experienced by peacebuilding missions, often by faltering lack of grounded legitimacy, seeking to balance between not enough and too much involvement from interveners (Lemay-Hebert and Kappler, 2016). The risk of 'local ownership' is that it becomes a superficial term that serves as a device to manipulate local agencies. Think tank representative Ivona Celebić focuses on avoiding high expectations: "what we learned from these 20 years is that we expect too much from internationals, they can't and didn't sort our stuff out."<sup>300</sup> Various NGO leaders were more critical: for Elmina Kulasic, "legitimacy is put into question regarding who is shaping the approach: are the donors with their proposals and their partnerships with NGOs or the real needs of the people?"<sup>301</sup> Mevludin Rahmanović stated,

"We have a High Representative who has a lot of power but they don't do a lot, they keep saying that you have to deal with your own issues. There are some good efforts but I am not satisfied. High Representative with Bonn powers who no longer uses it, you need to show some leadership when dealing with our politicians."<sup>302</sup>

For Luljetta Goranji, "the international community focuses on a few hotspots here in Bosnia but does not have a national approach to the issues, sometimes they do not listen to us [civil society]."<sup>303</sup> An interviewee from Youth Initiative for Human Rights was particularly concerned with demands from international donors regarding reconciliation projects:

"Donor timeframes become a problem, needs assessments too. Nobody asks people what they need and people are not involved in project discussions. They

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<sup>300</sup> Interview, 14-07-2016

<sup>301</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>302</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>303</sup> Interview, 20-04-2016

are told what to do from Sarajevo, a patronizing approach. Asking the population for needs is seen as lack of planning rather than a useful strategy.”<sup>304</sup>

Citizens displayed mixed feelings about internationals, recognizing their importance in stopping the war, initiating reconstruction but questioning their current disposition towards BiH. “we cannot do it on our own, we need their support”<sup>305</sup> says Sarajevan Vesna Vidaković, who thinks BiH could return to war if it wasn’t for internationals whom, in her view, prevented escalating violence after the Zvornik terrorist incident. Kenan CengiĆ, in Sarajevo, believes that “their work falls on deaf ears. They are not accomplishing anything because they interact solely with liberal individuals, their equals. This simply does not get us anywhere.”<sup>306</sup> Slobodanka Sodić in Prijedor blames them for the country’s problems: “Bosnian politicians have it good here with all that international money”<sup>307</sup>, a view shared by Seada Velić from Livno: “politicians and people who receive this [international] money do not invest it in anything. Politicians don’t care about people, just about themselves.”<sup>308</sup> Others were more poignant: for Zlatan Zubić in Prijedor: “We’ve had twenty years of them speaking and saying we have peace now, you will have your own government. What we have is a government that doesn’t do anything whilst Valentin Inzko makes a 40,000 KM salary doing nothing.”<sup>309</sup> Zlatan Velagić in Zenica adds, “Lack of involvement of the High Representative is causing many problems when they stopped ensuring the peace process that is when all our problems started.”<sup>310</sup> For Brčko-based Tatjana Milovanović, internationals

“Are not very useful now. They were expecting this hand-over process to us.

The OSCE told us by 2008 that they were pushing for a big reform in politics,

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<sup>304</sup> Interview, 23-07-2016

<sup>305</sup> Interview, 22-06-2016

<sup>306</sup> Interview, 21-05-2016

<sup>307</sup> Interview, 26-06-2016

<sup>308</sup> Interview, 02-06-2016

<sup>309</sup> Interview, 20-06-2016

<sup>310</sup> Interview, 13-09-2016

they put all political leaders in a hotel to solve the political stalemate in Bosnia and there was no agreement, no solution.”<sup>311</sup> She believes that the international community needs to push the government for reforms, whilst civil society projects should focus on pressuring for political change.

### ***NGOs: (dis)connecting state and citizens in reconciliation***

Legitimacy and sustainability are fundamental in the Bosnian NGO world. Legitimacy refers to connecting with citizens through work, supporting their needs. Sustainability is concerned with maintaining, through time, projects and ideas supporting reconciliation. For NGOs, sources of legitimacy derive from addressing key issues, establishing trusting relations with citizens and having a long-term presence where they are needed. On the other hand, sustainability is presented as problematic, derived from funding issues, distancing between international donors and citizens and obstacles for establishing partnerships.

For NGOs, responding to people’s needs is a source of legitimacy. Mervan Miroscija stressed, “Strategic planning is based on local needs, which has been recognized by citizens. We address real local problems of ordinary people.”<sup>312</sup> For Wahidin Ohmanović, proving that work comes from a genuine local interest is a priority: “we try to keep CIM [his organization] as inclusive as possible, trying to show everybody that we do this because we believe in it and not for money or outside interests.”<sup>313</sup> Edina Vošanović highlights that legitimacy requires understanding work as a process rather than a temporary solution: “the community trusts us and we keep connecting with new generations, this is not a temporary thing but rather a process as we keep our projects running for years despite funding problems.” Diana Pegić has a similar view: “it is long-term, professional work. We work with children’s needs and

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<sup>311</sup> Interview, 01-08-2016

<sup>312</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>313</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

we listen to them. We always come back to the places where we do our work, our legitimacy is out of the long work with children and the trust we get from them.”<sup>314</sup>

Responding to needs requires creating trusting relations with citizens. Kemal Salaca recognizes that working with veterans implies dealing with mistrust put in place by politicians, hence “what we try to do is to make an easy approach to the public; you need good relations with the public. We are an organization that brings all three ethnicities together to make a project successful.”<sup>315</sup> For Marija Vuletić, her gender-based work depends on “gaining trust from women, helping them understand that feminists don’t hate them. Our advantage is that we have the trust of the local women and are improving the situation in our local contexts with them.”<sup>316</sup> In Mevludin Rahmanović’s case, trust-building in Sanski Most counters politicians’ dividing efforts: “we need to show what reconciliation and peace means. When we say that we need to be in a good relationship with Serbs we see that through our examples. Getting trust from the people is key for our organization as it keeps people connected to us.”<sup>317</sup>

Sector views turn negative when addressing sustainability, concerned with donor emigration from BiH, ‘dirty’ NGO tactics inhibiting cooperation, and donor-driven and donor-dependent nature of the sector. “Writing projects, reporting on them, fitting into assigned priorities, doing fundraising, showing how it [the NGO sector] learned to be an industry, an entrepreneur instead of a critic, a corrector of the powerful, the one that sets bad policies straight regardless of whose they are” (Bozicević, 2007, p. 128). In BiH, many NGOs remain limited by ad hoc or narrowly directed funding sources and by the policy environment they operate in, compromising severely their ability to implement autonomous policies

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<sup>314</sup> Interview, 13-06-2016

<sup>315</sup> Interview, 22-07-2016

<sup>316</sup> Interview, 11-08-2016

<sup>317</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

(Evans-Kent and Bleiker, 2010). Problematic for Bosnian NGOs is the current situation where the EU, despite concerned with maintaining leverage over political elites and state actors, views civil society demands for justice as conflict generating and destabilizing (Rangelov et. al, 2016). This comes down to the EU's top-down view of transitional justice, reflected on civil society engagement with formal justice mechanisms. The only areas of EU support in this sense have to do solely with monitoring, outreach, awareness and victim engagement with the justice system. Elmina Kulasić highlights this: "we don't have institutions, Bosnian foundations for the NGO sector, nor long-term approaches. The donor community shapes NGO work via funding which makes NGOs aid dependent."<sup>318</sup> Wahidin Ohmanović expressed concern with how "most donors have left or redirected their grants. Donors always go towards NGOs in Sarajevo and Banka Luka and it is an NGO mafia, a circle of NGOs that are elite."<sup>319</sup> For Velma Sarić "the NGO sector is a dirty competition for funding, you have this lobby in donor dinners, and you have five or six NGOs always attending this. This lobbying excludes many organizations from the process and turns it all into a private business." Koutkova (2013) uses the term 'the usual crowd' to define the group of NGO leaders that attend the same seminars and events, seeing the NGO sector as a leader-centred, personality-based type of management model that contributes to clientelism and networking in the sector. Leslie Woodward, NGO co-founder, added how Bosnia's NGO 'mafia' is composed of organizations that "acquire funding without monitoring procedures or transparency. They are the ones donors get comfortable with. There is a lot of nepotism in donor funding."<sup>320</sup> Not only has this small elite of NGOs benefitted from sustained financial support from foreign donors but also become adept at diversifying their donor base over time, reducing their vulnerability to changing donor policy (Sterland, 2006)

