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**Assessing the role of civil society organizations  
in the peacebuilding process  
in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Doctoral dissertation

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## **Statement of originality**

This is to certify that the intellectual content of this dissertation is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this dissertation and sources have been acknowledged.

Olomouc, 2022

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## **Abstract**

Civil society organizations have featured prominently in internationally-led peacebuilding initiatives. Interventions built on liberal peacebuilding theory perceived a developed civil society sector as a crucial element of functional and peaceful democracies, and hence civil society building became the key component of the liberal peacebuilding agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been host to complex, multileveled liberal peacebuilding interventions by a wide variety of international actors for 27 years. One important component of the peacebuilding agenda in BiH has been civil society building. International actors regarded civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular, as capable of countering the prevailing ethno-nationalist political discourse, enhancing democratic culture and bringing a society divided along ethnic lines closer together, despite having little evidence to support these aspirations. This dissertation aims to shed light on the ability of small, local NGOs to enhance peace and democracy in a post-conflict society. We mainly focus on the so-called micro-macro link; in other words, whether NGOs can use the individual-level changes they trigger in people, such as changes in attitudes towards other groups, to enhance peace for the broader society. Based on the qualitative evaluation of three NGOs working in various regions across BiH, we concluded that even though these NGOs brought essential benefits to local communities, they were unable to trigger systemic, structural changes that would have broadly enhanced peace in BiH. A number of factors prevented NGOs from influencing such changes. First, the existing ethno-political system in BiH, rooted in deeply entrenched ethnic divisions, proved difficult to break for small, local NGOs with limited funding and reach. Second, the study showed that if an organization does not have a clear strategy on how to trigger broader, societal changes, they will not happen naturally as an inevitable consequence of individual changes. Third, if an NGO refuses to assume, or is denied, a political role, it cannot influence any of the political changes required to enhance the peacebuilding process. Finally, NGOs are limited in their reach also due to structural conditions in the NGO sector, particularly the short-term, project-based nature of funding for NGOs and the quickly changing priorities of donors.

**Key words:** non-governmental organizations, positive peace, liberal peacebuilding, micro-macro link, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Abstrakt

Organizácie občianskej spoločnosti majú prominentné postavenie v medzinárodných iniciatívach zameraných na budovanie mieru. Intervencie postavené na teórii budovania liberálneho mieru považujú rozvinutú občiansku spoločnosť za dôležitý prvok demokracie, ktorá je funkčná a vládne v nej mier. Budovanie občianskej spoločnosti sa tak stalo kľúčovým prvkom programov budovania liberálneho mieru. Bosna a Hercegovina (BaH) je už 27 rokov hostiteľom komplexných, viacúrovňových intervencií budovania liberálneho mieru, ktoré sú realizované širokou škálou medzinárodných aktérov. Budovanie občianskej spoločnosti bolo jednou z dôležitých zložiek týchto intervencií. Medzinárodní aktéri považovali organizácie občianskej spoločnosti, a najmä mimovládne organizácie (MVO), za schopné čeliť prevládajúcemu etnonacionalistickému politickému diskurzu, posilňovať kultúru demokracie a zblížovať spoločnosť rozdelenú podľa etnického kľúča, a to napriek tomu, že na podporu týchto tvrdení mali len málo dôkazov. Cieľom tejto dizertačnej práce je posúdiť schopnosť malých miestnych MVO posilniť mier a demokraciu v postkonfliktnej spoločnosti BaH. Autorka sa v práci zameriava hlavne na tzv. mikro-makro prepojenie, inými slovami, do akej miery vedia organizácie využiť pozitívne zmeny, ktoré vyvolávajú na úrovni jednotlivcov, ako napríklad zmeny v postojoch k iným etnickým skupinám, na posilnenie mieru na úrovni širšej spoločnosti. Na základe kvalitatívnej evaluácie troch MVO pôsobiacich v rôznych regiónoch BaH autorka dospela k záveru, že hoci tieto organizácie priniesli svojim cieľovým skupinám významné benefity, neboli schopné ovplyvniť systémovjšie, štrukturálne zmeny, ktoré by vo všeobecnosti posilnili mier v BaH. Organizáciám bránilo v dosiahnutí takýchto zmien niekoľko faktorov. Po prvé, ukázalo sa, že existujúci etnopolitický systém v BaH, postavený na hlboko zakorenenom rozdeľovaní spoločnosti na základe etnického kľúča, je pre malé miestne MVO s obmedzeným financovaním a dosahom ťažko prelomiteľný. Po druhé, táto štúdia potvrdila, že ak si MVO nedefinujú jasnú stratégiu ako ovplyvniť širšie, celospoločenské zmeny, tieto nenastanú prirodzene, ako nevyhnutný dôsledok individuálnych zmien. Po tretie, ak mimovládna organizácia odmietne prevziať politickú úlohu, alebo jej je zabránené takúto úlohu zastávať, nedokáže ovplyvniť zmeny potrebné k posilneniu mieru, nakoľko majú tieto zmeny v zásade politický charakter. Napokon, štrukturálne podmienky mimovládneho sektora, obzvlášť krátkodobý, na projektoch založený charakter financovania MVO a rýchlo meniace sa priority darcov taktiež obmedzujú organizácie v ich dosahu.

**Kľúčové slová:** mimovládne organizácie, pozitívny mier, budovanie liberálneho mieru, mikro-makro prepojenie, Bosna a Hercegovina

## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

ADL	Associazione per l'Ambasciata della Democrazia Locale – Association for the Embassy of Local Democracy
ALDA	European Association for Local Democracy
B-C-S	Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CDA	Collaborative for Development Action
CEKER	Centar za kulturu, edukaciju i kreativni razvoj – Centre for culture, education and creative development
CSO	Civil society organization
EVS	European Voluntary Service
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GPI	Global Peace Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
LDA	Local Democracy Agency
MSC	Most Significant Change
NCB	Nansen Coordination Board
NDC	Nansen Dialogue Center
NFYF	Nansen Forum of Young Peacebuilders
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PPI	Positive Peace Index
RPP	Reflecting on Peace Practice
RS	Republika Srpska

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services

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## Introduction

“Development is the most secure basis for peace.” (United Nations 1994:3)

“A vigorous civil society is indispensable to creating lasting and successful social development. Social development, if it is to take hold, must spring from society itself. [...] Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, private enterprise, worker’s organizations and other groups all must be actively involved. Locally based NGOs, in particular, can serve as intermediaries and give people a voice and an opportunity to articulate their needs, preferences and vision of a better society. [...] In countries where civil society is weak, strengthening civil society should be a major purpose of public policy.” (United Nations 1994:107)

Some weeks ago I came across a short article; a report from the eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina written by a Slovak journalist Andrej Bán, who has frequently travelled to the region and has published a number of articles on events and developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the broader Western Balkans region. In his article (Bán 2022) he wrote about his visits to several places around the towns of Srebrenica, Bratunac and Zvornik, where thousands of Bosniaks/Muslims were killed over the course of a few days in July 1995. Apart from describing past atrocities, he repeatedly highlighted the fact that he found no signs commemorating the horrible events and their victims at any of the places he visited. One important explanation for the lack of recognition is the fact that these municipalities became part of the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska, with practically no Bosniaks/Muslims living there after the war ended, and hence there was not much interest in keeping the memory of those events alive. Bán’s article only referred to places in Republika Srpska, but make no mistake, the situation where only the crimes committed against the dominant ethnic group are commemorated is also common in the other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina that are dominated by the other two main ethnic groups in the country; Bosniaks/Muslims and Croats. In his speech at the 2017 ICTY Legacy Dialogues conference, Marko Milanović said that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as with their neighbors from other former Yugoslav countries, live in parallel or divided realities. To put it briefly, every ethnic group believes that the crimes committed against their people really happened, but they refuse to recognize the crimes committed by the members of their own ethnic group against “the others” (Milanović 2016, 2017).

When the willingness of local governments to remember the atrocities carried out against “the others” is missing, local civil society steps in. Since 2015, an informal group of citizens called *Obilježavanje neobilježenih mjesta stradanja* (Marking of the unmarked places of suffering) has been putting plaques on unmarked places where violence against any humans was committed during the 1992-1995 war. All the plaques carry the same text: “Unmarked PLACE OF SUFFERING – in this place, in the past war, inhuman acts against people were committed – not leaving these events to be forgotten, we stand in solidarity with all the victims – so that it never happens again to anybody”<sup>1</sup> (Centar za nenasilnu akciju Sarajevo - Beograd 2020; translated by the author).

As this example shows, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is still far from being a peaceful country with past wounds healed, conflict issues resolved, society reconnected and the threat of a renewed conflict averted. Especially in recent months, the words war and conflict have been appearing disturbingly often in the news concerning political developments in the country. This is mainly in connection to the secessionist steps taken or soon to be taken by Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb political leader and a member of the tripartite presidency of BiH (Latal 2021). However, we do see similar political tensions increasing periodically, mainly in pre-election periods, to such extent that Džihić (2012) uses the term permanent crisis when describing the realities of BiH.

We continue to witness the numerous political and societal problems BiH has to deal with, including the poor economic situation, despite the decades-long, intensive and ambitious engagement of the international community in all spheres of the country’s post-conflict development. The Dayton Peace Agreement, negotiated by international actors in 1995, was effective in stopping the fighting and the direct violence against the citizens of BiH. Nevertheless, the ethno-political system that was created with the peace agreement has hindered rather than enabled the transformation of BiH into a functioning and truly peaceful country whose citizens share a common identity (Bennett 2016). As Keil and Perry (2016, 5) explain, BiH “was (and remains) a fragmented, complicated, ethnically- gerrymandered construction”. They also argue that the country “consists of a convoluted patchwork of state, entity, cantonal, and municipal levels of government crafted to appease the varying formerly warring factions by ensuring everyone got a piece of the post-war pie”. The complex and complicated

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<sup>1</sup> The original text says: “Neobilježeno MJESTO STRADANJA – na ovom mjestu su, u proteklom ratu, nad ljudima vršena neljudska djela – ne prepuštajući te događaje zaboravu, solidarišemo se sa svim žrtvama – da se nikada i nikome ne ponovi”(Centar za nenasilnu akciju Sarajevo - Beograd 2020).

administrative structure, where a country of just over 3.5 million inhabitants (Agencija za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine 2016) has two entities (Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina and Republika Srpska), one special district (Brčko), 10 cantons in the Federation of BiH, more than 30 ministries at the entity level and almost 130 ministries at the cantonal level, creates the conditions of severe ineffectiveness and deeply rooted dysfunctionality (Džihic 2012). With widespread corruption, nepotism, a system of patronage where employment in public administration and state-owned enterprises is controlled by ethnically-based political parties (Kapidžić 2020), and persistent socio-economic problems, the sentiment among the people of BiH is that there is a “lack of progress, lack of perspectives, lack of security, and finally, lack of hope” (Džihic 2012:330).

Nevertheless, my study does not aim to provide yet another analysis of the past and current problems of post-conflict BiH and their causes, as a great number of researchers have already written extensively on this topic. I will instead turn the attention to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as they are the actors that have featured prominently in the post-conflict peacebuilding process in the country since the end of the war, and have been involved in a range of sectors and activities. The following, a slightly sarcastic quote from Patrice McMahon's (2017, 3) insightful book on the effects of NGOs in post-conflict countries illustrates how broad the NGO sector in BiH was, especially in the first years of the internationally led post-conflict reconstruction: “I never actually tripped over an NGO in Sarajevo, Bosnia’s capital, but I often had that feeling that I might if I was not careful”.

The international community provided intensive support to various NGOs in BiH, as they were believed to be the agents through which peaceful and democratic development could be enhanced (Chandler 2017). Yet, despite the plethora of new NGOs founded in many towns across the country with the sudden influx of funding (Howard 2011), the prevailing image of NGOs among the wider population is rather poor. The views that NGOs are traitors or foreign mercenaries are common, and these opinions are often nurtured by some politicians (Carsimamovic Vukotic et al. 2017; Puhalo and Vukojević 2015). Bearing this in mind, and while seeing the numerous socio-political and economic problems the country still faces, one has to wonder about the effects the internationally-supported NGOs have had on the society of BiH. This dissertation will shed more light on this issue, particular by analyzing whether, and under what conditions, an NGO can be the main agent of more structural changes that will increase peacefulness in the broader society. I will also discuss why so many NGOs only provide benefits to the individuals directly engaged in their work. The evaluation of three NGOs

working in various sectors and regions of BiH, and the evidence of change triggered by the work of these organizations, will serve as background for the formulation of the conclusions concerning the effectiveness of local level NGOs in the process of enhancing peace in the society of BiH.

When discussing the issues I intended to elaborate on in my dissertation with various academics and practitioners, I specified that I am primarily interested in researching how far the NGOs' positive effects on peace can reach in a society. Most people instantly looked at me almost with pity, carefully saying that it is not an easy task I have created for myself. First, the very concept of peace is quite difficult to measure (Firchow 2018), as I thoroughly discuss in chapter 3 of this dissertation. Second, the NGO environment is complex, with the agendas and activities of individual organizations often overlapping, and this makes it difficult, if not impossible, to formulate the precise impact of any single organization. As the sector is rather messy and unstable, with NGOs showing various levels of engagement over time, it is challenging even to estimate the number of NGOs, local and international, working in the country at any single moment. Yet, as McMahon (2017) stresses in her book, we cannot ignore them just because they are hard to study. They are working in all spheres of life and have varying degrees of political and economic power. Many people look at NGOs with high expectations, and so it is important to know to what extent, and under what circumstances they can live up to these expectations.

NGOs can be studied from various perspectives and with various aims. In this dissertation, I wanted to give space to locally based, smaller NGOs, which are rather underrepresented in the existing literature. Most publications discussing the role of NGOs in peacebuilding mainly focus on bigger, international organizations, analyze the practices of international donors and international NGOs towards local NGOs, and/or are mainly based on the views and perspectives of the representatives of the NGO sector (see e.g. Autesserre 2017; Grødeland 2010; Heideman 2013; Jeffrey 2007; Kappler and Richmond 2011; Micinski 2016; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013; Verkoren and Van Leeuwen 2013). This dissertation takes a different approach, with the majority of respondents being the people living in regions across BiH who participated in one way or another in the numerous initiatives of the evaluated local NGOs. In this way I wanted to fill the gap in the existing knowledge about NGOs since, as McMahon (2017:61) writes, "most research on post-conflict peacebuilding minimizes the role of NGOs or ignores ordinary peoples' views", even though "the success in peacebuilding depends on ordinary people". Similarly, Firchow (2018) claims that the beneficiaries of peacebuilding interventions are best

placed to assess their effectiveness. Hence, I will study the impact of local NGOs on the broader process of building peace from the perspective of people who are in the closest contact with them, and whose perceptions and experiences of their work should matter the most.

The dissertation starts by outlining the scope of this work, placing the subject into the context of the current state of knowledge and identifying the research gaps I wish to fill. This chapter also introduces the aims and objectives of the study. The research methodology is then presented in necessary detail, together with the research questions. In the theoretical part of this work I present a literature review of the academic works published to date that are relevant to this dissertation and provide a background for the empirical research. First, the complex concepts of peace and peacebuilding are defined and discussed, offering a wide variety of perspectives on these two concepts. As the research in this dissertation is conceived as an evaluation study, the subsequent chapter presents a broad spectrum of approaches that can be applied when evaluating peacebuilding interventions and elaborates on the specific problems that evaluations of interventions in this field have to overcome. The literature review then follows with a discussion of the current knowledge concerning the role of civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations in particular, in the process of building peace. The evolution and structural conditions of the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina are then critically examined.

The empirical part starts with a presentation of the three NGOs evaluated for the purpose of this dissertation. I provide an overview of their histories, the main problems the organizations wished to address, their key visions and strategies of work. A thorough analysis of the data collected for the evaluations of the three organizations is presented in chapter 7, Research findings. The chapter is organized according to the research questions, and identifies the behavioral changes triggered by each of the evaluated NGOs. It also discusses which levels of society these changes affected and examines the work of the three organizations in relation to the criteria of effective peacebuilding. Finally, this chapter identifies the factors that allowed the organizations to achieve societal changes, as well as those that prevented those changes from reaching higher levels of society. The key findings and their implications are presented in the Discussion, which is followed by the concluding remarks.



## **1 Scope of the study and methodology**

Following the so-called local turn in the peacebuilding field<sup>2</sup>, the attention of many practitioners and scholars was directed at local actors in conflict-affected countries, with the expectation that they would be better positioned and more capable of enhancing the struggles for peace than the liberal peacebuilding strategies of the top-level actors, which had been preferred initially. New civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) arose, mostly with financial help and expertise from Western countries. As the importance of these organizations grew, donors and other stakeholders increased the pressure on the NGOs to justify their legitimacy and provide evidence that their involvement was yielding the expected results. Nevertheless, the question of how successful NGOs are in their support for peace in post-conflict areas, let alone how “success” should be defined and measured, still remains on the table.

The dissertation works with a number of theoretical concepts and addresses several persistent research gaps. First, the issue central to this dissertation is the so-called micro-macro link; the transfer of the positive changes that an intervention brings to its target level (most often the individual level), to broader community and societal levels. The research focuses on whether and how a change in individual perceptions and attitudes influences the broader community and society. It works with the underlying assumption, formulated e.g. by DeTurk (2006), that structural change occurs through the actions of individual actors, motivated and empowered to voice their needs and wishes, influence policy changes and participate in actions that bring about desired changes. By influencing individuals it should be possible to positively influence the societal, or structural, level. The dissertation primarily focuses on this link; between the individual level and the community/societal level. It assesses whether any broader societal, structural changes were instigated due to the activities of the evaluated NGOs working at the local level in BiH. The paper looks at the factors that supported the link between individual and societal levels and, in cases where there was no transfer, why the changes in individuals did not translate into societal changes. It is important to clarify that the dissertation does not discuss the effectiveness of NGOs to change the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of individuals. Several authors have already assessed the various activities typically implemented by NGOs in post-conflict contexts, and they have shown that under the right conditions such actions can instigate personal change in the direct participants (see e.g. Abu-Nimer 1999; Binder et al. 2009; Čehajić-Clancy and Bilewicz 2017; Čehajić and Brown 2010; Cehajic, Brown, and

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter 2.

Castano 2008; DeTurk 2006; Nagda 2006; Svensson and Brouneus 2013; Wayne 2008). Hence, this dissertation will not explore this issue any further and will, instead, focus on the micro-macro link; the transfer of changes felt by individuals due to their participation in the peacebuilding activities to the community/societal level.

Second, the dissertation research is framed as an evaluation study. The evaluation of peacebuilding interventions is, however, a disputed discipline for a number of reasons<sup>3</sup>. There is a lack of broad agreement on what constitutes success in peacebuilding efforts; how to measure it, how to assess whether any observed changes were partly or fully due to the evaluated intervention, and which methodologies and approaches are appropriate for such evaluations. Given the first research focus discussed above, the dissertation particularly takes on the issue of assessing the effects of peacebuilding interventions beyond the level of their primary influence, and discusses possible ways to evaluate the link.

In a broader sense, the dissertation is a contribution to the debate on the role that local peacebuilding NGOs, defined rather broadly, play in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and what positive changes their work can influence, given their positions and capacities. The focus on local actors, in this case NGOs, is in line with calls by proponents of the local turn and hybridity in peacebuilding for the attention of researchers to be directed at the local level, and for the focus to be on how actors at the local level experience peacebuilding interventions. This replaces the traditional focus on top-down approaches, which work primarily at the national level<sup>4</sup> (Mac Ginty 2011; Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). The author is aware that NGOs do not represent the whole spectrum of the civil society sector. However, in post-war BiH, Western donors and practitioners from international organizations have often equated NGOs with civil society. Mostly, it was the newly established, professionalized NGOs, often with low memberships, that received support from donors as part of the process of strengthening civil society in general. This practice ignored the pre-existing, domestic forms of civil society organizations and associations. Additionally, civil society organizations that did not adhere to the liberal values of the liberal peacebuilding theory, such as mono-ethnic or mono-religious associations, including war veterans, victim associations and churches, usually with stronger membership bases and stronger legitimacy among local populations, were often ignored by international donors (see e.g. Kappler and Richmond, 2011; Šavija-Valha, 2012; Chandler,

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<sup>3</sup> The issue is further discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> For more on hybridity see chapter 2.

2017; Puljek-Shank and Verkoren, 2017)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the decision to focus the research exclusively on NGOs is also influenced by local conditions in the civil society sector.

The research into the role and impact of NGOs is particularly relevant to the situation in BiH for several reasons. The post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in BiH have received extensive financial support from the international community. In total, the net Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>6</sup> provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina between the end of the war in 1995 and 2019 (the latest year with data available) amounted to 10.3 billion USD (OECD 2021a). A considerable share of the international aid money was provided to (and through) a wide range of local and international NGOs, because the international community had high expectations that the power of the NGO sector would effectively facilitate the much needed peacebuilding, democratization and interethnic reconciliation processes (Chandler 2017; Howard 2011). However, it is important to acknowledge that the exact share of funding NGOs have received over the years can only be estimated, since such flows are not systematically tracked and published. There is also a lack of research on the broader, structural impact of NGOs. Despite the fact that 26 years have already passed since the Dayton Peace Agreement ending the violent conflict in BiH was signed, the situation in the country can hardly be called peaceful. The peacebuilding process in BiH is, at best, characterized by terms such as stuck, paralyzed and frozen (Bennett 2016; Perry 2015, 2019). Periodically in the news there are stories of heated discussions regarding controversial issues with potential harmful effects on the fragile peace and coexistence of the three ethnic groups in BiH (for a snapshot of recent political debates see e.g. BIRN 2018; Dzaferagic 2021; Harris 2018; Higgins 2022; Lakic 2019; Latal 2019, 2021; Sito-Sucic 2021). For all these reasons, despite being extensively researched, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a country where a number of questions are yet to be answered.

### **1.1 Aims and objectives of the study**

As outlined in the previous section, the aim of the dissertation is *to assess the extent to which the local grassroots non-governmental organizations working in the broadly defined peacebuilding sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina are able to contribute to increased peacefulness in local communities and the broader society.*

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<sup>5</sup> See also chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of the civil society sector in BiH.

<sup>6</sup> Official Development Assistance (ODA) measures financial resources provided by official, governmental agencies of donor countries to receiving, developing countries, with the aim of promoting development processes (OECD 2021c).

More specifically, the thesis will fulfil the following research objectives:

1. to analyze the role and position of non-governmental organizations in the process of building or re-building peaceful societies;
2. to analyze the current state of affairs of the NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the peacebuilding field;
3. to explore the possible approaches and methods of evaluating the impact of NGO interventions on the peacefulness of target populations, particularly changes at community and society levels;
4. to evaluate the achievements of selected local peacebuilding NGOs working in various geographical and thematic areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the changes triggered by their actions at community and society levels;
5. to formulate conclusions about the ability of local peacebuilding NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina to influence broader community and societal changes leading to increased peacefulness, and about the factors contributing to or inhibiting their potential for positive impact.

The dissertation is anchored in Galtung's conceptualization of positive peace and its further elaborations by Diehl (2016) and Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta (2017), as introduced in the theoretical part of the thesis. These definitions of peace are rather broad, not focusing merely on physical security, and stressing the importance of the presence of cooperation within and between the adversaries. Therefore, the thesis will pay particular attention to the inter-ethnic relationships and to how the evaluated organizations influenced these relationships with their work. The ethnic tensions represented one of the drivers of the past conflict and were further exacerbated by the war and the post-war developments. Moreover, the divisions are still being maintained by the local political representatives, as the major parties are ethnically based and misuse the ethnic tensions to mobilize their constituencies (Perry 2019; Piacentini 2019; Stojarová 2010).

## **1.2 Research methodology**

The research presented in this thesis had three main stages. First, the author conducted a desk review of the literature relevant to the main aim of the thesis and the research objectives. The literature review was focused on fulfilling research objectives 1., 2. and 3., and is presented in the theoretical part of the thesis. Based on the literature review, the author decided on the

appropriate evaluation approach to apply in the research. Then, a sample of three non-governmental organizations working at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina was created. Subsequently, the data needed for the evaluation of the selected NGOs was collected and analyzed, and the main conclusions addressing research objectives 4. and 5. were formulated. The following sections present more detailed information about the research methodology applied in this thesis.

### ***1.2.1 Evaluation approach***

The thesis is designed as an evaluation study. Nevertheless, given the specificities of peacebuilding interventions described in the theoretical part of this thesis, a few distinctive features differentiate this study from typical ex-post evaluations. For ex-post evaluations, it is usual to work with results chains that depict the linear sequence of planned activities leading to the changes an organization intends to influence. The thesis draws on the findings of authors researching the hybridity of peacebuilding efforts (see e.g. Randazzo 2016; Visoka 2012), and who challenged such notions that the intentionality and linearity of actions would lead to the intended changes. In the complex, hybrid environments, it is not possible to rely on pre-defined, rational models that delineate social change as a direct result of a peacebuilding intervention. Moreover, hybridity is a challenge when it comes to assigning responsibility for any observed changes to any particular agent. These characteristics of peacebuilding render inadequate the traditional, most frequently applied approaches to ex-post evaluations that compare planned goals with an actual end state after an evaluated intervention was implemented.

The discussion introduced in chapter 3 on how to define success in peacebuilding projects, and whether it is useful to work with pre-defined sets of indicators in evaluations of peacebuilding practice, is another factor that influenced the decision about an appropriate evaluation approach for this study. The author took into consideration the concerns raised by numerous critics regarding the use of indicators in peacebuilding evaluations (see e.g. Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014; Denskus 2012; Firchow 2018; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017; Millar 2014). Furthermore, for most of their projects, the NGOs evaluated in this thesis did not define any specific results chains with targets and indicators, and they did not collect baseline data before the projects were implemented. In such cases, indicators would have to be defined ex-post, but the study would still lack the important information on the state of affairs before the initiation of the activities, and this would limit the ability to estimate any progress on the indicators.

For the reasons described above, the author of the thesis chose to apply the Outcome Harvesting evaluation approach for the study. Outcome Harvesting focuses on the collection of evidence

regarding behavioral changes in various stakeholders directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally triggered by an evaluated intervention. Such changes in behavior can be reflected in changes in attitudes, activities, relationships, agendas, policies and practices at various levels<sup>7</sup> (Wilson-Grau 2019). Outcome Harvesting is not based on verifying whether a planned chain of results actually occurred, or whether a given set of indicators and targets were fulfilled. Instead, the focus is on the perceptions of the local population directly or indirectly involved in peacebuilding projects, and it allows them to define what they believed were the most important changes the intervention influenced.

The objective of the thesis is to identify any changes that the evaluated organizations triggered, particularly beyond the individual level or, as Campbell (2007:6) stated, “beyond their initial entry point”. The thesis will assess whether the evaluated projects improved conditions at the levels of community and society. Therefore, the evaluation will apply the criteria developed by the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project (Anderson and Olson 2003). These criteria are suitable for evaluating the potential of a project to contribute to higher-level change, or Peace Writ Large, as it is referred to by the RPP. Out of the five criteria formulated by RPP, three are especially relevant to the current state of the post-conflict situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they will be the main focus of the assessment: the extent to which the interventions

1. caused participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace;
2. resulted in the creation or reform of political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict;
3. resulted in meaningful improvements in inter-group relations (Anderson and Olson 2003; CDA 2016).

Additionally, the evaluation will determine whether the evaluated projects attempted to influence the key people in communities as well as the wider population, and whether they triggered changes in the attitudes and perceptions of individuals, and also changes at the socio-political level<sup>8</sup>.

### **1.2.2 Research questions**

Based on the conducted literature review, we formulated the following research questions, in relation to the main aim of the thesis and research objectives 4. and 5.:

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<sup>7</sup> For more detailed definition of the Outcome Harvesting approach please see chapter 3.4.2.

<sup>8</sup> The RPP criteria are further discussed in chapter 3.2.

RQ 1: What behavioral changes potentially contributing to increased peacefulness have the evaluated NGOs triggered by their activities?

RQ 2: At what levels of influence (individual, family, community, society at large) can we find evidence of behavioral changes triggered by the evaluated NGOs?

RQ 3: Have the evaluated NGOs triggered any changes potentially enhancing Peace Writ Large, as defined by the RPP?

RQ 3.1: Have the evaluated NGOs caused the project participants to develop their own initiatives for peace?

RQ 3.2: Has the work of the evaluated NGOs resulted in the creation of new political institutions that handle grievances fueling conflict, or at least in some reforms of the existing institutions?

RQ 3.3: Is there any evidence that the evaluated NGOs succeeded in improving inter-ethnic relations in BiH?

RQ 4: What factors enhanced or inhibited the ability of the evaluated NGOs to contribute to positive changes leading to increased peacefulness at the community and society levels?

### ***1.2.3 Research sample***

The author conducted an evaluation of three NGOs working in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To be included in the study, an NGO must have fulfilled the following criteria:

- a substantial portion of its activities can be characterized as peacebuilding work intended to enhance peace, broadly defined;
- it is based locally, targets specific local communities and employs local staff;
- its activities work primarily at the grassroots level.

As well as the above-mentioned criteria, the author also attempted to create a diverse sample of evaluated NGOs. The work of the selected NGOs covers the most common approaches that have been applied in the peacebuilding work in post-war BiH. Of the seven peacebuilding functions defined by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010)<sup>9</sup>, four are present in the activities of the evaluated NGOs: in-group socialization, social cohesion, intermediation and service delivery. These four functions were selected because in each of them the local grassroots population is actively involved. Moreover, these functions are currently the most relevant and needed in BiH.

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<sup>9</sup> For detailed discussion on peacebuilding functions please see chapter 4

Of the three remaining functions, protection from direct violence was not relevant in BiH at the time of the data collection as the country was relatively stable and without the acute threat of direct violence between former adversaries. Monitoring and advocacy functions relate to activities that do not involve working with the population at the grassroots level, and hence they are not relevant to the focus of the dissertation. In addition to the thematic diversity, the research targeted NGOs working in various geographical areas of BiH. Geographical variety is particularly important in the context of BiH, given its complex administrative structure and the differing conditions in individual regions<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, the selected NGOs differ in the way they were established and who are their target groups.

Resulting from the above-mentioned criteria, the research sample for this dissertation consists of the following NGOs. The first organization, Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo (NDC Sarajevo), uses interethnic dialogue to re-establish the communication and cooperation in ethnically divided communities and works primarily with municipality councilors and administrators and in multi-ethnic schools in the Eastern and Central regions of BiH. It mostly serves the social cohesion peacebuilding function. Second, the Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići), focuses on improving the situation in a mono-ethnic municipality in the Central BiH through physical post-conflict reconstruction, mobilization of the local civil society and the young people, and establishing contact between the local population and local authorities, using connections with its Italian partners. This NGO serves in particular the service delivery and intermediation peacebuilding functions. Third, the Youth organization Odisej brings together young people of various backgrounds living in an Eastern Bosnian town and organizes various dealing with the past and educational activities. Thus, it serves the in-group socialization and social cohesion peacebuilding functions. A more detailed description of the evaluated NGOs is provided in chapter 6.

A specific list of respondents was created for the evaluation of each NGO. The types of respondents targeted by the research differ for each NGO, due to their varying peacebuilding approaches and target groups. We applied non-probability sampling methods when creating the sample. More specifically, criterion sampling was used, where the respondents must meet a certain criterion in order to be included in the study, as well as snowball sampling, where the

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<sup>10</sup> The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two main entities, Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine and Republika Srpska, and a condominium Brčko district. Federacija BiH (FBiH) is divided into ten cantons that are then subdivided into municipalities. Republika Srpska (RS) is only divided into municipalities. Differing demographic, legislative, social and economic conditions are present in various regions of the country (European Committee of the Regions 2016). Please refer also to the administrative map of BiH attached as Annex 3.



respondents contacted by the author identified other potential subjects (Gray 2018). A broader variety of stakeholders was targeted to ensure the triangulation of the collected data, including representatives of all ethnic groups inhabiting the regions where NGOs implemented their activities. The following stakeholders were included in the research:

- the staff of the implementing organization involved in the planning and/or implementation of activities and projects;
- partner organizations cooperating with the evaluated NGOs in the implementation of their activities and projects;
- direct beneficiaries/target groups of the activities and projects implemented by the evaluated NGOs;
- stakeholders in the broader project environment (representatives of the specific sector in which the evaluated NGOs work, representatives of local municipalities, other stakeholders possibly indirectly influenced by the NGOs' work etc.).

Besides interviewing the above-listed respondents that are connected with the evaluated NGOs in some way, the author also consulted local experts, representatives of the international community residing in BiH and experienced NGO workers, to gain a deeper insight into the overall situation in the local peacebuilding sector, and into the general post-conflict situation in BiH. The anonymized lists of all the respondents are attached as Annexes to this dissertation. Altogether, the author interviewed 68 respondents in relation to the evaluations of the three local NGOs and six key informants.

#### **1.2.4 Methods of data collection and analysis**

The evaluation presented in this thesis is a qualitative research study. The data were collected during three field visits, as presented in the table below, from June 2016 to June 2017. The evaluation of NDC Sarajevo additionally uses data collected and analyzed for the Master thesis the author published in 2013 (Komlossyová 2013).

Table 1: Phases of data collection in the field

Field visit no.	Data collection	Time frame
1.	Evaluation of NDC Sarajevo	June 2016
2.	Evaluation of LDA Zavidovići	October 2016
3.	Evaluation of the Youth organization Odisej; expert interviews	March, May, June 2017

Source: created by the author

Before the data collection in the field, the author analyzed various project documents provided by the evaluated NGOs. The documents contained important information about the work of the NGOs, their beneficiaries and partners, and the activities they implemented. This helped the author to not only become more familiar with the evaluated NGOs, but also to prepare an initial plan for the data collection in the field, including preliminary lists of potential respondents and interview questions.

For each evaluation study the main instrument used in the data collection was in-depth interviews. Additionally, for the evaluation of NDC Sarajevo, the author organized four focus groups in four municipalities where the organization had implemented its activities. Most of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in the local languages (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian), as only some of the research participants were able to fully and freely communicate in English. Before the data collection the author acquired sufficient language competency to be able to conduct the interviews and focus groups in the local languages. In addition to interviews and focus groups, in most of the locations the author had the opportunity to observe some of the activities conducted by the NGOs.

At the beginning of each interview and focus group, the author informed the respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of the data and the information they would share. All research participants signed a written informed consent prior to their interviews or focus groups. This meant that they agreed to be recorded, and hence most interviews and all of the focus groups were recorded to ensure that no important piece of information was lost. All the respondents were anonymized and are listed in Annexes 1 and 2. After the data collection, the interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed, coded and analyzed, applying the content analysis (see e.g. Flick 2018).

### ***1.2.5 Research limitations***

As with all research, the study presented in this thesis faced a number of limitations that need to be reflected upon. First, the author encountered one critical constraint when creating the sample of NGOs for the research. An evaluation study, especially when conducted by an outsider evaluator, cannot be done without the explicit consent and active involvement of the evaluated entities, in this case NGOs. Several NGOs were contacted regarding their inclusion in this research, but many of them were not open to such cooperation. They either mentioned time constraints or did not specify their reasons. In spite of that, the author succeeded in creating a diverse sample of NGOs, as is apparent from table 4 that introduces the evaluated organizations. Nevertheless, it is possible that the sample does not fully represent the whole

NGO sector in BiH, and that some types of peacebuilding NGOs working in BiH have been omitted. Hence, the transferability of the findings of this research to the level of the whole peacebuilding NGO sector in BiH is somewhat limited. Moreover, as the study focused only on assessing NGOs in BiH, the application of the findings to other post-conflict contexts should be considered very carefully.

Second, the qualitative research also depends on the willingness of respondents to devote their time to the research and openly share their opinions with the researcher. In the evaluation of the three NGOs, there were individuals that the author did not manage to reach, and thus some perspectives might have been missed. Since the end of the war in 1995, the citizens of BiH have been targeted by a significant number of research projects of various kinds, and this may have caused research fatigue; tired of being researched. Research fatigue could be one reason why some people are no longer interested in participating in research studies.

Finally, due to time and logistical constraints, the author was not able to spend more time in the researched communities to build greater trust among the potential respondents. Even though the author introduced herself and the aim of the research to every respondent prior to their interview or focus group, some respondents may have been hesitant to share their honest opinions with an outsider. Respondents who benefited in some way from the activities of the evaluated NGOs could have been motivated to paint a more positive picture and to skip the negative issues or limitations of the NGOs. However, to eliminate these forms of bias the author interviewed a wide variety of people in order to obtain the best data possible concerning the evaluated NGOs.

## 2 Conceptualizing peace and peacebuilding

The concepts of peace and peacebuilding have been discussed for several decades with little agreement being reached by academics and practitioners about their key characteristics. Opinions on what constitutes peace and which conditions can actually be called peaceful differ fundamentally. The concept of peace has not been sufficiently theorized, even though it has been presented by many as the ideal state (Richmond 2005). In turn, this situation influences the conceptualization of peacebuilding – what type of peace are peacebuilding initiatives trying to enhance, to build? What is the end-situation peacebuilding efforts are aimed at?

The following chapter will provide an overview of the debates and the most commonly applied definitions and approaches to peace and peacebuilding. Special attention will be given to the liberal peacebuilding agenda, as it has played a dominant role in framing the international response to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and has influenced the shape of the decades-long international involvement in re-building the country. Critical debates on liberal peacebuilding and a few alternatives will also be presented.

### 2.1 Peace: Negative, positive, and beyond

Peace is inherently a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Still, it may come as a surprise that scholars find it rather difficult to create a comprehensive, inclusive and widely accepted definition of peace. Understanding of the term varies, with scholars either working with a rather narrow conception, or not explicitly theorizing on the concept at all (Mac Ginty 2006; Olivius and Åkebo 2021). As Richmond (2005) observes, not even states, institutions or organizations presenting peace as the absolute state of affairs have conceptualized it in sufficient detail, seeing it as something that is apparent. He also argues that in Western political thought, peace has been perceived as a utopian condition and hence it has not been a primary focus of international theorization.

Peace is most often defined in terms of what it is not. At the most basic level, peace is described as an absence of open violence or war (see e.g. Bull 2002). Instead of specifying what peace is, this definition simply states what peace is not – open violence and war cannot be called peace according to this definition. Similarly, with relations between states, Aron (2017:151) defines peace as the “*more or less lasting suspension of violent modes of rivalry*” (italics in original). He adds that, in essence, peace is not too different from war, as it also relies on the power of individual states to act upon others. For Aron, peaceful relations exist in fear of expected future conflicts, implying the recurring nature of wars.

Defining peace as an absence of war and physical violence might be influenced by the fact that scholars in the international relations field have traditionally paid much more attention to the study of power, war and related security issues than to explicit research into peace (Diehl 2016; Richmond 2008). Quincy Wright noted in 1942 that war is inherently more interesting to people than peace (Wright 1942). Richmond (2005) explains that it has traditionally been assumed that wars have to be eradicated or managed first, and only then can the institutions of peace be established. As Diehl (2016) discusses, equating peace with the absence of war is appropriate for scholars whose main aim is to analyze the conditions that generate war and direct violence. However, this could provide absurd conclusions about peacefulness when applied to some inter- or intra-state conditions. Diehl (2016) demonstrated this by using the example of the relationship between Israel and Iran which, according to this definition, was equivalent to the relationship between the United States and Canada. Another example he provides to illustrate the inappropriateness of the definition is Gambia, with its authoritarian government and long record of human rights abuses, which would be on the same level as Sweden. Defining peace as the absence of war and violence puts all cases without war into one category, effectively concealing crucial differences between such cases.

Wright (1942) condemned the negative definition of peace for being self-defeating and unattainable and called for peace to be conceived positively as a condition where society assures cooperation and justice. Richmond (2008) criticizes mainstream international relations scholars for excessively emphasizing the balance of power between states in their definitions of peace, instead of looking into everyday life in countries affected by conflict. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Bull (2002) argues that a universal or permanent peace is a dream of which there is no evidence in our historical experience; states have never seriously pursued the goal of establishing universal peace. Instead, the absence of war among states is the form of peace that the international community considers normal and can only be disrupted in agreed-upon circumstances. He adds that peace is seen as subordinate to the preservation of states' system and the sovereignty of states; a view which is close to the realist thinking.

As we can see, the common perspective has been that war and conflict stand in opposition to peace. However, for some, the question of what is the antithesis of peace is somewhat more complex. In Webel's (2007) view, conflict does not constitute the opposite to peace, particularly if the parties involved do not use violent means to resolve and transform a conflict. He sees conflict as inevitable and beneficial if it results in desirable progress and resolution of problems that could, in turn, enhance peace. Webel argues that sometimes even violence is not the

antithesis of peace, quoting Gandhi, otherwise a symbol of nonviolent action, who saw violent acts as being a preferred option to impotence, to not acting at all. In Webel's view, "*the polar opposite of peace is violence, or the threat of violence, employed either for its own sake – that is, on behalf of political and/or criminal terrorism – or for the primary purpose of achieving, maintaining and/or expanding personal and/or political power for the sake of conquest and domination*" (italics in original) (Webel 2007:9). Stephenson (2017) agrees that conflicts may have certain value but adds that it is important to distinguish between destructive and productive conflicts. Productive conflicts are based on mutual respect between parties who are thus not aiming to destroy each other. Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta (2017) relate peace to cooperation, while emphasizing that the presence of cooperation is not necessarily synonymous to peace, just as the absence of cooperation does not inevitably mean conflict. For them, cooperation and violent behavior coexist and coevolve over time, and hence it is not correct to conceive peace and conflict as opposite concepts.

The most prominent conceptualization of peace and its forms that goes beyond simply equating peace with the absence of war was presented by Johan Galtung in his essay *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research* (Galtung 1969). His starting point was, in fact, a definition presenting peace as an absence of violence; nevertheless, he further focused on defining violence and created the typology of violence that gave direction to his conceptualization of peace. Galtung identified two basic types of violence – direct, personal violence and indirect, structural violence. Consequently, he distinguished two types of peace – negative peace defined as an absence of personal violence, and positive peace understood as an absence of structural violence. Apart from defining peace again in relation to what it is not, he added that positive peace can also be understood as social justice, and an egalitarian distribution of power and resources. He thus linked peace and conflict research with development research which, in his view, is highly relevant for positive peace. Adding to his earlier work, in 1990 he introduced a third type of violence; cultural violence, defined as aspects of culture used to legitimize direct and/or structural violence (Galtung 1990). Building on the positive peace concept, Diehl (2016) states that peaceful situations can be characterized by many other conditions, apart from the absence of war, such as broad cooperation and integration between actors, human security, development, human rights, equity and justice. Additionally, positive peace means that mechanisms for peaceful resolution of potential conflicts are in place, making the use of force highly unlikely. Similarly, Campbell et al. (2017:97) argue that apart from the absence of

violence, peace should also be characterized by “the active pursuit of cooperative behavior within and between opposing sides”.

Despite the fact that Galtung had already conceptualized positive peace by the late 1960s, most academics and researchers remained primarily focused on peace as an absence of violence. Quantitative studies in particular worked almost exclusively around negative peace, using mainly national-level battle-related deaths as an indicator of war or peace (Campbell et al. 2017). Diehl (2016) illustrated this focus on negative peace by analyzing the content of papers published in two of the most prominent journals in peace studies; the *Journal of Peace Research* and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. He ends his paper with a call for more academic research to deal with topics related to the broader conceptualization of positive peace. The issue of the *International Studies Review* that followed this call was devoted to papers discussing various aspects of positive peace, and challenged the prevalent understanding of peace (Guarrieri, Drury, and Murdie 2017). This dissertation is in line with this trend, as it works with the broader definitions of positive peace introduced in the paragraph above.

The concept of Peace Writ Large is another means of conceptualizing peace, though we can also see some similarities with Galtung’s positive peace. Peace Writ Large was introduced in the report of the Reflecting on Peace Practice project called *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, authored by Anderson and Olson (2003). The authors defined the term Peace Writ Large as peace at the level of society as a whole. Initiatives for achieving Peace Writ Large are aimed not only at stopping violence, but also at building just and sustainable peace through the transformation of political and social grievances and support for social change. The report also suggested that peacebuilding interventions can have a broader impact, an impact on Peace Writ Large, if they operate at both the individual level and at the socio-political level, and if they target a large number of people, and also key, influential individuals in a community or society. Following on from this work, Chigas and Woodrow (2009) later emphasized that a precise meaning of Peace Writ Large has to be determined based on each particular context, and must reflect the key drivers of the conflict. They also argued that peacebuilding programs can influence Peace Writ Large only after a proper conflict analysis has been carried out and there is a clear strategic focus on the driving factors behind a conflict; the root causes.

Several scholars have proposed that peace be understood as the state of the relationship between entities (see Brigg 2018; Davenport, Melander, and Regan 2018; Goertz et al. 2016; Lederach 1997). Mac Ginty (2006:24) defines peace as “the facilitation of non-exploitative, sustainable

and inclusive social relationships free from direct and indirect violence and the threat of such violence”. In this strand of thinking, actors are seen as moving on a continuum from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships (Curle 1971). In their recent paper, Söderström, Åkebo, and Jarstad (2021) presented a comprehensive framework for studying peace from the relational perspective. They identified three components of a relationship; behavioral interaction, subjective attitudes towards each other, and the idea about the relationship, and explained how these components should be manifested in a peaceful relationship.

With regards to the first component, behavioral interaction between parties, Söderström et al. (2021) identified three types of interaction that they consider to be peaceful; deliberation, non-domination and cooperation. Deliberation is a non-violent political engagement where parties publicly exchange their views and explain their positions, with the aim of allowing differences to be articulated and recognized, rather than reaching a consensus. In essence, deliberation can be related to dialogue (see e.g. Bryn 2015; Hareide 2015; Saunders 2011). Non-domination means being free from arbitrary interference, dominance or oppression by a more powerful actor. The last form of peaceful behavioral interaction, cooperation, is the most interactive type of interaction. It represents the active development and pursuit of complementary goals, with parties working together on shared visions instead of competing.

As for the second relational component, parties’ beliefs about each other and their attitudes toward each other, Söderström et al. (2021) identified two attitudes important for peaceful relationships: recognition and trust. They see recognition as a central element of a relationship as it expresses acceptance of the other actor. Recognition can range from mere acceptance of another’s existence, to respect for another’s identity, and to mutual empathy. Another important feature, trust, is crucial for cooperation between parties, and yet it is typically missing in post-conflict societies. For mutual trust to be built or rebuilt, misunderstandings, stereotypes and prejudices need to be addressed first.

The third component of a relationship relates to the understanding parties have of their relationship. In a peaceful relationship, the actors should consider themselves to be either fellows, allies, partners, or friends, and declare it openly. Also, as Söderström et al. (2021:495) stress, parties “have to have *expressed* that they *share something*, that there is a *sense of reciprocity* in their relationship, thus casting the other in the role of not an enemy, but a friend or fellow” (italics in original). Based on this framework, the authors present their definition of relational peace:



*“A peaceful relation entails behavioral interaction that can be characterized as deliberation, non-domination, and cooperation between the actors in the dyad; the actors involved recognize and trust each other and believe that the relationship is either one between legitimate fellows or between friends”* (italics in original) (Söderström et al. 2021:496).

## **2.2 Defining peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding, as a strategy for dealing with conflicts and enhancing peace, was first defined by Johan Galtung in his essay *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding* (Galtung 1976). He defined peacebuilding as a process of establishing a structure and an infrastructure of peace that would decrease the likelihood of open violence, remove the causes of war and offer alternatives to conflict. Essentially, he believes that peace can be sustained through certain mechanisms that need to be built into a society’s structure. Out of the three approaches to peace defined by Galtung, peacebuilding is the most complex and self-sustaining, while the other two approaches focus on more narrowly defined goals. Peacekeeping is aimed at preventing violent actions, thus maintaining the absence of direct violence; and peacemaking, a conflict resolution approach, focuses on resolving underlying conflicts and eliminating sources of tension. Peacebuilding, which is more comprehensive, is needed to address deep-seated structures and identities driving conflict, and to make peace long-lasting.

Another prominent author in the peacebuilding field, John Paul Lederach, defined peacebuilding as follows:

*“A comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. [...] Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct”* (Lederach 1997:20, italics in original).

For Lederach, peace not only requires the process of building, but it needs to be continually maintained. He proposed a comprehensive framework aimed at transforming violent conflicts into peaceful relationships. Lederach’s book, *Building Peace*, enriched the peacebuilding debate with the assertion that peace interventions should be focused on empowering local people in their pursuit of sustainable peace. He also created a typology of peacebuilding actors and approaches. His pyramid model distinguishes between three types of leaders and three approaches to building peace. First, he defines top level leaders and top-down peacebuilding interventions focused on high-level negotiations. On the second level there are middle-range

leaders, including ethnic and religious leaders, intellectuals and NGO leaders, and middle-level approaches comprising of problem-solving workshops, training in conflict resolution and peace commissions. The third, largest group comprises of grassroots leaders such as community developers and local NGO representatives, and grassroots approaches such as prejudice reduction, local peace commissions, grassroots training and psychosocial work.

Most of the applied definitions take their inspiration from the work of the two authors introduced above. Drawing on Lederach's emphasis on relationships and Galtung's assertion concerning the importance of the deep drivers of conflict, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall (2011:32) define peacebuilding as a process of "addressing structural issues and the long-term relationships between conflictants". As Call and Cook (2003) argue, definitions inspired by Galtung's work conceptualize peacebuilding as actions that are directed at stakeholders below the level of the state; at local and community levels. In contrast, the definitions and concepts driving the peacebuilding practices of the UN and its agencies, introduced in the following subsection, focus on whole societies and state elites.

From a survey of peacebuilding initiatives implemented by four important international players in the peacebuilding and development cooperation field; Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK, Smith (2004) created a classification of peacebuilding policy instruments or, as he called it, the peacebuilding palette. He identified four groups of peacebuilding activities: 1) security, including mine actions, disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of combatants, and security sector reforms, 2) socio-economic foundations, working on physical reconstruction, economic, health and education infrastructures, food security, and repatriation of refugees and IDPs, 3) political framework, comprising of democratization and good governance efforts, institution building, human rights monitoring, and 4) reconciliation and justice, focusing on dialogue between conflicting parties, truth and reconciliation commissions, and trauma therapies.

### **2.3 Mainstreaming peacebuilding into international practice**

At the beginning of the 1990s there was a growing interest in helping countries emerging from conflicts to build sustainable peace. Galtung's ideas were revived in UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* presented in 1992. This document, effectively bringing peacebuilding to the practice of international actors and into the agenda of UN agencies, defined "post-conflict peacebuilding" as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali

1992:21). Boutros-Ghali delineated peacebuilding as a process of rebuilding institutions, infrastructure and mutually beneficial relationships, adding that the space for the peacebuilding process is created through peacekeeping and peacemaking. If these two approaches successfully achieve their goals, peacebuilding work, addressing economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, can commence.

*An Agenda for Peace* represented a major shift in the understanding of the UN's role in the aftermaths of armed conflicts, and expanded it far beyond the traditional peacekeeping typical of the Cold War era. Peacekeeping operations at the time when *An Agenda for Peace* was published focused mostly on ceasefire monitoring by lightly armed military forces, facilitating the withdrawal of troops, and guarding neutral buffer zones; mainly to contain any existing conflict and prevent further escalation. Any intrusion into domestic affairs of the countries hosting peacekeeping missions was unthinkable (Newman, Paris, and Richmond 2009; Paris 2004; Paris and Sisk 2009). Another indication of the changing international approach, particularly as regards failed and failing states, was the paper written by Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner (1992:12), in which they called for increased international involvement in such states in order "to save them from self-destruction" and protect international peace and security. As a result, the idea that peace can be externally constructed and installed in contexts where it was not present gained prominence (Richmond 2008), and together with the erosion of the non-intervention and state sovereignty principles (Chandler 2017; Newman et al. 2009) this prompted an increased willingness to intervene in intrastate conflicts and post-conflict situations. We have seen a surge in international interventions in conflict-affected countries, aimed at setting up liberal democratic forms of government and free market-oriented economies, and promoting human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law (van Leeuwen, Verkoren, and Boedeltje 2012).

The new type of UN missions that followed the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* (and in a few cases even preceded it, for example with missions in Namibia, Angola, El Salvador and Cambodia) were greatly expanded in activities and functions; an acknowledgement of the need for a multifaceted approach to managing and resolving conflicts. This agenda expansion also reflected the changing nature of conflicts – a decrease in inter-state conflicts and a sharp increase in intra-state conflicts and civil wars (Newman et al. 2009; Paris 2018). Boutros-Ghali (1992) recommended the inclusion of new activities in UN missions, such as repatriation of refugees, training for security personnel, election monitoring, human rights protection and reforms of governmental institutions. In 1995, Boutros-Ghali introduced a follow-up

*Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*. Here he emphasized the importance of effective state institutions, saying they must be supported by international interventions and national reconciliation processes. He also broadened the time frame for peacebuilding, recognizing its role not only as a post-conflict measure, but also as a preventive tool in situations where there was a high risk of outbreaks of violence. Also in 1995, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali presented *An Agenda for Development*, another influential document relevant to the peacebuilding field. He wrote, “Development is the most secure basis for peace” (United Nations 1994:3), and “Unless there is reconstruction and development in the aftermath of conflict, there can be little expectation that peace will endure” (United Nations 1994:22). He explicitly named social and economic development as crucial tasks for peacebuilding, necessary to secure lasting peace and prevent the recurrence of conflicts. The *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, also called the Brahimi report, published in 2000, reiterated that the UN should be seeking long-term reconstruction, development and democratization, and its operations must be focused on addressing the underlying causes of conflicts. According to the report, military force is not sufficient for creating peace (Brahimi 2000).

Peacebuilding, as an agenda for international assistance in post-conflict or conflict-prone settings, has gained considerable popularity since the beginning of the 1990s. A large number of international actors, ranging from governmental agencies, UN agencies and other multilateral organizations, as well as international non-governmental organizations, began to include what are essentially peacebuilding goals in their programs, although the terminology used to describe these goals differed (Paris 2004). New infrastructure dedicated to peacebuilding was established at global and regional levels. For example, the UN General Assembly and the Security Council established the UN Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body in 2005 (United Nations n.d.a.). The UN Peacebuilding Support Office, opened in the same year, was authorized to assist the Peacebuilding Commission and manage the UN Peacebuilding Fund, a financial instrument supporting peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected countries (United Nations n.d.b.). The World Bank created its Post-Conflict Fund in 1997, and it was redesigned in 2008 as the Peacebuilding Trust Fund. The Fund’s purpose was to finance the World Bank’s reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in conflict-affected countries (Bahnson and Cutura 2004; The World Bank 2020). In 2003 the African Union established the African Peace and Security Architecture to promote peace and security and prevent outbreaks of violence on the continent (African Union 2020). Offices and departments dedicated to peacebuilding efforts were created within a number of donor agencies, and governments earmarked considerable

resources to fund these efforts (Zaum 2012). Barnett et al. (2007) explain that the popularity of the peacebuilding concept was due to its symbolic function. They see peacebuilding as a political symbol that a wide variety of actors can endorse because everyone agrees that building peace is a good thing. At the same time, it is also highly ambiguous as it conceals differences in opinions on exactly how efforts to build peace should proceed, and what the appropriate strategies and priorities in any peacebuilding process should be.

