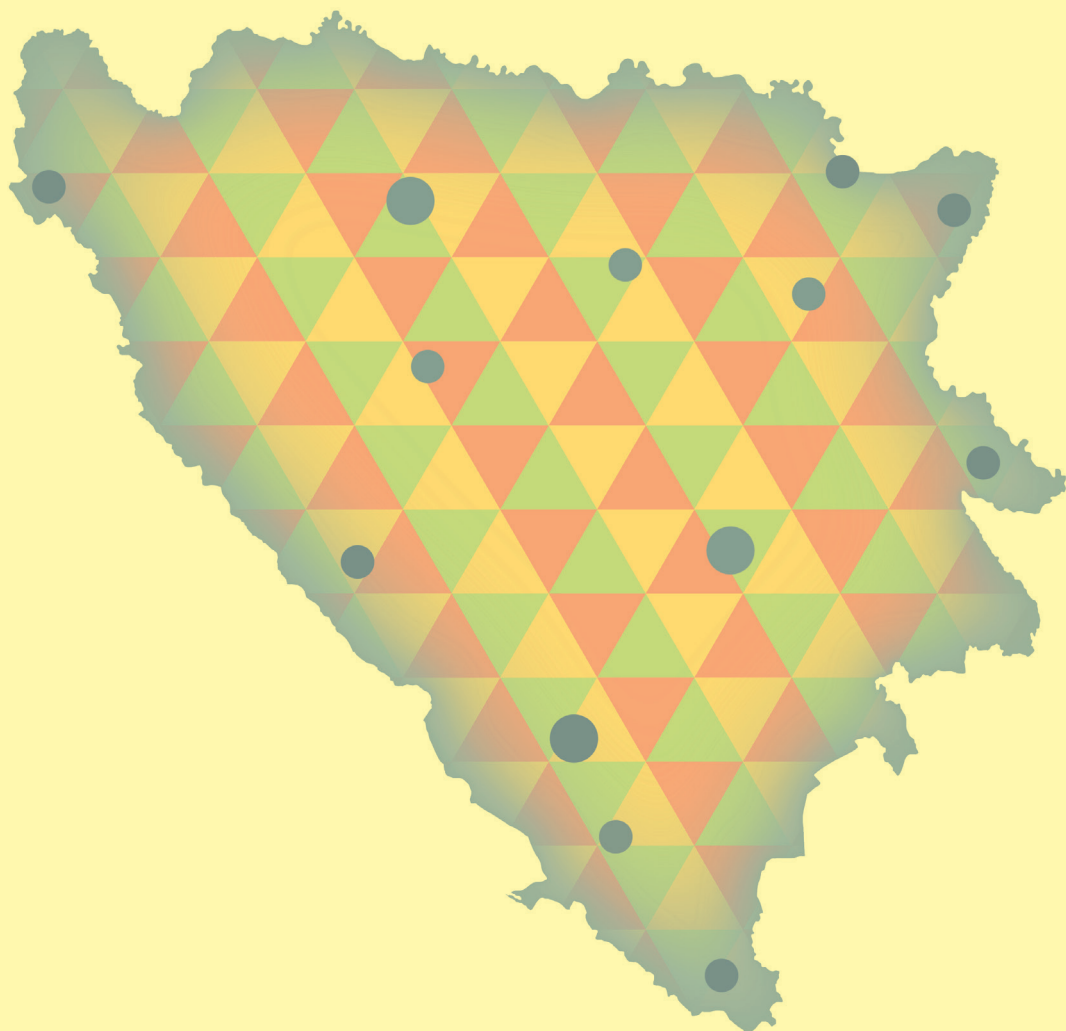Ana Zotova
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The Project on Religion and Ethics in the Making of War and Peace promotes academic research on ethical issues that arise in conflict and post-conflict situations, particularly where religion is invoked. It also promotes exchange between practitioners and academics working on ethics in peacebuilding work, humanitarian affairs and in militaries with an interest in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. For more information, see http://relwar.wordpress.com, http://www.diskursi.com, http://www.ceir.co.rs

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1 Introduction

This research report is the abbreviated English translation of a study based on interviews conducted in 13 cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a fourth phase of the research project of the Center for Empirical Research on Religion, Novi Sad - Sarajevo and the University of Edinburgh entitled "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

The three previous research phases started with a preliminary survey in four cities (2012), then a more extensive survey in 13 cities (2013), and then discussions in focus groups and public meetings in the same cities (2015). In this fourth phase, the research team conducted interviews (in 2018 and 2019) with stakeholders in each of the 13 cities. Our quantitative and qualitative research phases have made a significant contribution to understanding the attitudes of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina on key points relating to the nature of the reconciliation process. The bulk of the respondents and interviewees have consistently indicated that a reconciliation process is necessary and possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here, we compare findings from our previous publications and reports with the opinions of actors from the political, religious, educational and social life of Bosnia and Herzegovina, figures selected because they have more power than ordinary citizens to contribute to the process of reconciliation.

To give a brief insight into the method used in this study, the results were arrived at after analyzing interviews with 77 actors from 13 cities, plus six focus groups, the content being processed with MAXQDA, a statistical program designed for qualitative research. The number of minutes of recorded interviews was 3,414, or 57 hours. Interview transcripts comprised a total of 1,959,441 characters, representing over 1,000 pages of text. Focus group reports amounted to 112,530 characters, or 62 pages. The results are anonymised, to encourage respondents to speak more freely.

In what follows, different perspectives on the problems for understanding what is at stake in the reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina are organized into successive sections. First, detailed information is given about the research itself, followed by a chapter on attitudes towards the reconciliation process. Most attention is paid to the answers to four key questions:

What strategies for building reconciliation do the interviewees recognize as feasible?; What are the prospects of involving the public sector in the reconciliation

process and what is the relationship of this sector with non-governmental organizations?; What are the possibilities for involving different subgroups of the civil society sector in the reconciliation process?; and What is the role of religion in the reconciliation process?

The key focal points of this study are the nature of reconciliation, which is understood as a process, and not just as a goal, and the peace-building strategies that arise from the answers of the interviewees. We use reconciliation as a term that implies activities, practices, and processes that involve building relationships, requiring questions about the perception of the need for responsibility. In our interviews, *pomirenje* (reconciliation, or peacebuilding) was joined to the concept of *izgradnja povjerenja* (trust building) in a series of questions designed to motivate respondents to consider two practical dimensions of the reconciliation process: the actors and communities they trust, and the actors and communities for whom they have a low level of trust.

The approach to reconciliation which was most supported by interviewees is the inclusive approach, followed by the approach that drives change from the local to the centers of power. The second chapter deals with the proposed changes in the public sector which interviewees raised, with an emphasis on the inclusion of political leaders, as well as in the field of education and civil society organizations, where the possibilities for inclusion of citizens in the process of reconciliation appeared in different ways. A final chapter is devoted to the role of religion, religious communities, religious leaders and the laity in the reconciliation process.

2   Main research results

The results of this research study indicate the different perspectives held by important actors in the socio-political life of cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The interviews and focus groups offered a real wealth of opinions that address problems, obstacles, and ways of overcoming those obstacles, presenting practical ideas and giving examples that already exist in practice in the field. In this section, we list only the main results which reflect the dominant opinion expressed, in a number of variations, across the interviews: they are the views of interviewees, not of the researchers. Interviews were semi-structured, with the design of eliciting opinions without any leading questions that could shape the responses offered.

Almost all interviewees (94%) identified obstacles to reconciliation in the political sphere, which makes this topic the most commonly addressed in the study. The most talked about issues were the fact that the political leaders of the three constituent peoples encourage religious and ethnic divisions (69%), that they are mired in corruption (34%) and that they do not stand up for the citizens (27%). Our survey of 2013 indicated that citizens held less trust in the role that politicians might play in the reconciliation process than in any other category of actor, and subsequent rounds of research have underlined this, especially in light of the daily incitement of mutual hatred in the political sphere.

An important problem that stands in the way of reconciliation, as seen by interviewees from all the sectors encompassed in the study, is the problem of corruption. Criticism comes from both political and religious leaders, and from the realms of civil society and education. One third (34%) of those interviewed expressed the belief that the political leadership is engaged in corrupt practices. Of the five mayors interviewed, three talked about it, a third of all interviewees from the political sector (31%) talked about it, as did a third of those who do not belong to the political sphere (33%). Corruption has captured the institutions of the system, which has thus lost both trust and freedom of action, because the positions of power gained have been valued more than the common good.

Illegal actions mentioned include employment through a connection, sale of state goods, rigging of public procurements, theft of elections, connection with criminal groups, and non-restitution. Interviewees estimate that corruption has "captured" the state so much that institutions do not function, they do not sanction the corrupt actions of leaders or of other figures who have the support of strong political parties

in the area concerned. "The current sets of politicians have so much power... They swear by national ideas, and corruption is massive. The entire construction industry is 100% corrupt. The entire construction industry gives 10% to whoever hits. Municipal presidents are the most common. They also say that it is as small as corrupt procurement. For example, in medicine." The research was conducted in 2018 and 2019 and did not cover the health sector. This could helpfully be the subject of follow on research, especially since the health sector played such a central role in the pandemic period (2020 and 2021).

The motives for corrupt practices have been described on several levels, from personal motives for the pursuit of comfort, through deep material interests, to a lack of morality. One of the mayors stated: "My personal opinion is that they are at the top of the interest group. [...] This is absolutely the best situation for these interest groups. They have huge wealth, huge budgets – state, entity, cantonal, local, etc. – and no change suits them because it's great for them."

Interviewees dealing with transitional justice argued that the problem of corruption affects the poor progress achieved in addressing historic crimes. The political elite does not allow dialogue so as not to open many questions and seek those responsible. The problem of corruption also affects the perceived reliability of established truths about the past.

The media, according to a number of interviewees, often creates confusion, by presenting two contradictory "truths" as equally valid, confusing people so as not to know what to think, shifting the emphasis from objective facts to emotions and personal beliefs, and thus influencing public opinion. This mechanism is found not only in the work of the media, it is also visible in the statements of political leaders, which are seen by interviewees as creating both double moral standards and double messages for different audiences. The people are thus not able to opt for the version they consider to be true and to stick to it consistently. A source gives an example of people saying in the evening that doctors in BiH do not know their job and that they are corrupt, and the next day they go to be treated by them. They are bothered by corruption, and they give bribes whenever they need to. Both double messages and double moral standards not only drive an individual crazy, they also bring chaos into social relations. Those who advocate morality themselves are also subject to temptation.

Obstacles to reconciliation on the one hand lie within the system itself, both religious and political, and in the inability of individuals to change anything. On the other hand, obstacles are also presented by individuals who are deceived or who, out of weakness of character, betray the system to which they belong. Thus interviewees see corruption on more than one level, for instance in the consent of clergy to bribe before the elections and in their support for certain political options. They believe that political parties "buy" religious officials to support them from the pulpits.

According to the interviewees, problems within the public sector reflect and feed both national divisions and the inability of citizens to exercise their needs and rights, especially in relation to politics, the media and education. They believe that these sectors have not been involved in the process of building interethnic trust and reconciliation because they are blocked by politics, by political control and corruption. A number also assert that religious communities have done the most out of these three spheres, through establishing the Interreligious Council. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the majority, religious instruction still does not operate in the direction of reconciliation.

The peace strategy that received most support in this research, reflecting the opinions of experts active in various social sectors, is the strategy of inclusion. 74% (57/77) of the interviewees talked about inclusion, the strength of the people, the empowerment of individuals, education of the people, active democracy, and initiatives that can be metaphorically compared to 'small steps' – the approach taken when an NGO works with a group of people, overcoming prejudice, treating trauma, learning to constructively resolve conflicts (also the name of one well-known NGO, Mali Koraci). A small number of interviewees (12%, 9/77) insist that change can only come from above, and give their arguments for that.

From the interviews, the focus of an inclusive approach to reconciliation could be seen to entail accepting with confidence people of different backgrounds and identities in joint activities. Statements about inclusion were evident in 40% of interviews, and in these there were three different approaches to the involvement of people from different sectors in new reconciliation activities. Since the many initiatives taken to date at the micro level did not have the support of the system through all public sector institutions, and for this reason they may be seen not to have had greater traction, one response of a group of interviewees was now to include universities, schools, media, cultural and other institutions in the reconciliation process systematically and with a political decision. The second approach starts from an assertion of joint responsibility for the existing situation and argues from this that progress will be made when everyone invests their efforts in solving the problems faced, each from their own domain. In this perspective, people need to be empowered to act proactively, and to respect values such as justice and freedom in addition to valuing and working effectively on the basis of their own expertise. The third approach to inclusion goes beyond the framework of professions and indicates the need for inclusion of all. This approach is also expressed through the call to citizens to invest in the common good and in active democracy. The interviewees believe that people in BiH have lost their sense of what the general interest is.

Based on the research we published in 2013, we have evidence from a large study indicating the degree to which ordinary citizens across the country are in favor of

an inclusive approach as a strategy in the reconciliation process. The results showed that for more than 50% of the citizens surveyed it was important that all actors are involved in the reconciliation process. Moreover, in terms of the capacities they have for advancing reconciliation, the most widely trusted category of actors were people who were not identified with one constituent people, the second most trusted were teachers, and then came groups representing victims or vulnerable. Women occupy the fourth position, which is of central importance, as they are recognized through all of our studies as being important to the reconciliation process not only from the role of the profession they perform or the institution in which they work, but from their own nature. The contribution of women in the reconciliation process has been the subject of other publications, including by Zilka Spahić Šiljak,[1] whose TPO Foundation was included in the focus group (2018). Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović's book (2018), which drew from research conducted in the current research project, also deals with the contribution and role of women in reconciliation processes, and the perceptions of other actors when it comes to their role in these processes. These and other research studies also warn of the problem of the essentialist approach of the so-called women's peacekeeping "by nature", which is present both in the population and among various actors when it comes to the role of women in these processes (Helms, 2010; Ždralović, Rožajac Žulčić, 2012; Popov Momčinović, 2018).

The government's lack of commitment to reconciliation and the lack of a systemic plan to integrate different sectors for better interethnic relations make the reconciliation process more difficult, and the reason interviewees gave for this is the fear of larger initiatives in which different professions are united. Another reason given for which an inclusive approach is not present is due to interethnic mistrust. This is produced by actors for their benefit, and its deeper popular presence requires more socio-psychological research. A third reason is that there is no political option that advocates a reconciliation process.

We sought also to understand how experts and leading figures from the thirteen cities see the results of our three earlier reports. In these previous three rounds of research, it was clear that the dominant opinion is strongly in favor of the reconciliation process, much more strongly than had been reflected in the media or in individual ac-

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1   The importance of women for peacebuilding is also shown in a publication that talks about the gender dimension of peacebuilding and the contribution of women from different ethnic identities who were the first to cross borders and build peace. This research showed that women were and are key actors in peace building at the local level. The TPO Foundation has published a book *Sjaj ljudskosti: životne priče mirotvorki iz BiH* (2013), authored by Zilka Spahić Šiljak, http://www.tpo.ba/b/dokument/Zilka%20Spahic%20Siljak%20-%20Sjaj%20ljudskosti%20-%20Extract%20protected.pdf, the English edition published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, http://www.tpo.ba/b/dokument/SHINING%20HUMANITY%20Introd.pdf, and *Graditeljice mira − društveno-politički angažman dobitnica Nobelove nagrade za mir* (2012), authored by Alen Kristić, http://www.tpo.ba/b/dokument/Nobelovke%2070%20DknjigaWEB.pdf.

ademic studies. In addition, the survey results indicate that, amongst ordinary citizens, religion is not a rigid servant of divisive nationalism, although it is portrayed in this way in the public sphere and in political discourse. It turns out, moreover, that religion is one of the strongest foundations of support for the reconciliation process. The importance of ethnic and religious identity in the Balkans is widely considered to be very important, and they are often identified with each other. However, in our two surveys, respondents who indicated that their religious identity was a priority for them also were the most likely to support reconciliation activities.

The analysis presented in this study therefore turns to the attitudes of stakeholders to the meaning of an inclusive approach to the process of building trust and reconciliation represents given the religious/secularist diversity that exists in BiH. The report presents interviewees' judgements about what the current situation is and what changes an inclusive approach would bring, and is divided into three parts: through which roles religion can contribute to the reconciliation process; obstacles pointed out by religious leaders within their vocation, and how interlocutors of other, lay professions see the challenges and opportunities for religious actors to contribute to reconciliation. The role of religion in the reconciliation process was discussed by 81% of all interviewees, by all religious actors and by 73% from other sectors. Among religious interlocutors, there were two views on the role of religion in BiH society. Some believe that the three religions in BiH should deal exclusively with deepening the people's faith and judge that it is a mistake if they seek to deal with national issues. It is up to religious teachers to help believers build in themselves a sense of communion with God, to help with questions about the meaning of life, and with the affirmation of universal values and moral behavior. The church has a role to play in healing people of hatred and of bad memories, and should do this with sermons on love and forgiveness. Other interviewees accept that the religions are also national protectors. They emphasize the need for each religious community to nurture their own identity, not to oppose it to universal values, and they call for their co-religionists to have an acquaintance with the other two religions.

An invaluable insight into the relevance of religion to reconciliation is given by those who look at it from a social perspective, rather than as insiders. These interviewees affirm that the greatest need is for sincere and integrated believers who will be able to approach dialogue honestly, without manipulation and hidden agendas. We also received the same message from believers, as a form of self-criticism that only sincere believers, those who adhere to what the faith teaches them, have the power of reconciliation. That sincerity and incorruptibility also applies to religious leaders. Interviewees argue from this for the need for the separation of religious institutions from the state, in terms of the independent functioning and freedom of action of both. Because religious communities have more trust from the people than political leaders do, interviewees estimate that one consequence of this is that po-

litical structures are tied to religions in order to pursue their interests, and that is a kind of manipulation and abuse. That is why the interviewees (both laity and clergy) suggest to the representatives of religions that religion be protected from politics. It is necessary to separate religion and politics in order to preserve the function of both.

Our findings highlight the experience of the stakeholders interviewed, that political captivity hinders reconciliation in all ways, and therefore the reason why political figures should not be expected to play the role that otherwise belongs to them. The results show a variety of engaged approaches to the transformation of social values that govern relations in society and provide ample reason for a positive approach and for underlining the positive possibilities of religion and education in the reconciliation process. The different perspectives of our interlocutors are a good foundation for the reconciliation process, when viewed in the broader context of everyday life, and go beyond the obvious focus of many studies which have a narrower view of what would be necessary to provoke and overcome negative obstacles to change in the political and public spheres.

Across the spectrum of our interviews, stakeholders argue that the right to diversity, the right to one's own past, the right to the future, are each basic human rights, and that they are always important, including in the context of the reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The need for this recognition is emphasized in the demand that we not only get to know each other and differently, but also "that we recognize each other both religiously and politically." The interviews underline in common the affirmation that diversity is important as part of personal and group identity and requires respect.

The reason why the inclusion strategy is especially important for the reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina stems from the perceived captivity to identities that are constantly increasing their distance from each other. The overlap of social identities to which people belong is expressed from a low-inclusive identity, where there is a complete overlap of religious, national and ethnic, to a highly inclusive and complex identity, which is able to tolerate diversity as belonging. A less complex identity makes people perceive that the completely overlapping identities that frame national, ethnic, and religious affiliation instead constitute exclusive groups. Identity inclusion requires that there be other people with whom a person identifies and considers himself or herself a member of their group. People who are able to consider almost all other people as members of their group have a high inclusive identity.

Basic research information

The research team interviewed participants whose role and opinion are essential to the process of building trust and reconciliation, as part of the fourth

stage of the project *The role of religious communities in the reconciliation process in Bosnia*, coordinated by the University of Edinburgh and the Center for Empirical Research on Religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This research project was initiated in 2012 with a pilot survey (Wilkes et al., *Reconciliation and Trust-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Survey of public attitudes in four cities and regions: Banja Luka, Bugojno, Mostar, Sarajevo,* 2012). In the next phase, in 2013, the research team conducted a quantitative survey of citizens' attitudes towards the reconciliation process in 13 local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The survey included 2,606 respondents, taking care to include a balance of the three constituent peoples in each city. The results were promoted at the end of 2013 and during the first half of 2014. The third phase of the survey followed from October 2014 to February 2015, when 26 events were organized in 13 local communities, with one focus group and one public event in each location. The focus groups included ordinary citizens, representatives of different social, economic, national and ethnic groups characteristic of the community itself. The public events included representatives of different interest groups, including local authorities, media, representatives of other institutions, various governmental and non-governmental initiatives related to reconciliation, as well as other interested citizens. The intention of this qualitative phase of the research was to present the results of the surveys and to further interpret and contextualize the results through direct discussions with citizens. In this current fourth phase, the research team interviewed important participants in the reconciliation process from each city. The interviews aimed at gaining a clearer idea of their understanding of the nature of reconciliation work, of future needs and of their concrete proposals for action to build good relations between citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sample and methodology

The report presents the results of an analysis of the content of 77 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders representing different sectors of activity: religion, education, politics, the media, economy and the non-governmental sector. We consider the interviewees to be important partners in considering the topic of trust and reconciliation. Between June and August 2018 – in the run-up to the 2019 general elections – interviews were conducted with 71 people (92% of the sample), and another 6 people were interviewed (8% of the sample) from March to May 2018.

The interviews are presented as anonymous, in order to safeguard the interviewees' freedom to speak their minds fully on controversial topics and events. Interviewees were guaranteed that we would only use their names next to quotations or citations with their express permission. We are grateful to the interviewees in every one of the 13 cities to which the research team returned. Readers will see that their experience and opinions are used to deepen discussion of the substantial questions raised by reconciliation activity, not to prompt personal or political conflict, nor to stoke particular party political agendas.

In forming the sample of interviewees, the research team sought a careful balance of specialisms, and this required us to categorize each person according to their main specialism. According to this criterion, the sample consisted of 26% of participants in the field of religion, 22% in the field of education, 18% in politics, 13% working in the media, 9% in various sectors, 7% in women's NGOs, and 5% in transitional justice. However, many interviewees have experience working in different sectors due to the interdisciplinary nature of the activity they carry out. When presenting the opinions of those interviewed, we will use extended groups that involve all participants with experience in a given sector and who can speak competently about the situation in a given sector. 30% (23/77) of those interviewed were women and 70% were men.

In order to provide a voice from each of the 13 cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina that were the locations researched in the previous studies, a minimum of 3 interviews were conducted from each city. One interview was planned with a leading politician from the city / municipal administration, and two interviews were arranged with persons who can be considered competent observers of the local environment, whether they might be academic citizens, journalists or religious officials. Ultimately, we were not able to secure interviews with the most prominent political leaders from four cities: Banja Luka, Trebinje, Jajce and Livno.

Units of analysis and categorization

The report gives most attention to claims regarding the possibility of inclusion of different participants in the reconciliation process, to claims concerning the obstacles to reconciliation activity, and to proposals for future action in different sectors. We compared the assessments of insiders and outsiders to a sector (e.g. the media) with regard to the scope for advancing reconciliation through

it, and the obstacles and conditions for this to take place. The interviewees' affiliations to a sector were thus used to assess differences of opinion within the sample. During the analysis, we gave especial attention to testimonies that indicated how the interviewee viewed a successful peace building strategy and their judgements about who would be key participants in its application.

The primary unit of analysis in the report is a subject or topic which bears on the reconciliation process, and those topics are subdivided according to recurring claims that relate to and/or expand on our understanding of the topic. They are divided into three categories:

1. Obstacles – statements that are cited in interviews as obstacles to the reconciliation process;

2. Proposals – statements about activities or principles the implementation of which would contribute to reconciliation;

3. Positive and negative examples encountered in reconciliation work.

Another type of unit of analysis were the participants whose involvement in the reconciliation process is essential. Opinions on the roles played by people employed in the non-governmental sector and the public sector – politicians, educators and journalists – were examined separately. Opinions on the roles played by religious leaders and sub-groups of civil society – youth, women, veterans, groups representing victims of war and believers – were also singled out.

Our findings are based on identifying how many interviews a particular topic appears in. Then, the way it was mentioned is processed via a qualitative analysis of the segments related to a given topic or set of actors.

We considered five or more repetitions of the same thought to be a significant result because the interviews were semi-structured and the interviewees were selected independently of one another. Interviewers were given three general questions as a guide for the interview and they were already familiar with the results of our previous research. Other questions were created by the interviewers on the spot, bearing in mind the interviewee's profession, the locality, and the spontaneity of the conversation. It was not the case that interviewees needed to speak about obstacles in the work of NGOs, for instance, nor did the interviewer lead them to speak it, and we therefore treat these references as indicative of the interviewee's own priorities. We have limited our exam-

ination to explicit references to a subject, rather than including more indirect references, because the material from which the content analysis was made has over 600 pages of audio interview transcript text, and the number of topics tracked through the codes is also extensive.

Analysis of key issues

Four basic questions we sought to answer were:

1. What reconciliation building strategies do the interviewees consider to be feasible, with particular emphasis on their expectations about a process including as many participants as possible?

2. What are the opportunities for public sector involvement in the reconciliation process and what is the relationship of this sector with the non-governmental sector?

3. What are the options for involving different sub-groups of the civic sector in the reconciliation process?

4. What is the role of religion in the process of reconciliation?

3 Attitudes to Reconciliation Processes

3.1.1 How interviewees view an inclusive peace building strategy

There are three ways in which interviewees see potential for the involvement of people from a wide range of sectors in new reconciliation activities, and these were referred to in statements made in 40% (31/77) of the interviews. We will look at them and then go into a deeper analysis of who they see should be included, and how they should be included in light of the barriers they identify in the public and voluntary sectors.

Inclusion rests on the involvement of the institutions of the system

In this view, held by some interviewees, institutional involvement should be systemic and based on political decisions. Interviewees expected the reconciliation process will include universities, schools, media, culture and other actors, each in a way specific to their field of activity.

These interviewees judged that the actions of micro movements, projects and initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot affect much change, and there is no systemic support through all public sector institutions.

> One interviewee, a journalist and editor: "People were cozying themselves up to the idea that someone would help us, that we [as Bosnia and Herzegovina] would be built, etc., that there would be some great help. There were many organizations involved in reconciliation, dialogue, tolerance and the like. But it's simple, without the genuine support of these processes by the system, through universities, schools, media, cultural events, there was never, at any moment, even the first step towards reconciliation. There was a sort of alternative mini micro movement, in which I myself, for example, participated (...) You really can't do much on your own. The proof that I'm right is that there were a bunch of these processes, that there were thousands of seminars, that there were hundreds of conferences, that left no trace, they did not even begin to scratch the surface of this society. (...) If you consider that millions have been spent by organizations that have dealt with this, they have either done the wrong thing or simply this lack of support from the system has led to it being impossible, and you have nothing to expect that could even be called the first step."

The estimates are such that the process without the support of the system can also be catastrophic for individuals trying to implement it:

> The same interviewee again: "I always go back to the words of Zoran Đinđić that he uttered at a conference on dealing with the past, I think it was held at Sava Centar, when he said that these processes without support, the real support, of the system could be suicidal for those individuals trying to implement them."

A second interviewee, the director of a Catholic school, believes that organizations should be present both in the centers and also through branches at the local level, and then look to include various sectors of society at the local level. He gives an example stating that the Inter-Religious Council has its own councils in various cities, though to their disadvantage they are not associated with other sectors of society in the civic sector. He believes that a wider range of social participants can connect with them through various citizens' associations, and perhaps in some other ways, and move from that level to build trust and reconciliation.

Another interviewee who teaches at a theological faculty pointed out the need for religious actors to cooperate with the state and the non-governmental sector: "It may sound defeatist and pessimistic, but religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot establish reconciliation in a satisfactory way if the state is not involved in the process, and especially the civil sector, which in Bosnia and Herzegovina is shy to develop, always under the magnifying glass of suspicion and accusation that we are dealing with something that is against this country and its citizens."

Inclusion as the endeavor of every person to do their work
and to contribute to reconciliation through his work

The majority of those interviewed see inclusion as acting through their own work. Unlike the standard definition of inclusion as it applies to peacemaking, which involves the embrace of people of different backgrounds in common activities and identities, these interviewees argued that people should be involved in building peace through what they do normally. We understand that the interviewees in this way wanted to emphasize how functional the inclusion should be, and what the risk is that it should not be, either in their own work sphere because people only superficially do their jobs, or through extraneous reconciliation activities because they interfere with someone else's work, by taking over the rights and obligations of another profession.

An editor for a public broadcasting service points out that people in the public sector who receive salaries for certain jobs, who have professionally opted for such jobs, should do their jobs, which is not always the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They do not need initiatives to solve problems of (in)justice, in his view, establishing truths about war events, etc. All sectors of society are connected, and if they do not do their jobs well, it is a deficiency in the system that also causes people who *do* their jobs to derail and stop functioning, because they do not have the support from across working sectors which they need. Here are some examples of the need for

cross-sector cooperation that people in the profession have given us. The first relates to the work of the prosecution and the media:

> Our public service editor: "Here, take Dragićević's example, it doesn't matter now whether he was murdered or not, but it means politicians cannot issue a verdict, it is known who makes the verdict. You know who the person is who needs to say 'yes it was murder / no it wasn't murder', but neither Milorad Dodik nor Vukota Govedarica can do this. I am not now entering the left wing and I am not choosing the right wing. The prosecution must be the entity that says 'yes it was murder / no it wasn't murder'. And that is why all this is happening to us, everything to us is from today to tomorrow. Everyone needs to do their job. Was that murder? What did the prosecution say? They said nothing. The opposition said, the authorities said, we have no official information and that's when misinformation comes about and that's when the problems arise. (...) The media brought the biggest affairs, the biggest criminal corruption was brought out by the media, but nobody prosecuted it. The biggest scandals were resolved by the media and people from the prosecution admitted they took the case from the media but this story never came to an end. The best example for you is that BH journalists did the research that shows that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina trust the media the most. But what is it worth if you have one Slobodan Vasković, who is threatened day and night, who brought thousands of cases that the prosecution should not have even taken and that man must leave Bosnia and Herzegovina to stay alive? I think that the media did their job, but that other structures of society did not."

The other side of the same problem is when people in one sector get involved in someone else's business. In the above quotation, we have seen shortcomings where politicians make judgments as if they were lawyers. Quite a number of those interviewed, both practicing religion and others, objected to the behavior of religious communities.

> Back to the public service editor: "Religious leaders, in my opinion, are people who do things that are not their job. Religious communities should be concerned with religion, not politics, and they are the ones who should not deal with real life, they should engage in religion, and [yet] they have become politicians. Everyone needs to do their part. Serbian Orthodox, Islamic, or anyone cannot tell young people what is true, what is not, and this is not in the faith segment. And in my opinion, this is a key problem, the fact that they are not doing their job."

Two Islamic religious education teachers, who come from two different places, share a similar view of inclusion. The first interviewee assumes that we all have a responsibility for the current state of affairs, and that therefore we should all invest our efforts in solving problems, each from their own domain. The second interviewee starts from the idea that people should be strong supporters of proactive action, for values such as justice and freedom, as part of their personal/professional calling.

> First interviewee, a teacher of Islamic religious education: "I think this connection between the authorities and ordinary people is pretty much failing and trust between

people must be restored. All of us, all institutions and religious representatives and political representatives and education, therefore, all layers, have this responsibility. No one can say that they are not responsible for this situation that is happening. If everyone were to work out of their domain, from their own perspective, let's just say we would be better off as much as we can be in such a situation."

Second interviewee, also a teacher of Islamic religious education: "When it comes to some kind of plan for the reconciliation process, what the proposals might be, I believe that each of us in the domain and the area in which he works can take small steps forward and that is the area where we can act the most. (...) We can only work upwards from below and that is my only hope. You do your job, you have some vision and desire, you do the best job and maybe some of our results will contribute to something in the future."

This second interviewee believes that she can have an influence on the reconciliation process by doing her job, and by empowering each individual child she works within the domain of the values she needs to nurture. She says the emphasis is on freedom and building faith in God so that the children are not disappointed. She thinks that this way, children will later be able to act more freely, without fear, in a society where they are able to criticize, suggest and demand that which belongs to them.

Inclusion as citizen involvement in dialogue, using the capacities of institutions

Acting on a massive scale and the opening and presentation of many issues are very important to the representatives of this vision. As one university professor said in his interview, the reconciliation dialogue needs to be expropriated, broadened and democratized. Currently, only experts, politicians, religious leaders, and the media are claiming their role or being entrusted with this dialogue, and on the contrary as many people and institutions as possible should be involved. National and religious identities are important, but national identities should be made equal with other things that need to be discussed. Then, living in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be a completely different experience.

Interviewee, a sociologist and philosopher, university professor*:* "In my opinion, it is crucial to expand this dialogue. I think it is very important that somehow the conduct of the reconciliation dialogue is expropriated. Often, due to the understandable institutionalization of this process, some closure occurs. The flow is left to experts or people who are assumed to be experts. I think it is necessary to democratize this whole debate, to broaden the basis, therefore, to involve as many people as possible in it. Among other things, use existing institutional capacities such as the faculty. (...) So, something about the conversation and that whole process that took place in Africa. We had examples in South Africa, Rwanda. I am not well versed but (...) I could see that this kind of mass action was effective, that many questions were brought to light and investigated. With us, this somehow holds true, it is given to politicians, the media, and even religious leaders. Somehow this story is professionalized but under quota-

tion marks, isn't it, it escapes ... I think we have assumptions [about reconciliation]. If you look under the radar of daily political discourse, people have long been communicating, socializing, collaborating. So there is huge social capital and infrastructure."

A second professor, a political scientist, argued that the larger the network, the greater the possibility of finding a solution to peace and reconciliation issues.

He says this is not about any particular type of participant who is missing and whose role would be important, but about involving all people and as many people as possible. The first of the two professors believes that citizens have a strong desire to participate in political decision-making:

> "For me, a great experience was during the demonstrations, but no matter the way in which one understood those demonstrations. Especially in the forums and plenums where the broadest classes of citizens came and presented their problems, I, as someone in the social sciences, detected a strong desire in people to participate in political decision-making. That is why I told you at the beginning, as much as they try to explain to us from all sides that our people are not interested, that our people are not interested in it, 'Oh, politics, this-that', I think the other way around. I think just one different institutional framework is needed, just a different one, you see, the natural force [the 2014 flood] has led to a different way of looking at things. I think some kind of trigger is needed and you would have a completely different story, a completely different perspective that would thus be opened up."

This approach, which goes beyond the professions and indicates the need for the inclusion of all people, is also expressed through the call to investment in the common good. Another interviewee believes that today we have come to a situation where people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have lost their sense of what is of general interest. If interests are viewed from a personal perspective only, there will be no benefit because it breaks down the system, and it is the system that carries the common good.

> A perspective from an Orthodox priest: "These countries of the former Yugoslavia, or the countries where the Serbian people live, need very little to live well and to have good quality of life with only a little goodwill, respect and the need to work for the common interest. That is our biggest problem. We have come to the situation today that people have lost their sense of what the general interest is. Everyone works for themselves and for their own, personal interest. Today, people have set their mindset [so]: 'I'll do something if I benefit from it. If I don't benefit from it, I won't do anything there.' That sense of self-interest is lost where I work for the state, I work for the benefit of the people, I work for the other. (...) We must understand that this general interest is the driving motive that drives you to do something better and more beautiful, to make some more beautiful and better society. (...) When, as a society, we come to that level of consciousness to realize that the struggle for the common good is our primary goal, as it is for many European nations ... It would not happen in Switzerland, the fact that they are so rich, or in Sweden, Norway or Denmark, if these people did not have a highly developed sense of the common good. And a citizen of

those countries looks and loves his country and he wants in every way possible to contribute to that country to make it even better and then to make for himself a system and environment so that he too can live well in. Today, if you look only from your perspective, there is no benefit because the system is destroyed and the system is the one that carries the common good. If you do not have a system, if you have a personality cult that leads and governs and determines everything, then you are actually losing what is called the common good. And the common good must be the good of all of us. The fight for the common good is a public struggle to make a better society, and if this is the case and if it is understood, then we have strong reason to think about all this."

The point that the people should be taught to put the problems of citizens in this area first, and to put aside which ethnic group they belong to, is this way put by an interviewee who teaches Islamic religious studies: "I think we all need to look around a bit, look at the real problems of citizens, and put those national stories aside and solve the existential problems of the people living in this region."

3.1.2   Possibilities of involving the public sector in the reconciliation process, and the relationship of this sector with the non-governmental sector

Inclusive peace building is a necessary stage in building a stable society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Interviewees believe that all public sector institutions can contribute to establishing a good climate and relationships, but there are major obstacles to harnessing this potential. There has been great frustration with the failure of the public sector to show that they are listening when it comes to cooperation between the entities. Interviewees see the importance of involving a wide range of sectors in joint activities that build relationships and peace. However, joint work is not often done within any sector, in the sense that people in senior positions of institutions or from large urban centers block the initiatives of employees in lower positions and locally. The interviewees – mayors and other government employees, journalists, teachers and professors – are very aware of what has been done in their sector to reconcile and build peace. Political leaders blame senior political officials for the situation because they are deemed to hold back the process, while journalists lay the blame for a lack of improvement in the general economic situation, which leads their colleagues to let go of human and professional values. Local media are exposed to many pressures, which is not publicly discussed. The obstacles to the work of reconciliation most frequently cited by interviewees are political functioning, the way education is organized, the media and the economic situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the negative attitudes and post-conflict psychology of ordinary people. We will explain these obstacles in relation to the areas they belong to. In conclusion, we will analyze ways to overcome the problems identified, addressing what interviewees think about how connected the public sector is to the non-governmental sector, and how it can be better connected.

3.1.3   Obstacles in the political sphere

3.1.3.1   Corruption in the function of control and amassing wealth

A third (34%, 26/77) of those interviewed expressed their belief that the political leadership was engaged in corrupt practices. Three out of five mayors talk about it, one third of all in the political sector (31%, 5/16) and one third of all outside of the political sector (33%, 20/61). Unlawful acts include employment through insider connections, the sale of public goods, the fixing of public procurement, theft of elections, affiliation with criminal groups, non-restitution, etc. The interviewees underline that corruption has enslaved the state in such a way that institutions do not function. Citizens cannot know that their rights will be protected. Institutions that are supposed to protect human rights are not responding. Institutions neither place sanctions on corrupt actions by leaders nor on a wider circle of corrupt actors who have the support of strong parties in a given area.

> A lawyer and cultural studies expert: "People are disenfranchised; they lack these tools, mechanisms, because the others have swallowed up and privatized, or rendered ineffective, this judicial, prosecutorial, official apparatus, police, various human rights institutions. They simply made it useless and incapable of communicating while at the same time, the opinion of such a society is protected".

> Assembly member: "When I look at reality in Brčko it is a bunch of thieves in power who are looking to profit from all this, from this misery, to raise capital and leave. There is no state which would sanction them. There is no state in Bosnia. You have political parties that have replaced the state. And if you are a part of the party, you will not be sanctioned. So, you can do whatever you want if you have party legitimacy. The state and the rule of law that unifies us, that we are all citizens, not Serbs, Croats and this, and that will sanction everyone in Bosnia, does not exist. It does not exist in Brčko either. It exists nowhere in Bosnia."

Structural violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is also referred to by the term "systemically organized chaos".