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<sup>318</sup> Interview, 15-07-2016

<sup>319</sup> Interview, 18-07-2016

<sup>320</sup> Interview, 24-15-2016

International actors and civil society actors use donor dependency and lack of sustainability, as a critique of poor growth in the sector. As civil society burgeoned from the emergence of NGOs, it has grappled with the difficulties of civic participation. This is an area affected by the fickle nature of donor funding, which has seen a tendency of NGOs becoming temporary, short-term projects without strong constituencies, with a tendency to dissolve or become inactive after donor money has been spent (Richmond and Franks, 2009). Barnes et al (2004) identify an underlying dilemma: on one side, internationals acknowledge they are the driving force behind civil society, yet they identify a lack of vision and agenda for civil society by domestic actors, which challenges sustainability. On the other hand, local actors admit that the lack of domestic ownership of civil society is problematic but argue that the role played by the international community in BiH displaced domestic actors. International intervention initially reduced the potential of local grassroots NGOs in two ways: international organizations hiring citizens with higher education who would otherwise have become active in civil society, and creating a dependency trap where civil society initiatives depended on assessments of western donors and less on local needs (Bieber, 2002). Despite viewing themselves as politically independent, the NGO sector has created its own forms of patronage tied to either local government (for the more nationalist orientated organizations) or the international community (Kurtović, 2015, p. 645). This problem, typical in post-war democratization processes, goes back to the tendency of outsiders working in non-western countries, to look for structures representative of the forms of civil society present in modern western societies (NGOs, Trade unions, etc.) (Pouligny, 2005). When donors do not find this, they create a civil society with groups mirroring western society that suddenly emerge and claim this label, groups that are far from covering the range of modalities of a collective organization, ending in a difficulty in establishing links with other existing social arrangements at the community level (Pouligny, 2005). This constitutes an exclusion in

processes of democratization within liberal interventions that reject political cultures too different from the dominant western forms, ignoring the traditional ways of political organization for the sake of a local experiment of modern democratic representation. In the case of BiH, the grounds for this are the difference between NGOs and other forms of political organization. In this sense, Mervan Miroscija identifies a poor environment:

“Protests, demonstrations and assembly are denied as political elites attack CSOs on the ground, particularly if they work on corruption or reconciliation. International donors finance these projects. Limited projects where organizations try to meet donor standards, not the problems of communities on the ground. This is impossible in the case of transitional justice”<sup>321</sup>

For an international interviewee, “the NGO sector goes where the money is, they follow the interests of the international community, and when it has a political interest in something they fund NGOs in particular policy areas, and NGOs simply have to adapt.”<sup>322</sup> Goran Bubalo recognizes that NGOs “are working for the money. There is no way to share information in calls for proposal and big organizations use small organizations as restricted partners when there are requests for joint projects. The NGO world became a business.”<sup>323</sup> For Marija Vuletić, “Donors do not know the state of things on the ground yet here you are forced to fulfil donor politics. Their policies are project-based and lead to this high-level competition. Many of their projects are not accessible to us and the state does not give much funding either.”<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Interview, 16-07-2016

<sup>322</sup> Interview, 24-07-2016

<sup>323</sup> Interview, 13-04-2016

<sup>324</sup> Interview, 11-08-2016

Civil society's problems, from lack of sustainability and funding crisis to the inability to establish partnerships due to corrupt, competitive practices, further disconnect NGOs from citizens, leading to mistrust. The donor-dependent NGO sector in BiH is characterized by low levels of citizen involvement and a separation from society as it is made up of NGO professionals whose sense of accountability and political focus is on international donors and agencies (Fagan, 2005). As organizations get access to funding, they change in accordance with the conditions set by donors, risking losing touch with society, reducing their ability to build trust (Kappler, 2013). Reflecting on the 2014 protests, Vesna Vidaković in Sarajevo comments: "people are doing protests but NGOs do projects, they take money. Bosnia should get rid of NGOs; they are just like the political parties in parliament."<sup>325</sup> Tatjana Milovanović in Brčko believes "they are not trusted by citizens. The trend was to go into communities, do your project and leave. You do not come back nor do you leave anything behind. Communities are fed up with this."<sup>326</sup> "They get money from state budgets or overseas donors, they do activities but I don't see them doing anything smart, yet they talk a lot about it,"<sup>327</sup> said Slatan Zubić in Sarajevo. For Najra Krvavac, in Sarajevo: "NGOs became another form of business, now you have experts in writing projects for the U.N., OSCE and all those organizations. The result is 10% of the money goes to the cause but the rest of that money, god knows!"<sup>328</sup> "There are too many of them, I see them as small enterprises that enjoy international funds. They are displayed as an opportunity to find jobs and make a living, but a lot are just a waste of time,"<sup>329</sup> stated Damir Ugljen in Mostar.

The distancing between citizens, NGOs, and internationals in their understanding of legitimacy shows that efforts towards communication, trust-building and dealing with

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<sup>325</sup> Interview, 22-06-2016

<sup>326</sup> Interview, 01-08-2016

<sup>327</sup> Interview, 20-06-2016

<sup>328</sup> Interview, 20-05-2016

<sup>329</sup> Interview, 06-10-2016

pressing needs have not engaged fully with ethnopolitics and the ‘apparatus’ enforcing ethnic divisions. The view of NGOs as money-driven organizations forgetting citizens’ needs whilst favouring donor priorities, structures the mapping of reconciliation. This dilemma is present in radicalization, excessive international focus on Salafi influences coupled with an inability to promote consensus amongst authorities separates peace-builders and citizens. International and NGO interest in enterprise creation, employment training and alternative education miss dealing with corrupt, nepotistic and client-focused practices of political groups draining the economy. Separation is evidenced in protests avoidant of NGOs and citizen self-organization as recognition of the unwillingness of other actors to help.

International efforts promoting returnee inclusion, NGO projects providing an alternative, reconciliation-driven education and initiatives to raise awareness of problematic issues compete with segregationist practices and politicised information, driving citizens away from both nationalist and international/NGO provisions for alternative education and positive media reporting. All of these intersections turn to a concern, the focus of separations: ‘politics’. Intervention approaches monitoring and advocating for change and promoting reconciliation lack the reach and strength that ethno-nationalists have of state power. Dayton drafted the origins of this divided map, but it is in the intersections between internationals, NGOs, and citizens where truth telling, justice-seeking and reconciliation-prone efforts either survive or perish.

## **Summary**

Analysing what interviewees identify as barriers to reconciliation uncovers common linkages between actors engaged in peacebuilding as well as those who have witnessed the transformation process in Bosnia Herzegovina from its early post-war period to recent times. Many concerns expressed in this chapter (the impossibility of reforming the Dayton

agreement, stagnation of the political and economic systems, use of media and education as structures that inhibit future reconciliation) show that although problems are shared by most actors, they are experienced in different ways, producing a distancing between peacebuilding actors and citizens on the ground.

