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Youth Civil Society in Kosovo: the Impact of Reconciliation

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MA in Black Sea Cultural Studies at the International Hellenic University.

This master's dissertation examines the current status of the youth civil society sector in Kosovo. It tries to have as much as possible a diachronic approach, meaning that the evolution of the youth civil society sector throughout the years after the war was taken into consideration whenever possible. The main research question, summarised in this abstract, is what the international community and the youth civil society organisations exactly understand as reconciliation, how their understanding of this term influences their programmes and, if this is the case, how the understanding of this concept has been changing over time, influencing their programmes as well. The main conclusion of this master's dissertation is that the term reconciliation has undergone a double shift: one by the international community, and one by the locally based civil society organisations themselves. Regarding the second shift, the term still plays a very important role in Kosovo's civil society sector today, although it has become a concept with a quite negative connotation and a goal that has to be achieved rather indirectly, for example by working on youth unemployment at a first, less provocative level, and on reconciliation at a second, rather abstract and indirect level.

Keywords: civil society, youth, Kosovo, reconciliation

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Preface

The first person I want to thank is my supervisor, professor Ioannis Armakolas. He gave me the basic idea for this dissertation, supported me by sending me articles and regularly received me in his office for a rather lengthy discussion about how the dissertation should look like. Next to that, he also gave me access to his big network in Kosovo, which offered me the possibility to conduct a lot of fruitful interviews with persons working in or experienced with Kosovo's youth civil society sector.

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I want to explicitly thank Dina Pavlopoulou, for proof-reading this dissertation and correcting the mistakes I did not see myself.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank the persons in Pristina and Mitrovica who were willing to take some time to let me have an interview with them. Through Skype or "in real life", they gave me the opportunity to extensively compare the theoretical framework I designed with their own views, which was of course extremely helpful for this master's dissertation. Although they did not know me personally, they were willing to share their opinion with me. Without them, this research paper would most probably only have had a theoretical framework, and no empirical part at all.

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Introduction

In 2015, the twentieth anniversary of the end of the Bosnian war will be celebrated. The war in Kosovo was ended just fifteen years ago. However, it can hardly be claimed that the situation in either Kosovo or Bosnia today has been fully stabilised. In an attempt to further stabilise these countries, local civil society organisations (hereafter CSOs) have been continuously approached by the international community (hereafter IC) in their peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts since the end of the war. These CSOs, or those who have replaced the ones that have left the scene by now, are still present today. However, both by consulting the available academic sources and especially by analysing the empirical evidence obtained from the CSOs themselves, through their representatives, one can quite certainly claim that both the role and focus of these organisations have changed throughout the years. The goal of this master's dissertation is to analyse the changing appearance of the CSOs over time, by using a balanced mix of a theoretical framework and empirical evidence. The focus will be on CSOs that have specific programmes for the local youth, since this appears to be one of the most sensitive groups of the population today, as well as probably the most crucial group for the future of Kosovo and other war-torn countries. Due to the large amount of information collected during the fieldwork in Kosovo, it has been decided to focus mainly on this country, and to keep the case of Bosnia out of this master's dissertation. To be sure however, the case of Bosnia also deserves to be researched and can be the main topic of another research paper.

The central research question of this master's dissertation is how the focus of youth CSOs in Kosovo has changed over time, and what were the most decisive factors for these changes. Were the modifications mainly donor-driven or did they take place because people involved with CSOs, especially young ones, had learned some important lessons from the past? Moreover, could it maybe be argued that the CSOs in Kosovo are still involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, but that they have changed their understanding and approach of these concepts as the situation has been changing over time as well?

If so, what exactly do CSOs nowadays understand as peacebuilding and reconciliation, and what caused the shift in the understanding of these concepts? If the topics of peacebuilding and reconciliation are not central to the civil society sector in Kosovo anymore, what are youth CSOs exactly involved with today? The interpretation of the term reconciliation and the impact of this interpretation on the youth CSOs that are currently active in Kosovo and on their programmes turned out to be central to this research question.

The research question for this master's dissertation was, of course, not chosen randomly. The amount of sources written about peacebuilding, reconciliation and CSOs is so big that it is almost confusing for the average master's student trying to work his or her way through the available academic literature. In order to make matters more clear, researchers should thus choose a specific aspect of the debate. Next to that, a lot of the sources seem to be focused on a specific moment in time, without really investigating the evolution of the civil society sector throughout the two decades after the war. In spite of this trend in academics, while collecting the empirical evidence, and while reading between the lines of most of the academic literature available as well, it became evident that there most probably is an interesting evolution in the programmes and policies of CSOs, an evolution which moreover appears to be linked to a shifted understanding of the concepts of peacebuilding and, especially, reconciliation. It is not very clear yet in the current academic debate which factors actually triggered this change. However, the methodology used for this research paper seems to suggest that a first change took place among the actors of the IC, and a second one among the youth CSOs in Kosovo themselves. Both changes had their impact on how international and local actors currently deal with the difficult situation in Kosovo. Thus, an interesting approach for this research paper appeared to be to investigate the programmes and policies of the CSOs over the years in an empirical way, to point to the main reasons for the changes in their programmes and policies, as well as to try to find a connection of this evolution with the development of the understanding of the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes among both international and local actors

in, mainly, Kosovo. By doing this, it will hopefully be possible to somehow contribute to the still very lively debate about the post-war youth civil society sector in this country.