Essentially, peacebuilding was conceived in the founding documents introduced above, including *An Agenda for Peace*, as an inclusive and emancipatory concept concerned with the needs of populations harmed by conflicts (Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Yet the actual implementation of the concept in the policies of leading organizations and donor agencies attracted increased criticism from researchers and practitioners for being rather technocratic. Mac Ginty (2012) explains that the “technocratic turn” in peacebuilding has been caused by several factors. He cites for example, the modernist worldview, which prioritizes rational, evidence-based, technical solutions to social and economic problems that are not influenced by politics or identity. The adoption of management systems from the business world was supposed to ensure greater efficiency and value for money. Mac Ginty (2012) also points to the professionalization of the peacebuilding field that gave rise to peacebuilding professionals whose generic technical expertise became more valued than local and context-specific knowledge. As part of the technocratic turn, a set of standardized best practices started to be replicated in diverse conflict and post-conflict countries, not always reflecting specific local conditions. Moreover, conflicts have been framed and discussed in a way that essentially created the need for technocratic solutions. Chandler (2017) argues that international actors, especially the UN, actually undermined the originally-envisioned empowerment and democracy enhancement roles of peacebuilding by micro-managing post-conflict societies. In his view, this form of management implies that the people in countries hosting peacebuilding missions are not capable of building peace and democracy for themselves. The UN and other international actors assumed the responsibility for political, legal and socio-economic functions in many areas of people’s lives, excluding them from the peacebuilding process and reducing their opportunities to actively influence it. This happened despite the explicit claim made by the UN Secretary-General in the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, stating that “United Nations is, for good reasons, reluctant to assume responsibility for maintaining law and order, nor can it impose a new political structure or new state institutions” (Boutros-Ghali 1995:14).

## **2.4 Liberal peacebuilding: an approach dominating the post-Cold War era**

Much of the peacebuilding practice we have observed during the post-cold War era has been characterized by an emphasis on political and economic liberalization (Newman 2009; Paris 2004). The concept that provided the main rationale behind and justification for so-called liberal peacebuilding was the democratic or liberal peace theory. The theory had already been envisioned by Immanuel Kant at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Kant and Kleingeld 2006) and it inspired U.S. president Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy after World War I (Wilson 1965). It attracted considerable attention after the publication of Michael Doyle's essays in the 1980s (Doyle 2012). With the end of the Cold War, the liberal peace theory gained even greater prominence. The prevailing optimistic view of the time was that liberal democracy had been proved to be the universal form of government, best for all nations, an idea famously proposed by Francis Fukuyama (1992).

The democratic or liberal peace theory argues that liberal democracies are more peaceful in both their domestic affairs and foreign policies than illiberal, nondemocratic states, and they almost never engage in military conflicts with each other. The probability of war between two democratic states is extremely low because they use other means to resolve their disputes and do not perceive violent conflict as the right behavior. Additionally, the chances of falling into intrastate violence are also lower for market democracies as social conflicts tend to be resolved through nonviolent means. Hence, the world becomes more peaceful with more states being governed democratically. In Kant's original theory another important explanation for the liberal peace phenomenon was that citizens who have a bigger voice in democracies than those in other regimes would refuse to vote for politicians leading them to war. However, the role of the public turned out to be more complex and not always peace-prone (Doyle 2012; Mandelbaum 2002; Rummel 1995; Russett 1993).

Despite several analyses confirming the main premises of the liberal peace theory (see e.g. Gleditsch et al. 2001; Oneal and Russett 1997; Rummel 1995), Paris (2004) argues that the extent to which the concept can guide peacebuilding is questionable. As he stresses, the literature on liberal peace is concerned with well-established liberal democracies with functioning governmental institutions. However, peacebuilding interventions operate in countries that may not have these conditions. They are usually in the process of political and economic liberalization, and functioning governments are not yet established. As Paris notes, liberal peace literature offers little evidence on the effect of the process of liberalization on conflict-affected countries with weak governmental structures.

Nevertheless, from the 1990s, democratization and market liberalization became central to international peacebuilding operations (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). Most powerful countries, international organizations and international financial institutions started to see liberal democracy and market-oriented economics as universal solutions to many of the world's problems, including wars and violent conflicts, claiming that political and economic liberalization would naturally enhance self-sustaining peace (Mandelbaum 2002; Newman 2009; Paris 1997, 2004). Democratization, in practice manifested mainly as support for free and fair elections, became a major goal for the UN and its agencies, as well as other international players (Paris 2004). The UN's embracing of liberal democratic principles was presented in UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Democratization*, where he asserted that "peace, development and democracy are inextricably linked" (Boutros-Ghali 1996:118).

From their studies of seminal peacebuilding documents, Joshi et al. (2014) identified five policy areas that liberal peacebuilding generally pursues. (1) Promotion of democracy is the core area featured in liberal peacebuilding missions, assuming that the democratic model provides societies with inclusive mechanisms to address problems through peaceful means of political dialogue. The most common democratization strategy identified by Joshi et al. (2014) was the facilitation of elections, including training electoral personnel and overseeing election procedures. (2) The second policy area relates to support for the rule of law, manifested for example as the structural reform of judicial and legal institutions; vital because a functioning law and justice system is seen as essential for maintaining social order. (3) With the third policy area, a strong emphasis has been put on protecting human rights, including the rights of minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as other vulnerable groups. (4) The fourth area is reform of the security sector, including demobilization of ex-combatants. This is seen to be a crucial element of liberal peacebuilding interventions. (5) The last policy area includes a rather broad set of governance reforms to support the effective and efficient functioning of political and economic institutions and their accountability, transparency and inclusiveness.

However, it is important to stress that liberal peacebuilding missions have not necessarily included all these policy aspects. As Mac Ginty (2011) states, specific peacebuilding agendas varied from country to country, resulting in a number of different peace initiatives, rather than one single model implemented across all cases. Heathershaw (2008:603) arrives at a similar conclusion, arguing that peacebuilding is not homogenous, and that instead of peacebuilding we should be talking about "peacebuildings". He distinguishes three main discourses that

represent the main structural positions of the international peacebuilding community: democratic peacebuilding, civil society peacebuilding and statebuilding. The three strands are underpinned by three different ideals, liberty, justice and order. Democratic peacebuilding represents the original vision of the transition from war to liberal democratic peace, built on ideas of democratization, liberal internationalism and interventionism. The remaining two discourses, civil society peacebuilding and statebuilding, share some of the orientations and principles of democratic peacebuilding while, at the same time, offering fundamentally different starting points. The proponents of civil society strategies advocate for bottom-up approaches, emphasizing the importance of strong local capacities for peace that are represented by civil society and NGOs with their roles in ensuring social justice. We will discuss the role of civil society in peacebuilding in more detail later in this thesis, as it represents its main focus. Proponents of statebuilding, on the other hand, prefer top-down strategies, aimed at stabilization, security and institution building (Heathershaw 2008). Statebuilding is anchored primarily in the realist tradition and targets states that are perceived to have collapsed or failed, and are a threat not only to their own citizens, but also to the stability of the international system. Statebuilding became predominant in the liberal peacebuilding agenda, especially after 9/11 and the war on terror that followed. Compared to earlier conceptualizations of liberal peacebuilding, statebuilding was focused more narrowly on security goals through the construction of effective and legitimate governmental institutions in countries affected by conflict (Heathershaw 2008; Paris and Sisk 2009; Sabaratnam 2011b).

## **2.5 Critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding**

With time and the accumulating concerns about the effectiveness of liberal peacebuilding interventions, an increasing number of academics and practitioners started to question the prevailing liberal peacebuilding practices. Two major schools of criticism of liberal peacebuilding emerged: the problem-solving school and the critical school. The problem-solving approach, seen as the “conventional critique” (Newman et al. 2009:23), has primarily been focused on analysing the practices and policies of liberal peacebuilding that were not yielding satisfactory results, and proposing ways to improve their effectiveness. The authors of the problem-solving school do not question the political, legal and practical arrangements of liberal peacebuilding, nor its underlying ideological principles (Bellamy 2004; Newman et al. 2009). Studies on improving the effectiveness of liberal peacebuilding interventions have addressed issues concerning appropriate timeframes, cooperation and coordination among donors and other actors, the need for capacity building initiatives, and how to increase local



ownership of the liberal peacebuilding agenda (Newman et al. 2009; Paris 2010; Paris and Sisk 2009). Paris (2004:179), for example, suggested postponing liberalization in post-conflict countries, particularly their democratic elections, until the foundations of strong and effective political and economic institutions were laid, in what he called the “Institutionalization Before Liberalization” approach. The problem-solving approach has appeared not only in academic literature, but also in the practices of the UN and other major peacebuilding organizations. UN operations, for example, have recognized the need for a long-term timeframe for peacebuilding interventions that would provide sufficient time for the process of strengthening the institutions of post-war countries. They also acknowledge the importance of local ownership in order to ensure the sustainability of political and economic reforms (Paris 2010). At the same time, as Pugh (2013) notes, practitioners and policymakers in the peacebuilding field have almost exclusively been concerned with solving the existing problems of the prevailing liberal peacebuilding practice.

On the other hand, the critical school scrutinizes the basic assumptions of liberalism, the structures and principles of liberal peacebuilding. Representatives of the critical school examine the values, structures, institutions, policy assumptions and interests behind existing peacebuilding practices, providing critical perspectives that emphasize a wide range of problematic elements contained in liberal peacebuilding. The subsequent section introduces several types of critiques and follows a useful classification developed by Tadjbakhsh and Richmond (2011).

(1) The first group of critiques, labelled by Tadjbakhsh and Richmond (2011) as communitarian debate, challenges the legitimacy of the Western liberal values inherent in liberal peacebuilding practices and democratization efforts and their appropriateness for conflict-affected communities. The authors within this strand (see e.g. Lidén 2009, 2011; Paris 2002) argue that foreign cultures, moral values, norms, principles and political community cannot be promoted without considering the values and norms of the communities targeted by peacebuilding interventions. A model where local actors are creating peace for themselves in accordance with their own practices, traditions and moral values, with limited international assistance, which respects local sovereignty, is seen as the preferred engagement in post-conflict societies. (2) The proponents of social constructivism (see e.g. Conteh-Morgan 2005; Kurz 2010) criticise liberal peacebuilding operations for being constructed as de-politicized, bureaucratic, technical exercises with the simple logic of inputs (financial resources, reforms, policies, technical assistance etc.) creating normative outputs (peace and development). Liberal peacebuilding,

critics argue, overlooks local dynamics, power relations, institutions, the history and origins of states and local understanding of peace. All these factors may affect such a rational formula. Instead of incorporating them into the peacebuilding process, local cultures and values are perceived as issues that require modification if liberal peace is to be achieved. A related strand of criticism highlights poor contextual knowledge among international peacebuilders. In their ethnographic works, Autesserre (2014) and Pouligny (2006) showed that the international community fails to gain a good understanding of the communities and societies they are trying to rebuild. (3) Critical theorists radically reject the liberal peacebuilding agenda for reinforcing the current global, political and economic order. The authors representing this thinking (see e.g. Chandler 2006; Duffield 2001; Jones 2010; Pugh 2005) condemn the Western powers that dominate the peacebuilding field, and say these powers are using peacebuilding interventions to maintain their hegemony, the unjust world order and the unfair distribution of power and wealth. Ultimately, peacebuilding efforts are seen as contributing to the inequalities in the global capitalist system and having a negative effect on the capacities of host states to provide public goods and services. (4) The post-modernist critique (see e.g. Paris 1997; Richmond 2005) questions the underlying assumptions of liberal peace that it can serve as a driving force for linear progress, as well as its perception of the emancipatory potential of modernity. Peacebuilding is criticized for being a major experiment in social engineering, transplanting the Western model of organizing society, and incapable of absorbing local identities and standards in complex post-conflict contexts. (5) Finally, the post-colonial critiques (see e.g. Kapoor 2008; Lidén 2011; Richmond 2005) see a strong relationship to colonialism in the liberal peacebuilding practices of illiberal trusteeship and reform efforts aimed at pushing their own perceived civilized form of governance. These critiques also stress that there is a lack of representation of local perspectives in the peacebuilding process.

Even though the classification of critical voices discussed above is relatively comprehensive, it almost exclusively focuses on scrutinizing top-down international engagements in peacebuilding processes and macro-level dynamics. Missing from most of the early critical studies has been any analysis of the possible impact of local actors and their agencies on the shape and effectiveness of peacebuilding (Autesserre 2017a; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Nevertheless, recently a growing number of authors have become interested in the local dimensions of peace, giving rise to what Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013:763) call the “local turn” in peacebuilding. Given the importance of local agency in peacebuilding for the topic of this thesis, the following section will introduce the local turn trend.

## 2.6 Hybrid peace and the local turn in peacebuilding

The attention of peace and conflict scholars and practitioners has been increasingly directed at the importance of local actors in peace formation processes and at local dimensions of peace (see e.g. Autesserre 2017; Barnett, Fang, and Zürcher 2014; Heathershaw and Lambach 2008; Millar, van der Lijn, and Verkoren 2013; Richmond 2009; Visoka 2012; see also the special issue of *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 20, issue 2). Nevertheless, the local turn trend takes its inspiration from the work of John Paul Lederach (1997) published in the 1990s and described earlier in this chapter.

Prominent proponents of the local turn, Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013:769) define “local” as “the range of locally based agencies present within a conflict and post-conflict environment, some of which are aimed at identifying and creating the necessary processes for peace, perhaps with or without international help”. They assert that local peace is not created only or primarily through externally driven peacebuilding interventions and national-level politics, but rather as a by-product of the everyday economic, cultural and survival tasks that individuals pursue. Mac Ginty (2011:8) uses the term “hybridity” to capture the complex picture of conflict and post-conflict societies. He understands hybridity as “composite forms of practice, norms and thinking that emerge from the interaction of different groups, worldviews and activity”, asserting that all societies are the results of long-term, complex, and often subtle, processes of social negotiation that happen in everyday interactions. Additionally, hybridity emerges from the interaction between top-down and bottom-up dynamics, between representatives of internationally led peacebuilding interventions and local, indigenous social and political actors (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). Richmond and Mitchell (2012) identified four types of local responses to liberal peace interventions: acceptance, hybridization and shaping policies with tactics, co-optation and diversion, and resistance. Thus, the process of hybridization gives a new shape to liberal-democratic norms and to institutions implanted in post-conflict societies by Western peacebuilders, effectively creating unique hybrid forms of peace.

The focus on the local dimensions of peace deviates quite significantly from how liberal peacebuilding theory and practice has conventionally framed the local – as an empty space, an object of external intervention, with no agenda or history of change, indisputably accepting the ideas and models pushed by international peacebuilders (Debiel and Rinck 2016; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). An example of this is the fact that the term ‘local’ does not appear once in the whole *Agenda for Peace* documents, which illustrates

how little attention was given to the local agenda in the early years of international peacebuilding practice (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

Visoka (2012) argues that hybridity and local agency emerged as a result of peacebuilding interventions not fulfilling their promises and prioritizing external norms over local interests and needs. According to Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013), there were several forces behind local agency becoming more prominent. The continuous unveiling of the problems and failures of liberal peacebuilding led to intervention fatigue and a crisis of liberal peace that effectively allowed other perspectives on peacebuilding, including those formed by local practices and perspectives, to surface. Peace researchers and practitioners also started to use new methodologies and approaches that enabled them to better see and understand local perspectives. Another factor influencing the change was the increased attention given to the local within the development cooperation field; an area that is closely connected to the peacebuilding arena. Finally, voices from the global South became more present within the debate. Not only did the practitioners from conflict-affected countries reach senior positions within international organizations, local actors within post-conflict countries also gained the confidence to articulate their visions and preferences as they realized the liberal formulas were often not in line with their identities and norms.

The focus on hybridity influenced both the research on peace and conflict and peacebuilding practice. Mac Ginty (2011) suggests that hybridity be used as an analytical lens that would allow researchers and practitioners to look beyond national political elites and see other forces capable of engaging with the liberal peace, or resisting, ignoring, subverting, corrupting or exploiting it. With increased focus on the local, more attention would be given to those most affected by the decisions and policies created at national and international levels but who had been traditionally rather overlooked (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). Hybridity authors called for bottom-up approaches in peacebuilding practice that would incorporate local norms and traditions and put a stronger emphasis on local ownership. This would tackle the limitations of the rigid top-down approaches (Richmond 2015; Richmond and Mitchell 2012). However, others pointed to the challenges hybridity represents for peacebuilding interventions. For instance, Visoka (2012) and Randazzo (2016) claim that the hybrid nature of peacebuilding processes, the plurality and interdependencies of practices, agencies and involvements, and the complexity of social relations, all create contingent and uncontrollable conditions in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk about the intentionality, the controlled and linear actions which lead to intended outcomes. Hybridity challenges the rational models of causal,

progressive social change. It also makes it difficult to assign responsibility and accountability for any changes to specific actors. Such complex environments pose serious challenges to policy-making and governing and can effectively reinforce, complement or undermine peace efforts.

Building upon the local turn, several authors called for the promotion of everyday peace, as experienced by ordinary people in conflict and post-conflict areas, to be the objective of peacebuilding operations (Firchow 2018; Mac Ginty 2014; Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016). Everyday peace proponents argue that liberal peace only works with objectives on a national level, with the assumption that positive changes at the level of national institutions and governments will automatically transform into more peaceful lives for the general population. Focusing on everyday peace would instead allow peacebuilders to concentrate more on how individuals experience peace in their everyday lives, as this should be the central interest of peacebuilding efforts (Mac Ginty 2013, 2014; Millar 2014a). In her recent book devoted to everyday peace, Firchow (2018:14) concludes that everyday peace at a local level is “multidimensional, context-dependent, and evolving”. She specifically focused on how people living in conflict and post-conflict environments measure peace, and she found that local actors use different indicators to assess peace and peacefulness to those that international actors routinely apply. This indicates that the aspects of peace and conflict local communities find important are different from those that international organizations focus on in peacebuilding interventions. The issue of peace indicators and measures will be discussed further in chapter 3 Evaluating peacebuilding interventions. Additionally, Firchow (2018) distinguished between two approaches to peacebuilding: big-P Peacebuilding and small-p peacebuilding. Big-P Peacebuilding involves broad, community-level operations, such as humanitarian assistance during and immediately after a conflict, conflict resolution efforts, economic development interventions, governance and security sector reforms, rule of law etc. Small-p peacebuilding, on the other hand, focuses on the local level, especially on transforming or building peaceful relationships (Firchow 2018).

Hybridity and local agency studies also attracted critical voices that highlighted several limitations and weaknesses of this approach to peacebuilding. For some, it is too focused on presenting hybridity as an encounter of two different spheres, mostly local and international; thus constructing these two categories as binary opposites. Additionally, it often does so without sufficiently conceptualizing the local and the international (Paffenholz 2016b; Randazzo 2016; Sabaratnam 2011a). Another strand of criticism denounces the portrayal of the local as the good

actor, effectively romanticizing it and overlooking the diversity and complexity of local actors with varying profiles, behaviors and agendas. Several authors have shown that turning to the local does not automatically guarantee results that are more peaceful (Millar 2014b; Ngin and Verkoren 2015; Zanotti 2011). Even though both Richmond (2011) and Mac Ginty (2011), prominent proponents of hybridity, warn against romanticizing the local, Randazzo (2016) argues that the positive forms of local agency are represented more often in the literature than those forms with resistance or destruction on their agendas. As a result, Paffenholz (2016) claims, hybridity scholars do not sufficiently reflect on the local elite capture and the power relations among different local actors. Similarly do Debiel and Rinck (2016) argue that the local turn studies fail to sufficiently analyze the role of domestic politics and local formal institutions, and thus are only able to provide anecdotal evidence of everyday peace processes without identifying their underlying causes. Additionally, there are concerns questioning the authenticity of local actors, warning that the choice of local actors, portrayed as representing true local knowledge and interests, often depends on international actors and their own perspectives of the local. As Heathershaw (2013:279) states, “‘indigenous peacebuilding’ is partially produced by what internationals find, initiate or are willing to fund”. Moreover, Simons and Zanker (2014) assert that local institutions and authorities should not be automatically framed as authentic representatives of local people, since their legitimacy in the eyes of local populations may be contested, for example because of past events, when these institutions may have been involved in conflicts or had connections with the political and military powers. To summarize, criticism is mostly directed at the peacebuilding practice influenced by the hybridity perspective and at the recommendations hybridity scholars have had for international peacebuilding interventions. Nevertheless, the analytical value of the hybridity concept has not been contested as it provides a useful perspective on diverse and complex conflict and post-conflict processes.

## **2.7 Beyond peacebuilding: Conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict transformation**

At this point it is useful to define other concepts that can be found in the literature dealing with peace and conflict in order to distinguish them from peacebuilding. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that various authors may provide conflicting definitions of these terms and, in practice, the distinctions between them may not be straightforward.

Conflict management has been perceived as a tool of traditional diplomacy that applies various diplomatic, military, legal and economic means to prevent, mitigate and settle violent conflicts.

The main concern of conflict management is to make a conflict less damaging, minimize the suffering of those involved, and contain further escalation of violence. It generally involves official negotiations between parties in a conflict that are often mediated by a third actor, and ideally result in a ceasefire or settlement (Butler 2009; Maoz et al. 2004). Despite being perceived as an approach with rather narrowly defined goals, Butler (2009) acknowledges its importance in containing direct violence, thus creating an environment in which it is possible for parties to interact and potentially continue working to resolve underlying problems.

For conflict resolution, we can find definitions showing a varying degree of complexity. Wallensteen (2015:8) defines conflict resolution as “a situation *where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other’s continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other*” (italics in original). Compared to conflict management, conflict resolution is a more ambitious approach, aimed not only at ending fighting between conflicting parties, but also at solving the incompatibilities between them. Other authors (see e.g. Butler 2009; Jeong 2010; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall 2011) argue for an even broader definition of conflict resolution. In their view, conflict resolution should address the wider context that has given rise to and is sustaining direct violence, in addition to the conflict settlement dimension aimed at mediating a comprehensive agreement between the parties (Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Conflict resolution approaches are aimed at resolving deep-seated sources of conflict; the grievances, hostile attitudes, values, cultural practices and social and political issues driving a conflict. Without attempts to go below the surface of direct violence and resolve the issues that gave rise to conflict, a negotiated settlement could have a short life, and violence might re-emerge (Butler 2009; Jeong 2010; Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Wallensteen (2015), however, stresses that the specific aspects of any conflict resolution should depend on what the parties to a conflict can and want to include in their agreement.

Another influential approach, popularized in particular by John Paul Lederach, is conflict transformation. Lederach (2014) understands conflict as an opportunity for change, both at the level of the immediate problems giving rise to a conflict, and with regards to broader, structural issues. He lists several dimensions where change is necessary in order to transform conflicts and enhance peace. Special attention should be given to human relationships, and to the efforts to change relationships at interpersonal, inter-group, and social-structural levels. Arguments for enhancing peaceful relationships and cooperation by peace efforts were already presented in the 1970s by Adam Curle (1971), creating the basis for the conflict transformation approach.

Apart from relationships, conflict transformation should also attempt to address the root causes and conditions that led to a conflict, promote non-violent and constructive ways of dealing with conflict, develop structures that help people meet their basic needs and enhance their participation in decision-making, and transform the cultural patterns fueling violent behavior in conflicts (Lederach 2014).

Lederach (2014) makes a clear distinction between conflict transformation and conflict resolution, seeing conflict resolution as a problem-solving approach centered on the content, rather than on human relationships. Mac Ginty (2012) adds to this differentiation that conflict resolution (and conflict management) offer technocratic solutions to conflicts; such as the creation of arbitration mechanisms, tribunals and arbitration panels made up of foreign, neutral experts, which are supposed to reach objective, value-free judgments based on evidence. As a result, these solutions effectively depoliticize conflict issues, allowing the assumption that conflict is a matter of miscommunication rather than claims based on sentiment and identity. Ramsbotham et al. (2011) disagree with such conceptualization. For them, conflict transformation represents the deepest level of conflict resolution, rather than being a separate concept, as they work with a broader definition of conflict resolution that includes both the conflict settlement and the transformation dimensions.

The question of how peacebuilding relates to the concepts defined above is well explained by Ramsbotham et al. (2011). In line with Galtung's original ideas, they describe peacebuilding as "the project of overcoming structural and cultural violence (conflict transformation), in conjunction with peacemaking between conflict parties (conflict settlement) and peacekeeping (conflict containment)" (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:199). Thus, they see peacebuilding as the broadest approach, applying a wide range of strategies to build and sustain peace and prevent a relapse into violent conflict, and one which may include elements of conflict management, resolution and transformation. However, Tom (2017) criticizes peacebuilding for being too broad and incoherent as it has absorbed many other approaches dealing with conflicts, including conflict prevention and management.



### **3 Evaluating peacebuilding interventions**

Questions as to whether and how peacebuilding interventions are “working”, achieving their objectives and enhancing peace, have been of great importance to implementers of peacebuilding programs, their donors, and communities targeted by peacebuilding efforts. Implementing organizations want to know whether their work is yielding the hoped-for results, and they are pressed to obtain evidence of the merit of their work in order to demonstrate that the money they obtained was well spent. Donors need such evidence in order to distribute resources to where they can effectively improve the peacefulness of the recipient regions and to justify the spending to taxpayers. Finally, yet importantly, communities deserve to be informed about the effectiveness of the programs in which they have invested their time and efforts.

Scholars often emphasize that peacebuilding interventions need to be carried out in the best interest of the population they are targeting (Ramsbotham et al. 2011). To be able to determine the extent to which this is true for any project or set of interventions, rigorous evaluation is needed. However, despite the debates that have been going on for years, the field of peacebuilding evaluation is still faced with a number of problems and challenges. As Paris (2018:7) notes, peacebuilding evaluation remains “an imprecise science”. This chapter will discuss these challenges and introduce methodologies for evaluations of peacebuilding interventions that can be applied in an effort to overcome the challenges, and thus yield relevant and valid evidence concerning the peacebuilding effectiveness and impact.

First, we will discuss what constitutes the success or failure of a peacebuilding intervention, as this basic question is still on the table with no clear consensus among academics and practitioners (Firchow 2018). This is rather surprising given the fact that the conclusions of evaluation studies considerably depend on the applied definition of success. The chapter will continue with a discussion concerning the potential of local-level peacebuilding interventions to impact peace at the broader, societal level, and the difficulties of ascribing any observed changes to a particular intervention. Finally, a variety of evaluation designs and methods used in peacebuilding evaluations will be presented.

#### **3.1 Defining success of peacebuilding interventions**

Evaluations generally focus on assessing the extent to which projects, programs, policies and other interventions have achieved the desired objectives and goals. Thus, it is essential for those carrying out an evaluation to know what these objectives and goals are, in other words; how is

success defined? This then constitutes the optimal situation, and evaluations assess how far the actual situation is from the desired end goal and whether any progress has been achieved (Goertz 2020). The optimal goal of peacebuilding should be peace; however, as shown in the first chapter of this thesis, definitions of what constitutes peace and peaceful conditions vary. Moreover, peace and reconciliation, both of which are frequent aims of peacebuilding projects, are normative, complex and multidimensional goals. They are very much dependent on the context in which they are being pursued and consist of elements that are inherently difficult to quantify and measure (Firchow 2018).

Nevertheless, scholars and practitioners have been trying to identify various criteria and indicators of successful peacebuilding interventions. This is a crucial endeavor as evaluations are very much dependent on the selected definitions and indicators of success. As Ramsbotham et al. (2011) warn, narrowly or inappropriately defined criteria of success may considerably distort the assessment and provide an incomplete picture of the effectiveness and impact of an intervention. One strand of the research, popularized by Downs and Stedman (2002), operationalizes the success of complex international peacebuilding missions as an absence of direct violence at the time when the missions leave the host country. This indicator understands peace in a rather narrow way, essentially working with what Galtung (1969) calls negative peace and accentuating security and stability. Yet using such an indicator in analyses has several significant advantages. It is easily observable and the data are readily accessible from databases such as that operated by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Uppsala Universitet n.d.). However, Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta (2017) criticize the practice of equating peace with the absence of direct violence as it is primarily measured in terms of the number of battle-related deaths. Conflict occurs when the number exceeds a certain threshold and stops when the number falls below that threshold. Such binary conceptualization, according to Campbell et al., hides the complexity of war-to-peace transitions, and neglects many other factors and processes important for peace. It also focuses on the situation at the level of the state and is unable to capture differences at the local level. Paris (2004, 2018) criticizes Down's and Stedman's operationalization of success for focusing only on the situation at the end of peacebuilding missions, failing to consider whether peace is sustained over a longer period. He also argues that using direct violence as the only criterion does not say much about whether the interventions addressed the underlying, root causes of the conflict. There are also other macro-level measures similarly focusing on the security aspects of peace, such as the recurrence of violence and the need to repeatedly deploy UN peacebuilding missions to restore order. These

measures struggle with similar limitations as the indicator used by Downs and Stedman; they are of a rather minimalist scope and emphasize stability over other characteristics of the situation in post-conflict countries (Call 2008). Another commonly used indicator is the degree to which a peacebuilding operation has accomplished the goals defined in its mission statement. There are also several problems linked to such a definition. The assessment of success or failure depends on how ambitious the missions were when setting the goals. It also does not tell us much about the appropriateness and relevancy of the defined goals. Moreover, as the peacebuilding operations' mandates vary considerably, it is impossible to conduct any meaningful comparisons between individual cases (Downs and Stedman 2002).

Rejecting indicators that are narrow and mostly oriented towards security and negative peace, several authors have proposed different, more ambitious measures of success. Paris (2004) and Scharbatke-Church (2011) argue that peacebuilding efforts should primarily address the conditions that gave rise to the conflict, and hence evaluations have to focus on assessing the extent to which peace initiatives correctly identified and subsequently mitigated these root causes. Call (2008), however, warns that this definition of success is more difficult to be measured, and also points to the fact that some of the root causes lie outside the conflict-affected country itself, making it impossible for the peacebuilders to address them. Another strand of analyses works with political indices, where free and fair national elections are the minimal indicator of a legitimate, participatory government. Again, this type of indicator is easy to observe, but it is rather questionable whether the one single event of a national election can and should be seen as a sign of peace (Call 2008). Doyle and Sambanis (2006) proposed a more complex approach, defining success as a combination of security-oriented indices and those assessing the political openness of a government and the level of participation of citizens in governance, going well beyond the simple existence of national elections. Authors coming from the statebuilding school of thought assess the extent to which peacebuilding succeeds in establishing a credible, effective, legitimate, accountable and sustainable state, as well as state institutions capable of delivering essential services (Paris and Sisk 2009). However, judging whether a state has the above-mentioned qualities is a more difficult endeavor, again open to discussion regarding which indices to use for measuring state capacities.

Just as there are a number of compiled indicators used to track and compare the situations in different countries based on various characteristics (such as the Human Development Index), one of the prominent indices used to measure the peacefulness of countries around the world is the Global Peace Index (GPI), developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). It is

comprised of three groups of indices: societal safety and security, ongoing domestic and international conflict, and militarization. The index mostly measures aspects of negative peace, i.e. the absence of violence and fear of violence (Institute for Economics & Peace 2021). To supplement the GPI, IEP also constructed the Positive Peace Index (PPI), assessing the aspects important for positive peace. The index is built around eight “pillars” of positive peace that together create an optimal environment for peace: well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, free flow of information, good relations with neighbours, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others, low levels of corruption, and sound business environment (Institute for Economics & Peace 2020).

In his book, Wallensteen (2015:64–65) conceptualized what he calls “quality peace” as “the creation of post-war conditions that make the inhabitants of a society (be it an area, a country, a region, a continent, or a planet) secure in life and dignity now and for the foreseeable future”. He also proposed several indicators to measure this rather broad definition of peace. One group of indices targets the relationships between warring parties after the end of a conflict, assessing for example, meetings and agreements between the parties, the quality of the electoral contest, including all parties involved having access to media, the pursuit of war crimes and the provision of security guarantees. To evaluate whether conditions allow for human dignity, Wallensteen proposes using indicators such as respect for human rights, everyday expressions of discrimination, respect for minority rights, inclusiveness and gender equality. He also highlights the importance of reconciliation for peace, which can be measured through the acknowledgment of victims, apologies for discrimination and investigations into and compensation for crimes against various groups of victims. Another group of indicators relates to personal safety. This is defined rather broadly, as Wallensteen suggests tracking military and police expenditures, corruption levels, rule of law, access to disarmament and national crime rates. To create a complete picture of the quality of peace, he adds that traditional indicators of economic and social development, both domestic and international, should also be assessed (Wallensteen 2015a).

Diehl and Druckman (2010) also created a comprehensive framework for assessing the success of peace operations. In their evaluation framework they reflected on several issues important for peacebuilding interventions; for example differences in how various stakeholders in the peacebuilding field perceive success, short-term and long-term perspectives of success, availability of baseline data that are important for comparisons of situations before and after peacebuilding interventions, and the variability in peace operations’ scopes and goals. They

prepared separate evaluation frameworks for peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, specifying evaluation questions with related indicators of success for several dimensions of peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions. For peacebuilding operations, Diehl and Druckman identified questions and indicators in the following dimensions: local security (e.g. number of estimated landmines, number of national forces responsible for local security, percentage of citizens feeling safe to go to work/school, and homicides), rule of law (approval of constitution by parties, access to the justice system, number of attacks on judges and witnesses, perception of fairness of the justice system), local governance (number and frequency of elections for local officials, number of investigations of corruption), and restoration, reconciliation, and transformation (number of war crime trials, creation of truth and reconciliation committees, number of refugees resettled, and number of conflict resolution skills programs).

The list of indicators created by Campbell (2007) differs from Wallensteen's (2015) and Diehl's and Druckman's (2010) frameworks in that it identifies indicators appropriate for measuring success at various levels. Campbell identified indicators assessing personal, relational, structural and cultural changes in several thematic areas, such as socio-economic foundations, political framework, security, and reconciliation and justice. Moreover, she also provided examples of the theories behind the changes at each level and in each thematic area while, at the same time, warning against over-reliance on such theories without rigorous evaluation of the success of peacebuilding efforts.

Criticizing both the narrow, negative peace-oriented conceptualizations, as well as the broad, maximalist notions, applying definitions of peace that are hardly attainable, Themnér and Ohlson (2014) proposed a concept called legitimate peace. They see it as a more realistically achievable benchmark, yet one that apply a better definition of peace than just the absence of war. In addition, they argue that it is possible to operationalize and measure legitimate peace. It has two components; vertical legitimacy, defined as the loyalty towards the state, and horizontal legitimacy, understood as the attitudes of citizens towards each other. The authors do not define indicators for measuring vertical and horizontal legitimacy; instead, they propose a set of questions that can be used in surveys, interviews and discourse analyses of media outputs. The responses to the questions can be used to assess the presence and level of vertical and horizontal legitimacy in a society. For vertical legitimacy, the questions relate to people's willingness to report a crime to the police, their willingness to participate in collective initiatives organized by a state authority, their perceptions of the right of the state to collect taxes, and

their beliefs as to whether state institutions represent people's interests. The level of horizontal legitimacy can be assessed with questions about whether people think members of other groups should be allowed to live in their country, own land, form political parties, and whether they would appreciate having a member of the other group as a neighbour.

Most of the indicators introduced above, perhaps with the exception of Campbell's (2007) levelled list of indicators, are not suitable for assessing individual, small to medium peacebuilding projects. The potential of these projects to affect broad, state or society level indicators, such as an end to direct violence, respect for minority rights, and national reconciliation, is constrained by their limited resources, scope, capacities and influence. Moreover, the standard macro-level peace indicators are not suited to capturing improvements at the community level, which is exactly the level that individual peacebuilding projects, especially those implemented by local and international NGOs, strive to affect. However, it would be incorrect to conclude that none of them have any meaningful impact just because we cannot track their effects using society-level indicators. As Ernstorfer, Chigas, and Vaughan-Lee (2015) stress, high-level changes may only be happening as the cumulative effect of individual, small projects. Paffenholz and Reyhler (2007) note that even though not every peacebuilding effort necessarily needs to reach the macro level, projects should still have a clear vision of how they could contribute to broader peace. For these reasons, several authors have proposed other ways to assess the effectiveness of small to medium peacebuilding interventions.

A very common approach in evaluations of peacebuilding projects, and one which is also used in the development cooperation field, is to work with the theories of change of the evaluated projects and use the description of the outcomes and impacts in these theories of change as the measure of success (see e.g. OECD 2012). Theory of change, in a broader sense, is "a set of beliefs about how change happens" (Church and Rogers 2006:11). More specifically, it "explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts" (Rogers 2014:1). Church and Rogers (2006) see success as an arbitrary determination of the changes individual projects seek to achieve. Indicators are, in such cases, related to those specific goals defined in the theory of change. The problem is, however, that it is still rather uncommon for peacebuilding initiatives and organizations to have an explicit, well-defined theory of change; depicting how and why their activities would contribute to the desired change and what this change should be (OECD 2012; Paffenholz 2016a). Lederach (1997) also proposes using theories of change for formulating and evaluating

peacebuilding strategies, but warns against only using quantifiable indicators of the intended change. He concluded that while quantitative indicators can help verify outputs such as the number of workshops conducted or the number of participants, they do not tell us anything about the quality of the transformative process at which the peacebuilding should be aimed. Peacebuilding, in his conceptualization, is a dynamic, flexible and long-term process of building and rebuilding relationships and trust, and indicators should focus on this dynamic process and on relationships. On the other hand, there are authors such as de Coning (2016) and Millar (2021), who argue against the logic of theories of change. They see post-conflict contexts as being characterized by interactions of many actors, with multiple intentions and approaches, all contributing to the complex nature of the systems in which the peacebuilding interventions operate. Such complexity considerably disturbs the linear cause-and-effect logic inherent in theories of change, making it difficult to design a predictable causal chain of inputs leading to outputs, outcomes and impact. This makes the evaluation models with which we theorize on the effects of peacebuilding interventions and test these theories using relevant indicators, rather inappropriate.

While most evaluations assess the effects of peace interventions with standardized and mostly quantitative indicators, a growing body of literature criticizes this practice. Chigas et al. (2014) note that evaluation criteria and indicators usually represent evaluator's preferred peacebuilding theory and desired end-state, and might not reflect the actual context in which a program works. Millar (2014) and Mac Ginty and Firchow (Firchow 2018; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017) similarly stress that each context in which a peacebuilding intervention works is unique and cannot be standardized, meaning that what constitutes the success of peace efforts can also not be standardized. They also argue that the country-level, quantitative approaches to evaluation fail to capture the nuanced situation at the local, sub-state level. Standard evaluations of peacebuilding effectiveness assume that achievements on the macro level will trickle down to the local level, and hence do not aim to identify local-level effects. However, the trickle-down effect does not always happen. When evaluating the impact of peacebuilding interventions, the indicators used in quantitative studies are essentially proxy indicators for the independent variables, and often do not reflect the local people's experiences and perceptions, or the culturally variable nature of the phenomenon of peace. Such studies, as Millar (2014) notes, usually end up measuring the progress towards peace as security, or negative peace. Additionally, Mac Ginty (2013) observes that many of the proxy indicators for peace measure more social and economic development, and thus risk presenting a misleading picture of the

situation. Denskus (2012) claims that current evaluation practices in the peacebuilding (and development) field of applying quantitative models have become limited to mere managerial, technocratic and depoliticised tasks, with limited periods spent in the field, and without any questioning of the fundamental beliefs that lie at the core of peacebuilding practices. Assessing various evaluation guidelines and literature, Millar (2014) also criticizes the lack of emphasis on the fieldwork component in peacebuilding evaluations. Šavija-Valha (2012) argues that while quantifiable indicators might serve as an accountability measure for the donors of peacebuilding projects, they tell us very little about the actual changes caused by the interventions and the processes that led to those changes. Fischer (2009) similarly warns against the danger of peacebuilding evaluation becoming part of the performance-based system enforced by donors who want quick, measurable results in order to demonstrate the use of public money. In effect, evaluations increasingly focus on the measurement of short-term results, ignoring crucial, long-term processes. Finally, evaluations that track sets of pre-defined indicators can hardly be accurate when baseline data are non-existent and monitoring processes are not in place, which is often the case in many peacebuilding projects (Scharbatke-Church 2011a).

Following the local turn in peacebuilding (discussed in chapter 2), and addressing the limitations of the standard indicators described above, Firchow and Mac Ginty (Firchow 2018; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017) suggested a bottom-up approach to measuring peace. In their Everyday Peace Indicators Project, the authors created a list of community-level indicators by asking people in several conflict-affected countries about their perception of what peacefulness means to them and which conditions constitute peace. The indicators are very much related to everyday experiences and how people assess their own safety and peace. Most of the identified indicators concern basic needs and desires, such as safety from personal violence and access to public services and health care. Communities primarily identified security-related indicators (e.g. less gang violence, women safe from rape, safe streets, free movement at night), but also indicators related to social cohesion and relationships in communities (e.g. no discrimination based on tribes, young people being included in community meetings, no conflicts among community members, reconciliation). Indicators related to human rights were less common. Understandably, everyday peace indicators are context specific, and unlike assessments using top-down indicators, any comparison between cases is difficult. Mac Ginty and Firchow (2016) noticed a number of differences between how local communities in conflict-affected countries perceive peace and how international actors dominantly understand peace. For example, the



work of international NGOs and other international actors was mostly absent from local peace narratives. In addition, compared to gender-insensitive top-down indicators of peace and conflict, local accounts show the importance of gender and how the experiences of men and women can be very different. The Everyday Peace Indicators Project also revealed that communities which experienced conflict further in the past than others proposed a higher amount of positive peace indicators than communities with more recent experience of violence (Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017).

Millar (2014) responded to the limitations of quantitative indicators-based evaluations by developing a framework for an ethnographic approach to evaluating peacebuilding interventions. This framework sees the experiences the beneficiaries have of the transition to peace as the primary outcome of a peacebuilding intervention. Millar's approach allows evaluators to better capture the beneficiaries' understandings, perceptions and experiences of peacebuilding programmes, which are, according to Millar, often lacking in other evaluation studies. He argues that to understand why a peacebuilding intervention succeeds or fails, it is necessary to gain insight into how local people experience it and why they experience it the way they do, thus challenging our Western assumptions of how certain types of peacebuilding programmes should work. In doing so, the approach requires evaluators to allow beneficiaries to define what concepts such as peace, justice, reconciliation and development mean to them. The evaluators then gather thick descriptions of local experiences and assess the extent to which the evaluated peacebuilding interventions succeeded in providing those things important to the local population. The approach also requires evaluators to spend longer periods than is common with other approaches with a wide array of beneficiaries in the field.

### **3.2 Assessing the micro-macro link**

With the local turn in peacebuilding and increased attention being paid to local-level, grassroots peacebuilding programs, the effectiveness and ability of such programs to influence a broader context has started to be examined. In her study, Campbell (2007:6) equates the success of peacebuilding activities with their ability to reach "beyond their initial entry point". She writes that an activity is successful when it "is able to support personal change in a way that affects relational change", and even more successful when the "personal and relational change then leads to structural change". From her perspective, peacebuilding should ensure movement from the primary level that a project wants to influence, to other levels of change. This movement from personal to relational and structural change, or so-called micro-macro link/connection, represents another challenge peacebuilding evaluators have to deal with. Church and Shouldice

(2003) use the term micro-macro connection to describe the transfer of change that peacebuilding projects generate between the levels of influence, and they emphasize the importance of determining how and under what conditions such a transfer occurs. They have identified eight so-called tiers of influence, based on who represents the main target group of a peacebuilding intervention. Each tier of influence then corresponds to one of the three levels of change: micro, mezzo and macro (see table 2 below). While peacebuilding interventions usually target one of the tiers of influence, they often assume that the change resulting from their intervention will also be reflected in the other tiers and at other levels of influence. However, the question as to how change at the micro level, such as change of individual attitudes and behaviours, can affect the macro level of a society, remains rather under-researched, as does the question of how to assess this important link in evaluations.

Table 2: Micro-Macro spectrum of peacebuilding impact

Tiers of influence	Levels
Individuals	Micro level
Family unit	
Social network, peer group	
Community	Mezzo level
Sub-national region	
Society at large, country	Macro level
Regional grouping of countries	
International	

Source: adapted from Church and Shouldice (2003)

For Northern donors, peacebuilding has often been part of the same frameworks and policies as development assistance, and with regards to showing the results, the expectations put on the implementers of peacebuilding projects, usually NGOs, have been, in many ways, the same as in the development cooperation arena. Donors focus primarily on the accountability function of evaluations and expect implementers to provide clear evidence of the results achieved by the peacebuilding projects they supported. However, the impact of short-term peacebuilding projects, given the long-term nature of the process of enhancing peace, is often hard to spot. NGOs and other implementers usually provide, as evidence of their effectiveness, figures related to their activities and direct tangible outputs; such as how many people participated in

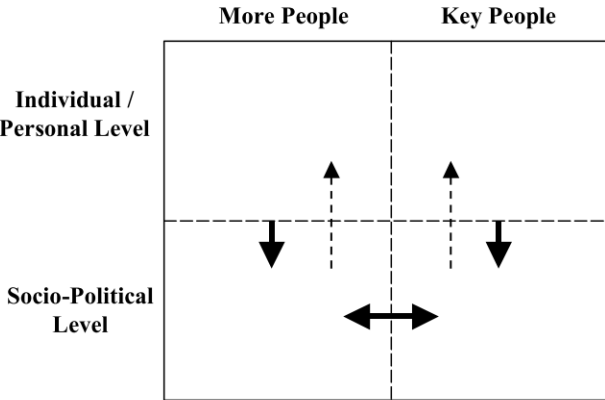
project activities or were trained as part of a project, how many schools were reconstructed etc. Yet these numbers say very little about progress towards building positive peace overall. Changes that are more subtle, intangible and more difficult to measure are often overlooked (Bush and Duggan 2013; Verkoren 2008). Moreover, NGOs often do not explicitly link their specific project goals with broader peacebuilding objectives, hoping or assuming the impacts they achieve at the individual level will eventually add up and contribute to societal peace. Yet, a clear vision or strategy of how a particular peacebuilding project should contribute to the broader societal peace is often missing (Anderson and Olson 2003; Chigas 2007).

Nevertheless, several authors have attempted to provide some guidance on how to evaluate the micro-macro link and to deconstruct the process of change transfer. Church and Shouldice (2003) suggest that the transfer of projects' impact should be conceived as a series of consecutive steps (that can essentially be seen as a theory of change), not as a direct effect from micro to macro level. They also claim that projects have a bigger impact on tiers closest to the one in which they operate, while their influence on more distant tiers is more limited.

The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project, implemented by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA), makes what is probably the most beneficial contribution to the micro-macro link debate (Anderson and Olson 2003). According to the authors, it is incorrect to assume that peacebuilding projects will automatically influence the lives of those not directly targeted by their activities. For example, it should not be expected that by changing individual perceptions and attitudes peace projects will naturally trigger broader political change. CDA developed four criteria for assessing peacebuilding effectiveness and the potential of projects to contribute to peace at the macro level, based on the examination of a number of peace projects. These criteria address the program level of individual peacebuilding interventions, and also suggest that an effective peacebuilding program should have a clear strategy as to how it will influence the dynamic of the broader conflict. In other words; how it will contribute, in its own way, to peace at the level of a whole society, or Peace Writ Large. According to RPP, a peacebuilding programme is effective and has the potential to contribute to Peace Writ Large if it: 1) causes participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace, 2) results in the creation or reform of political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict, 3) prompts people to resist violence and provocations to violence, and 4) results in people's increased security or a reduction in their perception of threats (Anderson and Olson 2003). Later, RPP added a fifth criterion of effectiveness: 5) peacebuilding interventions should result in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations (CDA 2016). Another criterion for

assessing the potential of peacebuilding projects to contribute to Peace Writ Large is their aspiration to influence both personal and socio-political levels, and attract and connect key people and wider populations (see Figure XY). Anderson and Olson (2003) argue that when projects only aim at changes at the individual level, such as changes of attitudes, perceptions and relationships, without a clear strategy of how these changes would affect the socio-political level, or how they would be translated into wider societal actions, they will not be able to meaningfully affect the Peace Writ Large. Likewise, if the changes generated by a peacebuilding project only influence the key people in a society and not the wider population, or if they only influence the wider population and not the key individuals, they will not achieve broader, sustained change at the level of Peace Writ Large.

Figure 1: Reflecting on Peace Practice project’s diagram for achieving structural change



Source: Anderson and Olson (2003)

Chigas and Woodrow (2018) summarized the findings from their research concerning cumulative impact of peacebuilding programs on broader peace, and the linkages presented by RPP in Anderson and Olson's (2003) publication. They validated the importance of peacebuilding interventions that promote vertical linkages (from individual to socio-political changes) as well as linkages across levels of influence (engaging more people as well as influential individuals serving as connectors across levels). Apart from these two aspects, the authors promoted the need for horizontal linkages in peacebuilding programming. If peacebuilding initiatives are to enhance their cumulative impact, they should focus on forming connections with representatives and initiatives from a range of sectors dealing with some overlapping issues, with the aim of collaborating in pursuit of common goals.

All the aspects of effective peacebuilding projects that potentially have some influence outside their original sphere, as presented above, are issues that should be analysed and traced in evaluation studies.

### **3.3 Attribution problem**

Another issue that represents a challenge for evaluations of peacebuilding interventions, but also for evaluations in other sectors of development cooperation, is causal attribution. OECD (2012:33) characterizes attribution as “the ascribing of a causal link from a specific intervention to observed (or expected) changes”. Essentially, evaluations should not only provide evidence of whether intended changes occurred, they should also assess whether the observed changes occurred due to the evaluated intervention or because of other projects or economic and societal factors, or the extent to which the intervention contributed to these changes. Appraising the attribution of peacebuilding projects might be even more challenging than in other areas, given the complexity, volatility and fast-changing nature of post-conflict environments, all of which make it difficult for evaluations to track potential outside influences. The experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs using counterfactuals or control groups that are seen as preferred options for assessing what a situation would be like without the evaluated intervention (see the following sub-chapter), are often not possible in post-conflict settings, or they are not appropriate for peacebuilding interventions (Bush and Duggan 2013; OECD 2012). Moreover, peacebuilding efforts often aim at rather intangible changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviors that are of a long-term nature, not necessarily visible within the timeframes of the programs. These changes may also be, to a considerable extent, affected by other societal developments, outside the evaluated programs (Corlazzoli and White 2013). All these issues make the assessment of attribution rather difficult. Nevertheless, the existing evaluation approaches used in peacebuilding evaluations and discussed in the following sub-chapter attempt to address this problem, each in its own way.

### **3.4 Evaluation designs for assessing peacebuilding interventions**

Firchow (2018) notes that there are two broad groups of approaches to evaluations in conflict-affected contexts. The first are bottom-up and people-centered approaches, inspired by anthropology, sociology and interpretivism, that often use case studies, systematically reflect on contextual factors, and include local perceptions of the evaluated interventions. They are used mostly for what Firchow (2018) calls small-p peacebuilding initiatives; local-level projects often aimed at transforming or building peaceful relationships. The second group comprises of approaches inspired by natural sciences and the positivist perspective, based on quantitative approaches to research that use econometric measurement and emphasize methodological robustness and replicability. They are used primarily for community-level Big-P Peacebuilding efforts. The assessments are based on pre-selected indicators that are measurable and

demonstrable. Firchow (2018) concludes that these approaches reflect the technocratic turn apparent in the peacebuilding field.

This section will introduce some of the evaluation approaches and designs that can be used for evaluating peacebuilding interventions, starting with experimental and quasi-experimental designs that work with counterfactual comparisons and are based on the positivist tradition. This will be followed by a variety of non-experimental designs inspired mostly by interpretivism.

### ***3.4.1 Experimental and quasi-experimental designs***

Experimental designs, or randomized controlled trials, are considered the gold standard of evaluations, as they provide the strongest evidence of what a situation would be like without the evaluated intervention, leaving almost no space for questioning the causal attribution (Chigas et al. 2014). They assess the impact of an intervention by measuring the net difference in the pre-defined set of indicators between the group that participated in the intervention (treatment group) and the one that did not participate in the intervention (control group). For the treatment and control groups to be as similar as possible as regards important characteristics, the potential target population is divided into these two groups randomly before the intervention commences. Then the only factor that explains the difference in the measured indicators is the evaluated intervention, providing the effects of any external factors are controlled (Morra Imas and Rist 2009; OECD 2012).

Quasi-experimental designs can be used when the random assignment of a potential target population to a treatment and a control group is not possible. These designs are again indicator-based and either use a comparison group that was not established randomly, but is still similar to the treatment group, or only measure the treatment group before and after the evaluated intervention. Such an evaluation can either be prepared before the implementation of a project, as with the experimental one, or after the project has finished (Morra Imas and Rist 2009).

However, there are several limitations and constraints to the application of experimental and quasi-experimental designs for peacebuilding projects implemented in conflict and post-conflict environments. The following section will touch upon some of the restrictions. First, to be able to assess whether there was any change in evaluated indicators, it is crucial to have baseline data on what the situation was like before an evaluated project started. Nevertheless, the lack of availability of reliable and high-quality baseline data is a common problem for many peacebuilding evaluations. There are a number of reasons for this, influenced by the conflict

context, including the security situation, political sensitivity, censorship, the efforts of various sides to control the data collection, and the inaccessibility of certain areas (Bush and Duggan 2013; OECD 2012). The complex, fast-changing nature of the conflict and post-conflict context is another constraint, as experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations are most suited to projects implemented in stable conditions where it is possible to control developments in the project environment. The conflict dynamic may also change over the course of a project, requiring the project to react to new circumstances and to change its strategy. In such cases, indicators selected for a study may be no longer relevant. Here it is also important to mention the issue of selecting appropriate indicators for measuring the intended changes, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition, it may be impossible, sometimes even undesirable, to prevent any spillover effects from the control/comparison group to the treatment group. Evaluations also have to consider the ethical questions raised by denying the treatment group access to the benefits of the evaluated project. Moreover, experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations are not suitable to be used to explain how and why certain changes occurred, or did not occur, unless they are accompanied by other evaluation approaches. Very importantly, they can only track the intended changes based on which the measured indicators are selected. Unanticipated changes, both positive and negative, may be left undetected. Finally, these designs are not appropriate for assessing the effects of peacebuilding on a wider population, beyond the intended target group, or on Peace Writ Large (Chigas et al. 2014; OECD 2012).

### ***3.4.2 Non-experimental and theory-based evaluation designs***

In situations where experimental and quasi-experimental designs are not feasible or appropriate, other approaches are available, not based on any experiments or comparisons with the counterfactuals, but closely and deeply investigating the evaluated interventions.

Theory-based evaluations explicitly work with articulated theories of change and test their validity and fulfillment. The attribution problem is addressed, although not fully eliminated, by verifying the theory of change. If a theory is created concerning how certain activities under certain conditions should lead to expected outcomes, and the evaluation validates that the changes occurred as predicted by the theory, the outcomes can be attributed to the program (Connell and Kubisch 1998).

Contribution analysis, also a theory-based approach, apart from validating the theory of change, also assesses how strongly or well supported by evidence individual causal links in the theory of change are. It also analyses any possible influence of external factors on the achievement of observed changes. In other words, contribution analysis intentionally investigates alternative

explanations for the outcomes a program intended to influence, assessing the extent of their potential role in the process of bringing about the observed changes (Kotvojs and Shrimpton 2007; Mayne 2001). The statement of causality is then based on the plausibility of the theory of change, evidence that the activities were implemented and intended changes occurred, and the assessment of the degree of influence of other factors, external to the evaluated project (Chigas et al. 2014).