From a reconciliation perspective, the Dayton process cemented a structure of government legitimizing ethnic divisions in the country. It has ended in incentives for corruption and deadlock between ethnically orientated governmental authorities, inhibited, and delayed the establishment of legislation vital to transitional justice concerning reparations, a possible truth commission, and political recognition for victims, protection of victims of sexual crimes, and the establishment of laws for protecting socio-economic rights.

All interviewed actors are concerned particularly with the ability of ethnopolitical parties to promote practices contrary to reconciliation: the promotion of hate speech ethnically focused propaganda for political purposes and their manipulation of socio-economic structures for the benefit of politicians. Reliance on Dayton and the impossibility of its reform as Constitution of BiH has created obstacles for cooperation between different authorities, political leaders, and platforms, which thrive on politics of separation. Opposition to reconciliation is a perception shared by all interviewees who specify various sources of ongoing tension derived from the divided nature of the post-Dayton system. Amongst these, interviewees highlight hate speech and genocide denial contrary to transitional justice efforts to avoid collective blaming for the past, citizen ethnic 'mistrust' that favours ethnopolitical parties, lack of accountability surrounding the constant deadlock of the system and the poor progress in economic development. Civil society representatives who promote reconciliation are affected directly, deemed as enemies of local or even national authorities as well as seen with suspicion and mistrust by citizens in the areas where they operate.

In the case of citizens, the ‘identitarian matrix’, or the reliance of Dayton on the concept of the three constituent peoples of BiH has led to a barrier to everyday life, an obstacle for citizens in their pursuit of education, employment, professional development and social relations, all areas deemed highly relevant for reconciliation. Ethnic identity feels imposed, obligatory and in many cases unnecessary. For generations who lived before the war, Dayton’s ethno-religious identities are seen as an imposed consequence of the victory of ethnopolitical interests from the war. Many remember ethnic or religious identity being irrelevant during the Yugoslav era or something that concerned a private rather than a public sphere. For younger interviewees, born after the war, it becomes a barrier, not only in relating to communities from other ethnic groups but also in the acquisition of employment (often needing a *štetla* derived from affiliation to a political party) or being exposed to forced political rhetoric in schools and universities.

Divisions are set in place via education and media. These two structures become tools for ethno-politicians to promote hatred and divisions in society, negatively affecting the prospects of future generations achieving reconciliation. Stemming from Dayton’s lack of acknowledgment of education as a tool for reconciliation, mono-ethnic and segregationist practices have become mechanisms for infiltrating ethnopolitical interests into the youth and children of BiH. Newer generations are perceived as more radicalized than those who can remember the war due to exposure to narratives and teaching that presents dividing views of the past or that maintains little or no contact between students from different ethnic groups. For peacebuilding agents, this represents a difficulty in getting young people to participate in initiatives towards memorialisation, peace education or workshops to get young people working together. As efforts to promote reconciliation-orientated education compete with mainstream (mono-ethnic and segregationist) education practices, they find difficulties in accessing schools, getting authorization from educational and political authorities and

effectively contest the dividing rhetoric that surrounds young people's lives. For young people themselves, obstacles are even more problematic: low quality of education, very little preparation for the national job market, exclusion of ethnic minorities from education, and the imposition of political and confessional views in teaching and learning.

This is further complicated by the workings of politicised media, where negative reporting that seeks ethnic angles on information and that promotes political propaganda becomes the trend. A shared area of concern is with the ownership by political parties of media channels in BiH and their use for promoting anti-reconciliation messages such as hate speech, genocide denial, and negative and ethnically focused reporting, as well as avoidance of reconciliation stories in the news. For international and civil society actors, this presents an obstacle in their interest to foster messages of reconciliation. Very little or often no mainstream channels report on the workings of NGO activities and in various cases negatively spin information in order to sustain divisions, or tell a one-sided view of the past. Such competition has led many NGOs to create their own media outlets, including own publications, youth journalism platforms, and workshops, but due to a shortage of funding and support, they struggle to contest mainstream media. This clearly affects prospects for effective outreach of transitional justice and reconciliation initiatives within the population.

If peacebuilding is intended as the establishment of structures that avoid the re-emergence of future violence and the maintenance of sustainable peace, then the views from all actors regarding economic stagnation, low unemployment and lack of development outside ethnopolitical structures remain a concern that threatens efforts for post-conflict reconstruction. The divergence in this regard stems from a constant support from peacebuilder agents in the stimulation of economic recovery via neo-liberal practices in BiH contrasted with the negative and frustrated citizen experiences with the BiH economy. Organizations recognize the economy as an area for planning peacebuilding matters, where

authorities from different ethnic groups are expected to work together in the development of economic reconstruction, the promotion of employment opportunities and particularly enterprise creation as ways to get people to work together, to benefit from peacebuilding and to empower victims and the poor. Yet, for most interviewed citizens, the economy holds little promise and is rather a source of frustration and corruption than of real change. Illustrative of this is the high level of youth unemployment, contributing to various tendencies. The co-option of Bosnian youth into ethnopolitical structures for acquiring employment, of a citizen drain from Bosnia, where youth, in particular, seem to give up on BiH as a place for their life projects and the engagement in survival strategies such as depending on diaspora remittances or at worst, joining radical organizations as foreign fighters.

A consequence of the economic and political stagnation derived from the complications and issues derived from Dayton's post-war state system is the protest and response to floods in 2014. The emergence of anti-government protests and the unification of citizens during catastrophe has represented an unintended form of cooperation that hints at a natural reconciliation, yet represents a form of contestation not only of ethno-politics but of the work from international and civil society actors, representing a major site for divergence in this map of Bosnian peacebuilding. As such, it provides for an interesting momentum in Bosnia's post-war reconstruction as it showed discontent and rejection of the ethno-political structures that have held a tight grip over political and economic progress but also of the presence of international actors and the donor-driven NGOs that make part of civil society. The moment is interpreted as a lost opportunity, where violence and the possibility of political co-option from elites disrupted the spaces for change, yet it serves as a driver of the distance between peacebuilding and citizens, to the point that it begins to display concerns about legitimacy and acceptance of peacebuilding decisions in society. The fact that interviewees put at the same level concerns with the corruption of political authorities and disappointment with donors and

NGOs representing social interests mark the schism in the map. Despite sharing concerns in vital areas, questioning of intentions, interests, and resources from international and civil society actors mark their separation with citizens, a division that will be more prominent in the study of legitimacy.

Both unaddressed issues of the past, combined with the challenges of reconciliation for future generations have contributed to the rise of extremism and youth radicalization in BiH, a problem that makes another area of convergence between peacebuilding actors and citizens. Here youth as a target for peacebuilding seems disconnected from the processes of change expected from state-building and transitional justice. The intergenerational passing of trauma, together with post-war structures that facilitate a dividing mentality between young people (education, media, politics, popular culture, parents) inhibit the prospects for youth constructing a multicultural country as they are constantly warned about the perils of the ethnic 'other'. This has led to radicalization affecting youth via the emergence of various extremist groups, an offshoot from radical ideologies persistent in BiH, but also stemming from lack of economic progress and the rising rhetoric from ethnopolitics. This combination has emerged in a radical discourse in BiH that brings the risk of renewed violence. This has seen expression in the recruitment of young foreign fighters travelling abroad but also in the recruitment of young people into extremist groups at the local level, reproducing violent propaganda from the past.