> Orthodox priest: "I do not think we have a problem of nation and religion. I think we have a problem in everything that is contrary to culture and civilization. (...) It is simply no longer possible to live in such a well-organized chaos, a structural violence that is seen through all instances of life, which has entered all pores of life, and which, like any other structural violence, is drawn from one another [violence] – cultural violence, in fact a misunderstood cultural violence."

Hiring people through "knowing someone" in state-funded institutions and businesses feeds the blockade of institutions that are supposed to protect civil rights because there are people in positions without the necessary competencies and with a sense of debt to whoever hired them. One person interviewed calls them "spokespersons of the governing structures" because they fulfill the will of the authorities. Also, obtain-

ing employment through having connections is one of the mechanisms of election theft, because citizens who rely on connections are obliged to vote for those who they are told to vote for.

> Mayor: "When you make this assumption, 100,000 people are employed in public institutions/companies that are on the Republic budget (RS Government building, Telecom, Elektroprenos, RS forests, RS roads, hydropower, agriculture), these are huge resources which have a lot of money. Many people work here. Many families make a living from that. People are politically employed there, you have the task of how many votes, how many applications [to collect for the party that employs you]. This other side is in the negative numbers by 100,000 [voters, he is saying parties in power have a numerical advantage because they control public employment]."

Interviewees assert that the sale of government goods is excessive and unregulated by law. Cases mentioned include the sale of "BH Telecom", mines, water and electricity. An example is given of a destroyed barracks that could have been given to municipalities for use instead of being kept a ruin since the war. The interviewee who raised it believes that they are being kept in this state in order to be privatized. The case of the Mostar Aluminum Combine is cited as an example of the illegal deals that are led by political leaders and that are damaging to the state because money from the deals does not go into the budget. Money is shared between strangers, the party and the middlemen.

> Mayor of a municipality: "Nowhere in any [other] country are natural goods or resources sold. We are the only ones being forced to sell it here. So, I was having a debate the other day when it came to the sale of BH Telecom (...). In my opinion, it would be normal for us to have one telecom at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Everywhere, there is a national telecom, in every country, and you can also make private telecoms and then competition, and even with that, state telecom is a competitive venture which will give better conditions. So, if you know how to work and if you have quality staff you will be able to be competitive in the market. You can't sell mines, you can't sell water, you can't sell electricity. You can make certain concessions when it comes to some mini hydro plants, but it also needs to be regulated, therefore legally regulated, and not have it be forced and people deprived of certain watercourses for the creation of some mini hydro plants. And then often through the media and television, we watch the revolt of that population. People are rebelling, whether it is justified or unjustified, I am not going into it now. There may be unjustified things where they go out and rebel, but in any case, these are all things that need to be regulated by some legislation. Unfortunately, when we talk about it, it is not regulated. Also, you now have some 27 unprofitable, unpromising military facilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I do not know why these facilities are not returned to the municipalities? What kind of entities? The object that is in Republika Srpska is known to belong to that entity. Well, no one will put it on their back and take it away. So, does it belong to the entity or to the state, it is neither, it is of the municipality, and the problem should end there. This needs to be simplified and understood, in order to

> put those facilities into operation so that people can easily get a job. First of all, they need to be adapted, renovated or demolished and something new needs to be built, so an operative will be employed who will do it and later the people who will work there. However, we do not understand it that way, that is, I am convinced that it will be kept for some better times, if there those times come around at all, so that it could be privatized, that it could be leased."

Rigging of construction works by companies and public procurement works is governed according to the percentage principle, with cuts given to those who mediate the bargaining. According to the interviewees, these are usually the mayors of municipalities.

> Catholic priest: "Such is the power of these current sets of politicians... They swear by national ideas, and corruption is massive. All the construction industry is 100% corrupt. I was a guardian for 3 years and renovated churches... All the construction industry gives 10% to the bidder. The mayors are the most common. They still say it's not enough of a sum, given how corrupt the procurement process actually is. For example, in medicine. You can't sell anything. First, someone from the company comes and gives it to the purchaser about ten percent of the total price, and after the agreement ('bribery'), the purchase is made."

Several interviewees indicate that often foreign money, for instance from the European Union, which is earmarked for some projects, is taken for other purposes, and that a small part of the planned budget remains for project implementers.

> Physical education teacher: "I witness that society as a society is failing and stumbling, and that politics and individuals are getting rich and artists are simply extinct. (...) They just find a new model from which to further spin their story and that they only work to line their own pockets and for their pals. As they are popularly called 'youth, art, reconciliation...' by us, all the things they take and all the expressions they have been using lately. And always they find something new because that is, of course, popular and because Europe supports it because the whole world revolves around it. They just use it in their own way to satisfy themselves. I simply do not see the way in which politics in B&H can work, how young people, artists and all of the different positive things can rise to a certain level and move forward."

And for the topic of reconciliation, for the signature on cooperation that would be pro-forma, politicians expect money, confirms another interviewee.

> Political scientist and journalist: "I still stand by the fact that no one ever said, 'People, the war has ended, let's turn to each other, let's turn, it's not the time for that, we live in peace.' (...) Just maybe one example is that in 1951, those who only made war six years back, France and Germany made a joint steel and coal organization, an economic organization. We don't have that today, that's all proforma. Someone has to force us to give us one, two million euros and now there's something we will sign for. So our politicians are cheap peddlers, they don't know anything basically. And we have to listen to them because they get that kind of money for it."

Interviewees who deal with transitional justice or who are part of the state structure claimed that political leaders were affiliated with criminal groups. Also, one mayor says that in the system now in place where there is a state, entity, cantonal and local level of money disposal, people in power have taken over "everyone and every-thing": "In systems like these the underground is in power. It has come to power and it works with the authorities. And we know and experience it every day. If you go to fight it you have to have a critical mass of people who want to fight. Fighting such things is very risky."

Cases of unsolved murders have led to mass protests against public sector corruption. The cases of Dragičević and Memić were current at the time of interviewing and mentioned in 9% (7/77) of interviews. There was no difference in the interviewees' interpretation of the motivation behind the protests, although their professions and ethnicities were different. In one interview, the cases were called "family stories", in others they were judged to be the stories of the corruption of the justice system. Protestors are also said to accuse the political apex of involvement. According to the interviewees, the mass protest was also influenced by the fact that people who have no political or ethnic orientation or affiliation identified with these two cases. People have shown a high degree of solidarity against the corruption of public sectors.

> "*Interviewer*: How did the solidarity between those two protests for David Dragičević and Dženan Memić come about? *Journalist*: Everywhere you have murders that are unsolved and which some politicians and their sons are suspected to be behind, those who have stirred shit, and that has been covered up. So, it's more of a family story that everyone can identify with, without politics and without the people and without changing Dayton and without entering who's to blame for the war and stuff."

> The former director of a humanitarian NGO adds that those who protest say: "'We are not interested in politics, we do not want the opposition or the governin party to have anything with us. We do not want politicians to attend the rally. We just want to say that this government is ripe to leave because it doesn't run from anything'. It's an indication that there is this mafia attitude to everything. Nothing is sacred any more, everything can be sold and people's lives can be sold. Everything can be sold because they have gotten too strong and powerful."

> Director of a public service information programme: "The prosecution has to be the one to say 'it is murder / it is not murder'. (...) Everyone should do their job. Is that murder? What did the prosecution say? It didn't say anything, we don't officially have any information."

According to one mayor, the protests give hope because "people show that they have an attitude, show that they are less and less afraid. For that reason, here, in such regimes, it is essentially a reign of fear." The interviewees also spoke about the pressures that the protests sought to stifle. So far, successfully stopping various protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina without addressing the issues that led to them has created

a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness in people. Hopes were expressed that the protests would survive the 2018 election campaigns and the elections themselves.

> Project Coordinator at a social-political affairs NGO: "Now we have these elections where the question is whether [the protests] will do anything. But if they do not, just to survive this election would be the goal, because their campaigns are becoming more and more aggressive every year."

The transitional justice specialists among the interviewees argued that the problem of corruption was a factor in the country's poor performance in addressing historic issues. The political elite does not allow dialogue so as not to open many questions and look for those responsible. The problem of corruption affects the reliability of established truths about the past. One example given was the publication of the book "Republika Srpska in the Defense of the Fatherland War" by the Republican Center for Research on War, War Crimes and Search for Missing Persons under the Government of Republika Srpska. Examples of the work of committees and organizations dealing with the identification of facts from the war period are given. The interviewee testified that the Republika Srpska Srebrenica Committee listed people who participated in the genocide who had still not been held legally accountable but who were listed as responsible for criminal acts by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Republika Srpska. Due to the nature of her job, she was interviewed and received calls from people on the lists who stated things regarding these actions.

One interviewee links the absence of restitution to corruption.

> Orthodox priest: "Who lives in these apartments? These are salon flats, Austro-Hungarian, 150-200 square meters. Who in Bosnia and Herzegovina can get such an apartment after this war? Of course, these are 'deserving' citizens. But there is no such courage – not from the media nor from researchers – to bring it up. And if they do, it's always polarized by the principle of these governing castes: 'Go attack somebody else there.' It is a structural violence against people, but it has no measure, it has no limit and no measure."

There are several explanations for what contributed to the development of this situation. The system of division into entities and cantons is most criticized, because in this way, everyone has their own enclave in which to do what they want when an irregular state joins all budgets: state, entity, cantonal, local. Secondly, given that most people in power have been there continuously since the 1990s, this is considered to be a period when they were able to develop and strengthen ties.

> Lawyer and cultural studies specialist: "This feudal system is appropriate for them, where everyone has their own ethno-territorialized enclave in which they will be the boss, decide on public procurement, spend budget money, organize smuggling, various types of illegal corruption activities, liaise with various types of criminal organizations, employ their own."

3.1.3.2   Not working for the benefit of the citizens they represent

In 27% (23/77) of the interviews interviewees directly address the extent to which politicians ignore the needs of citizens. There are more interviewees who share this view, though many of the comments were made indirectly and are not counted here. Almost half (44%, 7/16) of those interviewed who work in politics claim that politicians do not take enough care of the people they represent. 23% (14/61) of interviewees from other sectors explicitly claimed the same. They find that the issues and problems of everyday life are ignored; the impression is that people in government reduce these problems to national issues and do not actively address them. This impression is confirmed by the facts about the lack of improvement to social institutions and the economy, but also from the reduced programs of political parties, election campaigns and the daily media.

One mayor who was interviewed says people who work in public and state institutions do not understand that they are in service to the people, rather than the other way around:

> "The only thing that matters here is that one gets to have a secure job when it comes to some public and state institution, and is able to do exactly nothing until retirement. We must, however, change our minds and realize simply that we are in service to these people, and not the other way around. And when we understand this in our minds, it will be much easier for all of us, and thefore for those people who have chosen us, who placed us in these positions."

Another interviewee from the political and public services sectors believes that lack of trust in "our" institutions – from health care, through the judiciary sector and beyond – is currently a greater problem than the trust problem among the three constituent peoples. Preventive work is needed with respect to the relationship of the three constituent peoples, but the institutions of society and government themselves require serious reconstruction. The institutions of society need reform to uphold respect for universal human rights and the institutions of government to establish the rule of law, he added.

The same problem is expressed in another way as not addressing the problems that cause people to move out. One mayor interviewed says while economic insecurity is a burning issue for some citizens, social and political insecurity remain for others with employment. Citizens need a system that allows them to plan for the future, ie. some kind of perspective. And he wonders how much politics enables perspective. According to the estimates of the interviewees, the state does not sufficiently address even the basic problems and even less does it carry out activities that would make the system stable. The director of a women's rights NGO also points to the problem that citizens are unsafe, too often exposed to threats and intimidation. There is no guaranteed security for citizens to think and speak freely.

A series of examples cited by the interviewees indicate that sometimes when it seems that political officials are interested in citizens, it turns out that this is only a temporary matter, because of the election campaign:

> The president of a cultural-educational NGO: "[Politicians] are actually talking a lot and doing nothing. When you watch these public rallies, when you watch their election rallies, some walking around our Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of a sudden all concerned for us, when you actually see their story and take that story 8 years ago or 15 it is always the same story, and they did nothing. That's the problem. It's not a problem that there is no economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, you go out into the street, you can find a job in the street, but young people are smart and they don't allow anyone to brainwash them."

It is estimated that politicians do not reach the needs of the citizens through the "Chinese wall" between citizens and the political sphere, but they cross the wall to use individuals or NGOs when they need them. To be able to do this, they need to be, it it suggested, informed about the situation, phenomena and trends among citizens, but for their own reasons their communication with citizens in one-way only.

Many believe that a number of responsibilities that should fall under the jurisdiction of politicians and state institutions are neglected and dealt with by NGOs. This ranges from new educational trends, and the improvement of relationships among students of the three constituent peoples, to social work with vulnerable categories of the population. In a category of its own, we can speak of the lack of responsibility for the real consequences of the war, which affected social, cultural, scientific, demographic, psychological and other fields. Many interviewees highlighted the problem of the suppression of history, cultural heritage and the arts, the inattention of the system to the traumas that citizens have suffered since the war, and the unresolved issues of war veterans and war victims.

> The director of a humanitarian NGO notes: "We organize actions at the state level, we do the work that the state should do, we cooperate with 113 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And when we come to a ministry, no ministry wants to receive us, they do not want to have meeting with us. They are completely uninterested." *Interviewer*: "You have to knock on doors that do not open?" *Interviewee*: "Not just one door, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to knock on 13 doors. So, when we started the project, instead of talking to one ministry of ecology, we have 13 ministries of ecology in Bosnia."

Why don't politicians start doing their jobs? The majority of interviewees find the answer to this question in the concern of these politicians with their own personal interests. The spectrum of motivations that the interviewees recognize can be graded from relatively innocuous – a politician maintaining the comfort of a position in which they may or may not work (according to one mayor), through not having time, to corruption (lawyer/cultural studies expert). Most of them think that the sit-

uation is more serious, and that this corrupt situation is the most suitable for people in power.

> Mayor: "My personal opinion is that they are at the top of the interest group. (...) This is the absolute best situation for these interest groups. They have huge wealth, huge budgets – state, entity, cantonal, local, etc. and no change suits them because to them – life is good."

There are also those who believe that the people "who lead and who should take care of the economic picture have no qualifications to do something concrete in this field" and therefore "their stronghold and their status as a person in this position rests on the non-reconciliation of people, on the talk of national strife and religious strife." (Interviewee, psychologist)

The majority of those interviewed believe that reducing the problem to a national issue is a manipulative way of drawing attention to themselves and maintaining the state of things as it is.

> Local journalist: "It seems to me that they would do best – if this is their honest intention, for their people and ethnic group, to make it so these people can live better – to be in contact with others because there is no place on the globe where a diversity of people do not live interspersed."

One way of manipulation is to play the "rumor game", the big men playing with the little people. "In order to solve even the smallest problem, we need to talk, because communication between people is an important factor in achieving something" (political science student). One interviewee, a social psychologist, notes that fear is triggered by the silence mechanism: "It is fear that governs, ethnic homogenization rules here, and the last war and self-victimization are used for this. And how does a man tell you [for example]: 'I'm hungry.' They say, 'Shut up, Bosniaks will attack us, they will abolish Republika Srpska.' I say, 'Our children are gone.' And they say, 'Hold your horses you idiot, we Croats have no third entity, see what the Bosniaks do to us.' Or someone else says 'Fuck this healthcare system.' And this one says, 'Shut up you fool, the Serbs are going to split.' And it all came down to that." The empty promises made during the protests effectively acted to discourage citizens from making any changes. A former director of a humanitarian NGO describes it thus: "People go out on strike, go out on the streets, nothing happens. Tensions rise, a lot of things are promised, nothing happens. Even when it is repeated for decades and when there is no room to protest, then people simply withdraw into their families, withdraw into their lives, into their skin and say 'Come on, someone will come. A generational shift is coming'." There are a number of mechanisms as we see them that draw attention. In the section on encouraging religious and ethnic division, we will see more ways used to disrupt people's sense of economic, social and physical security.

A professor, a sociologist and philosopher, suggests: "It is important to act further, regardless of any desire to be affected (…) by those above. I mean, simply, they are not affected by stories of the truly existential vulnerability of individuals who face these problems on a daily basis, and how would they be affected by something that is deeply ideologically implied – war, victims, guilt, always on the other side, and so on. Of course, it will not make an impact. But if we, on this side, if I may say so, of the barricades, if that one discourse of open conversation develops, and so on, in my view we need not consider the extent to which it will affect or will not affect the existing establishment."

3.1.3.3   Encouraging religious and ethnic division

The obstacle to the work on reconciliation interviewees mentioned most of all was the promotion of national division through politics, and then the media that follow such policies with public announcements. The mainstream politics of national division is a serious problem because it affects the distancing of the three constituent peoples from each other. It also slows the cooperation of NGOs across entity borders. Most politicians are unavailable to collaborate on projects that contribute to building trust and reconciliation.

> One director of a women's rights NGO: "We do not give up talking to state structures and connecting in the field of peace building, but it is much more difficult because to us, the political mainstream is the politics of national divisions. We could build peace, for example, since we are in the RS, so to work at the level of Republika Srpska, but peace is only partly being built at the level of the Republika Srpska. It has to be built at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where it is a little harder to achieve cooperation, but we are working on that."

Two thirds of those interviewed (69%, 53/77), both those in the political sector (69%, 11/16) and those from other sectors (71%, 43/61) claim that the political apex encourages religious and ethnic division in different ways. The interviewees (9%, 7/77) agree that around 2009-2010, political elites increasingly began to move from reconciliation to the politics of conflict. By then, they felt that they were working towards state building and the results of some studies indicated a high degree of acceptance of the state institutions by all three constituent peoples, albeit slightly less in Republika Srpska.

> One university professor, a social anthropologist: "I think that this rhetoric is worse than it was ten years ago. I am not saying that we are closer to a conflict but the rhetoric ..."

> One party vice-president: "It seems to me that this trend has been reversed and that especially in the last two political terms, the last maybe eight years have seen a considerable effort by the political elite to reverse those steps that may have been positive and made in the first years after the war. (...) We've been through it all in the 90's and

now it's going like some kind of a recycling process, we're going back to the next round, but now it has a lot more 'theater' than before, it seems a lot more like 'Reality show' format, where they only need this: 'Let's say what is most scandalous, what will hurt the other side the most, so we will get a reaction from them there, and we will homogenize ourselves, and they will.' (...) Of course, my position is that there must be some political forces that will fight this approach."

The director of a women's rights NGO believes that nationalism, as a key issue on the political agenda, returned after a package of constitutional amendments in 2006 that was overthrown along with the considerations set before Parliament of establishing a Truth Commission as an alternative way to accelerate the reconciliation process.

According to one of the mayors interviewed, in the non-governmental sector and in many areas of the public sector, reintegration has been completed, for example in the economy, especially among private individuals, in sports and culture. In politics alone, it can seem that there has been no reintegration. In fact, there was reintegration; it's just that they abuse nationalism when they need it. It is a very common view that the clash of politicians is staged.

Mayor: "I think that it is only in politics that [reintegration] is not complete, primarily due to political competition. But, it doesn't matter, in this political struggle the nations are sometimes just abused and exploited. Yeah, you are threatened? Because, in fact, it is the people who fight the most when it comes to nations, everyone with everyone. This is where the fiercest struggle is."

Local journalist: "Right after the war, I was doing pre-election TV duels where I had the feeling that I was not in the role of a presenter but in the role of boxing referee, that I was standing between them, that I had to get up in the studio and say something like this: Stop! Fight! Stop! Fight. I was scared of what would happen when the show ended, when the cameras shut down. I was afraid there would be general chaos and general ruin. However, when the cameras shut down, the two of them hugged and said, 'Well, where are we going to have a drink?' This guy says, 'Hey, there's music in the restaurant, let's go downstairs.' And the two of them hugged and went to the restaurant. However, the day after that show on the street you can see people arguing and beating each other over something the two of them were saying. I've seen this many times, not just once."

One imam interviewed also believes that politicians in their speeches emphasize the national, but that they are not nationalists in private: "I used to drink coffee with these people. They are not really such people (nationalists), but they are poisoning the people precisely to retain their chair, position, power, etc."

Political speeches are overburdened with nationalist rhetoric by first mentioning nationality where it is not necessary, i.e. where it would be quite possible to speak of other factors, or of "citizens". A youth activist and local journalist comments on this

as follows: "The only real obstacle in this country as a state is that it constantly imposes itself on you." In political rhetoric, too often topics are generalized to the level of the ethnic corpus, and too little to citizenship or specific assaults of people who are neither Serbs, Croats, nor Bosniaks, but people with a certain name and surname who bear responsibility for themselves. Some interviewees called such topics stories about national problems. An Islamic religious studies teacher says: "They seem to be fighting for the interests of their people." The director of a women's rights NGO: "Further, the issue of vital national interests is one of the key issues in the functioning of the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the strict insistence on entity competencies, especially by RS authorities. Then the Federation also remembers that they may have some entity interest, since they are usually interested in money". "Nationalist rhetoric sometimes goes almost neo-fascist", says one interviewee, the lawyer/cultural studies specialist, and thus continues the fascism within society.

By analyzing the content of the interviews, we have identified a number of ways in which the political apex encourages religious and ethnic division. First, the method can be divided into ad hoc pre-elections and systematic encouragement of divisions through the education system: laws that regulate the ordering of education, school curriculums, textbooks and teaching staff, and through these laws they institutionalized division (according to two interviewees, a politician and a journalist). Politicians are estimated to increase the intensity of provocation, nationalism and insults before the election.

One way they do this is by talking about being in danger. Interviewees often called it victimization of their ethnic group. They argue that anything that starts to break through the narratives that sustain victims is condemned and that those who do not victimize fail to make headway in politics.

> Journalist: "We have an example of Dragan Čavić, the then President of Republika Srpska, who read a bold report in Srebrenica to the Republika Srpska general public on the main news show. Indeed, anyone who was in the war and who has genuine intentions, if he were to read his speech now, should agree with that speech. He was completely politically marginalized after that. He was expelled from the party that made him president. Sulejman Tihić, when he said that victimization cannot be a major political expression among the Bosniaks, he lost half his power in the SDA. They went at him with all their might, because here, victimization and that kind of helplessness you demonstrate, is something that suits everyone."

> One university professor interviewed, a literary theorist: "Anything that goes into this victim logic, to penetrate it and completely dismantle it, is condemned. And that is what we do. (...) You have wonderful artistic, theoretical and literary texts that dismantle it. You as a woman today waiting for her husband to return 23 years after the war, you cannot be a sexual being, you have to be a monument to cry and mourn constantly without any desire. That's violence."

> Mayor: "Unfortunately, in the election campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main weapon of all political parties, political leaders, above all those in one national camp, is the story of the threat of one nation to those of others. That's what everybody is telling you. That is imposed by Dodik and Čović and Izetbegović as incumbents in the current government. It is always this need to create a paranoid image of one or another or a third national corps that will be threatened by the other. And 'we [the presidents] are the only protectors who will protect you if you choose us'."

The story of the endangered is nicely complemented by the story of heroes who will save their ethnic group. National leaders have the image of people who care about the national interest. However, the interviewees felt that, without these leaders, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have as many of the problems listed in the section on corruption and in the section on the neglect of the needs of citizens, including the country's dysfunctional public sector institutions and economic problems.

> Orthodox priest: "We all have the 'of the people' mentality together and we have those leaders we love but somehow can't change. What is very problematic is that such structures, personalities, function on the principle of equalizing them and patriotism. It's not a nation, it's not a religion. It cannot be a nation and a religion. 'If I'm gone, everything will fail. If you don't vote for me you are for the demise of Serbs and Republika Srpska. (...) If you are not for this then all of this will fail and then we will all be threatened', as if we were not threatened already."

In his interview, the social anthropologist gives an example of the double messages politicians send: "We are for reconciliation, but no one should humiliate our people." And people hear it like, "Yeah, somebody wants to humiliate us, we're not for that."

This nationalist rhetoric insistently uses the idea that one national corps is a victim of both current events and those of the past. War narratives emmphasise both their own suffering and the search for the culprit.

> Mayor: "So many years after this war, and many more years after the Second World War, we talk about dirges, victims, genocide, every month or more, and we constantly encourage it, both sides and third parties. We keep talking about who to blame. Why no one was responsible for ... I don't know, anything, Bleiburg, Jasenovac, and then the events of this war. (...) We are in a situation where politicians are raising all the bells about it. When it is the election year, all politicians, all political parties, they lay wreaths at memorials that take place every summer for about ten days. They are all in line, part of the machine. When it's not an election year, it's just one in between, then there's no one. That's when only the families of fallen soldiers, members of religious communities, come – it depends on them [meaning the nation], and nobody talks about it."

War narratives in election campaigns negatively affect the youth. Interviewees have differing opinions about how well (or how much) young people are versed in war

events, but the general view is that what is done through the media and by the media is not correct. One school principal warns that this is a harsh environment for children to grow up in: "Now, before the elections, there is a talk about the dead, about the graves, about this, about that." *Interviewer*: "Bones are dug, looked for." *Principal*: "They carry around those bones, just like they did before the proper war."

Finding someone else to blame usually goes hand in hand with denying one's own guilt. The crimes are negated and the blame for past events is shifted to another ethnic body, and all that is good is left to the story of their own national corps (journalist). The interviewees cited examples of negation on all sides. However, given that this topic is more extensive than examples of political denial, we will only say here that denial provokes anger. Denial is perceived as exaggeration to one side, enhances the sense of injustice inflicted, can lead to anger, and thus feeds division.

Cross-national threats among politicians cause fear in the people, as war is often referred to as a solution to disagreement. The interviewees see a similarity in such rhetoric and that during the war, but note that it was not like this immediately after the war. The director of a broadcasting regulatory authority uses the term "incisive war rhetoric". The interviewees cited several specific examples. Politician: "In the last local elections, two years ago [in 2016], the campaign talked about war, rattling of weapons. Then there was that referendum. And then one person mentions secession, and another person says, 'All right', and it means war. Then this one says, 'Get ready for war'. And then it goes, there's noise". One broadcasting journalist comments on the election campaign poster: "Imagine a poster, a man who conceives a poster, and a party who takes it for his own purpose to win: *Determination or extermination* [HDZ poster]. And you have nothing more to discuss, you just have to close the page and run away from here. Of course, if you were to accept their message". In 2018, there were similar cross-national threats between Čović and Izetbegović over the story of a Croatian entity (raised by two interviewees, one a politician, the other a member of a victim's rights association).

> Politician: "Look what Čović is trying to do now through the formation of certain institutions in Europe. (...) It means to create in addition to the Republika Srpska and the Federation, to create that Croatian entity there in Herzeg-Bosnia. (...) And then it is logical that these intolerances will be created, that Bakir Izetbegović, with his statements that are out of his mind, will deepen that hatred, that intolerance. (...) His extremism and his attempts to place the Bosniak population as a population that should dominate and, most importantly, go to a number of certain extremes simply so that you are petrified of some escalations, conflicts or some setbacks that we really don't need."

It is important that all three parties enflame their public opinions, which are fairly closed-minded, because if there were no interaction between statements and threats, there would be no effect, observe the interviewed.

Social psychologist: "Before the election, tension rises, madness ensues. Those in Sarajevo have no idea what is going on here, we have no idea what is happening in Sarajevo, and the Croats know nothing either in Sarajevo or in Banja Luka. And then you have, in fact, three public opinions that are closed and that, very often, it seems to me that local politicians are in sync, in control. They coordinate their activity, like 'I'm going to be a little fussy now, and then you can return the favor.' Because if there is no interaction, there is no effect, it must be ping pong. I say to you, 'Bosnia is an impossible state', and you say 'You're not going to break away'. And I say, 'We will.' 'Oh, we'll see about that'."

Mayor: "These are the things that politicians agree on. Always, in the last four election cycles, you have at least a standard agreement between, say, Dodik and Izetbegović that they will start attacking one another, creating this paranoid threat before the elections." The media contributes because of the atmosphere: "In every daily TV news programme, one of the first news stories will be a story about the national vulnerability of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and vice versa of some other people there on another television channel. And if you watch it every night [you will] be splashed with that information (...) [You] are part of a brainwashing machine that will create a hero from the RS president, who is the only protector of the nation and there is no other. If God forbid he didn't exist, what are we going to do? This is repeated to us."

One politician says that when the Hague tribunal ended its term, some evidence was gathered, some arguments were obtained. The Hague trials aimed to put first and last names to each crime and criminal, so that there would be no generalization such as "Serbs killed Bosniaks" (as another interviewee, a social psychologist, put it). Following the Hague trial, some pending convictions have been determined and some are still awaiting execution. I believe that the conclusion of the trial could have been used in a much more constructive way, says the politician, and adds: "That is an environment that was not used to launch a positive story. No, indeed, we have all witnessed for months that 'joint criminal enterprise'. Okay, these are the kind of condemnations that many, especially politicians, have used to further deepen differences between people, or rather, among nations. So apparently, this is now a breakdown of the system, as if the war would start again. So, they completely misused that moment." In relation to the foregoing, I would add that war rhetoric does not avoid generalizations about ethnic military units and the invocation of collective responsibility.

So far, we have mentioned a number of negative emotions that are evoked: fear of mentioning war and extermination, distrust stoked through the paranoid story of the intentions of another ethnic corpus, anger over denial, exaggeration, injustice. A professor of literature talks about the "political economy of emotions" when he wants to explain that these emotions are manipulated on a daily basis in the public space. He says, "To us, all these primary emotions are heightened: anger, fear, envy. This is

what is amplified in public discourse." We have described some statements through which the transaction of negative emotions occurs. One Catholic priest believes that this kind of behavior from the politicians degrades people's self-awareness and encourages defense mechanisms, i.e. instincts. Two leading politicians from minority nationalities pointed out in their interviews that these interventions perpetuate inter-ethnic prejudice, that is, they promote a lower level of awareness of the other and of that which is different.

It is said that politicians with their programs and policies use individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a perfidious way for their own purposes of fostering distrust. It is especially easy to abuse associations representing war victims and veterans' associations.

> Lawyer/cultural studies specialist: "Sometimes civic associations, initiatives, and so on, when they do some of the work, they don't stop, they want to impose themselves as a kind of monopoly on something. Here, if you map camps, map mass graves, you have to stop at one point. You can't make a career out of it now, because it looks like we'll never be mapped out then. You have to map, saying, 'Here I did a part, here's how we will make some post production to bring it closer to people'. And then of course politics use that."

> Politician: "I think now the associations [representing victims] from both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the RS have all set out, many have been formed and persuaded by politicians to be formed, some in other ways [i.e.] spontaneously, but all of them were abused politically at some time."

In the same way, politicians have information about events within the civic scene and recognize the persons they can exploit. The following is an example given by one civic activist: "They will see that there is someone like me talking about genocide, fighting denial, so they will invite him to commemorate, at Manjaca, or I don't know where. And he will be invited by the official prisoner's association... But there will be about 3-4 people from the SDA, one from the SBB, one from the SB&H party, about two imams, do you understand me?" As we note from this statement, the civic event easily turns into an opportunity for politicians to gain attention for their party's positions.

Less noticeable, but more effective, divisions are also encouraged by actions taken by politicians. When political institutions support people who act to discriminate against other constituent peoples, who are "extremely divisive" (as this civic activist put it), people are sent a message about which behavior is desirable. When politicians only visit the places of suffering of their ethnic group and thus differentiate between victims, other nationalities find that they are not equal.

> Mayor: "I simply cannot understand that it is not the case that every politician is willing to go to a place where innocent victims were killed. I just can't believe that

at present someone can make a difference when it comes to the victim of a nation. As far as I am concerned, every execution site, at least from World War II and this war [1992-1995], should be visited by every person. There was enough time. Who were the innocent victims in World War II is known, I guess. But here it is, it is impossible for you not to stand in solidarity with the victims of, say, Gradiška, where every third inhabitant was killed. That's an incredible number of children, it's an incredible crime. (...) Likewise, I think about Srebrenica. Humanity must be preserved, but that humanity must be general. That humanity must treat all victims equally and the treatment of every criminal must be equal."

One interviewee, the social psychologist, believes that it is not just statements and actions that encourage division. Sometimes complete scenarios are the ones that encourage division among people. He gives an example of scenarios where victimization and rejection are used.

Social psychologist: "Just let me tell you something else, how fucked up the system is. Last year, for the first time, the Serbs celebrated the crime in Dobrovoljačka in East Sarajevo, in Miljevići. I was doing media analysis of that event. You have a completely crazy situation. It's the first time this happens. Families of victims of Serbian soldiers, not even Serbian soldiers, JNA soldiers, say in Dobrovoljačka 'But we want to go to Dobrovoljačka and pay tribute there to the dead, killed, this way – that way, why is Sarajevo not allowing us?' Who isn't giving you permission? When you analyze what the media writes, you see announcements. Senior officials stated that there were nine reasons why should not go there for the memorial. Among other things, you have completely crazy things, say, 'There will be agents of Iran'. Well, all kinds of things, and there are nine or eleven. And watch out for the madness now, in the Federal Gazette, which we don't read here, the mayor comes out saying, 'Well, nobody asked us for there to be a memorial'. Police say: 'But no one asked us for permission'. The Serbian authorities did not seek official approval for the rally to be held, as they had been given every time and had no problems until last year. This time, they didn't even ask for approval, but said, 'We won't have our nation's victims insulted. They don't give us permission. They belittle us', and they cited, I already mentioned, those seven reasons. But families still think Muslims, Bosniaks, Sarajevo, do not give them permission. And now you are an ordinary man, a small man, a victim, what can you do here when the authorities dictate? And now this is the system. That means there are no memorials in Tuzla, that Tuzla column, it is done now in Bijeljina because someone made the assessment that this is the way in which we become victims, via self-victimization, that they do not give us permission, that they hate us. That's how much you need to know about reconciliation."

As soon as it gets better, politicians destabilize the situation.

President of human rights NGO: "By some written or unwritten act, at any given moment, someone will always hasten to destabilize the situation because they feel something is going for the better."

> Broadcasting journalist: "When politics interferes, it will push so many elements of destruction forward that you cannot defend yourself. So when, at a given moment, you amplify the story of peace building, if they have planned that there should be a little more destruction, because it is their only need, because you need to scare someone else there, that is – your voters. Just remember how campaigns are here, and a lot of things will end up being much clearer."

The most persistent opinion on the motivation of politicians for destabilization is that it serves them to survive in power. In many of the quotations mentioned heretofore, the promotion of religious and ethnic divisions has a role to play in winning votes in elections. For example, for most war veterans, the war narrative encourages voting, a professor of security and peace studies claims. Four other interviewees – two professors, a psychologist and a prominent public figure from a minority nationality – indicate that functions within state and entity governments are acquired precisely as per the national key, which is why we cannot expect politicians to be the bearers of reconciliation.

> Professor: "People are still trapped within their ethnic, national or religious groups. Why is that so? First and foremost because policy makers have not promoted a different concept of thinking all these years that would be outside that national one. Why are they doing this? Because it suits them, because government in both the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the entities is formed by the national key, and if they are held prisoner in those national and ethnic groups, it also enables them to survive in power. I do not think that politicians and holders of political authority can be the ones to promote and work for reconciliation."

> Prominent public figure: "These opposite sides [are] very well positioned and just don't give you space to act [positively]. And even it seems to me that on all three sides such action is not considered welcome, because each party draws its power and its positions from division, and that is why they always insist on it. (...) The whole argument is about whose country this is. This is the land of us all."

Earlier, we talked about the financial benefits that politicians have had from dividing the state into entities and cantons. Interviewees explain how deep the divide is, and with little chance of change. Not only that everything is controlled by politicians, but politics itself is controlled and captured, and, at the same time, the political elite were formed by locally powerful individuals. Also, giving up on an issue regarding division among people would raise many questions.

> Journalist: "The rich today, who are financing politics here, would not be rich if they did not have this kind of exclusivity policy behind them, which impedes competition [and] free market development. The media is dependent on such economy and politics. (...) We have a frozen state of war that is only being waged by other means. (...) Why was this war fought? Is this a civil war in the sense that ethnic elites claim it to be a civil war? But when they say civil war, they mean ethnic war. However, it was a civil war as a class war in the sense that one class won this war. And this is the class

that got rich. Very clear. So, we have the winner of this war. When you draw the line, who profited from the war, they are the winners. Now, it's time to start saying that this war is a class war and that there are winners and losers. (...) And now the question is why don't we talk about it. Class no longer seems to figure. And [yet] you have people digging in dumpsters right around the corner. And you have people driving an Audi, whatever the latest one is? They exist simultaneously, you know."

Journalist: "We have survived the terrible experiences after which, in such a crippled society, the absence of a state or institution, [follows] a period of transition, i.e. the looting of state property and creating a new elite, that we can say contributed to the establishment of peace. We have peace, that is, a consensus about taking power and everything that comes from it, and of course taking over privileges."

Public figure: "All the people who, in some way, not only fell victim to the war but also benefited from the results of the war, they hesitate with reconciliation and they will simply say: *Everything you did was wrong because you didn't even need to fight*, because they base their position in society on having fought with others. If it turns out they didn't even have to fight, that they were wrong, why did they get pensions, why did they get a whole host of benefits that absolutely did not belong to someone who was doing something wrong, if society as a whole said that the war was wrong or that was something we didn't. So, this is what we are facing, and it is very difficult to overcome by any acts of goodwill."

Also, it is still possible to receive money from the international community if divisions are present.

Women's rights NGO chair: "I think it is a simple matter of political pragmatism, because it is much easier to retain power and privileges and control what little wealth we have in the country when the people are in a quarrel. Also, to keep the attention of the international community and to attract and bring money to Bosnia and Herzegovina that way; that's how it's maintained. It's one real political game."

7% (5/77) of those surveyed said that global trends have an impact on the turn of politics towards nationalism.

Politician: "I really get the feeling that conflict politics is mainstream right now, and that this is some trend that's happening that is not just about us. That this is actually a trend of populism and divided societies. We have a very concrete example from the US. Where the polarization of a society is greater by these ideological determinants, certain participants have better political results and society overall declines. Well, we have BREXIT, we have the growth of right-wing parties in Western Europe, and we have complete regimes such as in Hungary, now, increasingly Poland, where this becomes some normal political discourse. So, when Poland says that it is forbidden to say by law that the Poles participated in the Holocaust, and the greatest atrocities took place in their territory, it sounds to me like when Erdogan says you are going to prison if you say that there was no genocide against the Armenians. This is the same level and they are EU member states. And now these trends that have occurred are

spreading to us. Of course, they come to fertile ground because we've been through it all in the 90's and now it is being recycled."

Orthodox priest: "The world is at that stage. For example, let's take the last two years, from these massive wars in the east to the 'present conflicts', take the vocabulary of the American president, Russian president etc. This is the situation in the world as it was in our country in 1989 or the 1990's. Whether or not this is in favor of someone, I do not know, but it is a fact. People want their identities. They want and consider this to be their identity. There is no longer a common and shared identity. There are no more formal insincereties. To my mind, that's how Trump won in America. He was telling them what they wanted to hear. And that was honest. And people respected it and that's why they voted."