Theory-based evaluations, unlike experiments, are able to uncover not only what impacts certain intervention had, but also why and how these changes occurred, or in the case of a failure, did not occur. They thus provide richer insights that may help to improve peacebuilding practice. Moreover, they can track changes beyond the direct level of influence of the intervention, and to Peace Writ Large. However, it is still not a common practice for peacebuilding projects to have a full and well-developed theory of change that can be tested and evaluated (Corlazzoli and White 2013; Paffenholz 2016a).

Other non-experimental designs do not work with a theory of change, and thus can be used in complex, unpredictable contexts with complicated causal links that cannot be fully controlled, and/or in situations where theories of change have not been developed. One such method, Outcome Harvesting, developed by Wilson-Grau (2019), does not assess whether pre-defined outcomes have been achieved. Instead, it collects evidence of what has changed and whether and how the evaluated project contributed to these changes. Outcome is defined as “*an observable change in the behavior* of individuals, groups, communities, organizations, or institutions” (italics in original) (Wilson-Grau 2019:1). Such changes in behavior may be manifested as actions, activities, relationships, agendas, policies, or practices that were influenced or triggered by an intervention. The outcome statement includes both the identification of behavioral changes and the causal connection, small or large, direct or indirect, between the evaluated project and the identified behavioral changes. As Wilson-Grau (2019) proposes, Outcome Harvesting is particularly useful for evaluating interventions whose aim is social change, as it assesses whether an intervention prompted individuals or groups to initiate anything new and thus contributed in some part to a social change. The method thus turns the attention from proxy indicators that are quantifiable and measurable, but do not necessarily reflect the actual changes caused by an intervention (such as the number of people benefiting from a project, see the discussion on indicators above), to changes that many peacebuilding projects ultimately want to have influenced but are difficult to measure and track with traditional evaluation approaches: social change, change in attitudes and behavior, change in



policies, etc. The perspective Outcome Harvesting takes is also not limited to planned and intended changes, and can thus uncover effects project planners had not originally envisioned. All these characteristics make Outcome Harvesting well suited for evaluating peacebuilding efforts. However, there are also some limitations to be aware of. Particularly, there is a danger that the evaluation will only detect the most visible and easy to identify outcomes, leaving smaller and more subtle changes unnoticed (INTRAC 2017b).

Another non-experimental design that does not work with a theory of change, and is appropriate for similar situations to Outcome Harvesting introduced above, is the Most Significant Change (MSC) developed by Davies and Dart (2005). It is a participatory technique of collecting stories of change as experienced by the various stakeholders and beneficiaries of an evaluated intervention. After collecting the stories, stakeholders discuss which story they consider to be the most significant and why. A valuable strength of this method is that it provides accounts of change as experienced and perceived by the intended stakeholders and beneficiaries of an intervention. Traditional evaluation designs built around pre-selected indicators cannot capture this aspect to such an extent. On the other hand, by focusing on the most significant changes, MSC does not necessarily provide a comprehensive account of all the changes triggered by an intervention. Additionally, negative changes may not appear in the collected accounts (INTRAC 2017a). As such, MSC is usually not used as the only methodology in an evaluation, but rather in combination with other methods and tools (Chigas et al. 2014).

## **4 Civil society and its role in the process of building peace**

Civil society in its various forms and shapes is an indispensable part of our communities. In recent decades, civil society organizations, especially professionalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have come under the spotlight in a wide range of international interventions, including relief operations, development assistance, democratization efforts and peacebuilding operations. The trend of involving civil society in these processes has been particularly visible, and has grown, since the end of the Cold War (Goodhand 2006). Even though this practice is common and widespread, with numerous theories providing justification for it, the authors warn that the actual impacts of NGOs and other civil society organizations on these complex and multidimensional processes are still insufficiently researched and assessed (Church and Shouldice 2003; Paffenholz 2010). To illustrate this claim, a recent evidence gap study which mapped the evidence base from impact evaluations carried out on various types of peacebuilding programs found no impact evaluations of peacebuilding programs having the support of civil society as their main aim, despite the proclaimed centrality of civil society building in the processes of enhancing peace (Sonnenfeld et al. 2020).

The following chapter will first conceptualize the term civil society, describe its various forms and outline the current discussions in preparation for the second part of the chapter where the debate concerning the role of civil society organizations in peacebuilding processes is introduced. The existing evidence of the supposed benefits these organizations have for the process of building and sustaining peace is scarce, but it will be critically assessed.

### **4.1 Conceptualizing civil society**

Civil society is a rather broad concept with various meanings and understandings. Hence, this chapter will first define this concept before analyzing the role peacebuilding literature prescribes to civil society.

Many philosophers and social and political scientists, starting with Aristotle, have attempted to conceptualize the term civil society in their works. Khilnani (2001) and Spurk (2010) provided useful overviews of how the concept evolved, analyzing the contributions of, among others, Adam Ferguson, Thomas Paine, John Locke, Friedrich Hegel, Charles de Montesquieu, Alexis de Tocqueville and Antonio Gramsci. Most authors have defined the term in relation to other concepts. In the past, authors such as Aristotle and Kant understood civil society as being synonymous with the state and political society. They contrasted the “civilized” character of civil society to the uncivil state of nature and to uncivilized forms of government (Keane 1988;

Spurk 2010). Over time, the perspectives on civil society shifted and writers such as Ferguson and Paine conceptualized civil society and political society as separate, even opposing, concepts. Civil society became associated with the protection of individual rights and freedoms from the power of the state and abusive political leaders (Keane 1988). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that ideas and perspectives on civil society are as diverse as the sector itself, with theorists finding very limited common ground (Edwards 2014).

Diamond (1994) formulated a widely quoted definition of civil society that can be considered as the most common understanding of the concept today. He defined it as the “realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order or a set of shared rules”. Citizens are “acting collectively in a public sphere” to express their interests, ideas, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable (Diamond 1994:5). Keane (1998, 6) provided a similar definition, describing civil society as “a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that 'frame', constrict and enable their activities”. As Spurk (2010, 8–9) adds, civil society is “distinct from the state, political, private, and economic spheres” and the interests civil society organizations pursue “are not purely driven by private or economic interests”. Civil society thus occupies the space between individuals and families, the state and the market, although the boundaries between these sectors are often blurred and complex (Edwards 2014). Anheier, Lang, and Toepler (2019) argue that functional civil society organizations reflect the potential of a society for peaceful settlement of diverse private and public interests. As such, civil society involves a wide variety of actors and institutions, ranging from non-governmental organizations, charities, trade unions, self-help groups, neighborhood and community associations, advocacy groups, professional and business associations, sports clubs, cultural associations and many more.

Civil society as a concept has been largely theorized in connection with its role in building and sustaining functional liberal democracies. For Diamond (1994), a strong and plural civil society is, on one hand, capable of monitoring and limiting the excesses of state power, while on the other hand it can legitimize state authority when it adheres to the rule of law. In liberal democracy theory, civil society allows for the articulation and communication of demands and concerns of interest groups to the state, thus enhancing its transparency, accountability and capacity for good governance (Baker 1999). Robert Putnam (1993, 2000) has also been a fierce

proponent of the importance of a healthy civil society for democracy. According to Putnam, mutual interactions in voluntary civil society organizations build the so-called bonding social capital by strengthening mutual trust and cooperative behavior among members. Civil society serves as a school of democracy, as members are introduced to democratic norms and practices through the rules and management of community organizations. Another type of social capital that civil society helps to promote is the so-called bridging social capital, which is particularly important for societies divided along ethnic, racial, religious or other lines. Putnam argues that participation in civil society organizations teaches individuals to be tolerant of diverse opinions, perspectives and interests. He also stresses that any type of civil society groups, even non-political ones, can encourage trust and tolerance, and develop crucial bonding and bridging social capital, thus fostering democracy. As Belloni (2008) observes, this view of the importance and power of civil society in democratization processes was particularly popularized by the democratic struggles in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, which were portrayed as fights between civil society and the state. Nevertheless, strengthening social capital and cohesion is not the only function of civil society. Anheier, Lang, and Toepler (2019) point to the increasing reliance of states on nonprofit organizations as service providers, especially in health and social services.

However, civil society can also have a “dark” or undemocratic and uncivil side. Keane (1998) warns that civil society groups not only have the potential to promote cooperation, they can also instigate uncivil behavior, conflict and violence. For Keane, incivility is an inherent feature of civil society. Belloni (2008) goes even further, claiming that uncivil and violent forms of civil society prevail, pointing to the role voluntary organizations have played in dividing societies into opposing camps during the civil war in Lebanon and the genocide in Rwanda. Uncivil, xenophobic or sectarian forms of civil society may be particularly influential when states are weak or the leadership is contested.

#### ***4.1.1 Do NGOs equate civil society?***

When conceptualizing civil society, it is important to highlight one form of civil society that has received particular attention across peacebuilding, democratization and development scholarship – non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Even though many scholars and practitioners use terms such as civil society, civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interchangeably, they do not have the same meaning. A significant shift towards associating civil society with NGOs occurred with the introduction of neoliberal policies in the 1980s. Privatization and a reduction in the role of states in providing

public services brought new opportunities for non-state actors. At the same time, NGOs were starting to be seen as institutional alternatives to the previously applied, but largely unsuccessful development strategies in which states played the primary role (Bebbington, Hickey, and Mitlin 2007; Goodhand 2006). Since then, in many Western-funded humanitarian, development, democratization and civil society building interventions, particularly after the end of the Cold War, considerable support has been channeled through Western-style NGOs, used as subcontractors to international donors (Bebbington et al. 2007; Feldman 1997; Glasius, Lewis, and Seckinelgin 2004; Sørensen 2010). The term “NGO-ization of civil society” came into use to describe this shift from loosely organized and diverse civil society organizations and social movements, towards prioritizing professionalized, institutionalized, hierarchically structured and results-oriented NGOs that were focused on providing issue-specific knowledge and/or services. NGOs started to be seen as civil society’s most important actors, facilitators and, essentially, creators of civil society as such (Lang 2013; Paffenholz 2016b). Pouligny (2005) explains this trend by pointing to the tendency of outsiders coming to a new environment projecting the visions and structures they already knew onto the host society. The perception of civil society common among Western donors was influenced by what the representatives of the Western countries were used to encountering in their homelands’ civil societies – mainly modern, liberal and professionalized NGOs. However, such organizations were mostly not present in societies hosting development interventions. Hence, donors either contracted Western and international NGOs to establish them, or these NGOs were created by local actors only after the international donors flooded the recipient countries with a sudden influx of funding. Civil society organizations, from big transnational institutions to smaller grassroots groups, adjusted their structures and operations to look and function more like NGOs, and thus be perceived as legitimate actors by potential donors (Lang 2013). An even more visible effect of NGOs gaining a prominent position has been the unprecedented growth in the number of registered NGOs since the late 1980s. This has been particularly evident in developing countries, where Western donors have provided considerable resources to strengthen the NGO base. Additionally, new forms of transnational NGOs and global NGO networks have emerged at the international level, giving rise to what some refer to as the global civil society (Edwards 2014).

However, not all authors share the enthusiasm for NGOs. Some have raised concerns that this institutional form of civil society has been largely externally imposed on communities with no previous tradition of such concepts, and as such has disrupted local civil society sectors (Glasius

et al. 2004). According to Sampson (2002), the form in which the international donors provide their support to NGOs worldwide, the so-called projectization of support, creates a parallel society, with new elites competing for short-term funds and changing their focus and language to suit current trends in the donor community. This can weaken genuine civil society actors who are not skilled or equipped enough to gain the available funds. Edwards (2014) argues that the technocratic professionalization of the non-profit sector causes a greater distance between organizations and their social base. He also points to the fact that donors have been disproportionately providing funding to large, well-known, and primarily Northern NGOs, thus widening divisions and inequalities within the sector. The recent data on the financing the largest donors of development assistance provided to various types of CSOs published by OECD proves Edwards's claim. The OECD (2021) report shows that in 2019, CSOs based in donor countries received in total 13.5 billion USD, the international CSOs 5.6 billion USD, while the CSOs based in recipient countries received only 1.4 billion USD.

Feldman (1997) warns against equating NGOs with civil society as a whole, since NGOs do not represent all civic interests. She is also critical of the fact that NGOs, often controlled through financial and other means by their donors, have positioned themselves as spokespersons for the citizens, thus restricting grassroots mobilization. Similarly, Paffenholz (2016) claims that the "NGO-ization" of civil society effectively suppresses social movements aimed at more profound social changes that would threaten the existing hierarchies and public orders. In Wapner's (2007) opinion, NGOs should be seen as another political actor. For him, NGOs are undemocratic and self-appointed, rather than representative, and they are self-interested, focused on their own agenda and primarily concerned with their financial survival. Nevertheless, Lang (2013) speaks against the two extreme perspectives on NGOs - as either the one and only representatives of civil society or as mere businesses with an altruistic sheen. Instead, she believes we should critically examine the structural conditions under which NGOs function, while acknowledging the numerous achievements of the sector.

#### ***4.1.2 Current trend: Closing space for civil society and the contested legitimacy of CSOs***

The situation of the civil society sector has gradually been changing. The position of NGOs and civil society organizations is no longer as prominent as it was in the early 1990s. The initial optimism for the power of civil society is slowly vanishing, with the sector increasingly coming under close scrutiny (Anheier, Lang, and Toepler 2019; Mendelson 2015).

There are growing signs that the environment in which CSOs can function and serve their roles is becoming increasingly restricted. A report by Carothers and Brechenmacher (2014) offers an

analysis of a wide range of instruments that various governments have been using to limit the space for the work of civil society organizations, especially those supporting democratization, respect for human rights and related issues. Most of the instruments are used to limit or completely block external financial support for domestic civil society groups, which is described as a form of foreign political meddling. This happens regardless of whether or not governments themselves are financially dependent on foreign assistance. To give an example, Ethiopia limited foreign funding to a certain percentage of the total budget of local NGOs and banned foreign funding for some political and human rights activities. Russia, on the other hand, imposed excessive taxes on foreign grants, in addition to obliging foreign-financed CSOs to register as “foreign agents”. Other states chose to impose various administrative requirements. Algeria and Nepal require government approval for any foreign funding, and Uzbekistan has mandated that local organizations must channel foreign funding through a designated bank account that the government can easily monitor and freeze.

Such laws and restrictions particularly affect those CSOs that rely heavily on external funding. As Mendelson (2015) argues, the existing model, where Northern governments financially support Southern CSOs, weakens the links between CSOs and the local populations they want to serve. This in effect contributes to a decrease in the legitimacy of the CSOs and to a loss of support among the local population, which further worsens the CSOs’ position within society. Moreover, Carothers and Brechenmacher (2014) observe that the governments of many countries intentionally target the public image of local CSOs, in attempt to delegitimize them and deprive them of crucial public support, depicting them as agents of foreign interests. State-controlled media are particularly instrumental in spreading such messages.

The attempts to control and limit the opportunities for civic action, for which the term “closing space for civil society” is used, can be witnessed in most countries around the world. A global network of civil society organizations, CIVICUS, continuously monitors the space for activities of civil society around the world and warns that freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression are gradually being restricted across many countries. According to their data, only 3% of the world’s population lived in countries fully respecting these rights in 2019, as compared to 4% in 2018. A majority of the world’s population lived in countries with closed (27%) or repressed (40%) civic space (CIVICUS 2019). A paper by Anheier, Lang, and Toepler (2019) paints a similar picture. Using the data collected by a social science project called the Varieties of Democracy<sup>11</sup>, they analyzed the space for civil society in G20 countries, focusing

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<sup>11</sup> Varieties of Democracy: <https://www.v-dem.net/project.html>

on three indicators: control over the formation of civil society, control over the operations of civil society, and degree of self-organization and participation. They measured the diversity of and voluntary participation in CSOs. The authors found that, civil society space has eroded since the global financial crisis of 2008 across the three dimensions they analyzed. Countries with authoritarian governments (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Russia, China) showed more serious deterioration. However, the situation for CSOs in most democratic countries has also been slowly worsening, due to policies such as anti-terrorist and anti-corruption laws.

## **4.2 The role of civil society in peacebuilding**

Civil society and especially NGOs have been increasingly recognized as holding a significant position in peacebuilding approaches. As Pouligny (2005) observes, most recent peace operations and peacebuilding interventions have included a number of components which explicitly relied on the work of international and local NGOs and their contribution to enhancing human rights, democratization, and rebuilding war-torn societies. Kaldor (2012) argues that peace approaches in what she calls the time of “new wars” also require solutions at the level of civil society. Yet it is important to acknowledge that involving NGOs in such interventions has not always been the norm, with the rebuilding of economic and physical infrastructure and formal institutions traditionally being the prime or sole concern (Pouligny 2005). However, the end of the Cold War and the new discourse on peacebuilding presented in the UN Secretary-General’s *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali 1992) enlarged the scope and focus of interventions aimed at managing and transforming conflicts and building long-lasting peace, and opened a larger space for the work of civil society organizations (Chigas 2007). The liberal peacebuilding approach that dominated peacebuilding interventions in recent decades has also contributed to focusing increased attention on NGOs, as it encourages multilevel cooperation among a wide range of actors in the complex process of enhancing peace (Murithi 2009). Hence, we have experienced almost three decades of the involvement of civil society organizations in peacebuilding processes around the world and this experience can be critically assessed.

### ***4.2.1 Civil society within different schools of thought and peacebuilding approaches***

The position of civil society actors is theorized differently within different schools of thought. Even though certain peacebuilding roles are prescribed to civil society by almost every relevant theory, the perception of the extent and importance of civil society’s engagement varies.



The conflict management school allows only very limited space for the involvement of civil society. This state-centric approach, inspired by realist thought, practically excludes non-state actors. The preferred forms of interventions are peacekeeping, peace negotiations and mediations, with states and state institutions taking on the responsibility for these processes. A softer version of this approach, inspired by liberal-institutional thought, acknowledges the role of the UN, especially in peacekeeping operations (Aall 2007; Richmond 2005). Nevertheless, Paffenholz (2010) found a few occasions when civil society institutions participated in official peace negotiations, and when civil society peace forums were established parallel to official negotiations, providing negotiators with valuable inputs and recommendations. Aall (2007) emphasizes the importance of expanding the traditional understanding of conflict management and of considering non-state actors and their capacities, especially since states are not always willing or able to engage in conflict management and peace negotiations.

Contrary to conflict management theory, civil society is given a key position within the conflict resolution and conflict transformation schools. Both focus on addressing the underlying or root causes of conflict, and civil society actors are supposed to be best positioned for such a task (Paffenholz 2010). Conflict resolution theory stresses the importance of ensuring human security, not only state security, as the deprivation of human needs is perceived to be at the core of protracted conflicts (Azar 1990). In this approach, civil society is charged with identifying the needs of individuals and groups and communicating them to governments. External non-state actors should also be empowering individuals and groups to discuss and formulate desirable forms of peace (Richmond 2005).

The central elements of Lederach's conflict transformation model are the middle-out approach and the three levels of actors. He identified the middle-level, Track II actors, as having the highest potential to positively influence conflict transformation processes, due to their connections to the two other domains, up to top-level Track I leadership and down to Track III grassroots level. Hence, the middle-out approach should primarily work with well-positioned Track II leaders who are essentially from various spheres of local civil society. This presumes that the results of Track II activities will automatically trickle up to Track I level and down to Track III level. Such an approach should create a long-lasting infrastructure for building and sustaining peace (Lederach 1997). As Paffenholz (2010) noted, Lederach's approach has considerably influenced peacebuilding practice and increased the attention given to civil society actors in peacebuilding interventions. In particular, peacebuilding activities identified by Lederach (1997) as having the highest potential, such as conflict resolution training for local

leaders, problem-solving workshops, and dialogue initiatives, implemented especially by international and local NGOs, proliferated in numerous conflict and post-conflict settings. Nevertheless, the results of Paffenholz's (2014) analysis that tested Lederach's hypothesis do not fully confirm its validity. Analyzing the case studies of numerous conflict settings, she observed that the middle-out approach had been widely adopted by NGOs without clear evidence to support this theory. Her research showed that Track I approaches and leaders have the greatest potential to influence conflict at all levels of society. Track I actors can have a very positive, transformative impact on peace, but they can also have a negative influence which can reinforce a conflict. Track II activities very often depended on Track I developments, with positive changes at Track I level enabling and reinforcing activities at Track II level. Additionally, many Track III activities successfully influenced the grassroots levels without being supported by the Track II level. Paffenholz (2014) concludes that the position of Track II approaches may not be as crucial for the remaining levels of the peacebuilding pyramid as previously thought. What remains unclear, however, is the extent to which Track III, or the grassroots approaches, also widely applied by NGOs in conflict and post-conflict settings, can reach the higher levels of society.

Civil society also holds a prominent role in liberal peacebuilding theory. Building on the liberal democracy theory, and relying heavily on Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding model, liberal peacebuilding authors see a developed civil society sector as a crucial element of functional and peaceful democracies, and they recognize the positive role civil society can play in conflict and post-conflict settings (Goodhand 2006; Spurk 2010). This can be illustrated in the way Heathershaw (2008) perceives the liberal peace agenda. He distinguishes three main discourses within the peacebuilding debate: democratic reform peacebuilding, statebuilding, and civil society peacebuilding. Civil society actors should be in particular engaged in constructing the liberal peace primarily at the grassroots level (Richmond 2005). Civil society is thought to be a guarantee of democratic values and human rights, and to enhance these in the wider society through civil education, training and advocacy (Paffenholz 2010). The importance of local civil society in the process of building peace has especially increased when the voices asserting the local turn in peacebuilding became more vocal. To compensate for the shortcomings of traditionally top-down liberal peacebuilding practices, authors have called for greater emphasis to be placed on bottom-up approaches, and for increased involvement of local populations most affected by peacebuilding interventions (Richmond 2015; Richmond and Mitchell 2012).

The theoretical standpoints described above, especially the liberal peacebuilding theory, have considerably influenced peacebuilding practices in recent decades. The liberal peacebuilding approach is, as Richmond (2005) notes, highly interventionary at its core. Peacebuilding interventions are very complex, requiring substantial financial and human resources and specialized knowledge. As these are rarely present in target populations at the time they are needed for the peacebuilding process, a wide array of external actors come into play, including international NGOs supported by liberal states. In this way the liberal peacebuilding approach justified their intense involvement. Similarly, it gave rise to a whole segment within liberal peacebuilding and democratization interventions; the civil society building programs. On one hand, civil society has come to be seen as essential for peacebuilding, while on the other hand, international interveners have assessed local civil societies in conflict-affected settings as immature and not fulfilling liberal criteria, thus prompting a surge in civil society building initiatives (Richmond 2009b). Civil society building aimed at developing a healthy civil society, in line with liberal criteria, became an objective of many peacebuilding programs (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). Apart from that, the liberal peacebuilding approach also sees civil society actors as important in delivering public services in situations where governments are incapable of supplying them to their citizens. This has given rise to a vast segment of NGOs that essentially serve as sub-contractors for Western donors financing the provision of the missing public services (Paffenholz 2010).

#### ***4.2.2 Roles and functions of civil society actors and NGOs in peacebuilding***

It is theorized that civil society and NGOs assume a wide range of roles and functions in the process of building peace, mostly connected to the position of civil society organizations within wider society and their perceived comparative advantages.

As Chigas and Woodrow (2009) note, the peacebuilding field is rather interdisciplinary in its nature. Organizations involved in this work come from different fields, such as humanitarian relief, development, social work, and peace negotiations and dialogue. They all have different sets of skills and varying approaches and mindsets. As a result, civil society organizations and NGOs involved in peacebuilding processes focus on a wide range of topics, apply various approaches, and serve numerous functions. There are two widely quoted frameworks used to analyze the specific roles civil society groups play in peacebuilding. The first is Barnes' (2006) comprehensive list of civil society activities and roles, derived from an analysis of case studies from various conflict and post-conflict settings around the globe. The second is based on theoretical works in the field of democracy theory and development cooperation discourse

which were used by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) to develop an analytical framework of the main functions of civil society in peacebuilding. These two frameworks, described in more details in this chapter, share many features, although they differ in several characteristics.

Table 3: Functions of civil society organizations in peacebuilding

<b>Civil Society’s Peacebuilding Functions</b>	
<b>Barnes</b>	<b>Paffenholz and Spurk</b>
Waging conflict constructively	Protection
Shifting conflict attitudes and perceptions	Monitoring
Building visions of a better future	Advocacy and public communication
Mobilizing local and global constituencies for peace	In-group socialization
Reducing violence and promoting stability	Social cohesion
Making peace, helping to reach agreement	Intermediation and facilitation
Community-level peacemaking	Service delivery
Transforming the causes and consequences of conflict, creating peaceful relationships	
Shifting values and cultures, educating for peace	

Source: adapted from Barnes (2006) and Paffenholz and Spurk (2010)

Advocacy is a broad term used for a group of core functions that civil society performs in a variety of contexts. Public campaigns organized by civil society have the potential to draw wider attention to specific issues that have been ignored or overlooked, despite being at the roots of a conflict or having the potential to fuel societal conflict. Campaigns and protests can also tackle the existing power structures that are heavily oppressive for parts of society. Particularly crucial is their role in exposing violations of human rights, thus empowering public action against abusers. This is closely connected to the monitoring function of civil society, allowing for early identification of human rights abuses and quick reporting and possible action. Public communication can also mobilize society in favor of peace negotiations, as well as building the legitimacy of the peace processes, increasing public support, and creating pressure for peace processes to continue. Raising public support for peaceful solutions to conflict is important, and not only locally. International peace campaigns also have the power to create significant pressure (Barnes 2006; Paffenholz and Spurk 2010).

Apart from public communication, private advocacy and behind-the-scenes negotiations performed by civil society organizations are also crucial. Respected and well-positioned

representatives of civil society are discreetly able to mediate communication between adversarial parties, thus helping them overcome initial barriers and commence the negotiation process. They can also help bring issues to the negotiating table through informal communication and their connections to political leaders. In some cases, civil society groups may launch unofficial dialogue processes between the key people from conflicting sides, running parallel to the official negotiations, to add a human dimension to the process and tackle any toxic relationships hindering the peace process. Cases of civil society actors facilitating or mediating official peace negotiations are less common, with only a few examples of either local civil society groups and individuals or external organizations taking up this role. Civil society is more often involved in negotiating a peace agreement between warring parties at the level of local communities and villages, and mediating agreements between warring parties and aid agencies delivering needed assistance (Barnes 2006; Paffenholz and Spurk 2010).

Security from direct violence is a prerequisite for any further peace work. In many conflict settings states are incapable of providing basic security for their citizens, or are in fact the source of violence against civilians. The protection role has thus been taken up by civil society organizations. They can protect civilians either directly or indirectly. Due to their regular contact with local communities, organizations are well-positioned to recognize the early signs of the escalation of violence and they can propose an appropriate response. Civil society actors can also be involved in monitoring adherence to formal ceasefires at the local level. In conflict zones they can negotiate the creation of zones of peace where arms and direct violence are not permitted. They can also position themselves between opposing parties and thus help to establish a minimum level of security that allows safety of movement (Barnes 2006; Paffenholz and Spurk 2010).

For societies trapped in conflict, physical or structural, a positive vision of a desired future is seen as necessary in order to inspire people to act on it in the present. To create a broadly shared image, ideas on how to address the drivers of a conflict and how the future of a society should look have to be collected from the wider population (Barnes 2006). Organizations with regular encounters with local populations are well-positioned to bring the needs, interests and ideas of the grassroots to the attention of decision-makers and wider society (Chandler 2017). As the UN Secretary-General's *Agenda for Development* stated: "Locally based NGOs, in particular, can serve as intermediaries and give people a voice and an opportunity to articulate their needs, preferences and vision of a better society." (United Nations 1994:107). Based on the information collected from the grassroots, civil society organizations can then formulate policy

recommendations which reflect the vision of the desired future and communicate them to policy-makers (Barnes 2006).

Essential roles of civil society in the process of enhancing peace, particularly in divided societies, involve supporting socialization within and between groups, changing conflicting attitudes and perceptions of adversary groups, and building a culture of peace in societies. Given their proximity to the grassroots, civil society organizations are seen as capable of transforming deeply rooted, stereotypical, and often dehumanized images of “the others”, thus changing attitudes towards the perceived enemy among the wider population (Barnes 2006; Chigas 2007). Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) distinguish between the functions of in-group socialization and social cohesion. In-group socialization can help develop peaceful and constructive conflict resolution behavior, and enhance democratic values and the culture of peace within groups divided by conflict. As Edwards (2014) adds, the activities of civil society organizations also have the potential to transform violent tendencies present in societies into non-violent associational life and more active engagement in the public arena. The social cohesion function is crucial for restoring what Putnam (1993, 2000) refers to as bridging social capital across divided groups destroyed by conflict. Civil society plays an important role in bringing people closer and teaching them how to live together peacefully. Civil society initiatives are either aimed solely at attitudinal change on an individual level, or they are used to achieve larger peacebuilding goals through changes in personal attitudes and behavior. Bridging social capital can also be built unintentionally, for example through cooperation on development projects or in business (Paffenholz and Spurk 2010). People-to-people dialogue workshops have become a particularly popular tool for rebuilding damaged relationships and trust. They provide the otherwise missing contact and communication between adversary groups, and allow people to acquire a better understanding of the attitudes, intentions, needs and values of the others, thus helping them re-assess their own positions based on the enhanced mutual understanding, and to challenge the discourse of hate (Barnes 2006; Chigas 2007). Moreover, dialogue workshops are one way of supporting the healing and reconciliation of people traumatized by their experiences of war, which is another important arena where civil society organizations find their place. Civil society can also support the reconciliation processes through truth-telling initiatives such as documentation studies, memorials and various artistic projects, making sure the past does not stay hidden and denied (Barnes 2006).

A widely observed function that civil society organizations, especially NGOs, play in conflict, post-conflict and other settings, is service delivery. Their role in providing crucially needed aid

to affected populations is particularly valued in situations where state structures are weakened and unable to provide for the needs of their inhabitants (Paffenholz and Spurk 2010). NGOs are assumed to be particularly suited to this role due to their access to a wider population, flexibility and ability to respond quickly and without the burden of cumbersome bureaucracy (Richmond 2005). Barnes (2006) emphasizes that aid interventions are also important to facilitate the complex rehabilitation of conflict-affected societies, address the inequalities that might have laid at the roots of the conflict and allow all communities to experience the peace dividend. On the other hand, Anderson (1999) argues that aid provision can only support the peacebuilding process if donors and implementing organizations deliberately attempt to incorporate peacebuilding goals into their service delivery interventions. Similarly Paffenholz (2009) indicates that service delivery should be conceptualized as an entry point for the remaining functions of NGOs described above if it is to contribute to peacebuilding goals. For example, the provision of aid, if planned well, can serve as a platform triggering cooperation and dialogue between conflicting parties, thus enhancing social cohesion.

#### ***4.2.3 Critical perspectives on civil society peacebuilding***

A growing number of authors point to the weaknesses and limitations of the civil society peacebuilding approaches. The following section discusses these limits in general terms; the following chapter will look more closely at the weaknesses and problems visible in the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We can observe that liberal peacebuilding and its approach to civil society's role in peacebuilding generally moves in two different directions, one being when donors mostly support NGOs in building local civil society sectors in countries hit by conflicts. A more developed civil society should allow wider participation in the peace process and nurture values such as democracy, tolerance, a peaceful approach to resolving conflicts and respect for human rights. The second direction is with NGOs being seen as effective service providers in times of need (Verkoren 2008). There are issues connected to both strands of civil society peacebuilding.

A common line of criticism of civil society building concerns too much emphasis being placed on establishing and supporting modern, professionalized Western-style NGOs. This trend has distorted local civil society sectors in many post-conflict countries, giving rise to numerous professionalized NGOs fully dependent on donors for funding and with very limited ties to and support of the local constituency they are supposed to represent. The accountability of NGOs is directed towards foreign donors, rather than the local population, which reinforces their low legitimacy among citizens. The projectization of international support has further contributed

to the detachment of civil society organizations from their local context, as they were forced to design their activities within the frameworks of short-term, fundable projects with measurable goals in order to meet donors' requirements. In some cases, international civil society building initiatives also led to the weakening of those forms of civil society that were traditionally present and active in the host societies but did not receive any assistance or recognition from international donors. As a result, the diversity of civil society was reduced, and social movements with the potential to advocate for radical changes were the primary victims of selective funding policies (Barnes 2009; Dilanyan, Beraia, and Yavuz 2018; Heideman 2013; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012; Pouligny 2005; Richmond 2009b; Smith 2007; Verkoren 2008).

The criticism associated with contracting peacebuilding NGOs as service providers goes in a different direction. We can observe that this function dominated liberal peacebuilding practices. Despite the proclaimed importance of supporting local civil society in conflict-affected countries to enhance peace and democracy, international donors and international organizations have largely used the services of NGOs, primarily international ones, including those based in the country of the donor, to distribute needed assistance to affected populations and to provide essential services previously supplied by governmental agencies (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). This practice followed the trend described earlier that has been present in development assistance and humanitarian aid since the 1980s. Many organizations contracted by international donors for peacebuilding interventions in the contexts of developing countries originated from the relief and development sectors, and later expanded their operations to include conflict and post-conflict settings (Goodhand 2006). The other supposed role of civil society organizations and NGOs; civil society building at large, has been rather neglected, especially in the first years of international peacebuilding operations, with less attention and resources given to this goal (Bebbington et al. 2007; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012).

Another limitation of civil society peacebuilding is closely connected to the previous points. Dependence on donor finance coupled with the donor funding strategies contributed to the depoliticization of the role of civil society organizations. Organizations became more technocratic, fulfilling donor priorities, thus distancing themselves from grassroots social movements. Moreover, donors have been hesitant to support the political activities of civil society groups for fear of harming their relationships with local government. Hence, in their attempts to stay politically neutral and keep the support of their donors, civil society organizations have failed to address the structural issues driving conflicts, as well as political



interests and power imbalances, thus reinforcing the status quo that might originally been the cause of a conflict. Donors have mostly supported the socialization and social cohesion activities at the expense of the equally important advocacy role. The fact that peacebuilding and civil society building are highly political seems to be forgotten. As a result, civil society organizations receiving international support are very limited in the extent to which they can fulfill some of the main roles prescribed to them; enhancing democracy and addressing core, structural problems (Barnes 2009; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012; Paffenholz 2014; Verkoren 2008; Verkoren and Van Leeuwen 2013).

Some authors warn that civil society, being a wide and diverse concept, does not always play a strictly positive role in building peace and stability. Some forms of civil society organizations and associations have indeed had an opposite effect on democratization and peacebuilding. As Barnes (2006) notes, civil society actors may well be interested in sustaining conflict, rather than building peace. Paris (2004) and Belloni (2008) provide numerous examples of settings where civil society played strongly negative and divisive roles, rejecting liberal principles of democracy and tolerance, as in Germany before World War II and more recently in Rwanda. Belloni (2008) defined three types of civil society organizations with regards to their assumed impact on peace and peacebuilding, with the first having a potentially positive impact, the second type having a strongly negative impact, and the third type being more complex and ambiguous. Groups openly promoting politics of inclusion, pluralism, equal opportunities, tolerance across dividing lines of ethnicity, race and religion, the importance of developing multiple civic identities and the need for consensus building represent the first type of civil society organizations. According to Belloni, it is these groups that proponents of the importance of strong civil society for peace and democracy point to in their works. In the second type of organizations there are criminal or mafia-like groups and paramilitaries. Ethnic separation and division of communities is a key prerequisite for the success of such groups, hence they actively sustain and perpetuate divisions and segregation to reinforce their illegal rule. The third type of civil society organizations consists of groups where membership is strictly defined by criteria such as belonging to a particular ethnicity, nationality, or race, or having a particular religious affiliation or a specific past experience, such as serving in the military. On one hand, there are accounts of these ethnic or religious organizations fulfilling positive tasks in bringing divided communities closer together, thus creating not only bonding capital but also bridging capital. On the other hand, the exclusivist values and norms these organizations promote represent a threat to democracy, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in multi-ethnic or multi-religious

societies. Hence, the potential impact of such groups on the peaceful coexistence of communities will vary from case to case (Belloni 2008). Nevertheless, international peacebuilding efforts have omitted such civil society groups from their civil society building strategies as the international actors have perceived them to be spoilers and have overlooked the potential they might have for broader social change. Support has mostly been given to like-minded, moderate, urban NGOs with little or no membership base, and thus with limited potential for wider impact (Paffenholz 2014).

## 5 Civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The post-war period in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been marked by a rapid increase in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the reconstruction of the country. Big international NGOs started to open their local offices in BiH, and new local NGOs were established, mostly with the assistance of international actors. Support for building the civil society sector was one of the key areas for the engagement of international community after the end of the conflict. A strong and functioning civil society was perceived as essential for the processes of democratization, state-building, and interethnic reconciliation (Chandler 2000; Edwards and Hulme 1995; Fagan 2005; Howard 2011; Jeffrey 2007b; Smillie and Evenson 2003; Sørensen 2010). Civil society organizations were also contracted as providers of various services that had previously been delivered by the public sector at times when there were no other stakeholders capable of delivering them (Fagan 2005; Sejfića 2006; Smillie and Evenson 2003). Considerable amounts of international funding<sup>12</sup> were channeled to and through NGOs that served a variety of roles and purposes, including humanitarian aid delivery, mine clearance, documentation of war crimes, assistance to returnees, rural development, environmental protection, interethnic reconciliation, and many others (for an overview of the various roles civil society organizations in BiH have been fulfilling, see e.g. Sejfića (2006) and Fischer (2011)). The aim of this chapter is to analyze the post-war evolution and the current state of the NGO sector in BiH, relying on the existing academic works on this topic and the information collected during the key informant interviews the author conducted.

This chapter presents an analysis of the structural conditions under which Bosnian NGOs developed, with the assumption that these conditions, especially the nature of the international assistance that initiated the rapid surge of the civil society sector, significantly influenced the effectiveness and potential impact of the efforts of NGOs. It does not offer conclusions on the quality of individual Bosnian NGOs, as this varies significantly. Many local organizations conduct high-quality work, very often despite the broader conditions discussed in this chapter. The analysis provides a generalized picture of the state of the civil society sector in BiH; outliers that do not fully fit under the presented picture are of course possible. The exceptions are also present among international donors, whose practices will also be analyzed here.

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<sup>12</sup> However, the exact amounts of funding provided over the years to NGOs working in BiH can only be estimated, as such flows are not systematically tracked and published.

## **5.1 The evolution of the Bosnian civil society sector: From *mjesne zajednice* to liberal non-government organizations**

In its recent history, two main factors have considerably influenced the development of civil society in BiH: the socialist regime of the former Yugoslavia and the involvement of international actors in the post-war development of the country (Milan 2017). It would be incorrect to claim that civil society was non-existent during the time of Yugoslavia. Even though various associations were closely monitored by the communist regime in order to prevent them from pursuing political goals, a wide range of apolitical, voluntary organizations were active even before the fall of the regime. People mostly joined groups which promoted a particular interest or some cultural and free time activities, such as citizens' associations for veterans, pensioners, youth, women, students, and people doing a particular type of sport; mountaineering, hunting, fishing, etc. (Belloni and Hemmer 2010; Smillie and Evenson 2003). Additionally, a unique form of grassroots community or neighborhood associations developed in Yugoslavia; centers of local self-governance. These so-called *mjesne zajednice* were a link between citizens and the government, creating a forum for the inhabitants of a district to gather, discuss local problems, decide about local infrastructure projects and advocate for development in their area at the municipal level. Some *mjesne zajednice* are still functioning to this day, although to a limited extent compared to Yugoslav times, and they encounter numerous problems, such as inconsistent financing from municipalities, lack of financial independence and the influence of political parties over the elections of board members (Jusić 2014). Similarly, the majority of other civil society organizations created before the war ceased to exist when the conflict broke out and were not re-established after the war (Sejfića 2006). A survey of 282 active Bosnian-Herzegovinian associations conducted by Kronauer Consulting in 2008-2009 showed that only 9.4% of the surveyed associations were registered before 1991, and those were mainly mountaineering and hunting clubs, volunteer fire departments, cultural associations, and local Red Cross organizations (Kronauer Consulting 2009).

In the post-conflict period, civil society came under the spotlight of international donors and organizations, especially after it became evident that the effectiveness of top-down peacebuilding and democratization efforts targeting state institutions and political elites was rather low (Belloni 2001; Fagan 2005; Howard 2011; K5). Despite the expectations of the international community, ethno-nationalist parties remained in power after the first post-war elections that took place in September 1996, and they further increased their influence over state institutions. Thus, as frustration with the top-down approach grew stronger, more funding

was provided to civil society organizations, with the aim of supporting the creation of a democratic culture from the bottom up (Belloni 2013; Bieber 2002; Fischer 2011; Jeffrey 2007b). As Belloni (2001a) adds, the shift towards building a civil society was intended to compensate for the weaknesses and structural contradictions embedded in the Dayton Peace Agreement, and for the fact that civil society sector had been ignored in the peace deal.

Civil society has been promoted by the international community as a place where tolerance, compromise, dialogue, and political pluralism can flourish, all of which can assist the development of a democratic and multi-ethnic community and stimulate a high level of political engagement by its citizens (Fagan 2005; Jeffrey 2007b; Sørensen 2010). Despite the pre-war existence of various forms of civil society, the international community chose to establish a new civil society sector. As a result, international donors and agencies have either completely ignored the pre-existing civil society structures, or assumed that the existing organizations and citizens' associations, mostly formed in the communist times, would impede the political, societal and economic reforms seen as crucial for the transformation of the country. They also believed that these organizations would strengthen nationalistic and divisive agendas (Bieber 2002; Fagan 2005; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013).

It is important to stress that even though the term civil society is broad and encompasses various forms of, more or less, formalized groups of citizens, the international efforts to build and strengthen local civil society were narrowly focused on the development of professionalized, Western-style non-governmental organizations (NGOs), conforming to the liberal peacebuilding agenda (Fagan 2005; Sejfića 2006; Jeffrey 2007; Belloni 2013, Puljek-Shank and Verkoren 2017; Papić 2016). One reason for focusing primarily on the creation of NGOs in post-war BiH was, as Belloni (2001a) states, convenience. Compared to complex social movements and community associations, NGOs are easy to define, monitor, evaluate, and financially support. Donors are generally oriented on tangible outputs and quick results and NGOs fit their requirements more easily than social movements or other forms of civil society (Howard 2011). Indeed, the success of civil society building and democracy strengthening interventions was initially measured by the growth in the number of NGOs newly established in BiH (Belloni 2001; Howard 2011). Capacity building projects became very popular and were focused primarily on the professionalization of NGOs, enhancing their skills in project writing and management, so that they could comply with the formal requirements of Western donors and acquire international funding (Fagan 2005). Another reason for the rapid increase in international support for NGOs was, according to (Belloni 2001), that NGOs could work

without stable and functioning state institutions, as the process of rebuilding the state institutions proved harder than originally imagined.

The shift in focus of the international community towards civil society building changed the sector to a considerable degree. On one hand, because of the international funding, civil society organizations were able to help a considerable number of inhabitants in many ways. Capacity building programs increased the knowledge and skills of NGO staff in various areas; project writing and budgeting, organizational management and strategic planning, and media relations (Howard 2011). However, not all the effects of international involvement influenced local civil society in a positive way. Today, there remain several visible weaknesses in the civil society sector and, according to numerous authors quoted below, these inadequacies are, to a considerable degree, the result of the massive international support in the post-war period and the character of that support. Some of the most prominent issues of the paper will be discussed in the following section.

## **5.2 International civil society building efforts: Donor practices and their effects**

The most visible effect of the international support for civil society building was the proliferation of newly established NGOs that occurred with the sudden availability of large amounts of funding (Smillie and Todorović 2001). Šavija-Valha (2009) argues that we can even talk about an overproduction of NGOs, created directly or indirectly by international donors and agencies, mostly through the work of Western NGOs. As mentioned earlier, civil society became associated with this particular form of organization to such an extent that Howard (2011) uses the term “NGO-ization” to describe the post-war development of this sector in BiH. However, especially at the beginning, many organizations only existed on paper in order to acquire international funding, without actually implementing any activities, or they ceased their operations quickly after being established. Also, the rise in the number of NGOs does not inform about the quality and impact of their work, or their actual viability and financial sustainability, topics that are discussed below (Howard 2011). It is, however, problematic to find the exact number of NGOs registered in BiH, as new organizations can register at various levels of government in the complex system of the Bosnian state administration. Moreover, not all registered NGOs are necessarily active (TACSO 2014). One way of assessing the size of the NGO sector in BiH is to look at the number of NGOs that submitted annual financial statements, a requirement in law. In 2018, 14,911 organizations provided this statement to local authorities in FBiH or RS. Yet, this number might not be complete, as not all NGOs fulfill this requirement

(USAID, Bureau for Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Centre of Excellence on Democracy Human Rights and Governance 2019).

Initially, the sudden influx of funding donors allocated for their assistance in BiH largely exceeded the delivery capacities of local and international NGOs. As Smillie and Todorović (2001) suggest, the motivation of donor agencies to quickly disburse the available resources resulted in the provision of large sums of money to new NGOs that had little or no experience managing large scale projects, and lacked the capacity to effectively handle such donations and deliver the expected results. This practice also sparked widespread opportunism among Bosnians, who saw the NGO sector as an area of relatively secure employment with high salaries at a time of very few job opportunities.

Most international donors approached the local civil society in a rather superior, paternalistic manner, with what Howard (2011:108) calls a “we-know-better attitude”. The priorities for international support were set externally and were, at best, based on needs assessments formulated by foreign consultants or big international NGOs, with little or no participation from local actors, who were not treated as equal partners by donor agencies and international NGOs. Most often, international assistance was based on donors’ own priorities and their perceptions of local needs. They used strategies that may have previously worked elsewhere, rather than genuinely assessing and addressing the most pressing local needs (Bieber 2002; Gagnon 2002; Sejfića 2006; Smillie and Evenson 2003; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013; K4). Moreover, donors preferred programs that could quickly provide tangible and easily measurable results, so relief and rehabilitation programs were prioritized and equally important social programs were neglected (Smillie and Todorović 2001). Nevertheless, NGOs dependent on international funding for their survival followed donor priorities without critically examining their relevance and viability and this, in effect, distanced them from local communities and their authentic needs (Howard 2011; Sejfića 2006). As Jeffrey (2007: 268) observed, NGOs did not align the process of writing project proposals with needs assessments, but were more focused on what donors “wanted to hear”. Belloni (2013) concludes that international support for civil society in BiH essentially created a divide between local organizations and their communities by promoting agendas perceived locally as irrelevant. This undermined the local perception of the international assistance and the work of NGOs, and together with other factors described below contributed to the rather low legitimacy of local NGOs. Some NGOs succeeded in aligning their ideas and priorities with those of international donors. Nevertheless, and especially with

funding becoming increasingly scarce, NGOs are forced to either amend their projects so they are in line with donor priorities, or look for financial resources elsewhere (Jönsson 2011).

Another practice that negatively affected the development of the sector has been the inappropriate funding strategies of international donors. Funding has been provided in the form of discrete, short-term projects aimed at specific objectives, which did not allow time for substantive changes to materialize (Smillie and Evenson 2003). What should have been complex support for the development of the civil society sector became a vicious circle of new project applications for a couple of months, then report writing and evaluation, all accompanied by constant financial insecurity. This forced NGOs to continually develop new projects based on donor priorities (Belloni 2013). This practice, described by Sejfića (2006: 134) as “projectomania” and by Fagan (2005: 410) as “proposal culture”, has been criticized in particular for not providing NGOs with time and funding for long-term vision formulation or broader and more coherent goal setting, because the short-term projects could only follow limited, well-defined objectives (Heideman 2013; Nezavisni biro za humanitarna pitanja 1998; Smillie and Evenson 2003). Broader, long-term programs with more ambitious or less tangible goals and a higher potential to contribute to significant changes could not find the financial support they needed (Belloni 2013; Gagnon 2002).

Moreover, NGOs were unable to follow any coherent long-term strategies due to the rapid changes in priority topics of the available funding (Bieber 2002; Gagnon 2002; Smillie and Evenson 2003; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013; K4). Donors tended to jump from one priority to another, focusing for a limited period on the return of refugees and IDPs, then for a while on good governance, then gender violence, before turning to the LGBT+ agenda. As Tzifakis and Huliaras (2013) note, changes in priorities are understandable and often correspond with changes on the ground. However, donors’ agendas appeared chaotic and incoherent as they were not embedded in any long-term strategic frameworks. Some authors raise a particularly problematic issue concerning the changing donor priorities; the fact that the donors moved on to a new issue after a rather short period of time, without considering whether the needs in the previous priority area had been satisfied (Smillie and Evenson 2003). The goals that the international community claimed to be aiming for, by definition, require continuous and strategically focused work with a timeframe of years or decades, not months.

The international financial support that poured into BiH in large amounts when the conflict ended gave rise to many organizations that were fully dependent on donors for their funding and, consequently, their survival. It was only later that the financial sustainability of NGOs



became an issue, as donor cut their programs in BiH and moved to other troubled regions. Some donors then started to push NGOs into diversifying their funding base in order to gradually become independent from international funding, for example by applying for domestic donations (Howard 2011). However, as Carothers (1999) suggests, the idea that the professional NGOs would be able to acquire funds from domestic sources essentially stems from a Western perception of civil society and a fundamental misunderstanding of the characteristics of society in BiH. Private domestic support for professionalized NGOs is possible in countries where a large middle class possesses sufficient income and willingness to contribute to civil society organizations, and where private corporations consider philanthropic behavior to be the norm. Currently, none of this is present in BiH, and that is particularly due to the low level of socio-economic development, an almost nonexistent middle class and an underdeveloped philanthropic tradition that could be supported by a more favorable legal framework and tax policies (Fagan 2005; Papić 2016; Smillie and Evenson 2003; USAID et al. 2019). On the other hand, as the levels of international funding declined, public domestic funding for civil society organizations exceeded that of foreign agencies. However, public funds have primarily been given to a narrow group of organizations; mostly sports clubs, war veterans associations, and other organizations affiliated with political parties. Additionally, these resources are being disbursed in a rather non-transparent way, by ministries at various levels of state administration and local governments. Municipal governments have the largest budgets for civil society organizations, yet they rarely publish public calls for grants, they do not require submissions of formal project proposals and they do not follow any strategic objectives, priorities or standard selection criteria when selecting organizations for financial support (Belloni 2013; Papić 2016; TACSO 2014; USAID et al. 2019). Personal contacts with authorities and local decision-makers still play an important role in the distribution of public funding, and perhaps that is more important than the quality of project proposals (Jönsson 2011). It is also necessary to acknowledge that some organizations will never be able to attract corporate or public funding, especially advocacy and watchdog groups largely unpopular with the decision-makers they are supposed to monitor (Howard 2011). As a result of the above-mentioned trends, and as the 2018 CSO Sustainability Index shows, the financial viability of organizations in BiH has slowly been deteriorating (USAID et al. 2019).

### ***5.2.1 Civil society building and democratization: Questionable results***

Despite the proclaimed intentions of the international community to pursue the goal of supporting the democratization process through their assistance in the rebuilding of a strong

and pluralistic civil society, their actual practices and approaches to building civil society contradicted this aim. In fact, according to many, they considerably hindered the establishment of an empowered civil society that would be able to articulate and promote political changes (Belloni 2001; Fagan 2005; Sejfića 2006; Smillie and Evenson 2003).

The international community has largely been contracting local NGOs as service providers and implementers of donor priorities. Especially at the beginning of the international assistance, NGOs were a cheap and effective channel for the delivery of services to the local citizens. NGOs were essentially compensating for the inability of state authorities to provide these services. Only a small part of organizations assumed a more political role; advocating for necessary reforms and political changes, and promoting human rights, peacebuilding and democratization (Belloni 2013; Belloni and Hemmer 2010; Bieber 2002; Fagan 2005; Smillie and Evenson 2003). The practice of prioritizing the technical, apolitical work of NGOs was criticized e.g. by Belloni and Hemmer (2010) for creating a “bottom-out” civil society with no ambition to engage with the political structures. Donors even tried to address complex political problems such as electoral behavior, with narrowly defined, apolitical, and essentially technical solutions. In this case, that included voter education programs that failed to address the complex socio-economic and deeper political causes of these problems. The technocratic approach often stemmed from a misunderstanding of why Bosnians acted as they did. Their behavior was generally explained by their lack of “proper” knowledge, hence the education programs of various sorts (Belloni 2013). Van Leeuwen and Verkoren (2012) add that donors were also hesitant to support the activities of a politically oriented civil society for fear of harming their relationship with local government and their assumed neutral role. It was only later that the international community realized that without also supporting the policy and advocacy roles of NGOs, it would be impossible to reach the proclaimed democratization objectives that they had defined for civil society (Howard 2011). The number of NGOs monitoring state authorities, publicly and openly criticizing them, and lobbying for policy changes, grew (Sejfića 2006). Nevertheless, the earlier practices hindered the formation of a civil society sector capable of challenging the dominant ethno-nationalist political discourse and power imbalances, and of articulating political agendas. The past donor practices also influenced how civil society organizations are perceived in BiH today - primarily as service providers (Fagan 2005). Nevertheless, Van Leeuwen and Verkoren (2012) emphasize that civil society building is a highly political process, and by depoliticizing the work of NGOs, donors have contributed to maintaining the status quo.

We can say that funding was predominantly provided “through” local organizations, rather than “to” them, turning the local NGOs into contractors of services commissioned by international donors (Fagan 2005). This is evident not only from the topics the supported projects were focused on (service delivery), but also from the short-term nature and small size of the grants. Additionally, the majority of donors only provided project support and the funding rules were often rather restrictive in relation to covering the administrative costs and overheads that each NGO naturally incurs. Organizations thus only had funding to implement donor-defined priorities, with no resources left for their own organizational development and capacity building. With the small size of individual grants, NGOs had to apply for donations from numerous donors to secure their operation, which increased the transaction costs associated with a higher administrative burden (Howard 2011; Smillie and Evenson 2003). Institutional funds that would allow organizations to invest in their capacity development and long-term sustainability were scarce (Howard 2011).

Another problem that weakened the advocacy role of civil society was the lack of cooperation among local organizations. Instead of working together to leverage stronger political influence over the democratization and peacebuilding process, NGOs competed with each other for the international funding that meant organizational survival. Moreover, competition grew fiercer as resources became scarcer over time, especially for smaller NGOs in rural areas (Belloni and Hemmer 2010; Jönsson 2011; Smillie and Evenson 2003). In recent years, however, we can observe a few attempts to create networks and platforms of NGOs, support their cooperation and enhance their impact. For example, 183 NGOs engaged directly or indirectly in peacebuilding work, and with 21 schools, are grouped under the umbrella of the Network for Building Peace (*Mreža za izgradnju mira*) (Mreža za izgradnju mira 2017). Stronger Voice for Children (*Snažniji glas za djecu*) provides a platform for cooperation and coordination among 15 NGOs working towards better protection for children and strengthening their rights in BiH (Snažniji glas za djecu 2016).