All of these different sections of the peacebuilding map point towards the issue of legitimacy and the existing perceptions between peacebuilders and citizens in regards to the post-conflict process in BiH. The distancing between peacebuilders and citizens is appreciated in the different responses to what constitutes legitimacy. International organizations focusing on technical terms such as accountability, outreach, and local ownership as priorities in peacebuilding, contrasted with a questioning from citizen responses on what the purpose of

the international presence is, particularly after the move from heavy intervention and Bonn powers towards the era of 'local ownership'. Stronger is the feeling of disconnect between NGOs and citizens in the interviews. Organizations talking about the need to deal with local needs, keeping local interests in mind, and having a long and extended presence in local communities versus expressions such as 'money-driven' organizations that are on the side of donors rather than citizens. All of these discrepancies point towards a complex relation between donor-NGO-citizens that displays the tensions in peacebuilding on the side of those who work, plan or have witnessed reconciliation work in the last 21 years in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## **CHAPTER 7 - THE STATE-BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION NEXUS: CONNECTING THIN AND THICK RECONCILIATION IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

### **Introduction**

This section concludes with the steps and ideas emerging from the nexus' mapping of thin and thick reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), contrasting meanings for reconciliation as a working concept in peacebuilding and experience for citizens. It summarizes issues within academic literature and contextual information on Bosnia's reconstruction. Afterwards, it highlights discussions present through data collection: possible connection between thin and thick understandings of reconciliation from international actors and NGOs and the contrasting views from Bosnian citizens building their own organic conceptualizations. The chapter ends discussing areas of tension and agreement between peacebuilders and citizens, analyzing main reconciliation barriers.

### **Creating the nexus: linking top-down and bottom-up in state-building and transitional justice**

State-building and transitional justice are activities supporting or hindering peacebuilding: a process towards solidifying peace, avoiding relapse into conflict. Through conceptual clarifications, the nexus defines narrow and broad practices: narrow peacebuilding sees state-building separate from reconciliation, whereas comprehensive linkages between these practices harbour a broad and holistic peacebuilding, where such interactions between top-down and bottom-up bring in a more inclusive peacebuilding. Narrow forms of peacebuilding turn into negative peace: the cessation of hostilities and violence, missing options for foundation of durable and self-sustaining structures. Interaction between broad state-building (that includes high-level institution-building and the creation of political communities and culture on the ground) and broad reconciliation (concerned with both thin

(legalistic/institution-based practices and thick/healing and grounded practices) supports a holistic approach that considers the socio-political context of interventions, working through tensions and agreements, supporting a more legitimate process.

The study looked at reconciliation understandings, from international and local actors, revealing how a categorization of reconciliation permitted disjointed practices. Literature advocates linking top-down and bottom-up reconciliation approaches, moving beyond political agreements and state-building towards citizens priorities, it “needs both top-down and bottom-up processes, to be effective it must proceed in both dimensions simultaneously” (Fischer, 2016a, p. 26). Reconciliation “involves both bottom-up and top-down approaches, grass root level and institutions, which aims at restoring relationships between people, communities, as well as between institutions and citizens, and at establishing civic trust.” (Brand and Idrizi, 2012, p. 4). Judith Brand mentioned:

“State and citizens have a link in reconciliation: when citizens and organizations share the same values then trust in institutions can occur, for this, they need to guarantee safety and allow people to enjoy their rights. This also leads to people trusting in other fellow citizens as they know that they share the same values.”<sup>330</sup>

Defining reconciliation, as a working concept, seeks inclusion within peacebuilding. How the term is defined and practiced can harvest legitimacy by being broadening it to include a wide array of ideas, actors and priorities (a holistic approach) or work against legitimacy, narrowing it to single practices (as with its legalistic influence, prioritizing retributive practice focused on accountability and institution-building). Acknowledgment of the limited reach of transitional justice mechanisms is needed; each measure’s weakness provides incentives towards interaction with the others to make up for individual limitations (De Greiff, 2012, p.

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<sup>330</sup> Interview, 06-06-2016

34). This affects scholarship, as transitional justice research overemphasizes literature on single case mechanisms, failing to consider timing, sequencing or interaction of transitional justice mechanisms collectively. (Skaar and Malca, 2015, p.17)

Transitional justice mechanisms cannot be viewed as trade-offs or as either/or choice but as a contextual study opening up spaces for implementing different means to achieve reconciliation. Connecting practices helps address different needs, as the option is rarely either peace or justice. Transitional justice involves not only a range of tools and processes but also decisions among them (Sriram, 2007). Reconciliation work uses many vehicles, from arts to economic forms of cooperation, local conditions define which objectives and practices are relevant (Komesaroff, 2016). Yet, the distancing between legal (thick) and psychosocial (thin) practices leading to contradictory interventions is concerning. Legal dominance in transitional justice discourse sees justice delivery as quintessentially a matter of state or state-like institutions (McEvoy, 2007). Excessive faith in transitional justice institutions works against ownership and accountability to the communities they are designed to serve. Missing connections between bottom-up approaches with national contexts and state-based mechanisms also limits the reach for victims' needs and narratives to go beyond the immediate local, and eventually limiting the move from individual to collective and even national reconciliation.

### **Setting up the nexus: Bosnia-Herzegovina's reconciliation barriers**

Analysing tension and agreement in reconciliation required looking at Bosnia-Herzegovina's state-building and transitional justice as structures for reconciliation. Technicalities, modes, and priorities established in both processes, distanced peacebuilding from organic/citizen forms of politics, justice and reconciliation, establishing legitimacy and ownership problems, dividing between thin and thick reconciliation, separating internationals from locals. In state-

building, institution-building was prioritized over establishing political community between former adversaries, and in transitional justice, the ICTY was given too many expectations as a retributive tool, prioritized over reparations, socioeconomic justice, truth telling or memorialization. The international reconciliation discourse separated itself from local understandings and needs: the object of hope for many people was normality, not the crossing of national boundaries (Jansen, 2013). Reconciliation appeared on people's horizon not as a priority but as a side effect of their hope for reducing war's abnormalities.

ICTY's dominance affected the establishment of a judiciary, leaving a legacy of ethnic mistrust in the handling of cases, accusations of ethnic bias, delays and political obstruction to the delivery of justice. The ICTY did not aid reconciliation, it was not seen as dispensing impartial justice; Serb and Croats emphasize how a biased court works against reconciliation whilst Bosniaks cannot see reconciliation whilst certain war criminals remain free (Clark, 2009b). Developing civil society in BiH suffered a similar fate; its NGOization made this realm an artificial, donor-driven setting, finding it difficult to gain citizen trust, encountering obstacles in political elites who have deemed organizations and practices contrary to the interests of their constituencies.

### **Assembling the nexus: contrasts between reconciliation frameworks and citizen mind-sets**

The first step towards identifying tension and agreement in peacebuilding is observation of thin and thick reconciliation practices. First, it recognizes the need for connecting trauma-healing and restorative practices, one focused on workshops for victims and veterans to deal with trauma, another concerned with compensation and reparation. Both approaches put victims as beneficiaries of reconciliation and as such necessitate one another. Achieving healthy ways to deal with trauma via workshops where victims build relations with other

victims, perpetrators and other communities is incomplete without legal structures for compensation, support, and recognition.

Advocacy for reparative and socioeconomic justice in BiH can benefit from the knowledge and networks established in psychosocial practices of trauma-healing where practitioners understand victims' needs by engaging with them on an everyday basis. This space can bring local concerns and needs into state-building for reparative justice. Disconnecting psychosocial work from state-building's reparative justice leads to an empty western practice of trauma-healing focused on diagnosis and treatment of symptoms, ignoring the social context and socially available at the community level that could support trauma-healing (Charbonneau and Parent, 2012). This can become psychological imperialism, imposed from the outside upon a passive and disempowered 'patient'. Connections between trauma-healing and restorative/reparative justice are underpinned by a transitional justice aim: recognition. It is not about acknowledging victims great capacity for dealing with suffering but about providing victims with recognition as equal rights bearers and citizens, engaging in the redress that can assuage suffering, restore violated rights and affirming victims standing as citizens (De Greiff, 2012, p.42)

In dealing with 'truth', practices rely on truth telling as an interpretative approach contributing to dealing with the past between individuals and local communities, establishing dialogues between conflicting truths and an understanding that 'every side had victims and perpetrators.' In addition, fact-finding as processes concerned with objective, forensic and legalistic truths specifying how atrocities occurred, identifying individual perpetrators and information for identifying the missing.