The methodology of this research paper can be divided in two parts. Firstly, a theoretical framework will be constructed, using mainly academic sources, such as books and articles. Secondly, as for the empirical evidence, a combination of a study of the websites and publications of the CSOs and interviews with their representatives will deliver the necessary information for the empirical analysis. The websites and publications of the existing, mainly youth, CSOs in Kosovo provide important factual information about these organisations. This information can exist of statistical data, financial information, annual reports, mission objectives and so on. This information can mainly be found back in the appendix of this research paper. Together with the publications the CSOs provide online, this offers a first set of empirical evidence about the functioning of youth CSOs in Kosovo since the end of the war until today. Keeping the research question in mind, the emphasis will always be on changes that can be discovered in the approach of youth CSOs specifically. Next to that, a number of in-depth interviews were conducted with people involved with youth CSOs in Kosovo, currently or previously active in the sector. Due to a limited amount of time and a lack of financial resources, some interviews were conducted through Skype or, lacking a stable internet connection, via email. The face-to-face interviews in Kosovo were conducted in December, during a visit to Pristina and Mitrovica. When considered necessary, the empirical material taken from these interviews was complemented by basic information about the CSOs, obtained by short surveys or emails with concrete questions sent to several organisations that are active in Kosovo today. This double methodology makes it possible to start from a stable, scientific and theoretical basis, to then use this basis when analysing the empirical evidence, and thus to investigate the research question as thoroughly as possible, hopefully coming to a conclusion that can in one way or another contribute to improving the current status of the youth civil society sector in Kosovo in a positive and constructive way.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In the first chapter of this research paper, which is theoretical and will serve as the background and main basis for the next, empirical chapter, a literature review and theoretical framework are offered. The focus will be on the existing theories on peacebuilding and reconciliation on the one hand, and on the civil society on the other. The role of young people will be central to this description of the existing theories, having the topic of this thesis in mind. It was decided not to include a historical background in this chapter, because the sources for the historical part are abundant and the scope of this research paper is too limited to include this information as well.

The concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation: an overview

This section consists of a literature-based overview of some of the main theories on peacebuilding and reconciliation processes that are currently available in the academic debate. In order to make this research paper as a whole more coherent and fluent, these theories will be described not just in a general way, that is summing them up without using or interpreting them for a specific goal or in a particular way. Although this approach can certainly have its benefits in other papers with other goals, the attempt of this section is to present the dilemmas and discussions that are currently playing an active role on the academic scene in such a way, that it should become clear why the decision was taken to focus this research paper on the changing understanding of the concepts of peacebuilding and, especially, reconciliation in the youth civil society sector in Kosovo specifically. Indeed, if no hints would be found in the academic literature about this first paradigmatic shift that took place within the IC, the research question would probably not have been formulated in the same way as it is now. These hints, that were, sometimes, but certainly not always, read between the lines of most of the academic sources available, form a strong argument in favour of the main hypothesis of this master's dissertation, especially when combined with the empirical findings analysed further down in this research paper. Having the research question of this thesis in mind, next to discussing the changing mean-

ing of the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation, considerable attention will also be given to the reasons for the increasing focus of the IC on helping to develop the youth civil society sector in war-torn states such as Kosovo, and what, in turn, exactly was the influence of this international attitude on the “independent” development of the locally based youth civil society sector, which changed the interpretation of the concept of reconciliation a second time, thus influencing their programmes and policies once again. The reader of this master’s dissertation should always have in mind that the main debates in the academic literature are here, in this theoretical part that is, often connected with the results obtained from the interviews that were conducted for the empirical part of this master’s dissertation. Indeed, a lot of paragraphs in this section end with a short comparison between what can be found in books and articles and what was said in the interviews. No separate section was created here, in order to keep this dissertation short and fluid. Moreover, because the second change, the one made by the locally based CSOs that is, is not very apparent in the literature, it seemed to be a good idea to introduce this second change in this theoretical chapter as well, by referring shortly to the next, empirical chapter.

Let us first take a look at a basic definition for both concepts. Peacebuilding, according to most scholars, is the process by which the several actors involved try to rebuild the infrastructure and the institutional system of a state that has recently experienced a war. Rebuilding the infrastructure and institutions of a state is absolutely necessary, especially if a stable and long-lasting peace is what the several actors involved want to obtain in the end. As most of the short-term peace agreements clearly failed in the early 1990s, more and more emphasis was placed on long-term attempts and on connecting peacebuilding efforts with sustainable reconciliation processes (Mallinder 2011, 9-10; see also *infra*). This shift was also visible in the programmes of most of the CSOs in Kosovo, although those shifts were at that time mostly driven by the changing focus of the international donors. Next to that, because the war in Kosovo took place in the late nineties, a lot of international donors had already shifted their focus in general, having learned their lessons

from their experiences in other war-torn countries earlier on in the nineties, such as Bosnia. Nevertheless, this initial change in the programmes of the CSOs still has to be considered as a donor-driven one, and not as a decision made by the locally based CSOs in Kosovo themselves. Indeed, these locally based organisations were at that time still mainly listening to what their foreign donors said, as they themselves had very little experience in the new reality of Kosovo. Later on, however, they would themselves change their understanding of the concept of reconciliation, because of their past experiences. This became apparent when consulting the websites of the CSOs and while conducting interviews with their representatives (cf. *infra*). The fact that there seems to have occurred a double shift in the interpretation of the concept of reconciliation, one made by the IC and a non-donor-driven one, made by the locally based CSOs themselves that is, will turn out to be one of the main findings of this master's dissertation. It is important to have this in mind all the time.