For civil society to effectively represent the local population and lobby for political changes, a link between them and local authorities and decision-makers needs to be established. Liberal Bosnian NGOs created with the assistance of international donors often miss such a link. This is another factor that decreases the effectiveness of their work. Local government officials have often been suspicious of NGOs, perceiving them as political opposition to the government and a force that possibly threatens their authority (Fagan 2005; Smillie and Evenson 2003). This perception might have been fueled by the agendas of foreign donors who, as Sörensen (2010)

observes, first conceived local organizations as an opposition to the ethno-nationalist structures that overtook the local political arena. Additionally, local NGOs lacked the interest to cooperate with local authorities, beyond acquiring official permission for their operations. Their primary focus was on the representatives of the international agencies; their “bread givers” and, to a considerable extent, agenda setters (Smillie and Evenson 2003). As Fagan (2005) argues, the situation slowly started to improve in certain areas of BiH in the mid-2000s. Donors started to promote links between local NGOs and state authorities, which was a step motivated primarily by their intention to help NGOs find new sources of funding and thus ensure their financial sustainability. As a result, municipalities and cantons started to allocate certain portions of their budgets to various civil society groups. However, this again reinforced the service provision function of local NGOs, as they increasingly became contractors for local authorities, providing services that reflected government priorities, while again not necessarily respecting and addressing local needs and the strategic priorities of NGOs (USAID et al. 2019). Moreover, creating strong links with government agencies and being dependent on them is risky for local NGOs, as they may become actors in legitimizing state policies, rather than transforming them (Fagan 2005).

Given the characteristics of international support, the efforts at building a civil society essentially created a small group of professional NGOs that were, essentially, only a small part of what is generally understood as civil society. The NGOs that were established with the help of the international assistance did not emerge naturally from the broader society, but were introduced from outside. Some local citizens even perceived them as alien to Bosnian society. As a result, Bosnian NGOs could not rely on a solid membership base, unlike membership-based civil society organizations and associations (Howard 2011). They thus lacked one of the important sources of organizational legitimacy which again weakened their ability to influence important societal changes (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015). Bosnian NGOs were not run by their members but by employees, and their agenda was not derived from discussions among active members but was primarily influenced by international donors, as described earlier. Šavija-Valha (2009) uses the term “elitization” of civil society for this phenomenon. Many of the professionalized NGOs were staffed by English-speaking, cosmopolitan elites from bigger cities that are distant from the needs and interests of the majority of citizens (Fagan 2005). Šavija-Valha (2009) adds that such NGOs cannot fulfill the basic objectives of civil society as they represent neither a platform for a free and independent association of citizen groups

pursuing specific interests and needs, nor a genuine lobbying power capable of correcting flaws in state institutions.

This professionalization goes hand in hand with civil society losing its inherently active character. As Šavija-Valha (2009) argues, citizens are not actively involved in liberal NGOs in order to articulate and pursue their own interests and lobby for their own rights. Involvement in professionalized NGOs requires certain skills and a knowledge of specific technical vocabulary. It is necessary to write project proposals and reports and communicate with donor agencies. As a result, ordinary citizens are either excluded completely from the work of such NGOs, or at best they are given the passive role of target groups and beneficiaries of the NGOs' projects. Civil society as such has become associated with mostly humanitarian and post-conflict reconstruction projects delivered by professional NGOs, with passive citizens on the receiving end. Additionally, the new professionalized, apolitical NGO sector attracted the local intellectual elite with higher education and language skills, and this was mainly because the salaries were considerably higher than local salaries typical in other sectors. As a consequence, there was a lack of these people in the public sector, the state administration and the local business sector; all areas where they could have had a positive impact on the political and economic developments of the country (Bieber 2002; Fagan 2005; Gagnon 2002).

The professionalization of NGOs, the technocratic approach to civil society building, the dependency of NGOs on foreign donors, the alignment with externally set agendas, and the nature of project funding all influenced the direction of accountability of local NGOs. They were forced to prioritize upwards accountability to their donors over downwards accountability to their constituencies and the grassroots. This is seen as another factor that has negatively influenced the legitimacy and local grounding of Bosnian NGOs (Jönsson 2011; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013).

International support for the local NGO sector has provided rather mixed results. The expectation of international actors that NGOs would spark civic attitudes, positively influence the behavior of voters and thus change the ethno-nationalist grounding of Bosnian politics, proved impossible to achieve, especially with the widely criticized strategies described in this chapter. Also, the ability of NGOs to achieve policy changes is currently perceived to be limited (K2). In recent years we can see another shift in international support; from a focus on civil society building to an increasingly top-down approaches, working directly with state authorities and governments, and trying to promote the principles of good governance (K2). This shift can also be seen in the donor mapping reports published by the Ministry of Finance and Treasury,

responsible for coordinating international assistance in BiH (Ministry of Finance and Treasury 2019).

### **5.3 Legitimacy of Bosnian NGOs**

A common denominator mentioned several times in this chapter is the low legitimacy of local NGOs. The structural problems and limitations of the NGO sector, as discussed here, have meant that the broader population of BiH has a rather poor impression of local NGOs. This poses a serious threat to the work of NGOs as legitimacy is crucial for the stability of organizations, for the trust-building process (Suchman 1995), and for attracting participants, partners and volunteers as well as financial and other forms of support (Brown and Jagadananda 2007; Meyer, Buber, and Aghamanoukjan 2013; Molden et al. 2017). Organizations not perceived as legitimate may be criticized as being unnecessary (Meyer and Rowan 1991), or they may be subject to restrictions from state authorities more often than organizations with a higher degree of organizational legitimacy (Poppellwell 2018).

The low legitimacy of NGOs is apparent from several aspects. As Howard (2011) highlights, NGOs in BiH do not have the membership base crucial for functional civil society organizations, nor do they have the necessary roots in local communities. Citizens, as well as state authorities, are very often suspicious and distrustful of the real motives and interests of NGOs (Grødeland 2008). Authorities in particular see NGOs as anti-government opposition, not as possible partners for solving local problems. An opinion widely present in BiH is that NGOs pursue private interests of their founders or foreign interests of donors instead of addressing real local needs; a more radical, but not scarce, perception would be that NGOs act as foreign agents or foreign mercenaries (Milan 2017; Puljek-Shank and Verkoren 2017; K1; K3). Grødeland (2008) on the other hand, presents a more nuanced picture of local governments' attitudes towards NGOs in BiH. The results of her research show that the way local officials perceive NGOs corresponds with their opinions on the roles NGOs should be filling. NGOs that provide services to local citizens, such as financial, material, and psychological help, are assessed positively because local authorities see service provision as the proper role for civil society organizations. However, NGOs' watchdog activities or activities related to democracy and civil society building were not valued highly. People of BiH perceive NGOs similarly. Key informant (K3) confirmed that a small sector of humanitarian NGOs that help people in need possess the largest legitimacy among the citizens of BiH, compared to NGOs working in other fields. These NGOs are praised for providing the assistance government

structures fail to provide; nevertheless, do not push the governments to change their approach and start securing the necessary services for the citizens.

Results from a countrywide survey conducted by Puhalo and Vukojević in 2015 confirm a rather low level of trust towards NGOs among citizens. Almost 60% of 1,100 respondents do not believe that NGOs in their local community or their state entity are interested in the views of the citizens. The perception of NGOs' abilities to deal with problems is even lower, with 70% of respondents of the opinion that NGOs cannot solve problems in their local community and 79% of respondents doubting that NGOs could solve their personal problems. 25% of respondents believe that NGOs work in the interest of citizens and society. However, 21% believe that they work in the interest of their donors, and almost 22% indicated that NGOs work in their own interest (Puhalo and Vukojević 2015). A survey published in 2017 by MEASURE-BiH paints an even bleaker picture, with 36% of 3,000 respondents indicating that civil society organizations work primarily in their own interest and 25% believing that the organizations work in the interest of their donors. A mere 11% trusted the organizations to do the right things for the citizens (Carsimamovic Vukotic et al. 2017).

Apart from the professionalized, Western-style liberal NGOs that were created as part of the liberal peacebuilding intervention by the international community, with all its problems and limitations discussed above, a specific segment of civil society did develop locally. This was made up mostly of war veteran groups, organizations pursuing a nationalist agenda, and other ethnically defined organizations. In contrast to liberal NGOs, these grassroots groups actually have a stable membership base, are financially supported by local actors, mostly local governments and political parties, have access to decision-makers, and exercise a certain degree of influence over local politics. However, their characteristics do not match the liberal, civic criteria of international donors. Many ethnically defined NGOs have been coopted by political parties and pursuing their essentially exclusionary agendas (K2, K3, K6). Some have often raised their voices against the liberal agenda, opposed internationally led peacebuilding reforms, and blocked cooperation between ethnic groups. Thus, they have mostly been ignored, overlooked, and seen as damaging the peace process by the international community. Yet, unlike most NGOs supported by the international community, these organizations appear to enjoy higher legitimacy among local citizens (Belloni 2013). During his research into NGOs active in Brčko, Jeffrey (2007) found examples of organizations that enjoyed regular access to funding from state authorities because of their clear nationalist affiliations. On the other hand, most international donor agencies refused to provide them with any funding as they did not

comply with the requirements for multi-ethnicity. Puljek-Shank and Verkoren (2017) analyzed local organizations in BiH and the level of their legitimacy with donors and with local actors. They concluded that while NGOs with high donor legitimacy did not use any ethnic labels and symbols in order to conform with the liberal discourse, organizations with high local legitimacy refrained from publicly identifying themselves as anti-nationalist.

#### **5.4 Where the NGO sector stands today**

This chapter introduced the structural conditions under which the Bosnian civil society sector developed, and it assessed the current problems this sector encounters. Throughout the two-and-a-half decades of international support for civil society building in BiH there is a stark contradiction between the proclaimed goals of the international community and their actual practices, which often undermined these goals. The civil society sector, or better to say, the NGO sector, that international actors helped to establish, is now, in the main, remote from local people, depoliticized in its agendas, highly dependent on international funding with little hope for improvement, slowly shrinking as the international funding declines, and largely lacking legitimacy with local actors. As one representative of the civil society sector put it: “We are falling, we are failing, we are collapsing” (K2).

The development of the NGO sector in BiH during the post-conflict period was, as Smillie and Evenson (2003) state, a result of donor politics and local opportunism. The international interventions that were intended to strengthen civil society had many problematic and controversial aspects. However, Smillie and Evenson argue that without those interventions this sector would be dominated by ethnic rhetoric, as in the formal political arena. It is also important to acknowledge that not all international practices had equal nor equally negative effects on the sector, as the practices of some donors differed quite significantly from the general practices described in this chapter. The chapter presents an overall and, to some extent, generalized perspective. Nevertheless, the longer-term effects of international support are largely being questioned.



## **6 Basic characteristics of the evaluated organizations**

Before the results of the research are presented, we will briefly introduce the non-governmental organizations selected for the evaluation. The following part will provide brief histories of the evaluated NGOs and descriptions of their activities, strategies and visions. The information about the NGOs was collected by reviewing their official documents, websites and project documentations, and also in interviews and focus groups with their employees and leading representatives (especially with the following respondents listed in the Annex 1 List of respondents: R1, R2, R3, R31, R32, R51, R52, R53, R54, R63, R65, R66 and R67).

The chapter mostly focuses on the realities on the ground at the time of the data collection. The realities, with regard to the situation in the target municipalities as well as the work of the evaluated NGOs, might have changed since then. However, it is important to ground the analysis of the data in the situation that existed at the time when they were collected.

The author deliberately selected a diverse group of organizations for the research in order to capture the varieties of peacebuilding approaches NGOs in BiH apply, and the contexts in which they work. Of the three evaluated NGOs, Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo approaches peacebuilding in the most direct way, using dialogue to reestablish communication and enhance cooperation and peaceful relationships between communities divided along ethnic lines. LDA Zavidovići approaches peacebuilding in a more indirect way, gathering people around particular causes other than peace, which is common practice in BiH (K3). In line with the liberal peacebuilding agenda, the organization also focuses on promoting participatory democracy at the local level. The Youth organization Odisej uses a combination of direct peace work and various youth activities, creating opportunities for young people to meet and initiate inter-group contact. Furthermore, the three evaluated organizations have different levels of grounding within the communities they work in. Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo has its office in Sarajevo but implements activities primarily in regions further away from the capital, where it is only embedded in those communities to a small extent, maintaining relationships with a rather limited number of individuals living in those regions. Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići has a long history of working in one single municipality, is relatively well-known in the local community and cooperates frequently with representatives of local government. As a result, this organization has a stronger grounding within the local community. The third NGO, the Youth organization Odisej, differs from the previous two organization in that it is a membership-based organization. Hence, the NGO is led by its members and is strongly

embedded within the youth community in the municipality of Bratunac, where it is based. However, Odisej has a rather tense relationship with local government and the wider public, as will be discussed below.

All the important characteristics of the evaluated NGOs are summarized in the following table.

Table 4: Basic information about the evaluated organizations

Name of the organization	In operation since	Number of employees / members at the time of data collection	Main sources of funding	Location of activities <sup>13</sup>	Key characteristics of the target municipalities and issues addressed by the evaluated NGOs	Brief characteristics of activities	Peacebuilding approach	Main peacebuilding function (Paffenholz and Spurk 2010)
<b>Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo (NDC Sarajevo)</b>	2000	3 employees	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik (Republika Srpska) Jajce (Federation of BiH)	Multi-ethnic municipalities, with significant IDP and returnee populations, lack of cooperation and contact between various ethnic groups, education (esp. primary) mostly ethnically divided, either in the form of physical segregation or separate school curricula for each ethnic group.	Re-establishing interethnic communication and cooperation among municipal councilors and administrators, and in schools, through interethnic dialogue and follow-up multi-ethnic activities.	Interethnic dialogue seminar as a first step in the long-term peacebuilding process.	Social cohesion
<b>Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići)</b>	1996	2 employees	Italian municipalities of Brescia, Alba and Cremona; UNDP/UNOPS, OSCE,	Zavidovići (Federation of BiH)	Mostly mono-ethnic and relatively closed community, with serious economic problems, lack of job opportunities and emigration of especially young people from the town, wide-spread	Physical post-conflict reconstruction, income-generation activities, promotion of democratic principles, diversification of local civil society, mobilization of young	Enhancing local democracy, opening the local community to the outside world; active	Service delivery, intermediation

<sup>13</sup> Please refer to the Administrative map of BiH, attached as Annex 3.

			European Commission		lethargy, limited responsiveness of the local authorities to the needs of citizens.	people and cooperation with local authorities, using connections with Italian municipalities and institutions.	cooperation with local authorities.	
<b>Youth organization Odisej</b>	2001	Approx. 10 active members (a larger number involved in the past, peaking at around 120-200 members)	UNDP, OSCE, Catholic Relief Services, CARE International, Bauern Helfen Bauern, Arci Milano	Bratunac (Republika Srpska)	Multi-ethnic municipality with significant IDP and returnee populations who feel they are being discriminated against by the local community, tensions and conflicts between various groups in the past, lack of opportunities for young people to socialize and spend free time, apathy and lack of motivation of youngsters to engage in the life of the community.	Youth organization providing educational and cultural opportunities for young people and bringing together local youngsters from various backgrounds.	Peacebuilding through youth work and dealing with the past activities.	In-group socialization, social cohesion

Source: created by the author based on the collected data

## **6.1 Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo**

Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo (NDC Sarajevo), based in the capital of BiH, is one of several dialogue centers that were opened in the countries of former Yugoslavia around the year 2000, and together they form the rather informal Nansen Dialogue Network (Aarbakke 2002). The organization works in ethnically-divided communities, using inter-ethnic dialogue as the main tool for their engagement. Currently, NDC Sarajevo cooperates in various multi-ethnic activities with a number of elementary schools and high schools from Jajce and other municipalities mostly located in Central Bosnia. The thesis evaluates past programs implemented between the years 2006 and 2015 in four municipalities; Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik (Republika Srpska) and Jajce (Federation BiH).

### ***6.1.1 Establishment and evolution of NDC Sarajevo***

The Norwegian Nansen Academy (Nansenskolen), based in the city of Lillehammer, played an important part in the creation of NDC Sarajevo. Since 1995, the Nansen Academy, in cooperation with the Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norwegian Church Aid and the Norwegian Red Cross, have been organizing educational courses within the program “Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution”. This brought together multi-ethnic groups of middle-range actors; potential leaders, from the countries of former Yugoslavia for 12 weeks of dialogue and conflict resolution training in Norway. Around 170 participants had completed the program by the end of 2000, creating a highly motivated and engaged group of alumni. These alumni, after returning from Lillehammer, initiated dialogue seminars and, eventually, dialogue centers in their home countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina in the year 2000, centers were opened in Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka, with administrative support provided by the Nansen Academy, and the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Aarbakke 2002; Bryn 2015; Šavija-Valha and Šahić 2015; Sivertsen 2015).

NDC Sarajevo is comprised primarily of the Lillehammer program alumni, and it has continuously evolved in its strategies and focus. The organization first worked with middle-range actors from bigger cities, primarily from Sarajevo, including journalists, politicians, representatives of the judicial system and activists from other NGOs, inviting them to seminars on inter-ethnic dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. In these seminars they applied a similar model to the one they knew from the Lillehammer course. After realizing the limited effectiveness of such an approach, given the local conditions, the untraceable peacebuilding impact and the minimal opportunities for follow-up activities, the organization changed its strategy, its target groups and the location of its activities. Instead of the city environment, they

started working in more rural, ethnically divided areas of Eastern and Central BiH, and in 2006 they began their activities in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac, adding the municipalities of Zvornik and Jajce in 2009. This decision followed on from a series of dialogue seminars provided to teachers in school around the country and multi-ethnic round-table discussions with various representatives organized in smaller towns of Eastern BiH. During these seminars and discussions, NDC Sarajevo recognized the urgency of improving inter-ethnic communication and relationships in these mostly rural municipalities, as this need was considerably greater there than in major urban areas. NDC Sarajevo also acknowledged that the need for an inter-ethnic dialogue program was bigger in those areas of BiH that still, even after the recent war, have a multi-ethnic composition of inhabitants. Moreover, NDC Sarajevo took into account the demonstrated interest of the local people to be actively engaged in their activities. Along with the changes in target municipalities, the organization decided to diversify their target groups and started working primarily with schools, young people and municipality administrators and councilors. Their decision to focus on teachers, pupils and young people reflected the crucial position the education sector may have in perpetuating ethnic divisions, prejudices and stereotypes. The reason for engaging municipality councilors and administrators was their standing in the general life and functioning of communities, and the fact that many of them are perceived as influential figures who can ensure better access to local communities (Šavija-Valha and Šahić 2015; Šerá Komlossyová 2019).

For the selected groups, NDC Sarajevo developed a holistic approach of long-term engagement, with so-called Nansen dialogue (described in the following sections) as the main tool for bringing about the desired changes, and with a strong focus on follow-up activities

### ***6.1.2 Core problems NDC Sarajevo addresses***

NDC Sarajevo specifically delineated the main problem that lies at the center of their focus: the dysfunctional society of BiH. According to representatives of the organization, the society of BiH does not provide its citizens, except for powerful local elites, with the services on a political and social level that a functional society should be providing. Severe political and social antagonism and ethnic divisions are characteristic of the dysfunctional society of BiH. Citizens feel a deep mistrust of members of other ethnic groups and approach everyday negotiations as win-lose games, which then prevents societies from searching for common interests and cooperating for the common good. Interestingly, NDC Sarajevo does not claim that ethnic division as such is the main issue the organization wants to address and improve. They acknowledge that the problem of ethnic division exists in BiH, however, they see it as a

structural and deeply institutionalized problem, created by multiple forces that are outside their sphere of influence. For them, ethnic division in BiH existed long before the war in the 1990s, because political power, ethnic identity and religion have been connected ever since the Ottoman era. On the other hand, the dysfunctionality of the society of BiH is a product of the last war, according to NDC Sarajevo. Before the conflict, society was ethnically divided, yet socially and politically functional for all citizens, regardless of their background or position. The war gave rise to the current dysfunctionalities, as it was waged along ethnic lines and created physical barriers which divided communities. Subsequently, the political elites who have taken advantage of the divisions in society to gain and maintain political power have further reinforced the dysfunctionality. From the perspective of NDC Sarajevo, it is not within their power to create a united society and fully bridge all the divides. Nevertheless, they argue that they can help create functional societies by initiating contact and rebuilding communication and cooperation between groups, even when ethnic divisions are still unresolved.

### ***6.1.3 Vision, strategy and the main activities of NDC Sarajevo***

The main vision NDC Sarajevo aims to achieve is one of functional local communities in which social interaction, communication and cooperation between divided groups exist. Their interventions strive to create space where all groups of citizens can meet, bridge their differences, negotiate everyday realities and create mutually beneficial relationships that would allow them to work together for the benefit of the whole community (Šavija-Valha and Šahić 2015).

The main tool or method NDC Sarajevo uses to initiate interethnic communication and cooperation is the so-called Nansen dialogue. Building on the academic work of authors such as Lederach (1997) and Saunders (2011), the Nansen approach to dialogue was defined and developed by Steinar Bryn, one of the leading figures of the Lillehammer program and the Nansen Dialogue Network. The aim of dialogue is to gain a better understanding of the position of others, to listen to their perspectives and to share your own perspectives. Unlike debate or negotiation, with dialogue the ultimate goal is not to convince your opponents of the strength of your arguments, nor is it to be used for solving specific problems. Instead, as Bryn (2015) stresses, dialogue focuses on the driving force causing the problems; the conflictual relationship, and dialogue enhances mutual understanding and respect and eventually repairs formerly antagonistic relationships. Šavija-Valha and Šahić (2015), who further theorized on the Nansen dialogue approach, identified the creation of “places of interethnic encounters” (p. 58) as the first step in opening the dialogue process in ethnically divided communities. The

places for inter-ethnic encounters provide an otherwise missed opportunity for people of different ethnicities to meet, become visible to each other, engage in dialogue, form a better understanding of each other's perspectives on the issues dividing them and transform their mutual relationships. These places have to be constructed by an outside party perceived as neutral by the participants, because the divided communities, under the political influence of the elites interested in keeping the status-quo, would not be able to create such places themselves.

NDC Sarajevo developed a holistic process of engagement in the selected communities based on the Nansen dialogue approach, and this process was implemented repeatedly over several cycles. As a first step, the organization recruited participants for the dialogue seminars following interviews conducted by the NDC Sarajevo staff. In the interviews the organization was mainly interested in the motivation of possible participants to take an active part in the multi-ethnic initiatives beneficial for their communities. The ethnic and gender balance of the selected groups was also ensured. Subsequently, the process implemented by NDC Sarajevo was based on a combination of dialogue seminars for the selected participants that were intended to restore communication and mutual understanding between the divided groups, and the active engagement of the participants in the subsequent local multi-ethnic activities that were based on their own proposals (Šavija-Valha and Šahić 2015). For the adult participants (municipality councilors, administrators, teachers, parents), the weekend-long seminars for multi-ethnic groups were organized on neutral ground in Sarajevo, and followed the Nansen dialogue approach. Steinar Bryn who facilitated the dialogue seminars applied a wide range of methods and techniques to instigate open dialogue among the participants and encourage active listening. The schedule of the seminar was not very tight, giving participants the opportunity to socialize and interact in a more casual way. This practice is in line with the view shared e.g. by Feller and Ryan (2012), that the subtle, implicit dialogue that happens during the breaks and informal social activities is as important as the explicit dialogue taking place in the dialogue room. Towards the end of the weekend participants brainstormed ideas for potential activities that could be implemented in their municipalities to tackle the existing dysfunctionality. NDC Sarajevo encourage participants to put the ideas gained in the seminars into practice, and organize their own small-scale multi-ethnic activities. For those who manifested their interest to actively work for the benefit of their communities, NDC Sarajevo organized further seminars and a week-long field trip to Lillehammer, Norway. Students and pupils from participating schools received training in intercultural communication and peaceful conflict resolution. In the



regions where NDC Sarajevo worked, most pupils attend mono-ethnic schools, or have separate classes for at least some of their subjects. NDC Sarajevo provided them with the rare opportunity to interact with their peers from other ethnic groups. After the seminars they organized their own multi-ethnic activities in schools and in public spaces. Additionally, NDC Sarajevo organized students exchanges between the schools from the four municipalities participating in the project (Šerá Komlossyová 2019).

The most active participants created informal action groups, which served as platforms for meetings, planning and the coordination of further activities in their communities. Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs) were established in all four target municipalities, consisting of the active teachers, parents, municipality councilors and administrators. Nansen Forums of Young Peacebuilders (NFYPs) were also established and they consisted of students and young people. These action groups, with the financial and logistical support of NDC Sarajevo, organized a wide range of small-scale cultural, sport, political, educational and social activities (Šerá Komlossyová 2019). NDC Sarajevo allowed the local groups to initiate any activities they saw as necessary for their local communities, the only requirement being that the activities and the benefits produced were multi-ethnic in nature. Later, NCBs in Srebrenica and Bratunac established an officially registered NGO, Dialogue Centre Srebrenica-Bratunac, which was then responsible for the implementation of the local activities (Komlossyová 2013).

## **6.2 Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići**

Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići) is a community-based NGO, working primarily in the municipality of Zavidovići, central BiH. The scope of LDA Zavidovići's work is broad, and includes humanitarian assistance, civil society building, socio-economic development, support for cultural and sport activities and activities for women and young people. The overarching aim of its involvement, in line with the agenda of liberal peacebuilding approach, is to enhance democracy at the local level. Given its history as introduced below, the organization has a strong connection to its Italian partners, and they have influenced its work to a considerable degree, especially in the first years of its existence. LDA Zavidovići also frequently cooperates with other NGOs supporting local democracy in the Western Balkan region, under the umbrella of ALDA, the European Association of Local Democracy (formerly the Association of Local Democracy Agencies) (ADL Zavidovići 2015).

### **6.2.1 Establishment and evolution of LDA Zavidovići**

LDA Zavidovići was created soon after the end of the war in BiH, in 1996, evolving from the initiatives of Italian activists that delivered humanitarian aid to the population of this region during the 1992-95 war. In the first years following its establishment, the Italians continued to play a crucial role in the organization. As well as building the organization in BiH, they also established a counterpart NGO in Brescia, Italy; ADL Zavidovici (Associazione per l'Ambasciata della Democrazia Locale a Zavidovici). The Italian ADL Zavidovici has been the main partner organization of the Bosnian LDA. The Italian staff were continually present in Zavidovići during the first years of the organization, and they were responsible for the identification of project ideas and fundraising for the work of the organization. LDA Zavidovići now has greater autonomy and employs only local employees, while ADL still assists with technical support and fundraising. Additionally, LDA Zavidovići established partnerships with the municipalities of Brescia, Alba and Cremona, which then provided financial support to the organization. LDA also facilitated cooperation between representatives of the municipality of Zavidovići and these three Italian municipalities, organizing twinning and exchanges between BiH and Italy (ADL a Zavidovici n.d.; ADL Zavidovići 2015).

Apart from the cooperation with its Italian partners, LDA Zavidovići is a member of the network of Local Democracy Agencies (formerly Embassies) established by the Council of Europe's Standing Conference (now Congress) of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe in the early 90s. The goal of the Council of Europe was to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and peacebuilding in the ex-Yugoslav republics through locally based delegations, previously called embassies. In 1997, the Zavidovići initiative was inaugurated as the Embassy of Local Democracy, becoming part of the Council of Europe's network. In 1999, ALDA Association of Local Democracy Agencies was established at the initiative of the Council of Europe to coordinate and support the work of the LDAs. Even though the importance of ALDA for the work of LDAs has gradually decreased, the LDAs in the Western Balkan region continue to cooperate with each other in a number of initiatives (ADL Zavidovići 2015; ALDA n.d.).

In its first years LDA Zavidovići was mostly engaged in the continuous provision of humanitarian and relief assistance, the physical rebuilding of the municipality and the reconstruction of the civil society. Later, as the humanitarian needs decreased, the focus of the organization evolved. LDA started to implement activities focused on a wide range of stakeholders. The scope of their work is broad, as described below, given their position as the

most professionalized NGO in Zavidovići, with significant and relatively stable financial support compared to other NGOs in the area (Dušková and Komlossyová 2017).

### **6.2.2 Core problems LDA Zavidovići addresses**

LDA Zavidovići deals with more than one key issue. Initially, the organization had the clear focus of post-war physical reconstruction. In recent years, the range of problems they attempt to address is wider. Nevertheless, during the research it seemed that the organization had not clearly formulated and analyzed the specific problems that they could help their community to mitigate.

One strand of issues the staff of LDA Zavidovići listed in their interviews is the economic situation. The unemployment rate in Zavidovići municipality was approx. 25% in 2017, representing one of the highest rates in the Zenica-Doboj Canton (Služba za zapošljavanje Zeničko-dobojskog kantona 2017). Even though substantial improvements in this sector are beyond their influence, the organization has implemented several projects aimed at improving the economic situation of individuals and families, especially in the agricultural sector. Another issue that was mentioned repeatedly during the interviews is the situation and position of women, especially in the rural areas of the municipality. LDA Zavidovići mostly deals with the economic situation of women and the problem of domestic violence. In numerous initiatives, LDA Zavidovići focuses on problems faced by young people living in the municipality. The LDA's staff particularly highlighted the lack of opportunities for young people to participate in the life of the community, and the fact that young people are not a priority for the political representatives of the municipality. One example of this is reflected in the nonexistence of a municipal youth council.

Working in a mostly mono-ethnic municipality, the staff of LDA Zavidovići are rather hesitant to openly speak about the inter-ethnic relationships in their community, admitting that the issue is still taboo.

### **6.2.3 Vision, strategy and the main activities of LDA Zavidovići**

A clear vision of the desired future LDA Zavidovići wants to contribute to cannot be found in any available official document. The information leaflet of the organization lists the following general objectives:

- promotion of the principles of representative and participatory democracy;
- support for human rights and fight against exclusion and discrimination;

- promotion of social cohesion, dialogue and cooperation among actors at all levels;
- promotion of sustainable development, economic growth and employment;
- enhancement of international cooperation, networking with European institutions and partners and transfer of good practice;
- promotion of European standards and values at all levels (ADL Zavidovići 2015).

During the interviews, the staff of LDA Zavidovići and the representatives of the Italian ADL formulated rather general long-term objectives for their engagement, such as a better economic situation in the municipality, a fair, supportive and involved community, diverse local civil society, more active local authorities, more opportunities for young people, and belonging to the European society. LDA Zavidovići wishes take on the role of facilitating the citizens' active engagement in the life of the community and serve as a cultural and educational meeting point, a resource base and a networking agent. Peace was also mentioned as an overarching goal, but rather in the sense of economic stability.

There is one distinctive feature in the work of LDA Zavidovići, often mentioned and appreciated in the interviews, and that is the Italian component. The Italian partners were involved to some extent in most of the projects and activities. Where relevant, LDA connected Bosnian stakeholders (e.g. farmers, municipality employees, civil society workers, teachers, students etc.) with their counterparts in the partner municipalities in Italy, and organized exchanges and visits. Groups of young people from Italy regularly visited Zavidovići to organize summer activities for local kids. There were official twinning visits between Zavidovići and Italian municipalities. Through the Italian network LDA Zavidovići wanted to open the otherwise closed community to the outside world, and provide its citizens with what had previously been a rare opportunity to travel abroad, and gain new experiences and ideas for their work (Dušková and Komlossyová 2017).

Additionally, LDA Zavidovići builds its strategy on the involvement of local authorities, representatives of municipality administration and local government. The organization claims they involve these bodies in most of their projects, either as direct beneficiaries or as implementing partners. If direct involvement is not possible or the authorities do not show interest in being involved, as a minimum courtesy they are informed about the LDA's work, either formally or informally. The organization does so because they believe that active cooperation with authorities enhances the effectiveness and impact of their work, as it can help with the institutionalization of new initiatives and the adoption of legislative changes.

As previously mentioned, in the years following the end of the conflict, LDA Zavidovići primarily worked on the provision of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction of destroyed houses, other buildings and infrastructure, and the provision of equipment to health centers, kindergartens, schools etc. During that period, LDA also engaged in capacity building programs for the local civil society organizations, supporting the formation of new organizations and organizing seminars to enhance their capacities for this type of work. They also assisted with the return of refugees to the municipality of Zavidovići and organized initiatives promoting minority rights.

In the late 1990s, they started implementing numerous activities for young people. LDA created and ran a Youth center in its early days. Later, young people managed it themselves as an independent association that organized various cultural, educational and sports activities. The Youth center ceased to exist in the mid-2000s. Along with that, around the year 2000, LDA initiated the school of journalism for young people from Zavidovići, and later also included youths from the neighboring municipality Žepče. A more recent project focused on young people, the Balkan regional platform for youth participation and dialogue, was implemented in collaboration with other LDAs in the Western Balkans. The project connected young people with the representatives of local authorities in order to make both groups visible to each other, facilitate communication between them and motivate youngsters to become actively engaged in the work for their local community. LDA also offers opportunities for young people to participate in Erasmus+ activities abroad.

Another group of activities was focused on improving the economic situation for the citizens of Zavidovići. LDA organized seminars and workshops to support small businesses and provided micro loans to local entrepreneurs for a certain period. They have continued to support local farmers, providing them with plastic greenhouses, education on how to grow crops in the greenhouses, seminars with experts from the University of Sarajevo and consultations with agronomists. They have organized study visits to farms in Italy and paid the rent for a stand at the local market where the farmers can sell their produce. Farmers whose greenhouses and fields were destroyed in the 2017 floods received help to restart their production.

A considerable number of their activities are carried out in cooperation with the Italian partners. Over the years, LDA Zavidovići organized twinning between local authorities from Zavidovići and those from the Italian municipalities of Brescia, Alba and Cremona. A wide range of stakeholders participated in study visits to Italy, visiting institutions relevant to their positions in the local community (e.g. schools, kindergartens, municipal institutions, farms etc.) to build

capacities and exchange best practices. LDA Zavidovići, together with Italian ALD Zavidovici and collaborating researchers and students from Italian universities, conducted several research studies. Italian youngsters visit Zavidovići every summer to organize summer programs for kids from the municipality called Strani Vari. Italian partners also donated a van called the Ludobus for after-school activities and games local youngsters have been preparing for kids in the rural areas of the municipality, in cooperation with a local cultural association CEKER.

Several initiatives targeted local women. LDA Zavidovići implemented a project focused on fighting domestic violence and initiated the creation of a local association called Sigurno Mjesto (Safe Place). The association continues working with women from rural and urban areas, assisting victims of domestic violence, offering workshops for women, pregnant women and mothers, and seminars in schools, all aimed at preventing violence towards women in society. Additionally, LDA Zavidovići provided plastic greenhouses, seeds and education on growing crops for their own consumption to women living in the rural areas of the municipality as part of the initiative Orti famigliari (Family gardens).

LDA Zavidovići also cooperates with various local partners. Along with the local association Sportski i naučno-istraživački klub Atom (Sports and research club Atom), they initiated the creation of the Nature park Tajan in the mountains surrounding Zavidovići. There is also regular cooperation with the cultural association CEKER on cultural events and with the women's association Sigurno Mjesto. Moreover, LDA Zavidovići participates in the No Hate Coalition (Kultura mira) initiated by OSCE, organizing activities aimed at combating prejudice and intolerance in society (Dušková and Komlossyová 2017).

### **6.3 Youth organization Odisej**

The Youth organization Odisej (Omladinska organizacija Odisej, hereafter referred to as Odisej) was established in 2001 in the Eastern Bosnian town of Bratunac. It is a membership-based non-governmental organization bringing together young people from the Bratunac municipality, and organizing activities for its members as well as for the wider public. It has also served as an information point, informing youngsters about the various opportunities offered by Odisej's partner organizations from the wider region, such as education seminars, cultural events and various youth projects. The motivation of Odisej founders was to provide the youngsters from this municipality with the opportunities to meet, socialize and engage in the life of the community, as these were missing until then. Since 2004, Odisej primarily

engaged in reconciliation, dealing with the past<sup>14</sup> and peacebuilding activities, gathering young people of both ethnicities living in the area; Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks who slowly began to return to the region in the early 2000s. They participated in discussions and shared their perspectives on the past war. The organization has cooperated with various local and international partners, including the UNDP, OSCE, Catholic Relief Services, CARE International, the Austrian organization Bauern Helfen Bauern, the Italian association Arci Milano, and other NGOs and youth associations from around BiH (e.g. Centre for non-violent action, Center for Peacebuilding Sanski Most, Omladinski savjet Srebrenica, Udruženje žena Priroda Bratunac, Omladinski savjet Milići, Omladinska mreža BiH, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights) (Omladinska organizacija Odisej 2010).

### ***6.3.1 Establishment and evolution of Odisej***

The Youth organization Odisej was established in 2001 by a group of friends, based around the leader of the organization (he still held that position at the time of the research). This leading person (the author will keep the name of the leader confidential) was himself displaced from a town near Sarajevo to Bratunac at the end of the war. In 2002, Odisej participated in the civil society-building program “Strengthening democracy in Eastern BiH” implemented by CARE International. In this program the leaders of the organization received training and grants that enabled them to secure premises and the equipment necessary for the organization to function. With its own youth center, Odisej succeeded in attracting an increasing number of members (Omladinska organizacija Odisej 2010).

In the first years of its existence, Odisej was primarily aimed at offering young people from the area the opportunity to spend their free time away from the streets and the street violence common at that time. Also, as cultural events were rather scarce in Bratunac, Odisej organized concerts, offered music workshops and the space for young people to play their musical instruments and form music bands. A number of computers were donated to the organization and installed in the youth center, providing young people with the rare opportunity to use the internet and play computer games. In that period there were around 200 active members in Odisej.

In 2004, the leader of the organization participated in a training seminar organized as part of the Quakers’ project “Quaker Peace and Social Witness” that aimed to support citizens and civil

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<sup>14</sup> The term “dealing with the past” is used for activities of publically discussing the past war, its causes and course, together with the ways to avoid its recurrence. The phrase came into use when a similar word, reconciliation, became rather unpopular among the public in BiH (Belloni and Hemmer 2010).

society organizations in their work on peacebuilding and dealing with the past (Religious Society of Friends in Britain (Quakers) n.d.). Following the seminar Odisej promoted the issues of dealing with the past, reconciliation and peacebuilding in most of its activities. Additionally, the well-known Bosnian peacebuilding activist Goran Bubalo (deceased 2020) supported Odisej in its peacebuilding efforts, enhanced their capacity for peacebuilding work, suggested ideas for activities and shared funding opportunities.

Over the years, Odisej has had a rather complicated relationship with local government and police, and also with the older generation living in the municipality, especially since the organization assumed the peacebuilding role and started to organize seminars and public events on issues related to the past war. Soon after this change in emphasis the organization lost the premises of its youth center in the local high school that had been provided based on an agreement with the local municipality. Since then they have been unable to acquire a suitable place for their activities other than a small office. The leaders of the organization have often criticized the local government for its lack of interest and involvement in the numerous problems faced by young people living in the municipality. Moreover, after the first public event which, through leaflets and posters, provided information about Serb war criminals and Serb crimes against Bosniaks, members of the organization faced physical attacks from local police officers. The Odisej members interviewed for this research all shared the same feeling that they were perceived as traitors or as a sect by the local community for organizing activities for members of all ethnic groups. They felt that they were strongly disliked by the top representatives of local government and rejected by the local community. Many of them also highlighted the lack of a stable space for organizing youth activities as a major obstacle to their work.

### ***6.3.2 Core problems Odisej addresses***

The respondents interviewed for this research listed a number of problems that Odisej intended to address. However, the organization never conducted any systematic problem or situation analysis as, in the words of the respondents, the problems young people faced were clear and obvious. Ideas for projects and activities were collected on an ad hoc basis from the members as they discussed what they missed in the town and the problems they wanted to deal with.

Initially, the main intention of Odisej's representatives was to address the lack of opportunities for youngsters to spend their free time and socialize in a safe environment. Street violence and the availability of drugs and weapons from the war period were major dangers faced by young people at that time. Computers and an internet connection were not readily available, hence



Odisej succeeded in attracting many young people to its youth center because of the donated computers. The leaders of Odisej also wanted to make Bratunac more culturally active, as very few cultural events were happening in town at that time. Moreover, the organization saw the need to offer its members the opportunity to educate themselves in the various areas that, in their experience, were missing or insufficiently covered in the school education system, such as business planning, project writing and various foreign languages. These education seminars and workshops were also a means to address the persistent problem of high youth unemployment in the municipality.

The Bosniak refugees gradually began to return to the municipality around 2003, and new problems arose. Bosniak youngsters experienced conflict with the Serb majority, and due to the ethnic-based discrimination, they had limited opportunities to socialize with other young people and to integrate into the life of the local community. The Odisej leadership wanted to address these problems and create a space where all young people regardless of their ethnic background could come and socialize.

The shift in Odisej's focus towards peacebuilding activities in 2004 was, to a considerable extent, influenced by the leader's personal belief that the local community needed this type of work to change the prevailing sentiment at that time that the war would inevitably happen again. Moreover, as the leader explained, *"I realized that we raise our children telling them that there is a dragon living behind the mountain, doesn't matter whether he is Serb or Bosniak, and that one day he will come and eat us"* (R63). Given the bad socio-economic conditions in the region, people in Bratunac, especially young people, had very limited possibilities to travel to other parts of BiH or abroad. Some youngsters from the more remote villages did not even have the means to travel to the center of Bratunac. Coupled with the prevalence of one-sided information in most of the media and school curricula and the influence of the older generations on young people, the representatives of Odisej recognized the need to re-establish contact between Serb and Bosniak youngsters, and to broaden the horizons of local young people. Odisej started to organize activities where both groups would participate so that they could meet and talk. Apart from bringing Serb and Bosniak youngsters together for joint activities, Odisej also organized trips to other towns in BiH and abroad, to give young people the opportunity to travel outside their local community, meet their peers in other places, see how they live and exchange their perspectives on various issues.

Even though the leader of Odisej was the main initiator of the activities related to peacebuilding and dealing with the past, most of the members interviewed for this researched appreciated it

and agreed that this type of work was needed. However, there was a clear difference in how this topic was perceived by the older generation of Odisej members who were involved in the organization in the first years of its existence, and the younger generation who had joined Odisej more recently. With the recent generation of young people, the perception of the problems the organization should be dealing with shifted. The original members of Odisej all experienced the conflict and the difficult post-war period personally one way or another, as kids and young teenagers, and thus they had a greater need to talk about it, to meet others with similar experiences, to share their perspectives and come to terms with their war traumas. Moreover, almost all the leaders and main representatives of the organization were IDPs from other parts of BiH, or returnees, which intensified this need. That was also why they lacked a social network in Bratunac and felt marginalized and rejected by the local community, and were thus motivated to create a safe space for all to join, socialize and feel accepted. On the other hand, most of the younger interviewees (high school students and young people in their early 20s), who had no direct experience of the war, did not feel the same urge to engage in discussions about the conflict. They argued that returning to the past is not as relevant as it was in the past, and that reconciliation and dealing with the past activities are not attractive to young people anymore. According to them, Odisej should continue organizing seminars and workshops where youngsters can meet, but they should talk about the future, not the past.

### ***6.3.3 Vision, strategy and the main activities of Odisej***

The vision and mission of Odisej are formulated in the organization's Strategic plan (Omladinska organizacija Odisej 2010). The vision of Odisej is a prosperous, content and open community that enables active participation and equal opportunities for all young people. Odisej's mission is to work on the promotion of the needs of young people and on their active involvement at local and regional levels, through peacebuilding, cultural events, sports, educational and employment programs. The Strategic plan also lists four areas of work: internal organizational development, building peace in the local community, promotion of youth employment and community development, and youth activism. The document broadly defines the areas in which Odisej intends to be actively involved. However, it can be seen as a rather simple activity plan with vaguely defined objectives, not as a comprehensive results framework that would define the specific strategic goals and paths in order to achieve this broadly defined vision.

The activities Odisej organized can be divided into three, rather broad areas: 1) peacebuilding and dealing with the past activities, including mobilizing youngsters to participate in

peacebuilding activities organized by partner NGOs, 2) other activities for local young people, and 3) activities organized for the wider public. The following section describes these three areas of work in more detail and provides concrete examples of activities.

In the first years of its existence, after securing the space in the local high school, Odisej's work had the character of a youth center where youngsters could socialize, play computer games and use the internet to search for information online. Odisej also organized foreign language classes, workshops on how to use computers, and how to play various musical instruments. Members of Odisej could also use the space of the youth center for rehearsals and concerts with their music bands.

From 2004, Odisej became more involved in peacebuilding work. The peacebuilding strategy they applied was inspired by the type of peace work the leader of the organization had experienced in the Quakers' peace program. The peacebuilding activities mostly involved bringing young people from various ethnic backgrounds together for seminars and youth camps, creating an opportunity for them to socialize, talk about their perspectives and experiences concerning the past conflict, about the war's victims and perpetrators, and about ways different ethnic groups could peacefully live together. These activities were aimed at making young people aware of the perspectives of others, something that was not present in the one-sided media, and to overcome the psychological barriers stopping them from creating relationships with others. Odisej also organized workshops in transitional justice, nonviolent communication and how to fight hate speech, mostly in cooperation with other peacebuilding NGOs working in BiH and their lecturers.

Nevertheless, as some members of the organization emphasized, in many of the seminars and activities it was most important for Odisej to attract as many young people of both ethnicities as possible, no matter what the topic. They assumed that the contact in itself and the dialogue that would naturally occur would be sufficient to break down the barriers between the groups and reduce prejudice. As one member said, "*When the dialogue begins, you find out a Serb is not someone who wants to kill you or that a Bosniak is not some terrorist*" (R53). Hence, the organization sought topics for the seminars and workshops that would be interesting and attractive to youngsters of both ethnic backgrounds, and as a result many of the activities did not directly focus on war-related issues.

Cooperation with other youth centers and peacebuilding NGOs is a strong feature of Odisej's work. The organization uses the synergies with other, similarly oriented NGOs to enhance peacebuilding effects and offer more opportunities for youngsters in the municipality. Many of

Odisej's projects were implemented in collaboration with other NGOs, such as the youth centers in the neighboring municipalities of Srebrenica and Milići. The workshops and youth camps Odisej organized were often open to members of cooperating youth centers and other NGOs. Odisej also served as an information point for its members where they learned about the educational activities and travels offered by partner NGOs in BiH and the broader region.

In the educational activities that did not directly deal with the past, Odisej focused, among other things, on empowering young people to work for their community and for their own lives, providing them with skills they could use when they enter the job market. They taught the participants how to engage in the NGO sector, write project proposals, plan their own activities and monitor them. Odisej also organized workshops on how to start one's own business and write a business plan. For a short period Odisej ran an office for employment mediation where they collected information about young people looking for work. They visited local companies offering employment opportunities and connecting young people with potential employers. Additionally, Odisej promoted the importance of participating in local elections among youngsters who are, according to the leaders of the organization, rather passive and uninterested when it comes to politics and elections. Odisej continued to engage in organizing sport and cultural events, such as sport tournaments, rock concerts to counterbalance the dominance of ethnicity-related music bands, classes on how to play musical instruments, circus camps for local kids, and theater workshops.

The third area of Odisej's work involved activities that would be of benefit to the wider public. One initiative highlighted by several respondents as one of the most successful activities was the so-called 15 days of mercy (15 dana milosrđa). During this humanitarian action, which was carried out twice, Odisej collected clothes, food and other materials from the citizens of Bratunac and distributed them to the most vulnerable families, those living mostly in the rural areas of the municipality, regardless of their ethnic background. Odisej succeeded in collecting a considerable amount of material from the wider public and most members of the organization participated in the collection, sorting and distribution. Beside this activity, Odisej regularly organized the cleaning of the town and the recreational area on the bank of the river Drina. The organization purchased and installed trash cans for the center of the town. They also built and repaired several children playgrounds in town and in the rural areas, although vandals damaged most of them soon after. As one member stated, these public activities served, among others, the purpose of promoting the organization among the wider public, to improve the public image

of Odisej that was rather negative among the general public, and to attract more people to their peacebuilding activities and seminars (R66).

**7 Research findings**

The following chapter provides a throughout analysis of the data collected during the evaluations of the selected peacebuilding NGOs, introduced in the previous section. It is structured in line with the research questions defined in the research methodology. The author will: 1) identify behavioral changes that have the potential to increase peacefulness and were triggered by the evaluated NGOs, 2) discuss the levels of influence at which these changes were found, 3) assess these changes against the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project criteria of effective peacebuilding (Anderson and Olson 2003), and 4) shed light on the factors enhancing or inhibiting the ability of NGOs to contribute to broader, societal changes, or Peace Writ Large. Numerous direct quotes from the conducted interviews and focus group discussions will be presented to illustrate the claims the author makes.

**7.1 Behavior changes triggered by the evaluated NGOs**

Inspired by the Outcome Harvesting evaluation approach introduced in chapter 3.4.2, the author’s focus in her analysis was on identifying changes in the behavior of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and institutions. More specifically, the author attempted to identify the actions, activities, relationships, agendas, policies and practices that were triggered by the evaluated organizations and their efforts (Wilson-Grau 2019).

The following chapter addresses research question 1, discussing any behavioral changes the three organizations initiated through their work, as identified by the evaluations. Each section will list the behavioral changes prompted by each respective NGO, and these will then be discussed in more detail.

**7.1.1 NDC Sarajevo**

For the work of NDC Sarajevo, the research identified the following behavioral changes:

Table 5: Behavioral changes triggered by NDC Sarajevo

Identified behavioral changes
Enhanced communication and frequent cooperation among people of various ethnicities.
Regional cooperation between municipalities.
Change in perspectives on the others.
More frequent contact between the otherwise mono-ethnic communities.
Young people forming friendships with their peers of other ethnicities more easily.

Source: author

### Enhanced communication and frequent cooperation among people of various ethnicities

The most visible behavioral change this evaluation identified was reflected in the enhanced communication and frequent cooperation on joint initiatives among people of various ethnicities. Corresponding with the main aim of their work, NDC Sarajevo succeeded in rebuilding communication among the representatives of different ethnic groups living in the four target municipalities. Most participants agreed that the communication between the ethnic communities was still rather tense at the time when NDC Sarajevo initiated their work there, in some municipalities more than others, and this made it difficult to resolve numerous problems these communities were facing, such as concerning the return of people displaced during the conflict. As one focus group participant revealed:

*“We had problems, I would rather not go back, I don’t want to mention how many problems we had. It was difficult to communicate, to exchange dialogue between different groups [...]. There were some quarrels over issues over which you, the normal world, would not think you should quarrel. So we entered this process, and we tried, if nothing else, to talk about it, about issues that were a bit outside our power to solve, but we talked. [...] Today we communicate very easily, we talk, there are no problems that I couldn’t now discuss with them just because they are representatives of the other ethnicity. [...] We worked as one group even though we disagreed on some issues. Overall, we realized that we have to live together, one next to the other.” (R21)*

This behavioral change was particularly visible among the members of the Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs), the informal multi-ethnic bodies created by NDC Sarajevo in each of the four municipalities, each gathering around 15 active members of the local communities. The members of NCBs first participated in a series of inter-ethnic dialogue seminars, a weeklong dialogue and study stay in Norway, and practical workshops of project planning and implementation. The NCBs were then in charge of initiating and implementing small local multiethnic projects in their communities, with the financial support of NDC Sarajevo. Hence, the NCBs are the most visible example of the enhanced inter-ethnic communication and cooperation, regularly gathering for meetings and jointly deciding about the local initiatives they would like to implement: *“We communicated almost every day, and with the help of NDC we identified these joint projects at those meetings.” (R29)*. The focus group discussion participants, members of NCB Zvornik, explained the initiatives they organized as follows:

R6: “[We organized] *Activities that put better communication and socializing in the foreground. They remove those topics, the ethnic topics that aggravate the interpersonal relationships.*”

R7: “*To show that whatever we do we can do it together. Whether it is equipping the library, cleaning [the river] Drina, whatever, I mean, normal life.*”

R6: “*Naturally, everything is done jointly.*”

Interviewer: “*And this was not happening before NDC Sarajevo came?*”

R7: “*Well, it was not happening on such a scale, publicly.*”

The work of NCBs was a rather rare example of such cooperation in a country where authorities and state politicians openly oppose attempts at broad societal cooperation that would benefit all the groups living in BiH, as this respondent admitted:

*“The work of NDC Sarajevo showed us that in such activities we can rise above the everyday politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that these activities can have a very good effect on the local community where they are implemented.”* (R22)

As NDC Sarajevo intended, the activities initiated by local citizens deliberately engaged various ethnicities, to “*bring the people to do different kinds of works and to make dialogue, you know, to find a reason for that*” (R15). Along the way, NDC Sarajevo succeeded in suppressing the otherwise common way of thinking when people of one ethnicity oppose initiatives that, from their perspective, might benefit the other ethnic group; the attitude that eventually blocks progress for all and halts inter-ethnic cooperation. This change in thinking occurred especially among the members of NCBs, as this quote illustrates:

*“I was glad that when we were deciding about the money [from NDC Sarajevo] and about investing it in individual local communities, we were not looking at who receives what and how much. [...] That no one was saying what is being done in Kravica and not in Glogova, or what is being done in Glogova, because it is a Bosniak local community, or over there because it is a Serbian [local community]. No one was looking at it like that. [...] In fact, we all benefited, we all gained from it.”* (R21)

Respondents linked the improved communication and cooperation to the work of NDC Sarajevo in their communities. Most of the interviewed NCB members, with the exception of teachers working in the same school, claimed they did not know each other before they were invited to the dialogue seminars, and hence would most likely not have the same level of communication as they have now, thanks to NDC Sarajevo:



*“The question now is, whether, let’s say, me and [R21] would have this close communication and interpersonal socializing if we were not connected through the project of NDC Sarajevo. The question is meaningless; we perhaps wouldn’t even have any points of contact.” (R17)*

### Regional cooperation between municipalities

Not only did citizens of various ethnicities living in the same municipality worked together on joint initiatives, NDC Sarajevo also successfully connected the four participating municipalities and initiated regional cooperation between them. As one municipality employee revealed, at the time NDC Sarajevo began working in these areas, regional projects were more the exception:

*“When I started to work as a [position at the municipality], until that time we had not had one regional project, you know. [...] Srebrenica worked for itself, Bratunac they worked for themselves, [there was] no project in which they were together. And Nansen was one kind of a regional project, you know, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik, Jajce, to show that it is normal to collaborate, to be together, and to work together.” (R15)*

The four NCBs jointly organized mutual visits for the NCB members and student exchanges between the participating schools in the four municipalities that had no contact before NDC Sarajevo’s involvement. Additionally, a summer camp was organized in Bratunac for youngsters from all four municipalities. NDC Sarajevo organized a networking event so the representatives of the four NCBs could brainstorm ideas for deeper cooperation. These efforts contributed to the enhanced inter-group communication, created friendships between people from various regions of BiH that would otherwise not have met, and importantly, it gave the youngsters a rare opportunity to travel outside their local environment. Nevertheless, as representatives of NDC Sarajevo admitted, the organization lost its main source of funding before they had the opportunity to instigate further political actions on the regional level; actions that would have capitalized on the newly created relationships between representatives of the four municipalities (R2).

### Change in perspectives on the others

The evaluation found some evidence that prejudices and stereotypes about the others have been broken thanks to NDC Sarajevo’s work, although such effects were rarely mentioned, with the following quote being one of the few that appeared during the research:

*“It is evident that people got closer through those projects, got to know each other better, not with that view, that perception of what was, he is such and such, and so on. So now we have a real picture of each other.” (R17)*

The respondents rarely talked about their personal perceptions and attitudes and how these were affected by participating in dialogue seminars and other activities. The form of data collection chosen for this evaluation could have had a negative influence here, as participants in focus group discussions might have been less willing to talk openly about their perceptions of the other ethnic groups in front of their colleagues from NCBs. When such personal changes were mentioned during focus group discussions, they were introduced in an indirect way, as if other people had held those prejudices and had changed them thanks to NDC Sarajevo’s work, not the respondent who was talking about it:

*“People here have prejudices, you know, like I think he is a Bosniak and because of that he is like this, and he thinks I am a Serb and so I am like that and so on, and when we sit together and work and travel, especially the children, we break all those prejudices.” (R9)*

Only one respondent, interviewed individually for logistic reasons, openly revealed that participating in the dialogue initiatives had helped him personally change the way he perceived the importance of one’s ethnicity:

*“Nansen changed me personally, [...] Nansen helped me to be above the situation that’s happened down [in Potočari], [...] and brought to me a kind of, how to say, human view of people. Don’t look at them as: ‘they are Serb’ or ‘they are Bosniak’, but look at them as human beings.” (R15)*

#### More frequent contact between the otherwise mono-ethnic communities

Some of the communities NDC Sarajevo worked in had less frequent contact with the other ethnic groups than others. This specific situation existed in two neighboring local communities in the Bratunac municipality, Kravica and Konjević Polje, and in the Jajce municipality. In both cases, the activities of NDC Sarajevo contributed to more frequent contact between the otherwise mono-ethnic communities.