Despite creative approaches to truth telling, lack of regulation within the law and of recognition from political actors, make these efforts controversial and conflictive rather than

communicative. Lack of a political process for truth telling including authorities at local and national levels makes ‘truth’ projects compete with ethno-political rhetoric denouncing them as false, opposed to citizen interests and as attack on certain ethnic truths. This also affects fact-finding, lack of political recognition has allowed contestation of forensic truths via hate speech, genocide denial and praising war criminals as war heroes. Civil society organizations leading these projects work under difficult conditions; their work is rarely encouraged by governments and local authorities, therefore organizations cannot count on material support (Fischer, 2016a, p. 45). Activists work in isolation, risking being misunderstood by society and target of threats from nationalistic politicians. Looking at the bigger picture, there are conflicting claims about truth telling peace effect: that truth telling is vital for reconciliation, contributing to individualizing guilt and to the psychological healing of victims (Skaar, 2013). Too much confidence in the effects of truth telling, makes its relationship with reconciliation questionable. In the case of a prospective truth commission (in BiH or the Balkans), this needs to be managed in a sensitive manner, otherwise, it could heighten ethnic divisions. Too much truth telling can be counterproductive, generating more social cleavages (Skaar, 2013). The inability in BiH to establish a truth commission allows denial of what happened prior to Dayton, bringing in the problem that collaborators of the previous regime remain in office after transition, possibly undermining the new regime or being vulnerable to Blackmail from those aware of their past involvement (Elster, 2012, p. 97)<sup>331</sup>. Regarding the claim that truth telling allows national healing it is unclear how ideas of individual recovery from violence can have any bearing. ‘Do nations have psyches?’ asks Mendeloff (2004).

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<sup>331</sup> Illustrative of this is Sorguc’s (2017) report on the prosecution of Miroslav Kraljevic with war crimes, particularly murder and forcible disappearance of 22 people as well as detention, torture in Vlasenica in 1993. At the time of the indictment, December 2017, Kraljevic serves office as mayor of Vlasenica after being a successful politician for the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, leading party in RS.

Cooperation, another reconciliation form calls people to ‘work together’ in pursuit of common economic needs. This approach can engage peacebuilding with what genuinely matters for citizens, establishing a clear connection between thick practices that make authorities from different ethnic backgrounds to work together) with thin practices where citizens (particularly young people) can break ethnic barriers and mutually benefit from peacebuilding. This connection is challenged by problems of political accountability that allows ethnopolitical parties to gain control over the job market, making it difficult for enterprise and private businesses to boom, maintaining jobs within the state, affecting the prospects of different ethnicities working together. The problem with cooperation is depoliticisation; the risk of politics is that conflict may be non-communal, driving communities apart rather than a communal bringing of people closer together (Schaap, 2004). Reconciliation depends on a population within a state coming to think of itself as a single people, which makes reconciliation, not an imposed concept but an idea worked out politically by those who should get together to reconcile in the first place (Schaap, 2008)

Another approach is retributive justice via the ICTY. It has been subject to ongoing criticisms for lack of local outreach, excessive demands on accountability and rule of law, ignoring the reparative, rehabilitative demands of victims as well as limiting its scope of action prospects for reconciliation. Little evidence exists regarding the claims of the ICTY dissipating calls for revenge, individualizing guilt or establishing a historical record. Whilst Serbs and Croats claim bias against them, Bosniaks express anger with light prison sentences handed down by the tribunal (Clark, 2009b). In addition, trial truths are often partial and lost in juridical details, contested ethnically and politically. Denial becomes widespread, as almost a natural reaction in Bosnia evidenced by the politicised memorialisation of past events (Clark, 2009b).

The main tension appears with the gap between the high aspirations of the international community and the actual practice: justice conceived by UN actors and defined in narrow terms, avoiding any connection with projects for rebuilding social relations (Eastmond, 2010, p.3). The hijacking of transitional justice by political elites ushered in scepticism about the ICTY, as a discourse contrary to local ideas about justice. This ended reinterpreted within ethno-nationalist narratives of victimhood, guilt, and innocence. Claiming that tribunals contribute to social solidarity and a democratic political culture, depends on whether the judicial standards are accepted by most of society, which includes looking at how political leaders and elites use the law to influence social norms (Arenhövel, 2008, p. 575). The transitional justice claim that the ICTY would the Balkan wars was quickly refuted by events like Srebrenica and Kosovo. More complex is the claim that condemnation of ethnic persecution added to individual accountability would transcend identity politics and advance towards a liberal order (Skaar, 2013). Criminal trials have often divided small multi-ethnic communities, causing further suspicion and fear. Additionally, reinterpretation of indictments and contestation from political leadership has contributed to furthering social divisions. The case of the ICTY illustrates how domestic governments are able to act in ways that constrain the functioning of international tribunals (Loyle and Davenport, 2015). What is clear regarding retributive claims is that re-establishing a legal and justice system cannot by itself bring healing let alone reconciliation. It is needed for establishing an environment in which responsibility for crimes is attributed and perpetrators are punished so society can move to spaces of mutual respect and acceptance, often promoted by other mechanisms (Barakat, 2005).

The final approach is peace education as a local practice of conflict transformation. As thick reconciliation, peace education competes against mainstream schooling practices tending towards mono-ethnic and segregationist education. Reconciliation through education is an

informal practice that occurs sporadically, outside of the classroom and of dominant schooling structures, away from parent and relative narratives regarding the past and the conceptualization of the ethnic ‘other’. Education for peacebuilding and reconciliation projects often fail in recognizing the ways in which children have learned and been socialized through their own perspectives of violence; the idea that children are active social, economic and political agents inside and outside of educational experiences is often unaddressed by peace education programmes (Jones, 2016, p. 194)

Contrasting peacebuilding project formats, the next step in mapping refers to localised reconciliation through citizen interpretations and experiences. These narratives contrast with technical understandings of reconciliation, displaying an alternative, organic way of reconciliation criticising, opposing or ignoring mainstreamed practices. The first interpretation equates reconciliation with forgiveness and recognition, including processes for public apology, recognizing victims as rights bearers and an insistence on compensation and reparation for those most affected by atrocities committed during the war. People concerned with socioeconomic justice, insist on dealing with pressing issues of victims and the economic welfare of society rather than with demands for accountability and rule of law, buzzwords for international transitional justice. Regarding forgiveness, an arena where interventions have little or no space for engagement, it is a power held only by victims that cannot be claimed by others (Fischer, 2011, p. 415). Linking reconciliation with forgiveness can risk failure, forcing peacebuilding to concentrate more on coexistence or social reconstruction. Forgiveness has a religious/emotive component that in BiH is quite conflictive; it is better to focus on trust-building at different levels of society (Fischer, 2011, p. 415). Socioeconomic justice emerges as a possibility for broader understanding of transitional justice and peacebuilding, combining legal reparative and restorative dimensions of justice that can have societal repercussions in the form of rebuilding trust, societal

solidarity and even opening up discussions about the past (Hronešova, 2016). A holistic approach to dealing with the past requires a dimension on reparation, reaching neglected economic and structural categories in an attempt to re-establish the conditions before violence (Lai, 2016).