A lawyer interviewed says of politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "They are increasingly moving away from reconciliation because reconciliation is no longer needed for anything, neither to win votes, neither to have a good relationship with the European Union, with America, or with any, say, democratic liberal part of the world". How they distance themselves: "Until Russia started being one of the big players in the political scene in the Euro-Asian region (...) they and Dodik himself, were pretty moderate in talking to international... He was always in favor of dialogue, was always: "Here is the protection of the interests of Republika Srpska." After Georgia in 2009, after Crimea, he broke away completely, with the most cruel, grossest insults against Muslims, the worst victimization of Serbs, the rattling of the bones of the Jasenovac victims. (...) He started acting like that towards the ambassadors. He rejected the United States ambassador. (...) It's not Dodik alone. Čović got into deals in Mostar Aluminum Combine, via Karamarko, via PPD, the first business company to transfer. Russian aluminum is alloyed there, a lot of money making the rounds. (...) Bakir turns to Erdogan's oligarchy, a regime completely like some neo-imperial regime, small, but a regime rather in the spirit of Balkan ethno-fascism with a slightly greater emphasis on religion. But Turkey has always given more importance to religion."

4% (3/77) of those interviewed said that emphasizing national topics was a way to divert attention from the real problems of everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for which the government has no solution. Others believe that the political elites are deliberately keeping people in poverty because it is easier for them to set fire to national and religious issues and to provide support for themselves. An overstimulated national and religious consciousness is a good instrument of political manipulation.

Orthodox Christian religious studies teacher: "Here in Bosnia and Herzegovina we have been talking for 20, 25 years about how the war went, we are talking about reconciliation, year in, year out. And somehow that peace, as it has been built, seems to be constantly breaking down. The system just doesn't seem right. It needs a systemic solution. Now, the story can be so complex that again nothing will end up happening. There must be some concrete steps. The most difficult thing for all three nations, for all three religions, seems to be this situation: A nation that receives a salary of 300 euros tells the story of faith and wars in history. Those who receive a salary of 500 euros

may start talking about holidays, those who receive a salary of 1,000 euros talk about healthy eating, and those who have a salary of 3,000 euros talk about the weather and where to go for the winter holidays. So, it seems that this national consciousness, religious consciousness, is a good instrument in the hands of irresponsible politicians who take this social poverty and the truly unenviable economic status in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the other countries of our region... It is this national and religious story that is taken when they need some justification or a sizeable electorate and thus abuse it."

Most consider politicians aware and responsible for inciting religious and ethnic conflicts, and one interviewee tried to explain why such behavior is a mass phenomenon.

Islamic religious studies teacher: "I don't really know how these people have it. (...) It is probably a syndrome that as soon as you enter power, in that circle, you become, I do not know, as if that syndrome becomes hooked to you. You may not even be that kind of person... When you come to the wolf lair, you can't be a lamb, you become a wolf, or you become a lamb and the wolves eat and spit your bones out."

The consequences of inciting religious and ethnic divisions are different. It should be borne in mind, one professor interviewed recalls, that in Bosnia and Herzegovina not only has the war had consequences, but on top of that there has been twenty-five years of investment by the "political elites in producing difference, diversity, separation, fear, and so on." Interviewees pointed out some of the consequences, for example, the retraumatization of war victims (10%, 8/77).

Lawyer: "One woman once told me in Srebrenica. That was in 2014. (...) She says: 'My son, this is how I feel when I talk to you, I am filled with energy and confidence and everything, and it is enough for me to hear Dodik on television only once and then I once again...' It's a retraumatization of these victims. Retraumatization of different levels of trauma, different shapes and forms in which victims occur in our country. Whether it is the mother whose family was killed or the man whose 10-15 family members have been killed, or whether it is someone who went through torture alone, or someone who just lost someone on the battlefield. And, the battlefield, not even civilian casualties, or even someone who just had to move around the world and the region in order to somehow settle down again and fix their lives. These are different levels of traumatization, but that politician, political hate speech, intolerance, divisive speech, with all these other regulatory divisions, administrative, political, media, cultural-political, social, all nullifies the effects of true trust which is being built in society again and through the activities of non-governmental organizations, individuals, intellectuals, but also by being spontaneously built."

Catholic priest: "This policy systematically keeps people in the area of victimization. We treat people, we extract the normalization of life out of catastrophe, [and] nationalists systematically raze the wounds and keep them in victimization. So that's the main problem for society, right now. They do not allow nationalists to heal people, they degrade people's self-awareness. They put people in an environment of fear,

vulnerability, they provoke the development of people's human' defense mechanisms, which are instincts."

> Director of an NGO focused on interreligious dialogue: "Institutionally, I think the situation is a lot worse and it can always be worse, and it is constantly awful, so it is a little worse and it is even worse and this becomes the constant. So, politics is doing everything constantly to encourage this retraumatization and to remind people of the fear of extermination, of shaking them up, of hurting them. There is still this kind of masochistic style that we can't choose those who will not do this to us, and I think that is a bit of a problem."

One politician interviewed said that cross-national political threats and intolerance directly and indirectly affect the lives of peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily through economic and social security, and not just through the security of the people. A mayor sees intergroup conflict as a waste of energy and money that should instead be invested in economic growth and job creation.

> Mayor: "I believe that this is a key problem of the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, economic development, few jobs, little work is being done. All energy is spent scrambling, proving who is guilty of what, and little is being spent to create an environment that will allow investors to come to Bosnia and Herzegovina and invest money."

3.1.3.4 Obstacles of the political system

Electoral system

Of the obstacles that arise from the type of political system, 8% (6/77) of those interviewed indicated that elections are too frequent and that election campaigns take too long, and that the atmosphere of the election leaves the electorate at its most frightened over ethnic divisions. As soon as a different value system is created in the period between elections, one interviewee, president of a human rights NGO, again the country goes back to the past. Also, overly frequent elections interfere with the work of normalizing life and the resolution of specific and real existential problems that interfere with the day-to-day lives of citizens.

> Politician: "We have no place to breathe, to be normal. [You hear the frequent excuse] 'You know, he's talking about it because it's election year'. Well, man, we always say the same, when there are elections and when there are no elections. And what about when it's not an election year? Let me hear what he says when it's not an election year! That is why I liked the idea, even though it might not be practically feasible in connection with local and general elections being held at the same time. But let me have a cycle every four years so that something normal can be done between them. This way, no way. I believe that then these relationships and these processes as a whole would go faster. Everybody is in a spasm [now] and are pulling the brakes and

> what he would do he refuses to because it is not the right time." An example is given
> of the work of a group to draft a law on a reconciliation commission, that stopped its
> meetings with victims' associations during 2006 because it was an election year – "so
> as not to abuse the situation, allegedly".

13% (10/77) expressed the opinion that electoral votes are being stolen in different ways, which is one of the obstacles for the people to legitimately participate in politics. Other barriers to using elections in the most constructive way include regulating the chances of participating in elections and winning, problems that voters can influence such as turnout and who will vote, and the ruthlessness of the campaigns referred to above in the discussion of political activity which fosters divisions.

*Disagreement over the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a
state and non-formal reconciliation as a state protocol*

When wondering how to act for reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one should bear in mind that political leaders, parties and their voters consider different political arrangements to be the solution. Interviewees confirm that the government has not publicly announced the direction in which Bosnia and Herzegovina is heading, but that the political leadership itself is divided. Can the lack of definition of direction and different aspirations be considered as the primary issue, and a more powerful factor in the stagnation or decline of Bosnia and Herzegovina than corruption and public political incitement of entity divisions?

The Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995. One interviewee, a professor of philosophy, says that at that time there was no clear idea about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from the analysis of the content of other interviews we may conclude that it is still missing today. A political scientist and journalist says that no one has said to the people for 25 years what they want to make of Bosnia and Herzegovina except the platitude of uniting Serbian, Bosniak or Croat people.

> Political scientist: "The war was stopped, all of it, but I do not know that anyone
> once said what they want to make out of this situation. And now we are voting for
> something that goes on its own accord, nothing works here, no political light, no
> social light. I don't know how these people vote, for what, if nobody ever told them
> what this should be? We are talking about any of the states created by the breakup of
> Yugoslavia. I don't think any of these states [knows anything] except those platitudes,
> myths and legends about a united Serbian people, Croatian, Bosniak, god knows what
> else, a total irrational structure."

Opinions differ on the role of the Dayton Peace Agreement. One politician says that the Dayton Peace Agreement left the possibility for B&H to split and remain whole, but the majority of interviewees, 78% (7/9), talk about the negative impact of Dayton on the reconciliation process, and 9% (7/77) believe that the Dayton Agreement and

the Dayton Constitution actually brought division. Arguments raised by interviewees include that the constitution does not refer to *people* or citizens, but to Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, that the distribution of positions in power is made according to an ethnic key, and the consequences of such "equality" have resulted in a deep inter-ethnic division of society. The division is also evident in the way we think about ourselves and our fellow citizens. The relationship between ethnicity and self-determination as a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been substantially disturbed in favor of emphasizing ethnicity (journalist).

> Politician: "The Dayton Peace Agreement that had been drawn up has no winners. When you have a winner, forcefully impose your own solution, the others must listen. The Dayton Agreement left the possibility for Bosnia to split and remain whole. What is most unfortunate is that political parties are purely for pragmatic purposes, in order to stay in power, manipulate this." He calls Bosnia and Herzegovina an unfinished state: "This is what Andrić writes, we sweep everything under the rug, then we get it back again in irrational form at the opportune moment. We need to rationally check what is causing our conflicts. So, as Hegel puts it, things happen intelligently even when they are irrational. So, regardless of the fact that there was an outburst of irrationality, evil, and so on, there are rational reasons, and they boil down to the solution of the national question (...) You do not have it resolved in Bosnia. You have one unfinished state."

> Philosopher: "The condition in which these young people live, not only people of my generation, but also young people, remains that they should be closed and their consciousness be [enclosed in ethnic matrices]. This problem is first and foremost a problem of order, I would call it a structural problem, which is necessarily so conceptualized and so realized already from the Dayton Agreement and the Dayton Constitution that made such a tribal organization of this society. And, of course, the following question is what kind of generations do we have now?"

> Lawyer: "The obstacle is that one Dayton straight jacket that reinforced the nationalist, particularist fascisms, local, provincial, provincial fascisms, whatever you want to call them. The obstacle is the lack of clear state bodies and administrative fragmentation. So, the obstacle is in that Dayton legal order and the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina which supports provincial fascism."

> Peacebuilding NGO director: "Let us be aware that Bosnia and Herzegovina is an ethnically cleansed state and we are not aware of it. I mean, we're aware, but we're closing our eyes. And whatever is different, we are all judged by first and last name. A. Nidžara, whatever she does, someone will say she is Bosniak, and as to me, whatever he does everyone will say he is Vlach. None of us are Bosniaks or Vlachs, but they look at us through that perception. Sarajevo is not a multi-ethnic city. We claim we are, but we are not. Not to mention further, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Mostar, we are all divided cities."

From this it follows that the solution would be for people to look less at each other through the entity key, and more as citizens. However, the peacebuilding NGO di-

rector estimates that Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens, including those who participate in government, no longer have the capacity to change it, nor the will, and that Bosnia and Herzegovina will not survive this way. The topic of deep ethnic division is mentioned in two other variants. The first says that people are less aware of common interests than ethnic ones, and the second that there is no common concept of a nation, such as exists in America, that would allow a state to be functional.

> Imam: "When the people realize that the general interest, i.e. the state interest, is more important than anything else, then they will leave the national parties. But it takes time, and I don't know if it will ever be done unless the political system in the country changes."

> Orthodox theology professor: "I do not see any common denominators for Serbs and Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is no longer language, because now they have their own language, which it is less and less a culture and a literary heritage, religion of course has never been a concept of a nation that is closely linked to a religious identity. So, we're talking about different nations. There is now one new book by [Francis] Fukuyama called *Identity*, which deals with identity politics. Among other things, it talks about nationalism and how not every form of nationalism has to be destructive. On the contrary, he demonstrates that the reason for the failure of many sub-Saharan states is precisely that they do not have a common denominator, that is, they do not have a common concept of a nation that will enable them to have a functional state, such as the Americans have. What he finds harmful is ethno-nationalism. And the second concept of nationalism will enable integration of different ethnic groups, enable one social, political community for the state to function. I think that this is a major problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that one never goes in the direction of building that common denominator, on the contrary, even those movements and institutions that advocate the unitization of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not do so in the way of building a common denominator, but the dominance of one over the other. And that is why Bosnia cannot function as a state, as a society."

From content analysis, we understand that orientations towards division and or to togetherness have several variations. One accepts entities, and does not accept the state. Another accepts only the state, no entities and no cantons. A third wants the cantons and the state, but no entities. Interviewees say the realization of the Croatian entity is an open topic that is politically actualized from time to time. There were several comments addressing the Republika Srpska. Some have invoked the problem that RS is a separate entity. For example, for some residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dayton Peace Agreement brought injustice because it recognized Republika Srpska as an entity. For others, Dayton, by recognizing the RS, allowed the separation of the Serbian people from the Croat and Bosniak ones over time, which no one had taken care of. For others, Republika Srpska is giving up on Bosnia as a country and reducing itself to a part only. Among the interviewees, we did not have a person who openly advocated secession as their choice of political system in

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Quite a few interviewees took a stand against the division into entities and cantons. One politician is the only interviewee to propose the canton be retained and the Federation abolished.

> Politician: "In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as everyone in the media says they would like to abolish Republika Srpska, I say abolish the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and leave the cantons because those cantons could compete with each other. (...) Why must the answer from Sarajevo be awaited? Is Tuzla the one that needs to know how politics works in the canton? (...) The territory of the Federation could function in this way. This is a healthy way, the cantons would compete and it would simply give everyone better positions." This interviewee believes that in this way cantons can more effectively solve the problems of their canton. He considers this arrangement better than retaining only the state government because centralization would only lead to investment in centers such as the RS: "As for Republika Srpska, it is centralized and it does not have these cantons, and then the most developed part is obviously Banja Luka and perhaps Bijeljina and that's it."

When analyzing the vocabulary used by interviewees, there are generalizations in the interviews such as: "Serbs and Croats have some desire to prove themselves, they have some desire to pull the system back. (...) We do not need to equalize generally, we need coexistence and the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. reconciliation." Assumptions about Bosnia and Herzegovina's preferred political order generalized to the level of ethnicity are present both through the "we / they" speech and through a distant third-party analysis of all three constituent peoples. For example, one imam considers that each constituent people are drawn to their own side, two want their own entities, and one wants a united state. It believes that the current political system is a hybrid that is found nowhere else in the world. He says: "Can't have a three-horned stake in the ground." The special relations of one entity with the Republic of Serbia, the other with the Republic of Croatia, hinders integration within the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina: "How are you going to go forward if the two go to one side and I am driving up front? That's impossible. Therefore, I return to what we have said that the political system is to blame for all this. And it is very difficult to deceive ourselves and to say that this can be [and] that this will be changed by some agreement." On the other hand, they say that it is difficult to divide Bosnia into national states because it can be understood as a legalization of crime, especially if it is done along geographical lines that were "cleansed" during the war. On the other hand, one political figure maintains that it is legitimate to open the issue of the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina: "The problem of Bosniaks is that they refuse to open up. They maintain that Bosnia is unquestionable, as the Serbs kept Yugoslavia for a while, so they brought this. So, no. You must breach the question of dividing Bosnia. But how are you going to divide it? Let's see who will give the formula how it should be, so if it can, have some referendums, let people decide if it can be done. Because if we are to constantly keep going into war over this, it's not

worth keeping it." If they want to live together then "there must be some kind of elemental consensus that we want to live together. Bosnia does not have that elemental consensus and it seems to me it never had it except when it was part of some of the larger empires, the Ottoman Empire. Austro-Hungarian, Yugoslavian and so on. So, now we need help there…"

With so many different conceptions of state organization, when "everyone is pulling for their side" it is very difficult to move in any direction, even economically. One journalist interviewed considers that the unresolved issue is a problem for the development of state competencies. To this we can add the words of one of the interviewees, a professor of peace studies, that political participants have different views on both what went on in the war and what the peace-building process entails. If citizens "have the feeling that they are living here by force, they will constantly ask for some modalities to break it, to find some way out of it" (politician). Whether Dayton left the possibility of division or created the division, a clear political decision is to be made by final arbitration, with regards to which is the preferred form of living for Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, so that the prosperity of the country and peace can be worked on. Or, as stated in the quote above, a consensus should be reached to live either together or truly apart. Is it possible to advance the process of building trust and reconciliation by formalizing reconciliation as the chosen path, and working systematically to do so under conditions where there are so many differing views on the organization and future of Bosnia and Herzegovina? The second issue is whether a commitment to reconciliation necessarily means a commitment to a common state?

We may conclude that assumptions about what members of one entity think of the claims of other entities are problematic because they are not objective or representative at a general level. As was clear in our survey of citizens' attitudes in 2013, and is again clear from an analysis of the present interviews, we may conclude that generalisations cannot be made for citizens of any of the three constitutent nations. Not all Bosniaks are for unity, not all Serbs for secession, nor all Croats for Herceg Bosnia. Contrary to expectations, based on the results of 2013, we may see from that a large sample of citizens from across the country, those for whom national identity is important because they feel that it is the group to which they belong, give the greatest level of support to reconciliation activities. This result could be explained by the extent to which people who know and respect their own ethnicity have a ground or need to know and respect someone else's ethnicity – this will be discussed further below. Another result from the 2013 survey indicates that of the respondents who voted for ruling parties in the 2012 local elections, mostly for those parties which aspire to represent each constituent people, most thought that a serious attempt to build a relationship of trust and honesty would have an impact on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina (79%). They are followed by those who did not vote (74%), followed by voters of opposition parties in 2012, from whose platforms one might have ex-

pected a greater and not a lesser degree of support for building interethnic relations. The results suggest that it is not advisable to equate the desire for reconciliation with a certain political system.

Many of the interviewees (9%, 8/77) see the problem lies in that reconciliation is not formalized as something systematically being done. A director of a women's rights NGO says: "I don't think that politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina have ever taken it seriously as a recognized problem that everyone should work together on the issue of reconciliation." One interviewee, a political scientist, believes that there will be no fruitful new reconciliation action "until it's systematically organized, let's say we want it, because no one has said they do, yet. I think the Dayton Peace Agreement is about peace. When you take people involved in politics, they never implemented the Dayton Agreement. How can we tell if it is valid or not valid when it has never been implemented? They broke off the war but never has [any] of them said okay, now peace came and let's deal with something else now. When has a politician even told you, 'Peace has come, let's do some work now?' (...) That is the catch of reconciliation, we must decide that we want reconciliation." And "the system must agree that it wants reconciliation. None of these structures has said that it wants peace and what that peace is like." The interviewee is interested in a concrete concept of life in peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "What have we really been fighting for and working for 25 years?!" Is it peace and work, or emigration or war?

With the example of the quotation just cited, we may see that there are interviewees who do not see a direct problem in the Dayton Agreement for the reconstruction of relations. One of the politicians ho gave an interview believes that peace has created a prerequisite for reconciliation, but that we do not have authentic reconciliation today. The president of an association specializing in transitional justice also believes that much of that Dayton Agreement has not been implemented and that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a deeply divided society today. Immediately after the war, relations between the three constituent peoples began to rebuild according to one journalist interviewed, "only for a moment to come in 2003, 2004, 2005 when it all began to look rather precarious because there was never a system before. Because the policies of the elites here never worked on the reconciliation process as a systematic route, but they were mainly concerned with keeping war and the state of war as a political asset, without really interfering much with those relationships established by people at the private and personal levels. (...) And practically sometime since 2007, we have one complete free-fall in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society, in which I now think it is now provokes something of a joke, of ridicule, when one says the phrase *peace and reconciliation*." Many interviewees feel that there was greater hope in the early years after the war than today. One interviewee visited a number of politicians between 2003 and 2005 while they were organizing the *Pathways to reconciliation and global human rights* conference and said that "no one from any political option

wanted reconciliation, nor wanted anything to do with it." Politicians did not know whether to interpret reconciliation as reconciliation with the situation, with the enemy, or surrender. At the time, the interviewee interpreted reconciliation as understanding, and now, he adds to this – the benefit of people being together. Based on the results of his research, he concludes that places where people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are ethnically mixed are more prosperous. Reconciliation does not mean that a man is reconciled to what once was and that he is not doing anything about it, or to be reconciled because he/they is/are guilty or he/they is/are a victim.

In addition to not making reconciliation a state protocol, an interviewee (a lawyer) says politicians misuse reconciliation activities which come from the non-governmental sector. According to him, politicians do not want to systematically work on reconciliation because they would jeopardize the financial benefits that the division carries. The *Dialogue for the Future* project, which has been implemented under the auspices of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2014, is referred to as a project that revealed that, by the time of its start, none of the presidency members "had a serious approach" to solving problems that would contribute to improving relations, according to another interviewee. For example, education is not part of the reconciliation process, the attitude towards survivors of war has not been determined, etc. A peace studies professor says of the same project that, although the initiative came from the Presidency members and they signed the declaration, "they did not contribute, to any other extent, to what they signed. Through public action, this is a problem we have especially with political participants in the reconciliation process, that the signature does not oblige them. So they do a lot of it out of opportunism, out of political correctness, because it is *in* and so forth, but given our political culture, knowing that voters do not punish it, I see it that way, they think that they signed something and that is that, so what. And the true confidence-building measure would be for Ivanić and Izetbegović and Čović now to have that declaration, which you can see and read the contents of, for them to have put it to their parties first. And then, for their parties, the people in those parties, to have accepted it as theirs, and then through the politicians, to have that idea of peace function. And not have it be something most irrelevant to them within political platforms." If the political summit were to pushed for unity together, the forecasts are such that "we would have such optimism that within a year it would immediately produce 50,000 returns from Germany" (according to one interviewee, a politician).

The interviewees made several suggestions for action that could be taken while still waiting for the system and the political leadership to give their active support to reconciliation. There is a need for people who will continuously address the issue of reconciliation in the public space and lead a public discussion on obstacles and solutions, according to two interviewees, one a university academic, the other a politician. In order for the reconciliation process to become a general process throughout

the country, "we need to communicate with each other about it," and especially with entities that "mean something, who can contribute something," the latter being the politicians. We will talk about the prospect of greater involvement of politicians in the process later. The politician notes that there are now no politicians, civil society representatives and intellectuals in the public space who are continually addressing these issues, and believes that this could contribute a lot to the process: "I think people with a familiar first and last name could certainly contribute, that they have that story of continuity which would be one story acceptable to all (...) I believe that then the media would accept that story as well. I don't know. The media is a story unto itself, but if there were a lot it would not be possible to [ignore]. If it becomes a priority in this country some day, something that is an important issue for all of us will then get space everywhere, in the media." Another interviewee, an imam, suggested that the practice of inviting those who hinder reconciliation, such as in mosques, public places, edifices, etc., should be established for "evil does not come from abusers, but comes from those who see violence, but are silent." Another proposal envisages more systematic work on reconciliation by indirectly engaging in European Commission projects: "The European Commission is one of the potential instruments for change, perhaps the largest as I see it, to the extent that the European Commission delegation recognizes that they have that role. The only consensus that what we have in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that as we want to enter the EU. And I think it's very important that they understand their role, what role they have." The coordinator of an education programme at an NGO explains what he means by education: "So far, they have not wanted to invest too much in education in this sense. They are working on technical issues in education, but they have left these things, values, reconciliation, to our domestic political participants. But I think that they can get more involved. They currently have an initiative called *Education in Multinational States*. They launched this last year so these things may still make some difference. Now, we will see what recommendations that research will [give]. This is for the most part an exploration of what needs to change in order for education to take on the purpose we think belongs to it."

There is great dissatisfaction with the administrative fragmentation of Bosnia and Herzegovina present among the interviewees (11%, 8/77), regardless of the government model an interviewee favours. In these interviews, the large scale and fragmentation of the state administration emerges as a problem in its right. What are the elements of the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina, asks an expert adviser for pre-school education, when it is divided into territories, institutions of government, and people? "I'm not talking about a dry centralization, but a democracy, that, by analogy, bears responsibility." Currently politicians have assumed more rights than they have responsibilities. Interviewees talked extensively about the consequences of organization at the state, entity and cantonal levels. Above, we have seen inter-

viewees talk of the role of political organizations in promoting corrupt practices and in strengthening local nationalisms. A member of a victim's rights association addresses the Dayton Agreement as the causative agent of a large number of civil servants and parties, the very intention of which is to break the system and split the three ethnic groups. A lawyer explains the number of parties: "We no longer have one Communist Party. As many entities and cantons as we have, that many parties we have. The SDS in Krajina is not the same as the SDS in Pale, they are like two different parties. In the central canton, HDZ is not the same as in Posavina and in West Mostar. It's three parties, man! This is all about interest groups whose only common ideology is to victimize their own and to produce intolerance towards others." A local journalist, speaking symbolically with regards to the number of ministers, said that 200 of them run one small European city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can elsewhere be successfully run by one mayor. Three presidents, people employed in 14 assemblies, 14 governments, not counting municipal and city governments, with administrative workers, drivers and other service personnel – all this is difficult to maintain financially. In addition to the journalist, this was also reiterated by a victim's rights representative and by a theology professor:

> Theology professor: "It is an administration that could not function in any rich country, let alone here in poor Bosnia and Herzegovina. You have, I don't know how many different governments and ministers, and they themselves are rebelling and protesting, even though everything was established by the Dayton Agreement. This was probably a way not to establish more new entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to establish an opportunity for some distribution of power between the two nations that were feuding."

> Local journalist: "In general, how do these people, these workers, earn for the privileges of others? Now when a politician comes [for a visit to Bijeljina for example], all the police and the security forces, are activated, as if Trump or Putin had come."

In addition, citizens are confused about jurisdiction. One politician claims that people have little knowledge of the system and that they do not know who to turn to in order to address their problems. He also indicates that complicated administration reduces efficiency. For example, when obtaining some approval from the Federal Ministry, one has to wait for the Cantonal Ministry, and vice versa. A mayor pointed out the difference between the Federation and Republika Srpska in that, in the Federation, the municipality contacts the canton, and the cantonal government contacts the federal government, whereas in the RS, the municipality has a direct link with the entity government.

It has also been pointed out that the proliferation of many governments and parties are weakening the critical mass of civil society, disorienting it on many sides.

> A lawyer says that the Dayton legal order and political system "prevents one critical mass of civil society from forming against one government. One civil society cannot

respond to 14 governments that are more or less equal in authority. (...) The more the government has, the more the party has, and this is two times over, for the governing party and the opposition. It simply cannot be tolerated by a more developed democracy, let alone by a society that is just learning about liberalism. So, it teaches you that tomorrow I can sit with a man who is a salefija, a man who is an ultra-Croat, an ultra-Serb, an ultra-Bosniak, I can listen to him without fighting, you understand? (...) Politics lives up to the reality of the political organization of the Dayton Agreement. (...) We formally live as a state, as a political community, but we are divided again by sheep pens and then divided by political lines, party lines."

The same principle leads to the formation of separate realities that make it possible to manipulate the views of constituent peoples, deny crimes, hold different versions of history, etc. Entity and cantonal divisions are followed by divisions within the public sector. Take the examples of public and private media services that further influence the separation of reality, or, for example, of schools. Each of the constituent peoples has its own media through which they send their information, as well as their own curriculum.

3.1.4 Obstacles in the media

The largest number of interviewees emphasized as a problem the orientation of media towards negative contents (17), and the next most common problems in the media sphere were the level of media dependence upon the regime (12) and fake news. The sample contained in total 14 persons employed in the media and they assessed the obstacles in the same ways that interviewees outside the media did.

3.1.4.1 Fake news

"There are all sorts of things in the media, there is spinning, there are ugly things and there is fake news," says one journalist.

In order to be able to have better media reports on events, the interviewees note, journalists should be careful with the language used for talking and writing. Many interviewees emphasized the inclination of journalists to exaggerate events, in the title or entirely, calling it "bombast":

> One local NGO staff member: "The media use bombastic titles, they blurt something out and then you think 'God knows what this is,' and it turns out that they made a mountain out of a molehill."

> One of the journalists who were interviewed says that when politicians send negative messages via the media, the media exaggerate them even further. "In a second the people start wondering whether there will be a war. They start wondering that in no time at all, and that is frightening."

> NGO staffer: "We [in Jajce] are a little notorious for that school [the long-running campaign against the 'two schools under the same roof' policy], but the situation is not what the media represent it to be. The media often exaggerate it."

Journalists often use language inappropriately by using insulting words.

> Journalist: "If someone is a hooligan in a stadium and burns, I don't know, flags or something, he's a hooligan. I cannot call him a Chetnik or, I don't know, a Serb, a Bosniak. Simply, everything has its own name and cannot be generalized."

Some journalists imagine that they are powerful, that when they are pointing to someone they use such forceful language that they fail to notice that they write unfounded content.

> Journalist: "Sometimes journalists imagine that they are all-powerful and think that someone will fear them and then they enjoy it. I had both acquaintances and colleagues who enjoyed when they publicly pointed the finger at somebody, then being content because that person will be in fear because he was pointed out. Naturally, if that is unfounded, it makes no sense. And even if it is founded, there are other, different ways to say it all. After all, journalists are not judges. There are other institutions in charge of that."

Presenting two contradictory "truths" as equally valid and possible confuses people, and then they do not know what to think any more. One of the interviewees called this mechanism Trumpian post-truth, in which the emphasis is transferred from objective facts to emotions and personal beliefs, and this is done to influence public opinion.

> Professor: "That type of equalization is the type of newageism of the Trumpian *post-truth, fake news,* everything is possible, you can say everything, you can do everything and everything exists at the same level and everything is the question of your own position and identity, which is suddenly somehow hurt if you say: 'Well that won't do [the professor had been speaking of the version of the crimes in Prijedor of an uninformed person who denies the crimes, and of the media which presents this view as if it had the same value as the experience of a camp inmate].' So, the parameters are completely schizoid."

This mechanism is to be found not only in media activities, as interviewees see it, it is also visible in the manner of the behavior of political leaders, and it has also been transferred to the general public, visible in the manner in which people use double standards when judging others. Even though they know that corruption is bad, people still agree to it by doing things they despise in others. People are unable to opt for one version they consider to be the truth and stick to it consistently. For example, one interviewee noted, people in the evening say that doctors in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not know their job and that they are corrupt, and in the morning they go to be treated by them. They are bothered by corruption, but they bribe people whenever it is necessary.

Three of the journalists commented on the poor and superficial nature of information in the media. We recognized in their comments three consequences of this kind of information deficiency. First, if journalists do not present the problem and the information they report in detail, it is not stimulating to the audience. One young journalist suggests this in relation to a portal in Jajce whose staff changed, to the detriment of its unique content: "Possibly someone who read it before then gained some ideas, but we [in Jajce] absolutely have no media that deal with that kind of things any more." The other kind of consequence of superficiality is confusion. Another journalist comments on the contents to be found on the internet: "Now, we have the internet, so people are being educated with that, I like to say, internet feuilletons and all sorts of fabrications and revisions... To tell you the truth, I wonder where I would find myself if I followed those because you get into a situation in which you do not know any more what to think, and what is true, and whether the truth is really one or there have to be three of them." Based on these comments, it seems that a reader could be satisfied if the poor level of information they receive remains only poor without creating confusion and turning into a lie, which is the third problem to which the general state of superficiality in media coverage is seen to lead.

A journalist speaks about a widespread uncritical attitude towards information and an affirmative style of reporting: "The media failed in this process [reconciliation] as well. They failed badly and it is very inconvenient to get information from the media today because the information is very poor and very superficial. And even when it is perhaps more profound, when you can see that somebody perhaps talks longer, it is still affirmative [implying propagandistic]." According to the interviewee, a journalist will say about the project on which he is reporting: "There was such and such a project, that many people gathered." He will not state the reasons or main contents, or what happened after the project, for that matter. The reason for this is that they pay very little attention to one event. They are present there for the first 5 minutes, they take statements from the organizer, whom they ask very few questions, and they move on. The haste in which journalists do their job takes its toll.

Different kinds of mistakes, ultimately, cause the news to be inaccurate. These mistakes are not harmless: they can have far-reaching consequences when conflicts are represented as worse than they really are, because people believe it, and they can cause stigmatizing, slander and malicious spin. The situation is even worse if mistakes become the rule and not exception.

> NGO actor and radio journalist: "We can often read on these portals [and see] that lies are served and that exactly those media, let's say, make young people quarrel with each other. For instance, on Facebook, when I open a portal and start reading the comments, there are only young people quarreling. They once somewhere heard about this topic and somewhere heard how it earlier had been, and then they start quarreling. They write all sorts of nonsense, although they themselves do not know what it is all

about and, for instance, the information is not even accurate. And the media enjoy those kinds of things. I do not want to name now the media that place those lies, but mostly, I want to appeal to young people in this way, if I can, not to comment on the things that they do not know sufficiently, which are not, so to speak, close to them, or if they do, they should first get informed a little so as not to cause quarrel. This means that we should first be well-informed."

The solution is to deal with the facts, notes one journalist, in the manner that the journalistic vocation actually presumes, adding: "It is important in all this that everything that is within the domain of slander cannot be accepted." The journalists who were interviewed called their colleagues to try to view events in their entirety and critically. They also called them to use more precise and more appropriate language. The experience of these journalists says that it is not impossible: "Although we journalists do not set the titles in newspapers, but people knew, and my editors knew, that I did not want to use the terms Chetniks, Ustashas or I don't know what." The journalist continued that journalists should leave one measure of emotion for themselves.

3.1.4.2   Priority given to negative stories

Interviewees from all walks of life agreed that the media should really make a deliberate selection of topics in order to change the orientation of their publications from negative stories to positive ones, from the past to those topics that are useful for the present and the future. It is also pointed out that there are plenty of banal stories that get the focus of attention (private information about public figures) and which are made into "bomb stories", while, on the other hand, many topics of public interest do not receive equal attention.

> Journalist and artist: "Every day we have news that are bombastic and in fact they go something like this: 'I heard somewhere someone slept with somebody's wife.' That is made into a bombastic story. Nobody writes about concrete cases."

What the interviewees consider to be negative stories start with war stories: for example reports on excavations of tombs and on war victims generally, accusations on account of your and our victims, celebrations of war units, war crimes trials. Negative stories are also the ones that thematize conflicts, such as a group of individual politicians leaving an assembly in the middle of the sitting-session, or voting, quarrels, inter-religious conflicts in another entity where the constitutive people "whose media this is" are in the minority. It is also described as "negative" to speak or write too much about problems, for example how sportsmen have no money to travel to a competition. One interviewee (a professor) notes that the "official media" support a "confrontational nationalist discourse". The stories that use this discourse are perceived as full of violence, which is why some interviewees call them "violent stories" (professor). From the most critical perspective, journalists are mostly seen

as part of the team of public sector employees who gather around nationalist leaders who "perpetuate their ideology of division" (lawyer).

> Media regulation authority specialistt: "We, however, have awful media, awful media contents, one bleak story after another. Our daily TV news almost always starts with excavated tombs. I am not saying that we should not talk about that, but let us for once start with positive news: that our children won first prizes somewhere in a world competition, that our sportsmen and sportswomen are wonderful and amazing, so that I can go on." The interviewee gave an example from her earlier professional visit to the media in Lille, France, where "their front pages contain positive stories from life. On the day when we visited the editorial office, there was a granny on the front page holding two little kids. She lived somewhere in Bretagne and was poor and she received two goats as a present and one of those goats brought forth two kids and it was the story about what it meant for her, for the village, for the community, etc. When would we ever publish such a story? Never, unless some returnee or other killed two kid goats belonging to a local inhabitant, or similar nonsense. This need to always reduce something and make it nationalist, using hatred and some extremism, I simply don't know but I think that all of it is some sort of PTSD that we have been carrying from war days. I remember an interview that I did with the head of neuropsychiatry here in 1997 and what he told me then: 'We are all psychiatric cases, just in some of us it is evident immediately and in some of us it will be evident in the next 10 years.' We are still unaware of how much we all are psychiatric cases because we were in a war. (...) We have this problem now and are unaware of it. It is some kind of trauma as a result of negativity and it is dreadfully evident in the media."

Interviewees add that the media do not do enough to promote good news stories. The interviewees share the impression that negative stories are "almost a rule, i.e. the paradigm of our journalism" (professor). This is the unanimous opinion amongst interviewees, of both those who work in the media and those who observe their work from outside, of journalists from public service and those from private and local services. The imbalance between the number of positive and negative stories in the media is not accidental, according to activist interviewees, who see from their experience that the media make a deliberate selection of topics, and regarding which types of events are promoted and which are not. This will be addressed in the section on obstacles in the area of voluntary sector.

> Public service journalist: "I like beautiful stories but somehow they do not find their place in the program; maybe in ten-fifteen days [there is] one story or none. (...) Not because there aren't such stories but because we search for sensation, parties, politics, and somehow such stories are always left for the end (...) In order to survive, [the media] go for sensationalism. I understand them, those are my colleagues... It is like Aska and the wolf: 'I danced in order to survive', that is what they are. Giving everything just to be watched and so that they can get their paycheck. And it is sad."

Special attention is paid to the daily TV news. The interviewees believe that there is no big difference between the daily news now and that "in the middle of the war" (journalist) or 15 years ago. The first 15 minutes are dedicated to war.

> Professor of the sociology of religion: "In the key broadcasts such as the daily news, there are no positive examples, and the emphasis is always, in the first minutes, placed on some inter-religious conflict in another entity where Orthodox Serbs are in minority. (...) If you watch the daily news on a public service, it is for me identical to the one ten or fifteen years ago. If someone made an experiment and broadcast some old daily news from 15 years ago, changed the date and broadcast the old daily news, no one would notice what happened. Priority is given to interethnic differences, in which I include ethnic, religious, language differences, what will the language be called, accusations, etc., while nobody talks about important matters, and that is simply life. It is sad that even 20 and 25 years after the war, we are still living side by side the way we lived in the war, and not together."

> Journalist: "If you watch the daily news in Bosnia and Herzegovina, you have a feeling that you are in the middle of the war when you watch the main news. Celebrations of war units, excavation of mass tombs, war crimes trials, you have all of it in the first 15 minutes. 23 years after the war, the daily news is dedicated to war. (...) One gets the impression that war here produced something, some social reality, some event, where we at one moment were no less than the center of the world..."

Negativity from the media is transferred to people, negative emotions are produced and certain attitudes are accepted. The interviewees believe that the intensification of negative stories in the media increases negative energy among people and uncertainty. The young are particularly vulnerable.

> Islamic religious studies teacher: "First of all, each one of us has a task, human task, to, in the first place, release those young people from that burden, those negative trends which unfortunately very often occur in our region. This region in which we live on average endures war, devastation and so on every fifty years. And for that reason, as soon as the forces of evil start again in the media, we feel the departure of the young, we feel that negative energy, uncertainty among people. And our task should be exactly the one of providing security, to show through our projects, that is, positive processes, that we implement that there is life here, that we can live together here, that we have lived together for hundreds, even thousands of years with no major problems."

> Professor: "Naturally that [what they hear in the media] stays, as you know, somewhere in the mind of people, at least in the way that most consumers simply receive what is given. And if we reversed the situation, so that you have 70% of content being about peace, then it would influence people like the violent contents which represent 95% of our production influence people."

> Lawyer: "Tomorrow, if only that political elite would change, if speech changed, you and I would very soon find, in the daily news and in the newspapers, arguments to the

effect: 'Well, yes, that's it'." Just as we talked earlier about "you and I", the interviewer said. "When you and I are sitting as ordinary people and talking, we will connect on an emotional level, the level in which we will recognize some of our shared life circumstances that we have been through (...) We will not get into conflicts a lot, especially from the start."

The interviewees pointed out that reality is more peaceful than the impression given in the media and that in fact the appeals to provide more positive stories will bring media reporting closer to reality.