Reconciliation, in its basic meaning, is often considered as a process that aims at restoring relationships between individual persons, within communities or between communities. Often, it has to do with publicly, as a community that is, trying to come to terms with or accept what has happened with this specific community in the past. In the context of this research paper, it is important to stress that, just as was the case with the concept of peacebuilding, as early as in the 1990s, the interpretation and meaning of reconciliation already started to shift from creating a short-term non-violent environment towards achieving a rather long-term stabilisation of the relationships in the society. In other words, after the shift took place within the IC reconciliation was not just about ending the fight and accepting that bad things have happened in the past anymore, but also about learning how to live in a still multi-ethnic environment and how to accept the presence of other ethnic communities in a specific country, such as Kosovo (Mallinder 2011, 5, 7). According to Whittaker,

Reconciliation goes beyond resolution to refer not just to the political arrangements to resolve differences and hostile action but to the psychological process whereby understanding and tolerance lead to readiness to live together in a new framework of peace and well-being (Whittaker 2002, 1).

According to Burema as well, who basically adopted the definition of Kora Andrieu, the goal of the process of reconciliation is “to establish the conditions for peaceful dialogue mechanisms that would promote trust while encouraging reasonable disagreement” (Burema 2012, 8). The fact that, especially but not only, the northern part of Kosovo has still not solved its conflict nor agreed on the “correct” version of the truth severely hinders the reconciliation process, an argument that will also be repeated when the results of the interviews will be described in the next chapter of this thesis. Reconciliation, according to Burema, requires more than just peaceful coexistence; it also requires a degree of forgiveness. This is certainly not the case yet in at least certain parts of Kosovo, such as Mitrovica, where there is not even an official settlement of the conflict as of today (Burema 2012, 7-9). Indeed, although locally based civil society actors nowadays deliberately try to focus on achieving a sustainable form of reconciliation, they often face a reality in which the local population is still accusing “the others” for having committed deadly forms of violence during the war, and thus is most often not yet entirely ready for the next step, which would be actual reconciliation. This frustration was, for example, very much present during the interview with the representative from Community Building Mitrovica, a CSO that actively tries to organise projects in order to unite Mitrovica’s young people, but that very often faces rejection from the society in general, which does not accept a possible coexistence, because they are still in the phase of accusing the other ethnic group for what has happened during the war. Because of this, most CSOs that are active in Mitrovica today, and in Kosovo in general, are still focusing on other problems, such as giving everybody the same version of the truth or on improving the educational system, and not yet on reconciliation as such. This is the second change in the interpretation of the concept of reconciliation, made by the locally based CSOs themselves, when they realised that their original approach did not work, and thus not a change driven by the money of the IC. This second change will be the main part of the empirical chapter of this thesis (cf. *infra*).

Having these general, basic definitions in mind, the focus of this theoretical chapter will now shift to those aspects and discussions about peacebuilding and reconciliation that are more relevant to this thesis. In particular, an attempt will be made to see an evolution in the debate and understanding of peacebuilding and reconciliation theories and processes over time in Kosovo, especially regarding the youth civil society sector of this country. One absolute authority in the field of peacebuilding and reconciliation theories is John P. Lederach. Reconciliation, he says, is a “social space, where people and things come together” (Lederach 1999, 29). Lederach is one of the scholars who was, during the 1990s, actively striving for a paradigmatic shift, which would focus on getting the local people motivated to start being concerned about the restoration and rebuilding of their mutual relationships. In other words, he wants international and local negotiators to be focused on the long-term results of their talks, not on solving the most pressing issues only. In order to achieve these long-term results, a broad network of relationships promoting justice and addressing the main causes of the enmities should be created. Only then can the tensions be resolved in a sustainable way. This was also mentioned when the basic definitions of peacebuilding and reconciliation were given just above and seems to play a very important role in the programmes of the CSOs that are active in Kosovo today, especially of those focusing on Kosovo’s youth. Indeed. Lederach also emphasises that all sectors of society must participate in the building of peace, including a country’s youth (Lederach 1999, ix-x). All these elements will come back when the results of the interviews will be described as well, since they are part of the general approach of most of the youth CSOs in Kosovo.

The emphasis Lederach puts on a long-term approach of peacebuilding and reconciliation undertakings will, indeed, turn out to be one of the most important and, at the same time, most debated elements of the policies of CSOs in, for example, Kosovo today, which was apparently not the case in the first years following the war. To be sure, as will be stressed more than once throughout this research paper, and as was already emphasised before as well, the first international attempts at peacebuilding and reconciliation in, among many

other ex-Yugoslav countries, Bosnia, and in Kosovo as well to a certain extent, were focused rather on short-term, immediately visible results of ending the war and establishing a basic peace, enthusiastically funded by international donors, not on building viable peace and ensuring sustainable interethnic cooperation. This is obviously one of the main issues when scholars argue about peacebuilding and reconciliation in the ex-Yugoslav area during the past two decades, namely about whether these processes should be focused on the long term or if they should try to achieve their goals as fast as possible, without thinking too much about sustainability. Lederach was clearly arguing in favour of the first approach, which could also very frequently be heard during the interviews conducted in Kosovo for this research paper. Moreover, the use of both concepts has become rather problematic, which will be the main argument of the empirical section of this master's dissertation, but which is not frequently mentioned in the academic sources. Indeed, the academic sources seem to be mainly talking about the changed interpretation of the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation from the side of the international actors, and not about the one made by the locally based youth CSOs in Kosovo.