‘Youth in reconciliation’ highlights the prospective dimensions of transitional justice, demanding that peacebuilding meets young people’s needs: better quality education, better youth employment prospects and the establishment of spaces for the personal and professional development of youngsters. In peacebuilding literature, youth feature in many forms: as dissidents/rejectionists during peace processes, as possessing shifting identities and roles from political activism to criminal activity, key actors in negotiation and mediation, key actors in relation to new justice mechanisms and security forces, actors in socio-political violence post-agreements and as peacemakers (McEvoy-Levy, 2001). For BiH, this demands attention to the education system as peacebuilding site, bringing concerns with how political interests derived from Bosnia’s state-building process have found entrenchment in education structures, promoting separation, and segregation practices.

A highly critical and poignant understanding comes from interviewees deeming reconciliation as an external imposition, a foreign concept with little utility in the country and example of domination of international interveners. Those defending this perspective reject western formulations of reconciliation, projects, and ideas serving foreign interests rather than local needs. Contestation focuses more on a critique of internationals rather than a full ontological rejection of reconciliation, as a more organic, Bosnian-made reconciliation is evident in citizen responses to floods affecting the country in 2014.

This natural conceptualization presents communication as prominent feature of reconciliation; the term becomes an everyday dialogue between neighbours allowing a less technical dealing

with the past, but more importantly to find connections enabling cooperation, integration, and coexistence between former antagonists. The problem with this organic reconciliation is its risk of politicisation, particularly from ethnopolitical interests permeating society, prevalent in mainstream politics. The opportunity presented in communication is the fact that dialogue can be orientated towards solving pressing problems and needs between neighbours, something mainstream politics has not achieved.

Finally, reconciliation is viewed as development. Concerns with the stagnating economy, rising unemployment (particularly for young people) and lack of impact from peacebuilding on alleviating people's immediate needs demands concentration on fostering development and putting current problems into the fore of peacebuilding. If peacebuilding seeks to maintain sustainable peace and to avoid further escalation of violence, it simply cannot ignore this area of engagement. It is here where citizen tensions are rising and where renewed violence can appear.

These two chapters' findings, of technical frames and the grounded, natural and everyday conceptions of reconciliation, are linked through mapping tensions and agreements by analysing views on what constitutes difficult barriers to reconciliation. This mapping makes visible the shared concerns between international, civil society actors and citizens alike, showing discrepancies in the ways problems are experienced by different actors and looking at how legitimacy and recognition are perceived via the workings of reconciliation.

### **Mapping the nexus: convergence and divergence in peacebuilding**

The first area concerning all actors is the post-war political system and the rise of ethnopolitical parties and strategies directly affecting reconciliation. The first identified obstacle is the Dayton agreement, which created more incentives towards separation than reconciliation. Of particular concern are the excessive layers of government, creating spaces

for corruption and lack of accountability that made their way into state-building, threatening reconciliation directly. Ethno-political structures and strategies promote hate speech and genocide denial, questioning advancements of transitional justice, inhibiting the progression of legislation towards reparations, victim recognition, and guarantees for minority rights or even the reform of Dayton's constitution. This effect works in two directions: one opposing organizations and actors that promote coexistence, cooperation or reconciliation, presenting them as threatening national or entity-based interests, promoting through propaganda within their constituencies the idea that NGOs and international work simply promotes corrupt western interests. The second sees citizens obliged to be categorized and identified within the identitarian matrix of the 'three constituent peoples', forcing an ethno-religious identification excluding minorities and forcing citizens into the ethnonational structures put in place within the political and economic system.

The second area starts with the education system and media as platforms for ethnopolitical interests, spreading messages opposing reconciliation. The education system, characterized by mono-ethnic and segregationist practices, becomes the perfect mean for infiltrating political interests into young students and children, guaranteeing a continuation of tensions and mistrust characterizing relations between different communities. BiH education creates a continuity of social and political divisions. Instead of organically teaching new generations about rule of law and respect for human rights, it turns them into victims of the highly divided system with little incentive for interaction and development of a unified society (Čustović, 2014). For international and civil society organizations, the barriers emerge as a mainstreamed discourse against reconciliation via teaching and learning stimulating student separation. This becomes a form of truth telling where students are exposed to politicised narratives of the past being delivered and assessed in languages, history and religion lessons. In this sense, Nordquist (2006, p.13) insists on the importance of dealing with history so it

does not become a new reason for conflict, bringing a warning for inter-generational reconciliation: while being a victim translates into a second generation, the same does not apply for perpetrators. Solving this challenge requires a conscious rebuilding of understanding of a common fate and history, which takes time and effort. Problematic for NGOs are the difficulties in accessing students for interethnic initiatives such as peace education, and initiatives to teach conflict transformation pedagogies. For citizens, concerns regarding the low quality of teaching, demands for ethnic identification and acceptance of politicised narratives of the past, the system's inability to prepare competent citizens towards the job market and the exclusion of groups not part of the three constituent peoples show potential agreement with international and civil society. This requires considering education as active part of peacebuilding and an urgent need to eliminate segregationist and politicised structures prevalent in schools and universities.

In the case of media, there is also an agreement with how political ownership of media outlets in the country has led to biased, one-sided reporting, and promoting negative stories perpetuating differences, separation, and tensions between different ethno-constituencies. This opposes reconciliation, as the political strategy behind media manipulation has been promotion of hate speech against particular ethnic groups, promotion of ethnic/collective blaming, denial of genocide and of outcomes of retributive justice, as well as lack of recognition and reporting of reconciliation news and initiatives in the country. For peacebuilding actors, this limits their outreach efforts (an area that has been constantly criticised as a source of distancing between international and local actors) as they cannot have their work promoted within mainstream media, relying on more informal channels that do not extend to most of the population. For citizens, well aware of how politicised media is, this represents a source of mistrust that extends to the informal channels established by

international and civil society actors; lack of trust in information and sources represents a credibility gap in the work done by peacebuilders.

The third area has to do with the ability of initiatives to promote economic development and deal with pressing economic needs such as employment, prosperity, and sustainability of the economy. This area shows contrasting views between peacebuilders and citizens, the first insist on how fostering cooperation between entities and local authorities contributes to improving economic indicators and boosting the local economy towards employment, entrepreneurship, and development. In the case of citizens, there is a complete disappointment with the economic system and with promises made of integration into the European economic framework and promotion of neoliberal capitalist practices. Citizens display concerns with corrupt practices forcing people into joining political parties to acquire employment, with the need to leave the country in search for better opportunities (boosting in recent years an interest in some citizens to become foreign fighters). Particularly concerning are high levels of youth unemployment, potential triggers for interethnic clashes, as political propaganda can frame lack of prosperity as caused by the ethnic 'other'.

Important in shaping the boundaries of tensions arising from corruption and economic stagnation are the 2014 protests and responses to the floods, showing potential for a local resistance separating itself from international and civil society frames and establishing a democratic protest outside mainstream peacebuilding. Mujkić (2015) recognizes this as a moment of connection between citizens and internationals: protests led to citizens finding out what international actors really thought of ethno-nationalist elites, as most dignitaries seemed to share the same resentment towards oligarchs as the majority of the Bosnian population (Mujkić, 2015, p. 635). Anti-government protests showed signs of social mobilization across ethnic lines, with a strong focus on urban centres: Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Mostar. The unity of protesters showed how problems and difficulties faced by citizens were strong enough cause

for promoting cooperation that publicly rejected the corruption and manipulation of politicians. Interviewees identify ethnopolitical leaders as manipulators of protests, initiating violence and disrupting what was to be a democratic challenging of the status quo. The debate on violence during protests centred on the issue of whether those who attacked government buildings were paid agents of political parties in their effort to maintain power, leading to the belief that citizen anger became co-opted by a political plot to delegitimize their demands altogether (Kurtović, 2015, p. 647). The support between citizens during floods was also a short flash of cooperation, mobilizing resources and support in the middle of political indifference for those affected by natural disaster.