Kravica, predominantly inhabited by the Serb population, and Konjević Polje, with a Bosniak returnee population, share the same elementary school. However, the main school building located in Kravica is attended almost exclusively by Bosnian Serb children, while the branch school building in Konjević Polje is attended by the local Bosniak children, thus maintaining

the division between the pupils along the ethnic lines. The contacts between children were very limited, as this respondent explained:

*“At that time, it was unthinkable that children from one school in Konjević Polje where there were mostly Bosniak children, would go to Kravica where there were Serb children, that they would meet each other, that they would do some sports or cultural events together.” (R17)*

Based on the initiative of NCB Bratunac and NDC Sarajevo, a number of joint activities for pupils and parents of both ethnicities have been organized in both school buildings, including celebrations of school days, sports tournaments, cleaning the schoolyards, painting the school buildings and classrooms, etc. The school, together with some of the parents, organized regular extra-curricular classes of IT and English, one in each school building. They were jointly attended by pupils of both ethnicities, hence providing them with more opportunities to create relationships across the ethnic divide. Eventually, as these joint school activities involved not only pupils and the school administration, but also parents, they enhanced cooperation between the two mono-ethnic communities, as this focus group participant illustrated:

*“It was all happening during the time when returnees were coming back, there was certainly and understandably distrust on both sides. [...] We remember, even the parents were a bit hesitant, the parents of one ethnic group, for example Bosniaks going to Kravica, and vice versa, parents from Kravica going to Konjević Polje. But later, through various projects, we worked on improving the quality of the school in joint cooperation of parents from both ethnic groups.” (R20)*

It is important to acknowledge that one of the factors that might have enabled these activities was the engagement of some of the important people from both communities in NCB Bratunac, such as the then principal of the primary school and the head of the local community Konjević Polje, who was also one of the parents of pupils attending the branch school.

Jajce is another example of a community where contacts between ethnic groups in the municipality have been very scarce. This is true particularly for the school-aged children, as the elementary schools in this municipality function within the so-called “two schools under one roof” system that segregates children on the basis of ethnicity, as they follow different curricula. The pupils are divided in various ways, for example they attend different shifts or have the school building divided into two separate wings (OSCE 2018). On the other hand, secondary education is ethnically mixed, and so most pupils experience their first direct contact with their

peers from the other ethnic group when they start high school. For this reason, NDC Sarajevo decided to work primarily with the local high school. According to the focus group respondents who are members of NCB Jajce and teach at the local high school, the divisions between ethnic groups persist in the mixed classrooms during their first months at high school, as students usually socialize within their groups. The activities initiated by NCB Jajce were thus directed at helping students cross this divide. They organized joint workshops, extra-curricular classes and various cultural and sporting events; some held regularly and some as once-only events. Additionally, these activities connected the pupils from the high school located in Jajce, mostly Bosniaks and Croats, with older pupils from an elementary school in Jezero, a municipality that neighbors on Jajce but is located in Republika Srpska and is attended mostly by Serb pupils. These initiatives enhanced the contacts among the students regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and accelerated the process of connecting them, as this respondent, a high school teacher, explained:

*“Our school is like one. [...] When children come, the first 6 months they look at each other, one group from one side, the other group from the other side. After 6 months, especially with the help of these activities, the children connect and create strong ties that last even after finishing school.” (R22)*

Focus groups participants attributed the enhanced inter-ethnic contacts to NDC Sarajevo’s involvement and the atmosphere NDC Sarajevo created:

*“With Nansen [Dialogue Center Sarajevo] coming to our school, it became cool to be in Nansen, to be part of Nansen, it became cool to hang out with everyone. [...] I think that NDC was a kind of catalyst in that process.” (R25)*

Although the focus group participants mostly talked about the effects on students, when talking to the staff of NDC Sarajevo, the teachers revealed that relationships among them had also improved significantly with their engagement in dialogue initiatives. At the time NDC Sarajevo first approached the school in 2009, teachers were sitting in ethnically divided staff rooms, which were later united. They admitted that NDC Sarajevo had changed personal attitudes of the teachers and brought them together, and this enhanced unity among teachers then facilitated positive effects on students (Šavija-Valha 2019).

Towards the end of the data collection for this dissertation an event unfolded that showed the strength of the relationships among the high school students from various backgrounds. In 2016, the Ministry of Education of the Central Bosnian Canton, in which Jajce is located, attempted

to divide the ethnically-mixed high school where NDC Sarajevo had implemented most of its activities into two mono-ethnic schools with separate administrations. This political decision sparked long-lasting and widely covered protests by the students of the school against such segregation, and this eventually resulted in the Ministry dropping the proposal (Sito-Sucic 2017). The author did not have the opportunity to investigate the extent to which NDC Sarajevo's activities in the school had contributed to the students' initiative. Nevertheless, these students experienced NDC Sarajevo's efforts in their school, and they were also supported in their attempts by the teachers who were actively involved in NCB Jajce. NDC Sarajevo conducted its own qualitative research into the roots of the students' protests and concluded that their work had helped to bring pupils and teachers from different ethnicities together and had thus created an atmosphere conducive to such actions (Šavija-Valha 2019). These results should, however, be approached with caution due to the possible biases of the NDC Sarajevo team that implemented the activities and also assessed its contribution to the protests.

#### Young people forming friendships with their peers of other ethnicities more easily

Young people were targeted by NDC Sarajevo's work in all four municipalities, not only in Jajce. The research found evidence showing that the activities organized by NDC Sarajevo, NCBs and the cooperating schools triggered the young people to form friendships with their peers from other ethnicities more easily. The respondents, especially teachers from local high schools, repeatedly shared their belief that these initiatives helped the youngsters to break some barriers and prejudices, and their fears of talking to the others, which are often negatively influenced by the attitudes of their parents and the ethnically based propaganda presented by politicians and local media:

*“Children, when they come here [to a high school], they are a bit cautious in their communication, maybe it's because of fear, maybe because of prejudice that they do not want to communicate with them [the other ethnic group]. [...] We all have pushed the youngsters somehow to reconnect again, [...] pushed them a bit into friendship. (R12)*

*“Until Nansen, Bosniaks were playing ballgames on one side, Serbs on the other, you see. Nansen has pushed them to play together. And that has remained; now they hang out, play together.” (R20)*

As mentioned earlier, the respondents revealed that inter-ethnic friendships among youngsters were also fostered through youth exchanges and travels to other municipalities participating in NDC Sarajevo's projects. Travelling outside their own community and meeting and talking to

their peers from different backgrounds who live in different parts of the country; all of this helped break some mental barriers and diminish fears of meeting people from outside their own community, as this respondent revealed:

*“Now it is indisputable, no one asks a question about whether a pupil from Bratunac will have problems when going to Jajce, or a pupil from Jajce when going to Zvornik, and so on. No one thinks about these problems anymore, they only think about the good time they will all have. That is an evident result, certainly.” (R17)*

### **7.1.2 LDA Zavidovići**

Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići) is, in many respects, different from the other two evaluated organizations, in that the majority of its activities and project do not have peacebuilding as their pronounced aim. Still, the representatives of LDA Zavidovići listed peace among the organization’s goals, and when asked about their definition of peace they put it in the context of economic stability and a bright perspective for the future (R31). During the interviews and informal talks they rarely mentioned one of the crucial conflict drivers, and a casualty of the recent war; the relationships between groups of people from various ethnic backgrounds. Issues related to the war and post-war inter-ethnic relationships are, according to several respondents, still taboo in the Zavidovići community, to such an extent that the representatives of LDA Zavidovići were only willing to discuss inter-ethnic relationships briefly and off the record. This indicates that inter-ethnic relationships remain fragile. Instead of touching upon the questions society still found sensitive, LDA Zavidovići decided to enhance peace through work in other areas, such as local democracy building, creating a stronger civil society sector, supporting active citizenship and motivating people to create economic opportunities for themselves,

Given the centrality of democracy in the liberal peacebuilding agenda, we see it as the main area through which LDA Zavidovići could have supported peace. Hence, we will focus on behavioral changes with the most potential to promote local democracy. We will frame local democracy in this evaluation as it is understood by representatives of LDA Zavidovići and its Italian partner and founder, ADL Zavidovici. The representatives of these two organizations described local democracy as a social order characterized by *“solidarity, participation, social equality, attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized”*, creating opportunities to *“bring together individual ways of conceiving the common good to shape a community that is able to continually update the social compact that holds people together”* (R52). On a more practical level, the efforts to enhance local democracy should focus on *“promoting the participation of*

people in forms such as volunteering, debates and socialization” and “sincerely collaborate with municipal administrators” (R51). Hence, we will place the main emphasis on the achievements of LDA Zavidovići in the areas of promoting the participation of citizens in the political life of the community, enhancing solidarity and social cohesion, and strengthening cooperation with the municipal administration.

The table below summarizes the main behavioral changes identified in this research that have the potential to enhance peace and local democracy.

Table 6: Behavioral changes triggered by LDA Zavidovići

Identified behavioral changes
Representative of local authorities are more open to cooperation with the civil society actors.
More active civil society sector.
Young people are taking a more active role in the life of their community.
Local institutions and individuals adopted changes based on the experience gained through their dealings with the Italian partners.

Source: author

#### Representatives of local authorities are more open to cooperation with the civil society actors

Through its continuous presence and active work in the municipality, LDA Zavidovići succeeded in changing the attitudes of the local authorities towards civil society actors. In general, the prevailing sentiment towards NGOs among the public in BiH is rather negative, with the common opinion being that NGOs mostly work for the benefit of their representatives or they pursue the interests of foreign countries, not those of the local citizens<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, after experiencing the work of LDA Zavidovići, several respondents revealed that they had reevaluated their rather negative opinions of NGOs. Take for example the following response from a highly positioned representative of the municipal administration in Zavidovići:

*“Before, I was more skeptical of the non-governmental sector. I am a big critic; personally I would close down half of it. [...] You know, here a lot of non-governmental organizations are created by two-three people who do something for personal goals, some small projects, and then nothing for years. [...] But thanks to LDA, I reconsidered some of my attitudes. So I’m not so harsh that I would say: “What is this for?”. I*

<sup>15</sup> For more on the local perceptions of NGOs please refer to the chapter 5.3 of this dissertation.

*understood it is good to have them [the NGOs], but just arrange them in proper ways.”*  
(R35)

From the interviews conducted for this evaluation it was evident that LDA Zavidovići is valued very highly among a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public and other local civil society groups. High-level representatives of the local administration referred to it as “*a serious organization, [...] very skillful in preparing and implementing projects*” (R34). This positive picture of LDA Zavidovići is the result of several factors. Respondents appreciated, for example, the fact that LDA Zavidovići “*has continuity, has budget, projects, support*” (R35). The high level of legitimacy the organization has among local stakeholders was also aided by its position as the oldest NGO in Zavidovići and the most experienced. The other NGOs and CSOs in the municipality are much smaller, less professionalized, work with much smaller budgets and are focused on single issues. The close cooperation with the Italian partners and the opportunities this cooperation brought for various groups of citizens in Zavidovići, such as exchanges, study trips and professional consultations with various individuals and organizations in Italy, also boosted the general support for the organization and its work, as this quote illustrates:

*“What is for me the most significant thing they have done: after the war in Bosnia, us in Zavidovići we couldn’t go out of Bosnia, because we couldn’t get a visa, and we didn’t have money to buy a ticket to go anywhere in Europe. In that period, they made it possible for a great number of our citizens to travel for the first time after the war outside of Bosnia. [...] People who work at the municipality, people from various associations, schools, sport club and so on.”* (R34)

Finally, one of the biggest factors contributing to the positive perception of LDA Zavidovići is its early humanitarian assistance and post-war physical reconstruction work, which is still considered to be the most important role the organization has played in the community:

*“What the LDA was doing in the period after the war, in ’97, ’98, ’99, it was not like now. Now they also work, but what has been done by 2005, that was a special period when LDA was very needed in Zavidovići, that concrete help for children, citizens, also the impact on the development of the non-governmental sector was very important in that period.”* (R42)

Resulting from the high legitimacy the organization possesses, various key stakeholders, including the municipal officials, are very welcoming of the cooperation with LDA Zavidovići.



Moreover, they became more aware of the benefits that NGOs in general can bring to the municipality and the work of the local administration. As one representative of the municipality admitted, *“the municipality cannot do some things without the help of citizens and the non-governmental sector”* (R42).

However, it was evident from the interviews that the highly-placed representatives of the municipal administration have a rather particular perception of the proper, or preferred, role of NGOs, as regards their relationships with local authorities and the activities they should engage in. This perception is, to a large degree, influenced by LDA Zavidovići, given their long history, prominent position in the local community and engagement in civil society building. As a result, *“LDA has always been an example to other associations, how it should be done”* (R42), and *“acts as a corrective for other NGOs in relation to the government sector”* (R35). Hence, the way LDA Zavidovići worked and the type of activities they engaged in has affected local stakeholders' views of NGOs in general. The preferred picture of a good NGO, as shared in interviews, is that of a professionalized organization, capable of securing sufficient funds without the assistance of the municipality, and of bringing needed resources to the local community. NGOs should also offer concrete services and direct assistance to citizens. The work of NGOs that is more policy-oriented is much less welcome, as this quote from a municipality representative, commenting on the work of the women's association Sigurno mjesto (Safe place) established by LDA Zavidovići, revealed:

*“We have a group of young women called Sigurno mjesto, for victims of violence. But they don't deal with the talk about whether it is good or bad, or why there shouldn't be violence, but they offer concrete help, without entering into some legal matters, or commenting on them, or some political issues. Instead they are engaged in the field to the maximum.”* (R35)

The image of the “good” and “proper” NGO that LDA Zavidovići unintentionally created among the key local stakeholders, especially the municipality officials, can in effect constrain the more advocacy-oriented and policy-oriented functions that NGOs and other civil society actors should also carry out in democratic societies. Apart from providing services, civil society often serves as an agent of social change, tackling the structural causes of various problem and advocating for changes in laws and policies to address those causes. However, such activities seemed to be perceived as inappropriate for civil society actors and hence were not welcomed by local authorities in Zavidovići. This finding proves Paffenholz's (2016) claim that the NGO-ization of civil society can suppress social movements fighting for social changes that may

threaten existing hierarchies and social orders. This general view among decision-makers, that NGOs should primarily provide direct assistance to the citizens and help the municipality deliver services, may also have been one of the factors that prevented LDA Zavidovići from affecting any substantial, structural changes in the local community, as admitted by the representatives of the Italian founding organization. One of them referred to LDA Zavidovići as an example of a “*transition to nothing*” (R51), while the other representative of ADL Zavidovići replied in the following way when asked what changes the organization had achieved:

*“I would say very few, despite the long time and their hard work in this field. We definitely had gratifying achievements in various fields: agriculture, participation and the involvement of young people, promotion of human rights, but these micro-results did not act significantly in the macro social and economic context.”* (R52)

Thanks to its high legitimacy among key local stakeholders, LDA Zavidovići is very well positioned to fulfil the intermediary role, enhance democracy at the local level, and serve as a channel for bringing local problems and their causes to the attention of local decision makers. The organization could also advocate for the adoption of policies that could address those problems. However, due to the negative attitudes of the local authorities towards civil society taking up the role of an active advocate for policy or legislative changes, LDA Zavidovići’s intermediary role is severely limited.

#### More active civil society sector

One of LDA Zavidovići’s initial aim was to create a diverse, active and competent civil society in the municipality. They educated and empowered a few existing local NGOs, and several new NGOs were founded as a result of LDA’s projects. For example, the organization cooperated with the sports and ecology organization Atom, dating back to the early 1980s, and provided them help with the fundraising for some of their projects. In 2005, LDA Zavidovići helped to establish the cultural center CEKER that now cooperates with LDA Zavidovići on two free time activities for children from the rural areas, Strani Vari and Igrobus. In 2011 they founded the association Sigurno mjesto (Safe place), which primarily assists the victims of domestic violence. Between the late 1990s and 2005, a Youth center was active in the municipality, as a result of an LDA Zavidovići project. The Youth center provided the otherwise missing space for young people to meet and implement their own initiatives, such as organizing sports and cultural events.

Despite being active for several years, these local organizations still depend to a large extent on LDA Zavidovići, especially for funding and professional consultations. Some of them receive minor financial contributions from the local municipality, but LDA Zavidovići secures the majority of the funding for their activities from their partner municipalities in Italy. Despite the fact that LDA Zavidovići provided the local organizations with training in project planning and management, they rarely submit their own project proposals to other donors for funding. One exception was the Youth center that operated, to some extent, independent of its founder, LDA Zavidovići, thanks to its active president who was capable of submitting project proposals to various donors, including the European Commission. However, soon after this president left the Youth center, it ceased to exist. It should also be mentioned that these organizations did not originate from the initiatives of the local citizens, in a bottom-up way, but were driven by the project-based activities of LDA Zavidovići. Their sustainability is rather questionable, as the example of the Youth center has shown. Also, it was evident from the responses of the representatives of the local municipality that they do not perceive these NGOs as fully functional organizations:

*“Just two or three NGOs are grown up, the most are still at the very beginning of developing their skills of operating, doing things. They don’t really have ideas, are not active, just ask for money to finance their operational expenses. [...] The active ones are, apart from the LDA, Sadnice mira and the women organization Plamen, no other actually.” (R34)*

Thus, LDA Zavidovići did enrich the local civil society sector with several new organizations, empowered people and helped fundraise for a few existing organizations; nevertheless, these NGOs are still financially dependent on LDA Zavidovići. Their sustainability is further hampered by the fact that they were established and led in a rather top-down way, lacking support from a broader group of citizens.

#### Young people are taking a more active role in the life of their community:

A highly appreciated part of LDA Zavidovići’s work targeted the young people of the municipality. The activities focusing on young people were repeatedly highlighted in the interviews as being of special importance, especially the cultural exchanges and study trips to Italy:

*“What I like almost the most is their engagement with the youth. It was a specific time and condition in which the youth of Zavidovići lived after the war – it was very closed,*

*there were no contacts with anything or anyone different, [...] so it was really great. [...] For the youth of Zavidovići it was a chance for the first time to meet different culture, people, life philosophy, even religion.” (R34)*

Beside the youth exchanges with Italian partners and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) placements with partner organizations abroad, LDA Zavidovići has implemented numerous other projects and regular activities with and for local young people. The organization provided them with more ways to spend their free time, and aimed to motivate them to take a more active role in the life of their community, while also equipping them with useful life skills. One example of the organization successfully prompting youth activism was the work of the Youth center, discussed earlier. More recently, within the project called the Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue, the organization gathered a group of active youngsters who implemented several small local projects, such as cleaning the kindergarten's yard and maintaining an info page on Facebook that informed youngsters about the available scholarships, volunteering opportunities and courses of informal education. To engage youngsters in the local democracy processes as active citizens, LDA Zavidovići organized discussions with the municipal representatives, who informed the young people about how local authorities work and gave them the opportunity to raise their concerns. Also, groups of youngsters and Italian volunteers have been responsible for organizing summer free time activities for children in rural areas, called Strani Vari, and similar activities during the school year, called Igrobus.

However, as with the situation regarding the civil society organizations discussed above, activities for young people have been arranged in a top-down manner, and young people have been in the position of passive participants, rather than active initiators. Youth activities have often been conceptualized as project-based tasks, their duration is limited to the short implementation periods of the projects and there is usually no follow-up. It was evident from the responses of the young people interviewed for this research that they are mostly organized and invited to the various youth activities by LDA Zavidovići, rather than using the opportunities the organization offers to meet and implement their own initiatives. Mostly they wait for the youth coordinator employed at LDA Zavidovići to offer participation in a project, but they rarely bring their own ideas to the table. Take for example this excerpt from a group interview:

Interviewer: *“Do you have any concrete idea in your head that you would like to do through this organization?”*

R37: “[Name of the LDA youth coordinator] *always tells us “Give me an idea”, but nobody gives him ideas, so he gives us ideas”.*

Interviewer: *“Why is it so?”*

R38: *“We just go to school and that’s all that is on our minds. We come here, [name of the LDA youth coordinator] says “I have an idea, do you want to work?”. And we say “Yes, we want to work”.”*

R40: *“We are not lazy, we just have other priorities. And this is his job.”*

As is apparent from the excerpt, the youth activities organized by LDA Zavidovići serve the function of an after-school club, but seldom trigger genuine youth activism. Moreover, the youngsters perceive the youth coordinator employed by the organization as someone paid to give them ideas for activities and to organize them. It is also problematic to consider the Strani Vari summer activities as examples of genuine youth activism. Even though the youngsters from the municipality are actively involved in entertaining the children in the rural areas, the main organizers are the Italian volunteers who come to Zavidovići for this project: *“There are two older volunteers that bring a new group every year, but they are working in this project for 5 or more years. They organize everything for the new group of volunteers and for us.”* (R38)

Moreover, part of the motivation for the young people to engage in Strani Vari and Igrobus is also the small amount of cash they receive for each day of work, as the representative of CEKER that took over these two projects from LDA Zavidovići admitted:

*“A project that attracts the biggest number of young people is Strani Vari. Here they earn something. Here they receive an income for each day, it is not big money, but they have some pocket money here. They also have a small income in Igrobus. Very often we have asked ourselves how would Strani Vari function without this income, whether we would have these volunteers. And I think, maybe half of them, I will be an optimist, we would maybe have a half of them.”* (R44)

Due to the poor economic situation in the municipality it is understandable that young people welcome any opportunity to earn some pocket money. However, most respondents agreed that overall the youngsters are rather passive and not interested in voluntary work for the community: *“The youngsters are less and less interested in this type of activities, it is increasingly difficult for various associations to attract them”* (R44). The few active young people also realize this problem, claiming that *“The mentality of the youngsters is that they are not interested in volunteering, they think it’s a waste of time, mostly.”* (R49).

To summarize, LDA Zavidovići and its partners have continuously tried to motivate young people to be more active and contribute to addressing the various problems the local community faces. However, the activities were implemented on the basis of projects, in a top-down manner, with young people as participants rather than active collaborators. Even though, over the years, the organization attracted numerous youngsters to its activities, projects and exchanges, it did not manage to trigger a real youth activism or break down the overall passivity of young people.

#### Local institutions and individuals adopted changes based on the experience gained through their dealings with the Italian partners

From the beginning, LDA Zavidovići has used its connections to the Italian partner organization and the cooperating Italian municipalities in most of the projects and activities it has implemented. On several occasions the experience, education and capacity building that LDA Zavidovići provided to its beneficiaries through this Italian connection was then reflected in institutional changes and changes in various practices. This element of the organization's work was generally valued very highly: *"The educative part of those projects was often very good, we have learned what already functions well over there and we are trying to introduce it here."* (R42)

We have collected numerous accounts of changes triggered by the experiences of various local stakeholders during their study visits to Italy. For example, representatives of the women's association Sigurno mjesto were educated in Italian organizations with similar mission about the work with women who were victims of domestic violence. They were also shown the guidelines followed by the Italian organizations and they adopted these guidelines as their own. The director and several teachers from the local kindergarten participated in an exchange with Italian kindergartens. Based on this experience the teachers amended their methods of work, in order to be more focused on the needs of children. Additionally, the kindergarten started providing workshops for parents to build their capacities in child development. The organization and management of local firefighters was inspired by the experiences presented to them by a firefighting unit from a partner municipality in Italy. The municipality employees of the department for urban planning adopted some of the methods and designs they learned about during their study visit to their Italian counterparts. LDA Zavidovići along with the municipal administration and the local sports and ecology organization Atom succeeded in establishing a protected area in the municipality called the Park of Nature Tajan, and the study trips to Italian parks provided important inputs in the process:

*“They [LDA] organized visits to Italy, to 5-6 nature parks in Italy. It was a great experience in an educational and practical way. They provided technical support, help, so we had a chance to see so many different things, how it was arranged, maintained and organized in Italy. It was very helpful.” (R34)*

Nevertheless, despite the disagreement of the representatives of the municipality, the cantonal government appointed a logging company to be responsible for management of the protected area, which may be a conflict of interest due to the main area of their work.

To mitigate the negative effects of the significant reduction in production by the biggest local employer, Krivaja factory<sup>16</sup>, and the resulting dismissal of employees, and to provide people in the municipality with new economic opportunities, LDA Zavidovići organized a capacity building trip to Italy for people wishing to engage in agricultural production. A group of farmers visited Italian farms, and were also provided with plastic greenhouses and additional education at the University in Sarajevo. One of the farmers revealed that the trip to Italy inspired him to officially register his agricultural business and professionalize his production: *“It gave me the stimulus to work more, when I saw how much they [the Italian farmers] work, how many hours they work, and how they work. Here it is rather on a recreational level, nothing professional”* (R47). However, most of the people involved in this project only stayed in the agricultural business for a very short period. The fact that local farmers do not receive subsidies or other support from any level of government might have played an important role in their decisions to leave this sector.

### **7.1.3 Youth organization Odisej**

The evaluation of the Youth organization Odisej identified the following behavioral changes resulting from the work of this organization:

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<sup>16</sup> The formerly state-owned factory Krivaja, mainly manufacturing prefabricated houses and furniture, was a successful Yugoslav company, employing around 12,000 workers in the 1980s. The majority of the Zavidovići inhabitants depended on the factory, directly or indirectly. After a problematic privatization in 2014, several hundred employees lost their jobs, and this created dire socio-economic problems in the municipality where employment opportunities are scarce (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2021).

Table 7: Behavioral changes triggered by the Youth organization Odisej

Identified behavioral changes
Change in perspectives on the others.
New relationships, including interethnic ones.
Active engagement of youngsters in interethnic encounters and joint everyday activities.
Return to pre-war house.
Improvement in relationships between groups, decrease in tensions and conflicts.
Ethnicity of owners playing a less important role in people’s decisions regarding which local businesses to use.

Source: author

Change in perspectives on the others, new relationships, frequent interethnic encounters

Odisej influenced its members and participants to change their perspectives on the others, to form new relationships, including interethnic ones, and to actively engage in interethnic encounters and joint everyday activities, including meeting for coffees, attending various cultural events and participating in various workshops and seminars. These behavioral changes will be introduced below.

In the discussion of behavioral changes influenced by the work of Odisej, we have to differentiate between the experiences of the first generation of young people that were involved with the organization in the early years of its existence, and those of the younger generations participating in Odisej’s activities more recently.

The young people who gathered in Odisej and participated in its activities in the early 2000s had directly experienced the war in one way or another, as children or young teenagers. They all held memories of the conflict and the hard post-conflict years; many of them had lost family members in the conflict and were traumatized by their war experiences. Moreover, most of the early active members of Odisej were either internally displaced (IDPs) during or shortly after the conflict, eventually settling down in the Bratunac municipality (mostly young Bosnian Serbs), or they returned to the municipality a few years after the conflict ended, after being expelled from their homes during the war (young Bosniaks). In both cases, these young people lacked a social network in the town and felt rather marginalized; in some cases they were even verbally or physically attacked by the local community, as one interviewee explained:

*“When I came to Bratunac, I got involved [in Odisej] right away, because I didn’t have any friends. [...] Psychologically it was not easy for returnees, because you come to a*



*community where you don't know anyone and you live in fear. You need to do something. [...] I had many problems here, physical conflicts.*" (R53)

The interviewees of this generation asserted their need to meet other young people who had similar experiences, from their own ethnic group as well as from the other ethnicity. They wanted to talk about the war hardships, their traumas and feelings, to share their perspectives on the conflict, and in this way deal with and overcome their traumatic experiences:

*"Because I was a refugee I was interested in what the feelings were on all sides. Whether it is possible that it only happened to me, or it happened to everyone. So I was interested in seeing [...] how they dealt with it."* (R65)

No other organization or institution offered them such an opportunity at that time. When talking about their attitudes towards the other ethnic group, some interviewees admitted they did feel animosity and prejudice towards the others before their involvement in the Odisej's activities, some claimed they did not. In any case, they all felt the pressure from their families and/or the one-sided propaganda prevailing in the media telling them they should distance themselves from the others, that they should fear them and hate them:

*"I was a child of war who lost a lot. I hated the other side, Odisej taught me that that's not it. That the other side is not how I imagined them to be [...] not only me, but most of us, the young people [...] who came out of the war. [...] Through Odisej I met many Bosniaks and learned it is not like that, they are not like I thought, and not like the people surrounding me presented them to be."* (R66)

Odisej helped them realize and reassured them that, as many interviewees asserted they are all human beings, and that the others are not there to hurt them:

*"There are always some workshops, and you do change your thinking about life, you do change your thinking about people. [...] You have a different opinion when you go to when you come back. I participated in a workshop two months ago, [...] there were many people. There were Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs. We were all together and, when you look [at us], we are all humans."* (R55)

*"You really had opportunities to be together, to work together, to face each other, and I think people could see that other people are normal. [...] Bosniak or Muslim people are not [something] extreme [as] the ideology created [them]. Or that Bosniaks understand that all Serbian people [...] are not animals, they are not bastards. [...] [There] exist some good people who want to speak, want to create bridges."* (R68)

Thanks to Odisej, young people managed to overcome some sort of psychological barrier that have prevented them, in some cases, from even talking to their peers of different ethnicity:

*“Simply, we gave people an opportunity to talk about everything, so they could hear what the other side thinks. If you cannot hear about that from media, you have some sort of a psychological barrier that does not allow you to engage in close relationships with the others.” (R53)*

The organization showed them that it is all right to socialize with everyone, to form friendships regardless of the ethnic background of other people, and that it is possible to live together, despite the propaganda telling them the opposite. In addition, Odisej represented a way for them to create the social network they were lacking, by gathering young people, regardless of their background in the community that marginalized them because of their status or ethnicity. As one returnee revealed: *“So I came to Odisej, they accepted me as a brother. [...] Odisej saved me, [helped me] to reduce the number of conflicts I had” (R53).*

When interviewing the youngsters who have been involved in Odisej more recently, the effects that we identified among the older generation of members were less visible. The young people in their late-teens or early 20s are in many respects different from the first groups of Odisej members. They were born in the post-conflict years, knowing the conflict only indirectly, and their approach to people of other ethnicity is not affected by the same war-related trauma as in case of the older generation of participants. Most interviewees claimed they did not differentiate between people of different ethnicities and had friends of the other ethnicity even before participating in activities organized by Odisej. This may have been prompted, among other factors, by the joint schooling and positive influence of their parents. The young people admitted their opinions did not change significantly after taking part in Odisej’s activities, at most it helped them to better formulate or clarify their opinions. The following extract from an interview illustrates this claim:

Interviewer: *“What did you learn [in the seminars and workshops]?”*

R57: *“[I learned] that it doesn’t matter what our religion is, what nationality we are. We should simply live together, regardless of everything that happened before; the war and so.”*

Interviewer: *“And what was your opinion before participating in these activities [organized by Odisej]?”*

R57: *“Well, it was almost the same, I just enriched my opinion.”*

The opinion that activities in which participants discuss their perspectives on the events of the past conflict are not needed anymore, or are even harmful to the relationships between groups were also very common among the younger respondents. As these interviewees asserted:

*“I think that the young people are normal, just those a little older are poisoning their brains. The ethnic hatred is not there anymore. [...] Communities are mixed, not divided. [...] The young people are more or less normal. [...] I don’t believe that this work [reconciliation] is still needed.” (R64)*

*“Returning to the past – you don’t get anything out of it, you don’t live in the past. The past has passed, the present is the present, and we are looking to the future. [...] Each nation will tell their own history and I think they will never agree on that history. [...] Everyone has his own opinion, [...] and it will always be like that, at least I think that it cannot be eradicated. [...] For the youngsters, it [talking about the past] has no effect, at least not a very positive one, because mostly it doesn’t go so well.” (R56)*

The reflections of the younger interviewees show that instead of trying to reconcile the divergent perspectives on the conflict, young people would rather avoid talking about the past and focus on the future instead. They recognize their differences but do not find them important or that they hamper their own relationships with people of other ethnicities. They admit that the general situation in their region and in BiH is still fragile as regards interethnic relations, but they see it more as a problem of a small number of individuals, as well as the older generation and the politicians who are provoking conflicts among groups. However, they themselves do not feel influenced by such individuals. Hence, this group sees the major area of Odisej’s work, the dealing with the past activities targeting young people, as much less relevant. Instead, what motivated them to participate in the activities organized by Odisej was the opportunity to meet new people and broaden their own perspectives through travel, which for most of them would otherwise be unattainable.

#### Return to pre-war house

Probably the most visible individual behavioral change influenced by Odisej’s work that this research identified is the decision of one of its former members who joined the organization soon after it was established, to return to his pre-war house. Despite the disapproval of his parents, he moved from Bratunac, a municipality mostly inhabited by his own ethnic group, to a municipality that is now mostly inhabited by people of other ethnicities. This former member chose to return to the house he and his family had left at the end of the conflict, and to continue

his life in the place he grew up before the war. The interviewee directly attributed this decision to the experiences he gained in the workshops and other activities organized by Odisej, as he explained:

*“If I hadn’t participated in Odisej, maybe I would still have made this decision, but I would certainly have needed much more time to do it. And maybe I wouldn’t, maybe I would be still wandering around obsessed with some ideas, and so on. But I think I really wouldn’t. [...] I would certainly have needed much, much more time to take this path that I have decided on with the help of the workshops that directly introduced topics that are difficult to talk about, and about which people rarely wish to talk about under normal circumstances.” (R67)*

#### Improvement in relationships between groups, decrease in tensions and conflicts

Most of the interviewees, the older generation as well as the younger one, agreed that the relations between communities improved significantly since the early 2000s when Odisej was founded. The tensions and conflicts between the local population, IDPs and returnees, between Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks, decreased, and people learned how to tolerate each other. The respondents also claimed that the work of Odisej was one of the factors contributing to these positive changes, as Odisej was the first organization to show that people of various backgrounds can peacefully live and function together. Nevertheless, as one interviewee suggested, law enforcement also helped to decrease the violence in the community:

*“In my opinion, Odisej had a big influence on the community here. [...] First, uniting the young people, not only Serbs and Bosniaks, but also Serbs. [...] We are Sarajevans [moved to Bratunac from the Sarajevo region at the end of the war], we had a huge problem with the locals, they did not want us. [...] There were verbal conflicts, [...] not only verbal, but also physical conflicts. [...] Odisej contributed a lot to speeding up the reconciliation. [...] Laws and punishments also contributed to it, [...] but so did Odisej, to bringing people together, without punishments, only with its projects and by presenting what is good and what is not good, [...] and what we [Odisej] have achieved.” (R66)*

#### Ethnicity of owners playing a less important role in people’s decisions regarding which local businesses to use

Apart from the decrease in verbal and physical violence between various groups, interviewees identified several changes in their community that indicated to them the improvements in inter-group relations and the move towards increased peacefulness. Most of the examples the

respondents provided illustrate that the way people use local businesses is now less influenced by the ethnicity of their owners and people prefer to choose shops and services based on their quality and prices:

*“The butcher’s shop, the best, cleanest and cheapest in Bratunac is owned by a Bosniak. On the market, everyone is buying from Hajra who is a Bosniak because he has the lowest prices, and he produces [the produce] here. And then, I shave at Ado’s, and when I came to his place he told me, “since you started coming here, I have more and more of yours, Serbs”. He shaves with a razor, he is a Muslim, I’m a Serb; before it wasn’t normal.”*

(R63)

However, with most of these community changes it is difficult to establish a clear connection to Odisej’s work. The interviews in most cases did not provide strong evidence of such a link and, more importantly, the organization did not intentionally attempt to influence any of these changes with their activities. While the peacebuilding work done by Odisej might have inspired the broader community to cross ethnic lines, this behavioral change might have come over time as a natural evolution that would have occurred without the presence of Odisej. For some of these changes the leaders themselves and their initiatives were the triggers, rather than the activities Odisej implemented. Consider the following examples where the leaders of Odisej influenced the behavior of a café owner and people’s decisions about where to take driving lessons:

*“The cafés are without any problems. I told you, we had one member, but it was years ago when he was asked to leave a café. I was then talking to the boss of the café and I asked him to stop making the division. [...] I told him: “the money is the same, whether it is from a Serb hand or a Bosniak hand”. [...] And now both Bosniaks and Serbs go to that café. Before it was normal to hear the Chetnik music there, the patriotic Serb music, now it is not there. Why? Because I told him [...] “the more you play this music the less Bosniaks would come spend their money here, and you want to make money”. [...] Later he told me: “you were right”.”* (R63)

*“When I went to high school I got to know one instructor at a driving school. [...] When we were drinking coffee together, he asked me why Bosniaks never take driving lessons here, because Bosniaks usually took driving lessons in Tuzla and Srebrenica. [...] And so, I brought one man who returned to Konjević Polje, but didn’t have money to take the driving lessons elsewhere, and so I brought him here. After him, during the time I was at the high school here in Bratunac, [...] over 100 Bosniaks took driving lessons with this*

*instructor. [...] I also took driving lessons at his school, but my instructor was a Bosniak whom he now employs.” (R53)*

As is apparent from these quotes, these positive behavioral changes were the results of direct personal interventions by Odisej’s leading persons and hence the extent to which we could attribute them to the work of the organization as such is questionable.

## **7.2 From individual to the community and society**

The following part will further consider the behavioral changes triggered by the evaluated NGOs, as identified in the previous chapter. The aim is to assess the level of influence at which each change occurred, as formulated in research question 2). We will refer to the tiers and levels of influence as defined by Church and Shouldice (2003) and discussed in chapter 3 Evaluating peacebuilding interventions.

Addressing research question 3), this chapter will also assess the work of the NGOs based on the RPP criteria for projects that are effective in achieving the broader peace, or Peace Writ Large. These were presented in Anderson and Olson's (2003) seminal work on the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions, which is introduced in more details in chapter 3.

### **7.2.1 NDC Sarajevo**

NDC Sarajevo’s vision was to enhance the functionality of the multiethnic communities targeted by their initiatives. Even though the change of personal attitudes towards people of other ethnicities and the increase in trust are important pre-requisites for this goal, the organization deliberately intended to go beyond these micro level changes and to build upon them. Hence, the peacebuilding process applied by NDC Sarajevo did not stop after the contact between ethnically divided communities was re-created and inter-ethnic dialogue established. The organization used the enhanced dialogue as a tool to facilitate multiethnic initiatives which addressed day-to-day, local-level problems. As this member of one of the Nansen Coordination Boards (NCBs) explained: *“At the beginning, it was about establishing contacts in the community, interpersonal, among us, and then we started working” (R18).*

The analysis of the levels of influence at which the identified behavioral changes are observed proves the effectiveness of the process applied by NDC Sarajevo. Three out of the five changes occurred at the mezzo level, while only one change represents an individual change.

Table 8: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by NDC Sarajevo

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Enhanced communication and frequent cooperation among people of various ethnicities.	Community / mezzo level
Regional cooperation between municipalities.	Sub-national region / mezzo level
Change in perspectives on the others.	Individuals / micro level
More frequent contact between the otherwise mono-ethnic communities.	Community / mezzo level
Young people forming friendships with their peers of other ethnicities more easily.	Social network, peer group / micro level

Source: author

Nevertheless, most of these behavioral changes primarily occurred among the members of the communities who were directly involved in, or targeted by, the activities implemented by NDC Sarajevo. We found only a few occasions where the identified behavioral changes “reached beyond the initial entry point” (Campbell 2007:6); the most visible were related to the contacts between the mono-ethnic communities in the cases of the multiethnic initiatives in the Kravica – Konjević Polje elementary school in the Bratunac municipality, and the activities in the high school in Jajce.

The process of reconnecting the ethnically divided school in Kravica and Konjević Polje, initiated by the NCB members, affected a wider population living in these two local communities by engaging pupils, their parents and the wider public in the multi-ethnic extra-curricular classes, as well as various sports and cultural school events and joint activities, such as renovating school buildings and their surroundings. Respondents reported that in this process the atmosphere between the returnee Bosniak population of Konjević Polje and the Bosnian Serb population of Kravica improved significantly. They claimed that now “*inter-ethnic relationships in the local communities of Kravica and Konjević Polje among the ordinary people function very well*” (R20). While these activities improved the relationships in the community, no meaningful structural change addressing the ongoing institutional ethnic division of pupils at this elementary school in a more sustainable way was achieved. There were no attempts to integrate the education of the two groups of children beyond extracurricular and essentially free-time activities, as this would have required the cooperation and consent of the higher-level educational institutions of the Republika Srpska. As a result, these multiethnic activities had a limited durability, as they ceased after approximately two years. One of the

issues that contributed to the termination of the extra-curricular classes was that parents had difficulties securing regular transport for their children to the neighboring local communities (R20, R30). Moreover, the initiative was negatively affected by the decision of a large group of parents of Bosniak pupils attending the school in Konjević Polje to leave the school for not respecting the Bosniak children's right to education in their national language; a problem occurring across schools in the Republika Srpska (Smajlović 2016).

Similarly, the multiethnic activities initiated by the active teachers and students who are the alumni of the Nansen dialogue seminars and members of NCB Jajce, spread well beyond the individuals directly engaged with NDC Sarajevo. There were numerous multiethnic extracurricular classes and events open to the students from Jajce and from the neighboring municipality of Jezero (in Republika Srpska), spreading the message of tolerance and co-existence across the schools. This message was also shared with the wider public in public events organized by the students. A multi-ethnic volleyball team created by one NCB Jajce members, Jajce Nansen, aimed to normalize relationships among various groups through sport. The respondents shared their belief that people's attitudes are changing, claiming that *"now we have children from two entities that are having barbecues together, talking, falling in love with each other, which was unthinkable a few years back"* (R23). Another respondent mentioned that students finishing high school are now more likely to choose a university in Banja Luka, a city close to Jajce, but located in a different entity, Republika Srpska:

*"For me, an indicator of all that is that a number of students from Jajce go to the university in Banja Luka, quite a number of them. I personally know several of them. Some 10 years ago it was unthinkable to go to Banja Luka, not a chance, only to Sarajevo and Mostar [in Federation BiH]."* (R26)

#### 7.2.1.1 NDC Sarajevo against the RPP criteria

##### 1) Peacebuilding activities causing participants to develop their own initiatives for peace:

Motivating participants in the inter-ethnic dialogue seminars to build upon their re-established communication and work together to implement their own initiatives in the local communities was a strong and deliberate feature of NDC Sarajevo's peacebuilding strategy. The organization provided basic training in project planning to those alumni from the dialogue seminars who were interested in being more active in their communities. They were later invited to join the coordination boards (NCBs), and their efforts were financially and logistically supported by NDC Sarajevo, if needed. The only requirement NDC Sarajevo had for the local initiatives was



that they had to connect and provide benefits to various ethnic groups. The following quote describes the work of NCBs:

*“The coordination board was, indeed, the body that defined yearly activities in all the sectors that we covered, so we met, defined who is responsible for what in that year, and then these projects were realized.” (R12)*

Additionally, NCBs in the Srebrenica and Bratunac municipalities initiated the establishment of a local NGO named Dialogue Center Srebrenica-Bratunac. This organization coordinated the activities proposed by the two NCBs.

Later, NDC Sarajevo connected all four NCBs and invited them to brainstorm regional multiethnic activities; however, soon after the event the organization lost its main source of funding and these regional plans were never implemented.

The respondents often repeated that they appreciated the freedom they had to initiate activities they found important and necessary for the enhancement of peace and the functionality of their communities, and they compared NDC Sarajevo to other NGOs that came to their municipalities with a plan of activities already in hand:

*“Nansen was different in that we have jointly agreed on all those projects I have told you about. [...] Through a SWOT analysis we have defined our priorities, what needs to be solved, and what is the problem, and how to solve it. While other organizations [...] they write a project somewhere in Brussels, in Sarajevo, they bring it here to implement it [...]. This is the basic difference, Nansen dialogue center created its projects with the local actors, on the basis of real needs of the local community.” (R29)*

Hence, NDC Sarajevo was very successful in this criterion, and over the years the dialogue participants implemented a large number of own, local-level, multi-ethnic projects, covering various areas of life. The activities included cultural and sports events, mostly for youngsters of all ethnicities, but with some targeting the wider public, and youth visits and exchanges between the four municipalities. In-school activities with pupils, teachers and the local community councils included joint cleanings of schoolyards, painting walls and classrooms, purchasing books, computers and other educational materials and various tools pupils used in vocational training and research projects and publishing school newspapers. Additionally, NCBs organized environmental protection activities for youngsters, joint cleaning of various areas in the four municipalities and public discussions (e.g. on youth unemployment).

As respondents repeatedly emphasized, NDC Sarajevo did not provide large sums of money. Individual local projects were mostly given around 800 KM (approx. 400 EUR) (R16), but as one interviewee explained: *“If I compare Nansen with all the other organizations, nobody did so many things with that sum of money. [...] That’s the first time I saw that with a little money you can do big things”* (R15).

However, the organization did not secure the sustainability of the local groups of engaged citizens that they had helped to establish. The NCBs and their members were active only while NDC Sarajevo was present in their municipalities. After the organization lost its main source of funding, the NCBs stopped their regular meetings and did not work on any multiethnic community initiatives together. Most of the respondents representing NCBs agreed that they need someone to lead them and motivate them for further work in their communities. On one hand, they argued that they are not in a position allowing them to apply for funding, while also admitting that they simply need an external push:

*“We need someone to lead us, so that we could apply for funding with a project. [...] No one will give us money until we prepare a project, and we need a guide to tell us: let’s do something again. It is small money, but it is important that they motivate us to start thinking about projects again. Me alone I cannot, I am not an institution, but they were an institution that could channel us to some projects.”* (R21)

One respondent attributed this need for a leader to a general mentality among the people in BiH that is not specific only to the NCBs and their members, implying among others the influence of the presence and the powers of the High Representative for BiH, saying that:

*“We became used to, unfortunately, that we have to have a mentor here, and that this mentor outlines everything, explains everything, instructs, suggests, and then when we cannot agree – he will decide, and so on.”* (R29)

The NCB members revealed they remain in good communication. However, that is only occasionally and on an informal level. At the same time, they agreed that they are ready to start working again should NDC Sarajevo return: *“When Nansen calls us, we will gather children and make a project”* (R22).

At this point, it is important to mention again the impactful initiative taken by the students of a high school in Jajce where a large number of NDC Sarajevo activities were implemented. The students addressed the segregation of children based on ethnicity and, as described earlier, their protests against the creation of new lines of division in education eventually lead the cantonal

Ministry of education to drop the proposal to divide the high school into two separate institutions, one for each of the dominant ethnic groups in the municipality. Nevertheless, for the reasons outlined earlier, the author of the thesis was unable to investigate the extent to which the work of NDC Sarajevo in the school triggered the student activism.

2) Peacebuilding activities resulting in the creation or reform of the political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict:

Two main lines of the work of NDC Sarajevo can be discussed under this criterion. First, the organization focused on creating local coordinating bodies; the NCBs. In all four municipalities the NCBs initiated a wide range of activities supporting peacefulness and the functionality of their communities. Even though a number of active members of the NCBs and other participants in dialogue seminars and education trips to Norway were also representatives of the local authorities, such as mayors, municipality councilors and heads of municipal councils, heads of local communities and municipality administration employees, NCBs were not official political institutions and worked outside the political system. It was, admittedly, more feasible to work independent of the political system; however, such a position might have limited the potential of NCBs to influence broader, structural change. Moreover, the durability of NCBs proved to be heavily dependent on the presence of NDC Sarajevo in the regions, and hence on the ability of NDC Sarajevo to secure funding for its activities. Similarly, the newly created NGO, Dialogue Center Srebrenica-Bratunac, was not financially independent off NDC Sarajevo, and hence was unable to continue working once NDC Sarajevo lost its main source of funding and terminated its presence in these municipalities. Members of the NCBs in Srebrenica and Bratunac succeeded in securing donations for the Dialogue Center Srebrenica-Bratunac from the municipal budgets, negotiating directly with the mayors of these two municipalities, but this only lasted for a few months. Nevertheless, this shows the strong will of the active members to keep these multiethnic local initiatives alive and their belief in the changes NDC Sarajevo triggered in their communities.

Another line of NDC Sarajevo's work that targeted institutions with the potential to address the root causes of the conflict in BiH were the activities they carried out in schools. Schools in BiH, especially the elementary schools where pupils attend different school buildings or are segregated in different classrooms based on ethnicity, are still places where ethnic division is maintained and perpetuated. Such schools, as OSCE (2018:10) insists, "instil division and the notion of artificial differences", and as a result, negatively affect the process of reconciliation and trust building. The teachers who underwent the dialogue training and the additional

workshops focused on the mediation and resolution of conflicts among pupils have the potential to facilitate contacts and dialogue between children of various ethnicities, and to create additional opportunities for them to socialize and to handle potential conflicts. Additionally, the teachers serve as positive examples of feasible and beneficial inter-ethnic cooperation, and can thus create an atmosphere in their schools in which such cooperation is seen as normal, as was the case in the high school in Jajce, described in the previous sections. However, sustainability is again problematic. While the teachers educated by NDC Sarajevo continue teaching at their schools and using the skills they gained in their communication with pupils, the additional activities initiated within the scope of NDC Sarajevo's projects mostly ceased when the projects ended and, according to some, the negative effects of that are visible: *"That's the thing now. The children that experienced all this have left, the new ones have come, and now the new ones don't have any communication"* (R26). Moreover, the organization only worked within the existing education system, without attempting to instigate any reforms in the school organization, which is deeply problematic, because they assumed they were not in a position to seek such a high-level, political change.

It is, nevertheless, necessary to note that a vast majority of respondents expressed their belief that politicians and the media controlled by political parties are the main force that maintains divisions and tensions between ethnic groups, as this quote illustrates:

*"Our problem is the older people who are influencing children. Specifically, politics is poisoning relationships among children, for the sake of earning cheap political points. Especially during election campaigns, the children receive information that they are in danger from this or that side. [...] Children receive information also from those who don't wish the relationships to be as close as possible."* (R25)

At the same time, there is a widespread belief that there is nothing one can do about the politicians and the way politics affects inter-ethnic relationships:

*"Nansen can influence ordinary people, but there are only small problems among ordinary people. Bigger problems are among politicians. Nansen has an impact on ordinary people, but can do little when it comes to politicians who create the conditions in which we live. They are the ones creating the inter-ethnic intolerance."* (R23)

Some of the key representatives of the local communities who are members of various political parties were personally engaged in the work of NCBs; however, there were no attempts by NDC

Sarajevo or the NCBs to directly address the broader problems posed by the current political system. The organization chose not to intervene any higher than the local level, claiming that:

*“Much bigger players than we are, starting with those who created the Dayton peace agreement and the constitution, and those who intervene in BiH in all fields – they were unable to change anything at the top level, not even at the middle level.” (R2)*

Hence, the organization assumed that the local, community level is the only one appropriate for their involvement. As the representatives of NDC Sarajevo noted, they wanted to *“work with institutions but in a non-institutional way, trying to change institutional behavior through the behavior of people who are connected to institutions”* (R2). Nevertheless, the organization only worked with people representing local-level, municipal institutions.

### 3) Peacebuilding activities resulting in improvements in inter-group relations:

As illustrated in the section describing the behavioral changes triggered by NDC Sarajevo, respondents have repeatedly shared their conviction that the relationships between the ethnic groups living in the four target municipalities have improved over the course of the organization’s presence there. As one respondent revealed:

*“We have achieved great success, in that we don’t have some ethnic intolerance, some encounters – me as a Bosniak, he as a Serb, a Serb with a Bosniak, or something like that. When we have a conflict, we have it as a person with a person, or your own with your own. So, we don’t have those inter-ethnic excesses.” (R21)*

Naturally, such normalization of relationships between ethnic communities cannot be seen as a result of one single force. Nevertheless, respondents agreed that NDC Sarajevo did make an important contribution to those improvements by focusing on dialogue and facilitating direct communication inside the communities. As this interviewee explained:

*“When I came back to live here, in 2005, the situation was not good. [...] For example, here in town, you could not go to every place to have coffee, you had the Serbs cafes, you had the Bosniak cafes, you had the Serb shops and Bosniak shops. [...] But since 2008-2009, the situation started to change little by little, in a positive direction. [...] Today there are no more problems, absolutely, people in Srebrenica they live together, help each other. [...] There are many international organizations that came here, [...] every one of them they were part of a mosaic, and Nansen [Dialogue Center] also. [...] Nansen created a good, positive atmosphere in the town [...] through hard work inside and directly with*

*the people and the children. [...] They were not alone, but they were part of that, you know.” (R15)*

However, some respondents argued that a number of the benefits the work of NDC Sarajevo created in the local communities are slowly diminishing, as the organization was no longer present in the municipalities at the time of data collection. As this respondent argued:

*“I think that at least for two years the Nansen Dialogue Center has not been working here, and, I can openly say, it is already felt. There is no longer this cooperation among local leaders, leaders of local communities, there are no joint projects, in the sense, between local communities, not even with the ones we border. The problems in communication are obvious. Political problems occur because, simply, there is no one who would gather us together so that we could talk about it, about those problems anymore. [...] We are going into some kind of a stagnation in that regard.” (R29)*

Another respondent shared a similar view, that *“there used to be more socializing, more dialogue and more communication, and it used to transmit more to town” (R14)*. Hence, we can conclude that NDC Sarajevo successfully contributed to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations and communication; however, the sustainability of these benefits beyond the period the organization was actively present in the target municipalities is questionable. This goes hand in hand with the limited durability of the local initiatives described earlier in this chapter.

#### Vertical linkages: from individual to socio-political level:

According to Anderson and Olson (2003), peacebuilding programs that aspire to contribute to Peace Writ Large, should aim at triggering changes both at the individual level as well as at the socio-political level. The approach NDC Sarajevo chose for its involvement in the four municipalities began with the dialogue seminars that focused on, apart from the re-establishment of inter-ethnic communication, the individual perceptions and attitudes towards the others. At the same time, the organization put the main emphasis on motivating the alumni of dialogue seminars to actively engage in solving problems in their communities and schools, and to initiate inter-ethnic interaction in the public space, thus transforming the individual-level changes into improvements at the socio-political level. As is apparent from table 8, this strategy succeeded in producing the desired changes at the community level, and to certain extent on regional level. Nevertheless, the organization failed to trigger more structural socio-political changes, such as reforms of policies or institutional practices that have negative effects on inter-

ethnic relations and cooperation. Factors that led to the lack of success in this regard are discussed further below.