Another important debate that was and is held and hold, is about the best possible ratio between the actions undertaken by the IC and those initiated or supported by the local population in the peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. After the wars in the ex-Yugoslav countries, a lot of scholars started to emphasise the importance of getting the local population involved in the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes (Lederach 1999, 15). These scholars wanted to create an environment in which the IC and the foreign donors, whenever they were about to take a decision, would check the reaction of the local population, because, according to the scholars, every decision should reflect the perspectives and needs of the people living in a specific country. Connected to this, specialists also argue that training, often organised by the IC, should be linked to the development of people and their communities in such a way that it creates an "infrastructure for peace within their setting" (Lederach 1999, 51). This reasoning again seems to have its roots in the idea that peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts should not be focused on

immediate and highly visible results, valued by the international donors that dominated the post-war scene during the years, but on achieving something more viable for the local population, which has to support the actions undertaken by the IC. This is indeed the vision that was echoed in most of the interviews that were conducted as well, while reports dating from the years right after the war, even in Kosovo, where the war broke out relatively late, rather seem to voice the strategy of achieving the goals as fast as possible, without really having sustainability in mind. Of course, it should be mentioned that this was one of the few ways in which goals could be achieved immediately after the war, when something like sustainable peace was still unthinkable and unachievable, as well as almost totally unsupported by the local population. Truly, trying to improve the situation of the country by adopting a policy of achieving fast-term results, was most often one of the only approaches that could be slightly successful in, for example, Kosovo, right after the war, when the whole country had to be rebuilt. Although the war in Kosovo broke out later late and the general strategy of the IC might have been changed by that time, due to the experiences taken from other war-torn countries, the IC still adopted this fast strategy, because this was one of the few approaches working at that time, when Kosovo was literally in ruins. In other words, although they might have changed their approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation in general by that time, the IC active in Kosovo was confronted with more or less the same situation as in other ex-Yugoslav countries before, namely a post-war country in which highly urgent problems arose, and thus it makes sense that they worked on fast-achievable goals during the first post-war years, even in Kosovo. Despite this argument in favour of the approach of the IC, the interviews also clearly showed that getting the local population involved and using the term reconciliation together, is quite difficult. This is an aspect of the civil society sector in Kosovo that is not very much covered by the academic sources, but that is very much present in the minds of the CSOs today. In other words, after the IC started to focus more on long-term projects and on involving the locals, the locally based CSOs, in turn, became more aware of the problems that were and are connected with the concept of reconciliation, and changed their own approach as well.

Next to that, in spite of the above mentioned striving for getting the local population involved, which became more important during the last few years especially, the IC, particularly after the war but today as well, appears to often face the difficult dilemma between legitimacy and efficacy, between local actions and international assistance (Jarstad and Sisk 2008, 11). The IC became indeed convinced that its actions are more efficient than those undertaken by the local population, while they also started to be aware of the fact that they somehow have to involve this local population in their actions if they want to obtain some degree of long-lasting legitimacy for their frequent interventions, a shift that once again reflects the changing focus of the IC. However, looking back at the last decade, the first idea of achieving fast results seems to have been stronger than the second one, especially in the period immediately following the ending of the war, as was mentioned before as well (Jarstad and Sisk 2008, 44-46). Of course, it should be kept in mind that in the first years after the war, the local population was not yet ready to cooperate in such projects, while it was also difficult for the IC to develop a clear strategy in these extremely turbulent years. These factors partly help to explain the shift in the approach of the IC, which, after some years, found a local population that was more willing to cooperate, as well as a better ground for developing a clear strategy. It must be stressed that this shift only took place during the last few years, when things started to change in Kosovo and the country calmed down a bit. This partly helps to explain the focus of the IC on creating a peaceful society as fast as possible immediately after the war. Only when this fast peace was achieved, they considered themselves and the society ready for the next big step, namely engaging in projects designed for creating a more sustainable form of coexistence. Moreover, the reader of this research paper should also keep in mind that a large part of the local population got so used to the former approach by the IC by now, that it is difficult to get them involved in new projects, with the new approach. Next to that, it has to be stressed again that the use of the term reconciliation has become rather problematic in Kosovo, in spite of the attempts of the IC to focus on this process more, which caused the locally based CSOs to change the interpretation of the term once again.

To overcome this above mentioned dilemma between legitimacy and efficacy, the popular discourse of “failed states” often helped in the years immediately after the war, and to a certain extent still helps today, legitimising the strong and long-lasting intervention of the IC in war-torn societies such as Kosovo (Boege 2006, 2-3). By fixing the culpability for the war on the state and its society, the IC often makes the domestic actors look dysfunctional, while the international interventions start to look functional. Yet, in contrast to this discourse, the IC has not been able to entirely or sustainably cure the societies it intervened in (Hughes and Pupavac 2005, 873-884). Next to that, people using this discourse, whether they are international actors intervening in a war-torn country or scholars dealing with these issues, should be aware of the fact that the idea of “failed states” does not automatically imply that the population of the “failed state” also lost its power to act (Boege 2006, 10). Moreover, if the IC first diagnosed this state as “failed”, it would in any case make more sense to involve its population directly in their interventions (Krause and Milliken 2002). This argument in favour of appreciating and effectively using the capabilities of the local population was, especially during the last years, further supported and strengthened by the obvious, though often neglected, fact that these local people are exactly the ones that face the dilemmas of reconstruction, democratisation and reintegration. Noticing that these people often ignore formal institutions and develop their own strategies and informal social networks to rebuild their lives, should help the IC today to realise that their interventions are not always as efficient as they might think they are. In other words, using the argument developed in the book written by Pickering here, even if its role remains important and dominant, the IC should probably start listening more intensively to the reaction of the local population and, after that, start adapting their programmes according to these reactions. In doing this, their interventions would become more efficient and the results of these interventions more long-lasting, because they would resonate the local perceptions and problems (Pickering 2007, 1-5; 29). This is an argument that can be found not only in Pickering’s book, but in most of the sources available today, and which to a considerable extent is still used by for example think tanks that are currently active in the ex-Yugoslav region, among other countries in Kosovo. These think tanks often emphasise