A fourth area has to do with extremism and radicalization amongst youth. This is identified as a new source of potential violence, yet one that comes from unaddressed issues of the past, with the exclusion of specific ethnic groups within certain areas of the country, and the poor socioeconomic prospects for young people regarding employment and prosperity. A combination of previous factors making part of the nexus, (intergenerational passing of trauma, lack of interethnic contact, propagation of hate speech and negative narratives of collective blame) influenced the rise in youth extremism. Extremism is present in the appearance of radical groups within all three constituent peoples, some even joining forces as foreign fighters travelling to conflict areas like Syria and Iraq, and returning with even more radicalised forms of thinking. Response to this issue is also fragmented by the political system and its reliance on ethnic structures: there is no consensus on how to respond to the perils of terrorism and extremism and different policy approaches within the Federation and Republika Srpska lead to further discrimination and harassment rather than guaranteeing security for all Bosnian citizens.

The nexus' endpoint arrives with interpretations of legitimacy in peacebuilding. Observing different understandings of legitimacy clarifies agreements and tensions in the way actors

working on reconciliation are perceived. Peacebuilders, and particularly international actors, see legitimacy justified in their constant pressure towards accountability, public outreach of transitional justice and the idea of local ownership as the handover to local authorities, civil society actors, and citizens of the mechanisms, institutions, procedures and structures put in place by international intervention. For NGOs, justification comes with an extended presence in the field (organizations who were present during the war see some recognition in their long-term engagement in peacebuilding). Also by working in remote and often excluded areas of the country, insisting on constant engagement with target populations, contesting short-term approaches with little presence outside main urban centres. The contrasting responses of citizens show where disconnections and tensions are most visible. Terms like ‘money launderers’ and ‘money-driven organizations’ when assessing NGOs and contesting international presence, indicates citizens viewing reconciliation practices as disconnected from everyday needs. The message is that, crucial for achieving sustainability in such practices is that local ownership is not just promoted by international and civil society actors, but ensured through the implementation of transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms (Mobekk, 2005, p. 289). Without genuine local ownership, one addressing the political problems in BiH, the success of such initiatives will be critically reduced. The current problem for many reconciliation initiatives is that lack of engagement with politics on behalf of NGOs as well as excessive reliance on donor priorities, trends, and agendas, making reconciliation practices, and peacebuilding a process with very little meaning for citizens’ lives.

Through different areas, the nexus links state-building and reconciliation, integrating thin and thick forms of reconciliation as well as perceptions, between international, civil society actors and citizens on what has worked and failed reconciliation work done. Connecting thin (state-building) and thick (reconciliation) forms permit opportunities for peacebuilding. Holistically

approaching a peacebuilding form beyond legalist or state-building forms, requires connecting institutional frameworks (transitional justice) with work at local and individual levels, gaining legitimacy by bringing victims and citizens views as guidance on what alternative approaches to mainstream peacebuilding. Gains made by ground work on reconciliation, such as trauma-healing processes or truth telling initiatives require linkage with high level political processes to push for legislation and political structures permitting a comprehensive approach repairing victims, communicating different truths and educating on reconciliation. Each identified issue represents a possibility for rethinking peacebuilding as an alternative connecting thin and thick, the high level and the grassroots practice. Tension areas (as with legitimacy perceptions, discrepancies surrounding economic projects or distance between international retributive justice and local demands for socioeconomic justice) require immediate attention: these are the sources for a re-ignition of violence. Areas of agreement between actors (identifying ethnopolitics as a barrier, denouncing education and media as obstacles, concerns surrounding extremism and terrorism) require consistency and support from peacebuilding agents. Reduced policy interest and investment in these could potentially signify a gain for actors investing in past war mongering and in keeping society divided.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Personal trauma-healing through the nexus**

When describing positionality in Chapter 2, I mentioned how being a victim of Colombia's war influenced my decision to research peacebuilding. As such, final reflections on this process must account for how this personal issue with victimhood and trauma developed through this research.

Planning, researching, and writing this thesis meant facing at various points the personal question of how my experience with injustice relates to doing research. The first challenge began by leaving Colombia, taking this journey into an unknown country. Reading about Bosnia-Herzegovina, its different modalities of atrocities, violence, and injustice, reminded me of injustices in my own country for more than fifty years. I constantly talked about the Colombianization of Bosnia or the Bosnification of Colombia, referring to commonalities between our societies when enduring pain and suffering but also the resilience, and courage that individuals and societies find amidst war.

Personally, there were many moments where I had to face up to my own issue, exposing me to the fears derived from repeating one's story about trauma and my personal concern with being labelled 'a victim'. The first moment came after my arrival at Birmingham, in a supervision meeting. As to the question of why undertake research on reconciliation, I mentioned my father's disappearance. This forced me to acknowledge that I too have a painful journey; one that affected my decision to study peace and conflict issues, but that has always made my life gravitate around a series of unanswered questions regarding the location and fate of my father and problems with not knowing the past.

A breakthrough occurred in this personal process. In July 2015, whilst attending the Gregynog ideas lab, an event aimed at critical scholars in international relations, what I

thought unimaginable occurred: I decided to tell the narrative of my father's disappearance to a room full of strangers. It was at this time that, despite feeling a range of conflicting emotions and thoughts, I understood this idea of trauma-healing and reconciliation. By narrating my personal trauma, I confronted the possibility of being seen as a powerless victim and at the same time felt the release that comes with truth telling. Sure, my father was not going to suddenly appear by me telling my story, but this emotional release, this letting go of bottled up trauma occurred. It was the first time I defined my Ph.D. as a quest seeking answers and connections that I could never get regarding my father's disappearance. I ended my intervention with "To the question of why is a Colombian researching Bosnia, I can only say that I hope to find someone who can cope with this better than me."

This was precisely the opportunity Bosnia presented me through ethnographic fieldwork. I heard stories of survival, I accompanied victims as they mourned and demanded justice, and I spoke with many who witnessed injustice, felt pain and had many unanswered questions. This created an unbreakable link to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In one of my interviews, with a psychosocial practitioner, I decided to ask how trauma-healing works for relatives of the disappeared. This person's answer exemplified what this process meant for me:

"When it comes to a disappeared person the grieving process is never finished. People want to find the bones, a physical proof; they want to have a funeral. For those who cannot find their missing ones, there has to be an internal decision and strength to enter mourning and find acceptance to this idea of never finding them. And they do a mourning process, which can turn into an eternal decision. This constitutes a problem, when you decide that it is done, that the person will not come back, you have to ask how does one mourn someone that you have not seen

dead. Their cycle is different; it's an endless cycle of reconciling with oneself.”<sup>332</sup>

My decision to embrace this process as personal empowerment saw an opportunity on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016 during the celebration of a street action for the International Commission for Missing Persons, commemorating the international day of the disappeared. It was obvious I had to be there and raise awareness in Sarajevo about the difficulties faced by Bosnians who still do not know the fate of their relatives. I felt my journey had a purpose that I was somehow giving back, through my trauma-healing, to this society that had opened their hearts, minds, and voices to me. Helping in this process somehow made my trauma useful. I spoke to people, I participated in a symbolic protest and I wrote this message of encouragement:

“When you miss a piece of your life, understanding others, their pain, and their quest helps you deal with your own traumas. Thank you for this. Louis Francis Monroy (Colombia). In memory of Francisco José Monroy Arcila, wherever he may be.”