Horizontal linkages: engaging key people and more people:

Engaging the key individuals working in positions that are important for the functioning of the local communities, while also working in institutions with the potential to reach the wider population, an approach that according to Anderson and Olson (2003) should help organizations contribute to Peace Writ Large, was another integral feature of NDC Sarajevo's process. Among the people invited to dialogue seminars and educational trips to Norway were important individuals such as mayors, deputy-mayors, heads of local communities, municipality councilors, employees of the municipal administrations, representatives of local civil society organizations, school principals, teachers, medical doctors etc. The organization recognized the role these people could play in the process of normalization of relationships and the creation of functional societies in the four municipalities and succeeded in actively involving them, as this NCB member revealed: "*Nansen was the group that gathered all of us, people who meant something in the community*" (R18). At the same time, having key people on board makes the work in communities possible, as the representative of the organization admitted:

*"If you don't work with the authorities you don't have a chance to do anything, particularly in local communities where everybody knows everybody. You have to open the doors and have the important stakeholders in these communities, and most of them are somehow connected to local governance, so working with the authorities makes it possible to work."* (R2)

Hence, the organization first secured the support and engagement of the key people in the target municipalities, before moving on to involving a larger number of the people at the grassroots level, especially elementary and high school students. As a result, NDC Sarajevo formed "*the broadest network of people, both in the local community and regionally, [...] to create a better atmosphere in the entire community*" (R12).

However, at this point we have to again mention the problem of the limited sustainability of these achievements. The key people who cooperated with NDC Sarajevo and facilitated the positive achievements often changed with election cycles. As the organization is not active in most of these regions any longer, the new key stakeholders in the local administration lack the important experience their predecessors gained in dialogue seminars, and hence the inter-ethnic cooperation may not function in the same way in the future. As a member of NCB explained:

*“I am the head of my local community. [...] We have achieved something, but when the elections come now, if someone else comes, [...] someone who was not with Nansen, it would be good if he was also informed. [...] I’m scared we would shut down with these things.” (R21)*

From looking at how the work of NDC Sarajevo fulfills the RPP criteria of projects with the potential to achieve peace at the broader, societal level, we could conclude that the organization conceptualized its approach in a way that should ensure a high effectiveness in achieving the peacebuilding goals. NDC Sarajevo was, in fact, rather successful, and triggered important societal changes; however, the benefits created are slowly vanishing as NDC Sarajevo is not active in most of the former target regions due to the loss of its main source of funding. Despite working in those municipalities for 10 years (in Srebrenica and Bratunac) and 7 years (in Jajce and Zvornik) respectively, this type of work apparently requires much longer, continuous involvement.

At the same time, the fact that NDC Sarajevo deliberately chose to work only at the local level, without engaging with other important, higher level causes of continuous division and dysfunctionality of the society of BiH, might be another reason why the benefits created had a limited duration.

### **7.2.2 LDA Zavidovići**

LDA Zavidovići is specific in its emphasis on local democracy as the overarching goal. The organization’s representatives mostly avoided issues related to the past war that still pose problems in today’s BiH. Topics such as the varying perspectives on the conflict, its victims and its perpetrators, persistent divisions, tensions and lack of contact and cooperation between various ethnic groups, were seen as too sensitive for the local community in Zavidovići. Hence LDA Zavidovići chose to work towards peace by enhancing democracy and the active participation of citizens, and by strengthening cooperation with the municipal administration.

The table below specifies the levels of influence of each behavioral change identified by the research. It is important to stress that each of these changes was achieved only to a certain degree, as we found crucial limitations in most of the cases. They are discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.



Table 9: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by LDA Zavidovići

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Representative of local authorities are more open to cooperation with the civil society actors.	Individual / micro level
More active civil society sector.	Community / mezzo level
Young people are taking a more active role in the life of their community.	Individual / micro level
Local institutions and individuals adopted changes based on the experience gained through their dealings with the Italian partners.	Community / mezzo level

Source: author

The change in the attitudes of the representatives of the local authorities towards the civil society actors occurred at the level of individuals; nevertheless, its effects could have been felt at the higher, community level. In their intermediary role LDA Zavidovići built on this change of attitudes, as it gave the organization a better access to local decision-makers. However, LDA Zavidovići was unable to use this opportunity to advocate for more structural changes that would address the various problems faced by the citizens of the municipality. According to the representatives of the organization, there are limits on what changes they can influence in the municipality because of the broader political situation in BiH. However, we have also identified also other, local factors that might have negatively influenced the organization's reach; not only the fact that the key local stakeholders saw the depoliticized provision of services as the most appropriate role of NGOs, but also the limitations brought about by the project-based, top-down activities. These will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The diversification and mobilization of the civil society sector in the municipality can be seen as a community, or mezzo level change that created potential benefits for the wider community, mostly in the form of the provision of further services for various groups of citizens. Yet, the viability of the newly created civil society organizations is questionable as they are, to a large degree, dependent on LDA Zavidovići for access to funding and other technical assistance.

The same can be said about the mobilization of the young people. This individual level change is largely dependent on the youth workers employed by LDA Zavidovići. Youth workers are the main engine behind the activities the youngsters engage in because they rarely take the initiative themselves. Also, this change did not reach beyond the relatively small number of

young people directly engaged in the activities of LDA Zavidovići since the general interest in the volunteering for the benefits of the local community is rather low.

The behavioral changes that came closest to bringing structural improvements to the local community are the innovations various local institutions and individuals adopted that were based on the consultations and study visits to the Italian partners. These innovations helped to improve the work of various public institutions and individual entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, some of the issues in which LDA Zavidovići and their Italian partners invested considerable time and resources were ultimately rejected by the local authorities, such as the proposed system for waste management and separation.

#### *7.2.2.1 LDA Zavidovići against the RPP criteria*

##### 1) Peacebuilding activities causing participants to develop their own initiatives for peace:

One of the aims of LDA Zavidovići was to enhance the participation of local citizens in local democracy processes and to particularly mobilize young people to be more actively engaged in the local community. However, the actual situation we encountered was rather paradoxical. Most projects the organization implemented followed the usual top-down, project-based approach, with activities being decided by the organization. LDA Zavidovići assumed the leadership role in a majority of the initiatives, including those that were intended to enhance youth activism. Such an approach contributed to the perception that it is the job of the staff of LDA Zavidovići to come up with the ideas for activities and projects, and to act as the main leader of the activities. Even though the civil society organization established by LDA Zavidovići created space for a small number of citizens to be more active in certain areas, they essentially functioned in a similar way, providing services and organizing activities for their beneficiaries. Additionally, they still rely to a considerable degree on their founder:

*“I think other associations still see LDA as a foreign organization, as an organization that always has some ideas and projects, and they expect LDA to implement some projects and maybe to involve them in its projects.” (R43)*

The following quote from one of the representatives of a partner organization proves this point: *“I see LDA in a way that we are in a house and LDA is a roof. And I think a lot of associations see LDA in this way, that they are always open and ready to help as much as they can.” (R44)*

2) Peacebuilding activities resulting in the creation or reform of the political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict:

LDA Zavidovići spent little time engaged in a direct way with the grievances that prompted the conflict. On one hand the representatives of the organization claimed that the issues of inter-ethnic relationships and cooperation, and the tolerance of differences are still taboo in the local community, while they also asserted that because one ethnic group dominates the ethnic composition of the municipality, there are no major incidents between various ethnic groups in Zavidovići.

One exception is the No Hate Coalition “Culture of Peace”; the coalition combating hate crimes, prejudices and intolerance that was created within a project implemented by the OSCE throughout BiH. As part of this initiative, LDA Zavidovići cooperated with the municipality on the adoption of an action plan for social cohesion, and organized a few activities promoting tolerance and human rights. However, as almost none of the respondents mentioned this initiative during the interviews it is apparently not considered to have been a significant endeavor.

3) Peacebuilding activities resulting in improvements in inter-group relations:

The majority of citizens of the Zavidovići municipality belong to one ethnic group and acts of ethnic intolerance are scarce there. Hence, the organization only implemented a handful of activities with the aim of bringing people of various backgrounds together to promote communication and cooperation.

However, several respondents characterized Zavidovići as “*a small community where it’s not easy to be different in any way*” (R33). Moreover, inter-ethnic relationships still represent a sensitive issues in the local community, as illustrated by the fact that the representatives of LDA Zavidovići were only willing to talk about the issue off the record. This indicates that LDA Zavidovići could have engaged more heavily in this topic. The fact that the staff of the organization has been multi-ethnic could have served as a starting point.

There were only a few activities that connected the citizens of Zavidovići with the neighboring municipality Žepče, which is mostly inhabited by a different ethnic group; activities such as the school of journalism for young people in the late 1990s and the education project for farmers from both municipalities. More recently, within the OSCE project No Hate Coalition, LDA Zavidovići organized a volleyball tournament for young people from three municipalities inhabited mainly by three different ethnic groups; Doboj, Žepče and Zavidovići. However, all

these were one-off activities for relatively small groups of participants. There has not been any continuous initiative in this area.

Vertical linkages: from individual to socio-political level:

Despite the fact that LDA Zavidovići invested heavily in cooperation and having a good relationship with the local authorities, this has not translated into any significant structural societal changes. In several areas of their work the organization provided needed assistance to individuals, but failed to promote structural reforms that would have improved the broader situation in a more sustainable way. We found a few instances of systemic changes adopted by various stakeholders based on the educational visits of the Italian partner institutions, as described in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, in many areas the necessary reforms were not accepted. To give an example, even though the municipality representatives highly appreciated the work of the women's association Sigurno mjesto, established by LDA Zavidovići, the association was unable to advocate for any political or institutional changes that would have improved the situation for the victims of domestic violence. The representative of Sigurno mjesto highlighted the problem of victims of domestic violence who leave their abuser but do not have a safe place to stay due to the municipality's inaction:

*“In our canton, the closest safe house is Medica Zenica; however, the Zavidovići municipality is the only municipality in the canton that does not have an agreement with Medica Zenica, and so our municipality is the only one in the canton in which victims of violence cannot be by law taken care of anywhere. [...] They should have an ear for the victims of violence.” (R45)*

In other areas of work, LDA Zavidovići did not succeed in establishing an official youth council at the municipality level, or advocate for institutional support for professional farmers that is completely absent.

The inability of LDA Zavidovići to trigger systemic, institutional changes was largely influenced by the prevailing perception of the appropriate role NGOs should fulfill. As discussed above, according to highly-positioned municipal officials, NGOs should primarily provide concrete help to citizens in various areas, while advocating for policy changes is not welcome.

### Horizontal linkages: engaging key people and more people:

LDA Zavidovići engaged a wide spectrum of local stakeholders in their activities, fulfilling the criterion of targeting the key people, individuals with important roles in the community, and the broader public.

Top representatives of the municipality authorities, including mayors, deputy mayors and other municipal employees, were frequently involved in LDA Zavidovići's projects, participating in study visits to Italian partner municipalities and various public institutions. They took part in discussions and round tables concerning the particular issues LDA Zavidovići was dealing with in its projects, and they were also engaged as partners in numerous reconstruction projects. Nevertheless, the intensity of cooperation with the local authorities depended on the attitudes and interests of the serving mayor. During periods when a mayor was not in favor of cooperation with LDA Zavidovići and its Italian partners, the activities, exchanges and projects with the authorities, and between the Zavidovići municipality and the counterparts in Italy were not as frequent as at other times, as the following quote reveals: "*At certain points we had an intense cooperation. [...] But the last two terms of the mayors, they were not that interested in that kind of cooperation, so it wasn't as intense as it could be or should be*" (R34). This illustrates how important the key individuals in a community are for the work of an NGO.

Several respondents shared the view that "*in this town there is no person that some time in life did not have any contacts with LDA in some way*" (R45). Over the years of their work, and with the broad spectrum of projects primarily concentrated in a single municipality, most of the citizens of Zavidovići somehow benefited from the activities of LDA Zavidovići in one way or another. Through their continuous assistance to various groups of people, the organization succeeded in creating the generally shared perception that "*they [the LDA representatives] are people who have an ear for people, one always has the door open there, to ask for any help*" (R47). However, most of the projects involved the citizens as recipients of goods and services provided by LDA Zavidovići, not as active agents for needed changes. For some projects, especially the post-war humanitarian assistance and reconstruction projects, such an approach was understandable. Yet, this approach did not change significantly even with activities aimed at enhancing youth activism or the participation of citizens in the local democratic processes, LDA Zavidovići still acted as the main initiator and organizer of activities. The potential of such activities to mobilize citizens to actively participate in and influence the life of their community is limited as they provide little motivation for any member of the public to become the main driver of change.

### 7.2.3 Youth organization Odisej

Having experienced the war and its effects, the first generations of young people involved in Odisej felt a strong urge to improve relations between the Serb and Bosniak youngsters in their community, which were very strained at that time, with frequent verbal and physical conflicts. The members of Odisej personally experienced these conflicts, and thus wanted to improve the situation for themselves and their fellows. Apart from that, they attempted to fight the prevailing belief at the time among youngsters that the war would inevitably happen again. As the leader explained: *“It really bothered me, that conviction “there will be war again”, it bothered me as a person. That’s why, in 2004, I started to work in the area of peacebuilding and dealing with the past”* (R63). Hence, the activities of Odisej primarily focused on individuals; young people of both ethnicities inhabiting the municipality, with the aim of positively influencing their perceptions and thoughts about the others.

Odisej’s conceptualization of its peacebuilding efforts is reflected in the outcomes identified by this research. As is evident from table 10 below where we analyze the levels at which the behavioral changes identified and discussed in the previous chapter occurred, most of the changes triggered by the organization are at the lowest, micro level, with only one behavioral change influencing the mezzo level, more specifically the local community.

Table 10: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by the Youth organization Odisej

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Change in perspectives on the others.	Individual / micro level
New relationships, including interethnic ones.	Social network, peer group / micro level
Active engagement of youngsters in interethnic encounters and joint everyday activities.	Social network, peer group / micro level
Return to pre-war house.	Individual / micro level
Improvement in relations between groups, decrease in tensions and conflicts.	Community / mezzo level
Ethnicity of owners playing a less important role in people’s decisions regarding which local businesses to use.	Individual / micro level

Source: author

Odisej is a youth, membership-based organization, and is mostly focused on providing services to its members and other youngsters in the Bratunac municipality. Hence, most of the behavioral

changes were limited to “the initial entry point” (Campbell 2007:6), to people directly involved in the activities organized by the organization. The only two identified changes that reached beyond the direct participants are the general improvement in relations between groups from various backgrounds living together in the municipality, and the way citizens use local businesses. However, the evidence that Odisej’s work was the main force behind these changes is rather weak. Odisej might have contributed in some part to these improvements, nevertheless, their contribution has certainly been weakened by the generally negative picture Odisej has among the public due to the rather confrontational and controversial public events they organized, especially during the first years of the organization’s existence. Moreover, Odisej has had a rather troublesome relationship with the local authorities. Both of these issues will be further discussed in the following section. Finally, it is also important to mention that Odisej has never formulated any plan or a strategy on how to achieve broader, community changes that would reach beyond the young people they primarily wanted to serve, as the author will also elaborate on below.

#### *7.2.3.1 Youth organization Odisej against the RPP criteria*

##### 1) Peacebuilding activities causing participants to develop their own initiatives for peace:

Young people engaged in Odisej have initiated numerous peacebuilding and dealing with the past activities. For the youngsters from Bratunac and other municipalities of BiH, they organized or co-organized youth seminars and camps to share and discuss various perspectives on the past war. They also initiated various public events that were, however, especially in the first years rather confrontational, and thus very controversial. Instead of increasing peace in the local community, these initiatives triggered feeling of aversion towards the organization among the public and damaged its image. On a few occasions Odisej’s actions even provoked violent reactions from the local police. The first peace initiative the members of Odisej organized was a public campaign in which they hung posters around the town showing victims of the war from both ethnicities. The reaction to this campaign was described by the leader of Odisej:

*“On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, the police came and they beat our activists so much. Because they thought those were Muslim victims [on the posters], and that we are mercenaries, paid to tell that story.” (R63)*

Odisej also lobbied for municipality workers and police officers to be screened for participating in war crimes, particularly in the Srebrenica massacre. As apparent from the following quote, this initiative also caused major problems for Odisej’s members:

*“Once we asked for all employees in the municipality and local police to be checked, to be tested for war crimes. You know, because someone who committed war crimes should not work here. You can’t be a defender of justice and a police officer now, if you killed and slaughtered there. And then we were beaten again. One time they came to us, and then, like, started to beat us. [...] That was the biggest problem, when we started to engage in this, because there are many of them until today in the police whom I know took part in the killings in Potočari.” (R65)*

Although youngsters involved in Odisej did attempt to promote peace in their local community through various initiatives, the initiatives targeting local authorities and the wider public had a negative effect on the peacebuilding process.

### 2) Peacebuilding activities resulting in the creation or reform of the political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict:

Odisej have always had a very limited influence over local institutions and local government, and so they could not promote any policies or reforms that would improve the situation in the local community. Members of the organization mentioned that on numerous occasions they had tried to submit various proposals to the municipality council (R65), for example a code of conduct for the municipality assembly that would ban hate speech (R53). However, none of their proposals were approved by the local government, due to their lack of access to important decision-makers. Overall, Odisej enjoyed low legitimacy among both the decision-makers and the wider public, as we will discuss below.

### 3) Peacebuilding activities resulting in improvements in inter-group relations:

When analyzing the extent to which Odisej succeeded in improving relations between various groups in Bratunac, the research revealed varying degree of success among various population groups. As discussed above, we found strong evidence that the first generation of Odisej members changed their attitudes to people of the other ethnicity due to their experiences with Odisej, and they created friendships across ethnic lines. For the younger, more recent generation involved in Odisej activities such effects are less visible and, according to the young respondents themselves, even less relevant. They claimed they had normal relationships with people from various backgrounds, even before taking part in the activities organized by Odisej. The overall improvements in inter-ethnic relations in the Bratunac community are also presented above. Relations between people from different ethnicities and backgrounds in Bratunac have improved significantly since the war ended, as can be seen from the reported



decrease in direct violence towards people of other backgrounds, and from the way people use local businesses. Yet, the research did not find clear evidence of whether and to what extent the work of Odisej prompted this change. We found a few examples of the leaders of the organization and their personal interventions changing the behavior of individual entrepreneurs and consumers towards people of other ethnicities. However, the work of Odisej did not directly aim at broader societal changes, nor at improvements in inter-ethnic relations among people not directly involved in the activities of the organization.

It is important, nevertheless, to emphasize that while tensions between various groups in the municipality decreased, and young people now claim they have friends regardless of their ethnicity, major differences in opinions on issues connected to the past war still exist. Yet, people have now chosen not to talk about them anymore and instead they have learned to coexist, despite their strong disagreements, as several respondents in the Odisej's evaluation as well as one of the key informants (K6) admitted. Even the leader of Odisej argued:

*"I cannot sit down with [name of a Bosniak member] and [name of a Bosnian Serb member], and the whole group, and talk to them about the genocide in Srebrenica, because they simply want to live, want to live in peace, possibly they want to work, earn something, and these are the common topics that connect them. And now, bringing them all back and telling them stories about the war is already a futile job, doesn't make sense."* (R63)

#### Vertical linkages: from individual to socio-political level:

As regards the vertical linkages, table 10 above shows that Odisej's effects were mostly on individuals. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize the fact that by changing the perceptions and behavior of individuals directly involved in Odisej's activities, Odisej's representatives intended, in the long term, to also have a positive influence on the broader community. As one of the members explained: *"I cannot influence the politics, but I can have an impact on individuals. If we change individuals, the things will then slowly start to change"* (R53). Later in the interview, the same member said: *"We were only a trigger so that some other things [could] start"* (R53). The official vision of the organization, as stated in the Strategic plan, is also in line with this claim, as it foresees "a prosperous, content and open community" (Omladinska organizacija Odisej 2010). However, absent from both the strategic plan and the actual work of Odisej described by members in interviews are any direct attempts to transfer the positive effects from the individual level to the community or society levels. The representatives of Odisej assumed that the positive changes they triggered in individuals would

naturally transform into positive changes at the community level. They also believed that the rest of society would follow the positive example presented by Odisej of how various groups can live together and cooperate. However, this evaluation found little evidence that the assumptions of Odisej's leaders had held true, as the results presented in the table above show. We did not identify substantial community or society-level changes that can be assessed as resulting from the positive influence Odisej had over the behavior of individuals. This finding is in line with Anderson and Olson's (2003) assertion that projects with no clear vision of how the effects they have on individuals can be translated into changes at the broader, societal level have very limited potential to contribute to Peace Writ Large.

Horizontal linkages: engaging key people and more people:

Odisej also did not succeed in attracting “more people” and “key people”. During its most active periods Odisej gathered and actively engaged between 120-200 young people (R65, R53). Moreover, youngsters of various backgrounds, representing the diverse communities of the municipality, were all present in the organization. Hence, a significant number of the local youngsters were more or less actively participating in the organization and its activities. However, Odisej's reach was limited to the young people, while the wider public perceived Odisej rather negatively, mainly for crossing the ethnic and other dividing lines, as the respondents revealed:

*“You, as the young generation, if you don't follow them [older generation, parents, politicians], you are some kind of a freak, a traitor, and I don't know what else, but mainly you are not normal. That was the case with us [...], a satanic sect, traitors, that's the first thing, traitors of the Serb nation. Spies, drug addicts, that's quite normal. Nothing was positive.” (R65)*

As for the “key people”, the organization mostly lacked meaningful connection to the important individuals in the community. The representatives of the organization had rather lukewarm relationship with the local decision-makers and their activities did not receive any substantial support from the municipal government. This is particularly true for the period after 2004, when Odisej started to engage in peacebuilding and dealing with the past activities, and organized public events that were perceived rather negatively, as discussed above and shared also by one of the key informants familiar with the work of the organization (K6). According to former members of Odisej, the controversies that Odisej provoked contributed to the organization losing its premises in the local high school, used as a youth center. Moreover, Odisej focused primarily on young people, and did not attempt to reach or engage any other influential figures

from within the local community. These people could have provided practical, or at least symbolic support to the organization and its work, which would have enhanced its legitimacy and impact on the local community.

### **7.3 Factors of success and failure**

The final section of this chapter discusses the factors that have both positively and negatively influenced the ability of the three evaluated NGOs to achieve broader, societal changes and to enhance Peace Writ Large; peace at the level of society (Anderson and Olson 2003). We identify the factors of success and failure separately for each of the three NGOs.

#### ***7.3.1 Factors affecting the ability of NDC Sarajevo to achieve societal changes***

Out of the three NGOs targeted by this research, NDC Sarajevo was the most successful in bringing benefits from the individual level to a higher level, especially the community level (see Table 8). The evaluation shed light on several factors that enabled the organization to enhance peace on the community level.

For its involvement in the ethnically divided communities, NDC Sarajevo created a structured and gradual process, which the organization then repeatedly implemented in cycles. The process focused on achieving clearly defined community-level objectives. As a starting point, the dialogue process which all the people involved in NDC Sarajevo's projects experienced proved to be an effective tool in breaking down the persistent prejudices and stereotypes regarding the others. This process breached the divide between the ethnic communities and started the inter-ethnic cooperation. The crucial element of success was the fact that the transition from individual changes to community changes was not left to chance. Representatives of the organization intentionally used the individual changes and the restored inter-ethnic communication to trigger community-level changes, and to improve the functionality of the multi-ethnic communities.

From the very beginning, the organization concentrated on engaging the key stakeholders in the local communities where its projects were implemented. This enabled the community-level changes achieved by NDC Sarajevo in two ways. First, winning over the support of high-level representatives of the local authorities was a necessary pre-condition for further engagement of the organization in the four municipalities. As one of the respondents, a municipality employee, explained, *“you can come with a very good project, you can also bring the money, but if there is no political willingness, you cannot do anything”* (R15). Engaging mayors, heads of municipal assemblies and school principals in dialogue seminars and study visits to Norway

built support for the organization among the local institutions and opened the doors to their activities with other local stakeholders.

Second, the key local stakeholders who worked with NDC Sarajevo were well positioned to transfer the benefits of their personal changes in attitudes to the community level, and through their active involvement contribute to the normalization of relationships and increase the functionality of their local communities. The NCB members represented various local institutions and a diversity of sectors. As one member of an NCB explained:

*“That’s what I liked about the coordination boards. The coordination board we had, it had various structures, and when you present an idea, you receive the support of people, it means you get the support of the municipality, the non-governmental sector, the education and health sectors.”* (R12)

For example, the activities that took place in the elementary school in Kravica and Konjević Polje in the Bratunac municipality were enabled by the active involvement of the principal of this school and the head of the local community in Konjević Polje, an active member of the Parents’ Council of the Konjević Polje branch school, in the activities of NDC Sarajevo and the local NCBs.

Besides having the right people on board, another crucial factor in the success of NDC Sarajevo’s work was the freedom the organization gave the alumni of the dialogue process to initiate and organize their own activities for the benefit of all the groups in their communities. Entrusting the NCBs with the responsibility to implement local-level activities was another way of bringing the benefits of the individual change to the community level. This enhanced the cooperation among various ethnic groups on the initiatives designed to tackle local problems for the common good, and served as an example that inter-ethnic cooperation is possible. In the opinion of several respondents, this was a unique feature of NDC Sarajevo’s work, as other organizations they have experienced *“they come here, contact you once, finish their project, say goodbye. And this, this was an all-gathering network linking all those people”* (R30). NDC Sarajevo virtually gave a free hand to the local actors to decide what was important for enhancing peace and functionality in their communities. This essentially created space for the “local agency” to play the key role in building community peace.

When looking at factors that limited the potential of NDC Sarajevo to trigger broader societal changes, we first have to discuss the durability of the local structures that the organization created to lead the local peacebuilding efforts. As representatives of NCBs repeatedly admitted,

even though they were keen to actively work on those local initiatives, they still needed an external actor to bring them together and motivate them for further work. NCBs also needed NDC Sarajevo as a channel through which they could apply for funding, as they were not officially registered associations. Since NDC Sarajevo has not been present in three of the four previously targeted municipalities, the groups of active citizens they empowered have mostly ceased their community activities.

Another factor negatively influencing the impact of NDC Sarajevo's efforts is the natural turnover of politicians with election cycles. With each election it is possible that the key representatives of the local authorities who NDC Sarajevo cooperated with will change, and new people will be elected who have no experience of the dialogue process and inter-ethnic communication. This indicates the importance of the continuous presence of the organization in the local communities, regularly engaging new key stakeholders in the process to maintain and further develop the level of inter-ethnic cooperation NDC Sarajevo has helped to establish.

The most significant factor that limited the effects and reach of NDC Sarajevo's work was the ethno-national political system in BiH. At a certain point, the inter-ethnic peacebuilding efforts of NDC Sarajevo and the NCBs hit the barriers raised by the existing political system, and this essentially prevented them from reaching beyond the community level and achieving more profound structural changes. Most of the inter-ethnic initiatives NDC Sarajevo and the NCBs organized bypassed the existing system, and worked alongside the institutionalized divisions, rather than directly targeting them: *"we have been able to create functional, multi-ethnic initiatives and social systems within this ethnically divided political, social and state system"* (R3). One example is the activities for pupils and students that were organized in schools on an extra-curricular basis, as free-time activities. Children who were usually separated in their classes according to their ethnicity were brought together in after-school groups. The organization did not attempt to address the institutional division of pupils in schools, as this is a structural problem that has to be dealt with on higher political levels. However, when the existing system is left untouched, it not only creates a barrier to any changes at higher levels, it can also jeopardize the benefits created by the organization. For example, the successful multi-ethnic initiatives in the elementary school in Kravica and Konjević Polje and the improvements in inter-ethnic relations between the two mono-ethnic local communities triggered by these activities were later seriously undermined when Bosniak parents took their children out of the school in the protest against what they perceived as discrimination by the education system of the Republika Srpska. In Jajce, the benefits of the activities at the local high school would have

been diminished if the students' protests had not succeeded in stopping the cantonal government's plans to divide this ethnically mixed school into two mono-ethnic institutions. Despite the obvious challenges the existing system poses, neither NDC Sarajevo nor the four NCBs have attempted to address these structural problems posed by the ethno-political system, claiming that such objectives are beyond their reach, and that they cannot change the prevailing system: *"We all agree that structural problems are so firm, you simply don't have any tool to smash it. They are consequence of war and the constitution – it's very well-written, frozen"* (R2). The approach they chose focused on changing the behavior of the individuals who represent institutions, instead of working directly with the institutions at the core of the ethnic divisions. According to representatives of NDC Sarajevo, this was the only possible way the organization could operate in the dysfunctional and ethnically divided communities:

*"This type of institutional change, change in the behavior of people in institutions is the result that we were able to deliver, based on our assumption that the only way to make structural change is to change institutional behavior."* (R2)

As we have shown, this approach did succeed in changing the attitudes and behavior of individuals, and prompted improvements in relationships and the functionality of the multi-ethnic local communities. However, these benefits were vulnerable to the influence of structural conditions. Additionally, in the centralized political system of BiH there are limited opportunities for individuals from the local levels to influence changes at higher levels, even when they are part of the political system.

Finally, the research identified several factors limiting the potential of NDC Sarajevo to achieve broader societal changes, which can be summarized as general structural problems of the NGO sector. Primarily, the system of financing NGOs proved, in the long-term, to be incompatible with the approach chosen by NDC Sarajevo for their involvement in communities. As discussed above, the peacebuilding process designed by the organization requires a continuous, long-term presence in the communities, especially for two reasons. First, even after NDC Sarajevo had been working with these municipalities for 10 (Srebrenica and Bratunac) and 7 years (Jajce and Zvornik), the local coordination bodies still needed someone from outside to provide continuous support and motivation for their further involvement. Second, as potential stakeholders naturally circulate and change, whether that is politicians being elected to certain positions for a limited time, or students who finish schools and are replaced by new ones, and as the structural causes of the systematic divisions and dysfunctionality remain in place, there is still a need for NDC Sarajevo to involve the new people in their dialogue processes. However,

the interest of international donors in supporting the NGO sector in BiH has decreased significantly, and it has become more difficult for NDC Sarajevo to secure funding for its activities. After the loss of its main donor, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2015, the organization received less support from other donors, and this only allowed them to continue their operations in one of the four municipalities; in Jajce. On a practical level, not all potential donors would be willing to support projects in which the activities and their results are not specified beforehand, as was the case with NDC Sarajevo's projects where the activities were created by the participants of the dialogue process over the course of their projects. The freedom the organization provided to the local agency in leading the peacebuilding process does not fit the general requirements of project management that NGOs have to adhere to.

### ***7.3.2 Factors affecting the ability of LDA Zavidovići to achieve societal changes***

The evaluation showed that LDA Zavidovići was very capable of providing essential services to various groups of citizens, particularly children, youngsters, women and farmers, and numerous local institutions. Apart from fulfilling this service provision role, the organization also succeeded in diversifying the local civil society sector, helping to establish several new associations. LDA Zavidovići improved the acceptance of NGOs and CSOs among the local authorities, motivated local institutions to adopt a few systemic changes and enhanced the participation of youngsters in the work for the community. Nonetheless, all these changes should be presented with the phrase 'to a certain extent'. Their limitations will be discussed below.

LDA Zavidovići was highly praised for the assistance it provided in the Zavidovići municipality during the first post-conflict years as well as in more recent time. The organization was able to fulfill this role because of the continuous support of its Italian partners. The partner organization ADL Zavidovici built the professional capacities of LDA Zavidovići's staff in the early years and assisted in fundraising, and three Italian municipalities have provided stable and continuous funding for the organization's work. Being able to secure finances for larger, highly visible infrastructure and reconstruction projects contributed to the high legitimacy LDA Zavidovići enjoyed among local citizens and authorities.

The few institutional changes we identified were significantly prompted by the connection LDA Zavidovići had to its Italian partners. The organization functioned very well in connecting various local institutions and individuals with their counterparts in Italy, allowing for the exchange of practices and experiences and motivating stakeholders in Zavidovići to adopt improvements in their current practices. As a highly positioned representative of the municipal

administration explained: *“When we go there as municipality officials, we have the opportunity to learn new things. [...] We learn what already functions well over there and we try to introduce it here (R42).*

Despite their long-term engagement in the Zavidovići municipality, dating back to the early post-war years, and the wide array of activities and projects the organization implemented, it was difficult to identify behavioral changes, beyond those described above, that resulted from their work and had the potential to support peace and local democracy. The efforts aimed at enhancing local democracy at the municipality level, improving the work of the municipal administration and supporting the active participation of citizens, including the young people, in the political life of the community did not trigger any substantial changes that would benefit the local society. We have identified several factors that have prevented the organization from triggering broader, societal changes.

First, we encountered an obvious paradox in LDA Zavidovići’s approach. On one hand, the organization wanted to ease the numerous problems the local community was facing, especially after being physically damaged during the conflict. At the same time, LDA Zavidovići aimed to break the passivity of people in the municipality, to mobilize them to become actively engaged in bringing the necessary changes to the local community and to their own lives, for example by starting their own business when other employment opportunities are scarce. However, the first and, for many respondents, the most important area of their work, the provision of services, created the broadly shared perception that LDA Zavidovići was there to help people; to provide assistance that is often missing, even from the local authorities. This perception may have further increased the passivity and undermined the mobilization efforts, both among the public and among the representatives of the local authorities. Additionally, LDA Zavidovići applied the top-down approach, with local stakeholders as the recipients of their assistance, in most of their projects, not only in the service provision projects, but also in those aimed at mobilizing local citizens to take a more active part in their community. This approach, with the prime responsibility for local initiatives taken by the implementing organization and not the citizens, discouraged rather than encouraged their active participation, as these quotes from the local young people involved in LDA Zavidovići’s activities illustrate: *“We come here for some projects when [name of the LDA youth coordinator] says.” (R39).* *“[Name of the LDA youth coordinator] organizes meetings and says: ‘Come if you want to do something’.” (R38).*



The general passivity encountered in LDA Zavidovići's attempts to mobilize local stakeholders also had other causes. Several respondents shared the opinion that the long tradition of having only one major employer in the municipality, the Krivaja factory, and the resulting job security for a large part of the local society, as well as *"the mindset of industrial workers"* (R34), contributed to this passivity. Additionally, the current dire socio-economic situation with high unemployment rates is also an important factor in decreasing the will and capacities of citizens to be more involved:

*"Now everything is influenced by the bad economic situation. People are desperate, there is not much wish to do other activities when you all the time think whether you will have the next lunch. There is not much space for cultural or sports activities."* (R34)

Hence, the combination of the general passivity of the participants and the top-down approach of LDA Zavidovići contributed to local stakeholders being mostly involved in the projects as passive beneficiaries who rely on the organization to create and implement projects for their benefits, rather than being proactive citizens contributing with their actions to the local democratic processes.

The ability of LDA Zavidovići to prompt structural changes was further limited by the belief shared among the municipal officials that NGOs should primarily be engaged in helping citizens and providing them with concrete services, rather than proposing policy changes that would address the causes of the problems faced by people. Ironically, LDA Zavidovići has significantly contributed to this perception of the proper role of NGOs through the example of their work. The organization was unable to break this perception and to encourage the local authorities to accept a more policy and advocacy oriented role for NGOs, and to listen more actively to their proposals for reforms that could bring systemic changes and provide more sustainable solutions to existing problems.

Finally, it is important to mention that over the years LDA Zavidovići has implemented a wide range of projects in very diverse areas, with a rather short time dedicated to projects focusing on one particular issue and with only limited follow-up. This indicates one structural problem faced by NGOs in general – the changing priorities of donors. The sectors and topics that international donors prioritize change rather quickly, without giving NGOs sufficient time to achieve meaningful improvements in any particular area, as too often they are forced to "follow the money" and change their focus.

### **7.3.3 Factors affecting the ability of Youth organization Odisej to achieve societal changes**

As the evaluation showed, Odisej was successful in changing the attitudes of young people in the Bratunac municipality and creating inter-ethnic friendships among them. Yet, most of the effects of Odisej's work occurred at this micro level. The respondents reported general improvements in inter-group relations in Bratunac society, such as a decrease in inter-ethnic tensions, and cafes and shops being visited by all ethnic groups; however, the extent to which Odisej served as the decisive force in triggering these changes is rather unclear. Hence, the organization was rather unsuccessful in translating individual-level changes into community or society-level improvements. We will first analyze the factors that enabled their success at the level of individuals, and then discuss the issues that hindered Odisej from achieving broader societal changes.

For a substantial period, Odisej was the only organization in the Bratunac municipality that offered leisure time activities for the local young people; basically a place to meet and spend time. Odisej offered activities and opportunities young people could not find elsewhere, and in its first years it essentially functioned as a youth center. Through these opportunities, and as the only such space in Bratunac, Odisej attracted a significant number of youngsters from various backgrounds and ethnicities. The sustained inter-ethnic contact during free time activities, together with the dealing with the past workshops Odisej started to organize a few years after it began operation, resulted in positive changes in individual perceptions and attitudes towards the others.

One factor that contributed to the success of the dealing with the past workshops was that they were organized outside Bratunac; in Sarajevo and other towns around BiH. This provided additional motivation for the youngsters to participate in the workshops, as it gave them a rare opportunity to travel and visit other places. More importantly, young people felt they could speak more freely in discussions when they left their local environment: *"The workshops were outside the environment in which people live. In those places, people were free to talk about various topics without the fear that what they say will have consequences"* (R67).

Significantly, the evaluation indicated that the dealing with the past workshops had a much stronger effect on the young people who had personally experienced the war, and thus had a greater need to discuss the issues related to the war and share their experiences and traumas with others. For the more recent generation of youngsters, such activities are seen as much less relevant.

Even though the Odisej representatives imagined the organization to act as a “*trigger*” (R53) for further changes, Odisej did not have a clear vision of how their activities could prompt societal changes. There was no strategy on how to translate individual level changes to the community level. The organization did not create any structured process of engagement in the broader local community beyond a few ad-hoc public activities that could have contributed to the improvements of the overall situation. Hence, the link between the individual and socio-political levels was largely missing from Odisej’s work.

Despite being highly valued by young people in Bratunac, the perception of Odisej was rather negative among the broader public and the local authorities. Some of the public peace activities initiated by Odisej members, especially during the early years, were rather confrontational and produced mostly negative reactions from the public. These controversial activities of Odisej also contributed to the troublesome relationships the organization had with the representatives of municipal authorities, who are the key local stakeholders. Additionally, the fact that the leaders of the organization were themselves IDPs, as they had relocated to the Bratunac municipality with the end of the conflict, might have played a certain role in their limited connections to the wider public and the key decision-makers. The respondents revealed that the local population generally perceived IDPs and returnees negatively: “*When we came to Bratunac in 1995, they [the local Serbs] hated us Serbs more than Muslims*” (R63). Being IDPs also meant that Odisej’s leaders lacked social networks that would have helped them establish themselves within the community. Lastly, as a youth organization, Odisej did not attract any substantial financial resources for its work and hence was not a valuable resource for the municipality. Hence, we can conclude that the organization failed to attract both more people, meaning the general public, and the key local stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier, the younger members of Odisej perceived the dealing with the past activities as much less relevant to their generation. As they lack any direct experience of the conflict they do not feel the same need their predecessors had, to talk about the war, the victims and the perpetrators. The younger respondents argued they had had normal relationships with people of various ethnicities even before participating in the dealing with the past workshops, and hence it was difficult to assess whether the workshops had any effect on them. They did not wish to talk about the war anymore and primarily saw the workshops and seminars offered by Odisej as an opportunity to travel and make new friends, rather than as an opportunity to share their perspectives with their peers from various backgrounds. As they admitted, they can have normal relationships with people of other ethnicities, even though there are major

disagreements on many issues related to the past war. They claimed that their relationships are even better when they avoid talking about those disagreements:

*“We talked to each other about the culture, they talked about their customs, we talked about ours. [...] And then through this talk we learned about each other, about everything. But we were far from having some conflicts. Maybe it was precisely because there was no discussion about who is guilty [of the past war] and who isn't.” (R56)*

Yet, according to some of the older members, the activities of bringing young people from diverse backgrounds together to enhance their mutual contact and break the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices between them are still needed. They see these activities as relevant particularly for youngsters living in more isolated, ethnically homogenous rural areas, with very limited opportunities due to the prevailing poverty and with access only to one-sided information about the issues related to the past conflict and the people of other ethnicities. As this member illustrated when asked whether dealing with the past activities are still needed:

*“They are not needed for me, but are needed for those post-war generations that are 12, 13, 14, 15 years old, are from poorly situated families in which parents blindly believe in that ludicrous ideology of their ethnic group. They need to be talked to because usually those children don't have anything, they only have the narrative “I am a great Serb” or “I am a great Muslim” and don't have absolutely anything else. They don't even have the opportunity to get an education.” (R60)*

However, Odisej apparently did not succeed in attracting these groups to its work. In recent years the small number of young people engaged in Odisej's activities were already rather open-minded before their participation in dealing with the past workshops. Hence, the organization should have invested more efforts into targeting youngsters for whom these activities would be more relevant and could bring substantial changes.

While they seemed uninterested in talking about the past, and claimed that relationships between young people of various ethnicities in their communities were normal, young respondents often complained about the persistent bad socio-political situation in Bratunac and in the country. Most respondents blamed the existing ethnic tensions on the politicians who are misusing ethnic differences for their personal gains: *“Here in BiH, the government is mostly to blame, in my opinion, because they all look after their own interests. People here fight without even knowing why” (R56)*. At the same time, the leaders of the organization shared their feeling

that the newer generation of young people were not willing to engage in more profound discussions about politics:

*“What bothers me now is that the majority of our new, younger members is completely apolitical. They avoid politics, don’t like to talk about politics even though they don’t understand it. I see a complete indifference to having anything to do with politics.”* (R63)

Many youngsters do not even participate in elections, as they are discouraged by the alleged wide-spread election corruption, especially vote-buying and other attempts to influence the election results (Pod Lupom 2021; Zvornički 2020). As most of the respondents revealed, during the past elections *“every citizen could sell his vote for 50 marks. It was obvious, votes were being sold publicly, and there was no one to legally prevent it”* (R66).

Despite being aware of the shift in young people’s perceptions of the situation in their community and beyond, and their opinions on discussing the past, Odisej did not profoundly change its main aim and focus, and continued mainly follow the same model of engaging the youngsters in dealing with the past workshops. Essentially, the organization failed to adapt to the changing circumstances.

The last factor influencing not only the ability of Odisej to trigger societal changes, but also the very existence of the organization in the future, is the widespread youth exodus. Youngsters currently do not see their future in Bratunac due to the poor socio-economic situation and the lack of job opportunities: *“All the youngsters from Bratunac are just looking at how to get out of here”* (R61). This issue, along with all the factors discussed above, has resulted in the current leadership problem. The leaders of this youth organization passed the age when they could be considered as youngsters some years ago; however, they have not found any younger members willing to take over the leadership of the NGO. The organization is currently practically inactive.

## 8 Discussion

The dissertation aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate on the role played by civil society organizations, NGOs in particular, in the peacebuilding process. The author has primarily intended to shed more light on the potential reach of the NGOs' work; in other words, what levels of society can NGOs affect through their peacebuilding activities. Additionally, the analysis attempted to find the factors that enable NGOs to achieve positive changes, while also answering the question of what prevents NGOs from influencing the higher levels of society. We have focused on the group of NGOs that has scarcely been researched – local, community-based and relatively small organizations.

This chapter synthesizes the result of the three evaluations presented in the previous part and discusses common trends. We will present the lessons we can learn from the three case studies and relate them to the existing knowledge presented in the theoretical part of the thesis.

The three evaluated NGOs represent three different models of work. NDC Sarajevo can be seen as an example of organization doing the usual work of NGOs in post-conflict settings – bringing people of various ethnicities together to share their experiences and perspectives of the conflict, and through intensive contact and dialogue changing the attitudes towards the others and re-starting inter-group communication. However, what is specific about NDC Sarajevo is its emphasis on the process of intensive inter-group cooperation following the dialogue seminars. The organization did not primarily aim at individual changes of attitudes, but understood them more as a prerequisite for the normalization of cooperation between various groups at the community level, and for making the local society functional in the sense of providing essential services to its citizens regardless of their background. NDC Sarajevo achieved this by motivating the alumni of dialogue seminars, often the representatives of key local authorities, to actively engage in the life of their communities and to initiate concrete actions addressing local-level problems and bringing benefits to all groups. This approach proved to be effective in triggering community level changes that contributed to the increased functionality of local, multi-ethnic communities.

LDA Zavidovići is standard, project-based NGO, engaged in multiple areas of the life of the local community in a single municipality. LDA Zavidovići is the only one of the three evaluated organizations that operates in a municipality inhabited by one dominant ethnic group. The organization implemented post-conflict humanitarian and reconstruction projects and provided services to various groups of citizens in need, as well as technical assistance to civil society

groups and the local authorities. They attempted to enhance citizen participation and local democratic processes, while providing the local community with intensive contact with partners in Italy. This organization had quite the opposite approach to NDC Sarajevo. As LDA Zavidovići originated from the post-conflict reconstruction work, they followed the classic model of local stakeholders being the recipients of services planned for and provided by the NGO. The organization essentially followed the same model in projects aimed at enhancing the participation of young people and other citizens in the life of the community. LDA Zavidovići was valued very highly for the assistance and services they provided to the local society during their long, continuous presence in the Zavidovići municipality, yet they were mostly unsuccessful in triggering more structural, systematic changes. Hence, instead of tackling the structural causes of the prevailing problems faced by various groups of inhabitants in Zavidovići through encouraging necessary reforms or policy changes, LDA Zavidovići was only able to ease the consequences of these problems through the provision of concrete help. Nevertheless, the feature that is specific to this organization, the connection to various Italian institutions, did bring benefits in the form of the few institutional changes that were adopted by local authorities and individuals based on their study trips to Italy.

It is also important to comment on the specific conceptualization of peace that LDA Zavidovići applied in its work, and particularly on what the organization chose not to include in its activities. The representatives of the organization argued that issues related to the past conflict were still too sensitive in the local community, while also implying that there were no visible inter-ethnic problems in the almost mono-ethnic community of the Zavidovići municipality. Hence, LDA Zavidovići focused more on supporting local democracy, citizens' participation and, to a small extent, easing the poor economic situation. In this way they intended to enhance local peace, instead of engaging in activities directly addressing the past and the problems that led to, and were aggravated by the war. As the works of Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) and Edwards (2014) have shown, these are certainly important avenues for building peace. Yet the local reality, which is that the key issues related to the past conflict and the persistent ethnic divisions and tensions are still taboo in Zavidovići, should have motivated the organization to address them rather than ignore them altogether.

The youth organization *Odisej* is an example of a membership NGO, primarily serving the needs of its members. *Odisej* was successful in bridging the divide between youngsters from various backgrounds in the Bratunac municipality. The organization can also serve as confirmation of the positive effects of sustained inter-group contact during free time activities

accompanied by planned workshops where participants discussed the past conflict, their personal war experiences and their perceptions of the victims and the perpetrators. Despite having a vague desire to spread these positive individual-level changes to the wider community, the representatives of Odisej did not formulate a clear vision or strategy of how their work could improve the general situation in the broader society. When the younger generation who had no direct experience with the past war joined the organization, the perceived relevance of the dealing with the past workshops and their effects, diminished significantly. Younger members do not share the same urge to discuss the past as their older peers, and they build friendships across ethnic divides more easily, despite disagreeing on numerous issues related to the war. As a result, Odisej has lost its original purpose, and this has contributed to the problems of a declining membership base and the lack of youngsters willing to take over the leadership of the organization.

The research proved that NGOs are capable of achieving individual-level improvements, such as changing attitudes towards the others, improving the perception of the work of civil society organizations, mobilizing youngsters to participate in community work, and decreasing the perceived importance of one's ethnicity in everyday-life situations. Through their active engagement in local communities, NGOs can also prompt people to build relationships across the ethnic divide, providing a natural impetus for them to meet and engage in everyday activities.

We have seen that it is possible for NGOs to also bring benefits to the community level; although the extent and intensity of the community-level changes we have identified in individual evaluation studies, as well as the strength of evidence that the NGOs were the main drivers of those changes, differed significantly. Of the three organizations, NDC Sarajevo achieved the most significant community-level changes, enhancing communication and building cooperation among people of various ethnic backgrounds and re-connecting the mono-ethnic communities in joint activities. The organization even prompted a regional-level change, triggering cooperation among the target municipalities. However, this cooperation only lasted for a very short period because soon after it was initiated, NDC Sarajevo lost its main source of funding and the regional cooperation was discontinued. LDA Zavidovići's efforts to provide local stakeholders with a professional experience in Italy resulted in the adoption of a few systemic changes, even though several other efforts aimed at structural change did not succeed. Another improvement at the community level triggered by LDA Zavidovići is the diversified and active civil society sector, with several new NGOs being established and financially

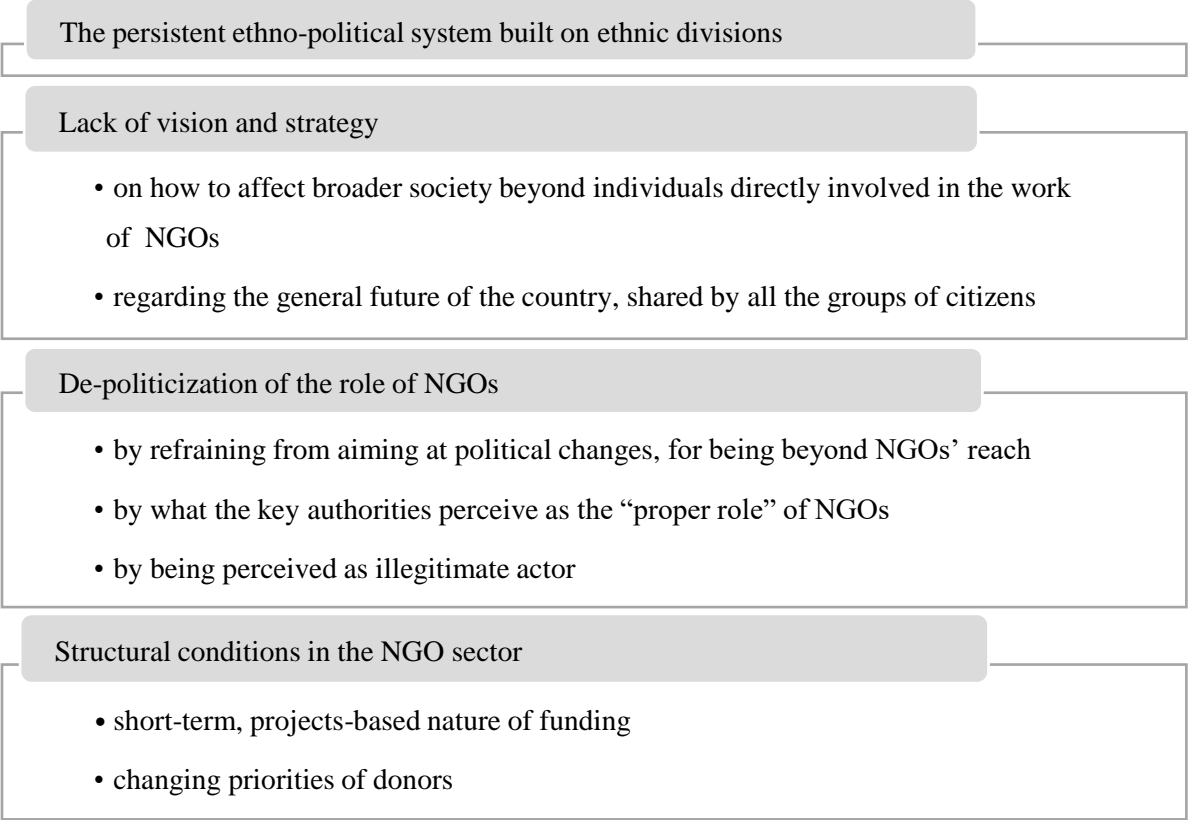


supported by LDA Zavidovići. In the case of Odisej, community-level changes were difficult to spot. Respondents generally reported improvements in the relationships between various groups of inhabitants, with a decrease in the occurrence of tensions and open conflicts. Nevertheless, the evidence that the work of Odisej was the main force prompting these improvements was rather weak, leading us to the conclusion that the organization was mostly incapable of translating the individual-level changes they achieved with the youngsters into benefits at the broader societal levels.

Interestingly, in all three examples, positive changes mostly happened when the participants in the activities left their communities. The benefits of taking people away from their usual environment were mentioned several times by respondents in all three evaluations. NDC Sarajevo organized the dialogue seminars on supposedly neutral ground in Sarajevo, and invited the most active and/or highly positioned participants for study visits to Norway. LDA Zavidovići relied heavily on knowledge sharing during the study visits to various Italian institutions and the youth exchanges between Zavidovići and Italy. Odisej mostly organized the dealing with the past workshops and youth summer camps in cooperation with their partner organizations in various towns of BiH. The benefits of travelling outside one's community were threefold. First, it provided additional, in some cases the main motivation for the participants to join the activities of the NGOs, especially in the early post-conflict years when travelling was particularly difficult because of economic reasons and visa requirements. Second, respondents admitted that being out of their usual environment allowed them to open up more in various discussions. If they had stayed in their hometown, they would have felt less comfortable sitting in a room with people of the other ethnicities and discussing sensitive topics. Third, seeing examples of various processes and practices in foreign countries, as in Italy and Norway, served as an inspiration and motivation for the adoption of similar practices, or at least for further engagement in working for the community. Many respondents in the NDC Sarajevo case study revealed that the study trip to Norway gave significant impetus to them becoming active in their communities. Essentially, this finding confirms the importance of constructing what Šavija-Valha and Šahić (2015:58) call places of interethnic encounters that should be created as a "neutral and symmetrical place in which participants have equal opportunity to claim, freely and openly, their group, individual, inter-group, and inter-individual identities and interests, and in which they will be safe while doing that", and that these places are best created outside one's usual environment.

As can be seen from the analysis of the levels of behavioral changes triggered by the three NGOs, we have not identified any significant effects of their interventions that reached beyond the community level. The research attempted to explain what prevented the evaluated NGOs from achieving structural and broader societal changes. The key causes of this failure are presented in the following figure.

Figure 2: Factors preventing NGOs from reaching beyond individual and community levels



Source: author

First, a barrier common to all three NGOs that essentially prevented them from achieving more systemic, structural changes that would have affected larger parts of society, is the existing ethno-political system in BiH. None of the three models that the evaluated NGOs applied was able to break the prevailing political problems in BiH. The example of NDC Sarajevo, the one organization of the three evaluated NGOs that triggered the most substantial changes at the community level, showed that the improved inter-ethnic cooperation and functionality of local multiethnic communities does not necessarily trigger structural improvements at higher levels. The approach of Odisej focused exclusively on inter-group relationships, without ensuring any support from, or legitimacy among, the wider public and local authorities, proved even less effective in challenging the existing system. Promoting more structural, higher-level changes

would essentially have meant engaging in issues of a political nature and would have required direct cooperation with political institutions beyond the municipal level. However, the existing political system is built on the division of power according to ethnicity, and relies heavily on misusing ethnic differences and reinforcing ethnic tensions in order to maintain the status quo for the politicians and serving public officials (K1). As Kapidžić (2020:81) explains, in the current power structures, the political contest is “purposefully contained within ethnic and subnational boundaries and constrained through several layers of institutionalized multilevel and ethnic checks and balances”. As a result, the party system, with a few political parties dominating politics over a long period of time, “closely reflects the ethnic structure of the country and subnational units of governance” (82), with voters almost exclusively voting for parties representing their own ethnic group. Moreover, employment is also linked to ethnically-based political parties that control the public administration and state-owned companies (K3). Such a system, where ethnicity and ethnic divisions are deeply institutionalized, is not open to initiatives that would in any way transform it by breaching those divisions and initiating multi-ethnic cooperation for the benefit of all. NGOs with their limited powers, unstable funding and weak public support are certainly not in a position to break such deeply entrenched systems of division. However, the existing political situation in BiH not only creates a barrier to the NGOs’ reach, it also presents a threat to the benefits that NGOs are capable of providing, as the situation with NDC Sarajevo’s work in an elementary school in Kravica and Konjević Polje showed. Moreover, the language of ethnic division and hatred used by politicians especially in the pre-election periods and during commemorations of mass atrocities committed during the war perpetuates the problems that NGOs in the peacebuilding field are striving to alleviate (K6).