> Journalist: "On TV and in the newspapers, we always have some problems, always some tensions, but specifically in Srebrenica it is very hard to find people quarreling about national issues or I don't know how to define them. Generally, people are getting along very well in reality, except on TV, except in the newspapers, except in the media."

> Political scientist: "So you have this official media-supported confrontational nationalist discourse and, on the other hand, you have something completely opposite, including various initiatives of civil society associations, a different world in which people are perceived differently, different topics are opened and discussed, and therefore different relations of cooperation and solidarity are developed."

The choice of stories of negative characters and events is considered by journalists to be determined by the journalists themselves, acting on their own volition, because there are always different kinds of people, says one journalist: "Everyone in his own family, in his extended family, has both positive and negative characters, and within one nation there those who are degenerates, thieves, those who may be evil, but there are also other people who are good."

And not only is it more peaceful in reality, but even politicians behave differently in front of the cameras and when the cameras are off. It is worth mentioning again here, now in a different context, the testimony of one of the journalists about the friendly relations between the guests on pre-election shows after the shutdown of the cameras, which was also discussed in the previous section on politicians.

The media are often the means through which to put pressure on certain persons in order to solve private or political problems. The interviewees judge that the media space should instead serve more its primary purpose.

> Journalist: "If we are solving something, if we have problems, we do not have to go public with it. I advise people when there is a problem – they cannot get, for instance, some documents for the house, there is a problem. Now, is that a problem of corruption, should they pay something to someone. They ask me and I say: 'I cannot advise you that, but now think this through, if we put it now in the media, as a journalist I can do that, you are my interlocutor, you are ready to point to this other person, I can use that. But will it be of use to you? Will you solve the problem if it goes public? Sometimes it turns out to be counterproductive. And what, should we expose some

dirty laundry there?' (...) So we might leave some things to be solved in normal circumstances without going public with them. I especially don't understand it when politicians solve those things publicly, snipe at each other over the media, when very often they are in a situation in which they can sit and talk, even drink coffee, we can even see them smiling, and afterwards they shoot those arrows unnecessarily, which poisons people a little. But I can notice that people are not buying it any more. That is good."

Another journalist: "What used to be solved in wars, by guns – cannons (*topovima*) – now is somehow solved, by political parties and their supporters, by laptops (*laptopovima*)."

Not all interviewees would agree that the chain of these problems starts with journalists. Although everyone agrees that the main instigator is "politics", a discussion can also be developed around the conviction of one section of journalists that the public likes and seeks negative stories.

A journalist: "The situation is very specific. As a journalist, I have managed to publish many beautiful and positive stories that illustrate the true values of life. But at the same time, we have to realize that the public does not react favorably to those stories, that the media and big TV channels prefer problems, tensions, quarrels, a group of politicians leaving the assemblies in the middle of the sitting. or voting, and such like. They prefer those stories, which does not mean that they will not broadcast beautiful stories as well, but only when there are no negative stories, which is the system of the market, that is what people seek. This is where the circle closes again, the politicians made the market seek problems and not beautiful things."

Some journalists think that they have the ratings because of the discourse they promote, however the more important reasons for the ratings and readership can be a better transmitter quality or distribution, and the fear because of which people are drawn into searching for news that might enable them to determine how relevant it is. The larger number of interviewees deem that the public does not seek negative stories. An interviewee who works in the Press Council thinks that journalists take the line of least resistance:

"The editors start creating such content from the very beginning, thinking that people want to read it. That is not true. Let's try positive stories for a month and then we will get the answer. Yes, but when I have a negative story, I have 1500 views per minute, when I have a positive one, 3 views. Yes, but let's see in a month how it will be. The media must educate their public, not the other way around, that the public educates the editor and creates editorial policy. I think that this is the line of least resistance. One should risk a little. The media have lost their educational purpose, which is necessary. We don't have proper cultural, or educational, content, or proper children's programs, nothing in that sense that could raise the level of positive thinking, knowledge, creative development, an intellectualism – which has been neglected entirely. When was the last time you saw or heard a book review in the media? It was an obligation earlier and regular practice."

Several of the journalists testified that not only should the public be given time to show how they react to positive stories, but that positive ordinary life stories are actually even more wanted now, and that the likes prove it.

> Journalist: "And it is only important that those who are responsible, and I think that politicians are responsible in that sense, and the media that follow them, provide some positive stuff. I am a journalist and I know that when I follow some reactions on the internet when some text is posted, that is always a most ordinary life story ... For example, when I made a story for Deutsche Welle about a kebab restaurant, Vučko, which is here in Bijeljina, of a younger, family man who moved here after the war with his family from Sarajevo. And as a homage to his hometown, he made everything inside to be like you are in Sarajevo, the panorama of Sarajevo and the entire menu, he even brings the famous pita bread, cream and kebabs from Sarajevo, they arrive every morning. And when I made that story, he did not believe it and said: 'I made this just in order to survive, to make it easier for my soul a little.' But he said that business flourished afterwards, so many people came. So, people do react to such positive material. Naturally, with the beginning of summer, all Bosniaks from the diaspora go to Vučko, and then the people of Bijeljina also go there to try the Sarajevo kebabs. So, many people now wonder and want to see who makes Sarajevo kebabs in the middle of Bijeljina. There is no barrier. Therefore, I think that such material, something that we share and that can be positive, brings people together. And people react every time to some very ordinary life story, about people and families, who helped whom, who does something successfully, positively. Believe me, when we post what a politician said, even some religious leader, there are 300 likes, and when we post an ordinary story, there are 15000 likes. People react differently. So, we can be alert and see what actually interests people."

> Public service journalist: "We brought four stories that were most viewed in our service. How Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks reconstructed a mosque. How Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks applied together for water supply. So, these are the stories that ordinary people brought themselves. Not parties, not non-governmental organizations [but] ordinary people."

The latter journalist believes that a big problem is presented by the fact that people no longer contribute to the process of reconciliation by bringing stories about coexistence and cooperation of the people of three entities and making changes through joining forces. Another journalist wonders: "Why are we living in the past when we have a shared future again." The stories that interest citizens are those describing people who are successful in their jobs, success of pupils, students, scientists and athletes. In contrast to all the stories about the past, there is "simply life" here, which is little talked about (according to a professor of the sociology of religion).

> Professor: "But I think that we actually have to bring back (...) life to the neighborhood, to the locality, to that dimension of immediate needs." He adds: "You know, we are now living other people's lives. We are living the lives of politicians, of political elites, and if not, in addition we are living the lives of soap opera protagonists."

The direct needs that are of interest to the population are social and economic ones. People want to know about their fellow citizens, about the state of agriculture, industry, traffic, trade, tourism, education, culture, health care, etc. These topics are especially absent in the period before the elections. Another journalist says similarly: "The elections will come soon. (...) And some cases that are close to the people are neglected."

One of the interviewees explains that the media produce too much anger, fear and envy, and that this is the way to turn the attention of the people in Bosnia and Herzegovia from issues of real interest to them. This type of manipulation is called "the political economy of emotions":

Professor: "What is in the public interest today? Certainly not: 'Bakir said...', 'Dodik said...', that is stupid, that is gossip. Therefore, our politics has been reduced to gossip. (...) This is how strong emotions are transmitted, that is the political economy of emotions. You are envious of what your neighbor carries in her bag, but you do not want to see why she lives badly, like you. That further crushes any kind of solidarity, which is the key issue today – how to create solidarity. All our primary emotions are intensified: anger, fear, envy. Those are intensified in the public discourse. You watch who has how many things and you do not watch who drives an Audi 7, but you want to drive Audi 7. Well, that is the perverted parameter."

The recommendation of interviewees to their colleagues in the meida: to start the news with a positive story, to improve cultural, educational, and children's programming, in order to raise the level of positive thinking, knowledge, creativity and intellectualism. Journalists should try as much as they can not to allow the public space to be used for solving private and political conflicts – not to use the media as a kind of tool for pressure, for the struggle for domination. By closing the door of the media to this pressure, people would be more inclined to solve problems in normal relationships. One of the interviewees from the profession claimed that he refused such services on several occasions as soon as he noticed their motive.

We noticed in the interviews that there were people who wanted to work differently, as well as those who did work differently. One young student of political science shared with us the motivation with which she had started to do the job of a radio journalist: "(...) I want to bring closer to the people the real situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is not as black as it looks, and I think that it can function, that it can function much better."

The indicator that we have solved the problems will be when we eliminate war narratives from the daily discourse, and when we do not know the names of so many people in the state leadership.

A journalist: "Someone once said: 'The moment we do not know who our president is, we will live well', and I agree with that."

A second journalist: "When we eliminate war narratives from our daily discourse about politics, it will be the sign that we have reached reconciliation. From the beginning of this year to today, look at the front pages of Croatian, Bosnian and Herzegovinian and Serbian media, and you will see that I am right. You have war topics, war provocations, war accusations, you have the return of media buffoons from that war period. In Serbia, you have Vojislav Šešelj who goes on the rampage through Serbia bringing disaster every day and no one prevents him from doing that. It even seems that he has substantial support for doing that."

3.1.4.3   Responsible to the regime and not to professional ethics

Journalists do not have freedom of speech, it is argued by interviewees, because of their financial dependence. The interviews indicate that this applies to both public services and other media. It is possible that in local areas the pressure is even stronger. On the basis of materials that we have analyzed we cannot claim it with certainty. We have received the most testimonies on problems inside the media from people employed in the media. The problems are evident from outside as well, but we will give priority to the opinions of journalists whose existence is very immediately concerned with these problems. Their testimony suggests that economic uncertainty strongly influences the scope for media employees to act in the direction of reconciliation. The interviewees stated the manner in which the media was brought into this position of reduced media freedom.

Public service editor: "We live our lives from one day to the next. The journalists of the public service cannot be independent when they live from one year to the next. We now have subscription until the first of January [2019] and they told us that it will be what will be. That is not good. Brussels as well warned [that] public service must be independent, must have funding through subscription, must have secure financing, and we do not have that. And you now have a correspondent, for example in Mostar, who did not receive one mark for six months. How do I tell him: 'Make one independent story.' I cannot. But they are doing it deliberately. Because if you get an independent public service, who will that benefit? They like us to be dependent on them and to ask them every month what to do next. So that it is all one project, and, in my opinion, Brussels takes part in that project. Brussels said a long time ago that public service must be independent, but it gives in and gives in and has been giving in for five years. Why it gives in, you must ask them."

The problem with the subscription of the public service has deeper roots in the manner in which the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is organized and in the level of economic development. Our interlocutor from the public service explains: "The estimate is that Bosnia and Herzegovina has supposedly 3 million citizens, but I think that it has fewer, but let it be that. Our economy cannot finance, according to EU estimations, even one public service, let alone three. You cannot charge someone for a serious commercial service if that person barely makes ends meet. Our econo-

my is in disarray. You still have electric-power industry, two telecoms and they are our biggest advertising partners. When they are not here anymore, I do not know what we are going to live on, honestly. Our economy cannot sustain three public services. You have Serbia which has 7 million and barely finances one public service, we have 3 public services, on three million inhabitants. And no one can survive that. Now it is only a question of when somebody will tell us that we are dead. (...) Bosnia and Herzegovina should have one public service and three television channels and that's it, and we have over fifty. I have told you everything."

Pressure on public services is possible thanks to the uncertainty of subscription and the practice of appointing the board of directors, in which "politics had its hand in". One professor says: "So, those boards of directors appoint lower structures, which is management, that is directors, the directors already have influence on editors, and editors already have influence on journalists so that this can slowly have influence on the actual program", a journalist explains. A professor of political science and peace studies thinks that this is the fundamental reason for the weak presence of peace issues in the media, because in the media the editors and producers are more "the servants of political order than real followers of deontological principles of the profession."

It is often not just about financial dependence, but about "indebtedness" as well, for services that maybe someone from the "elite" provided for the editor, journalist, media director, or about high-profit business deals.

> Pediatrician and university professor: "The media are extremely powerful, we know that, but we also know in what way the media work, right. Many of them are in the sphere of certain elites, all kinds of them – financial, human, this or that."

> Lawyer and researcher: "But you can see how powerful this propaganda is. How powerful the propaganda is that *Oslobođenje*, hey, fires Dežulović because..., hey! Just how strong that business is. Why is he fired? Because Vildan Smailbegović, which means the wife of Mujo Selimbegović, a Bosnian tycoon, protects Mujo's deals with the SDA and IDZ and with the Sarajevo nationalist elite, of the SDA. Similarly, she criticized very moderately, and she knows exactly how to criticize, Dodik, because Mujo Selimbegović supplies engineering for road construction and cooperates with him. They earn tens of millions marks. And now you have the newspaper and you would want to talk freely now. "Well, you cannot talk freely, where is my money then." Just watch how far it goes and how tied up this elite is, it is terribly tied up. They have no ideological design except their own private interest, their own pocket, and let's say a microfascism, elitism and microfascism, built inside their head."

> A journalist: "As for the media, there is still a terrible political pressure getting increasingly stronger, more and more open and insolent. In local areas, that pressure is terrible. There is also the pressure upon public services which belong to municipalities. Now, before the elections, look what is happening. In Visoko, RTS is completely

closed. Like we will open a new television on the order of the mayoress or I don't know whom. I mean where do you do those kinds of things, on which mandate, on the basis of what? Two months before the elections, it is known how that man is appointed and who ordered him to do that. What happens to the public service of Una-Sano canton? Total dismissals, total chaos. People are driven crazy, they lost their jobs, and the public lost the news service. If you are in such information darkness, then they can do with you whatever they want. A great many things influence the role the media will have. They will have the role which is imposed. Evidently, there is not a sufficient critical mass of media professionals to oppose it. It is always reduced to economic calculation, in the sense of whether I will have enough money to feed my family or not, because that literally means that you will do as you are told or you will be left on the street with the famous sentence: 'There are plenty of those who cannot wait to take your place.' We do not have labor unions to protect us, we do not have social services which will determine, ok, this is how much you have been paid in the last months and you will get 70% in the next nine months, or I do not know how it works abroad a payment is made so that when looking for a job you are not hungry. Here you will drop dead after two days and no one will turn around to look at you. That's it. So, everything starts from above and goes down in a vertical direction. The communication starts from politicians, from politics, generally, on a daily basis, and it is imposed and it creates the general climate of opinion, which makes the media and even the public services say nothing about those various interest groups that act through commercial, private, municipal media. The work of the public media should be more controlled at the local level. Their work should in no way be in the service of local politics, and it mostly is. The majority of those local radio and TV stations are PR for local politicians because they have been conditioned: 'you will either be ours or you will get no money'. We return to the current situation of Una-Sano canton and its public service and to the fact that the entire management will be changed now and people who are obviously suitable for some political interest in that environment will be appointed. This is where the Regulatory Agency (RAK Bosnia and Herzegovina) should regulate more and bring more order. That is the only way. I mean, we want actions according to democratic rules. In order to be able to apply democratic rules, you must have people with a democratic consciousness. With us it is still: 'Until I punish you, you won't listen.' From throwing papers, disposing of garbage, to these much more important things, unfortunately that's how it is."

The issue is not only that the trade union or social service will not protect people from firing, but that the employees do not work on the problems in order not to disturb the existence of well positioned persons in the hierarchy above themselves. These fears of the person stronger than themselves influence the quality of the job they perform so that it is low and so that journalists cannot deal with topics critically. They do their job pro forma, superficially. This problem is connected with the poor state of the judicial system. The interviewees claim that the judicial system is also under the control of the regime and corrupted in the same manner as the majority of public institutions.

> A young journalist and artist: "They all work the way they are directed. But no one wants to do their job the way it is supposed to be done because if you speak about a problem, the masses react, because the masses fear for their existence. Because now somebody has a salary of 2000 KM, brother, and do not touch him until the pension."

The dependence in these employment relations is manifested in the political discourse, which is confrontationally nationalist. According to the estimation of interviewees, both journalists and activists, there is a serious dependence on the policy of exclusivity because only such a policy could lead to the enrichment of people who are now in charge, and they still need the policy of exclusivity.

> Journalist: "I'm afraid that current narratives are so powerful, those forces that want to keep this kind of a state. (...) The people who are rich today, who finance the politics here would not be rich if they did not have this policy of exclusivity behind themselves, which does not allow competition, free development of the market. The media depend on such economics and such politics. There are only a few media outlets which have been trying in the past several years to press a topic on us [the public]."

The dependence is also reflected in the fact that what is positive in the media is only that which refers to the majority within a community.

> Sociologist of religion: "However, I haven't noticed anything positive in the main news broadcasts except when they speak about the majority of a religious community, and there we have more powerful feature stories in terms of length and which are placed within the first minutes. The emphasis is always put on conflicts if they are present in the area."

It can be noticed that politicians are over-represented in the media space. According to the interviewees, the politicians have usurped the media space. Moreover, they add, too many discussions take place before the eyes of the public when they should take place and be concluded in the institutions established for that purpose.

> Journalist: "Now everything is the media space of those politicians who if they do not say something in the media, it is as if they did not say it at all."

It is possible to control what will be said in the media. If they cannot control all the media in this way, they control those with the highest ratings.

> Journalist: "I think that media space as well suffers certain blockages, censorship and self-censorship that happen on a daily basis."

> Catholic priest: "Nationalists control the media entirely. There is no way that, for instance, there could be quality debates in the media. There are a few such media, but there is a great blockage because the media with the highest ratings are those that the nationalists control."

The consequence of this dependence is that journalists who do not comply with the nationalist trends are powerless to oppose them. You can write about peace but if the

policy says that there should be more destruction, you are powerless: "it will activate so many destructors that you cannot defend yourself from them" (journalist). The interviewees claim that there are only several media that refuse the dominant nationalist negative discourse (journalist), and that there are only a few journalists who, so to speak, "are not in love with politics", "who want to do serious journalism", and who because of that "barely survive" (journalist). "There is no way that journalists and politics can live in love. Because if they are in love, there is neither normal, human politics, nor normal, human journalism." All these points were made by people employed in the media.

3.1.5   Obstacles in education

The education system has potential and was rated as a sector of great importance for reconciliation – both in the survey of 2013 and in 2018 in the stakeholder interviews covered here. Interviewees pointed out that changes in education were crucial and that education comes first in the process of building trust and reconciliation. The present situation does not match these expectations, however: those critical of the laws governing education, curricula, textbooks and teaching staff make up 68% (52/77) of the total sample. Amongst educators, 70% (23/33) are self-critical about their own sector, and 66% (29/44) of interviewees from other sectors are similarly critical of the current situation.

The largest body of criticism focuses on systemic divisions in the education sector, and this far outweighs testimonies about other obstacles mentioned in the education sphere. In this chapter we address only obstacles in education that are systemic in nature (we analyze other obstacles in the context of a more detailed treatment of the role for young people in the reconciliation process in Chapter III of the BCS edition of this report).

The following remark should be interpreted as a consequence of the problem we have described above as the *disagreement about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state*. A Catholic priest says: "I believe that education should be an education for people in a specific society, for children to learn what it takes to live in this society." What is the society that the political system foresees if we read into the organization of the educational system?

Ministries of education do not systematically work for reconciliation. The system is centralized, i.e. all decisions are made in ministries, and the leads in schools are principals, while the mode of work is distributed to teachers. Schools are divided on an ethnic basis, primarily through learning according to different national and cantonal plans and programs, from different textbooks, and through teachers of a particular nationality. History, geography, religion, language and script are taught differently. In most schools, classes are taught in one, two or three curricula, depending on the

number of children of the respective constituent peoples. Each of these curricula considers itself to be mononational, deals with the interests of its group, and presents the other two as separate, as an unknown or as a threat, says an education specialist: "These are three education systems that are in constant tension with one another." Another pedagogy specialist further explains: "How will we integrate if one learns that Croatia is the home country, that Zagreb is the capital of Croats, that Belgrade is the capital of Serbs. (...) Right from the start, children were taught who the Bosniaks are, how they are the enemy, who the Serbs are and how they are the enemies and such things." A young journalist studying under the Croatian program resented the fact that there is little to learn about Bosnia and Herzegovina where she lives, and much more about Croatia.

> An activist: "When I introduce myself, it is a little strange for me to introduce myself as a Bosniak, for the most part I present myself as a Bosnian woman, because I am from Bosnia and Herzegovina. And then when they tell me that you have to study the history of Croatia, then it gives me a little... Why do I have to study the history of Croatia when I have never seen Croatia? I have never been, but I know the history, geography, climate and more, and we have not studied Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the professors tried to do something about Croatia for at least half of the period, they also tell us something about Bosnia and Herzegovina. [Actually, not that it wasn't, but] for example, say in the second and third year when we are learning the history of the world and going through, I don't know, either Estonia or Argentina, we have an hour to work on it. We have 10 classes working on Croatia, and within those ten classes one class where we go over Bosnia and Herzegovina."

> Director of an NGO: "In most of our analyses of educational curricula and policies, we have concluded that comprehensive and substantive education reform is needed, that only this can lead to a concrete turnaround. The way it [the education system] is set up and structurally discriminates and substantially discriminates against minorities, others, and cannot meet the requirements of the modern age. There are different ways and tactics to accomplish this."

The historical truth problem is a broad topic that those interviewed needed to talk about a lot (21% of direct quotes, 16/77). History in schools is a subject of national importance, and therefore is taught to students from the three constituent peoples separately. Many interviewees expressed the view that within the ethnic framework there was a deviation from the truth. In this way, uncertainty is created, and students are directed to conceive of their futures on the basis of constructed historical events. What matters most is the misuse of the subject itself to create a false image of the role of other nations and to develop the concept of hostility. Insufficient aspiration to establish a single history for all three constituent peoples, ignoring a generation of witnesses with different views as if, according to a journalist, "to mess up a whole generation, which will end up being collateral, and to establish a completely different generation who will tell the historical truth as it suits it."

Mayor: "And here [in schools], unfortunately, politics interfere with history (...) And when we were students, we were either crazy or mistaken about some of the details in our history, but that was not the case at all. This is a problem that has, lasting consequences, that you live with the misconception that something happened that way, and in fact it was completely different. History should be something that has truly happened. However, it is said, history is written by the victors, or those who are stronger and those who determine the fate of all."

In the Federation, in the same school building, separated by time and/or space, there are schools operating Croatian programs and schools operating Bosniak programs. Although the schools are in the same building, they have different names, and separate principals and teaching staff. In some environments, children of different ethnicities go to school in different shifts, in some environments the same shift but generally not mixing. The interviewees' comments on the practice of two schools under one roof were almost all negative.

Teacher: "It is very wrong when children come in one door and are in different classes, not socializing. Although outside of school, they are all friends."

Director of a peacebuilding NGO: "I personally think that the international community was very wrong because they did not recognize that you need to find a new approach with the people of the Balkans. (...) I personally think that reconciliation can only come from within, and the international community has tried to impose peace and reconciliation. And I think these two schools under one roof is a prime example. I understand very well that they were thinking: *It goes one step at a time. The first step they go to the same building, later they will approach each other, there will be a communal administration.* They didn't count on it not working here. People here have other logic that they develop, and I don't think anyone has bothered to come up with that logic and how they would do it if you gave them space to do it. Now, I think that in the last 23 years after the war, this has become so much established as a structure that can no longer be changed. But it did not come from within."

A Catholic recounts his experience of encountering this type of school: "I was in some of those schools in Bugojno where there is horrible hostility among the children. If the children who go to the same school there meet – they communicate there, they attack the children [and] the teachers. [Two schools under one roof] is a festering wound that needs to be healed as soon as possible! (...) One girl says to me in Bugojno, 'I saw', she says, 'when he went over to the Muslim side.' She says this at school, right there. And she reported him to the teacher who was a Croat." Not all Croatians agree with the separation of schools. One attributes this solution to Croatian and Bosniak nationalists: "We Catholics have school centers attended gladly by Muslims and Serbs and no one is losing their identity, and now all of a sudden Croats are running separate schools, it's horrific!"

The practice of two schools under one roof was supposed to be experimental after the war, but it persisted. In elementary school, children were separated from the first

grade. Interviewees who were parents or students at the time recall that it was a practice to move children to a second grade that is ethnically appropriate in the first days of school when a list of who is in which grade is made. The memory of a first-generation student says that the children did not know why they were separated but later understood that they were divided according to their ethnicity, still not knowing why. From the following quotation we will see the importance that one interviewee attaches to the practice of common schools.

> A journalist and youth activist: "I was sitting in the first grade of elementary school with a friend called Semin, so we were all Croats in the class and he was the only Bosniak. Then I remember an ugly man who came in and gave Semin a piece of paper and said, 'Eh, let your mom and dad look at this and if they want they should sign, and it would be good for them to sign and then you bring it to the teacher.' And he did it all, of course we were first grade elementary. It's from that kind of perception that I remember. Only for that friend of mine to be transferred, after 7 or 15 days, to a different class. (...) But he actually went to a Bosniak class. So, as kids, we were sorted into sheep pens by that time, and we, as kids, don't know if anyone ever did anything wrong to that Semin kid in the first grade of elementary school. We were not aware of what was what. We were learning the Croatian anthem, we were learning about Croatia, this and that. The letters, the numbers, more or less everything, but somehow that chessboard was always there, though we weren't aware of it. That later, when we had already grasped some knowledge, we understood that we had been separated. For what reason we didn't know. And finally, back in high school, we all go back to the same table. In high school, everything works, everything goes. Come on, you're still in school, so you're not thinking about existence and that stuff, but in that case, the reconciliation process was already over. I mean, it's a paradox, but then when you get out of that high school again, that story comes up."

One interviewee felt that two schools under one roof were in order. Among those who resist this practice, he sees the intention of "pushing something else, to have one program here, one people, one nation. I am certainly against it." Several interviewees, two of them from Jajce, commented on the case of starting two schools under one roof instead of a high school in Jajce that works according to the Croatian curriculum and to which all children from that place go.

Divisions among school-age children are affected by war-related manifestations, which are marked as non-working holidays. Another interviewee gives an example of celebrating September 13, the Liberation Day of Jajce, and September 14, Liberation Day of Vinca, a suburban village near Jajce. The elementary school operating the Croatian curriculum within two schools under one roof is called "September 13", ie. it is named after the said holiday. The other school that operates under the Bosnian plan is Berta Kucer. Thus, on the first day of the holiday, Croats do not go to school, and on the second day, it is the Bosniaks' turn. She says, "They create such confusion in the elementary children. The first-grade children [ask] 'Why are they

not going to school today? We are off tomorrow.' And then, of course, their parents explain to them, and then they begin to understand it from a young age."

There is poor interaction between students everywhere according to 14% (11/77) of the interviewees, which together with all the above contributes to the isolation of young people and the creation of their separate realities, truths and prejudices. When this is considered, that young people have little room for socialization beyond the organization of their school (according to one political scientist and journalist), the situation gets serious. The school misses an important opportunity for clarifying issues at the peer-to-peer level.

Interviewees listed the most common ways young people use their free time: using phones, being on social networks, watching TV/movies and other audio-visual content online. New technologies are taking over and taking away and/or expanding the power of formal education. Values and opinions are influenced by social networks and the Internet, and the power of educational institutions is weakened. We would say that young people have always formed part of their views in peer relations, but the question is how many young people get together and socialize and how much they attend extracurricular activities. A literature professor who works with students thinks that the younger generations lack "that basis of sociability". He explains that social and social media time is different: "This is the time of sitting down together, of talking, which is a slower process than what they are used to. I think digital technologies can transform time and space in a different way, which a priori is not a bad thing, it can be a good thing, but it has to be combined with *real time* which has a different logic." The question is also what extracurricular activities are offered at local levels, for example cultural, artistic or sports activities that can bring young people together. Several interviewees indicated a problem with betting shops. The professor: "The betting shops have replaced other social production centers." Another interviewee resents the fact that bookmakers are in the domain of schools. Another raises the question as to what results may be attained through non-formal education, which is occasionally present through non-governmental organizations in schools where there is interest.

So far, we have mentioned some elements that control the education system. We mentioned a clear hierarchy in the system because of which teachers who are in real contact with students and in a position to act, are compelled to obey both in terms of what they do and how they do it. One school principal argues that politics is present through school boards, through the constant change of management positions and the recruitment of employees through political options. He says it brings "an ugly feeling into school systems." The director of a peacebuilding NGO says, "All these principals are politically appointed." Interviewees told us that teachers are threatened with dismissal and being in fear for their jobs they can be controlled. Interview-

ees frequently mentioned threats of dismissal. It is an increasingly common practice, a staff member at an educational NGO says, for contracts to be renewed for each school year, so that teachers do not have the elemental security that allows them to plan their lives and so that they have to watch what they do: "Teachers are aware at all times that their contracts may not be renewed." Teachers have the same kind of poor salaries that other workers living in poverty have. The normalization of poverty is an obstacle created by the separation of power from the people. People reduced to existential needs are less motivated to do their jobs, and the space for cooperation has been squeezed by conflict and the struggle for survival. Poverty thus becomes spiritual in nature.

Basic, vital knowledge at school is not learned, says one professor. Society is illiterate but that illiteracy is produced and nurtured in the education system. We come to the paradox that uneducation develops in the education system. The poor quality of education was indicated by many interviewees from the education sector. Interviewees claim that most teachers do not hold extra-curricular classes, do not attend city events or inform students about events, and that they have an authoritative approach in teaching and do not allow critical thinking. Further, "when it comes to the fact that there are no elements of reconciliation, education for peace, or general affirmation of universal human values, in fact we are talking about education not being good", says an educational specialist.

> Educational/cultural NGO president: "Our teachers, professors, when there are some protests, for example, should they not bring the children? There are no extracurricular clubs in the school to keep a child interested. (...) I sang, we had a music club, so we had a folk-dance club, so we had a club of hiking, they taught us how to deal with maps when in the mountains, there were actions such as (…) we go to the lake to clean, so we hang out, we play ball. Now this is gone, now teachers and professors will not work with children."

> NGO education specialist: "[Education] supports the traditional ways of learning, the teacher as the absolute authority, unquestionable truths, no questioning, no creative thinking, no critical thinking, and these are all elements of poor quality."

> Orthodox religious studies teacher: "In today's society, everything is devalued – [in] education, many colleges have opened. There are examples where we know you can say 'Hello' and just say 'I need a degree' and 'How much?', then get a party-based job and be at the top. And the kids know it. You can't hide anything today. Let's just say it used to be a closed circuit, and today information is spreading at the speed of light."

A journalist and youth activist describes the usual attitude of a demotivated teacher towards work at school: "Professors come, charge a year's worth of 'mileage', just so they can out on their CV their work as professors. Anyone with a passport packs up and goes abroad because no one will ever work for a small salary, no-one in the coming generations of professors is interested in any struggle over the reconciliation

process and things like that." In these conditions, teachers are not motivated to work with either children or reconciliation. Promoting reconciliation comes down to the few who want to put certain things in place and bring them closer to children. In doing so, it is difficult for a few to carry out classes that promote reconciliation and understanding because there is little support, and not only does the system not allow it, but it also sanctions it.

> NGO education specialist: "I think all those individuals who depart from some set way of working in that community and at school face obstacles. [They] have more barriers than is generally accepted. There were many cases where these things were seen. Let's say a teacher who was later awarded the Civic Courage Award [presented by] President Mesić. She worked at a school and wrote an article about two schools under the same roof, ie. about how teachers of both nationalities never share experiences [and] never talk to each other. Although her contribution was anonymous, the school was recognized immediately and she was fired. And it was a very affirmative article in that [she argued that] the two teaching councils should sit together sometimes, once a year. So, it was not a particularly negative and critical text. However, that was the response. And I do not see that they have enough space to work beyond what is specified in the system. There are individuals who always do something in spite of the system, and in spite of everything, but the system does not allow it, and, furthermore, it is sanctioned."

> School principal: "We are here at this school [a Catholic school] with a school center where we strive for tolerance, coexistence, a normal relationship. (...) It is very difficult to implement such a strategy, because it seems to me that we do not respond to political structures, so we have an awful lot of problems where we should by no means have them. And if you have these problems where you should never have them, then it means that you are doing something that someone does not like at the moment. That is my personal experience and the experience of the staff working here."

The curriculum for the 4th grade of secondary school contains the subject Democracy and Human Rights, a new subject introduced with a view to the democratization of society, and a subject of great potential for reconciliation and peacebuilding. However, a youth worker at an NGO pointed out that it was not contextualized for Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving an example from a lesson in which they participated: "Someone stabbed someone in the subway with a knife and the police officer confiscated [the knife]. [The question for students is] does a cop now have to [take a knife or do something else]? Totally different context. Now children need to identify with another concept. So the kids don't like the subject either, they clearly don't like it. American content and context were taken over and then our institutional ones were added. So now they are learning how many cantons the Federation has, House of Parliament, this and that. And this part of us that is just structural, it's terribly boring. So essentially the subject did not fulfill the potential it had." The subject was not taken seriously by teachers either. The subject Democracy and Human Rights and

the subject Culture of Religions are both perceived as new ideologies, like Marxism: "The system treats them as a foreign body but tolerates them due to pressure from the international community. Both USAID and the like have worked directly on the subject Democracy and Human Rights and on its introduction." Since some experts believe that religious education is not a good solution, a subject called Culture of Religions was introduced, but it is perceived by critics as threatening religious education and is therefore causing resistance. Religious education and the culture of religions will be discussed further in Chapter II. One professor reflects on the problem that someone outside the country is raising important issues for education in the country. "It looks like the authorities don't care enough about 'their home', or that with the intention of failing little has been invested in the preparation of this subject."

Such systematic work on fostering divisions is effectively destructive at all levels of education, a number of those interviewed believe.

> Youth activist: "If the education system from kindergarten through high school is not functioning as it should be, you will ultimately get the wrong product."

Education from kindergarten to university has contributed to greater closure of consciousness into the matrix of "Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks", according to two interviewees. Young people are not sufficiently focused on life and the future, they cannot imagine what they would change in the country, and yet they do notice the shortcomings of the environment in which they live. In other words, their political imagination is suppressed, and the ability to perceive negative things is over-stimulated.

> Philosophy professor: "What education has, unfortunately, produced, at all levels, from kindergarten to university, is really just fueling the fire, put in the terms of the people, in what is this growing closure into what may be called political or social autism. So, [we experience] a type of separation from life, from what should be the meaning of our existence today primarily, and even more with respect to our turning towards the future. Until that changes, until we move beyond this matrix of Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks and others, we have no chance for the future."

> Literature professor: "On the other hand, what worries me, and what I see in my daily work, is that this generation, now 22, 23 years old, has lost the capacity to imagine a different future. That's one difference in the last 15 years that I see, they don't have the capacity to imagine what they would change. That's the scary thing, that's the scariest thing to me, that's what personally discourages me. How can I describe it to you? It's like they can see what's wrong, how they live, but they can't cast it in terms of what they do want. They can't imagine it even when you do some guided fantasy with them: Close your eyes and imagine waking up in a country where you would like to live what you see around you. This lack of imagination is what is systematically killed in the education system and it is a crime. Now the question is how, how to work on it, how to resuscitate that [political imagination]? (...) If you think that the state in which you live is the only possible one, then that is very sad."

Without a different systematic approach to education, the interviewees agree that there will be no improvement in relations between the constituent peoples.

3.1.6   Obstacles in the non-governmental sector

Interviewees agree that the non-governmental sector is the one most actively working on reconciliation and that it should be encouraged further.

> Politician: "If it weren't for the NGOs, and the attempt to have people communicate and meet and produce something together, it's unlikely that this story would remain afloat. This story has its continuity and it lasts, and there are certain organisations who make a considered effort, in the region and within Bosnia and Herzegovina."

According to the opinion of those interviewed, the way forward lies in NGOs drawing other sectors of society into taking action. However, it is difficult to design good, practical and efficient initiatives, projects and work programs that deal with reconciliation, within an NGO, it is said. This is first and most often due to the difficulties of creating an authentic initiative, but also, secondly, due to financial restrictions and to the limited support they receive from state-run institutions. Under current conditions, in order to get into schools, politicians have to be a part of a project. One of the obstacles is also a caution at confronting public policy and policymakers, and on top of that is the need to please donors. 66% (51/77) of the interviewees spoke of the obstacles in the NGO sector, and this was 63% (32/51) among those who work in the NGO sector. Most of the critical interviewees speak of the insufficient levels of professionalism in their activity, the limited effects of projects and weak promotion of activities undertaken – and of their results (56%, 43/77). They criticize the choice of project activities, and the relations between NGOs, and attribute the causes of the limitations in their results (note: this is a critique made by NGO staff and interviewees from other sectors) to their lack of mutual knowledge of each other's work, their rivalries, and the lack of networking between them.

3.1.6.1   Selection of project activities

14% (11/77) of respondents commented on the selection of project activities. Interviewees find that the most frequently undertaken project activities do not have the power to initiate social change. Those are:

• Seminars

• Workshops

• Conferences

• Round tables

• Non-scientific meetings

• Tribunes

• Meetings

• Signature of platforms, declarations, and agreements that do not contain binding concrete activities

• Research conducted without promotion of conclusions and without a plan for activities based on the findings

• Publications

• Equipping, updating via technology

There are too many seminars, interviewees claim. Often, as two interviewees testified, NGO staff who have had appropriate training or education then poorly apply what they have learned. We have been repeatedly told that public debates, conferences, roundtables, campaigns and other events are always attended by the same people. An expert on pre-school education adds that the problem is that young people are not carriers of these activities. Consideration should be given to enhancing the educational activities of non-governmental organizations so that they are well used.

> A senior civil servant specializing in the area: "I would like to especially emphasize that through projects, research, or, in particular, projects that entail education and enabling local leaders and important people to initiate such activities in local environments, a certain number of people is educated, but the knowledge and skills they adopt are later not used in practice. It all remains [focused] on research, education, enabling of the leaders, but afterwards there is no implementation, nothing worth mentioning."

> A sociologist of religion: "Organizing meetings, workshops, scientific or non-scientific meetings, roundtables, etc. (...) all somehow ended up with us just saying or expressing the intention that we need to do something." Similarly, a teacher of English and literature, when asked if NGOs should change their approach, responded by saying, "Well, they should finally stop talking and do something concrete." A teacher of Islamic religious education from a town in Herzegovina says: "Throughout my experience in the work that I do, I have realized that it is somehow too much, that there is no value in just coming together at seminars, some roundtables, and talking about dialogue, if it doesn't happen in the field, in action. We need to find some common projects that are being worked on and where you do more and talk less. So, basically, just act."

It is not enough to draft documents for politicians to sign, for instance, politicians should be committed to specific tasks. Our interviewees are saying that too often their signature itself turned out to be non-binding for politicians. The director of a peacebuilding NGO gave examples of signed documents whereby politicians indicate their support for the statement that *they are for building peace, a better democratic society, stability, prosperity, etc*. He considers such documents to be es-

sentially irrelevant, though they represent a step forward. Everyone will sign such documents because it is not something that would hurt politicians, threaten them, or oblige them: "We need strategic documents to follow those documents. An action program, an action plan, concrete steps and activities. [For example,] the way I will work in Konjic to build peace; how it will be incorporated into municipal policies. (...) Say, gender, for example, it has been included in many strategic documents now because it is *in, a hot topic*. How can human rights be incorporated into all these strategic documents? This is the right way to build peace, by being specific about it. [More examples:] How will I use speech that will not be hate speech and endangerment of others, how will we respect others through strategic documents and activities. That is what's missing in all this." He praised Croatia's 2004 Peacebuilding Strategy as an advance in this direction.