that the voices of the local people are even today not always heard by the international, rather dominant, community, although the local population seems to be in the best position to help to decide on the future of their society and will be more motivated to implement certain changes if they were themselves part of the decision-making process that led to these changes. It should be repeated, however that this willingness to cooperate was not present at all during the years immediately following the end of the war in Kosovo, and that most of the civil society actors, both international and local ones, indeed started to shift their policies once the local population was more or less ready for this shift. To be sure, more or less ready, since even today it cannot be claimed that all the inhabitants of Kosovo are ready for reconciliation; they most often hinder this process until today, as was mentioned very often during the interviews and earlier on in this research paper as well. Nevertheless, the IC started to involve the locally based organisations more and more, while they also shifted their focus towards more long-term goals, once the immediate needs of war-torn Kosovo were fulfilled. However, the interviews conducted in Kosovo learned that, although reconciliation is now more on the agenda of most of the CSOs in Kosovo today, because of the emphasis put on it by the IC that is, most CSOs try to achieve this goal in a rather indirect way, for example by letting people cooperate first on shared and important problems such as education. Getting people involved in projects directly focused on reconciliation appears to be difficult, to a great extent due to the negative connotation of the concept. This once again is an argument in favour of a second change of the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation, realised by the locally based CSOs themselves, and thus not a donor-driven change, because the CSOs themselves had learned important lessons from their previous experiences.

In spite of the almost overwhelming presence and power of this argument in favour of strengthening the voice of the local population, as well in favour of long-term projects, to a certain extent up to today, peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives still seem to be answering more to the urgent needs of the international donor community than to those of the local population. Peace builders – although not all of them, it has to be remarked –

often appear to opt for the easy solution of using available blueprints, instead of trying to examine the specific local situation and then adapting their programmes according to the results of this examination (Bush 2000, 24). In doing this, the IC often fails to recognise the local worldviews and, also, clearly does not understand the often complicated nature of the conflict in which it has intervened (King and Mason 2004, 85). Hence, the IC and their interventions quite often lack fundamental legitimacy among the local population (Baker 2012, 849-850; King and Mason 2006; Sterland 2006, 15). It has to be stressed, as will be mentioned further down in this research paper as well, nevertheless, that some foreign donors started to give more attention to the locally based civil society actors, which know the needs of the local population better. The theory of the too dominant IC, implementing blueprints without taking the local population into account, should thus not always been taken for granted. However - although this theory is, indeed, often criticised - it is regularly said that the lack of legitimacy and thus efficacy of the IC, still seems to be one of the reasons for the current unstable situation in, among other conflict-ridden countries, Kosovo (Belloni 2007). Chopra and Hohe voiced a similar concern in 2004. Moreover, these scholars also argue in favour of a longer-term project of coexistence, in which the slow integration of the local population in the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes is preferred over simply using the fast solution of ready-made blueprints, without trying to achieve the difficult goal of taking into consideration the needs and capacities of the locals (Chopra and Hohe 2004, 242; King and Mason 2004, 126-127). Indeed, to quote the authors of the article:

There is never a vacuum of power on the ground. Even when there is the complete absence of an identifiable state government or any semblance of governing institutions – as was the case when Indonesian forces withdrew from East Timor or when Somalia disintegrated – traditional structures evolve, social organisation is re-defined, people continue to survive, filling the space, if it was ever there in the first place (Chopra and Hohe 2004, 252).

It should be stressed here that, compared to ten years ago, when Chopra and Hohe wrote their article, the civil society sector in Kosovo is now to some extent more focused on achieving long-term results and sustainable peace, instead of on fast successes. However,

due to this long, donor-driven tradition of trying to realise fast results, which was part of the funding policies of foreign donors, and thus also part of the policies of the locally based CSOs, and due to the negative connotation of the concept of reconciliation, most of the civil society actors active today are very well aware of the problems connected to this concept. This statement will later one be proved with empirical evidence collected from the websites of CSOs and their publications. In most of the interviews as well it was emphasised that, although locally based CSOs nowadays try to work on for example reconciliation, because the IC is focused on achieving this goal and gives money for projects connected to it, they often face resistance from the local population in spite of their new efforts, a local population which is to some extent still used to the dominant role of the IC, reluctant to get involved in projects that are directly focused on reconciliation, and preoccupied with the anger they feel towards other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the IC often continued to act in a rather dominant way, because the local population was and, undeniably, is not yet ready to work on processes like reconciliation independently. Indeed, especially in the years immediately following the war, the IC tried to achieve its goals while the local population was still thinking about the violence that the others committed against them during the war. In other words, the IC is not entirely to blame for its initial, dominant approach and the effect of this approach, as it was mainly trying to achieve its short-term, necessary goals while the local population was not yet ready nor willing to cooperate. At the same time, a lot of locally based CSOs today are still dependent on the money coming from international donors, which to a certain extent forces them to implement the programmes designed by these donors. This ongoing dependency on foreign donors, together with the resistance of the local population, often makes locally based CSOs focus on less sensitive issues, that are moreover easier to achieve, for example youth unemployment and education. Thus, it has to be stressed again that the IC alone is not entirely responsible for the situation, but that the Kosovo society in general, led to this approach, especially in the first post-war years. Moreover, the locally based CSOs were also part of this decision, later on, having learned from the past.