Second, the research indicated a prevailing lack of vision and strategies. On one level, two of the three organizations did not formulate a clear vision of the broader change their work should have contributed to, nor a strategy on how to trigger such change. LDA Zavidovići claimed that it aimed to enhance local democracy, yet did not specify how exactly the activities they organized should lead to it. Similarly, Odisej lacked any strategy for using the individual-level changes in perceptions towards the others to achieve changes at the level of community and society. These examples serve as evidence that if an NGO does not plan for broader societal changes, it cannot expect such changes to occur naturally. As the RPP model of effective peacebuilding iterates (Anderson and Olson 2003) and this research proves, changes at the individual level are not automatically reflected in improvements at the community and society levels.

On another level, the problem of a lack of vision in the work of these organizations could be connected to the general lack of a shared vision for the future of BiH. When discussing why NDC Sarajevo chose only to work with local communities and not on higher levels of society, the representatives of the organization admitted that they did not know what should be done in order to make the broader society functional again. As the following quote by the representative of NDC Sarajevo illustrates, the country lacks a broadly shared vision of how the future of BiH should look:

*“To really change society to a democratic one which would be functional on higher level, capable to provide services to citizens, I think we have no clue, on the level of vision among BiH citizens, on possibilities for this change. We have a problem imagining and conceptualizing the future in this society in general. [...] There are in fact three visions: Bosniak Bosnia, Croatian vision of Bosnia – either to join Croatia or to have autonomy, and several Serb visions of BiH. Each of these visions is offensive and entrenched and cannot be discussed. That’s why I think that even if we got all the money to work throughout BiH, I’m not sure we would be able to achieve significant change. Maybe some small policy changes, but to make broader change we need very wide dialogue about the vision of BiH.” (R2)*

Coupled with young people see their futures outside the country, as most of the youngsters interviewed for this research revealed, the picture of society in BiH is still one of a “lack of progress, lack of perspectives, lack of security, and finally, lack of hope” (Džihic 2012:330).

Third factor relates to the de-politicized role NGOs play in BiH. In the three evaluations, we have encountered three different reasons for NGOs not assuming more political roles. NDC Sarajevo intentionally refrained from working with higher-level political institutions out of the belief that the political system is so entrenched that they would not be able to achieve any meaningful changes in that area. LDA Zavidovići has, on several occasions, tried to push the local authorities to adopt some reforms and policy changes; however, their potential to trigger such changes was significantly limited by the local authorities seeing the “proper role” of NGOs only in service provision. In Odisej’s case, the organization lacked widely shared legitimacy among the public and the local authorities and this restricted any activities aimed at political changes.

Lastly, as discussed in the theoretical parts of the thesis, the work of each organization is influenced by structural conditions in the NGO sector. Hence, when analyzing NGOs’ successes and failures, we should also focus on any constraints imposed by the sector that might have

shaped their work (Lang 2013). The research uncovered several issues inherent to the sector that negatively influenced the ability of the evaluated organizations to trigger broader changes. The short-term nature of the funding provided by international donors to NGOs is incompatible with the long-term character of the processes that have the potential to enhance peace (Heideman 2013). As the research has shown, meaningful community-level changes can only be achieved when an organization has long-term, sustained involvement with local stakeholders. In all three case studies, respondents expressed various levels of reliance on the evaluated NGO to lead the process, either as the initiator of meetings, or taking the lead role in planning and organizing activities. Additionally, as the RPP model (Anderson and Olson 2003) emphasizes, the involvement of key stakeholders in communities is one of the crucial pre-conditions for effective peacebuilding. However, people in such key positions are often elected officials, and they may change with new election cycles. Other beneficiaries with whom NGOs work can also change over time. For example, students finish school and often leave their communities, with new pupils entering the education process. If the work of NGOs is discontinued due to losing the support of donors, the benefits those NGOs created disappear relatively quickly with the natural turnover of stakeholders. Hence, if peacebuilding efforts are to yield sustained results, the processes involved require long-term commitment from donors to financially support communities recovering from conflict.

Moreover, the traditional project-based support may not be appropriate for peacebuilding interventions. As this study has shown, respondents greatly appreciated it when an organization gave them the freedom to initiate local-level activities that addressed the issues they perceived as crucial in a way they saw as effective. In contrast, when an NGO assumed the role of the main initiator and manager of activities; a model typical of most peacebuilding projects and other development activities, this contributed to the passivity of the local population. People in the position of standard beneficiaries became used to the NGO being the active agent of change and they were not motivated to become more proactive members of their communities. Nevertheless, regular project funding is based on the detailed plan of activities that the NGO would implement (Heideman 2013; McMahan 2017), and this leaves limited space for local citizens' initiatives and leads to reliance on the NGOs to lead the community work.

The usual funding processes of international donors negatively affected all three NGOs. NDC Sarajevo refused to change their way of working to adapt to changing donor priorities. As a result, the organization struggled to secure new sources of funding after their main donor, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, downsized their program in BiH and, after 15 years of

continuous and fairly flexible funding that essentially allowed NDC Sarajevo to develop their effective peacebuilding approach, they stopped supporting this NGO. Afterwards, NDC Sarajevo was only able to ensure funding for their projects in Jajce and they had to leave the remaining three municipalities. For LDA Zavidovići, we have identified the frequent changes in the organization's focus as one of the reasons this NGO did not prompt significant societal change. They were influenced by the changes in the donors' priorities and the organization never spent a long time focusing on one particular issue. Odisej, being a small, membership-based NGO, has never fully developed the professional capacities to acquire substantial funds. One of the key informants closely familiar with this organization (K2) also indicated this problem. This situation highlights one problem of the project-based system, where representatives of NGOs are required to have a set of technical knowledge and skills in order to succeed in competing for donor funding.

Some of the factors we identified as having a negative influence on the ability of NGOs to enhance peace are context specific and would not be applicable to other post-conflict environments. Other factors should be considered by NGOs working in peacebuilding sector in other post-conflict countries. These include the importance of having a long-term vision and strategy for enhancing peace in the broader society, possessing a certain level of legitimacy among both the population and key stakeholders, and being aware of the limitations posed by the NGO sector and the usual funding processes.

### **8.1 Theoretical implications of the research findings**

The case study of NDC Sarajevo validated the theoretical model presented by the RPP project that provided guidance on how to construct an effective peacebuilding program (Anderson and Olson 2003). The model of NDC Sarajevo's involvement in local communities largely adheres to the RPP criteria. The organization provided a lot of space and support for local groups to initiate their own activities for enhancing peace at the local level, addressed some of the institutional problems contributing to the persistent ethnic divisions and tensions, and improved inter-ethnic relationships. NDC Sarajevo also connected the four quadrants of the RPP matrix (see figure 1) and took the improvements made on an individual level to the socio-political level through public initiatives carried out by the dialogue alumni. NDC Sarajevo secured the support and active cooperation of both key representatives of the local communities and wider groups of the population. With the other two evaluated NGOs, we have seen that their approaches were rather far from the ideal presented by the RPP model. At the same time, NDC Sarajevo was the most successful of the three in achieving higher-level changes, meaningfully taking the benefits

from the individual level to a certain level of the socio-political realm. This indicates the soundness of the RPP model.

The study highlighted “pathologies in peacebuilding”, a term referred to by Heideman (2013) in her insightful paper on donor support for NGOs in Croatia. We have essentially validated a number of claims that the usual way donors support the NGO sector in their peacebuilding work actually undermines the NGOs’ abilities to achieve meaningful societal changes (Belloni 2013; Fagan 2005; Heideman 2013; Howard 2011; Jeffrey 2007a; Sejfiija 2006; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013). Short-term, professionalized, project-based funding and changing donor priorities proved to be especially limiting for all three evaluated NGOs. Nevertheless, as the domestic public funding for such activities is almost nonexistent (TACSO 2014; USAID et al. 2019), international funding, though decreasing and limiting the work of NGOs, is usually the only way to sustain the organizations’ work. The donors’ practices have not changed significantly over the years, despite long-standing criticism from academics and practitioners. Hence, we should fully acknowledge the continuing limitations these practices pose to organizations dependent on international funding and we should consider these limitations in our analyses of the work of NGOs.

Numerous studies presented in the theoretical parts of this dissertation also identified donors’ funding policies as one cause of the de-politicization of NGOs’ activities (Belloni and Hemmer 2010; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). Nevertheless, we have uncovered other, more internal and domestic factors not directly influenced by donors that have also stripped NGOs of their political roles. It is especially difficult for an NGO to assume a political role when key local stakeholders refuse to acknowledge them as having anything other than the function of service provision. This is also the case when an NGO possesses very low legitimacy and has little support from the wider public and local authorities. Finally, the existing ethno-political system blocks attempts by NGOs to prompt broader political changes. The fact that the evaluated NGOs were unable to assume a political role and influence policy changes could have been a crucial factor in their failure to trigger structural changes. As DeTurk (2006) emphasized, for a structural change to occur, it is necessary to motivate and empower actors to voice their needs and wishes, to participate in actions bringing about desired changes and, crucially, achieve policy changes. Our case studies showed that without the last point, policy changes, structural and systemic improvements are not possible.

## **Conclusion**

Responding to Diehl's (2016) call for devoting more academic research to the study of positive peace, the presented dissertation focused on the process of enhancing broadly defined positive peace in the post-conflict society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate on the role civil society organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can possibly play in the process of building peace after a civil war. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the international community put a lot of hope into these non-state actors, expecting that they would be able to counter the dominant ethno-national political discourse, reconnect the society divided along ethnic lines and enhance peace and democracy (Chandler 2017; McMahon 2017). Despite these high expectations, studies providing evidence of the changes local grassroots NGOs were capable of bringing to the society of BiH are rather scarce, especially those giving voice to the beneficiaries of the NGOs' work who are in the best position to assess their effectiveness (Firchow 2018). The dissertation strived to fill this research gap by evaluating three local NGOs working in various regions of the country and applying various approaches in their work. The data for these evaluations was collected through interviews and focus groups with various participants and beneficiaries of the NGOs.

The aim of the dissertation was to assess the extent to which the local grassroots NGOs working in the peacebuilding sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina are able to contribute to increased peacefulness in local communities and the broader society. The methods applied in the study were introduced in detail in chapter 1. The literature reviews presented in chapters 2 – 5 provided the necessary theoretical background for the subsequent empirical study. Chapter 2 discussed definitions of the terms peace and peacebuilding, and showed the variety of opinions concerning conditions that can be called peaceful and how to achieve such conditions. We also critically examined the liberal peacebuilding agenda that dominated the international efforts to re-build BiH after the civil war. In chapter 3 we presented the forms of assessment relating to the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding interventions. The author critically examined the problems related to the use of quantifiable indicators as measures of success of peacebuilding efforts and introduced the issue that was central to this study; the link between the micro level benefits of peacebuilding interventions and the macro level, societal changes. The author also included the approaches to evaluating this link. The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project criteria for peacebuilding interventions effective in bringing the micro-level changes to the macro level are also presented here, as we applied these criteria when assessing the work of the selected NGOs. In chapter 4 we turned to the civil society organizations, provided definitions



and characteristics of civil society and identified the roles civil society, particularly NGOs, play in peacebuilding processes. This laid the groundwork for the description of the civil society sector in BiH and the conditions within which the sector has developed and functioned, as presented in chapter 5.

The three case studies at the core of this dissertation rely on the author's qualitative research in the communities targeted by the work of the three evaluated NGOs: NDC Sarajevo, LDA Zavidovići and the Youth organization Odisej. Before presenting the results of the evaluations, we briefly introduced these NGOs, their histories, visions, strategies and main activities. In the key chapter of this dissertation, chapter 7, we provided rich evidence of the behavioral changes triggered by the work of the three NGOs. To assess the abilities of NGOs to achieve changes beyond the level of individuals, we analyzed the levels at which each identified behavioral change occurred. The author also applied the RPP criteria for effective peacebuilding interventions to the analysis of the NGOs' work. The analyses allowed us to indicate the factors that helped organizations bring the benefits of their activities to higher levels of society, as well as those factors that inhibited them from triggering structural, systemic changes.

All three evaluated NGOs contributed to important individual level improvements and in a few cases these translated to community-level improvements. For example, we have identified changes in personal attitudes towards other ethnic groups, enhanced communication between people from various ethnic backgrounds in communities where inter-ethnic encounters had previously been scarce, more frequent contacts between ethnic groups, an enhanced position of civil society in the local community and youngsters mobilized to participate in community work. The study shows that some elements of the NGOs' work have enhanced their ability to achieve these positive changes. First, taking the project participants outside their communities allowed them to be more open than they would have been in their local environment when discussing sensitive issues connected to the past conflict and the inter-ethnic relationships in their communities. Additionally, the opportunity to travel to other towns in BiH and abroad was a factor that initially motivated people to join the process, especially in the early post-conflict period when it was difficult for citizens of BiH to travel due to economic reasons and visa requirements. Second, giving beneficiaries the freedom to implement their own local initiatives that addressed the issues they perceived as pressing was of a major benefit to the entire process. Third, we also showed that it is crucial to engage key, well-positioned members of local communities and local authorities in the peacebuilding process in order to transfer the individual-level changes to the broader community.

However, we have not identified any behavioral changes the three NGOs achieved at higher than community level. The author found no evidence of these NGOs contributing to systemic, structural changes that would broadly enhance peace and democracy in BiH, and uncovered several key factors that prevented NGOs from achieving such changes. First, the existing ethno-national political system in BiH proved difficult to break for small, local NGOs with limited funding and reach. The deeply institutionalized ethnic divisions, the prevailing ethnic narratives and ethnic tensions that are periodically stirred by leading politicians for their political gains, all present a major barrier for NGOs trying to take benefits from an individual level to a societal level. Such conditions, with divisions so entrenched, are not conducive to changes that would reconnect the divided communities and enhance their functionalities for all citizens. Second, the study proved that if an organization does not have a clear strategy on how to trigger broader, societal changes, it cannot expect such changes to happen naturally as an inevitable consequence of individual changes. The third factor is connected with the de-politicized role of NGOs. None of the three NGOs assumed a particularly political function. This was either the result of the conviction that policy changes are impossible for NGOs to influence, or because the key political actors refused to acknowledge political roles for NGOs beyond the service provision, or due to the poor image and low legitimacy of an NGO among the public, and among the local authorities that blocked the attempts of the NGO to influence policy changes. Finally, structural conditions in the NGO sector, particularly the short-term, project-based nature of funding for NGOs and the quickly changing priorities of international donors, also limited the NGOs in their reach.

To conclude, the dissertation paints a de-romanticized picture of the ability of NGOs to enhance peace in the broader society recovering from civil war, and thus contributes to the existing literature warning against relying too much on NGOs as prime agents in the process of building peace. We provide evidence of the barriers that limit grassroots NGOs from triggering structural changes. At the same time, we fully recognize the essential benefits NGOs bring to local communities. We should approach NGOs with realistic expectations concerning what they can and cannot achieve. The international community should also address the persistent challenges that short-term, project-based funding poses to NGOs striving for changes that are inherently of a long-term nature. Nevertheless, as representatives of one of the evaluated NGO admitted, without the society of BiH agreeing on a shared vision for the future of their country, NGOs will lack a clear view of the desired conditions they should strive to promote.

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## Annex 1: List of respondents

Table 11: List of respondents

Respondent code	Date	Place	Method of data collection	Evaluated NGO	Characteristics of the respondent, relation to the evaluated NGO	Language of data collection
<b>R1</b>	03/06/2016	Sarajevo	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	representative of the organization	English
<b>R2</b>	03/06/2016	Sarajevo	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	representative of the organization	English
<b>R3</b>	03/06/2016	Sarajevo	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	representative of the organization	English
<b>R4</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R5</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R6</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R7</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	local CSO representative, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R8</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	municipality employee, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R9</b>	14/06/2016	Zvornik	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R10</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	local CSO representative, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R11</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R12</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	school administration employee, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R13</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R14</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	local CSO representative, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R15</b>	16/06/2016	Srebrenica	individual interview	NDC Sarajevo	municipality employee, member of NCB	English
<b>R16</b>	17/06/2016	Srebrenica	individual interview	NDC Sarajevo	representative of the Dialogue Centre Srebrenica-Bratunac	English
<b>R17</b>	17/06/2016	Bratunac	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R18</b>	17/06/2016	Bratunac	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	municipality employee, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R19</b>	17/06/2016	Bratunac	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	school administration employee, member of NCB	B-C-S

<b>R20</b>	17/06/2016	Bratunac	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	school administration employee, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R21</b>	17/06/2016	Bratunac	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	business sector representative, former municipality representative, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R22</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R23</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R24</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, sports coach, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R25</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R26</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	teacher, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R27</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	focus group	NDC Sarajevo	sports coach, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R28</b>	20/06/2016	Jajce	individual interview	NDC Sarajevo	local CSO representative, member of NCB	English
<b>R29</b>	06/03/2017	Srebrenica	individual interview	NDC Sarajevo	municipality councilor, local CSO representative, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R30</b>	25/05/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	NDC Sarajevo	municipality councilor, member of NCB	B-C-S
<b>R31</b>	23/06/2016, 24/06/2016	Zavidovići	individual interviews	LDA Zavidovići	representative of the organization	English
<b>R32</b>	24/06/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	employee of the organization	English
<b>R33</b>	24/06/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	representative of a partner organization	English
<b>R34</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	municipality representative	English
<b>R35</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	municipality representative	B-C-S
<b>R36</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	kindergarten administration employee	B-C-S

<b>R37</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	local youngster involved in LDA youth activities	English
<b>R38</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	local youngster involved in LDA youth activities	English
<b>R39</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	local youngster involved in LDA youth activities	English
<b>R40</b>	10/10/2016	Zavidovići	group interview	LDA Zavidovići	local youngster involved in LDA youth activities	English
<b>R41</b>	11/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	local CSO representative	B-C-S
<b>R42</b>	11/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	municipality representative	B-C-S
<b>R43</b>	11/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	former participant of LDA youth activities	English
<b>R44</b>	12/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	teacher, local CSO representative	B-C-S
<b>R45</b>	12/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	representative of a partner organization	B-C-S
<b>R46</b>	13/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	teacher, former participant in LDA education projects	B-C-S
<b>R47</b>	13/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	farmer, beneficiary of LDA agricultural projects	B-C-S
<b>R48</b>	13/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	farmer, beneficiary of LDA agricultural projects	B-C-S
<b>R49</b>	14/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	local youngster involved in LDA youth project	English
<b>R50</b>	14/10/2016	Zavidovići	individual interview	LDA Zavidovići	kindergarten teacher, representative of a partner organization	B-C-S



<b>R51</b>	05/03/2017	-	email interview	LDA Zavidovići	representative of the Italian partner organization ADL Zavidovici	English
<b>R52</b>	02/04/2017	-	email interview	LDA Zavidovići	representative of the Italian partner organization ADL Zavidovici	Italian
<b>R53</b>	06/03/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	representative of the organization	B-C-S
<b>R54</b>	06/03/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	representative of the organization	B-C-S
<b>R55</b>	25/05/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	Odisej	sports coach, participant in youth activities	B-C-S
<b>R56</b>	25/05/2017	Milići	individual interview	Odisej	representative of a partner youth organization, cooperating with Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R57</b>	25/05/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	student, participant in youth activities	B-C-S
<b>R58</b>	25/05/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	student, participant in youth activities	B-C-S
<b>R59</b>	26/05/2017	Srebrenica	individual interview	Odisej	representative of a partner youth organization, cooperating with Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R60</b>	26/05/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	Odisej	former active member of Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R61</b>	26/05/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	youngster, participant in youth activities	B-C-S
<b>R62</b>	26/05/2017	Bratunac	group interview	Odisej	student, participant in youth activities	B-C-S
<b>R63</b>	08/06/2017	Bijeljina	individual interview	Odisej	representative of the organization	B-C-S
<b>R64</b>	09/06/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	Odisej	former participant in youth activities	B-C-S

<b>R65</b>	09/06/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	Odisej	former active member of Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R66</b>	09/06/2017	Bratunac	individual interview	Odisej	former active member of Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R67</b>	15/06/2017	Sarajevo	individual interview	Odisej	former active member of Odisej	B-C-S
<b>R68</b>	25/06/2017	Sarajevo	individual interview	Odisej	former active member of Odisej	English

Source: author

## Annex 2: List of key informants

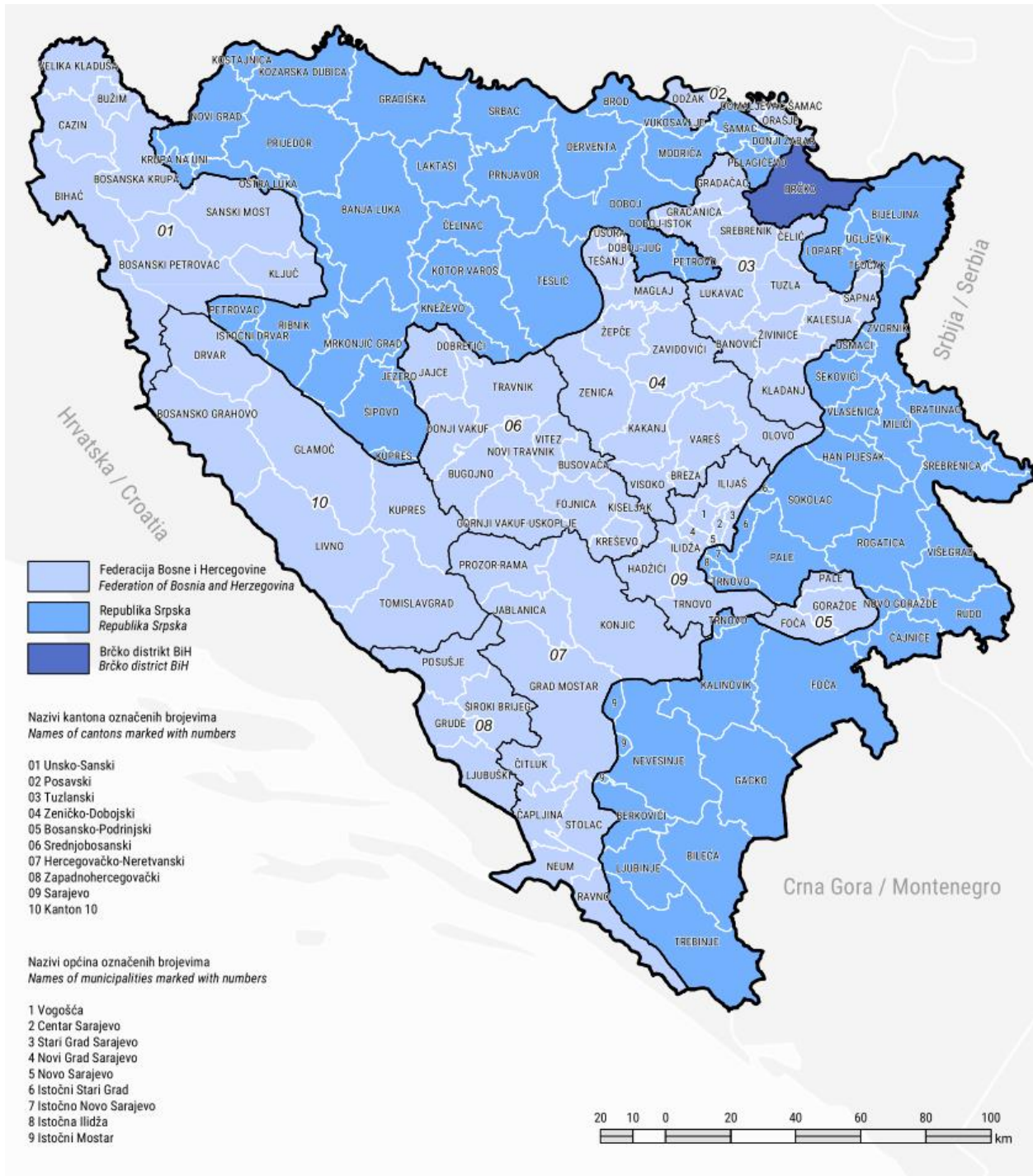
Table 12: List of key informants

Respondent code	Date	Place	Method of data collection	Characteristics of the respondent	Language of data collection
K1	02/06/2016	Sarajevo	expert interview	representative of academia	English
K2	07/06/2017	Sarajevo	expert interview	representative of the NGO sector	English
K3	14/06/2017	Sarajevo	expert interview	representative of academia	English
K4	19/06/2017	Sarajevo	expert interview	representative of academia, formerly involved in the NGO sector	English
K5	27/06/2017	Sarajevo	expert interview	representative of the international community	English
K6	31/10/2019	Bratunac	expert skype interview	representative of the international community	English

Source: author

### Annex 3: Administrative map of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Figure 3: Administrative map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Source: Agencija za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine (2016)

# **HODNOTENIE ÚLOHY ORGANIZÁCIÍ OBČIANSKEJ SPOLOČNOSTI V PROCESE BUDOVANIA MIERU V BOSNE A HERCEGOVINE**

## **AUTOREFERÁT DIZERTAČNEJ PRÁCE**

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Odbor štúdia: Mezinárodní rozvojová studia

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# **ASSESSING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PEACEBUILDING PROCESS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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Study Programme: P1314 Geography

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**Department of Development and Environmental Studies**

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Obhajoba dizertačnej práce prebehne 11. novembra 2022 pred komisiou pre obhajoby dizertačných prác doktorského štúdia v programe P1314 Geografie, študijnom odbore Mezinárodní rozvojová studia, v priestoroch Přírodovědecké fakulty Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci, 17. listopadu 12, 771 47 Olomouc.

The defence of the doctoral dissertation will be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 in front of the commission for the defence of doctoral dissertation in study programme P1314 Geography, specialization International Development Studies, in the premises of the Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc, 17. listopadu 12, 771 47 Olomouc.

S dizertačnou prácou je možné sa zoznámiť na študijnom oddelení Přírodovědecké fakulty Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci, 17. listopadu 12, 77 46 Olomouc.

The dissertation is available at the Study Department, Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc, 17. listopadu 12, 771 46 Olomouc.

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## **Abstract**

Civil society organizations have featured prominently in internationally-led peacebuilding initiatives. Interventions built on liberal peacebuilding theory perceived a developed civil society sector as a crucial element of functional and peaceful democracies, and hence civil society building became the key component of the liberal peacebuilding agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been host to complex, multileveled liberal peacebuilding interventions by a wide variety of international actors for almost 27 years. One important component of the peacebuilding agenda in BiH has been civil society building. International actors regarded civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular, as capable of countering the prevailing ethno-nationalist political discourse, enhancing democratic culture and bringing a society divided along ethnic lines closer together, despite having little evidence to support these aspirations. This dissertation aims to shed light on the ability of small, local NGOs to enhance peace and democracy in a post-conflict society. We mainly focus on the so-called micro-macro link; in other words, whether NGOs can use the individual-level changes they trigger in people, such as changes in attitudes towards other groups, to enhance peace for the broader society. Based on the qualitative evaluation of three NGOs working in various regions across BiH, we concluded that even though these NGOs brought essential benefits to local communities, they were unable to trigger more systemic, structural changes that would have broadly enhanced peace in BiH. A number of factors prevented NGOs from influencing such changes. First, the existing ethno-political system in BiH, rooted in deeply entrenched ethnic divisions, proved difficult to break for small, local NGOs with limited funding and reach. Second, the study showed that if an organization does not have a clear strategy on how to trigger broader, societal changes, they will not happen naturally as an inevitable consequence of individual changes. Third, if an NGO refuses to assume, or is denied, a political role, essentially it cannot influence any of the political changes required to enhance the peacebuilding process. Finally, NGOs are limited in their reach also due to structural conditions in the NGO sector, particularly the short-term, project-based nature of funding for NGOs and the quickly changing priorities of donors.

**Key words:** non-governmental organizations, positive peace, liberal peacebuilding, micro-macro link, Bosnia and Herzegovina



## Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is still far from being a peaceful country with past wounds healed, conflict issues resolved, society reconnected and the threat of a renewed conflict averted. Especially in recent months, the words war and conflict have been appearing disturbingly often in the news concerning political developments in the country. This is mainly in connection to the secessionist steps taken or soon to be taken by Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb political leader and a member of the tripartite presidency of BiH (Latal 2021). However, we do see similar political tensions increasing periodically, mainly in pre-election periods, to such extent that Džihic (2012) uses the term permanent crisis when describing the realities of BiH.

We continue to witness the numerous political and societal problems BiH has to deal with, including the poor economic situation, despite the decades-long, intensive and ambitious engagement of the international community in all spheres of the country's post-conflict development. The Dayton Peace Agreement, negotiated by international actors in 1995, was effective in stopping the fighting and the direct violence against the citizens of BiH. Nevertheless, the ethno-political system that was created with the peace agreement has hindered rather than enabled the transformation of BiH into a functioning and truly peaceful country whose citizens share a common identity (Bennett 2016). As Keil and Perry (2016, 5) explain, BiH "was (and remains) a fragmented, complicated, ethnically- gerrymandered construction". They also argue that the country "consists of a convoluted patchwork of state, entity, cantonal, and municipal levels of government crafted to appease the varying formerly warring factions by ensuring everyone got a piece of the post-war pie". The complex and complicated administrative structure, where a country of just over 3.5 million inhabitants (Agencija za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine 2016) has two entities (Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina and Republika Srpska), one special district (Brčko), 10 cantons in the Federation of BiH, more than 30 ministries at the entity level and almost 130 ministries at the cantonal level, creates the conditions of severe ineffectiveness and deeply rooted dysfunctionality (Džihic 2012). With widespread corruption, nepotism, a system of patronage where employment in public administration and state-owned enterprises is controlled by ethnically-based political parties (Kapidžic 2020), and persistent socio-economic problems, the sentiment among the people of BiH is that there is a "lack of progress, lack of perspectives, lack of security, and finally, lack of hope" (Džihic 2012:330).

Nevertheless, this study does not aim to provide yet another analysis of the past and current problems of post-conflict BiH and their causes, as a great number of researchers have already written extensively on this topic. I will instead turn the attention to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as they are the actors that have featured prominently in the post-conflict peacebuilding process in the country since the end of the war, and have been involved in a range of sectors and activities. The following, a slightly sarcastic quote from Patrice McMahon's (2017, 3) insightful book on the effects of NGOs in post-conflict countries illustrates how broad the NGO sector in BiH was, especially in the first years of the internationally led post-conflict reconstruction: "I never actually tripped over an NGO in Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, but I often had that feeling that I might if I was not careful".

The international community provided intensive support to various NGOs in BiH, as they were believed to be the agents through which peaceful and democratic development could be enhanced (Chandler 2017). Yet, despite the plethora of new NGOs founded in many towns across the country with the sudden influx of funding (Howard 2011), the prevailing image of NGOs among the wider population is rather poor. The views that NGOs are traitors or foreign mercenaries are common, and these opinions are often nurtured by some politicians (Carsimamovic Vukotic et al. 2017; Puhalo and Vukojevic 2015). Bearing this in mind, and while seeing the numerous socio-political and economic problems the country still faces, one has to wonder about the effects the internationally-supported NGOs have had on the society

of BiH. This dissertation will shed more light on this issue, particular by analyzing whether, and under what conditions, an NGO can be the main agent of structural changes that will increase peacefulness in the broader society. I will also discuss why so many NGOs only provide benefits to the individuals directly engaged in their work. The evaluation of three NGOs working in various sectors and regions of BiH, and the evidence of change triggered by the work of these organizations, will serve as background for the formulation of the conclusions concerning the effectiveness of local level NGOs in the process of enhancing peace in the society of BiH.

## **1 Scope of the study and methodology**

Following the so-called local turn in the peacebuilding field<sup>1</sup>, the attention of many practitioners and scholars was directed at local actors in conflict-affected countries, with the expectation that they would be better positioned and more capable of enhancing the struggles for peace than the liberal peacebuilding strategies of the top-level actors, which had been preferred initially. New civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) arose, mostly with financial help and expertise from Western countries. As the importance of these organizations grew, donors and other stakeholders increased the pressure on the NGOs to justify their legitimacy and provide evidence that their involvement was yielding the expected results. Nevertheless, the question of how successful NGOs are in their support for peace in post-conflict areas, let alone how “success” should be defined and measured, still remains on the table.

The dissertation works with a number of theoretical concepts and addresses several persistent research gaps. First, the issue central to this dissertation is the so-called micro-macro link; the transfer of the positive changes that an intervention brings to its target level (most often the individual level), to broader community and societal levels. The research focuses on whether and how a change in individual perceptions and attitudes influences the broader community and society. It works with the underlying assumption, formulated e.g. by DeTurk (2006), that structural change occurs through the actions of individual actors, motivated and empowered to voice their needs and wishes, influence policy changes and participate in actions that bring about desired changes. By influencing individuals it should be possible to positively influence the societal, or structural, level. The dissertation primarily focuses on this link; between the individual level and the community/societal level. It assesses whether any broader societal, structural changes were instigated due to the activities of the evaluated NGOs working at the local level in BiH. The paper looks at the factors that supported the link between individual and societal levels and, in cases where there was no transfer, why the changes in individuals did not translate into societal changes.

Second, the dissertation research is framed as an evaluation study. The evaluation of peacebuilding interventions is, however, a disputed discipline for a number of reasons. There is a lack of broad agreement on what constitutes success in peacebuilding efforts; how to measure it, how to assess whether any observed changes were partly or fully due to the evaluated intervention, and which methodologies and approaches are appropriate for such evaluations. Given the first research focus discussed above, the dissertation particularly takes on the issue of assessing the effects of peacebuilding interventions beyond the level of their primary influence, and discusses possible ways to evaluate the link.

In a broader sense, the dissertation is a contribution to the debate on the role that local peacebuilding NGOs, defined rather broadly, play in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and what positive changes their work can influence, given their positions and capacities. The focus on local actors, in this

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 2.

case NGOs, is in line with calls by proponents of the local turn and hybridity in peacebuilding for the attention of researchers to be directed at the local level, and for the focus to be on how actors at the local level experience peacebuilding interventions. This replaces the traditional focus on top-down approaches, which work primarily at the national level (Mac Ginty 2011; Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). The author is aware that NGOs do not represent the whole spectrum of the civil society sector. However, in post-war BiH, Western donors and practitioners from international organizations have often equated NGOs with civil society. Mostly, it was the newly established, professionalized NGOs, often with low memberships, that received support from donors as part of the process of strengthening civil society in general. This practice ignored the pre-existing, domestic forms of civil society organizations and associations. Additionally, civil society organizations that did not adhere to the liberal values of the liberal peacebuilding theory, such as mono-ethnic or mono-religious associations, including war veterans, victim associations and churches, usually with stronger membership bases and stronger legitimacy among local populations, were often ignored by international donors (see e.g. Kappler and Richmond, 2011; Šavija-Valha, 2012; Chandler, 2017; Puljek-Shank and Verkoren, 2017). Thus, the decision to focus the research exclusively on NGOs is also influenced by local conditions in the civil society sector.

The research into the role and impact of NGOs is particularly relevant to the situation in BiH for several reasons. The post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in BiH have received extensive financial support from the international community. In total, the net Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>2</sup> provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina between the end of the war in 1995 and 2019 (the latest year with data available) amounted to 10.3 billion USD (OECD 2021a). A considerable share of the international aid money was provided to (and through) a wide range of local and international NGOs, because the international community had high expectations that the power of the NGO sector would effectively facilitate the much needed peacebuilding, democratization and interethnic reconciliation processes (Chandler 2017; Howard 2011). However, it is important to acknowledge that the exact share of funding NGOs have received over the years can only be estimated, since such flows are not systematically tracked and published. There is also a lack of research on the broader, structural impact of NGOs. Despite the fact that 26 years have already passed since the Dayton Peace Agreement ending the violent conflict in BiH was signed, the situation in the country can hardly be called peaceful. The peacebuilding process in BiH is, at best, characterized by terms such as stuck, paralyzed and frozen (Bennett 2016; Perry 2015, 2019). Periodically in the news there are stories of heated discussions regarding controversial issues with potential harmful effects on the fragile peace and coexistence of the three ethnic groups in BiH (for a snapshot of recent political debates see e.g. BIRN 2018; Dzaferagic 2021; Harris 2018; Higgins 2022; Lakic 2019; Latal 2019, 2021; Sito-Sucic 2021). For all these reasons, despite being extensively researched, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a country where a number of questions are yet to be answered.

### **1.1 Aims and objectives of the study**

As outlined in the previous section, the aim of the dissertation is *to assess the extent to which the local grassroots non-governmental organizations working in the broadly defined peacebuilding sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina are able to contribute to increased peacefulness in local communities and the broader society.*

More specifically, the thesis will fulfil the following research objectives:

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<sup>2</sup> Official Development Assistance (ODA) measures financial resources provided by official, governmental agencies of donor countries to receiving, developing countries, with the aim of promoting development processes (OECD 2021b).

1. to analyze the role and position of non-governmental organizations in the process of building or re-building peaceful societies;
2. to analyze the current state of affairs of the NGO sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the peacebuilding field;
3. to explore the possible approaches and methods of evaluating the impact of NGO interventions on the peacefulness of target populations, particularly changes at community and society levels;
4. to evaluate the achievements of selected local peacebuilding NGOs working in various geographical and thematic areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the changes triggered by their actions at community and society levels;
5. to formulate conclusions about the ability of local peacebuilding NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina to influence broader community and societal changes leading to increased peacefulness, and about the factors contributing to or inhibiting their potential for positive impact.

The dissertation is anchored in Galtung's conceptualization of positive peace and its further elaborations by Diehl (2016) and Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta (2017), as introduced in the theoretical part of the thesis. These definitions of peace are rather broad, not focusing merely on physical security, and stressing the importance of the presence of cooperation within and between the adversaries.

## **1.2 Research methodology**

### ***1.2.1 Evaluation approach***

The thesis is designed as an evaluation study. Nevertheless, given the specificities of peacebuilding interventions described in the theoretical part of this thesis, a few distinctive features differentiate this study from typical ex-post evaluations. For ex-post evaluations, it is usual to work with results chains that depict the linear sequence of planned activities leading to the changes an organization intends to influence. The thesis draws on the findings of authors researching the hybridity of peacebuilding efforts (see e.g. Randazzo 2016; Visoka 2012), and who challenged such notions that the intentionality and linearity of actions would lead to the intended changes. In the complex, hybrid environments, it is not possible to rely on pre-defined, rational models that delineate social change as a direct result of a peacebuilding intervention. Moreover, hybridity is a challenge when it comes to assigning responsibility for any observed changes to any particular agent. These characteristics of peacebuilding render inadequate the traditional, most frequently applied approaches to ex-post evaluations that compare planned goals with an actual end state after an evaluated intervention was implemented.

The discussion introduced in chapter 3 on how to define success in peacebuilding projects, and whether it is useful to work with pre-defined sets of indicators in evaluations of peacebuilding practice, is another factor that influenced the decision about an appropriate evaluation approach for this study. The author took into consideration the concerns raised by numerous critics regarding the use of indicators in peacebuilding evaluations (see e.g. Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014; Denskus 2012; Firchow 2018; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017; Millar 2014). Furthermore, for most of their projects, the NGOs evaluated in this thesis did not define any specific results chains with targets and indicators, and they did not collect baseline data before the projects were implemented. In such cases, indicators would have to be defined ex-post, but the study would still lack the important information on the state of affairs before the initiation of the activities, and this would limit the ability to estimate any progress on the indicators.

For the reasons described above, the author of the thesis chose to apply the Outcome Harvesting evaluation approach for the study. Outcome Harvesting focuses on the collection of evidence regarding behavioral changes in various stakeholders directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally triggered by an evaluated intervention. Such changes in behavior can be reflected in changes in attitudes,

activities, relationships, agendas, policies and practices at various levels (Wilson-Grau 2019). Outcome Harvesting is not based on verifying whether a planned chain of results actually occurred, or whether a given set of indicators and targets were fulfilled. Instead, the focus is on the perceptions of the local population directly or indirectly involved in peacebuilding projects, and it allows them to define what they believed were the most important changes the intervention influenced.

The thesis will assess whether the evaluated projects improved conditions at the levels of community and society. Therefore, the evaluation will apply the criteria developed by the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project (Anderson and Olson 2003). These criteria are suitable for evaluating the potential of a project to contribute to higher-level change, or Peace Writ Large, as it is referred to by the RPP. Out of the five criteria formulated by RPP, three are especially relevant to the current state of the post-conflict situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they will be the main focus of the assessment: the extent to which the interventions

1. caused participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace;
2. resulted in the creation or reform of political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict;
3. resulted in meaningful improvements in inter-group relations (Anderson and Olson 2003; CDA 2016).

Additionally, the evaluation will determine whether the evaluated projects attempted to influence the key people in communities as well as the wider population, and whether they triggered changes in the attitudes and perceptions of individuals, and also changes at the socio-political level.

### ***1.2.2 Research questions***

Based on the conducted literature review, we formulated the following research questions, in relation to the main aim of the thesis and research objectives 4. and 5.:

RQ 1: What behavioral changes potentially contributing to increased peacefulness have the evaluated NGOs triggered by their activities?

RQ 2: At what levels of influence (individual, family, community, society at large) can we find evidence of behavioral changes triggered by the evaluated NGOs?

RQ 3: Have the evaluated NGOs triggered any changes potentially enhancing Peace Writ Large, as defined by the RPP?

RQ 3.1: Have the evaluated NGOs caused the project participants to develop their own initiatives for peace?

RQ 3.2: Has the work of the evaluated NGOs resulted in the creation of new political institutions that handle grievances fueling conflict, or at least in some reforms of the existing institutions?

RQ 3.3: Is there any evidence that the evaluated NGOs succeeded in improving inter-ethnic relations in BiH?

RQ 4: What factors enhanced or inhibited the ability of the evaluated NGOs to contribute to positive changes leading to increased peacefulness at the community and society levels?

### ***1.2.3 Research sample***

The author conducted an evaluation of three NGOs working in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author attempted to create a diverse sample of evaluated NGOs. The work of the selected NGOs covers the most common approaches that have been applied in the peacebuilding work in post-war BiH. Of the seven peacebuilding functions defined by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010), four are present in the activities of the evaluated NGOs: in-group socialization, social cohesion, intermediation and service delivery. In addition to the thematic diversity, the research targeted NGOs working in various geographical areas of

BiH. Geographical variety is particularly important in the context of BiH, given its complex administrative structure and the differing conditions in individual regions<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, the selected NGOs differ in the way they were established and who are their target groups. Resulting from the above-mentioned criteria, the research sample for this dissertation consists of the Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo (NDC Sarajevo), Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići) and the Youth organization Odisej (referred to as Odisej). Please see table 3 for the basic information about the evaluated NGOs.

A specific list of respondents was created for the evaluation of each NGO. The types of respondents targeted by the research differ for each NGO, due to their varying peacebuilding approaches and target groups. We applied non-probability sampling methods when creating the sample. More specifically, criterion sampling was used, where the respondents must meet a certain criterion in order to be included in the study, as well as snowball sampling, where the respondents contacted by the author identified other potential subjects (Gray 2018). A broader variety of stakeholders was targeted to ensure the triangulation of the collected data, including representatives of all ethnic groups inhabiting the regions where NGOs implemented their activities. We included the staff of the implementing organizations, partner organizations cooperating with the evaluated NGOs, direct beneficiaries/target groups of the activities and projects implemented by the evaluated NGOs, and stakeholders in the broader project environment. Additionally, the author consulted local experts, representatives of the international community residing in BiH and experienced NGO workers, to gain a deeper insight into the overall situation in the local peacebuilding sector, and into the general post-conflict situation in BiH. The anonymized lists of all the respondents are attached to the dissertation as Annexes. Altogether, the author interviewed 68 respondents in relation to the evaluations of the three local NGOs and six key informants.

#### ***1.2.4 Methods of data collection and analysis***

The evaluation presented in this thesis is a qualitative research study. The data were collected during three field visits, from June 2016 to June 2017. The evaluation of NDC Sarajevo additionally uses data collected and analyzed for the Master thesis the author published in 2013 (Komlossyová 2013).

For each evaluation study the main instrument used in the data collection was in-depth interviews. Additionally, for the evaluation of NDC Sarajevo, the author organized four focus groups in four municipalities where the organization had implemented its activities. Most of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in the local languages (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian), as only some of the research participants were able to fully and freely communicate in English. At the beginning of each interview and focus group, the author informed the respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of the data and the information they would share. All research participants signed a written informed consent prior to their interviews or focus groups. This meant that they agreed to be recorded, and hence most interviews and all of the focus groups were recorded to ensure that no important piece of information was lost. All the respondents were anonymized and are listed in Annexes 1 and 2. After the data collection, the interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed, coded and analyzed, applying the content analysis (see e.g. Flick 2018).

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<sup>3</sup> The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two main entities, Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine and Republika Srpska, and a condominium Brčko district. Federacija BiH (FBiH) is divided into ten cantons that are then subdivided into municipalities. Republika Srpska (RS) is only divided into municipalities. Differing demographic, legislative, social and economic conditions are present in various regions of the country (European Committee of the Regions 2016).

### **1.2.5 Research limitations**

As with all research, the study presented in this thesis faced a number of limitations that need to be reflected upon. First, the author encountered one critical constraint when creating the sample of NGOs for the research. An evaluation study, especially when conducted by an outsider evaluator, cannot be done without the explicit consent and active involvement of the evaluated entities, in this case NGOs. Several NGOs were contacted regarding their inclusion in this research, but many of them were not open to such cooperation. In spite of that, the author succeeded in creating a diverse sample of NGOs. Nevertheless, it is possible that the sample does not fully represent the whole NGO sector in BiH, and that some types of peacebuilding NGOs working in BiH have been omitted. Hence, the transferability of the findings of this research to the level of the whole peacebuilding NGO sector in BiH is somewhat limited. Moreover, as the study focused only on assessing NGOs in BiH, the application of the findings to other post-conflict contexts should be considered very carefully. Second, the qualitative research also depends on the willingness of respondents to devote their time to the research and openly share their opinions with the researcher. In the evaluation of the three NGOs, there were individuals that the author did not manage to reach, and thus some perspectives might have been missed. Finally, due to time and logistical constraints, the author was not able to spend more time in the researched communities to build greater trust among the potential respondents. Respondents who benefited in some way from the activities of the evaluated NGOs could have been motivated to paint a more positive picture and to skip the negative issues or limitations of the NGOs. However, to eliminate these forms of bias the author interviewed a wide variety of people in order to obtain the best data possible concerning the evaluated NGOs.

## **2 Conceptualizing peace and peacebuilding**

### **2.1 Peace: Negative, positive, and beyond**

Peace is most often defined in terms of what it is not. At the most basic level, peace is described as an absence of open violence or war (see e.g. Bull 2002). Instead of specifying what peace is, this definition simply states what peace is not – open violence and war cannot be called peace according to this definition. Similarly, with relations between states, Aron (2017:151) defines peace as the “*more or less lasting suspension of violent modes of rivalry*” (italics in original). He adds that, in essence, peace is not too different from war, as it also relies on the power of individual states to act upon others. For Aron, peaceful relations exist in fear of expected future conflicts, implying the recurring nature of wars.

Wright (1942) condemned the negative definition of peace for being self-defeating and unattainable and called for peace to be conceived positively as a condition where society assures cooperation and justice. Richmond (2008) criticizes mainstream international relations scholars for excessively emphasizing the balance of power between states in their definitions of peace, instead of looking into everyday life in countries affected by conflict.

The most prominent conceptualization of peace and its forms that goes beyond simply equating peace with the absence of war was presented by Johan Galtung in his essay *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research* (Galtung 1969). His starting point was, in fact, a definition presenting peace as an absence of violence; nevertheless, he further focused on defining violence and created the typology of violence that gave direction to his conceptualization of peace. Galtung identified two basic types of violence – direct, personal violence and indirect, structural violence. Consequently, he distinguished two types of peace – negative peace defined as an absence of personal violence, and positive peace understood as an absence of structural violence. Apart from defining peace again in relation to what it is not, he added that positive peace can also be understood as social justice, and an egalitarian distribution of power and resources. He thus linked peace and conflict research with development research which, in his view, is highly

relevant for positive peace. Adding to his earlier work, in 1990 he introduced a third type of violence; cultural violence, defined as aspects of culture used to legitimize direct and/or structural violence (Galtung 1990).

Despite the fact that Galtung had already conceptualized positive peace by the late 1960s, most academics and researchers remained primarily focused on peace as an absence of violence. Quantitative studies in particular worked almost exclusively around negative peace, using mainly national-level battle-related deaths as an indicator of war or peace (Campbell et al. 2017). Diehl (2016) illustrated this focus on negative peace by analyzing the content of papers published in two of the most prominent journals in peace studies; the *Journal of Peace Research* and the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. He ends his paper with a call for more academic research to deal with topics related to the broader conceptualization of positive peace. The issue of the *International Studies Review* that followed this call was devoted to papers discussing various aspects of positive peace, and challenged the prevalent understanding of peace (Guarrieri, Drury, and Murdie 2017). This dissertation is in line with this trend, as it works with the broader definitions of positive peace introduced in the paragraph above.

The concept of Peace Writ Large is another means of conceptualizing peace, though we can also see some similarities with Galtung's positive peace. Peace Writ Large was introduced in the report of the Reflecting on Peace Practice project called *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, authored by Anderson and Olson (2003). The authors defined the term Peace Writ Large as peace at the level of society as a whole. Initiatives for achieving Peace Writ Large are aimed not only at stopping violence, but also at building just and sustainable peace through the transformation of political and social grievances and support for social change. The report also suggested that peacebuilding interventions can have a broader impact, an impact on Peace Writ Large, if they operate at both the individual level and at the socio-political level, and if they target a large number of people, and also key, influential individuals in a community or society. Following on from this work, Chigas and Woodrow (2009) later emphasized that a precise meaning of Peace Writ Large has to be determined based on each particular context, and must reflect the key drivers of the conflict.

## **2.2 Defining peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding, as a strategy for dealing with conflicts and enhancing peace, was first defined by Johan Galtung in his essay *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding* (Galtung 1976). He defined peacebuilding as a process of establishing a structure and an infrastructure of peace that would decrease the likelihood of open violence, remove the causes of war and offer alternatives to conflict. Essentially, he believes that peace can be sustained through certain mechanisms that need to be built into a society's structure. Out of the three approaches to peace defined by Galtung, peacebuilding is the most complex and self-sustaining, while the other two approaches focus on more narrowly defined goals. Another prominent author in the peacebuilding field, John Paul Lederach, defined peacebuilding as follows:

*“A comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. [...] Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct”* (Lederach 1997:20, italics in original).

For Lederach, peace not only requires the process of building, but it needs to be continually maintained. He proposed a comprehensive framework aimed at transforming violent conflicts into peaceful relationships. Lederach's book, *Building Peace*, enriched the peacebuilding debate with the assertion that peace interventions should be focused on empowering local people in their pursuit of sustainable peace. He also created a typology of peacebuilding actors and approaches. His pyramid model



distinguishes between three types of leaders and three approaches to building peace. First, he defines top level leaders and top-down peacebuilding interventions focused on high-level negotiations. On the second level there are middle-range leaders, including ethnic and religious leaders, intellectuals and NGO leaders, and middle-level approaches comprising of problem-solving workshops, training in conflict resolution and peace commissions. The third, largest group comprises of grassroots leaders such as community developers and local NGO representatives, and grassroots approaches such as prejudice reduction, local peace commissions, grassroots training and psychosocial work. Most of the applied definitions take their inspiration from the work of the two authors introduced above.

### **2.3 Mainstreaming peacebuilding into international practice**

At the beginning of the 1990s there was a growing interest in helping countries emerging from conflicts to build sustainable peace. Galtung's ideas were revived in UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* presented in 1992. This document, effectively bringing peacebuilding to the practice of international actors and into the agenda of UN agencies, defined "post-conflict peacebuilding" as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali 1992:21). Boutros-Ghali delineated peacebuilding as a process of rebuilding institutions, infrastructure and mutually beneficial relationships, adding that the space for the peacebuilding process is created through peacekeeping and peacemaking. *An Agenda for Peace* represented a major shift in the understanding of the UN's role in the aftermaths of armed conflicts, and expanded it far beyond the traditional peacekeeping typical of the Cold War era. The new type of UN missions that followed the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* (and in a few cases even preceded it, for example with missions in Namibia, Angola, El Salvador and Cambodia) were greatly expanded in activities and functions; an acknowledgement of the need for a multifaceted approach to managing and resolving conflicts. This agenda expansion also reflected the changing nature of conflicts – a decrease in inter-state conflicts and a sharp increase in intra-state conflicts and civil wars (Newman et al. 2009; Paris 2018).

Peacebuilding, as an agenda for international assistance in post-conflict or conflict-prone settings, has gained considerable popularity since the beginning of the 1990s. A large number of international actors, ranging from governmental agencies, UN agencies and other multilateral organizations, as well as international non-governmental organizations, began to include what are essentially peacebuilding goals in their programs, although the terminology used to describe these goals differed (Paris 2004). Offices and departments dedicated to peacebuilding efforts were created within a number of donor agencies, and governments earmarked considerable resources to fund these efforts (Zaum 2012).

### **2.4 Liberal peacebuilding: an approach dominating the post-Cold War era**

Much of the peacebuilding practice we have observed during the post-cold War era has been characterized by an emphasis on political and economic liberalization (Newman 2009; Paris 2004). The concept that provided the main rationale behind and justification for so-called liberal peacebuilding was the democratic or liberal peace theory. The theory had already been envisioned by Immanuel Kant at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Kant and Kleingeld 2006) and it inspired U.S. president Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy after World War I (Wilson 1965). The democratic or liberal peace theory argues that liberal democracies are more peaceful in both their domestic affairs and foreign policies than illiberal, nondemocratic states, and they almost never engage in military conflicts with each other. The probability of war between two democratic states is extremely low because they use other means to resolve their disputes and do not perceive violent conflict as the right behavior. Additionally, the chances of falling into intrastate violence are also lower for market democracies as social conflicts tend to be resolved through nonviolent means. Hence, the world becomes more peaceful with more states being governed democratically (Doyle 2012; Mandelbaum 2002; Rummel 1995; Russett 1993). From the 1990s,

democratization and market liberalization became central to international peacebuilding operations (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). Most powerful countries, international organizations and international financial institutions started to see liberal democracy and market-oriented economics as universal solutions to many of the world's problems, including wars and violent conflicts, claiming that political and economic liberalization would naturally enhance self-sustaining peace (Mandelbaum 2002; Newman 2009; Paris 1997, 2004).

## **2.5 Hybrid peace and the local turn in peacebuilding**

The attention of peace and conflict scholars and practitioners has been increasingly directed at the importance of local actors in peace formation processes and at local dimensions of peace (see e.g. Autesserre 2017; Barnett, Fang, and Zürcher 2014; Heathershaw and Lambach 2008; Millar, van der Lijn, and Verkoren 2013; Richmond 2009; Visoka 2012; see also the special issue of *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 20, issue 2). Nevertheless, the local turn trend takes its inspiration from the work of John Paul Lederach (1997) published in the 1990s and described earlier in this chapter. Prominent proponents of the local turn, Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013:769) define “local” as “the range of locally based agencies present within a conflict and post-conflict environment, some of which are aimed at identifying and creating the necessary processes for peace, perhaps with or without international help”. They assert that local peace is not created only or primarily through externally driven peacebuilding interventions and national-level politics, but rather as a by-product of the everyday economic, cultural and survival tasks that individuals pursue. Mac Ginty (2011:8) uses the term “hybridity” to capture the complex picture of conflict and post-conflict societies. He understands hybridity as “composite forms of practice, norms and thinking that emerge from the interaction of different groups, worldviews and activity”, asserting that all societies are the results of long-term, complex, and often subtle, processes of social negotiation that happen in everyday interactions. Additionally, hybridity emerges from the interaction between top-down and bottom-up dynamics, between representatives of internationally led peacebuilding interventions and local, indigenous social and political actors (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012).