The interviewee continues: research draws public opinion on the same questions, and yet does not follow through to give them research findings or research-based action, based on their work, that could lead to real change. Frequent exposure to research that does not have clear results, he adds, has reduced the desire for people to provide answers.

> Catholic religious education teacher: "On the other hand, through these two or three years I have been here in Brčko, I have participated several times in meetings that touched upon these topics of reconciliation and all that. I was disappointed, if it may be said, that every single encounter, all those people who came, just did some research. (...) Unfortunately, it just happens that it's just research, not moving forward. We have no specific conclusions. Last year [2017] there was a *Dialogue for the Future* platform where through four meetings I was present, it ended and I don't know what to do next. So all these questions go to waste, and then some new research happens. Here, too, people are a little fed up with this research and you cannot get some good feedback from people because they say [there is] no point in speaking. When you talk to people, they know what hurts them, let's say that economic situation and the associated political simulation. (...) Research is needed, but after research it is necessary to move forward, but unfortunately things stop at research only."

Writing reports is a must in delivering projects, but, according to one interviewee, the problem is that projects are finished and the reports and the practical recommendations that are named or that have been implemented through the project are forgotten. He adds that projects come up with very few models. The reports appear to have models because they are beautifully described, but the result is poor on the ground and the models are fictitious. He says that reports should be written "to help here in the field, not to make it clear to some donor sitting in the Netherlands, for example, that we did it." The director of an NGO focused on transitional justice believes that the work of NGOs has been reduced to writing reports to donors, to justifying activities and money spent, because of frustration that they cannot change much.

On the other hand, according to the interviewees, there should be more activities, as follows:

• Fieldwork with people

• Model development

• Practical projects of general interest

• Responding to current events

• Work with people of influence

Although fieldwork is a type of work the results of which are difficult to prove and present, the majority of those interviewed rate the importance of fieldwork very highly and believe that it needs to be much more present, and that just the fact people know what NGOs are doing in the field is a change.

> The director of a peacebuilding NGO: "Most of us do not work with people in the field. Most of us do this advocacy policy, laws, but we don't work with people any more, we lost that contact. We call the schools, bring the children together, bring them to a seminar, but this is not a full-time job and we do not have that permanent work with people. We do not work in local communities. We bring together 20 people and it's like a seminar. Share a little, people, let's get out there, people don't know about us. When I was doing that ProBudućnost project, my goal was for the little old granny in Žepa to know what we are doing. When we achieve that, it is a change, when people know what is being done. And we don't bring together 20 people and that's a change. So, working with people is the key to any project. Working with politicians, working with people, it creates changes."

It is important to work on projects of general interest and which are visible, such as investments in schools, other facilities, children's areas, sports fields, roads, etc. the interviewees pointed out. Projects like these can be shared so that they are launched by two entities simultaneously or proactively. We have noticed that members of the dominant constituent people in a community know that they appreciate it when such projects are implemented by members of a smaller constituent people or returnees. For instance, the construction of a children's playground in the courtyard of the Cultural Center in Janja, which benefits all citizens, or coastal fortification in the region, renovation of heating, carpentry, and the reconstruction of the sports hall in the elementary school "Meša Selimović" – after the floods, many such initiatives were praised.

> Mayor: "We can divide projects into visible and invisible ones. Some projects are invisible when it comes to it, without diminishing the value of NGOs, but when it comes to some kind of education and those things that are simply not measurable, they are not tangible. For me, a project is when you build a sewer, and a road, when you mutually agree and both municipalities with two different entities participate, that is

a project. [Whereas, for invisible projects:] They meet about getting together to talk about things, so they talk, so this will be, so it will be that, these are stories for young children, these are so-called invisible projects. Because unfortunately huge amounts of money are being spent, we have to be open when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that is where brokers are most easily involved. And on visible projects this cannot be done because if I did something then it is exact and it has its price, it has costs. (...) It's really that [that makes] coexistence, it's about restoring trust between people and that way we can just move on and have a future. (...) One has to go from words to deeds and just look for deeds. What are these deeds, you will find very few in practice."

Interviewees judged that there were too few concrete activities, but a more serious complaint was that NGOs had poor communication with citizens whose interests they proclaimed to work for. It was resented that they were not addressing basic social problems, such as disenfranchisement, poverty, the capacities of pre-school institutions, peer violence, violence against women, disability, sex education, etc. These are topics that can put the civilian sector back on its feet. Women's NGOs stand out in this regard. 7 out of 11 interviewees responded regarding this. One professor says that many basic topics are no longer of interest to donors, and that "we do not have enough capacity to take care of basic things." Another interviewee stated that non-governmental organizations funded by foreign sources are often not effective essentially because they are guided by project activities that will be given funding. Civil society organisations that are not funded by foreign donors achieve the greatest results because they have more of an ear for basic social problems.

Journalist: "As for the non-governmental sector and civil society structures, I would make a little differentiation here. The non-governmental sector and all the activities of the non-governmental sector financed by foreign donors are making great efforts towards building civil society by the measures of mostly Western and European Union structures, etc. etc. and I think their involvement is significant. I think they do a lot – they connect people, they do programs, they make camps, they connect children, they connect young people, etc. On the other hand, I would single out civil society structures that are more basic. Now what does that mean? Not funded by international organizations. They do as much as they can on a realistic basis. What does it mean on a realistic basis? Religious institutions [and] civil society organizations, grass roots, that is to say, they are doing their job. And the unity is greater, the reconciliation is greater because it starts with the basic problems – how children will enter kindergarten, what will happen in kindergarten, what will be the rights of persons with disabilities, how will animals be protected, etc. It starts from a civil society structure, it starts from concrete things and I think they show the greatest results. (...) It is perhaps through these problems that reconciliation, unity and all those things that are essential for the normal civilian life in these regions are best built. And I would just go back to non-governmental organizations funded by international sources they are guided somewhat through projects because they are all adjusting to what is being funded. We have seen that a great deal of effort was invested in the protection of Roma, Roma

rights, at the time when Soroš promoted the protection of Roma. This is an example that tells us that, what is determined in foreign centers of power and influence as a priority, becomes a priority for NGOs funded by foreign sources."

A professor explains: "Dealing with basic things is one of the returns of the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina: What does [the civil society sector] mean? Where do I start? So, civil society organizations, NGOs, have lost contact with the base. (...) Since 2014 it has been clear that these people have no contact with the base at all and that it is normal for them that people have nothing to eat, that poverty is normal, that this disenfranchisement is normal. The fact that civil society organizations have accepted as normal something that can by no means be normal is of concern to me."

One interviewee from his experience of running a street activism organization confirms that, for example, workers' strikes do not have the support of NGOs; that is, NGOs do not join protesting people. The executive director of an NGO for the protection of journalism drew attention to the problem that women's NGOs did not support the protection of women journalists. She says: "I think all these numerous women's organizations should, every time we have any attack, including verbal and physical attacks, and any other humiliating and disproportionate attack on journalists, that we should all send protest notes, send press releases, raise publicity against that. Unfortunately, there were so many examples where they could have proven to be strong NGO women's organizations. Unfortunately, they did not show up in these cases." Interviewees felt that NGOs should be more responsive to current events. A professor says: "in 2014, no organization was allowed, until the donor had given them the green light to do activism, here in Tuzla, if we're being concrete about it. They first consulted with the donor whether they were allowed to participate in protests and plenums." He adds that social justice in the work of NGOs is neglected, both as a concept and as a practice. A politician draws attention to NGOs, noting that they did not get involved in relaxing and lowering tensions raised by politicians after the Hague trials ended: "I think that was absent and it is a pity. But it is not too late, there is much work to be done."

The coordinator of socio-political projects for an NGO: "I mean, there is a project definition for organizations where they are just project driven, by some specific donor policies. Now, that will prove over time, how much legitimacy it has, because I think lately civil society organizations are not communicating enough with citizens, they do not have that feedback from citizens, and they're supposed to be doing it for citizens; because of that monitoring and analysis and all that is being done, which is also necessary, but again it is not for the citizens again, it is once more for some other institutions, instances, so to speak, and not to address specific problems."

The interviewees pointed out to us that the skipping of steps up to now, in terms of neglecting the current problems that have arisen, has contributed to not having a clear insight into what society really needs now. One political scientist and radio

editor says, "We are told, at school, that we have accumulated material, and when we accumulate material, then you can learn something quickly, but there is no knowledge left in our heads. So, I think we have, in skipping all these things we are talking about, in fact, become mired deep in the possibility that we may be doing certain programs, projects, but we do not have a background that would give us a certain background from which we could draw what we really need for our society."

Among the basic problems of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina are issues of the past, i.e. establishing a common truth about what happened from 1992 to 1995, acknowledging one's own responsibility and the collective responsibility to achieve a healthy distancing from the past in various available ways, from judgments, through good laws, to apologies and forgiveness. Opinions differ on the best ways to deal with issues of the past, but 50% of those interviewed put this problem ahead of others regarding urgency.

> A politician: "What I do know about Brčko is that there are a number of international organizations that fund various projects to bring about any kind of reconciliation. (...) I don't think these projects are bad, they should be done, but they don't touch that essence. There can be no true reconciliation unless we clarify some things. And that is, first, that we have some truth about what happened. True reconciliation cannot take place in Bosnia unless we have at least some consensus on what happened, unless within that truth we also determine some of our own responsibility for what happened. (...) We must consider both our role and the role of the collectivity, our own collectivity in committing bad things that have done harm to others. And from that, then, let us come, whether as true believers or as people who hold on to ethics to a kind of repentance, to seek forgiveness. I think we need to incorporate these four categories into each of our reconciliation projects in this region. Otherwise, we are in danger of reducing our activism to some empty form in which we will simulate a kind of reconciliation, and that what is important, and what is the cause of all this, will be pushed deep into the subconscious."

Ignoring the past has its price. Another problem is where NGOs have dealt inadequately with the past. The director of a peacebuilding NGO says there are non-governmental organizations that are genuinely struggling to ascertain the facts, but there are those that approach the past ideologically and through identity matrices. These are usually related to the ethnicity to which they belong, bound by stereotypes and prejudices against others. The specific challenges facing the NGOs dealing with the past are discussed in the chapter on war experience.

Authenticity is rarely evident in the work of NGOs, it is said, in the sense that activities are adapted to the state of things, to local receptiveness and environmental conditions, and to the need to hit the essential targets and achieve goals. The assumption is that if they do so, NGOs are less likely to be suspicious of whose interests they serve. In addition, as noted above, in having to adapt to changing donor demands

NGOs activities are seen to stop before being carried out in practical and useful terms. One politician expressed the opinion that employees in the non-governmental sector often do not have a full sense of what effects they need to provoke through their activities, such as whether what they are doing should produce some views.

We considered what patterns of inauthenticity were mentioned in the interviews. The first cause lies in the kind of dependency (political or financial) of NGOs that is sometimes decisive and can take priority over other commitments held by NGO leaders. In this case, it is said, what they are doing "is not authentic, but is more at the request or expectations of donors or maybe some groups, even political ones, which are behind them, but which do not want it to be known." So that kind of dependence I can understand as a phenomenon, but I always expect that we will somehow get out of it, make some strides and have it cost how much it will cost. And it always costs, those kinds of steps, but people are not always too ready. Because probably, if we lived better, if we were a little better off economically, if people had jobs, I believe that it would be easier for people to choose to take that kind of step towards each other in expressing their opinions and whatnot. This way, somehow everything revolves in a circle and everyone seems to depend on each other – this one depends on that one, that one depends on someone else, and they remain restrained and incomplete, withdrawing. There are few who perish for [the idea]" according to one politician.

The cause of inauthenticity is sometimes a lack of ideas on the part of the team or leader. One peacebuilding NGO director resents established NGOs for repeating the same projects for 20-25 years, believing that they need to put more effort into thinking. He says "there are no deliberations", and all too often they only trust their own work experience and ideas. A professor emphasized the importance of transforming the activities of non-governmental organizations over time: "If we are talking about some kind of activism, peace activism, which is still very important because [in] Bosnia and Herzegovina, 23 years after the war, the war has not ended, and in fact the future has not begun (...) I am interested in what NGOs involved in peace activism primarily do and how they transformed their activities from 1996 to the present?"

There are ways to encourage fresh approaches to activism. Young people need to be involved in work with more respect and need to carry more responsibility. Also, more people who can feel the spirit of time and environment good need to be involved. These are people who can understand the dominant way of thinking in the community, notice the primary needs of the people, and evaluate the opportunities and preconditions for the work of the NGO. Another professor believes that "the freest, most authentic, forward-looking thoughts are possessed by those who are farthest from institutions, from the system of government in general, and from different ideologies, politics and so on." The problem is that at the same time, these are

usually people who have no influence on social life, who engage with their soul and live according to their principles. However, they can be found and included in the work because in reconciliation activity it is generally necessary to deal with people who are sufficiently authentic. Those who are not yet can be educated and built upon, including learning through work. Another path to inspiration, and to a better appreciation of the state and conditions of the time and work environment, is to develop a culture of listening and talking.

One NGO president says that it is very important that the voice of all social strata be heard: "Every aspect of society should express its position, whether it is mothers, whether it is women, daughters, children, pensioners, their voice must be heard and it is important that they have authentic representatives. Authentic I say, and not the fake representatives but the authentic ones that have the support of the base. That's key." An Orthodox priest explained to us how the work of the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina preserves the authenticity of women's representatives for the Women's Network of Believers: "The Inter-Religious Council respects the organization and hierarchy of churches and religious communities participating in inter-religious dialogue. And in doing so, we do not introduce anyone ourselves but churches and religious communities are proposing these women to have the authenticity of doing so." The priest tells organizations dealing with civil society issues: "I want to see real projects and professionalism in those projects."

3.1.6.2   Human resources in the NGO sector
– characteristics and relationships

We now turn to what interviewees think about the competence of NGOs, their motivation and commitment to work, and relationships, both within NGOs and between NGOs.

There were objections to the unprofessional approach taken to tasks. One political scientist (also a radio journalist) points to situations where "You have the money, you don't have the people, you don't have the serious people who really do the right job in the field." The director of a peacebuilding NGO says that employees in the non-governmental sector need further education, familiarity with theoretical literature in their field of work, to track and read other projects and research, both in their own country and abroad. It is not enough to rely on your own work experience or to learn from the process itself, even though that, too, is important. A peace studies professor points out that research conducted without knowledge of the theory in the area means missing the opportunity to gather relevant information within the same budget.

> The director of a peacebuilding NGO: "We all say, I've been working for twenty years and I know everything about human rights and peace building. It's learning by doing,

that's great, but taking into consideration how many of us read Lederach, not even 1%. How many of us have read the research, how many of us have read the Edinburgh research? They heard what you [did] at the presentation but how many read it, went into it? 3%. How many read any publications, research, what's out there? No one reads, we all "know", in quotation marks. (...) The war ended 23 years ago, you know how long ago that was? And we still do those same projects we wrote after the war."

Professor: "Very often, when it comes to peace research and practical peace building, we are confronted with the fact that it was dealt with by people who had no prior knowledge at all but were really [working] from within the process, according to Gandhi's dictum [*There is no path to peace, peace itself is the path*], drawing their insights from the process itself. This is not bad, but it is not enough, because then the research remains reductive."

For a professional approach to activities, it is important for NGO leaders and employees to have a good understanding of the area they are dealing with, to have a good understanding of the environment in which they operate, the culture, the religions that are present, the particular society or communities with which they wish to cooperate. This is important, not only for them to come up with an authentic idea for project activities, but also for them so that they do not have unprofessional outbursts and aree able to work with the desired project associates and the target group they want to act on. One orthodox priest gave an example, outlining the consequences of not knowing the internal structure of a particular group and how the group would like to become involved in the project. He also noted that NGOs and the media often make the mistake of approaching religious communities as if they were a form of NGO.

Orthodox priest: "We are doing a project with one NGO, [which is] extremely strong. (...) And within that we are conducting a process of strengthening inter-religious dialogue, and questions are raised about the tools, the communication system [and] freedom of speech. (...) So I said, 'Okay, the communication system, what does that mean?' [The non-governmental organization responded:] 'So, for example, if a bishop does not want to cooperate or the mufti does not want to cooperate, then you can talk that way.' [I responded:] 'Good. (...) Your tools are out of place here because you have to know how a particular religion works or nothing comes of it. Which religious leader can you go to democratically to persuade him?' In addition, it is always out of place when it comes to religions because of the misperception of these NGOs and the media that these religions are also a form of non-governmental organization, without knowing anything about the organization, nothing at all. (...) In a society you have the right not to be interested in religions, but if you deal with religion in some way you have no right not to know this internal structure. (...) There is a way of organizing and how it can [cooperate with religious communities]."

People from the non-governmental sector who have the opportunity to gain experience abroad, it was noted, would do well to share their impressions upon their return.

According to a leading peacebuilding NGO specialist: "We who go abroad never give feedback. Recently one dear colleague was in Sri Lanka, she was named an ambassador of reconciliation, but she did not give anyone feedback on how it was, what it was. So, we who go out there do not give feedback, we just struggle to keep it, for me to get a project or some support. That's not right, that's not how it works. I keep saying we must support each other, we must cooperate, we must work together. Anything can be done, but we no longer have the capacity. There are great ideas, but I'm afraid we no longer have the will to cooperate, we don't have the capacity to support each other. We are shutting down [because] there is no solidarity, they are all small projects. We do not have the strength, for example, to stand up to political parties jointly (the elections are coming) (...) [nor] towards donors."

It is necessary for the NGO sector to become more acquainted and to connect with each other better: interviewees note that participants dealing with the same topics do not know about each other, and the general public is not sufficiently aware of those NGOs that exist. The cooperation gap between the media and NGOs has elements in common with the gap that exists between NGOs and the public, which we will discuss later. Here we focus on other factors that create gaps in knowledge within NGOs. For years, efforts have been duplicated because colleagues and organizations from the same field did not know each other, and the results were weaker than they would have been if they had worked together. This is not only true of small NGOs. In the interviews, a comment was made on account of the UN. A leading professor in the field claims that, until 2013/2014, a variety of social participants in the process of building trust and reconciliation would work in parallel without any contact between them. Among the various reasons for this, he recognizes that NGO staff had "a kind of incomprehension of the fact that the process of networking, the growth of various activities with as many actors as possible, empowers all actors individually"; they failed to understand the fact that "things cannot be raised to a higher level if there continue to be parallel flows." He notes: "the fear of losing some of one's own research niche, the fear of losing resources, etc. has produced a kind of competitive match between NGOs, as if it were a profit sector. And this is not a profit sector, and a strategy of networking is a way for these organizations to survive and to rise to a higher level." The director of an NGO specializing in transitional justice shared her opinion on why she thinks that the Genocide Denial Act was not adopted: "I think NGOs could have put a lot more pressure on if they had been united, coming to Parliament. That if [NGOs], along with the victims' associations, pressured the Parliament, it could have been adopted. And that fragmentation is a problem in addition to these networks as they exist. There are no common actions, you have a situation where actions are only initiated by a single association." One imam emphasized that it was strategically important for social advancement to "establish, wherever possible in person, direct co-operation between religious communities [and] associations

that have the same goals, which are honest in the path of reconciliation and overcoming war traumas. I think this would be most effective."

Several interviewees witnessed poor reactions from NGOs to "competition", i.e. to other NGOs dealing with the same topic, which is hampering the non-governmental sector. One of the interviewees said: "We know who the women leaders are who let no one in and control them. We know which one is good with the Germans, who is good with the British, who travels to lectures and conferences, who receives world rewards and only looks after herself. And it's ugly. And we have that setting up, stabbing you in the back, all those ugly and embarrassing situations. Unfortunately, that's the way it is."

More mutual support is needed through sharing experiences and working together. Networking is possible on multiple levels. In addition to the cooperation of those involved in the same processes within the same entity, and cooperation across the entity borders, there is a need to address communication among people of different professions focused on the same problem, that is, the inclusion of different participants. We heard from a number of interviewees – 17% (13/77) – about actors fearful of reactions from their own ethnic group when establishing relationships with another ethnic group. One coordinator of socio-political projects at an NGO indicated to us that non-governmental organizations are also subject to this fear because they suffer attacks from their entity. One example given shows that the support of intellectuals from another nationality may be the reason for the attacks. The problems crated by pressure from local nationalistic groups is joined by pressure from the authorities.

> Interviewee: "Although there is someone who supports you, an intellectual or someone who is significant, but if they are from Sarajevo, they do not have the same weight here in Banja Luka. This means nothing here in Banja Luka, but it also proves to others that you are a traitor, an anti-Serb. That is why few organizations that have such a context, the RS context, do not adopt it, not only territorially but ideologically. And it's not something to hold against people. It's just the situation as it is."

Misunderstandings are easily produced by cooperation across entities. We will illustrate an example of a problem that emerged at one time in the work of the Women's Court, which was organized regionally by several non-governmental organizations. There was a stalemate of cooperation, and that continued subsequently. They had "a problem with some women from Republic Srpska because it turned out that there was somehow more talk about women from the Federation who were raped, who had experienced a tragedy, than women who had gone through the same things from Republika Srpska." The politician testifying to this experience says such situations have a discouraging effect on the initiators of interethnic co-operation. From within the NGO sector, too, the kind of dilemmas of this nature that come up highlight the importance of not only the education and professional competence of staff in the NGO sector, but also the need for deliberate character development. One executive

director of a women's rights NGO discussed the importance of peace first being embedded in those who wish to work for reconciliation: "I think that by doing these projects under the watch of the international community [immediately after the war], we could not build peace in fulfilling our project tasks. I made a manual, *Peace begins with me and around me*, where the focus is on our feelings, our memories and our customs. You have to make peace here first [she pointed to her heart] so you can offer it to another. Second, you have to be patient, or have patience in listening to each other's experiences. (...) I also have the right to be angry and disappointed. (...) Conflict resolution offers that beautiful teaching: *When I listen to you, but not with my ears, but when I listen to you in my soul, then I understand what you are saying to me. And when I understand what you are saying I am ready to accept you.* I accept you but I do not agree with you, that is what we are missing. We do not need to think the same, but we should be free to talk to each other about how we feel, about our allegiances and what our memories are and how I see your and my life. [We] need to decide whether we are together or side by side. It should be our decision. But without me accepting you here, and you accepting me, it can't happen."

One professor, however, believes that the non-governmental sector has the least nationalism of all sectors, and that it needs to be even more courageously integrated across entity and ethnic lines: "Of course, we always have to keep in mind that we had non-governmental organizations that were just an outstretched hand of various nationalist ideologies. But I still think that there is the least nationalism in the non-governmental sector. It is my assessment of sorts, and that perhaps a new phase would require even more intense, bolder horizontal integration across entity and ethnic lines, which is, let's say, still a largely empty space, that work can still be done there."

Interviewees claim that NGO directors do not renew themselves through employing new young staff. Too often, the younger generation are only included as volunteers in irrelevant positions, and often this translates into exploitation. There is too little willingness to have the youth trained for responsible positions in the NGO sector.

> According to the director of a peacebuilding NGO: "The problem is we are all CEOs for 20 years. So we do not allow fresh blood to enter. 'That's my organization' (...) [Nerzuk] Ćurak has educated a lot of young undergraduate students, we don't let them in, we don't train, we don't work with them. There are few genuine peace and human rights organizations. There are some, but in the end we run the same projects. (...) There are great young people who have stayed here, who want, who want [to work], but have no opportunity and we do not include them in our activities. Often, we do not have the money to include them, or the ones we do include can appear a threat to our jobs, and we give them some unpaid jobs. They can volunteer for a while, but they need a job. And then these good and smart young people eventually get a job and have to adapt to the political structures that condition them."

The attitude of disrespect towards the employees in the NGO sector does not remain without reactions, they become suspicious and are not ready for additional work, they do not want to spend their knowledge and capacities, so to speak. The interviewee often feels with coworkers that they fear someone will "steal" their experience and use it to their advantage: "Someone will get the money through me." Another interviewee, a political scientist and radio journalist, shares a different experience that says that a lot of training has been invested when it comes to non-governmental employees seeking further employment in nationalist politics: "Imagine a non-governmental sector fighting such a political system going to that political system for money. 30-50% of the people we have educated through the civil society and human rights sector ended up supporting abusive policies, nationalist policies, because they no longer have money in the non-governmental sector or do not know what more to do in the non-governmental sector."

Another journalist gives an example of how relationships within a non-governmental organization can be dysfunctional and become focused on less important things: "I don't want to generalize, I believe there are organizations that are motivated by what their mission is and what their goals are, but I don't see it. We had an example here of The Coalition against Hate [from Srebrenica]. Great idea, people coming from different ethnic groups are gathering, but simply their work is bad, so to speak. They should actually show people real life values, but they are doing some nonsense. They are debating how many banners we need, how many stickers, how many leaflets, like that will be crucial and will give us a better life and less hatred."

The conclusion is that more people need to be hired for jobs in the non-governmental sector, and pay them properly, if serious activity is to be carried out. For example, when one wants to come out more strongly with documents that would more clearly convey – to the parties, donors, or other target group – the views and demands of the NGO on certain issues, a series of human resources issues arise, says one peacebuilding specialist: "Who will write this? Who will explain? Who will investigate? Who will dare?" It takes people who write a document, people capable of arguing and advocating for a document in front of interest groups, people who make contacts, etc. Similarly, when politicians need to get involved in projects, the interviewee says NGOs refuse to work with them, among other things, because "it's too much work, too many obligations. (...) We don't have the financial support to work with them." Therefore, he says about working with politicians that a budget to pay for a large number of people who would carry communication with politicians is of great importance. Consideration should be given to the fact that different initiatives require different conditions in order that employees of non-governmental organizations be in a position to realize them.

Some initiatives require advanced listening skills, some need communication, some larger budgets, some a more authentic approach. However, when looking at what

the interviewees said about motivation to work within the non-governmental sector, more interviewees raised the contention that employees are overly focused on their earnings (14% 11/77) than raised any other problem, and of this number, 70% work in the non-governmental sector. For NGOs that have sufficient cash flows, one political journalist says they are like small businesses, writing projects, getting money, splitting it into salaries and writing a report, adding: "it has nothing to do with civil society, pressure, control, the balance of power." Some of the reasons given in explaining that this is the key motivation for many NGO staff are the degree of poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the degree of frustration with the inability to change the situation through their work.

> The director of a transitional justice NGO: "I think that there is a lot in the non-governmental sector, there is simply some frustration with these people, that feeling of inability to change, that nothing can be done. And again, I say if you work in an NGO and you do nothing, then why are you doing it? (...) The work of NGOs has come down to the fact that organizations work as much as they are paid for and for what they are paid for; there is no activism there, initiatives that are for the benefit of society, which should be the mission of NGOs. I am therefore disappointed in the non-governmental sector."

> Lawyer/researcher: "The obstacle is also that, I say, we are a poor society. Our civil society sector understands activism ... You know, they have to work for a paycheck in that NGO because there is no other job. And then the approaches are different when you take it as a job and not as some activism."

> Catholic priest: "Healthy civil societies are incredibly important. However, nationalists have already taught us 'civil society is manipulated by the foreigner'. Hundreds of organizations are created. He sees there's no money to be had here [and] he makes an organization to make money. And now the question is, can we have a functioning civil society here? The aim is, if it is to be a functioning society, to create mechanisms so that civil society is not abused."

Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that NGOs are different from each other and should not be placed in the same basket. We noted above the points made about non-governmental organizations funded by foreign donors which are making great and significant efforts towards building civil society, but their disadtantage is that they are tailored to Western concepts. We then highlighted the grass roots and authentic NGOs, starting with the basic contextual issues that were most valued by the interviewees. In addition to non-governmental organizations working to contribute to the community, there are those whom the interviewees call corrupt, who are thought to be working for political structures for their own material gain. Mention is also made by interviewees of those suspected of overthrowing regimes or systematically working against rival parties, supported by foreigners or structures within the country.

3.1.6.3   Promotion of projects

Poor project promotion limits the results of everything undertaken during projects. Whether the promotion will be weak can depend on both the NGOs and the accessibility of the media. 25% (19/77) of those interviewed spoke on this topic. The director of a transitional justice NGO believes that the work and results of NGOs are often known only to persons who were directly involved in the project and not to the general public. Many interviewees pointed out that they lacked more information about NGO work and would like that information. The comments addressed all types of NGOs: those dealing with youth, education, the culture of remembrance, the representation of victims, fighters, women, etc. Some interviewees place the greatest responsibility on NGOs for this situation (two interviewees say it is up to NGOs how much to market their projects), while others place it on the media (for example, one NGO director says the problem is that the media ignore them, and another says it's about choosing topics). One interviewee calls on NGOs to be more penetrating, more courageous, more focused on working with non-like-minded people than with like-minded people in order to affect social change:

> "The problem with non-governmental organizations is that it has never occurred for a strong organization to be formed that will be credible and respected in the public space. On the one hand, the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to blame, and on the other hand, I think that the NGOs themselves, who, even though they are on donor funds, act as if they are subordinated to public leaders and do not want to conflict with them, how can I put it? They are walking the line of less resistance and somehow what they do, so maybe use the term of the LGBT population, is like being kept "in the closet." A lot of research has been done but you don't have it publicly. They most often defend themselves by the media being uninterested in publishing such topics (...) I would disagree that it is only the media, I think the responsibility is on NGO leaders who fail to present what they do to the public and fail to understand that they are not subordinate in society, but that it is the non-governmental or civil society sector that has more power than politicians. And that is a problem for me in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Why has the civil society sector never realized how much power it has? When I say civil society sector, I mean theoretically the academic community, the media and NGOs. And realistically in every society, the power rests with them, not politicians. Until strong, credible NGOs emerge, ready to go out and confront public policies and imposed narratives, and to confront facts, evidence and documents, I fear we will live in an environment where politicians impose an interpretation of events, not what work has been done by the NGOs. I think it should also be a message for donors to reconsider how they invest their funds, because activism that has been supported for years shows that it did not produce the expected results, that it came down to like-minded circles and a small number of people who appear there, that they have never succeeded in extending it to the wider social circles that are still dominated by politics." She gives an example of what she means by credible NGOs:

"Who can now name a strong women's NGO that now comes out and releases and causes an earthquake and triggers changes?"

Although NGOs organize various events, work in the field, advocate for policies, initiate changes and enactments of laws, do research, and produce statistical results, their messages, actions and results in the media are not visible enough. This attitude has been conveyed by a range of interviewees, by those who work in the media and those who do not. From the perspective of the journalists interviewed, the reason given is that in most cases NGO do not inform the media about the events to be followed, or inform them late. On the other hand, the problem is that the media sometimes get 50-100 calls a day to cover something, and you even need to find a way to make the call interesting to be recognized and for them to come (specialist NGO director). Public service editors recommend that NGOs be more "aggressive" in demanding that their event be monitored. They also say that NGOs should know that when presenting reports, they should not write in the form of a scientific article, but that they need to adapt the language of the public and that the media should be seen as their partners. NGO staff may counter that they know it is important to make every effort to present your activities to the public. An NGO director countered the critique as superficial, and gave an example of how he adjusts court judgments for the better understanding of the public. The problem, he added, was that activists lacked education on the relationship with the media, and the public through the media, both things that are very important because the results they accomplish through their work would be even more visible if they had more application in practice. Interviewees did not talk about the reasons why NGOs lacked adequate techniques, knowledge or awareness and engagement to better promote projects and how this could change, but merely stated the fact and that it needed to change.

Media interlocutors note that in the NGO sector there is an expectation that the media should monitor their activities without calling.

The director of an NGO in the field: "I once told one of the ladies who run one of the organizations just this: 'Why are you not in the media, we citizens have no way of knowing what you are doing and you are doing fine things.' (...) The lady said, 'Well, you know what, we exist and the media knows we exist, why don't they come?'."

Public broadcasting service journalist: "I used to say to veterans, 'Let us know where you are going, I'll be the first to support you.' But they don't. They go from today to tomorrow."

NGO staff also urge that journalists make changes: for example, not to approach event reports in a nutshell in terms of reporting only basic information – what the event was and who was there – but to delve deeper into the issue and make a more serious story. The media do not give information about the reasons for an event or action, its essential contents, and the consequences that the event or action caused.

Also, it bothers them that the media come to the event only for the first 5 minutes, and they don't know anything about what happened later, and then they report on only the superficial impression they received.

> Political scientist, radio journalist and acitivist: "The media comes to the beginning, they record, it lasts for 5 days or it lasts for 5 hours and what happens after that the media doesn't even record it anymore. So, you don't have reporters today who would sit for 5 hours and look at that whole story and make a serious story out of it. No, it is recorded initially, some statements are made, some important information is given to them and it goes to the media. (...) You [as the organizer] get very few questions from journalists. The reporters make a note of it, record what you said, and go on because they have another three things they have to do. So, journalism has turned into something that is affirmative, which we use to write tomorrow in various project reports 'We had so many journalists.' And what we really achieved, I don't see it. And it keeps on not being seen all the time in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What has the NGO sector really achieved?! What has the media, together with the non-governmental sector, really achieved, for it to still be the way it is?"

There is an impression among some activists that the media is selective about topics. The media is open (according to three interviewees with different specalisms) when it comes to promoting non-national projects that are for the benefit of every local community but closed to the promotion of coexistence and reconciliation. These statements are offered as their own experiences of what kind of initiatives they have received media support for and those that they have not.

> Political scientist and journalist: "You know, as soon as you mention that this is a reconciliation project, the media shuts you out."

> Humanitarian NGO director: "As for the *Let's do it* project, we had a lot of media support, yes, all the media supported it, because the project is not essentially national, the project is for the benefit of every local community, so for every action we had a lot of guest appearances on television and on radio stations. On this side, the media is open. And on the other hand, the media is closed to the promotion of coexistence, I can say that, at least these official and leading media where the past is constantly emphasized, the victims of war, our victims / your victims are constantly mentioned, instead of turning to the future. There is almost never an example of good practice, reconciliation, coexistence among people, you can only find it on some social networks."

The interviewee shared with us an example illustrating the media's selective focus on negative events. The media did not report on the signing of an important document, but they were very much present when the document did not pass the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *The Platform for Peace* is an important document as it has been signed by 60 mayors involved in local peacebuilding processes and a significant number of political parties. It is also important because it was signed by political participants, according to one professor, "who do not think the same about the past or about peacebuilding processes." The team from PRO-

Budućnost worked on it for many years, "it has been designed to make its content acceptable to all social participants who are loyal to peacebuilding, both political and non-political participants." The media "ignored" the signing of the Platform at the Parliamentary Assembly while the US ambassador and EU representative were both there. The next step after the signature was to adopt the Platform for Peace at the Parliamentary Assembly, to oblige the Legislature to allow citizens to refer to the document when they ask politicians to work diligently for peacebuilding. Most MPs were in favor of accepting the document, but it was knocked down by two SNSD MPs and an HDZ MP. The former, according to the interviewee, because they did not know that Dodik had already endorsed the Plaftorm in the interviews PRO-Budućnost had previously conducted, and the HDZ MP "made a truly extraordinary remark." "When it came to Parliament, and when politicians started talking about it, there was no media outlet that didn't hear about it and it made all the news. The Platform for Peace was not the cause [that the media] was [interested] all at once, just the occasion, because the political participants had had a row. Here, those are the approaches we have (...) I regret that peace issues are not intensely present. In my opinion, it is necessary to educate journalists and editors, to see that this is something where there is meat, where there are stories, not where there are none."

One peacebuilding specialist noted that the most effective way for the system to dismiss initiatives that do not support it is to ignore them, and this is more effective than denying or attacking them:

> "In our country, the most important way is to minimize [what you do], to ignore, to not have it exist. (...) This is way too rehearsed here, because if you talk about everything, you give it weight. You know, when you go to Germany, there's discussions about everything. And here, I think decisions are made in the same way, both political and all [the others], everything just skated over it [as if] it's nothing. There, for example, the [Congress of the Network] of believers (...) Only radio Bir reported on it. Well I don't even know how the Catholic radio didn't [report]."

We have presented the outline of a mutually-critical discussion that could go further between the non-governmental sector and the media, based on statements from the two sectors. There are also those interviewed from the NGO sector who are satisfied with the media coverage. For example, in the case of the project "Let's do it – clean the country in a day" mentioned above – or the Health Club in Brčko. On the other hand, the BHRT public service gave access to the Mothers' Movement of the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves.

> Public service journalist: "They are are just really aggressive, [in fact] not aggressive [but] they demand that it be monitored, they announce it, that is, whatever they do, they deliver on time and we follow it. So unless you say what you do, we can't even know about it."

NGOs also have other media at their disposal such as the Internet. "The Internet has liberalized the transfer of information", says one interviewee. Another, a journalist, expressed the disadvantages of this liberalization, however, in a society where the media do not function constructively, the internet is, in the majority's view, a way out. There are also social networks that a number of interviewees presented both as a means of mobilization and also as a valve for social pressure.

> Journalist: "Today, when you look at it, the media has been transformed by the advent of social networks. You used to have morning news and you knew exactly who the editor of morning news was. And you know you would have in the morning news, I do not know, five-six or ten major news items on the country and the world. And then of course as the day goes on, by 3pm or 7pm you would, of course, have a meeting again, and it all worked according to an established journalistic principle, how one decides and what news goes up. What happened with the advent of the Internet and the emergence of social networks? We've fallen into one big, huge junkyard and now we're acting like a little poor man who needs ten times, or maybe fifty times, or three hundred times more education than we needed without the internet. The internet has made the smart even smarter, and those who are not, let alone another term, it has made them seem, even more incompetent, unable to use it. (...) And why do I say full education? Just because we have this huge dump there that offered us a wealth of information. And you just type one term. Here, my first and last name, nothing else. You will find there about me such things that will make you scared of who you talked to, when you read. Now, what do you know now, what's the truth – what's not? How to find out what's true? So, I compared it to a dump because the little poor guy is out there looking for copper wire, and how do you find a huge copper wire in that area? And how to find accurate and useful information here on the Internet? It's very difficult. (...) We can easily go from, I don't know, little things, a particular issue, to nationalism, chauvinism and fascism of all possible forms, you understand. So, there we can find a huge dump and horror. So, the question is whether to ban those mighty portals we have, to put some control there. Just because my freedom must not jeopardize your freedom, I have the right to write whatever I want, but I need to know that I also have a responsibility. (...) I would come back to another problem, which is, when you get up in the morning, what do you do first? So, first we go to Facebook or some social network and go through what our friends have posted, the so-called Facebook. And what do they get then if we follow them? They get the role of editors, whether we like it or not (...) instead of those for whom it is a real profession, we get editors who are not in the business, so they serve us with everything. So, they fill our heads for up to nine hours with such bad information that we start to wonder why our head hurts. Of course, because of the lack of education. We need to educate ourselves more on how to use, above all, new media. (...) We have entered into a virtual world, an incredible lie that we should be educated on and from which we should, in some way, defend ourselves, and to know the true value of the media, and to really know the value of the media, know the right way to use it. And of course, it's a long process."

> Professor: "People let off steam on social networks. You can have a five minute spitting session on Facebook and that's it. God forbid you change something in reality now. So social networks are a little tricky as far as that goes."

> Journalist: "I think social networks are a great way to organize and conduct some kind of discussion. I don't know how high quality it can be, how extensive it can be, [and] how much it comes down to talking in vain and venting frustrations."