Belloni summarises a lot of the above mentioned problems quite accurately when writing about the current situation of the civil society sector in Bosnia. According to Belloni, three lessons can and should be learned from the international peacebuilding and reconciliation interventions in Bosnia. These lessons can, of course, also be applied to the case of Kosovo, which largely faced the same problems as Bosnia did, for example the dominant role of the IC and the difficult transition in general after a violent war. The first lesson to be learned, according to Belloni, is that the different objectives of different third parties made the effectiveness of the international intervention more difficult and caused a delay in the local adoption of democratic reforms. Secondly, the IC preferred to maintain the status quo and relative stability over really changing the situation on the ground. Lastly, and connected to the second trend, the IC was mainly concerned with achieving visible and concrete, short-term results, through top-down implemented projects (Belloni 2007, 5). This top-down approach applied by the IC once again contributed to the creation of a situation in which the local population is not central to the peacebuilding process, and the resources of this local population are not used sufficiently by the IC (Belloni 2007, 32). This top-down approach was also reflected in the first programmes of the locally based CSOs in Kosovo, which were mainly donor-driven and attempting to achieve the fast results the IC was asking for, while they later on realised that the local population in general was not yet ready for big projects connected to reconciliation attempts, a concept which it does not really like even today. This last factor will be, it has to be stressed again, central in the empirical part of this chapter.

The last part of this section on peacebuilding and reconciliation theories focuses on the place of young people of conflict-ridden societies in this discussion. Many scholars argue that young people in, among other problematic, war-torn and ethnically diverse countries, Bosnia and Kosovo, constitute a paradox, in the sense that they have the potential to contribute to the peacebuilding process, while they are often considered to possibly pose a threat to this process as well (Del Felice and Wisler 2007, 3). Del Felice and Wisler argue in favour of the potential of young people to play an active role in the peacebuilding process,

for example by supporting the initiatives that those young people themselves started. These initiatives, since they were undertaken by the local youth, are supposed to take into account their own needs and preferences, and thus should have a greater capacity of being effective and attractive initiatives. Such initiatives will be discussed at length in the empirical chapter of this thesis. Another argument in favour of letting young people develop their own strategy is the fact that they are on average more oriented towards the future than the previous generation. They may have heard stories about the war from their parents and other family members, but, at the same time, they are aware of the fact that they will be the ones that will soon be capable of changing the often problematic reality that was created right after the war, and that they are the ones that will face the future situation as well (Del Felice and Wisler 2007, 21-24). On the other hand, however, young people can pose a threat to the processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the sense that they do not always come to an organisation without prejudices about people from different ethnic backgrounds, with whom they sometimes have to cooperate in the organisation they work for or get involved with as a volunteer. In other words, it is important to involve young people in peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, but it should always be kept in mind that they might have some stubborn and influential negative stereotypes about the other ethnic groups, which might hinder an effective cooperation and coexistence with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Next to that, having a few enthusiastic young people does not reflect the situation of Kosovo's young population as a whole, nor does it ensure that their suggested solutions will have an effect in reality. This last argument will be further elaborated throughout this research paper.

The idea of peace education can be connected to the discourse about the role of the youth in peacebuilding and reconciliation attempts. Peace education tries to create a stable and peaceful society from the bottom up. It tries to

Create the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will allow people of all ages and levels to develop the behavioural changes needed to prevent the occurrence of conflict, to resolve it peacefully and to create the social conditions conducive to peace (Keating and Knight 2004, xiii).

Peace education tries to establish a “culture of peace”, in which the local population actively participates (Keating and Knight 2004, xxxviii). It is evident that young people, who did not experience the war directly but are still to a large extent affected by its devastating and destabilising consequences and by the negative stereotypes that are still present in society, and who are, moreover, the ones that will constitute the main and decision-making part of the population of their country soon, are a central element to the concept of peace education. However, in spite of all the afore stated arguments, young people are not always sufficiently involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes (McEvoy-Levy 2001, 2-3). This should be one of the lessons that the civil society sector in Kosovo should have learned already, or, if not, should learn as soon as possible. From the interviews conducted for this master’s dissertation, it became clear that a lot of CSOs in Kosovo do try to involve young people in their projects, although they are also highly aware of the fact that, quite often, young people, due to their background and the society they live in, are more prone to cooperate for pressing issues such as unemployment and education, while they often do not want to get involved directly with reconciliation projects, which they consider impossible and which they often perceive negatively, because the term reconciliation has received a quite negative connotation over the years. Moreover, as will be elaborated further down in this master’s dissertation, being able to involve a small proportion of Kosovo’s youth in projects does not mean that all young people will be involved in the programmes automatically, nor does it mean that the problems faced by Kosovo’s youth are solved easier or faster.