The focus on hybridity influenced both the research on peace and conflict and peacebuilding practice. Mac Ginty (2011) suggests that hybridity be used as an analytical lens that would allow researchers and practitioners to look beyond national political elites and see other forces capable of engaging with the liberal peace, or resisting, ignoring, subverting, corrupting or exploiting it. With increased focus on the local, more attention would be given to those most affected by the decisions and policies created at national and international levels but who had been traditionally rather overlooked (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). Hybridity authors called for bottom-up approaches in peacebuilding practice that would incorporate local norms and traditions and put a stronger emphasis on local ownership. This would tackle the limitations of the rigid top-down approaches (Richmond 2015; Richmond and Mitchell 2012). However, others pointed to the challenges hybridity represents for peacebuilding interventions. For instance, Visoka (2012) and Randazzo (2016) claim that the hybrid nature of peacebuilding processes, the plurality and interdependencies of practices, agencies and involvements, and the complexity of social relations, all create contingent and uncontrollable conditions in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk about the intentionality, the controlled and linear actions which lead to intended outcomes. Hybridity challenges the rational models of causal, progressive social change. It also makes it difficult to assign responsibility and accountability for any changes to specific actors. Such complex environments pose serious challenges to policy-making and governing and can effectively reinforce, complement or undermine peace efforts.

### **3 Evaluating peacebuilding interventions**

#### **3.1 Defining success of peacebuilding interventions**

Evaluations generally focus on assessing the extent to which projects, programs, policies and other interventions have achieved the desired objectives and goals. Thus, it is essential for those carrying out an evaluation to know what these objectives and goals are, in other words; how is success defined? The optimal goal of peacebuilding should be peace; however, as shown in the first chapter of this thesis, definitions of what constitutes peace and peaceful conditions vary. Moreover, peace and reconciliation, both of which are frequent aims of peacebuilding projects, are normative, complex and multidimensional goals. They are very much dependent on the context in which they are being pursued and consist of elements that are inherently difficult to quantify and measure (Firchow 2018).

Nevertheless, scholars and practitioners have been trying to identify various criteria and indicators of successful peacebuilding interventions. This is a crucial endeavor as evaluations are very much dependent on the selected definitions and indicators of success. As Ramsbotham et al. (2011) warn, narrowly or inappropriately defined criteria of success may considerably distort the assessment and provide an incomplete picture of the effectiveness and impact of an intervention. One strand of the research, popularized by Downs and Stedman (2002), operationalizes the success of complex international peacebuilding missions as an absence of direct violence at the time when the missions leave the host country. This indicator understands peace in a rather narrow way, essentially working with what Galtung (1969) calls negative peace and accentuating security and stability. Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta (2017) criticize the practice of equating peace with the absence of direct violence as it is primarily measured in terms of the number of battle-related deaths. Conflict occurs when the number exceeds a certain threshold and stops when the number falls below that threshold. Such binary conceptualization, according to Campbell et al., hides the complexity of war-to-peace transitions, and neglects many other factors and processes important for peace. It also focuses on the situation at the level of the state and is unable to capture differences at the local level.

Rejecting indicators that are narrow and mostly oriented towards security and negative peace, several authors have proposed different, more ambitious measures of success. Paris (2004) and Scharbatke-Church (2011) argue that peacebuilding efforts should primarily address the conditions that gave rise to the conflict, and hence evaluations have to focus on assessing the extent to which peace initiatives correctly identified and subsequently mitigated these root causes. One of the prominent indices used to measure the peacefulness of countries around the world is the Global Peace Index (GPI), developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). It is comprised of three groups of indices: societal safety and security, ongoing domestic and international conflict, and militarization. The index mostly measures aspects of negative peace, i.e. the absence of violence and fear of violence (Institute for Economics & Peace 2021). To supplement the GPI, IEP also constructed the Positive Peace Index (PPI), assessing the aspects important for positive peace (Institute for Economics & Peace 2020). In his book, Wallensteen (2015:64–65) conceptualized what he calls “quality peace” as “the creation of post-war conditions that make the inhabitants of a society (be it an area, a country, a region, a continent, or a planet) secure in life and dignity now and for the foreseeable future”. He also proposed several indicators to measure this rather broad definition of peace. Diehl and Druckman (2010) also created a comprehensive framework for assessing the success of peace operations.

Most of the indicators introduced above are not suitable for assessing individual, small to medium peacebuilding projects. The potential of these projects to affect broad, state or society level indicators, such as an end to direct violence, respect for minority rights, and national reconciliation, is constrained by their limited resources, scope, capacities and influence. Moreover, the standard macro-level peace indicators are not suited to capturing improvements at the community level, which is exactly the level

that individual peacebuilding projects, especially those implemented by local and international NGOs, strive to affect.

While most evaluations assess the effects of peace interventions with standardized and mostly quantitative indicators, a growing body of literature criticizes this practice. Millar (2014) and Mac Ginty and Firchow (Firchow 2018; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017) stress that each context in which a peacebuilding intervention works is unique and cannot be standardized, meaning that what constitutes the success of peace efforts can also not be standardized. They also argue that the country-level, quantitative approaches to evaluation fail to capture the nuanced situation at the local, sub-state level. When evaluating the impact of peacebuilding interventions, the indicators used in quantitative studies are essentially proxy indicators for the independent variables, and often do not reflect the local people’s experiences and perceptions, or the culturally variable nature of the phenomenon of peace.

**3.2 Assessing the micro-macro link**

With the local turn in peacebuilding and increased attention being paid to local-level, grassroots peacebuilding programs, the effectiveness and ability of such programs to influence a broader context has started to be examined. In her study, Campbell (2007:6) equates the success of peacebuilding activities with their ability to reach “beyond their initial entry point”. She writes that an activity is successful when it “is able to support personal change in a way that affects relational change”, and even more successful when the “personal and relational change then leads to structural change”. From her perspective, peacebuilding should ensure movement from the primary level that a project wants to influence, to other levels of change. This movement from personal to relational and structural change, or so-called micro-macro link/connection, represents another challenge peacebuilding evaluators have to deal with. Church and Shouldice (2003) use the term micro-macro connection to describe the transfer of change that peacebuilding projects generate between the levels of influence, and they emphasize the importance of determining how and under what conditions such a transfer occurs. They have identified eight so-called tiers of influence, based on who represents the main target group of a peacebuilding intervention. Each tier of influence then corresponds to one of the three levels of change: micro, mezzo and macro (see table 2 below). While peacebuilding interventions usually target one of the tiers of influence, they often assume that the change resulting from their intervention will also be reflected in the other tiers and at other levels of influence.

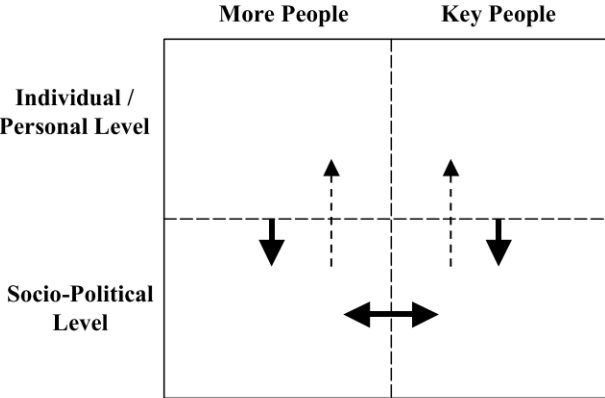
Table 1: Micro-Macro spectrum of peacebuilding impact

Tiers of influence	Levels
Individuals	Micro level
Family unit	
Social network, peer group	
Community	Mezzo level
Sub-national region	
Society at large, country	Macro level
Regional grouping of countries	
International	

Source: adapted from Church and Shouldice (2003)

The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) project, implemented by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA), makes what is probably the most beneficial contribution to the micro-macro link debate (Anderson and Olson 2003). According to the authors, it is incorrect to assume that peacebuilding projects will automatically influence the lives of those not directly targeted by their activities. For example, it should not be expected that by changing individual perceptions and attitudes peace projects will naturally trigger broader political change. CDA developed four criteria for assessing peacebuilding effectiveness and the potential of projects to contribute to peace at the macro level, based on the examination of a number of peace projects. These criteria address the program level of individual peacebuilding interventions, and also suggest that an effective peacebuilding program should have a clear strategy as to how it will influence the dynamic of the broader conflict. In other words; how it will contribute, in its own way, to peace at the level of a whole society, or Peace Writ Large. According to RPP, a peacebuilding programme is effective and has the potential to contribute to Peace Writ Large if it: 1) causes participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace, 2) results in the creation or reform of political institutions handling grievances that fuel conflict, 3) prompts people to resist violence and provocations to violence, and 4) results in people’s increased security or a reduction in their perception of threats (Anderson and Olson 2003). Later, RPP added a fifth criterion of effectiveness: 5) peacebuilding interventions should result in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations (CDA 2016). Another criterion for assessing the potential of peacebuilding projects to contribute to Peace Writ Large is their aspiration to influence both personal and socio-political levels, and attract and connect key people and wider populations (see Figure XY). Anderson and Olson (2003) argue that when projects only aim at changes at the individual level, such as changes of attitudes, perceptions and relationships, without a clear strategy of how these changes would affect the socio-political level, or how they would be translated into wider societal actions, they will not be able to meaningfully affect the Peace Writ Large. Likewise, if the changes generated by a peacebuilding project only influence the key people in a society and not the wider population, or if they only influence the wider population and not the key individuals, they will not achieve broader, sustained change at the level of Peace Writ Large.

Figure 1: Reflecting on Peace Practice project’s diagram for achieving structural change



Source: Anderson and Olson (2003)

**4 Civil society and its role in the process of building peace**

Civil society in its various forms and shapes is an indispensable part of our communities. In recent decades, civil society organizations, especially professionalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have come under the spotlight in a wide range of international interventions, including relief operations, development assistance, democratization efforts and peacebuilding operations. The trend of

involving civil society in these processes has been particularly visible, and has grown, since the end of the Cold War (Goodhand 2006). Even though this practice is common and widespread, with numerous theories providing justification for it, the authors warn that the actual impacts of NGOs and other civil society organizations on these complex and multidimensional processes are still insufficiently researched and assessed (Church and Shouldice 2003; Paffenholz 2010).

#### **4.1 Conceptualizing civil society**

Civil society is a rather broad concept with various meanings and understandings. Diamond (1994) formulated a widely quoted definition of civil society that can be considered as the most common understanding of the concept today. He defined it as the “realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order or a set of shared rules”. Citizens are “acting collectively in a public sphere” to express their interests, ideas, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable (Diamond 1994:5). Keane (1998, 6) provided a similar definition, describing civil society as “a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that 'frame', constrict and enable their activities”. As Spurk (2010, 8–9) adds, civil society is “distinct from the state, political, private, and economic spheres” and the interests civil society organizations pursue “are not purely driven by private or economic interests”. Civil society thus occupies the space between individuals and families, the state and the market, although the boundaries between these sectors are often blurred and complex (Edwards 2014).

Civil society as a concept has been largely theorized in connection with its role in building and sustaining functional liberal democracies. For Diamond (1994), a strong and plural civil society is, on one hand, capable of monitoring and limiting the excesses of state power, while on the other hand it can legitimize state authority when it adheres to the rule of law. In liberal democracy theory, civil society allows for the articulation and communication of demands and concerns of interest groups to the state, thus enhancing its transparency, accountability and capacity for good governance (Baker 1999). Nevertheless, strengthening social capital and cohesion is not the only function of civil society. Anheier, Lang, and Toepler (2019) point to the increasing reliance of states on nonprofit organizations as service providers, especially in health and social services.

#### **4.2 The role of civil society in peacebuilding**

Poulligny (2005) observes that most recent peace operations and peacebuilding interventions have included a number of components which explicitly relied on the work of international and local NGOs and their contribution to enhancing human rights, democratization, and rebuilding war-torn societies. Civil society holds a prominent role in liberal peacebuilding theory. Building on the liberal democracy theory, and relying heavily on Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding model, liberal peacebuilding authors see a developed civil society sector as a crucial element of functional and peaceful democracies, and they recognize the positive role civil society can play in conflict and post-conflict settings (Goodhand 2006; Spurk 2010). Civil society actors should be in particular engaged in constructing the liberal peace primarily at the grassroots level (Richmond 2005). Civil society is thought to be a guarantee of democratic values and human rights, and to enhance these in the wider society through civil education, training and advocacy (Paffenholz 2010). Civil society building aimed at developing a healthy civil society, in line with liberal criteria, became an objective of many peacebuilding programs (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). Apart from that, the liberal peacebuilding approach also sees civil society actors as important in delivering public services in situations where governments are incapable of supplying them to their citizens. This has given rise to a vast segment of NGOs that essentially serve as sub-contractors for Western donors financing the provision of the missing public services (Paffenholz 2010).

There are two widely quoted frameworks used to analyze the specific roles civil society groups play in peacebuilding. The first is Barnes' (2006) comprehensive list of civil society activities and roles, derived from an analysis of case studies from various conflict and post-conflict settings around the globe. The second is based on theoretical works in the field of democracy theory and development cooperation discourse which were used by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) to develop an analytical framework of the main functions of civil society in peacebuilding.

Table 2: Functions of civil society organizations in peacebuilding

Civil Society's Peacebuilding Functions	
Barnes	Paffenholz and Spurk
Waging conflict constructively	Protection
Shifting conflict attitudes and perceptions	Monitoring
Building visions of a better future	Advocacy and public communication
Mobilizing local and global constituencies for peace	In-group socialization
Reducing violence and promoting stability	Social cohesion
Making peace, helping to reach agreement	Intermediation and facilitation
Community-level peacemaking	Service delivery
Transforming the causes and consequences of conflict, creating peaceful relationships	
Shifting values and cultures, educating for peace	

Source: adapted from Barnes (2006) and Paffenholz and Spurk (2010)

**4.2.1 Critical perspectives on civil society peacebuilding**

A growing number of authors point to the weaknesses and limitations of the civil society peacebuilding approaches. A common line of criticism of civil society building concerns too much emphasis being placed on establishing and supporting modern, professionalized Western-style NGOs. This trend has distorted local civil society sectors in many post-conflict countries, giving rise to numerous professionalized NGOs fully dependent on donors for funding and with very limited ties to and support of the local constituency they are supposed to represent. The accountability of NGOs is directed towards foreign donors, rather than the local population, which reinforces their low legitimacy among citizens. The projectization of international support has further contributed to the detachment of civil society organizations from their local context, as they were forced to design their activities within the frameworks of short-term, fundable projects with measurable goals in order to meet donors' requirements. In some cases, international civil society building initiatives also led to the weakening of those forms of civil society that were traditionally present and active in the host societies but did not receive any assistance or recognition from international donors. As a result, the diversity of civil society was reduced, and social movements with the potential to advocate for radical changes were the primary victims of selective funding policies (Barnes 2009; Dilanyan, Beraia, and Yavuz 2018; Heideman 2013; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012; Pouligny 2005; Richmond 2009b; Smith 2007; Verkoren 2008).

The criticism associated with contracting peacebuilding NGOs as service providers goes in a different direction. We can observe that this function dominated liberal peacebuilding practices. Despite the proclaimed importance of supporting local civil society in conflict-affected countries to enhance peace and democracy, international donors and international organizations have largely used the services of NGOs, primarily international ones, including those based in the country of the donor, to distribute needed assistance to affected populations and to provide essential services previously supplied by governmental agencies (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). Many organizations contracted by

international donors for peacebuilding interventions in the contexts of developing countries originated from the relief and development sectors, and later expanded their operations to include conflict and post-conflict settings (Goodhand 2006). The other supposed role of civil society organizations and NGOs; civil society building at large, has been rather neglected, especially in the first years of international peacebuilding operations, with less attention and resources given to this goal (Bebbington et al. 2007; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012).

Another limitation of civil society peacebuilding is closely connected to the previous points. Dependence on donor finance coupled with the donor funding strategies contributed to the depoliticization of the role of civil society organizations. Organizations became more technocratic, fulfilling donor priorities, thus distancing themselves from grassroots social movements. Moreover, donors have been hesitant to support the political activities of civil society groups for fear of harming their relationships with local government. Hence, in their attempts to stay politically neutral and keep the support of their donors, civil society organizations have failed to address the structural issues driving conflicts, as well as political interests and power imbalances, thus reinforcing the status quo that might originally been the cause of a conflict. As a result, civil society organizations receiving international support are very limited in the extent to which they can fulfill some of the main roles prescribed to them; enhancing democracy and addressing core, structural problems (Barnes 2009; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012; Paffenholz 2014; Verkoren 2008; Verkoren and Van Leeuwen 2013).

## **5 Civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The post-war period in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been marked by a rapid increase in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the reconstruction of the country. Considerable amounts of international funding<sup>4</sup> were channeled to and through NGOs that served a variety of roles and purposes, including humanitarian aid delivery, mine clearance, documentation of war crimes, assistance to returnees, rural development, environmental protection, interethnic reconciliation, and many others (Fischer 2011; Sejfića 2006). It is important to stress that even though the term civil society is broad and encompasses various forms of, more or less, formalized groups of citizens, the international efforts to build and strengthen local civil society were narrowly focused on the development of professionalized, Western-style non-governmental organizations (NGOs), conforming to the liberal peacebuilding agenda (Fagan 2005; Sejfića 2006; Jeffrey 2007; Belloni 2013, Puljek-Shank and Verkoren 2017; Papić 2016).

### **5.1 International civil society building efforts: Donor practices and their effects**

The most visible effect of the international support for civil society building was the proliferation of newly established NGOs that occurred with the sudden availability of large amounts of funding (Smillie and Todorović 2001). Šavija-Valha (2009) argues that we can even talk about an overproduction of NGOs, created directly or indirectly by international donors and agencies, mostly through the work of Western NGOs. It is, however, problematic to find the exact number of NGOs registered in BiH, as new organizations can register at various levels of government in the complex system of the Bosnian state administration. Moreover, not all registered NGOs are necessarily active (TACSO 2014). One way of assessing the size of the NGO sector in BiH is to look at the number of NGOs that submitted annual financial statements, a requirement in law. In 2018, 14,911 organizations provided this statement to local authorities in FBiH or RS. Yet, this number might not be complete, as not all NGOs fulfill this

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<sup>4</sup> However, the exact amounts of funding provided over the years to NGOs working in BiH can only be estimated, as such flows are not systematically tracked and published.



requirement (USAID, Bureau for Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Centre of Excellence on Democracy Human Rights and Governance 2019).

Most international donors approached the local civil society in a rather superior, paternalistic manner, with what Howard (2011:108) calls a “we-know-better attitude”. The priorities for international support were set externally and were, at best, based on needs assessments formulated by foreign consultants or big international NGOs, with little or no participation from local actors, who were not treated as equal partners by donor agencies and international NGOs. Most often, international assistance was based on donors’ own priorities and their perceptions of local needs. They used strategies that may have previously worked elsewhere, rather than genuinely assessing and addressing the most pressing local needs (Bieber 2002; Gagnon 2002; Sejfića 2006; Smillie and Evenson 2003; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013; K4). Nevertheless, NGOs dependent on international funding for their survival followed donor priorities without critically examining their relevance and viability and this, in effect, distanced them from local communities and their authentic needs (Howard 2011; Sejfića 2006).

Another practice that negatively affected the development of the sector has been the inappropriate funding strategies of international donors. Funding has been provided in the form of discrete, short-term projects aimed at specific objectives, which did not allow time for substantive changes to materialize (Smillie and Evenson 2003). This practice, described by Sejfića (2006: 134) as “projectomania” and by Fagan (2005: 410) as “proposal culture”, has been criticized in particular for not providing NGOs with time and funding for long-term vision formulation or broader and more coherent goal setting, because the short-term projects could only follow limited, well-defined objectives (Heideman 2013; Nezavisni biro za humanitarna pitanja 1998; Smillie and Evenson 2003). Moreover, NGOs were unable to follow any coherent long-term strategies due to the rapid changes in priority topics of the available funding. Donors tended to jump from one priority to another, focusing for a limited period on the return of refugees and IDPs, then for a while on good governance, then gender violence, before turning to the LGBT+ agenda (Bieber 2002; Gagnon 2002; Smillie and Evenson 2003; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013; K4).

Given the characteristics of international support, the efforts at building a civil society essentially created a small group of professional NGOs that were, essentially, only a small part of what is generally understood as civil society. The NGOs that were established with the help of the international assistance did not emerge naturally from the broader society, but were introduced from outside. Some local citizens even perceived them as alien to Bosnian society. As a result, Bosnian NGOs could not rely on a solid membership base, unlike membership-based civil society organizations and associations (Howard 2011). They thus lacked one of the important sources of organizational legitimacy which again weakened their ability to influence important societal changes (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015).

## **6 Basic characteristics of the evaluated organizations**

Of the three evaluated NGOs, Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Sarajevo approaches peacebuilding in the most direct way, using dialogue to reestablish communication and enhance cooperation and peaceful relationships between communities divided along ethnic lines. LDA Zavidovići approaches peacebuilding more indirectly. In line with the liberal peacebuilding agenda, the organization focuses on promoting participatory democracy at the local level. The Youth organization Odisej uses a combination of direct peace work and various youth activities, creating opportunities for young people to meet and initiate inter-group contact. All the important characteristics of the evaluated NGOs are summarized in the following table.

Table 3: Basic information about the evaluated organizations

Name of the organization	In operation since	Number of employees / members at the time of data collection	Main sources of funding	Location of activities	Key characteristics of the target municipalities and issues addressed by the evaluated NGOs	Brief characteristics of activities	Peacebuilding approach	Main peacebuilding function (Paffenholz and Spurk 2010)
<b>Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo (NDC Sarajevo)</b>	2000	3 employees	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Srebrenica, Bratunac, Zvornik (Republika Srpska) Jajce (Federation of BiH)	Multi-ethnic municipalities, with significant IDP and returnee populations, lack of cooperation and contact between various ethnic groups, education (esp. primary) mostly ethnically divided, either in the form of physical segregation or separate school curricula for each ethnic group.	Re-establishing interethnic communication and cooperation among municipal councilors and administrators, and in schools, through interethnic dialogue and follow-up multi-ethnic activities.	Interethnic dialogue seminar as a first step in the long-term peacebuilding process.	Social cohesion
<b>Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići (LDA Zavidovići)</b>	1996	2 employees	Italian municipalities of Brescia, Alba and Cremona; UNDP/UNOPS, OSCE, European Commission	Zavidovići (Federation of BiH)	Mostly mono-ethnic and relatively closed community, with serious economic problems, lack of job opportunities and emigration of especially young people from the town, wide-spread lethargy, limited responsiveness of the local authorities to the needs of citizens.	Physical post-conflict reconstruction, income-generation activities, promotion of democratic principles, diversification of local civil society, mobilization of young people and cooperation with local authorities, using connections with Italian municipalities and institutions.	Enhancing local democracy, opening the local community to the outside world; active cooperation with local authorities.	Service delivery, intermediation

<b>Youth organization Odisej</b>	2001	Approx. 10 active members (a larger number involved in the past, peaking at around 120-200 members)	UNDP, OSCE, Catholic Relief Services, CARE International, Bauern Helfen Bauern, Arci Milano	Bratunac (Republika Srpska)	Multi-ethnic municipality with significant IDP and returnee populations who feel they are being discriminated against by the local community, tensions and conflicts between various groups in the past, lack of opportunities for young people to socialize and spend free time, apathy and lack of motivation of youngsters to engage in the life of the community.	Youth organization providing educational and cultural opportunities for young people and bringing together local youngsters from various backgrounds.	Peacebuilding through youth work and dealing with the past activities.	In-group socialization, social cohesion
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Source: created by the author based on the collected data

## 7 Research findings

### 7.1 NDC Sarajevo

NDC Sarajevo can be seen as an example of organization doing the usual work of NGOs in post-conflict settings – bringing people of various ethnicities together to share their experiences and perspectives of the conflict, and through intensive contact and dialogue changing the attitudes towards the others and re-starting inter-group communication. However, what is specific about NDC Sarajevo is its emphasis on the process of intensive inter-group cooperation following the dialogue seminars. The organization did not primarily aim at individual changes of attitudes, but understood them more as a prerequisite for the normalization of cooperation between various groups at the community level, and for making the local society functional in the sense of providing essential services to its citizens regardless of their background. NDC Sarajevo achieved this by motivating the alumni of dialogue seminars, often the representatives of key local authorities, to actively engage in the life of their communities and to initiate concrete actions addressing local-level problems and bringing benefits to all groups. This approach proved to be effective in triggering community level changes that contributed to the increased functionality of local, multi-ethnic communities.

The following table presents the behavioral changes triggered by NDC Sarajevo and the levels of influence at which these changes are observed.

Table 4: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by NDC Sarajevo

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Enhanced communication and frequent cooperation among people of various ethnicities.	Community / mezzo level
Regional cooperation between municipalities.	Sub-national region / mezzo level
Change in perspectives on the others.	Individuals / micro level
More frequent contact between the otherwise mono-ethnic communities.	Community / mezzo level
Young people forming friendships with their peers of other ethnicities more easily.	Social network, peer group / micro level

Source: author

Based on the analysis of the extent to which the work of NDC Sarajevo fulfills the RPP criteria of projects with the potential to achieve peace at the broader, societal level (Anderson and Olson 2003), we can conclude that the organization conceptualized its approach in a way that should ensure a high effectiveness in achieving the peacebuilding goals. NDC Sarajevo was, in fact, rather successful, and triggered important community changes; however, the benefits created are slowly vanishing as NDC Sarajevo is not active in most of the former target regions due to the loss of its main source of funding. Despite working in those municipalities for 10 years (in Srebrenica and Bratunac) and 7 years (in Jajce and Zvornik) respectively, this type of work apparently requires much longer, continuous involvement. At the same time, the fact that NDC Sarajevo deliberately chose to work only at the local level, without engaging with other important, higher level causes of continuous division and dysfunctionality of the society of BiH, might be another reason why the benefits created had a limited duration.

### 7.2 LDA Zavidovići

LDA Zavidovići is standard, project-based NGO, engaged in multiple areas of the life of the local community in a single municipality. LDA Zavidovići is the only one of the three evaluated organizations that operates in a municipality inhabited by one dominant ethnic group. The organization implemented

post-conflict humanitarian and reconstruction projects and provided services to various groups of citizens in need, as well as technical assistance to civil society groups and the local authorities. They attempted to enhance citizen participation and local democratic processes, while providing the local community with intensive contact with partners in Italy. This organization had quite the opposite approach to NDC Sarajevo. As LDA Zavidovići originated from the post-conflict reconstruction work, they followed the classic model of local stakeholders being the recipients of services planned for and provided by the NGO. The organization essentially followed the same model in projects aimed at enhancing the participation of young people and other citizens in the life of the community. LDA Zavidovići was valued very highly for the assistance and services they provided to the local society during their long, continuous presence in the Zavidovići municipality, yet they were mostly unsuccessful in triggering more structural, systematic changes, in some part due to local authorities refusing to acknowledge NGOs to have other than service provision roles. Instead of tackling the structural causes of the prevailing problems faced by various groups of inhabitants in Zavidovići through encouraging necessary reforms or policy changes, LDA Zavidovići was only able to ease the consequences of these problems through the provision of concrete help. Nevertheless, the feature that is specific to this organization, the connection to various Italian institutions, did bring benefits in the form of the few institutional changes that were adopted by local authorities and individuals based on their study trips to Italy.

Table 5: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by LDA Zavidovići

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Representative of local authorities are more open to cooperation with the civil society actors.	Individual / micro level
More active civil society sector.	Community / mezzo level
Young people are taking a more active role in the life of their community.	Individual / micro level
Local institutions and individuals adopted changes based on the experience gained through their dealings with the Italian partners.	Community / mezzo level

Source: author

It is also important to comment on the specific conceptualization of peace that LDA Zavidovići applied in its work, and particularly on what the organization chose not to include in its activities. The representatives of the organization argued that issues related to the past conflict were still too sensitive in the local community, while also implying that there were no visible inter-ethnic problems in the almost mono-ethnic community of the Zavidovići municipality. Hence, LDA Zavidovići focused more on supporting local democracy, citizens' participation and, to a small extent, easing the poor economic situation. In this way they intended to enhance local peace, instead of engaging in activities directly addressing the past and the problems that led to, and were aggravated by the war. As the works of Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) and Edwards (2014) have shown, these are certainly important avenues for building peace. Yet the local reality, which is that the key issues related to the past conflict and the persistent ethnic divisions and tensions are still taboo in Zavidovići, should have motivated the organization to address them rather than ignore them altogether.

### 7.3 Youth organization Odisej

The Youth organization Odisej is an example of a membership NGO, primarily serving the needs of its members. Odisej was successful in bridging the divide between youngsters from various backgrounds in the Bratunac municipality. The organization can also serve as confirmation of the positive effects of sustained inter-group contact during free time activities accompanied by planned workshops where participants discussed the past conflict, their personal war experiences and their perceptions of the

victims and the perpetrators. Despite having a vague desire to spread these positive individual-level changes to the wider community, the representatives of Odisej did not formulate a clear vision or strategy of how their work could improve the general situation in the broader society. When the younger generation who had no direct experience with the past war joined the organization, the perceived relevance of the dealing with the past workshops and their effects diminished significantly. Younger members do not share the same urge to discuss the past as their older peers, and they build friendships across ethnic divides more easily, despite disagreeing on numerous issues related to the war

Table 6: Levels of behavioral changes triggered by the Youth organization Odisej

Identified behavioral changes	Tiers / levels of influence
Change in perspectives on the others.	Individual / micro level
New relationships, including interethnic ones.	Social network, peer group / micro level
Active engagement of youngsters in interethnic encounters and joint everyday activities.	Social network, peer group / micro level
Return to pre-war house.	Individual / micro level
Improvement in relations between groups, decrease in tensions and conflicts.	Community / mezzo level
Ethnicity of owners playing a less important role in people’s decisions regarding which local businesses to use.	Individual / micro level

Source: author

**8 Discussion**

The research proved that NGOs are capable of achieving individual-level improvements, such as changing attitudes towards the others, improving the perception of the work of civil society organizations, mobilizing youngsters to participate in community work, and decreasing the perceived importance of one’s ethnicity in everyday-life situations. Through their active engagement in local communities, NGOs can also prompt people to build relationships across the ethnic divide, providing a natural impetus for them to meet and engage in everyday activities.

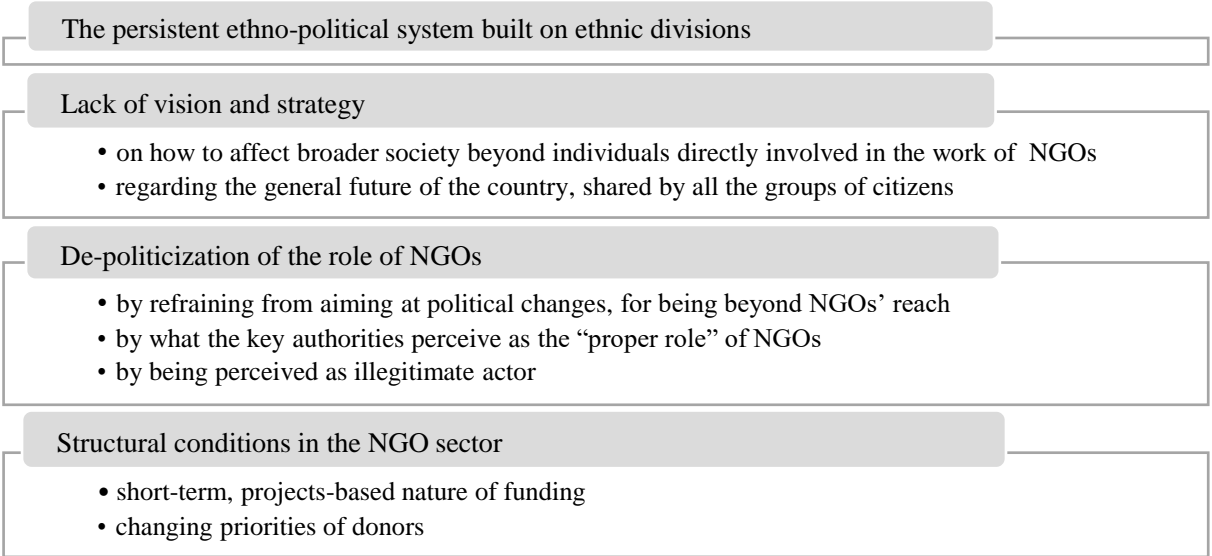
We have seen that it is possible for NGOs to also bring benefits to the community level; although the extent and intensity of the community-level changes we have identified in individual evaluation studies, as well as the strength of evidence that the NGOs were the main drivers of those changes, differed significantly. Of the three organizations, NDC Sarajevo achieved the most significant community-level changes, enhancing communication and building cooperation among people of various ethnic backgrounds and re-connecting the mono-ethnic communities in joint activities. The organization even prompted a regional-level change, triggering cooperation among the target municipalities. However, this cooperation only lasted for a very short period because soon after it was initiated, NDC Sarajevo lost its main source of funding and the regional cooperation was discontinued. LDA Zavidovići’s efforts to provide local stakeholders with a professional experience in Italy resulted in the adoption of a few systemic changes, even though several other efforts aimed at structural change did not succeed. Another improvement at the community level triggered by LDA Zavidovići is the diversified and active civil society sector, with several new NGOs being established and financially supported by LDA Zavidovići. In the case of Odisej, community-level changes were difficult to spot. Respondents generally reported improvements in the relationships between various groups of inhabitants, with a decrease in the occurrence of tensions and open conflicts. Nevertheless, the evidence that the work of Odisej was the main force prompting these improvements was rather weak, leading us to the conclusion that the

organization was mostly incapable of translating the individual-level changes they achieved with the youngsters into benefits at the broader societal levels.

Interestingly, in all three examples, positive changes mostly happened when the participants in the activities left their communities. The benefits of taking people away from their usual environment were mentioned several times by respondents in all three evaluations. NDC Sarajevo organized the dialogue seminars on supposedly neutral ground in Sarajevo, and invited the most active and/or highly positioned participants for study visits to Norway. LDA Zavidovići relied heavily on knowledge sharing during the study visits to various Italian institutions and the youth exchanges between Zavidovići and Italy. Odisej mostly organized the dealing with the past workshops and youth summer camps in cooperation with their partner organizations in various towns of BiH. The benefits of travelling outside one’s community were threefold. First, it provided additional, in some cases the main motivation for the participants to join the activities of the NGOs, especially in the early post-conflict years when travelling was particularly difficult because of economic reasons and visa requirements. Second, respondents admitted that being out of their usual environment allowed them to open up more in various discussions. If they had stayed in their hometown, they would have felt less comfortable sitting in a room with people of the other ethnicities and discussing sensitive topics. Third, seeing examples of various processes and practices in foreign countries, as in Italy and Norway, served as an inspiration and motivation for the adoption of similar practices, or at least for further engagement in working for the community. Many respondents in the NDC Sarajevo case study revealed that the study trip to Norway gave significant impetus to them becoming active in their communities. Essentially, this finding confirms the importance of constructing what Šavija-Valha and Šahić (2015:58) call places of interethnic encounters that should be created as a “neutral and symmetrical place in which participants have equal opportunity to claim, freely and openly, their group, individual, inter-group, and inter-individual identities and interests, and in which they will be safe while doing that”, and that these places are best created outside one’s usual environment.

As can be seen from the analysis of the levels of behavioral changes triggered by the three NGOs, we have not identified any significant effects of their interventions that reached beyond the community level. The key factors that are prevented the evaluated NGOs from achieving structural and broader societal changes presented in the following figure.

Figure 2: Factors preventing NGOs from reaching beyond individual and community levels



Source: author

First, a barrier common to all three NGOs that essentially prevented them from achieving more systemic, structural changes, is the existing ethno-political system in BiH. None of the three models that the evaluated NGOs applied was able to break the prevailing political problems in BiH. The example of NDC Sarajevo, the one organization of the three evaluated NGOs that triggered the most substantial changes at the community level, showed that the improved inter-ethnic cooperation and functionality of local multiethnic communities does not necessarily trigger structural improvements at higher levels. The approach of Odisej focused exclusively on inter-group relationships, without ensuring any support from, or legitimacy among, the wider public and local authorities, proved even less effective in challenging the existing system. Promoting more structural, higher-level changes would essentially have meant engaging in issues of a political nature and would have required direct cooperation with political institutions beyond the municipal level. However, the existing political system is built on the division of power according to ethnicity, and relies heavily on misusing ethnic differences and reinforcing ethnic tensions in order to maintain the status quo for the politicians and serving public officials (K1). As Kapidžić (2020:81) explains, in the current power structures, the political contest is “purposefully contained within ethnic and subnational boundaries and constrained through several layers of institutionalized multilevel and ethnic checks and balances”. As a result, the party system, with a few political parties dominating politics over a long period of time, “closely reflects the ethnic structure of the country and subnational units of governance” (82), with voters almost exclusively voting for parties representing their own ethnic group. Moreover, employment is also linked to ethnically-based political parties that control the public administration and state-owned companies (K3). Such a system, where ethnicity and ethnic divisions are deeply institutionalized, is not open to initiatives that would in any way transform it by breaching those divisions and initiating multi-ethnic cooperation for the benefit of all. NGOs with their limited powers, unstable funding and weak public support are certainly not in a position to break such deeply entrenched systems of division. However, the existing political situation in BiH not only creates a barrier to the NGOs’ reach, it also presents a threat to the benefits that NGOs are capable of providing. Moreover, the language of ethnic division and hatred used by politicians especially in the pre-election periods and during commemorations of mass atrocities committed during the war perpetuates the problems that NGOs in the peacebuilding field are striving to alleviate (K6).

Second, the research indicated a prevailing lack of vision and strategies. On one level, two of the three organizations did not formulate a clear vision of the broader change their work should have contributed to, nor a strategy on how to trigger such change. LDA Zavidovići claimed that it aimed to enhance local democracy, yet did not specify how exactly the activities they organized should lead to it. Similarly, Odisej lacked any strategy for using the individual-level changes in perceptions towards the others to achieve changes at the level of community and society. These examples serve as evidence that if an NGO does not plan for broader societal changes, it cannot expect such changes to occur naturally. As the RPP model of effective peacebuilding iterates (Anderson and Olson 2003) and this research proves, changes at the individual level are not automatically reflected in improvements at the community and society levels.

On another level, the problem of a lack of vision in the work of these organizations could be connected to the general lack of a shared vision for the future of BiH. When discussing why NDC Sarajevo chose only to work with local communities and not on higher levels of society, the representatives of the organization admitted that they did not know what should be done in order to make the broader society functional again. According to them, the country lacks a broadly shared vision of how the future of BiH should look. Coupled with young people see their futures outside the country, as most of the youngsters interviewed for this research revealed, the picture of society in BiH is still one of a “lack of progress, lack of perspectives, lack of security, and finally, lack of hope” (Džihić 2012:330).



Third factor relates to the de-politicized role NGOs play in BiH. In the three evaluations, we have encountered three different reasons for NGOs not assuming more political roles. NDC Sarajevo intentionally refrained from working with higher-level political institutions out of the belief that the political system is so entrenched that they would not be able to achieve any meaningful changes in that area. LDA Zavidovići has, on several occasions, tried to push the local authorities to adopt some reforms and policy changes; however, their potential to trigger such changes was significantly limited by the local authorities seeing the “proper role” of NGOs only in service provision. In Odisej’s case, the organization lacked widely shared legitimacy among the public and the local authorities and this restricted any activities aimed at political changes.

Lastly, as discussed in the theoretical parts of the thesis, the work of each organization is influenced by structural conditions in the NGO sector. Hence, when analyzing NGOs’ successes and failures, we should also focus on any constraints imposed by the sector that might have shaped their work (Lang 2013). The research uncovered several issues inherent to the sector that negatively influenced the ability of the evaluated organizations to trigger broader changes. The short-term nature of the funding provided by international donors to NGOs is incompatible with the long-term character of the processes that have the potential to enhance peace (Heideman 2013). As the research has shown, meaningful community-level changes can only be achieved when an organization has long-term, sustained involvement with local stakeholders. In all three case studies, respondents expressed various levels of reliance on the evaluated NGO to lead the process, either as the initiator of meetings, or taking the lead role in planning and organizing activities. Additionally, as the RPP model (Anderson and Olson 2003) emphasizes, the involvement of key stakeholders in communities is one of the crucial pre-conditions for effective peacebuilding. However, people in such key positions are often elected officials, and they may change with new election cycles. Other beneficiaries with whom NGOs work can also change over time. For example, students finish school and often leave their communities, with new pupils entering the education process. If the work of NGOs is discontinued due to losing the support of donors, the benefits those NGOs created disappear relatively quickly with the natural turnover of stakeholders. Hence, if peacebuilding efforts are to yield sustained results, the processes involved require long-term commitment from donors to financially support communities recovering from conflict.

Moreover, the traditional project-based support may not be appropriate for peacebuilding interventions. As this study has shown, respondents greatly appreciated it when an organization gave them the freedom to initiate local-level activities that addressed the issues they perceived as crucial in a way they saw as effective. In contrast, when an NGO assumed the role of the main initiator and manager of activities; a model typical of most peacebuilding projects and other development activities, this contributed to the passivity of the local population. People in the position of standard beneficiaries became used to the NGO being the active agent of change and they were not motivated to become more proactive members of their communities. Nevertheless, regular project funding is based on the detailed plan of activities that the NGO would implement (Heideman 2013; McMahan 2017), and this leaves limited space for local citizens’ initiatives and leads to reliance on the NGOs to lead the community work.

The usual funding processes of international donors negatively affected all three NGOs. NDC Sarajevo refused to change their way of working to adapt to changing donor priorities. As a result, the organization struggled to secure new sources of funding after their main donor, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, downsized their program in BiH and, after 15 years of continuous and fairly flexible funding that essentially allowed NDC Sarajevo to develop their effective peacebuilding approach, they stopped supporting this NGO. Afterwards, NDC Sarajevo was only able to ensure funding for their projects in Jajce and they had to leave the remaining three municipalities. For LDA Zavidovići, we have identified the frequent changes in the organization’s focus as one of the reasons this NGO did not prompt significant societal change. They were influenced by the changes in the donors’ priorities and the

organization never spent a long time focusing on one particular issue. Odisej, being a small, membership-based NGO, has never fully developed the professional capacities to acquire substantial funds. One of the key informants closely familiar with this organization (K2) also indicated this problem. This situation highlights one problem of the project-based system, where representatives of NGOs are required to have a set of technical knowledge and skills in order to succeed in competing for donor funding.

Some of the factors we identified as having a negative influence on the ability of NGOs to enhance peace are context specific and would not be applicable to other post-conflict environments. Other factors should be considered by NGOs working in peacebuilding sector in other post-conflict countries. These include the importance of having a long-term vision and strategy for enhancing peace in the broader society, possessing a certain level of legitimacy among both the population and key stakeholders, and being aware of the limitations posed by the NGO sector and the usual funding processes.

### **8.1 Theoretical implications of the research findings**

The case study of NDC Sarajevo validated the theoretical model presented by the RPP project that provided guidance on how to construct an effective peacebuilding program (Anderson and Olson 2003). The model of NDC Sarajevo's involvement in local communities largely adheres to the RPP criteria. The organization provided a lot of space and support for local groups to initiate their own activities for enhancing peace at the local level, addressed some of the institutional problems contributing to the persistent ethnic divisions and tensions, and improved inter-ethnic relationships. NDC Sarajevo also connected the four quadrants of the RPP matrix (see figure 1) and took the improvements made on an individual level to the socio-political level through public initiatives carried out by the dialogue alumni. NDC Sarajevo secured the support and active cooperation of both key representatives of the local communities and wider groups of the population. With the other two evaluated NGOs, we have seen that their approaches were rather far from the ideal presented by the RPP model. At the same time, NDC Sarajevo was the most successful of the three in achieving higher-level changes, meaningfully taking the benefits from the individual level to a certain level of the socio-political realm. This indicates the soundness of the RPP model.

The study highlighted "pathologies in peacebuilding", a term referred to by Heideman (2013) in her insightful paper on donor support for NGOs in Croatia. We have essentially validated a number of claims that the usual way donors support the NGO sector in their peacebuilding work actually undermines the NGOs' abilities to achieve meaningful societal changes (Belloni 2013; Fagan 2005; Heideman 2013; Howard 2011; Jeffrey 2007a; Sejfića 2006; Tzifakis and Huliaras 2013). Short-term, professionalized, project-based funding and changing donor priorities proved to be especially limiting for all three evaluated NGOs. Nevertheless, as the domestic public funding for such activities is almost nonexistent (TACSO 2014; USAID et al. 2019), international funding, though decreasing and limiting the work of NGOs, is usually the only way to sustain the organizations' work. The donors' practices have not changed significantly over the years, despite long-standing criticism from academics and practitioners. Hence, we should fully acknowledge the continuing limitations these practices pose to organizations dependent on international funding and we should consider these limitations in our analyses of the work of NGOs.

Numerous studies presented in the theoretical parts of this dissertation also identified donors' funding policies as one cause of the de-politicization of NGOs' activities (Belloni and Hemmer 2010; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren 2012). Nevertheless, we have uncovered other, more internal and domestic factors not directly influenced by donors that have also stripped NGOs of their political roles. It is especially difficult for an NGO to assume a political role when key local stakeholders refuse to acknowledge them as having anything other than the function of service provision. This is also the case

when an NGO possesses very low legitimacy and has little support from the wider public and local authorities. Finally, the existing ethno-political system blocks attempts by NGOs to prompt broader political changes. The fact that the evaluated NGOs were unable to assume a political role and influence policy changes could have been a crucial factor in their failure to trigger structural changes. As DeTurk (2006) emphasized, for a structural change to occur, it is necessary to motivate and empower actors to voice their needs and wishes, to participate in actions bringing about desired changes and, crucially, achieve policy changes. Our case studies showed that without the last point, policy changes, structural and systemic improvements are not possible.

## **Conclusion**

Responding to Diehl's (2016) call for devoting more academic research to the study of positive peace, the presented dissertation focused on the process of enhancing broadly defined positive peace in the post-conflict society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate on the role civil society organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can possibly play in the process of building peace after a civil war. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the international community put a lot of hope into these non-state actors, expecting that they would be able to counter the dominant ethno-national political discourse, reconnect the society divided along ethnic lines and enhance peace and democracy (Chandler 2017; McMahon 2017). Despite these high expectations, studies providing evidence of the changes local grassroots NGOs were capable of bringing to the society of BiH are rather scarce, especially those giving voice to the beneficiaries of the NGOs' work who are in the best position to assess their effectiveness (Firchow 2018). The dissertation strived to fill this research gap by evaluating three local NGOs working in various regions of the country and applying various approaches in their work. The data for these evaluations was collected through interviews and focus groups with various participants and beneficiaries of the NGOs.

The aim of the dissertation was to assess the extent to which the local grassroots NGOs working in the peacebuilding sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina are able to contribute to increased peacefulness in local communities and the broader society. The three case studies at the core of this dissertation rely on the author's qualitative research in the communities targeted by the work of the three evaluated NGOs: NDC Sarajevo, LDA Zavidovići and the Youth organization Odisej.

All three evaluated NGOs contributed to important individual level improvements and in a few cases these translated to community-level improvements. The study shows that some elements of the NGOs' work have enhanced their ability to achieve these positive changes. First, taking the project participants outside their communities allowed them to be more open than they would have been in their local environment when discussing sensitive issues connected to the past conflict and the inter-ethnic relationships in their communities. Additionally, the opportunity to travel to other towns in BiH and abroad was a factor that initially motivated people to join the process, especially in the early post-conflict period when it was difficult for citizens of BiH to travel due to economic reasons and visa requirements. Second, giving beneficiaries the freedom to implement their own local initiatives that addressed the issues they perceived as pressing was of a major benefit to the entire process. Third, we also showed that it is crucial to engage key, well-positioned members of local communities and local authorities in the peacebuilding process in order to transfer the individual-level changes to the broader community.

However, we have not identified any behavioral changes the three NGOs achieved at higher than community level. The author found no evidence of these NGOs contributing to systemic, structural changes that would broadly enhance peace and democracy in BiH, and uncovered several key factors that prevented NGOs from achieving such changes. First, the existing ethno-national political system in BiH proved difficult to break for small, local NGOs with limited funding and reach. The deeply

institutionalized ethnic divisions, the prevailing ethnic narratives and ethnic tensions that are periodically stirred by leading politicians for their political gains, all present a major barrier for NGOs trying to take benefits from an individual level to a societal level. Such conditions, with divisions so entrenched, are not conducive to changes that would reconnect the divided communities and enhance their functionalities for all citizens. Second, the study proved that if an organization does not have a clear strategy on how to trigger broader, societal changes, it cannot expect such changes to happen naturally as an inevitable consequence of individual changes. The third factor is connected with the depoliticized role of NGOs. None of the three NGOs assumed a particularly political function. This was either the result of the conviction that policy changes are impossible for NGOs to influence, or because the key political actors refused to acknowledge political roles for NGOs beyond the service provision, or due to the poor image and low legitimacy of an NGO among the public, and among the local authorities that blocked the attempts of the NGO to influence policy changes. Finally, structural conditions in the NGO sector, particularly the short-term, project-based nature of funding for NGOs and the quickly changing priorities of international donors, also limited the NGOs in their reach.

To conclude, the dissertation paints a de-romanticized picture of the ability of NGOs to enhance peace in the broader society recovering from civil war, and thus contributes to the existing literature warning against relying too much on NGOs as prime agents in the process of building peace. We provide evidence of the barriers that limit grassroots NGOs from triggering structural changes. At the same time, we fully recognize the essential benefits NGOs bring to local communities. We should approach NGOs with realistic expectations concerning what they can and cannot achieve. The international community should also address the persistent challenges that short-term, project-based funding poses to NGOs striving for changes that are inherently of a long-term nature. Nevertheless, as representatives of one of the evaluated NGO admitted, without the society of BiH agreeing on a shared vision for the future of their country, NGOs will lack a clear view of the desired conditions they should strive to promote.

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## **Abstrakt**

Organizácie občianskej spoločnosti majú prominentné postavenie v medzinárodných iniciatívach zameraných na budovanie mieru. Intervencie postavené na teórii budovania liberálneho mieru považujú rozvinutú občiansku spoločnosť za dôležitý prvok demokracie, ktorá je funkčná a vládne v nej mier. Budovanie občianskej spoločnosti sa tak stalo kľúčovým prvkom programov budovania liberálneho mieru. Bosna a Hercegovina (BaH) je už 27 rokov hostiteľom komplexných, viacúrovňových intervencií budovania liberálneho mieru, ktoré sú realizované širokou škálou medzinárodných aktérov. Budovanie občianskej spoločnosti bolo jednou z dôležitých zložiek týchto intervencií. Medzinárodní aktéri považovali organizácie občianskej spoločnosti, a najmä mimovládne organizácie (MVO), za schopné čeliť prevládajúcemu etnonacionalistickému politickému diskurzu, posilňovať kultúru demokracie a zblížovať spoločnosť rozdelenú podľa etnického kľúča, a to napriek tomu, že na podporu týchto tvrdení mali len málo dôkazov. Cieľom tejto dizertačnej práce je posúdiť schopnosť malých miestnych MVO posilniť mier a demokraciu v postkonfliktnej spoločnosti BaH. Autorka sa v práci zameriava hlavne na tzv. mikro-makro prepojenie, inými slovami, do akej miery vedia organizácie využiť pozitívne zmeny, ktoré vyvolávajú na úrovni jednotlivcov, ako napríklad zmeny v postojoch k iným etnickým skupinám, na posilnenie mieru na úrovni širšej spoločnosti. Na základe kvalitatívnej evaluácie troch MVO pôsobiacich v rôznych regiónoch BaH autorka dospela k záveru, že hoci tieto organizácie priniesli svojim cieľovým skupinám významné benefity, neboli schopné ovplyvniť systémovjšie, štrukturálne zmeny, ktoré by vo všeobecnosti posilnili mier v BaH. Organizáciám bránilo v dosiahnutí takýchto zmien niekoľko faktorov. Po prvé, ukázalo sa, že existujúci etnopolitický systém v BaH, postavený na hlboko zakorenenom rozdeľovaní spoločnosti na základe etnického kľúča, je pre malé miestne MVO s obmedzeným financovaním a dosahom ťažko prelomiteľný. Po druhé, táto štúdia potvrdila, že ak si MVO nedefinujú jasnú stratégiu ako ovplyvniť širšie, celospoločenské zmeny, tieto nenastanú prirodzene, ako nevyhnutný dôsledok individuálnych zmien. Po tretie, ak mimovládna organizácia odmietne prevziať politickú úlohu, alebo jej je zabránené takúto úlohu zastávať, nedokáže ovplyvniť zmeny potrebné k posilneniu mieru, nakoľko majú tieto zmeny v zásade politický charakter. Napokon, štrukturálne podmienky mimovládneho sektora, obzvlášť krátkodobý, na projektoch založený charakter financovania MVO a rýchlo meniace sa priority darcov taktiež obmedzujú organizácie v ich dosahu.

**Kľúčové slová:** mimovládne organizácie, pozitívny mier, budovanie liberálneho mieru, mikro-makro prepojenie, Bosna a Hercegovina

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- asistent
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##### **EDREO s.r.o**

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- členka evaluačného tímu
- evaluácia programu Vysílání učitelů do rozvojových zemí, zadávateľ MZV ČR

##### **ARPOK**

**2018–2020**

- externá evaluátorka
- vedenie formatívnej evaluácie českej časti projektu globálneho vzdelávania Global Issues – Global Subjects

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- asistentka evaluácie
- evaluácia osvetového projektu Make chocolate fair!

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## PROJEKTOVÁ ČINNOSŤ:

- IGA\_PřF\_2018\_018 (Interní grantová agentura UP, 2018): výskum možností využitia metód štúdia budúcnosti neziskovým sektorom a prípadné prínosy ich aplikácie
- Assessing Impact of Local Democracy Agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Gianfranco Martini Scholarship, 2016-2017): evaluácia organizácie Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići, Bosna a Hercegovina
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- Zvyšování kvality vysokého školství v Bosně a Hercegovině, Moldavsku a Srbsku (Česká rozvojová agentura, 2012-2013): výměna akademických pracovníků mezi katedrou rozvojevých a environmentálních studií UP a partnerskými univerzitami v Bosne a Hercegovine, Moldavsku a Srbsku

#### PUBLIKAČNÁ ČINNOSTĚ:

ŠERÁ KOMLOSSYOVÁ, E. et.al. (2020) One step ahead? The use of foresight by Czech and Slovak non-governmental organizations. *European Journal of Futures Research* 8(4):1-9.

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#### ĎALŠIE KURZY:

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- 31. augusta – 5. septembra 2014: European Programme for Development Evaluation Training – EPDET 2014 (IDEAS, Čilistov, Slovensko): medzinárodný tréning v metodách evaluácií rozvojevých projektov
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