Doing this PhD, through all its different stages, I faced survival and empowerment, of accepting that despite not being able to control the past, I can somehow contribute, via my work, to dealing with issues of truth, justice and perhaps that extremely difficult word I have been working with for the last four years: reconciliation.

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<sup>332</sup> Interview, 11-10-2016

## APPENDIX 2 – LIST OF CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

No.	Name	Organization	City	Date
<b>ACADEMICS/RESEARCHERS</b>				
1	Joseph Kaminski	International University of Sarajevo	Sarajevo	May 13
2	Kirsten Johnson	Independent researcher	Sarajevo	August 16
3	Randal Pulej-Shank	Independent researcher	Sarajevo	August 18
4	Jessica Smith	Independent researcher	Skype	September 1
5	Focus Group: Svitac NGO Monica Reeves Eleanor Pearson Anne Bonits	SVITAC Brčko	Brčko	September 9
<b>CITIZENS</b>				
6	Emir Dzino	N/A	Vareš	May 16
7	Najra Krvavac	N/A	Sarajevo	May 20
8	Kenan CengiĆ	N/A	Sarajevo	May 21
9	Focus group: Elvir Muminović Najra Krvavac Zenko (Anonymous)	N/A	Skakavac	May 22
10	Masa Nurkić	N/A	Sarajevo	May 23
11	Alma Imamović	N/A	Sarajevo	June 1
12	Seada Velić	N/A	Livno	June 2
13	Boris Predić	N/A	Prijedor	June 18
14	Dragana Sredić	N/A	Prijedor	June 18
15	Aleksa Vućen	N/A	Prijedor	June 18
16	Mustafa Niksić	N/A	Sarajevo	June 21
17	Vesna Vidaković	N/A	Sarajevo	June 22
18	Anonymous citizen	N/A	Sarajevo	June 23
10	Daniel Jovanović	N/A	Prijedor	June 24
20	Slobodanka Sodić	N/A	Prijedor	June 26
21	Emina Sabljaković	N/A	Sarajevo	July 20
22	Sladjana Milunović	N/A	Sarajevo	July 22
23	Nejra Kadic	N/A	Gornji Vakuf	July 21
24	Tatjana Milovanović	N/A	Brčko	August 1
25	Ada Hasanagic	N/A	Sarajevo	August 3
26	Aleksandra Kuljanin	N/A	Sarajevo	August 3
27	Nevena Medić	N/A	Srebrenica (Skype)	August 3
28	Sara Velaga	N/A	Jajce (Skype)	August 3
29	Aida Murtić	N/A	Sarajevo	August 9
30	Amina Isaković	N/A	Sarajevo	August 31
31	Goran Djurić	N/A	Tuzla	September 1
32	Allan Dindić	N/A	Sarajevo	September 2
33	Idriz Emirović	N/A	Sarajevo	September 3
34	Zlatan Velagić	N/A	Zenica	September 13

35	Slatan Zubić	N/A	Sarajevo	September 20
36	Selma Hodžić	N/A	Mostar	October 6
37	Anja Kresojević	N/A	Mostar	October 6
38	Damir Ugljen	N/A	Mostar	October 6
39	Lejla Crnkic	N/A	Sarajevo	October 10
40	Emir Kapetanović	N/A	Sarajevo	October 25
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS</b>				
41	Luljetta Goranji	Nansen Dialogue Center Sarajevo	Sarajevo	April 10
42	Goran Bubalo	Mreza Mira	Sarajevo	April 13
43	Sretčko Latal	Social Overview Service	Sarajevo	April 24
44	Adnan Hasenbegović	Center for Nonviolent Action	Sarajevo	April 25
45	Tanja Milovanović	Nansen Dialogue Center Prijedor	Banja Luka	May 4
46	Leslie Woodward	Post-Conflict Research Center	Sarajevo	May 24
47	Edvin Cudik	UDIK	Sarajevo	May 27
48	Safet Sarić	Post-Conflict Research Center	Sarajevo	June 1
49	Focus Group Judith čand Soraja Zagić	FORUMZFD	Sarajevo	June 7th
50	Milan Sitarski	Institute for Social and Political Research	Mostar	June 15th
51	Tamara Cvetkovic	Center for Peacebuilding	Sanski Most	June 19
52	Mevludin Rahmanović	Center for Peacebuilding	Sanski Most	June 19
53	Wahidin Ohmanović	Center for Peacebuilding	Sanski Most	July 19
54	Amir Zulić	Association of Concentration Camp Survivors (SULK)	Sarajevo	June 29
55	Dzenana Karup-Drusko	Human Rights House/RECOM	Sarajevo	July 3
56	Ivona Celebićić	Promente	Sarajevo	July 14
57	Elmina Kulasić	Association for Transitional Justice and Remembrance	Sarajevo	July 15
58	Velma Sarić	Post-Conflict Research Center	Sarajevo	July 16
59	Kemal Salaca	War veterans association, juvenile volunteers of war	Sarajevo	July 22
60	Anonymous NGO	Youth-focused NGO	Sarajevo	July 23
61	Nejra Neimarlija	KULT	Sarajevo	July 23
62	Valery Perry	(Various organizations)	Sarajevo	July 27
63	Maja Kapo	Wings of Hope	Sarajevo	July 28
64	Marija Vuleetic	Cure Foundation	Sarajevo	August 11
65	Lejla Sinancević	Foundation for Local	Sarajevo	August 19

		Democracy		
66	Anonymous SBB Politician	SBB	Anonymous	August 31
67	FOCUS GROUP Edina Vošanović Volunteer 1 Volunteer 2 Volunteer 3 Volunteer 4 Volunteer 5 Volunteer 6	SVITAC Brčko	Brčko	September 9
68	Jasmin Jasarević	PRONI Youth Center	Brčko	September 10
69	Majda Halilović	Atlantic Initiative	Sarajevo	September 19
70	Suada Kapić	FAMA	Online response	October 5
71	Lana Prlić	SDP	Online response	October 10
72	Dijana Pegić	Genesis Project	Banja Luka	October 13
73	Focus group  Zlatana Gruhonjić Zoran Vukovac	Center for Democracy and Transitional Justice (CDTJ)	Banja Luka	October 14
74	Aleksa Matić	Be a Man Club	Banja Luka	October 17
75	Sabahudin Mujkić	ERASMUS NETWORK BiH	Sarajevo	October 19
<b>INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>				
76	Stefan Mueller	GIZ	Sarajevo	May 27
77	Sinisa Sagević	CARITAS Bosnia-Herzegovina	Sarajevo	June 10
78	Adisa Fisić	Track Impunity Always	Sarajevo	June 23
79	Aida Vezić	Cultural Heritage Without Borders	Sarajevo	July 15
80	Mervan Miroscija	Open Society Foundation	Sarajevo	July 16
81	Alexandra Gatto	EU delegation	Sarajevo	July 21
82	Erna Mačkik	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network	Sarajevo	July 22
83	Anonymous OSCE Representative	OSCE	Sarajevo	July 22
84	International Organization Representative (Anonymous)	Anonymous	Sarajevo	July 24
85	Anne Havnor	Norwegian Embassy	Sarajevo	August 31
86	Matthew Holiday	International Commission for Missing Persons	Sarajevo	September 1
87	Focus Group: Samra Ramić Nihad Gavranović	Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe	Sarajevo	September 6
88	Jasmin Hasic	Humanity in Action	Sarajevo	September 7
89	Karis Lokavić	Swiss Cooperation Agency	Sarajevo	October 5

90	Amela Pulej-Shank	Mennonite central Committee	Sarajevo	October 11
91	Anonymous ICTY OUTREACH representative	ICTY Outreach	Sarajevo	October 11

**Total number of interviewees: 104**

**Total number of anonymous respondents: 12**

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