This general overview made clear that three main and interconnected problems in contemporary peacebuilding and reconciliation undertakings are, first of all, the overwhelming dominance of the IC, which, secondly, fails to see the potential of the local population, among others the youth, who often are not ready to get involved in long-term projects yet. Thirdly, too many attempts of building peace in and reconciling a war-torn society have been focused on achieving fast and immediately visible results, instead of trying to work on viable solutions that are backed by the local population – although one should

notice two shifts in the policies of international actors and locally based CSOs lately, corresponding to a shift in Kosovo's reality recently, in which the population is more prone to get involved in reconciliation attempts, but in a rather indirect way. Kosovo is a country that provides a very clear example of this problematic situation. Two changes in the interpretation of the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation seem to have taken place: the IC realised that it should focus more on long-term projects, while the locally based CSOs realised that the use of the terms peacebuilding and, especially, reconciliation, even in a long-term approach, is quite problematic and that it is better to focus on less problematic goals, such as youth unemployment. Due to constraints in terms of time, as well as of in terms of space, the scope of this research paper will be mainly limited to the problematic case of Kosovo.

The civil society sector was and is heavily influenced by the policies of the IC, since the latter turned to the former in order to achieve its peacebuilding and reconciliation attempts, as will be made more clear further down. This last remark forms one of the central arguments in the next section, which focuses on the concept of civil society in general, and on the problems connected to this concept in Kosovo.

Civil Society

Before connecting civil society with peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in more detail, it seems appropriate again to give a proper definition of what is generally understood as civil society first. Unfortunately, a lot of different definitions have been written down in books and articles during the last few decades. In order not to get lost in the details here, the definition of John Hall shall be used as an example of a definition that seems to grasp the meaning of the concept of civil society quite accurately. It has to be noted, however, that Hall has put quite an amount of value in his definition, that should not be neglected by the reader of this dissertation, who is free to prefer a less value loaded definition in mind while reading this research paper:

Civil society is a particular form of society, appreciating social diversity and able to limit the depredations of political power (Hall 1995, 25).

Let us now take a closer look at the connection between civil society on the one hand, and peacebuilding and reconciliation processes on the other hand. Civil society is very often considered as one of the main aspects that can help to enhance the difficult processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation in war-torn countries such as Kosovo. According to Belloni, this mainly stems from the “failures of economic and political incentives to achieve reconciliation” (2001, 164; 2007, 109). In other words, when it became clear that reconciliation and a stable, peaceful society could not be easily achieved through political and economic policies only, the IC tried to stabilise the newly established countries by focusing more on the development of their civil society sector, hoping that it could, in this way, still achieve its broader political and economic objectives (Fagan 2010, 1).

Indeed, civil society offers in a certain way the possibility for peace-builders to motivate the parties to encounter and cooperate with each other as people, as well as to create a place where they can express their feelings about their problematic past openly while also recognising the importance of their shared future (Lederach 1999, 27; 34). A lot of books have been written about the general composition of the civil society sector and the role that the different actors within this sector normally play. There is no need to repeat what these books say here. Nevertheless, the reader of this research paper should connect the change in the policies of the IC, discussed above, with the greater importance attached to the local civil society actors, as well as with the changing reality in, for example, Kosovo, in which the inhabitants of the country became more and more interested in long-term projects, once their urgent problems were solved. Indeed, as the IC felt that both the locally based organisations and the population were more focused on trying to create a working, multi-ethnic society instead of on mainly trying to avoid the fighting to re-emerge, they involved these groups more and more in their policies for Kosovo. However, the negative connotation of the term reconciliation among Kosovo’s population largely hinders this

positive development, which triggered the second, non-donor-driven change, made by the locally based civil society sector itself.

Next to this optimistic stream of publications, quite a large amount of researchers also critically questions the role of CSOs in peacebuilding and reconciliation operations. Very often, those scholars argue, NGOs are already active as development organisations in a certain country when the peacebuilding process in that same country effectively starts. Moreover, in many cases CSOs quite explicitly connect their development work with peacebuilding activities, for example by building a social infrastructure which, at the same time, motivates the local population to become more involved in their society and in interethnic cooperation (Abiew and Keating 2004, 97-98). However, the question then arises as to how accountable, neutral, legal, transparent and so forth CSOs are when they are carrying out peacebuilding tasks at a first stage, and reconciliation activities at the next stage (Abiew and Keating 2004, 111). Although this certainly is an important stream in the current debate, civil society actors that consciously do not get involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, such as for example veterans, are deliberately not taken into account in this dissertation. Indeed, so many CSOs exist in Kosovo today, that it seemed to be wiser to focus in this master's dissertation on those youth CSOs that are effectively focusing on peacebuilding and reconciliation, and thus not on those that are consciously not working on it.