An interviewee at an NGO gives an example of how some initiatives started over social networks. In June 2018, protesters stopped traffic in parts of Banja Luka due to a fuel price hike. Social networks have been a big contributor to the Justice for David movement: "The father of the murdered boy went to Sarajevo to take a picture with the father of the murdered Dzenan Memic. And I honestly say to myself, when I saw that picture on Facebook, for me that [was] the historical moment of one Bosnia and Herzegovina, [because] I personally feel that this is the first, I cannot say, the only, spontaneous movement that has arisen in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina where people, i.e. citizens, have come together. (...) There is one moment on social networks where this group gets more and more fans and where people are completely from all cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were various bots, trolls, so to speak, who come to the site. You see people [who say] like, 'We googled, we found, it's a troll, log into Facebook.' People were totally mobilized about it." She calls for social networks to be used more, "in order to combat more of this one political context imposed on us by the governing structures. I travel often, and other people travel often, and I think that people who are inevitably connected to people from other cities, what I'm personally starting to believe lately, is that there is not as much hatred in the field as is, so to speak, represented through individuals, through certain individuals who represent the interests of the majority." However, this should not be made into dry content, like "a friend saving another in war and the like." She suggests that people be allowed to express their emotions more so that civil society entities do not impose what reconciliation should look like.

The director of a women's rights NGO considers, however, that the civil society sector has also been given considerable space in the media compared to 15 years ago. She says of the impact that NGOs have: "It's not really that we don't have any influence, but we don't have the kind of influence we would like to have and that we should have."

3.1.6.4   Lack of financial support for initiatives and continuity of projects

Although many interviewees say that a lot of money has been invested in previous years, the non-governmental sector currently lacks stronger and more continuous sources of finance, according to 12% (9/77) of the interviewees, all of whom belong to the non-governmental sector. We have seen above that NGO employees are blamed

for producing insignificant results and for being focused on making money. Where interviewees from the non-governmental sector spoke about this, they applied it to the work of other non-governmental organizations: none of the interviewees spoke about their own NGO in that way. There is also a gap between two groups of interviewees: one group focused on the lack of funding for NGOs, the other criticized the imbalance in motivation to work and the focus on earnings rather than activism. Lack of sustained funding is related to the increased need for NGO employees to secure a living wage. Also, since projects are mainly dependent on external sources of funds, whether national or foreign, the source of funds is a powerful factor that in many ways has the power to influence the work of NGOs.

There are a number of reasons for which sources of funding are shrinking. One is when donors change the focus of interest from one topic to another. The coordinator of an NGO education program gives the example that there are no longer many human rights organizations engaged in issues left over from the war. Another reason for which funding has been terminated is when foreign donors have felt that the state should take over the financing of an activity.

> The director of a women's rights NGO: "…it is absurd that the state does not give to civil society organizations that would like to do something and that do in fact do it, and foreigners do not give it either, because they think it is the job of the state or that it has been dealt with. (...) That is the problem, that NGOs at one point [lose their support], foreigners leave, there is no more interest, and the state will not work on the issue."

A journalist and editor claims that the international community has less and less interest in investing in the non-governmental sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina: "I do not see any great chance that the non-governmental sector [will bring about change], which in fact, due to the diminishing interest of the international community, has to fight for its own survival, and it has in fact, has been reduced to being realistic, to dealing with themselves, and that's the worst thing that could have happened to it." Political ties were needed to obtain funding from domestic donors as recently as 7-8 years ago, says one politician, adding that in his estimate this has undermined the impact of the non-governmental sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A staff member at a cultural and educational NGO says that everything depends on how the ministry sees the project, whether it is in their interest to realize the project: "All our associations [culture, sports, pensioners, youth in Jajce], do as much as they can, but they are not sufficiently supported by our [authorities]. Whether the municipality has the money or not, they can help us, mostly with small funds, and through the projects as well. Now, if someone gets less and someone gets more, it all depends on the ministries, on the way they see the project. On whether it is in their interest to have that project, to pass it, to get it done, for it to be realized." The director of a women's rights NGO says that the state does not recognize the good initiatives of non-governmental orga-

nizations because now all of them [referring to state presidents] are friends when negotiating. The connection between the non-governmental sector and those in power is a broader topic, to which we will return.

Four of the interviewees addressed the problems arising from the lack of continuity between projects. The director of a women's rights NGO illustrates the modest scope of work with children that deals with the past and reconciliation imposed by the challenge that this work is not continuous: we need a team to go right through the classes in a school, so that eventually the youngest will have discovered their own attitude and opinions step by step, and that is not happening: "But they are touched a little by our NGO [in] third, fourth [grade] high schools, and some schools. You know, not all schools are included, principals think we don't need to be there, so we don't involve them. Then it [still only] touches you a little if you go to college – whether in sociology, or a little history, will they even talk about the last war? And then it's time to vote, where you have power and you really don't have information. And you don't care, so you won't even read it. I don't justify this, God forbid, but sometimes they don't know where to find [the information]."

International donors were investing in work on dealing with the past in schools from 1996, but in 2005 they stopped, appearing to consider it a completed topic. The NGO director says that in the 14 years following there have been 14 generations of children who know nothing and who can be easy to manipulate into thinking: "You will do this, you will do that, this one will kill you or this one will slaughter you." The director of another NGO gives another example with respect to the meetings of veterans in which he is involved, and says that meetings cannot be included as an informal form of education because they do not have continuous financial support, the funding is only given on a case-by-case basis. The Nansen Dialogue Center is an organization cited as an example where funding has been interrupted in schools where it has managed to perform well. Another example given: the Women's Court run by Women in Black.

Continuity of projects is also important for evaluating results.

> Preschool education expert: "Non-governmental organizations, which are pushing the boundaries of trust building through their programming initiatives, are unfortunately [able to work only in the short term]: are missing this timeline to say in the next 10 years we will be doing this and this so we can know if we are on the right track."

The interviewees provided us with several other reasons why projects are prematurely shut down, the most prominent reason given being the withdrawal of funding. The second reason for the lack of continuity in projects stems from the fact that projects are not part of long-term policies for national or international organizations. As the focus of interest changes from one topic to another, so many organizations are losing support and this translates into a lack of impact. It also happens that schools refuse

to cooperate because of a change of attitude or a change of principal. Another perspective focuses on the lack of authenticity in projects: inauthentic projects are less likely to develop successfully and where they do take form they are less likely to last for a long time. One interviewee observes of a political foundation that the work of the NGO is meaningful and therefore that, although funding is difficult to get, it is still possible. The coordinator of education projects at another NGO says: "There are a few authentic things that survive at the local community level even if they are not funded [i.e., they have their own sources of funding]."

3.1.6.5   NGO relations with politicians, the state system and public sector institutions

Lack of support for NGO activities

A major drawback to the work of the non-governmental sector is the lack of support for inclusive, systemic change from the political level, including from the public sector institutions and other actors in the public sphere which depend on them. This is one of the causes of the limited results of the projects being undertaken: it means that ministries do not necessarily receive representatives of the organization for talks, and there is a much wider lack of support for reconciliation activity from universities, schools, media outlets, judicial authorities, and politicians.

Municipalities have Social Affairs Departments with which NGOs can work. However, according to one interviewee, often the employees in those departments lack qualifications. When NGOs find a good municipal worker, or a good mayor, they all try to work with them. One interviewee says: "We could change the whole municipality, the local community, if we had sensitive people in these positions. And we only have a couple of quality people. So we go round in circles again. Those who would work are too busy. When you get a good mayor, a good municipal worker, we all call them."

Representatives of youth NGOs say they have difficulty getting licenses from education ministries for their activities, and then there is the need for permissions from schools and colleges too. Very often there is refusal to cooperate when the topic is dealing with the past or reconciliation. Another NGO director says that these topics are completely "undesirable in the political agenda after 2010. At this point, I think they would have passed the Law on Same Sex Marriages with more ease than the Law on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. That's just how hot an issue it is."

> The director of a peacebuilding NGO: "You cannot enter colleges, or primary or secondary schools, to work with them. We have no room to enter. We work in a part of the schools, with more open teachers, but these teachers also say, 'They don't let us work'. All of these school directors are politically appointed, so they are scared

because they may lose their jobs. And they don't let you in. So the problem for me is that year after year we create generations that are worse. And I am very sincerely afraid for the future."

A political scientist/radio programme editor: "Schools do not allow you in, if you have a different approach, whether to history or politics, they don't allow you to enter these schools, nor are you allowed by the ministry of, say, the canton in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to have access to young people at all. Very often, you are checked in all sorts of ways when you go to schools. It is almost impossible to get into those bunkers where certain things are put to young people's minds. And no one will let you in, whether it is a Bosniak, Federal, Serbian or Croatian plan. It is very difficult for any organization that first deals with the past, and later with reconciliation, to enter schools."

President of another NGO: "You cannot work with children unless you have the consent of the ministry. For this project that we are doing, we first sent letters to the ministries to see that we were receiving support. If they give you support, the second phase is your school, some schools will give you support, some will not – principals, pedagogues ... *Interviewer*: Was it problematic? *Interviewee*: Yes, the RS Ministry did not give it. Brčko and the Federation did, they all supported it. Most importantly, it is the Federation cantons Central Bosnia and Herzegovina-Neretva that are most important to us with respect to these divisions of children. It was also very important to us that children from RS come. I think generally Brčko, since it was divided during the war, that the district covered one small part is also a good thing done, a useful thing. However, I'm sorry RS didn't. Maybe this year, I don't know, we'll see... "

The lack of resources translates into practical difficulties in a range of spheres. For instance, the Resource Network for Professional People in Bosnia and Herzegovina has no developed programme for assisting activists. Activists struggle to pass individual laws in current social fields. In the West, lawyers sometimes do pro bono work, i.e. without compensation, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina this is not the case. They often charge a lot when they support some of the laws in public. One interviewee suggested that lawyers should charge less for service fees when it comes to advocating for specific laws.

Ways of suppressing the freedom of the NGO sector and selecting projects financed from the budget

Earlier, we noted that a number of interviewees identified 2009 as a milestone in the development of a politics of conflict. One interviewee, who did not claim this marked a turn in politics, nevertheless marked the same year as the beginning of suppression of freedom for the NGO sector. Various ways of suppressing the expression and functioning of the NGO sector can be seen from the interviews, and interviewees also reflected on the attempts to fight for greater rights in their sector. The first way by which action is suppressed is preventive: those in power control which projects

will be funded. No explanation is given to applicants about the reasons for rejection, there is no possibility of appeal against the decision, and there is no transparent information about the projects which are accepted.

> One senior civil servant: "Everything that the authorities have done at the local level for the last ten years has been directed towards suppressing freedom of expression within civil society. I know that it is the tendency even among liberal democracies towards restricting freedoms when it comes to preventing conflict or violence. But to this degree, to put civil society fully under the control of the authorities, these are worrying proportions. (...) Projects are under strict control. I know when it comes to culture. You have public calls issued by a government department, which is an authority. Even in most cases, there are some formal, fictitious committees that, under quotation marks, 'consider' these projects. You do not even have a two-step decision-making ability, to appeal the decision of the first-instance authority, and have someone explain why you were rejected, or why someone gave you only 300 KM out of the requested amount, which they most often resort to. You don't even have the elementary thing, and that's information about who got it. These are huge funds, multi-million-dollar amounts. Not to mention analyses, year-end performance evaluations, a serious monitoring system. This would all come about if the basic goal were to organize the free functioning of civil society and all that can come from it as a benefit. So, among other things, they would support some serious projects, encourage young people and civil society in general to come up with some projects in order to build reconciliation and trust among people. *Interviewer*: What does it mean: that there are obstacles and those obstacles are political, obstacles to power? Is there any way to overcome these obstacles? *Interviewee*: I think that from time to time there are some initiatives, but they are quickly stifled. (...) There have been examples of attempts to awaken consciousness and take some organized action, to fight for specific rights, but I must say that all these sets of authorities have shown a very high degree of willingness and vitality to kill this in the short term. I do not know that any initiative has lived longer than a few years."

> A politician: "For NGOs to receive funding is no longer so easy, they need to have [political] connections to be able to get funding and implement projects. In this way, the influence of the non-governmental sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina is weakened. Mind you, you have certain NGOs that are doing quite well. Let's say, regarding the election, [but] I know [they are] hiding it, they are less heard [NGOs] than those above [in power]. [But from non-governmental organizations] they pointed to the problems of elections."

Interviewees argued that in Russia, Hungary and Turkey, the trend now is for non-governmental organizations to be considered traitors, and that the same arguments are used by politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina to curb civil sector liberties.

> The Coordinator of an NGO education programme: "I think that somehow Putin started first, he was the first to ban the work (...) of any foundation that receives foreign donations, then it was Orban, and now in Turkey. It is again a signal that society is shutting down [to] any influences deemed hostile. This is a trend."

Politician: "I see that in Republika Srpska the stance towards associations is getting worse. I now follow these reactions to the protests. It is this Orban model, the Russian one, in fact, Orban's model. The Russians were already doing this some time ago [in the manner of] 'Let's see how it is [i.e. how are NGOs organized]? These are all foreign agents. You can only [apply] through the budget, and only those who we like will get through the budget.' So that's the way. So, I see that this is their reaction to the rebellion. Instead of being the opposite, instead of opening up, they are now using religious communities, using [abusing] organizations close to the budget. I hope that this will not become a trend in our country as well. It is a trend, but it has not yet taken over in the Federation. But looking at our responses to these broader challenges, we are no better than others. It's probably all going to go the same way if we don't fight for the better."

The problem of better regulation of jurisdiction over the non-governmental sector regarding budget financing and monitoring of results was also presented to us from the perspective of one of the mayors interviewed. He claims that currently money for the same project can be withdrawn from the budgets of different levels of government without any level of government monitoring the results sufficiently.

Mayor: "Let's see who is in charge of which NGO. Huge sums of money are given without even having a system in which to distribute that money. Because if someone has already withdrawn money from the state, then there is no need to turn to any other level of government. Or, if you are at the municipality or canton level, then let that concern be taken by the level of government you have agreed with. These are things that must be addressed legally."

Other ways of suppressing the freedom of expression of the NGO sector take the offensive. NGO representatives are invited to investigative talks, there are reasons for their apprehension or for misdemeanor charges, fines and media targeting, etc. One interviewee says the goal of such methods is to intimidate and silence activists.

NGO project coordinator: "We received six misdemeanor charges because of the stickers, three for the association and three for the president [i.e.] me. Because of the sticker that said *I just don't want to leave here*. That was the message of our activism. That was 2011. It was not even a year since the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were established after the general elections, for parliament. RS debt was growing bigger and bigger. We understood on that day, when it was a year from the election, that we [should] organize the action, *I just don't want to leave here*, [and] this was the reason for our activism and everything. And then we received misdemeanor charges for the slogan. This was considered advertising in the territory of the city of Banja Luka; [i.e.] it was archived under that offence. (...) They brought this boy Stefan Blagić[2] into custody because during the protests [due to the fuel price increase on June 12, 2018[3]],

2   Stefan Blagić, President of the association "ReStart" Srpska. Source: http://www.restartsrpska.org/clanovi/ accessed: 27.6.2021.

3   On the traffic blockade protest, https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/B&H/stotinu-vozaca-blokiralo-ulaz-u-banja-luku-371043, accessed: 27.10.2021. On the arrest of Blagić, https://srpskainfo.com/aktivista-stefan-blagic-dobio-poziv-na-informativni-razgovor/, accessed: 27.6.2021.

they brought him in for investigative talks, because they thought he was organizing it in Banja Luka, him and Drasko Stanivukovic[4]. In the Federation, police threatened people. But this is nothing new. As I say to you, whenever we organized something, we always had civilian police, their eyes were on all of us who were at the protest. When there were protests for Picin Park in 2012, and when we were walking around the city to preserve the public land, with the citizens ... [The protestors] didn't look who jaywalked because we were walking down the street in one lane. So they pulled some people, me too, and gave misdemeanor charges for jaywalking. And so they were trying to intimidate people. I mean they use those methods constantly."

The interviewee says that the positive thing about these circumstances is that such a regime relationship – the strong pressure on the non-governmental sector – acts to unite the non-governmental sector:

"If you had asked me two years ago, I couldn't have told you this. It has been a positive thing for me over the last two years that there are different organizations that nevertheless, very clearly and very well, define who our "enemy" is. And they are experiencing the same reactions from the regimes that we have been experiencing. And they are not going to support the White Ribbon Days in Prijedor or something like that and they are getting the same ... Maybe even now they are a little more rigorous towards them. Maybe because we were women. But there was everything with us. They have the same informative talks, they were detained, fines and the like ... I have a feeling that in five years you cannot tell people 'We told you this happened to us', but [you can] explain through those examples what that system is doing against us, i.e. how it turns us against one another. In that sense, as much as it may be an obstacle, because the context is limited to organizations, so much of it may be a positive thing, because now we can somehow compare and uncover things together."

Non-governmental organizations receiving financial support may be more reluctant to face this, being in a position of dependency and susceptible to accepting political influence; for example, being placed under pressure to act in accordance with identity matrices.

Mayor: "There are non-governmental organizations that are directly influenced by politics, this or that, one or the other. They can be recognized in their actions. But there are those that are quite different. I know, unfortunately, the non-governmental sector, like some other organizations, always depends on some kind of budget. The non-governmental sector depends on local and republican budgets; because they are partly reliant on their funding, they cannot self-finance from program projects, and then are always more or less influenced by politics."

Politician: "Then I saw that some NGOs – I deliberately do not name them now, do not ask me, I do not want to hurt anyone either personally or as an organization

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4   Draško Stanivuković is a Bosnian politician, a member of the Party of Democratic Progress and member of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska. He is a former member of the Banja Luka City Assembly. In the local election of 2020, he's been elected as city major. Source: https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-ec/Драшко_Станивуковић, accessed: 27.6.2021.

– [were promoting] attitudes that were very recognizable because now current. In this case some NGOs from RS reacted fiercely because someone had criticized them heavily there. I got this added communication: 'What is this amendment and what is the story of constitutional changes?'"

Another interviewee stressed that even organizations funded by sources independent of the state – for example by foreign donors – do not have the courage to make a stand, so they appease public bodies and mitigate their conclusions and statements, which has a direct effect in diminishing their social impact. One interviewee – a professor – noted that peacekeeping NGOs have adopted identity matrices and do not pursue social justice, they seek permission from donors to engage in protests and plenary sessions, and when they engage, they depoliticize more than they explore social antagonism and solutions to real problems. If they were to deal with social antagonism, they would have to deal with some sensitive issues connected with identity matrices and social justice.

There are also non-governmental organizations on the scene that interviewees consider a corrupt part of civil society: they were one of the most talked about problems in the civil society sector (mentioned by 10% of interviewees, 8/77). These NGOs willingly support politicians, and return services for services: for example, they receive grants, and they reciprocate by voting or by passing on a percentage of the grant awarded to them. Such organizations have no reason to be pressured by the regime. One journalist believes that some of them have been funded in order to influence rival parties.

> Mayor: "The problem is, believe me, higher instances of government. The problem is those political elites that were created at the state level, whether they are four, five, we [usually] talk about three of them. It's not. There are more of them, you know. There are even some non-governmental organizations that are very close to the political elites but that hide behind certain things. And that is true, and it can be very easily proven, documented. There are these non-governmental organizations that are really non-governmental organizations, but there are also [those] who are just hiding behind the term and are being used precisely for these particular political elites."

> Senior civil servant: "[The international community] by decision has provided Brčko with something that does not belong to it, so we have a budget of, say, 120 million euros, which is big money for a local community of this size. And of course, for the elite here it is such loot. And everything boils down to that. That's enough for them, nothing else, [not] projects from the outside, [not] regional cooperation, [not] cross-border cooperation [they don't need it]. We are in such a space [that we are] the center, we have been throughout history – a regional center – since Brčko has been developing more economically and commercially, and we should continue to develop these benefits. However, not having enough money is enough to divide it and that is all it ends with. Churches and the Islamic community, a large part of the non-governmental sector, have found themselves in this. If you were to measure Brčko's degree of democra-

cy with the amount of public money that is put into the non-governmental sector, so I think it's the number one in the world. You look at it by population, by some standard, and so on. These are the millions of KMs that are given through the budget, directly as a grant, where you have 500-600 registered NGOs. You register a non-governmental organization, gather 50 people, approach someone from the assembly, immediately have some discretion right there to dispose of some funds when the budget is passed, they slip you 100,000 KM and [you] say great. You slip him 10 and of course when the election comes you get 200-300 votes. Then they calculate it, ten such points per 200 votes is a term, I mean it's a term and a half in the local parliament."

Physical education teacher/professional dancer: "Much work needs to be done to popularize us artists so that we can further collaborate and work with the region. We have a big problem. There is a big problem with us [in RS], I don't know how it is in the Federation, though I assume it's the same everywhere. Big money is put on, so to speak, quasi-artists and quasi-organizations, and then in principle, political parties divide that among themselves. Organizations generally do not get the money that is channelled to organizations, but the political parties get it again, and they somehow divide it for their campaigns and their own issues. [This is] what I, as a layman in political terms, can see happening, and knowing the people who run politics in our country, and who are in organizations, in various youth and non-governmental organizations, who generally do little for organizations, and do little for youth, and do little work for global reconciliation, and [are not doing] some kind of co-operation on the environment. So, I think only a tenth of the money that is earmarked for them goes to organizations that really work on that. That is to say, [if that were to change,] ten times more would be done for reconciliation and for all those things that need to awaken somewhere and that need to be worked on."

Some NGOs work transparently to contribute to the community, whereas others channel donations that end up in private hands. One mayor says that they are actively working on bringing back organizations that once operated in the city, which have worked transparently on reconciliation, seeking to create better conditions for coexistence: "they left because they had no interlocutors, they did not want to undertake non-transparent work that was being imposed."

Poor involvement of politicians in activities

While a number of interviewees expect politicians to initiate a reconciliation process, others were more reflective about the challenge of how to get politicians involved, or don't count on their cooperation at all, and therefore focus on ways to build citizen relationships that exclude working with politicians altogether. Here we will analyze the opinions for and against the inclusion of politicians in project activities.

The interviewees cited a series of negative behaviors from the centers of political power which they encounter when initiating collaborations. The following example illustrates one of the patterns of political behavior in collaborations.

> Professor: "Last year, for Human Rights Day, I was in Prijedor and let's just say, it's a big deal, because in the municipality building we had a panel dedicated to difficult issues of dealing with the past. And the big thing is that we did it in the municipal building. However, no one from the municipality came, that is to say, *nobody*, the only participants came from various NGOs and associations."

The most common form of negative behavior on the part of politicians is to give fake support to project activities. But the bigger problem is that the actors who give this fake support act simultaneously in certain ways that are contrary to the activities that they "support", and thus undermine them. The example given to us is the behavior of the members of the Presidency for the duration of the *Dialogue for the Future* project, which we wrote about in the section on the absence of systematic support for reconciliation by politicians.

An example of successful co-operation with political leaders was highlighted in the context of the Pro-Budućnost project, aimed at empowering peace in local communities, organizing co-operation across the entity border. Each event is attended by a municipal mayor or one of his assistants.

> Leading figure in Pro-Budućnost activities: "It was decided that the political participants, to whom the non-governmental sector is rightly very critically disposed, must be involved in the processes of confidence building. Thus, this work in the local community included civil society, non-governmental organizations, mayors of municipalities, and departments for social activities in municipalities. I visited the whole country, from Nevesinje to Krajina, where we worked with actors, professors, teachers, activists, NGOs, and always the mayor of the municipality was there, which is amazing, or one of their assistants."

Local leaders are generally more cooperative, according to the interviewees, but it also depends on which mayor they engage with, according to two interviewees.

> Peacebuilding NGO director: "It depends a lot on local mayors, local MPs. There are some great ones who one can work with, and who love to collaborate and wish their local community well. There are some who are radically right, nationalists, and with whom there is no conversation."

Mayors and local governments in Jajce, Janja, Bijeljina, Foča, Visoko and Srebrenica were commended. We had a claim in the Jajce local community that politicians there do not send hostile messages, that they can only make a problem out of nothing in order to delay the session of the Municipal Council, but that this is not from nationalist initiatives. The extent to which these divergent patterns are present in other local communities may be worth further research.

> Peacebuilding NGO Director: "Somehow nationally undermining the nation is not present in Jajce and never has been, no matter who is in power. Especially for the last two to three years, they have really been collaborating and doing projects. They are

together at these manifestations, together they are at some receptions, everything in the interest of the city they do for the city."

Collaboration with local leaders has had strengths and weaknesses for peacebuilding NGOs, and the same may be said of cooperation with senior political officials on a state or entity level. An analysis of the barriers of work with local leaders, that affect individual citizens and citizens' initiatives alike, will be presented below as part of an analysis of the feasibility of implementing a strategy we have called *From the Local to Centers of Power*.

During her interview, one political figure highlighted a positive example of work to reconcile representatives from state ministries. However, she noted, the problem is that such examples are not promoted and that other politicians do not follow them:

> "And when something positive comes up, it is simply ignored, it is not news, something that is promoted, from which some good examples are made, that others are after. This was so even, I remember last year or the year before that, when representatives of religious communities and some representatives from state ministries agreed to visit the places of suffering of both Serbs and Bosniaks and Croats, which was a great gesture for me, indeed. I also expected according to the statements made that this will continue, that it will be upgraded and that everyone will somehow or together or individually or in whatever way fit it into their agenda and that it will become, as I say, a commitment, a move that people are made aware of, that will contribute to reconciliation. However, this ended up being just an individual visit. I didn't see anything significant afterwards, any significant events after that. I think these are some lonesome gestures, even though the fact that [it] happened shows that they know very well what could actually contribute to reconciliation, but that, maybe I'm a little rude, they don't see some special profit from it, not to mention around election years, but in general at all other periods. So unfortunately, it is not nurtured."

On the other hand, interviewees also spoke about the responsibility of NGOs, which too often only weakly enthused people for political action and which avoided the involvement of politicians in project activities.

> NGO staffer: "Political literacy done by non-governmental sectors, and by all of us over the years, might [helpfully] be less abstract, to put it a bit more in the more accurate examples, because when it comes to reconciliation and coexistence, it is very difficult to show. [It's not enough to socialize:] 'You know, my friend, a Serb [and] a Croat, they go for coffee, [and] a Bosniak go for coffee' (...) It is not just about reconciliation in terms of meeting people from Banja Luka and Sarajevo, the people of Zenica and Prnjavor, not only as formal activities, but that in addition to this 'Here they came together', let's also act politically, to teach them some further processes. (...) People are not interested in elections, not even 50% of people turn out to vote. Young people are one of the biggest abstainers in terms of elections. That, let me say, legitimate political participation is very low. This political activity of the people is also missing from the activities of the non-governmental sector, and we have a 'bub-

ble' that speaks only of the politicians' politics, we have no deviation from that one system."

Politicians refuse to cooperate, it is true, and NGOs refrain from establishing communication when they estimate that they will spend too much energy and time and money on contacting politicians, which is not worth it. Another factor is the fear of being labelled because of cooperation with specific politicians. Onlookers may then assume that the non-governmental organization in question favors their political view or party. An additional reason for which politicians are not included in activities is a sense of aversion, because at a popular level they are considered "balijas", "chetniks", "ustashas", "criminals", and so on.

> Peacebuilding NGO director: "Generally, we in civil society, we do not want to work with politicians. Who will work with the SDA, with the SDS, with the SNSD, with the HDZ ... – these are 'balijas, chetniks, ustashas'. We don't want to work with them. But we have to work. That is why I respect what these German foundations that work with them specifically are doing. We had the OSCE before that, which tried to work with them through academies, for example. But we say [that] we can't work with them, and we have to work, but we don't want to. It's too much work, too much commitment. (...) It is crucial to work with politicians, it is clear, but we do not have the capacity to work with them, we do not have the financial support to work with them. They do not see us as key players, we do not bring votes. (...) So money is needed, a strong background is needed for one of the politicians to recognize us as important actors, to work with them, and we need will on our part. So that's a lot of overlap."

One of the politicians interviewed considers it very important for non-governmental organizations to communicate their views on problems to people of influence, meaning to people from governments and parliaments: "Whatever is happening to us, I always try to say that we must act together, that we must complement each other. That does not mean that if you support the views of a political party today, that you have sold yourself to someone, that you are now supporting that party, we lack this very quality and we immediately have a label attached, and I think that in our country NGOs have a problem with that, just as unions have a problem with this as well, as do some intellectuals, etc. It could be preferable to leave that kind of attitude, or communication, behind, and to say, 'Wait a minute, about this problem, I think there is a very good solution offered by the X party'. This kind of alliance is missing. I think the issue of reconciliation must be a general process throughout the country. We all need to know that it is very important to us in our lives, in everything we do in life. Now, in order to achieve this, we need to talk about that among ourselves. Including with those entities, especially those who mean something, that can contribute. Whether we like it or not, politics is very important, governments are very important, as are parliaments, as are the people who have mandates there. Now, why is a slightly tighter connection missing? The connection is definitely missing. Perhaps [because] politicians refuse to accept this story any more, maybe NGOs

also refrain from communicating more closely so that someone does not label them. This [labeling] is otherwise a problem not only in this process but also elsewhere. So, then the results are small." Another way in which NGOs and their leaders are labelled is ethnic: "We are all judged by first and last name. Nidzara, whatever she does someone will say she is Bosniak, Goran, whatever he does people will say he is Vlach. None of us are Bosniaks, none of us are Vlachs, but they look at us through that perception." (NGO director)

Among the respondents who expressed their opinion on the involvement of politicians in the projects (16%, 12/77), a majority (75%, 9/12) were of the opinion that they should be included, while a minority (25%, 3/12) insisted on the disadvantages of such cooperation and considered that they should work independently. The interviewees stated that the reason for not including politicians was that the government was formed by ethnic key in the state and entities and that the politicians must keep the people divided and they do so (as one sociologist noted). Cooperation is judged to be unpromising, due to the habitual assumption of the political leadership in this region that it is up to them to decide, not to cooperate (transitional justice specialist). The third reason given is the lack of interest in concrete work (NGO director). A number of interviewees who argue for the involvement of politicians in activities are led by the argument that the power of politicians is great and this means it would be reckless to leave them out. Since politicians control the public sector as a whole, the situation in it cannot be changed without their initiative. The director of a women's rights NGO illustrates this with respect to the education sector: "We cannot [change a lot] in civil society, we can create alternative forms, and this is something that some politicians have to initiate." It is further underlined that non-governmental organizations, by working without politicians, touch only a small percentage of the population, mostly the population already open to reconciliation. In addition, cooperation is seen as an opportunity for politicians to reconsider their own views.

> NGO director: "The role of politicians is crucial in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. So, the fact is that people follow politics, they listen to politics. Everything we do, what we do as a civil society, so we touch 5% of the population. And that is 5% of the population which is generally more open to these topics. So, all that we do is, in principle, irrelevant. It is politics that will bring about or take away reconciliation. It is politics that brought about the war, it is politics that can ultimately bring about a new war. So, the key to our work is what we avoid. We need to work with politicians to win them over. We don't do that. Basically, we can do a fantastic job but if a politician comes out and says, for example, 'The church in Visoko is on fire' and says 'We, Serbs, are attacked, we are in danger', everything we did in Visoko and anywhere else, it falls into the water. So, it is the politicians who bring and take away reconciliation."

> Women's rights NGO director: "Personally, I would never exclude them, because in this way they are also given the opportunity to reconsider their own views. (...) We

> live with them, they shape our lives whether we want it [or not], whether we vote in
> the elections, they decide and they cannot be bypassed. I have the right to disagree
> with them, but I want to debate with them because that's how they hear me, they don't
> have to accept anything. Maybe our children will welcome progress at our age, we
> certainly will not, but it is our responsibility."

We will present concrete proposals made by interviewees for cooperation between civil society and politicians. Three interviewees who work in peacebuilding described the experience of working with politicians in the context of two projects. The first, the UN's *Dialogue for the Future*[5] project, under which the *Platform for the Presidency* was written, is considered to be the less successful. This project involved political, international and non-governmental social participants with the idea of empowering and encouraging the process of reconciliation and confidence-building, getting to know one another, and with a particular focus on young people. One interviewee says: "There have been several conferences organized in this regard, small grants for young people to work with each other, on different processes that can strengthen different horizontal relationships [and] trust-building processes." The second project is USAID's *Pro-Budućnost*[6] project, in the context of which the *Peace Platform* was written. It works in local communities with youth, religious and political leaders, the media, and NGOs. For both projects, the challenge is to secure and verify the implementation of the platforms and agreements signed. Since it is not enough simply to produce documents for politicians to sign, one of the interviewees recommended that in the future strategic documents should be drafted, not declarative ones, that is, documents obliging politicians to concrete activities. Work should also be done in local communities to develop and adopt local strategies and action plans, and to think of effective ways of monitoring the implementation of what has been learned and agreed on through further training and education.

A coordinator at an NGO suggested involving young people entering politics into projects:

> "People now entering politics, young people, have started to take up activism, so to
> speak, some of our ways of doing things. I don't [mean] 'ours' [as in] we've now
> just discovered it. No, but what we have done so far, and they are doing it in terms
> of promoting themselves, but also dealing with really specific issues: socio-econom-
> ic issues, maternity issues, procurement for the needs of government, ministers and
> the like. Okay if their interest is a political party or something more, but these are
> problems that have not been discussed before, and this is a dimension in which it is
> possible to cooperate. But [it] takes time again, but it's something we already have."

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5   Source: Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence. https://bfpe.org/programs/dijalog-za-buducnost/, accessed 27.6.2021.
6   Source: Pro Budućnost https://www.probuducnost.ba/o-pro-buducnosti, accessed 27.6.2021.

Another interviewee believes that it is important to ensure that each municipality acquires a civil society officer who could cover different areas: youth, women, minorities, human rights, peace building and every other topic. An additional suggestion is that people from the department of social affairs in municipalities be trained and financially supported to fulfill what civil society needs. Interviewees also believe that NGOs should make an effort to apply for IPA programming[7]: "There is a call for IPA programming, but few have come forward and decisions are made there. We need to apply here."

NGOs should network more, and one interviewee proposes joint presentations to political parties, authorities and donors, presenting their needs, views of society, and concrete proposals and recommendations for action. First, the NGO sector's recommendations should be formulated into a single peace building strategy document, on the basis of which a Ministry of Human Rights and Peace Building can be established. He judges that NGOs are afraid of such a standoff because of the pressure from the regime that may follow.

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7   Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/ipa, accessed 27.6.2021.

4 The Impact of Religion

In this chapter, we will consider what an inclusive approach to the process of trust-building and reconciliation represents in the field of religion, mindful of the diversity that is present in B&H, of the changes an inclusive approach would bring, and of the current situation. The analysis is divided into three parts. First, we present how the interviewees see the role of religion in the reconciliation process. Then, we consider the obstacles pointed out by religious leaders within their area of vocation, and how interlocutors from other professions see the challenges and opportunities for religious actors. In conclusion, we present suggestions for solving the problems experienced and positive examples and good practices which already exist.

Of the total number of interviewed persons (77) in the sample, 27% (21) are religious actors. By religious actors, we mean persons whose profession involves promoting or teaching about faith, who see themselves as religious actors and are recognized by others as representatives of a religious constituency. Most of them are priests or imams, while religious education teachers and professors in religious universities make up a smaller proportion. A few interviewees act through NGOs in religious communities or in independent organizations oriented towards work with religious actors. We have not included one sociologist of religion in this group; we included him among actors focused on education, based on the extent to which he works as an academic approaching religion from an external, scientific perspective. Out of 13 cities included in the research, we have religious representatives from 10 cities (Livno, Bihać, Tuzla, Trebinje, Mostar, Brčko, Bijeljina, Banja Luka, Teslić, and Sarajevo).[8] We interviewed members of different religious, ethnic and theological directions. Thanks to that, we have hopes that the opinions presented may provide a broad picture of the experiences of different sides in the dialogue, and be a good basis for understanding differences of opinion.

4.1 The role of the religion in the reconciliation process

The role of religion in the reconciliation process was discussed and thematized by 81% (62/77) of all interviewees, by all religious actors that were interviewed and by 73% (41/56) of interviewees from other sectors.

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8 Note: The methodology used in selecting the interviewees did not imply that there was a religious representative from each city.

Interviewees took different approaches to the role of religion in the reconciliation process, because religious affiliation is closely related to nationality and to the divisions that are present in the country. We will first address how recognised religious actors see the opportunities and challenges in their work, and then examine how interlocutors whose profession is not tied to religion see the role of religious leaders in the reconciliation process.

Religious actors gravitated to one of two positions bearing on the role of religion.[9]

One group thinks that the three main religions in B&H should deal exclusively with the deepening of their adherents' faith and that they are making a mistake if they do not deal with national issues.

Others accept that these religions also play a role in the protection of the nation.

We note that members of all religious communities are divided into the two tendencies.

The opinion that religious communities should deal only with religion was expressed by a large number of religious and other actors. Here, we recall the earlier quotation from one journalist according to whom it is important for B&H that everyone "look after their own business/purpose" and thus contribute to life in B&H. In that context, he especially emphasized that religious communities should deal with issues of religion and faith, and not political matters. It is interesting that those who advocate the connection between religion and nation did not criticize the work of religious communities. There was only one remark that religious leaders should look at ways to reach nominal believers.

According to the first opinion, religions should be "ambiences of faith". This means that they (religious leaders) are working on building a religious community as an environment and on the deepening of the faith of individuals. It is the task of religious leaders to help believers build a sense of life with God and a sense of closeness to God, to help produce meaning and resocialize values. This group of interviewees especially pointed out that religious leaders should invest unambiguous effort in the resocialization of morality among citizens. In explaining this view, one politician expressed his opinion on why it is that religions have ethical significance for modern man and why they are especially important for the life of people in B&H, in the period after the war.

> Politician: "Nowadays there is a science that dominates, that gives explanations for a lot of things, and then we no longer look for that in religion. But [we need faith in God] on the level of the ethical, of what Dostoevsky wrote, that if there is no God, anything is possible. That's why I need God, so that not everything is possible, and

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9 However, not all interviewees fall into one of these two groups since this issue was not been systematically examined in the semi-structured interviews.

then there will be no evil, either. Ethically we need God. (…) When I look at modern man, I do not see in him a sense of God. I am not a practicing believer but I have this feeling that someone is looking at me and that someone is above me. It may be superstition but when I do something, I fear that I will be punished if I do something bad. I have a feeling that someone is running this world, it is not a chaotic state in which everyone can do what and how they want. In this context, I am also talking about modern [man]. I am not going into Christianity now, that love and faith should lead to that [good behavior]." He thinks that for most believers in B&H, practicing religion is ritual and that there is a lack of a true feeling that God exists, that God observes them, and that they should be afraid of Him. He adds that "if, despite this, there is no state and no coercive and forced apparatus, then chaos ensues."

Many interlocutors also spoke about the role of religious communities in the resocialization of common human values that contribute to reconciliation, such as the values found in the Ten Commandments, the universality of human rights, justice, truth and the importance of investing in the common good.

A priest Catholic and an Orthodox priest each said that the church has a role in healing peoples, combating hatred and bad memories with sermons on love and forgiveness. Some interviewees call this [healing process] awakening of consciousness and say that religious communities should affect the awakening of consciousness in terms of appeals to honesty in actions, by repeating that are all are human and all have the same needs, all share the way of coming to this world and going from it, and what is implied from this is the universal justice that we should insist on.

One professor points out that there are a lot of "lost souls" in the people of B&H, in the sense that they do not want to have deeper knowledge of themselves, as opposed to having an "open consciousness". He blames religious communities which, instead of dealing with lost souls, make a pact with the authorities and make religion a status issue:

"If we wanted to change something, then the religious communities, that is the religious sector, which, it is not disputed, also has its values, would have to make a revision (I use this word even though I don't really like it). [They would have to] revise the meaning of the position of religious communities and that discourse in general, the relationship of religious values and any others concerning the soul, that internal value system towards people who have lost their souls. [Man] no longer has a soul and what should religious communities do now? It was easiest for them to make a pact in each of these small states in the Balkans. And perhaps Bosnia and Herzegovina is the best example where we are talking about these three denominations that have made a pact with the authorities here. It suits them [the authorities] in that way. We have, for example, Orthodox Iran in the Republika Srpska, and in the Federation we have, among other things, the Islamic Vatican, I could list them with these epithets. This has led to the situation that being a believer is absolutely disastrous, not to mention this necessity that being a believer has become a status issue. (...) Perhaps the most difficult thing in this situation is to form an open consciousness, because it is about the

inner feeling of each of these young people, individually; it is about the soul, as our people say. So, the soul is lost, even that ability and desire to know or find out what is happening in the individual, in each of us, is lost, not just this vision that would be directed forward."

The interviewees believe that religious communities are insufficiently committed to their believers, and that they deal too much with national issues. As a consequence, they point out a large number of nominal believers who have a distorted view of religious and national identity. If justice is universal, there cannot be justice only for my people, and injustice for the other people. We should be fair even towards an enemy in every situation, emphasized one imam. Universal justice, numerous interviewees consider, does entail an agreement on historical facts, on punishment and apology for historic crimes. However, only one religious leader was explicit, calling for all religious leaders to tell everyone to "look the truth in the eye. If we talk about the suffering of Bosniaks and genocide in Srebrenica, if we talk about the persecution of Serbs from Sarajevo, if we talk about the ethnic cleaning of Orthodox citizens from Croatia, from Knin, we should do this together, I think, if we wait for the politicians, it will never come. Believe me." In this perspective, without prejudice to the division of opinion over whether religion should be deemed important because of the connection with nationality, it is important that religious persons call for justice, for truth, for access to those who have returned and reaching out minorities.

There were plenty of arguments that the interviewers presented supporting the view that religions in B&H should not be national protectors. On the other hand, no interviewees explained or detailed the view that religion should strengthen national identity. Only one Orthodox religious education teacher explained that linking religion to national issues is natural in these areas, because, he noted, society is patriarchal: "Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is patriarchal in its nature and tied to its religious communities, and I could say that society here ties its national identities to a certain religious structure." As a result, the institution of religious communities is often used as a tool to increase political influence.

Most interviewees, by contrast, suggest that religious communities reduce activities that link them to national issues. Whereas two priests, one Catholic and one Orthodox, openly advocate linking religious and national identities, seventeen interviewees give arguments against, including a Catholic and an Orthodox priest and one Orthodox religious teacher. Thus, nationalism was a topic for 30% of interlocutors who commented on the religious sector, which makes it the most common topic. One Catholic priest estimates that "If our religions don't become aware and escape from the jaws of nationalistic politics, we are doomed." He believes that cultural and national institutions need to put effort into the development or the construction of

national identity. Contrary to this, an Orthodox priest stated his opinion that religion has a homogenizing power that no other institution, or political option, or national option, has for Serbs today. This homogenizing power lies in Saint Sava's philosophy of life, so through that, it is possible to raise awareness of life values, improve relations in society and improve the functioning of a system that would be good for all citizens.

> Theologian/Orthodox priest: "We don't have even a single institution that could homogenize the Serbian people today. Today, we don't have a political option or a national option, or any other option that could bring the Serbs together no matter where they live, in any continent, and even on the territory of former Yugoslavia, except for the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Orthodox Church is the one thing that can bring the people together through its institutions and give the people meaning in jeopardized areas where they live, it can give these people a ray of light to stay and to fight for themselves. We must certainly understand from the highest level that the Serbian people can no longer be guided by any political projects, but can only be guided by the Orthodox philosophy of life, Saint Sava's philosophy of life, that carries with it the faith, new birth and fight for the common good, a patriarchal approach to family and faith in your country that you build and love. And a completely different relationship towards the other is built from this greatness."

This Orthodox theologian perceives the struggle for the common good as the feeling of the people to work for their country, for a better society, for each other, and indirectly for themselves, by strengthening the system which, if everyone works in such a way, would become a society of quality and bring the common good. Contrary to the struggle for the common good, there is today, in his view, only a focus on self-interest. It is in the general interest of the Serbian people to have a higher birth rate than mortality: "If you don't have children, then what do you rely on? Who will go to the army tomorrow, who will come to church tomorrow and who will lead the country tomorrow? After all, that is why we have a problem in Kosovo today." He says that most Serbs, when planning a family, do not think about whether our people will have five, six or fifty million inhabitants, but choose to have less children in order to maintain their standard of living. He believes that the people have adopted some new selfish values and that, among the Serbs, "Orthodoxy, as a religion, is what this nation can revive. But unfortunately, our problem is that we cannot accept that."

The problem that other interviewees see in the fact that the three religions took on the role of national protectors is that it allows them, together with other instruments of nationalist struggle, to produce hatred and impose division on the people. They believe that religions cannot cure people of bad feelings, attitudes and memories, and at the same time also serve national interests. In addition, the majority shares the same opinion as the Catholic priest that for as long as they are national protectors, "nationalists cannot be removed from power." The so-called nationalists in B&H are

thus provided with great assistance. Religions have a reputation among the people and work effectively on people's souls.

> Orthodox religious studies teacher: "We notice that objectively the institution of religious communities is still very often used to increase [power] because religious communities have a reputation among the people. Research shows that, as well as the percentage of students who choose [religious education], regardless of media campaigns against religious education. 97% of students still enroll in religious education."

> Former director of a humanitarian NGO: "If politicians need any help, they immediately unite and connect with religious leaders. When Dodik needs to realize something, he goes with the Patriarch or someone else. When they get closer and when he gets their support, the citizens then believe him when he says 'We should do this, it is good for our people'. The same goes for others [Croats and Bosniaks]."

> Catholic priest: "The power of nationalist politics is mostly built by nationalists through manipulating religion. (...) Religions produce the most sacred products; they are best used to heal man. And this most sacred content of religions is abused by nationalists to produce hatred and vulnerability."

How much it is possible for religious communities to act simultaneously in the direction of strengthening the nation and building the faith should be specified on the basis of the concrete ways in which it usually works in both directions. Also, an examination of the impact that such actions really have on citizens should be conducted, rather than remaining on the level of good ideas and intentions. In the following section, we will present the specific behaviors of religious leaders that the interlocutors consider destructive, and present an analysis of the situation with regard to nominal believers. Another way to examine whether religious communities can meet both goals is to conduct a citizen survey. In our quantitative survey in 2013, 58% of citizens rated the involvement of religious actors in the reconciliation process as important or very important. Two offered categories were rated lower – politicians (52%) and the religious laity (56%), and four categories were rated better – women (63%), groups representing victims or vulnerable (68%), teachers (72%), and persons who support the political interests of all citizens of B&H, and not just one of the constituent peoples (77%).

Analysis of the interviews given for this study underline that religious actors act in different, often contradictory directions, and progress is not being made towards reconciliation. In this sector, too, we get the impression that it is unclear in which direction the sector is going or wants to go when it comes to interethnic relations in B&H.

The majority of those interviewed in 2018 expressed the opinion that the influence of the religious sector is very important for the reconciliation process, in a similar way as politics is, but that it does not use its potential.

> Member of Parliament in the Entity Assembly: "I think politicians and religious officials (clerks) could have done the most in that area, but they haven't done enough, and let that be on their minds. I think people send them different messages than what they do [merit]."

The interviewed member of a Victims' Association says that politics is very important, but as we saw in the previous chapter, the interviewees expect even less commitment from them. A sociologist of religion estimates that religious communities should work on the promotion of peace more than the non-governmental and educational sectors, because the concept of peace is the basis of all religions. Many interviewees regret that very little has been done.

> NGO education programme coordinator: "The potential is huge, but I don't see that they really contribute to reconciliation. (...) So far, I haven't seen any readiness there [among religious communities], except the Interreligious Council, but it's again a non-governmental organization more than a religious institution."

> President of a veterans NGO: "What they can do, but do not do, is a big problem, especially because they have the capacity to repair (fix) things. (...) Especially since the majority of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina declares themselves to be believers, religious authorities should be more actively involved in it."

> Political leader: "I don't see them as a [solution], they mean nothing to me, but they have the greatest potential for reconciliation in the region, not just in B&H. I say they have the greatest potential because people still believe in them." The interviewee made two remarks in the entire interview on religious communities. The first remark refers to the hypocrisy of religious leaders, and the second remark refers to religious education, which, together with other national subjects, systematically maintains Dayton as a state of "war without war".

The interviewees either tend to think that religion does not contribute to divisions or violence, or they believe that we should tread lightly with religion. Religious education teachers are most inclined to agree with the first opinion, especially those who have the experience of cooperation with religious education teachers from other religious communities.

As an argument, they point out that religious books do not call for hostility, but the opposite. The second opinion is based on the observation that issues of faith often take the form of firm beliefs to which people are sensitive and which they strongly advocate often up to the limit of exclusivity. Therefore, in their opinion, religion is prone to violent methods both earlier in history and now.

> Teacher of Islamic religious teaching: "Let's take my case as an example, considering that this is my profession and expertise. Primarily, I have studied Islam, [its] dogmas and thematic, but I studied in parallel and I also shown interest in Christianity, Judaism and other religions. I didn't find in any of the religions that they call for evil or that they call for bloodshed. Quite the contrary, every religion preaches that whoever

saves one man has saved the entire mankind, all people, right? The one who kills, it is as if he killed all the people in the world. This is a foundation, so to speak, of the Ten Commandments, and so on. So, these are all elements included in all the religions of the world. And I don't see in any moment that religious education speaks negatively about anyone else in their program, or their curriculum. Of course, there you can offer your value, the value of your faith, your religion. But never in any moment is there mentioned in a negative context anyone else who is not part of our religious community, religious group." He added that religious education complements the school system in a way that it works on the raising of children, their moral upbringing, because in a majority of school subjects, the accent is placed on information and not on education (upbringing).

Activist working with believers, religious education teachers and religious leaders: "When it comes to religion, I am aware that just like any phenomenon – maybe even more than all the phenomena – that this is a confused phenomenon that always brings violence with it. I read a text for my doctorate yesterday and the author said, among other things, that each one of them – Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Jesus – they all had a violent death. Yes, their message was a message of peace, but they were all killed. So, violence is very close to that. Everything smells of violence. And when someone tells me that there is this good religion, [and there is also] bad [religion], that is an unrealistic image in my opinion. I mean, in a way, we cannot say that it can be separated from that [violence]. But we are entering a spiritual nature of the world here which states that this world has the most valuable – spiritual – things, next to the filthiest things. And that is this world, that is how we are living." … "What we are doing, what we are trying to do in our mission, is to open the people's eyes that it is possible for this to happen in this world. We do a lot of work with believers, trying to bring this religion to a passive state or even, which is even worse, to take it from something violent in a person and transfer it into the noble part of that person, the part where he stands up for someone else, where he is an activist, where he has to suffer for someone else." … "The human is a holy being in a sense that he is special and he wants to do something for someone else. Now, there are a thousand things that disorient him in this effort, that degrade him, try to frighten him, focus him primarily on the material things. And we are trying to introduce him to a higher sphere of his being. In principle, we always connect the ideals of a religion with the ideals of a civil society, and we are trying to say that it is the same model, that we are in no conflict if we are believers with someone living next to us with another system of values." (...) If we are talking about forgiveness, if we are talking about hope, if we are talking about all these concepts, then we are simply using things that are very present in religion and thus extracting those principles that are first and foremost common. This is very important, because people on both sides need to be aware of that. It is important to us believers to transform that belief as much as we can. Most believers are convinced that only their faith is true, that only they know best. Such [belief] is actually the biggest misconception.

"You can only be a lover of the truth, but you can never fully grasp the truth. Therefore, it is important for believers to remove such an exclusivist view. I think that's one

of the things that produces the most violence in religion – when we do something in the name of God, then [below] we will burn the world." The interviewee concludes that "in addition to building peace in society, it is very important for believers to transform, to grow in spirit; that spirit should be like music, it should cross borders, be unstoppable, it is something that is absolutely for everyone. And no one has the right to privatize it. We can define it by various names – the Holy Spirit – either one way or another, it does not matter; it is important that it is present in all people. God reveals himself to all of us and that sense of togetherness and unity is something I am trying to promote."

When we want to explore the role of religion in the reconciliation process, it is important to keep in mind that issues of faith and belief are of such a nature that people need to defend or strongly advocate for them. The interviewees pointed out how important it is that believers and religious leaders, inspired by morals, faith and beliefs, act constructively, respecting others.

> Politician: "We are playing with religion. I often think about religion. Religion is to me a tradition about Ibrahim, Abraham. This means that, at some point, God asks you to sacrifice your child, and that if you are a true believer, you must be willing to sacrifice all this worldly realm in order to verify your true faith in God. The problem arises when you are not sure whether you hear the voice of God or the voice of Satan. Or when you read the holy book [you are not sure] whether you are reading what was God's intention or you are interpreting it yourself. So, religion is dangerous. As they say, religion has brought good things, but it has also brought bad things. The history of the human race is a history of evil in which religion played an important role because we cannot fully recognize the voice of God and the voice of the devil. That's where the problem is. Therefore, a true believer must be willing to "sacrifice his child" in the name of faith, if he receives a "call", and thinks it is from God. You can imagine what a person is able to do then."

The third interlocutor reminded us of violent methods known from the history of religions (inquisition, crusades, stoning) and pointed out modern counterparts which are also violent and still present, more often in rural localities than in urban areas. Journalist: "Only the methods have become a little more sophisticated; in fact, we don't literally take a stone to throw at someone, what we do is anathematize them."

Among the religious leaders interviewed, as well as among all the others, two tendencies are visible that influence attitudes. One strives for a homogeneous society with the dominance of one nation and religion, and the other tends towards a civil society that respects differences and encourages minority groups to feel accepted. We should bear in mind that religious identity is one of many identities that a man has and that people cannot be reduced to ethnic and religious identity. This was indicated by 17% of interviewees (13/77), both religious actors (20%, 4/21) and others (16%, 9/56). For some interviewees, reconciliation activity ought to provide for work to expand people's view of identity (their identity vision), or to transfer their focus from

ethnic/religous difference onto unity and harmonization amongst all of humanity. A sociologist and philosopher comments on this: "I'm not saying that the national/religious does not matter. But the debate needs to be democratized. If our national identity becomes one among a number of equal things, equal to other [identities] about which dialogue should be conducted, then we would have a completely different life here, if I may say so." One political scientist says that we cannot talk about human rights until we have a series of identities: "We should let homogeneous communities exist, because they will also have to be sorted out at some point. There you also have other forms of minorities: people with disabilities who have also not been given the opportunity by the government to enter the library, to enter the theater, or the cinema. Also, there are people who are sick and do not have the possibility of treatment, then you have other minorities. You have people who are sexual minorities, so they will also ask about their rights, etc. Human rights are basically something we don't have at our disposal until we have a set of identities. He can't just be a Muslim, a Croat, an Eskimo and an Indian, that's not enough, that's not what defines a man."

"A man is a very complex, structured person, composed of a series of identities." The director of a women's rights NGO surveyed the number of children in grades 3-4 of high school as to the difference between individual and collective identities: When I ask them, they tell me, "I am a Serb, a Bosniak." Then I ask them, "Are you someone's son?" They answer, "I am." "So, are you a brother?" And they do not understand and do not know what am I actually asking them."

Regarding the frequent mutual exclusion of some identities such as religious and secular, national and civic, the interviewees clearly pointed out the need to overcome such differences and bring them into balance. In this context, let us recall the previously quoted activist who works with believers, religious teachers and religious leaders.

The director of a peacebuilding NGO explains that it is important to have more identities because they provide sovereignty. He gives an example of how he can love and support both football clubs "Partizan" [from Belgrade] and "Sloboda" [from Tuzla] and concludes: "When you give up freedom and reduce it from the 100% that you had, then you give up 60%; because you want to be this, this, this, then you allow yourself to be manipulated."

Using the example of a conversation about the imposition of national identity by the interlocutor, the interviewee sought to explain how pre-war friendships, i.e. complex relationships that people had previously made with each other, were broken by being seen through the lens of one identity only. Another interviewee gave a positive example in which people who are harmonized according to other, different personality characteristics can put national identity or someone's war experience in the background.

Executive Director of a women's rights NGO: "The worst thing is that we have lost each other, that we have locked ourselves into our ethnicities, instead of ethnic and religious affiliations remaining part of our personal identity. I have a thousand of them. You can't put me in two, I don't let you in. I recognize a hundred of them in myself and each one is important to me, I don't have a higher priority. (...) I meet my friend Branka in '93 on a train between Zagreb and Budapest. She says to me, 'You didn't tell me what your army did.' And I say, 'Which army? So, do I have an army?' And then I understand – so I am a Muslim and the BH Army is my army. 'Well, listen, Branka, let me tell you something, from today onwards I will name myself who I am, what I am, and you will not recognize me, I do not have an army, I did not have one. And did you fail to know that I am Muslim? You didn't mind taking me for the previous 12 years. You see, now in order to take me, you have to accept me as I am with all my affiliations and identities'."

The director of an NGO dealing with interreligious peace: "When I say reconciliation, in the context of peace building, [reconciliation] is what happens in human relations, not between warring parties. I have never dealt with reconciling those who were at war. I think there is a lot more unrest in a man than just one that concerned conflict in war. So, two people come, they can clash on a much higher level, to reconcile or agree on something. Just yesterday [I talked to my husband] about the movie *Men Don't Cry*. My husband didn't watch that movie. He is a war veteran; he was at war. And he says "I have no desire to watch it". "And why?" I asked, "You don't want to watch that movie? It's similar to what I'm doing. I'd like you to watch it, I'm interested in your opinion." And he says, "I don't think I'd like it". "Why wouldn't you like it?" "Most people were promised that they would have money, that they would be able to steal. It was all a robbery, and so on." I say: "Well, you know our Spasoje from Derventa, he is the same as you, he went to defend his home, there was a shooting across the river, without any ideology, without anything, do you understand?" "Well, it is", he says, "but me and Spasoje, we don't need you." And that was a very interesting sentence for me. As someone who deals with reconciliation [I don't need them]. So, when we are reconciled on all levels, when we start from similar motives, for example in war, to defend our home, when we feel towards each other that we are, for example, honest people, when we are bosses in all this and when we see that we are similar (they are similar in profession), they do not need a third party to reconcile them just because they were on two sides of the war. Now it is irrelevant that someone was on this side and someone on the other side, they will definitely meet. The conflict in the war itself is not the point, it is not the locus where reconciliation takes place. It is reconciliation that is on the overall level of the human being. Rarely is it just one thing – where you were in the war. There's a whole list there. If it's okay with me where you are now, if we all agreed, mostly people will find it easier to accept whose side someone chose in the war. But if something isn't right for him now, [for example] if I think it's an injustice, you might be doing a job I'd like to do, then I'll say, "And where was she in the war?" So it is with the reconciliation process. Since this conflict does not happen only on that one level, that is why reconciliation takes place in a broader context, in that space of everything that human relations are."

On the other side of the interviewees' deliberation about the building of a nation's identity lie debates about the ways in which religious actors help the nations in B&H to get closer to each other: by reminding believers of common values, by solving specific interfaith problems in the communities where they work, by giving support for getting to know others, and even by organizing meetings, as well as through quality religious education.

The interviewees believe that imams, priests and religious education teachers have an impact by reminding believers about the common values they share with the members of other religions and about the value of reconciliation itself. Therefore, the priests and imams interviewed suggest that they use their services to send messages that the other person does not represent danger and that the other person does not have to be part of the same religion. The same goes for religious education teachers in the context of their classes.

However, the situation is not simple when a large number of believers do not come to services and cannot hear the messages of love and forgiveness. An orthodox priest raises the question of whether and how religious leaders are able to influence the mass of nominal believers. Religious leaders see a problem in parts of B&H, based on the exchange of experiences among themselves, where people attend church rarely, and they think that the situation in those areas is especially bad because people have nowhere to hear calls for love and forgiveness that would otherwise be heard in religious communities.

> Orthodox priest: "I know that from reliable circles, because priests are sharing thoughts and reflections between themselves. And then where there is no church, where no-one is coming to church, one cannot hear sermons on love and forgiveness. If that person does not hear sermons on love and forgiveness, what will he hear? He will hear what television teaches him, what these various electronic media teach him, and what is being said in one environment in front of someone, in the village shops, pubs and so on, so there is no future there. At least here, in church, he will hear the basis of church vocabulary that is love and forgiveness." The interviewee believes that if every priest would call for love and forgiveness (and adds that forgiveness means "forgiveness of everything that has been done"), then it would lead to collective peace: "Well, if everyone forgives everyone in pursuit of love and peace, that is simply logic. And just as in Islam the main point is to call for love and forgiveness, so a Roman Catholic friar should call for love and forgiveness. And I don't think that practice is present [or that is not the case]."

> Doctor of Theology/Orthodox priest: "If everyone wanted to listen to the voice of their religious representatives, then there would be no problem here or anywhere in the world. But what is the problem of a man living in the 21st century? We have a problem with nominal believers today, because on the census conducted a few years ago, everyone declared themselves mostly as believers. All Bosniaks are Muslims, all Serbs are Orthodox, all Croats are Roman Catholics, but the question is whether

these people are really practicing believers? Someone who is a practicing believer will listen to the voice of the one who leads his religious community and will want to respect what is given to him as a blessing. And that's actually a problem we keep referring to, to wonder if religious leaders are able to influence that mass of people of nominal believers, who are where they are, but practically they're not the believers we see in religious buildings, when every day we serve the service. And now, the problem needs to be posed differently, maybe this should be something that religious communities should think about – how and in what way can they somehow educate their congregation in that direction so they truly realize that the person next to you is not an obstacle or a disturbance or a threat, but that it is someone who is supposed to be an icon of God that you see in that person, and he [that person] will be in you when communication and cooperation exist this way."

Municipality leader: "The best example when you talk about something is to always start from yourself, never talk about someone else. I am a Bosniak of the Islamic faith, a Muslim. When you go to the mosque on ordinary days, you can see how many people came to the 'regular' prayer. Prayer is prayer, each is valuable, but at a regular prayer how many people are in the mosque? [Few people.] Just being present at the Jummah is not a measure of how religious someone is. Jummah (Jumu'ah) is not a measure, everyone rushes to show themselves in Jummah. Whether it is aksham, ja-ciya or sabah, go and see. Forget about Jummah or the days when religious holidays are celebrated, such as Bajram. It is a measure of how sincere we are as believers. The same goes for Orthodox and Catholics, I talk to those people."

13% (10/77) of the interviewees pointed out the problem of nominal believers in all three denominations, which further complicates the influence of religion. Several actors from other sectors (8/56), of various religious affiliations, and two Orthodox priests (2/21), drew attention to this problem. Real values can be taken from religion. However, if this is approached superficially or incorrectly, misinterpretations are possible. The head of a service within the entity government says: "The problems are there, both in the interpretation of what value is, and then in the ability of an individual or group to recognize real values. The question is whether an individual or group takes essentially real values from religion or they are satisfied with something less important, mostly superficial and very often wrong."

One politician explains the types of nominal believers he recognizes: "What we have in everyday practice I call – religion without God. So, the first thing with religion is God, and when you acknowledge God and believe in God, everything is different. If we did at least a little [like that] (...), the situation would be brought to a normal level. However, you have a traditional believer who, while living in the countryside with his family, adopted the religious practice of going to a mosque, a church and doing certain things, without ever thinking about the existence of God or ever wondering what it really means. Thus, this kind of traditional [practice of faith] is adopted through socialization. And you have those that camouflage themselves in religion.

Those who worshipped and bowed to Tito now worship God. Tomorrow they will worship or bow to someone else."

There is a perceived need for authority of any kind, to make one feel safe there. There are very few true believers, a number of interviewees are saying. The interviewed social psychologist does not interpret the second type of nominal believers through the need for authority but through pragmatism:

"It's not faith, it's a falsification of faith, because now you have to be a Serb, a Croat, a Muslim, to succeed in life. You take pictures, you are baptized, that's the "must have". You don't have true believers there, they are nationalists who embrace/wrap themselves in faith to be more authentic." The problem of nominal believers in the context of reconciliation lies in their reckless approach to religious content and rituals. Our interlocutor, a member of the entity assembly, speaking of believers who follow instructions without prior thought, says that these people are potentially ready for lynching if a leader appears to them: "When it comes to religion, we go back to the Middle Ages (...) Today it is taken just like that. However, it makes you a pack of people, people who are potentially ready to lynch. Just give them a leader in the form of a holy face or something like that. Then people are ready for anything. So, after all, crimes were committed that way." He is not claiming that a hatred towards the stereotyped other is currently present, but if that stereotype gains in spontaneity, it will first manifest itself among declarative believers. But even now there is the most separation among those who are "declaratively believers, they are most divided."

We mentioned earlier that in a quantitative survey in 2013, 56% of respondents rated the activities of lay believers as effective for a reconciliation process. The assumption is that believers can contribute because the more sincere a believer is, the more tolerant and closer he or she is to another believer. One politician explains that "when someone becomes a true believer, he finds the strength to overcome his frustration [he overcomes resentment] and to be at least partly good." However, the problem is that interviewees judge that there are very few sincere believers to contribute to tolerance. The interviewees listed two main reasons why they do not consider the role of believers to be more important than it is. First, because of their small number in relation to nominal believers, and second, because it is a necessary consequence of distrust in religious organizations. To the interviewer's question *In your opinion, if we move away from religious communities as institutions, rather than when we talk about believers, would they, as sincere believers, have the potential to build good relations and reconciliation?*, a political scientist/radio journalist wondered who is building a sincere believer? Can this be the same person who, for example, "sinned on the battlefield of the worst crimes"? Although our other interviewee estimates that 90% of ordinary people want to do good, they cannot do that, because of those who "poison the public space". A politician says: "90% of people want to do good things,

they don't want to do bad things. However, we have one smaller team that poisons public space according to a well-tried formula and they are currently succeeding in that."

In each local environment, believers have specific problems and may have a quite particular profile. Therefore, one of the imams interviewed reminds fellow religious officials of the importance of getting to know their believers so that they can have a beneficial effect on their interpersonal relationships. Religious leaders understand their believers only after they get to know each other and when they realize and learn about the issues that believers and citizens face in their communities. However, due to the frequent relocation of priests or imams from one city to another, religious leaders face the challenge of meeting new believers and their problems repeatedly. He said: "Believe me, I worked in the Federation and in Republika Srpska, there are colleagues from other religious communities who also depend on the frequent relocation from one city to another, while in service, we realized through our conversation that until a person realizes the real burden, the actual situation, of followers, believers in a municipality, in a church community etc., they will not understand them. Only when they realize the issues they are faced with will they scan this situation sufficiently well and see the diagnosis." The imam then continued to talk about the problem of majority-minority relations: "You know, when we talk about both the Catholic and the Muslim citizens of Teslić, who are returnees, even though there are Orthodox citizens who are also refugees from some other places and came to live in Teslić, they are still referred to as refugees even today. (...) If someone tells you that you are a second-class citizen, they tell you publicly, it is hard for a person to face that, it's very difficult." Finally the Imam once again emphasized the importance of getting to know the believers in their location, their communities: "This is the only key, that we understand this situation of regular people, and go among them. And who ever moved around with his sermons – I was in both entities – they know what it's like when one side is the majority and what it's like when the other side is the majority." The imam gave an example of how he works to improve relationships: "I am from an environment – where I was born and spent a part of my life growing up – where Bosniaks are an absolute majority with over 90%. (...) And my village is next to another village where the majority of citizens are Orthodox. I often go there, I ask my people there what their relationship towards these citizens is, and they often say: 'What kind of a relationship should be, there is no relationship, we don't care, they live…' I tell them: 'This is a wrong way of thinking, and here's why: If you are friendly, attentive and normal towards them, these Serbs of mine will be friendly, attentive and normal towards my returnees to the same extent'."

A theological motivation for attempts to reconcile monotheistic believers is posed: Is this the same God? If God is One, and if the revelation is the same, then it makes sense to try and restore peace among people by using theological arguments. One

religious actor notes, "… if you listen to religious leaders, you will hear that they are all saying that we are children of one God, that all of us, being monotheistic religions that are Abrahamic, have the same origin and that it's all the same thing." He adds that we should insist that monotheistic religions are all Abrahamic religions and that 90% of the content is the same across the monotheistic religions.

The religious actors also suggested in interview that religion also has a role in the process of becoming familiarized with others, including with those that are different, through education about them, especially where religion is seen as the only thing that divides the people in B&H.

> Professor: "When we talk about coexistence in B&H, what stands out is the common life across different religions and nationalities in B&H that existed before the war. However, after the war, the question that arises is what was this coexistence, considering the evils experienced during the war? It is obvious that coexistence was not followed by adequate knowledge and familiarization with other religions and nationalities, or their history, culture and literature. One of the starting points should definitely be a repeated, but more serious and deeper mutual, introduction of people who are nationally and religiously different. (…) We in B&H lack a serious and thorough knowledge of the other and their religion, culture and tradition."

In the testimonies of the interviewees, we distinguished a number of potential ways of getting to know other religious communities that are present. In that context, the subject Culture of Religions was mentioned by three non-religious actors, and with respect to religious education five out of six of the religious education teachers believe that the prescribed two / three hours a year about other religious community is not enough. If there is good will among religious teachers, then there are more opportunities for learning: most of these interviewees mentioned meetings as a way to gain a true understanding of the other and to enrich oneself. However, as we will see, the interviewees had several objections to the realization of this role of religion, and many more suggestions besides.

> Catholic religious studies teacher: "When I taught a lesson on Islam, I took my students to visit the religious teacher of the Islamic catechism. We also visited the Orthodox religious teacher, so we compared and looked for common ground. It is a treasure with which we can enrich and understand each other. We will never be able to fully understand someone who lives his faith. It's different to learn, and it's different to live. But we can teach our children to know and to visit religious sites."

Meeting and cooperating with religious actors are also important because people look at them as role models. The interviewees emphasized the importance of meetings at all levels, from those among religious leaders at the highest level to local ones, between religious teachers, as well as bringing together the population of different religious affiliations at joint events. They considered formal and informal meetings equally important, and resented hypocrisy about this and absence from

such events. In the interviews, hypocrisy was most often assigned to higher-ranking religious persons.

One activist always looks to ensure that four religious leaders meet within projects, noting that it is good for them (four religious leaders) to meet and important to take photos together, "because that is very important to our people, it is a message that tells the people symbolically that they are together and a new, more positive social capital, that religion is producing, is being formed." All the local priests and imams interviewed supported the idea of cooperating in the local context, attending each other's receptions and other events, but they also noted problems.

> Orthodox priest: "Religious representatives can certainly contribute through their effort, their appearances, their speeches, their joint meetings, joint projects we have, suggested or accepted – that after seeing their religious representatives the people can sit down together and talk, and that they also want to do the same in their micro-world of their families, neighbourly relations, at work place, and so on."

It is good for religious leaders to meet informally as well, to drink coffee several times a year in their uniform when there are some events.

> Orthodox priest: "… I think that it is very important here that religious leaders give an example of cooperation with people of different nations, faiths, with everyone who is different in every sense. I see that it is very important here in Mostar that we meet with Catholic priests and with imams, muftis, and so on, not only at these official receptions, but also in everyday life. This makes a great contribution. The examples that we give in everyday life, without saying a word, are very important for these communities. And the opposite, when we shut ourselves off from others, the community shuts itself off as well. Maybe the most important thing of all is the message that religious leaders are sending."

> Imam: "And that is precisely why – I mean locally when I talk about Teslić – it would mean a lot to ordinary people, not only returnees, but all people (…) if we were to decide to reach an agreement to go out in our robes, to have a cup of coffee once, twice, three times, several times a year, when there are some events."

A second level of cooperation takes place, or doesn't take place, among the religious education teachers. The interviewed religious teachers shared their positive experiences – this is not a large enough sample to say their attitudes are representative, but they come from across the country. We heard how they hold classes in Brčko together, organize visits to religious sites of other religious communities in Brčko, Mostar and Teslić, hang out during breaks between classes in Brčko and Janja. The curricula prescribe several hours of processing the issues of other religious communities for each class, and such cooperation depends on the good will of the religious teachers.

> Orthodox religious teacher: "It's wonderful when children see that we hang out, help each other and love each other; that's the best that children can see. When they have a

lesson in school and when they see us – three religious teachers, how we go together, how we laugh, how we communicate without any problems."

Catholic religious teacher: "I come from the area of Žepče, from an environement that is still affected by the consequences of the war. Then we were at war with others, now we are at war with each other. There were two schools under one roof. That is not the case here in Brčko, and it is a step forward in coexistence. Sometimes it is a problem to understand all these details. Not everything is great here, but we have certainly taken a step further in the Brčko area."

The religious teachers noted that only a few children had negative reactions to their socializing and cooperation; moreover, some religious teachers believe that their cooperation contributed to a significant shift in the children's relaxation towards each other.

Orthodox religious studies teacher: "We can say that we have a small interreligious council almost every day. As representatives of all three denominations, we sit for coffee every day, exchange opinions, organize children to visit religious facilities. High school students and older children are a little more mischievous, but they also have shifts and results. We can be their role models. Mostly this is the case, although 'there is a black sheep in every flock', on one, on the other and on the third side, but these are not so common. So, we have satisfying and friendly communication every day."

Islamic religious studies teacher: "We came to a much more relaxed relationship compared to what I found when I came [to high school in Brčko]. I like that. (...) In our school it is quite relaxed and, in a way, that Orthodox children, almost 70 percent of the children, greet me with 'selam'. Yesterday I met a boy who is considered naughty, he is Orthodox and he greeted me with 'selam' in the city center. I think my colleagues and I contributed to that. Those joint classes, joint visits to mosques, churches and so on."

A former religious teacher of Catholic religious education noted: One of the most beautiful scenes, perhaps a bit strange, while I was working at the School of Economics, the three of us religious teachers, during the break, we went to drink coffee together. On the one hand, it is a message to children and others that we can find a common [theme]. The problem is if we start looking for details. We need to look at what we have in common and what we can accomplish together. And that is – primarily to teach people how to be human, how to respect their own, but also to respect others. If I don't respect others, I probably don't respect my own. This leads to the fact that I do not know how to appreciate how others live their nationality and their religion. As long as I can find common ground on different topics and jokes, we can laugh, we can break down those stereotypes, as the saying goes, "birds of a feather flock together."

A third level of cooperation is established between members of different confessions, i.e. believers, when they participate together in activities for the good of all, work on some common activities and programs, or when they attend religious holidays. Many interviewees stressed the importance of nurturing neighborly relations in these ways.

> Representative of a minority nationality: "It seems to me that it is very good to see people who are known to come from different confessions – I am talking about confessions rather than about ethnic groups or confessional nations – working together on something, playing together, doing performances or singing in a choir together, or doing anything for the good of all together, it can be encouraging. But of course, these are isolated cases, on which it would be difficult to base reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But it can work very well in local environments, and it can help avoid something that happened to us in '92 from happening ever again, and it can help us try and live again as we lived here for centuries, one with the other, and not one next to the other, on which they are insisting now."

> Teacher of Islamic religious education: "Our task [as religious teachers – ed.] is to build these moral values in children, to try and plant in them concern for their fellow man, that the neighbour is sacred in our religion, regardless of their confession." When we celebrate our holidays, we should not forget our neighbors, we should also visit them. Also, we need to visit them for their holidays, we need to cooperate. It's happening. (...). For example, for Bajram, when it comes to sacrificing Kurban-bajram, we also share our meat with our neighbors, that is our task, that is, the custom and, above all, the practice in our area."

We will now turn to the influence that interviewees believe that religious education has on the reconciliation process. Religious education was mentioned by 34% of the interviewees (26/77). Of the religious actors, 61% (13/21) shared their opinion: among them, six religious teachers, three Islamic, two Orthodox and one Catholic. On the other hand, religious education is on the radar of 23% (13/56) of the actors from outside the religious sector who were interviewed. Topics arising from the interviews concerning the role of religious education in the reconciliation process can be classified into several categories. Starting from the belief that religious education is a return to tradition, that it has a function in building national identity, morality, freedom of thought, all the way to the assertion that it constitutes a challenge for dialogue, or that it contributes to separation between people.

After the fall of the previous system and the initiation of the democratization of society, repressed identities hastily started a struggle for social positioning. Ostensibly traditional values were affirmed through religious teachings, interwined with different customs and traditions, and these were not sufficiently known by citizens, neither in their own religion nor in regard to the religions of other citizens. In this way, religious education took the centre stage in attempts to form and renew identity, and also to bridge the historic gap of about 45 years in religious continuity.[10] Looked at from the perspective of the state of religious education today, its orientation to-

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10   In 1944, it was reduced to an optional subject, and in 1952, it was completely abolished in schools. Preparations for its reintroduction in B&H began in 1991, and it was introduced everywhere by 1994. Sources: Ninoslav Kačarić, "Srpska pravoslavna verska nastava u Srbiji - istorijat i perspective", *Istraživanja u pedagogiji,* 2014/2, 54-55; Zorica Kuburić and Christian Moe, eds., *Religion and Pluralism in Education - Comparative Approaches in the Western Balkans*, CEIR, Novi Sad, 2006, 74.

wards form and belonging can be noticed, while the path that leads to peace and reconciliation arises from the essence of religious thought, and it would be good to focus more on it.

Three out of six religious teachers testify that they had experiences when they were not welcome during the period when religious instruction was introduced in the high schools, such was the resistance to religious education. The religious teacher of Islamic religious education says that she notices more mistrust and negative comments related to religious education in high schools on social networks than she meets in person, i.e. she says "the situation is quite different in the field."

One interviewee, an NGO project coordinator, expressed her negative opinion: "You may have heard, it has not been decided yet. We have religion from the first to the ninth grade in primary schools and there was a recent initiative to introduce religion in secondary schools. Religious education as a compulsory subject is in secondary schools. Fortunately, the professional public rebelled, [the department] of psychology and the Faculty of Political Sciences [in Banja Luka] sent a certain comment on that and it has not been adopted yet, everything has calmed down. The fact that something like this is announced in our country, and then realized [is bad]; just like that, for example, they change the laws in our country. In the fourth grade, students are taught the subject *Democracy and Human Rights* and at the same time *Culture of Religions*; *Religious Education* is also introduced in schools, in parallel with the mentioned subjects." A sociologist of religion also commented on the haste of the decision, that it was agreed by two people, representatives of the entities and the bishop of the Banja Luka diocese, after which the agreement was publicly announced on television.

A number of interviewees attribute resistance to religion to previously formed images of faith being a dogmatized matter, a conservative, rounded and closed system. Religious education seems like a step backwards to the time before it was excluded from the education system.

Other interviewees have negative expectations about religious education for fear that religious education could influence or even encourage the development of stronger nationalism. First, because religious education belongs to the group of national subjects due to which children are physically divided and go to separate classrooms. Second, in these classrooms, children do not learn enough about others, or mention others by emphasizing their differences. In this sense, some are of the opinion that confessional religious instruction participates in the systemic violence and indoctrination perpetrated by the current regime. No matter how justified this structure of separation is in terms of linguistic understanding, it is more influenced by the context of cultural backgrounds and events throughout history. Language, history, geography (with elements of state organization and national geography) and religious

education are the pillars of identity where personal, national and religious identity is formed, along with the return to traditional lifestyles, which includes religious rituals and ceremonies that were lost since the abolition of religious education in Yugoslavia in 1952.

The atmosphere at a school can be positively oriented towards cooperation, and yet even in these cases it may be negative when it comes to religious education. Religious education teachers are able to cooperate in some localities, while they cannot in others.

According to most of the interviewees from other sectors, the many ways that religious and national identity are linked at the moment, and the manner in which religious education is currently organized in schools, have the effect of further stratifying society and increasing differences.

Of the thirteen interviewees not working in the religious sphere who mentioned religious education, 61% (8/13) emphasized that it contributes to separation. On the other hand, this is not the view presented in the interviews with religious actors. One priest was of the opinion that religious education was not organized for the needs of those students who choose a life of faith. The interviewed religious teachers notice outbursts of an unhealthy connection between religious and national identity, but they do not think that there are any problems with the subject itself.

> Orthodox religious studies teacher: "Very often they blame us for influencing children in favour of national insults. In fact, we do not cause it, nor do we induce children to do so, but insults on a national basis do not even exist, they are just individual cases. There was really great resistance to the introduction of religious education in high schools. We were not very welcome at the beginning, because people publicly talked about how they are not in favor of introducing religious education, that religious education should be in church yards, in mosque yards. That we have nothing to look for outside these limits, which is completely wrong."

> Executive director of a women's rights NGO: "We do not have a systemic approach [to work for reconciliation through education]. First, when there is a systemic approach, you will not have religious education classes, but you will have a subject that will bring together rather than separate. In this case we will not have a situation where some children sit in class and some wait in the yard. We need to get to know each other."

> Sociologist of religion: "There is a concept of religious education that is confessional, which creates even more differences between religious groups. Children do not learn about the other in any subject, they only learn about their religious community. So, there were attempts to introduce subjects that are multi-confessional, which use a multi-confessional model within the culture through which children would be given the opportunity to talk about the religious communities that exist in our area. However, the biggest opponents of this type of education were religious communities. They

were [against] perhaps, because they were afraid that they would lose that confessional model of teaching, and thus their job. And most importantly, they feared losing potential believers who would form part of the religious community in the future. It is absurd that the Interreligious Council itself was against the Culture of Religions as a subject that would be outside religious communities. There were also bizarre situations. In the Easter message, one bishop told the children not to go to the subject Culture of Religions. The priest in Bjeljina made leaflets using the devil where it was written: Culture of Religions is the devil. I think we are simply in trouble when we want to talk about the other, because the system does not offer knowledge of the other. I think that the children themselves do not have the 'experience of difference', as defined by prof. Šušnjić. These are homogeneous monoethnic environments, and thus we do not direct children to the other at all. I think that the basis for starting a dialogue is primarily knowledge about the other, but that knowledge is missing. One writer wrote a great thing: to live in Bosnia and Herzegovina you have to be a sociologist of religion. Why? Because the environment is so intertwined with different influences, different religious discourses, practices, etc. Why is such knowledge needed? So that when you go out on the street, you know who to congratulate; therefore, one needs to know. Unfortunately, there is no such knowledge."

Preschool education specialist: "Not enough is being done in the field of religious education and teaching of religious culture in schools. There is still division. The analysis of curricula by proMENTE, *What we teach children*, confirms that we can improve a lot in the education sector."

It is clear that confessional religious education has as its primary goal the knowledge of one's own religious and national identity, and not of others. All of the religious teachers interviewed believe that the contribution that religious education has to the knowledge of one's own identity is important, that it is important for citizens to know who they are, and that such an investment will lead to greater tolerance in the long run. One of the starting theses is that believers who defend their faith without sufficient knowledge and understanding are more likely to provoke conflicts. A teacher of Catholic religious education notes that people who do not know why they should respect their faith, do not know why they should respect others. The psychological basis of respecting someone else's need to express themself religiously lies in one's own experience of such a need. It can then be conceived so that others also have such a need. The second thesis assumes that the teaching of religious education achieves educational outcomes, that children become better people and better believers.

A Catholic theology professor advises that when this is already the case in this area, that ethnic and religious identities are so connected, then they should be seen to be properly connected through the education of religious teachers, imams and priests, so that they can further spread a healthy influence:

"Since, unfortunately or fortunately, ethnic and religious identities coincide in our country, it is very important in the work of priests and religious teachers to correct-

> ly connect their ethnicity and their religious affiliation. Imams, Catholic priests and Orthodox priests are expected to be somehow, patriotic, as well. That they originated from the people and that they serve the people in terms of ethnic interests, needs, and so on. Therefore, the education of religious teachers, imams and priests is very important for their future influence on their own believers in the process of building reconciliation and trust."

However, two religious and one political actor pointed out that currently students of theological schools do not have enough knowledge of others and difference.

> Orthodox priest: "We often see how students of Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic religious schools do not have enough knowledge about each other and contact with each other."

In the words of the Catholic professor of theology, we may note that the initiative to connect religious and national identity can come from believers. We find the same attitude in some earlier statements, for example from Orthodox theologians, "society in Bosnia and Herzegovina (...) connects national identities with a certain religious structure."

However, from the analysis of the content of the interview, we conclude that it is not certain from whom the initiative starts, because other interviewees believe that politics is responsible for strengthening this connection, and that the introduction of religious education was initiated by national parties. They believe that religious education would be completely different if it were introduced by religious communities for their own needs – to grow up in the faith. Others believe that religious communities care about connecting with national identity in order to strengthen their power and it was for this reason that it was important for them to introduce confessional religious instruction.

Sociologist of religion: "We recently had an absurd and unpleasant situation when a representative of the entity agreed with the bishop of the Banja Luka diocese on the introduction of religious education in high schools. They also agreed on a public [agreement] on television. It is the abuse of the religious community by politics and vice versa, the abuse of politics by the religious community. That is the point, that political leaders themselves address those who are in the majority because it will enable them to survive in power and promotes them politically."

> Catholic priest: "I think that religious education was introduced in schools in our country by national parties, it was not organized by the church. I fought very hard for the church to organize religious education in schools and to realize its needs for building a Christian community. However, in our country, religious education in schools was done by HDZ, SDA, national parties. Religious education in schools is more an education for national ideology than for religion. Recently, the cardinal told everyone, including me, that he could punish us who are against religious education in schools. And I said to my provincial: 'Tell the cardinal that I have never been against religious education in schools, that religious education in schools should not be the ideology of

the HDZ, but that it should be for the church to organize it. And, in this case, religious education was handed over to the HDZ.' (...) Why did [religious leaders] allow this? What did they do with religious teachers and all this? This should be viewed objectively. Then we will see that it is an ideologized religious instruction, and that the HDZ considers it its own, and the SDP considers it someone else's. Now, the norm in Croatia is that non-national parties are against religious education in schools."

Interviewees spoke of the role of religion in the resocialization of values and that these values are common across the religions.

From the testimony given by our cohort of religious teachers, it is absolutely right that religious teachings be presented to children in the classroom, in spite of opposition. One puts it thus. The child's personality is built primarily indirectly, through religious teachings, to cherish peace and respect their tradition, and the educational system and curricula will never be ideal.

> Orthodox religious studies teacher: "When I started working in this school last year, religious education was introduced in high school – three confessional religious studies, Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic. Then an alternative subject was introduced for students who do not want to learn any of these three religious studies, and that subject is Ethics. I have noticed that other colleagues have a fear that this religious education will cause the opposite effect by introducing some recent national passions. But religious education really fulfilled its purpose, and responded extremely positively. It is impossible to find an ideal solution systematically, it's a utopia, you cannot make a curriculum that is ideal, and maybe this curriculum doesn't have some teaching units that talk about this problem – about reconciliation and trust, perhaps they are treated more from the point of view of religion, whether it is historical text or religious education. It is the personality of the religious teacher who is among all these children and who should arouse the values that each of our three religious preaches: love, understanding, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, should be aroused."

Religious education complements the educational tasks of attending school, it raises people, too.

> Islamic religious studies teacher: "From my concrete experience, I do not see why religious education would be an obstacle or would lead to the deterioration of interpersonal [relationships]. I even think that faith and religion should educate people. We have said that most subjects have become an educational set, a set where only information is placed, multiplied, and so on. Religious education should, in fact, upgrade this educational element in children. *Interviewer*: In which direction does such an educational element go? *Interviewee*: First of all, it goes to the moral aspect. It is very evident that in our society morality is very lowly valued, very lowly ranked, and our basic task is to build these moral values in children, to try and plant in them the concern for the fellow man, that the neighbour is sacred in our religion, regardless of their confession."

This interviewee added that religious education in school contributes to the cherishing of freedom, adding that freedom as a value can be seen both in the Bible and Quran:

> As such, it encourages a person to fight for good things, not to be afraid to step in and act independently when necessary, and not to be subject to pressure. The religious teacher notes that through faith she empowers "the individual to think and to dare to act proactively from freedom, to ask, to demand, to know that there is a right that some things can be different. We [religious teachers] do this through faith, teaching children that they must sacrifice that they may also be hungry, but that their need for freedom should be above the need for food. This is what happened when [Moses] brought the people out of slavery. As soon as they got hungry they said 'all this is nice, but we are hungry'. If my students complain to me that the professor is unfair to them, I tell them 'So why don't you react, it is your right, if you think s/he is not doing everything right, s/he is unfair to you'. And they say, 'Well, s/he did, but s/he'll hate me later and s/he'll want revenge on me'. (...) They complain to me, but I can't help them, so I say: Go to [the one who is causing the problem] (...) if you think you deserve a solution. But it takes strength, character, and they have to detach themselves from their personal need for something. Because if we step up, it is very possible that our existence will be endangered."

Religion can also contribute to another type of freedom, the feeling of personal freedom in deciding the meaning of life and death. Religious education i.e. religion can provide this in the search for answers to questions of the origin of life, death, love, hate. Religious education functions in favour of freedom of thought, belief and feeling, when it enters into a dialogue with science, because it is often perceived as opposed to science. Here we are talking about atheistic and religious approaches to the issues of life and death, which can be equally exclusive, dogmatic, and which do not leave the possibility of agnosticism, re-examination. It is necessary that science is properly understood, not as a dogma, and this can be achieved where religion and science are reconciled.

> Islamic religious studies teacher: "Children in the fifth grade learn theories about the origin of the world for the first time. They already did it during nature classes and then they came to me and asked me how Islam views the origin of the world. I told them, they carefully listened, and now I see them thinking deeply about it all. Then a little girl tells me, 'We did it'. And I ask, 'What did the teacher tell you?' And she said: 'The teacher said: Children, we have different theories about the origin of the world, there are many of them (...) get to know them all and you will decide which of them you will believe in'. I said, 'That's perfect'. And I was very happy that we have a teacher like this. There can be no collision. I teach my children to explore. Only a few people are given the opportunity to believe in their choice of religion. There is no need for them to fear that they will find something that will arouse suspicion and shake their faith."

Religious education is also a challenge for the dialogue between different religions and view of the world, if that potential is used by religious teachers. The thematic treatment of other religious communities on religious education is required in two or three classes annually for each class (year) by the curriculum. Providing a positive or negative connotation about other religions has a significant influence on mutual relations in the society, and that is decided by religious teachers. Who will regulate their emotional relationship?

5 Conclusion

Just as reconciliation is a process that takes place on several levels with the aim of rebuilding broken social ties and relationships, our research is one such process. It was conducted in several phases, so that deeper insight could be sought: an initial set of interviews with a range of specialists and stakeholders was followed by a pilot survey, then a larger survey of attitudes in the general population was undertaken in 13 cities, the results were analysed in focus group interviews in the 13 localities, public meetings were held in each location to broaden the findings from the focus groups, and, finally, this publication has presented results from semi-structured interviews with a range of key actors, again in all 13 cities. The interviewees identify the main obstacles to further reconciliation and formulate recommendations for the improvement of these processes. In conclusion, the research team will review the work we have done in presenting and framing the insights and experiences of our interview partners.

Ana Raffai has written that in peacebuilding studies in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, scholars have noted that 'Who is right?' can be less important than 'Who is well-meaning?' (Raffai, 2007: 30). This reflects the fact that for many questions it is difficult to come to a complete truth, and even that a complete, single truth may be both impossible and even undesirable, and that this could lead, paradoxically, to a freezing of the state to the detriment of social pluralism. On the other hand, extreme pluralization where it takes the form of polarization is also undesirable: we see this in Bosnia today, it marks many social relations, and it is most reproduced through the existing political structures. For the political figures who themselves were interviewed, according to the quantitative analysis presented here, the biggest obstacles to reconciliation were recognized in the activities of political elites, within the existing political system and in the party and electoral subsystem. The politicians who unfolded their own perspectives on reconciliation to our research team themselves spoke of the irresponsibility of politicians, corruption, non-advocacy for citizens and peoples, which further deepen the problems that exist at the level of formal legal regulation.

Two thirds of the interviewees (69%, 53/77) claim that the political leadership encourages religious and ethnic divisions in different ways, a judgement made equally by those in the political sector (69%, 11/16) and those from other sectors (71%, 43/61), a range of interviewees recognizing that there had been a greater turn towards

conflict by the political elites in the period after 2009-2010. Interviewees considered the policy of division, at the utilitarian level, to be profitable in elections – according to some interviewees, it is actually staged – and for this reason the state of division and the continual reheating of conflict is perpetuated, through the politicization of the educational system, through the practice in the media, focusing on advocacy to the detriment of professional journalism, and through control over associations with ethnic prefixes, especially when it comes to associations representing victims (which should be distinguished from associations working directly with victims of trauma treatment) and veterans' associations.

On the other hand, the importance of local initiatives, and of activities initiated from below by local associations, is also stressed by interviewees. The obstacles to local reconciliation initiatives include problems such as donor orientation and dependence, fragmentation and lack of commitment, lack of critical attitude and insufficient work. Interviewees underlined that civil society initiatives are weakened where they are unwilling to work with political actors. This is said to be most often due to taking the line of least resistance, and thereby avoiding the challenges that are key to this work. The divide between civil society and the political creates an unproductive form of parallelism, such that at present it is judged that civil society is almost completely separated from the political.

Nevertheless, we can also see the testimony presented in the study in light of Lederach's notion of the gift of pessimism, which is the framing through which the complexity of the peacebuilding and reconciliation process is realized. This pessimism, unlike cynicism, does not say that change is not desired or impossible, but this pessimism is nevertheless a gift from a realist perspective – a starting point for examining the authenticity of change (Lederach, 2005: 55). In this vein, interviewees did not reject the notion of reconciliation and clearly consider it to be important. Their responses mirrored the results of the 2013 survey, in which as many as 75.4% of respondents answered that a serious attempt to build relations between religious and ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have an impact on the future of the country" (Wilkes et al., 2013a: 7). Interviewees see obstacles and problems in the sectors in which they operate, as well as in other sectors, and such a diagnosis is, if we refer to peace theorist and practitioner Johan Galtung, who uses medical terms, an integral part of both rehabilitation after conflict and the prevention of future harm. Problems are known and recognized within their sector, but also in other sectors, which is also valuable given that many interviewees have experience working in multiple sectors. Their clear-sighted view of the multiple types of obstruction faced currently is a significant human resource for eventual strengthening and improvement of cooperation.

At the same time, a large number of interviewees pointed out that there are also now a number of positive examples to be learnt from, from individual forms of engagement in politics, education, religion to initiatives implemented by informal groups and formal civil society organizations, as well as in initiatives advancing cooperation between sectors. However, due to the problems present in the media sphere and the lack of communication between sectors, many positive examples and initiatives are not sufficiently visible to the public. This is seen especially to be due to the orientation of the media to negative content, on the principle of "if it bleeds, it leads", and as a result of the tendency to sensationalist reporting. Thirty-three of the 77 interviewees (43%) presented (without prompting) with the view that people on the ground actually enjoy better relationships than seems to be the case in the media. As one interviewee, an activist and peacemaker, put it, the "ordinary man" feels this change. However, for these positive changes to be sustainable, they see the importance of greater political participation of citizens: it is crucial that it is not only a few people who are politically engaged, and this political participation implies the importance and the willingness of people outside the party system to inform, cooperate with and control the political elites.

A large number of interviewees have high expectations of religious actors and of religion in general, many emphasising the universal message and corpus of common values of the four traditional churches and religious communities in BiH, arguing that these send strong symbols which are important resources for reconciliation processes. Most agree that this has not been sufficiently exploited. There are some differences of opinion when it comes to the contributions of religious actors, and most particularly over the ways in which religious representatives encourage and fuel divisions. Some interviewees also mentioned positive examples of religious individuals and initiatives. One of the problems identified is the lack of communication between the secular and religious, which is reflected, for example, in a lack of understanding over the concept of civil society organizations motivated by religion, as was emphasised by interviewee who is both a peacemaker and an activist working in one such organization. The issue of confessional religious education in public schools was critically approached by more than half of the interviewees from other sectors, as well as by one Catholic priest. By contrast, religious actors and religious teachers in particular, mentioned positive contributions made by confessional education, notably with regard to their understanding of the importance of deepening spirituality as a resource for social and political ethics. They also raised concrete examples of cooperation in this sphere, both some of which they know and others in which they have participated.

Turning to the structures on which reconciliation and trust building depends, interviewees recognized the importance both of better integration within each of the sectors and of systemic forms of cooperation between different sectors. Interviewees

identified two models or strategies by which concrete steps can be taken to involve a wide range of actors in the reconciliation process more successfully. The first approach is more optimistic and starts from a position of greater self-confidence, proposing a flexible approach to bottom-up socialization. The second model implies that a transformational leap is needed due to the weight of deep structural conflicts between the political "elite", its supporters and some other groups of citizens. These conflicts might be complex, with economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Interviewees working in civil society, and in both religious and non-governmental sectors, recognized three ways of acting in a society in which there is a clear conflict between the "elite" and the citizens:

Those who adopt the first version of the model above suggest that inclusion be extended to different groups of actors that have been poorly involved so far, and that it be extended to different localities. This implies the inclusion of a wide range of different sectors of the population in reconciliation activities.

The second version of the model reverses this and into the reconciliation processes that join people together proposes the inclusion of power structures, which are estimated to be the most prone to conflict – and currently absent from the reconciliation process. If they do not get involved, reconciliation work could be risky in the sense that it could also provoke a strengthening of their opposing reactions, lobbying new members to pursue their interests, or reconciliation efforts may remain ineffective, useless.

A third version suggests that a priority for reconciliation activity is the involvement of "middle-level actors" who are interested in connecting for a variety of reasons. Involving "middle-level actors" is intended to be an effective strategy for communicating positive influences to a wider spectrum of members of the communities from which these actors come. This could be seen, for example, in the view of one interviewee that religious officials could help to reach influential and educated people and that these people could improve the functioning of NGO programs. Those influential and educated people could then also help with advice, suggestions, project ideas, they could help materially, or they could help by getting involved in activities themselves. John-Paul Lederach considers mid-level actors to be crucial for reconciliation work, because they have more access, more time and more ways to engage across the dividing lines than people at the top and bottom do. At the top of the social pyramid are a very small political and economic elite, and the vast majority of the population constitute a grassroots, or the bottom of a pyramid. In between, there are active members of institutions who can communicate between the elite and the grassroots, and across social and potentially political divides. In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this view could rely on several problematic assumptions. One is that these actors at the middle level of the pyramid can be distinguished separately

from ordinary people or from the non-governmental sector. We noticed among the interviewees comments that the value of non-governmental organisations is that they are seen as part of ordinary society or the "lower" strata of society. They see in BiH that individual forms of cooperation are more evident than systemic or institutional cooperation. This is evident, for example, through the cooperation of individual members of the academic community, who belong to the middle level, with local NGOs. Several interviewees note that there are no systemic forms of connection between formal and non-formal education. The same is said of civil society. One example of such a form of connection is the master's course on Interreligious Studies and Peacebuilding, which was initiated by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and by the Catholic, Islamic and Orthodox theological faculties, with the cooperation of professors who teach at social science faculties. This network or alliance comes from outside the institutions it works with, and this is a source of innovative quality, but also raises questions about its own systemic sustainability and about the general support for such courses within the higher education system. The networking process has its drawbacks that need to be overcome. As Lederach states, the key dilemma when it comes to building peace and reconciliation is how to coordinate different but related activities at different levels of the affected society (Lederach, 1999: 33). This demands attention at a systemic and institutional level.

Based on the interviewees' analyses of the situation in the public sector and their proposals for the inclusion of representatives from those sectors in joint projects and activities related to building trust and reconciliation, we will list what seem to be the real possibilities of inclusion of a wide range of actors in BiH. The conclusions presented also refer to the ways of overcoming the problem of inclusion of politicians, religious leaders, teachers, religious teachers, professors, academics, other researchers, journalists and non-governmental organizations, and the inclusion of subgroups of civil society.

The interviewees presented several aspirations for the design of programs and activities which have an inclusive approach to the reconciliation process. Willingness to change work methodologies is important when it comes to activities that engage people from different populations or professions. One interviewee, an Orthodox priest, believes that one should have a range of different approaches and be ready to constantly find new ways. Signals for change to be aware of come from noticing changes in the socio-political conditions, consciousness and needs of the people, or from recognizing one's own mistakes in previous efforts.

One recommendation is to involve as many social actors as possible who can work on the same topic – for example, politicians, the media, NGOs, international actors – and in the same project. Likewise, non-governmental actors dealing with similar issues, for example the past, should network together without fear of losing their

monopoly on the topic, their standing, donations and profile. One interviewee, a professor of security and peace studies, points out that there is a lack of awareness about this – that "the process of networking, the growth of various activities with as many actors as possible, in fact strengthens all actors individually." A second interviewee, a pre-school education expert, believes that the creation of sustainable networks is an important objective for the mobilization of resources to work on the reconciliation process. Intergroup contacts have great potential in healing and improving relations and this is a strategy that is often used in various peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, but the question of what positive consequences are, and under what conditions they are achieved, is still open (Čehajić Clancy, 2018: 102, 103). What has been observed in research is that it is important to strengthen the perceptions of others as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous groups (ibid., 104). Although the interviewees had somewhat different views on the place and role of national and religious identities in reconciliation processes, the ovewhelming majority see that it is important to expand on these identities through changes in the self-perception and perceptions of the other (Long and Brecke, 2003: 32).

More frequent encounters between groups that are distant and not in close dialogue are needed in order to remove prejudices, to get to know the other, and to be able to work more constructively on common problems. For example, women's organizations can advance through projects with leaders of religious communities, exchanging views and getting to know each other's values. Otherwise like-minded people stick together and their world is closed. This recommendation came from an interviewee with many years of experience working on conflict transformation, and she shared her observation that everyone within their profession is "produced", and their horizons are framed by this. The approach she recommends implies the advantage of having a good knowledge of how the consciousness of people of a certain professional orientation works, as well as knowledge of the specifics of each profession. For example, in several interviews with religious actors, interviewees saw the importance of paying attention to the way in which something new will be presented to their communities. Another example in which this arises is in the networking of NGOs from different sectors and dealing with different interests in a joint project, such as the Pro-Budućnost project.

There is a stereotype about religious actors being divisive actors, embedded in a polarising, nationalistic elite political game, and the interviews we conducted show a quite different picture of the attitudes held by religious actors across the country. The competitive ethnonationalist structures are remarked upon by religious interviewees, and their views of the country's objectives are in many respects markedly independent and different. This can be seen, for instance, in the advice religious leaders had for sensitizing the community on what is needed to build trust and reconciliation, which is couched, naturally, in a religious language or perspective. A key message

religious leaders shared in interviews was that work to raise awareness in people will encourage inclusion. For example, one imam interviewed says that there are several factors that influence the establishment of peace or reconciliation, but he believes that the awareness of both prominent actors (educators, religious officials, etc.) and the ordinary public are both of prime importance. This emphasis on awareness building is behind another shared objective: that it is necessary to constantly emphasize in public that we are all human beings, that the common good is of moral value, and that it is important to be honest in our actions. The imam explains: "Why is the situation like this here in Bosnia? Because there is no honesty in actions, in politics, in economics, in performances, it is all acting and manipulation and hypocrisy." A similar opinion comes from the Orthodox priests interviewed. The way for people employed in the public sector to engage more in the direction of building trust and reconciliation is to show honesty towards them. It seems necessary to break the vicious circle of mistrust, so that everyone would actually try to be more honest and open in contacts: "if we weren't hollow, but if we were really honest and open, then the level of awareness could be raised and then [there could be] results in building peace." The religious leaders argued that not only the religious but all the groups which make up society (school employees, researchers, officials, both religious and state, police, media, lawyers, doctors, etc.) should work on building and expressing this awareness of the common good. As another Orthodox priest says: "So that it would not be just an empty story, but a true witness of love, again from that gospel perspective, our every contact not only in the church from the pulpit, from the service, but at all times, at school, on the street, in a tavern, a theater, in a hospital. There is a lot of work to be done on that." From the interviews with these actors, it can be seen that they argue that only those who are essentially motivated for such relationships can be sincere in their actions aimed at building trust and reconciliation. One of the Orthodox priests interviewed sees the education of people through religious communities to help each other as a pathway to motivate the general population, regardless of national and religious affiliation, to transfer such an approach outside the religious community, to the state and the common good: "You will simply have an educated a man, both religiously and nationally, but also socially, who will simply want to contribute to society to be better and of better quality in every sense." The religious actors we interviewed will not represent all clergy, but clearly across the country there are clergy of all faiths who do not represent their role as part of a divisive conflict with other nations or with secularists, and their discourse about reconciliation reflects neither a left-wing nor a right-wing factionalism. If a practical follow-on were to collect proposals from representatives of different professions on how the population can be motivated through their sector to invest in the common interests of BiH citizens, the recommendations of religious actors could be expected to make a contribution to civic and social cohesion where currently their role is so often framed more in relation to divisive partisanship.

Most of the interviewees expressed their commitment to a pyramid strategy of building peace, from the local to the center of power. In other words, they believe that it is a good strategy to build peace and relations at the local level and for this to influence the centers of power over time. Some expressed this clearly, others more implicitly. This choice is influenced by the opinion that it is easier for people to connect at the local level, and more difficult at the top of the power pyramid, where relations are more complicated because of the influence of business interests, because at that level there is a broader problem in the practice of non-compliance with agreements, and because of international interventions at that level. Some interviewees see that reconciliation and trust building is simply a natural process in ordinary people. Some interviewees point at concrete examples, that, for example, local politicians are more sensitive because of the context in which they live and work: what will happen to the mayor of Srebrenica, for example, if people clash there, the location in which he also lives. There is also the view that local activities when it comes to reconciliation are more measurable and concrete. Many mention the floods, how people spontaneously got involved, and this showed when the state failed.

In this study, the nature of local reconciliation activity is also problematised. Interviewees from local communities that are perceived by the general public as divided or conflicted (e.g. Jajce, Srebrenica) indicated that these problems are either distorted in public, or encouraged, by those who do not live in these communities, whether they are politicians exercising pressure or journalists framing news to maximise their impact. In that context, several interviewees mentioned the importance of organizing trips and getting to know different local communities through school excursions, mutual student visits, etc. On the other hand, there are studies which warn of a focus on low intensity changes at the local level. Elise Helms in her analysis of the work of women's civil society organizations in small communities and rural areas distinguishes between a thin reconciliation or coexistence where due to proximity mutual contacts are established, for example, through the institutions of the neighborhood and the invitation to coffee, and the more demanding process of the so-called thick reconciliation, which presuppose empathy and dialogue (Helms, 2010: 18). Helms notes that animosity and the perception of one's own group as morally superior are still present among women working in NGOs in small communities and rural areas (ibid., 19, 24). This builds on a particular understanding of a common anthropological distinction between thick and thin description and analysis. Michael Walzer has taken this in another direction, distinguishing between thin and thick moral realities, arguing for a thicker morality which engages both universal and local, intertwined. That they are interwined is part of the problem we witness in this study. Other recent anthropological research in Bosnia-Herzegovina has also treated the ways in which the dominant culture of local memory is produced through the connection between the political center and the periphery (Čengić, 2017: 5). The upshot is that forms of

cooperation at the local level will necessarily be intertwined: should there be further intensification of locally-based forms of cooperation, both within and between sectors, the strategy of moving from the local to the centers of power – which drew wide support from interviewees – may have greater effects.

A small number of interviewees believe that things must first be resolved at the political level and in education, so that work at the NGO level may have its effects. Advocates of this view did not offer proposals for concrete procedures to address problems at the political level, except for examples of some initiatives that need to be continued, such as joint visits of political leaders to places of suffering, erection of monuments / plaques recognising those who have suffered in localities in which they are in numerical terms minorities. The value of these initiatives is seen to lie in the positive message that is sent to the other, with the effect that the other communities may also follow such an example. One of the interviewees, director of a peace-building NGO, stated that civil society should be clearly connected and act together towards politicians (and donors) and with clear demands – that integration strategies must be integrated into important documents from the state to the local level, into development strategies. He argued that not everything comes down to politicians signing onto platforms. Another interviewee, a university professor, stated that when it comes to political leaders "their signature is not binding", and no one will sign a statement saying that they are not for peace. Others – the representative of a women's organization, a peace activist, the president of a human rights NGO – also criticized the practice of promoting such declarations, and noted the issue of understanding the value of those which were not actually initiated by politicians. On the other hand, the Platform for Peace within the Pro-Budućnost project is mentioned in a positive light by interviewees, it being important because it was signed by the mayors and mayors of 60 local communities,[11] which is a strategic document involving actors of different levels of the social and political pyramid.

The assessment that we are talking about two collapsed dimensions – local-state and people-political – requires more attention. This may not be applicable to all local areas, especially not those where certain sectors or nations are absent. Among those academic papers which nevertheless support this assessment, one 2015 Nansen Dialogue Center report is worth attention. The researchers report that it is easier for participants at the local level to ignore pressure that suspends (or slows down) engagement and cooperation at the state level. This may not be true in all locations. Indeed, the hypothesis that the pressure is low at the local level may not be strictly true. There are communities such as Stolac, where the pressure is high, and in the context of divided schools, the pressure can be high already at the local level. In the third report, in which Davor Marko was the lead author, we distinguished between smaller multinational communities, where social relations are intense, and cross (mixed)

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11   https://probuducnost.ba/index.php/platforma-za-mir

groups within large cities, where there may be less pressure on civil society relations. Participants in focus groups who fed into that report noted that much depended on the character of local public figures – it matters if a local religious leader takes a stand for reconciliation, and this is noted by all parts of the population, not only the more religious. The local political situation may present as distinctive in tense divided locations, but the politics that affect school directors, sectoral organisations, businesses, or journalists, are nevertheless linked to and intertwined with state-level pressures. Relationships at the local level may be simple and natural for civil society and the general population, but not as simple for political leaders as mayors. The local is a complex domain worthy of more attention.

Across the interviews conducted for this study, there was an understanding of the local popularity of reconciliation activity, shown in the results of the 2013 focus group survey, which showed a high level of support for reconciliation and confidence-building processes across all of the 13 local communities covered. This was confirmed by the participants in 13 focus groups and public events, in Srebrenica, Bihać, Bijeljina, Livno, Brčko, Stolac, Tuzla, Mostar, Teslić, Sarajevo, Jajce, Banja Luka and Trebinje. The added value of the focus group discussions were the different interpretations and interpretations of the results of the 2013 survey offered by locals, which the members of the research team presented to the participants at the beginning. Follow-on public events were a means for these results to reach political decision-makers, representatives of important local institutions, as well as the general public, through the media coverage the events received. Participants in the focus groups and public events themselves emphasized the importance of such initiatives that would help them understand and explain certain trends, but also the specifics of their local communities. Our interviewees were not all aware of this prior research, but echoed this picture of the local support for further reconciliation activity.

The series of studies conducted by this research team have focused on religion in particular, not to push an agenda favouring or attacking those who seek to represent different religious communities, but to examine the issues for understanding how religion relates to attitudes to reconciliation and trust building. We began our study with an awareness that religion is sensitive, and seen by many as divisive. After four rounds of research, we have presented a nuanced set of studies which show how salient religion is in the formation of attitudes to reconciliation, both because of mistrust and also because of ethical commitments. The 2013 survey showed that citizens were divided over trust in religious and political institutions as actors and generators of the reconciliation process. The results also showed that those who said they were religious, regardless of religious tradition or affiliation, were more likely to support reconciliation activities, and this was more significant than the wealth or educational status of a survey respondent. It could be that the results reflect teach-

ings shared amongst more religious respondents. These results can also be read as an indicator of the high degree of uncertainty produced by the ongoing conflicts that occur in the institutional and political field in BiH, with more and less religious respondents reacting differently to this uncertainty. During the discussions, citizens spoke affirmatively about the potential of religion and religious teachings, especially for the reconciliation process, while they spoke very critically about the religious leaders and institutions themselves, considering their actions ineffective and even destructive. Conversations with citizens, along with criticism of politicians and religious leaders for what they do or do not do, also indicated the belief that these actors are the ones who have the real potential to change something.

Thus, expectations from politicians and religious leaders, especially at the local level, are high, and examples of positive practices were mentioned during the interviews that could have a significant impact on reconciliation processes in these local communities. In this context, the work of the Interreligious Council (MRV) and some local MRV committees was especially mentioned, as an example to other NGOs of how to work through cooperation with other sectors in these processes.

Our aim has been not only to analyse the understanding of prominent and engaged figures across the 13 cities, but also to identify the practical proposals they have that can be used in work to address challenges for reconciliation. The following practical steps, according to the interviewees, should be taken to make such a reconciliation building strategy more effective and through:

- Better support for activists.

- Activists should be more active in promoting their results in the media and in meetings inviting people from the public sector.

- Development of local action peace plans at the level of local self-government units that would include local government, political actors, the religious communities, civil society organizations, journalists, youth, both in the development process and through concrete activities that would be conducted in a transparent manner and through reports submitted to the public on the results. These initiatives should then be presented as much as possible in the media and they should be disseminated through media that cover not only the local but also the state level. Some actors pointed out that positive stories and initiatives from their communities that have been implemented or are being implemented are insufficiently presented in the media, except, in part, in the local media.

- Since violence in war is always structural violence, it is necessary to connect local communities from the Federation and the Republika Srpska that were on the front lines of major conflicts in the war and to resolve the relations affected by these structures.

- Network NGOs dealing with the same topics on either side of the entity borders, encouraging them to meet and have joint activities (e.g. groups representing victims, veterans and refugees).

- Strengthening civil society and critical awareness, especially through linking civil society and academia, and then enabling them better to control the politicians. At the moment, this kind of control is weak.

- Strengthening social justice. This was put starkly by a number of interviewees: The war in BiH was also a class war, during which a new elite was created, which we tend to suppress. "The war stopped, and no one won" is a lie, new elites have won and that is the zero point of the new ideology (a point put by interviewees from different parts of the country). Further comments from a range of interviewees give more flesh to this: Neither the political projects of the elite nor certain actions of the elite during the war have been condemned by them. An approach to reconciliation that ignores the problems of social injustice in BiH feeds a sense of victimhood and the political capital that comes from using this for electoral purposes. The population of BiH will revolve in the past until it recognizes the achievements of the war, until it recognizes the present, and until it forms a relationship with both of them. On the other hand, the problem is that people misunderstand the process of reconciliation, because they did not see that it includes the concept of justice. A social anthropologist, a university professor, commented that after 2005, reconciliation became a word that no longer meant what it was supposed to mean: it is not something about which we can say, "Now we sit down and sign something and it's done." Rather, "[reconciliation] and truth and justice and the establishment of some normalcy among people is a process." In his opinion, real reconciliation is happening today among people who do not call it that.

- Strategies and activities should be more authentic, building on the basis of personal reflection, and paying more attention to the pace of action. It should be well assessed when the community and the groups affected by the initiatives are ready, and for what. According to one interviewee, "we ran through the war, and now we are running through reconciliation."

Leaving the last word with those interviewees really engaged with challenges in their localities, who see what it would mean to advance cooperation in smaller communities and see the need and the scope for better mutual knowledge of the constituent peoples:

- A politician in one of the higher-level assemblies: "Locally, people know each other much better. I think that there are much fewer differences in the environments where people live together [...] that life somehow flows, people help each other."

- A spokesman for one of the 13 cities: "I believe that in smaller communities, people know each other better and there may be more of that honesty in the relationship. In slightly larger environments, people may be more alienated from each other."

- A social anthropologist and university professor: "There were no incidents among the people who live there. I say, it's too close, people know each other and people share that space to insult each other."

- A mayor: "There are few of us and all these boys and girls know each other; they know each other and they know that they are all good people, that they want a better life."

Further Reading

We give here selected readings for those focused on peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for those interested in theoretical approaches to peacebuilding. For a fuller bibliography, please turn to the BCS original of this report.

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Other works produced as part of the
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The local religious communities are traditionally "overly-focused" on mass gatherings of believers, e.g. in terms of numbers (how many believers will go to the pilgrimage, Ajvatovica, Medjugorje ...). They want to leave the impression of their "power". And often their "power" and influence on the believer (especially on their intimate life) do not go beyond the threshold of the church / mosque. That is why this monograph "Building Trust and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Different Perspectives" comes to us as a real refreshment.

<div align="right">

Academician Prof. Dr. Ivan Cvitković

</div>

It would be sad and frightening if, at this advanced stage of Western cultural development, social life in B&H did not find a way to overcome the paradoxes of cultural identity politics. That would entail the collapse of the sacred, but also the defeat of the type of education that this mono- graph warns us about. That is why the drive for awareness among citizens is important. This relies on NGOs, and more broadly on an articulated civic activism which concretizes reconciliation by strengthening trust between the people in B&H, and which thus establishes and preserves a free society.

<div align="right">

Prof. Dr. Želimir Vukašinović

</div>

They know that the key is in the hands of politicians and the state, leaders of ethnic groups and statesmen (along with the so-called international community). But they don't seem to take it in their hands intentionally; they are not used for the purpose of reconciliation and mitigation of multiple war consequences in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Should we be passive and calmly wait for reconciliation? No, one should work on it using every opportunity! Even this kind of research and this publication, which is a valuable contribution to social sciences and humanities.

<div align="right">

Prof. Dr. Dragoljub B. Đorđević

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The publication points out the PROCESS of changes and the need to establish values of trust and coexistence, that needs to be consciously encouraged in educational systems, media, and religious institutions. Unfortunately, what we learn is that there is no consensus omnium about this need, despite the passage of time, and in some segments of social life it has not even begun.

<div align="right">

Prof. Dr. Danijela Gavrilović

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This study has a special methodological contribution which is reflected in the recognition of the need that such a complex research problem must be investigated by triangulation of methods and techniques. Namely, the study combines qualitative and quantitative methodology, which is recognized, above all, in linking the results obtained by interviews with already published results of quantitative research.

<div align="right">

Prof. Dr. Snežana Stojšin

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Therefore, the authors of this research propose a peace strategy of inclusion, which means accepting the diversity of citizens of different identities and living together, rather than living side by side. Then, a systemic approach to peacebuilding, in which key institutions of the system of government, media, academic and civil society institutions will work together and in a coordinated manner on peacebuilding, rather than undermining each other. In addition, the authors appeal to the importance of the individual responsibility of each citizen, because they ultimately make up the system, as well as the willingness to work for the common good for their community and people.

<div align="right">

Prof. Dr. Zilka Spahić Šiljak

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