As was mentioned just above, namely in the introduction of this short section, civil society is often considered as something that should help to lead to a stable and multi-ethnic democracy, by letting people acquire tolerance for diversity. This civil society is thus supposed to bridge divisions and diminish the influence of exclusivist values maintained by, for example, the politicians in Kosovo (Jarstad and Sisk 2008, 185-189). However, a good balance should be found between the role of international actors intervening, who can be good intermediaries between citizens and the state, and local civil society actors, who do not always appreciate international support. This non-appreciation obviously obstructs

the development of the local civil society sector. In other words, the development of civil society should once again try to find a good balance between the legitimacy and efficacy of international interventions in this development, just as was mentioned earlier on, in the previous section on peacebuilding and reconciliation theories, as well (Jarstad and Sisk 2008, 200-205). On the other hand, it should be emphasised that some of the civil society actors today, for example veterans, deliberately do not work on peacebuilding and reconciliation, because they want to maintain the division in the society and keep the memory of a violent war alive. By doing so, they sometimes hinder other CSOs that do want to work on a long-term form of cooperation and coexistence. As was stated before, however, this kind of CSOs was not taken into account for this research paper, because it would probably only further complicate the picture. Instead, it appears to be sufficient to mention that not all CSOs in Kosovo are willing to work on peacebuilding and reconciliation today, and that those other organisations are indeed sometimes hindering the work of the CSOs and actors that were interviewed. Nevertheless, they also have to be taken into account in a general way in other papers, as part of Kosovo's civil society today.

The finding of the right balance between the IC and the local population in the civil society sector has often proved to be quite problematic, as has been described already extensively earlier on in this thesis. This can also be seen, for example, in how the civil society sector in Kosovo has developed, namely by listening to what their foreign donors asked. This was one of the factors that created many problems, which will be described in this paragraph. A lot of scholars emphasise the fact that many CSOs emerged in the first few years after the war. The main reason for this was the availability of foreign money, since the IC had decided that the civil society sector was one of the most important fields in which it could achieve some results in its peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Most of these CSOs, however, were founded out of opportunism and because of the huge amount of grants available for them at that time, not because the founders had a clear or genuine concern with the local population, which was at the moment not concerned with this issue at all, as has been stressed several times already. The priority of the IC was, besides,

most often on the most urgent cases, not on long-term projects that would ensure a sustainable peace. Next to that, the CSOs that emerged right after the war listened to their foreign donors, who indeed asked for immediate and tangible results, instead of focusing on achieving long-lasting and more abstract results that could be considered as being more beneficial for the local population, or on the projects that the local people clearly find important today, but that this local population was not concerned with yet during the first years after the war. Moreover, most of these first CSOs used the western model, thus not having the structure that could help the local population in the Balkans in the best way possible. These are elements that will be very present in the analysis of the interviews conducted in Kosovo as well. A last negative consequence of this opportunism towards foreign funding was the disappearance of a local, more informal, culture of solidarity and of the locally based CSOs that existed before the wars, but that lost their support and thus ceased to exist after the war (Sterland 2006, 15-20; Schwartz 2010; Fagan 2010; Mertus 2004). From the side of the IC, in turn, the most logical legitimisation of their funding policy seems to have been, and sometimes still is, that providing financial assistance for locally based CSOs was and is the easiest way to support the development of both the democracy and the civil society sector (Fagan 2010, 11). It should be stressed again that their focus was, especially in the beginning, on the most urgent problems Kosovo faced at that time, a strategy partly motivated by the attitude of most of the local population immediately after the war. Besides, even when they did change their strategy, the society in general did not like the use of the term reconciliation, which forced the locally based CSOs to change their own approach as well.

Yet another problematic factor in the development of the civil society sector in Kosovo, as well as in other ex-Yugoslav countries such as Bosnia, is the lack of tradition of voluntary work, non-formal education or political engagement (Dipa and Fazlic 2012; Dipa 2008, 60-65; Hoxkha 2011, 9, 28, 46). This makes it difficult for CSOs to find enthusiastic and experienced local employees or volunteers. Local CSOs also face difficulties connected to a lack of legal regulations and a bad approach when it comes to the distribution of public funds

(Dipa 2008, 50-51). Despite some successful programmes in Bosnia, such as the Youth Information Agency (www.oiabih.info), CIVITAS, the Youth Law of FBiH and the EU-funded Youth in Action programme, there seems to be a general lack of human resources and skills in almost all of the ex-Yugoslav countries (Dipa 2008, 55-56; Besic 2014, 34-37), while it is also obvious that CSOs needed quite a lot of time to adapt their programmes to the new and changing social reality that emerged after the wars that took place in the nineties (Hoxkha 2011, 9). All these problems will be treated more extensively in the empirical chapter of this research paper.

Bosnia's and Kosovo's citizens, furthermore, perceive a lot of the existing civil society building programmes as bizarre and alien efforts, since these programmes do not take into account the local history and the structure of the society. Next to that, they also have the feeling that the IC came to their conflict-ridden country in order to educate the local population (Belloni 2001, 169). Taking all these factors into consideration, it becomes once again clear that the foreign people involved in CSOs should reconsider their programmes and give more attention to the needs and perceptions of the local population, especially now, when the inhabitants of Kosovo are slightly more willing to get involved in long-term projects. Otherwise, the gap between CSOs and the people they are trying to get involved with will probably continue to widen (Hoxkha 2011, 21). This would again lead to a non-sustainable, short-term peace, established by international actors who are most often not appreciated by the local population. To quote Belloni:

If citizens do not perceive themselves as a source of development or as actively shaping their community by adopting their goals and strategies, they might see no value in participating in an exogenously driven development project (2007, 112).

Recently, the IC seems to effectively have developed a certain degree of awareness of this problem and to have started shifting its focus on developing sustainable local CSOs and on rather long-term projects of peacebuilding and reconciliation (Belloni 2007, 112). Nevertheless, the civil society sector in most of the ex-Yugoslav countries is to a large extent still

dependent on foreign funding, with the IC most often determining the agenda of the CSOs, which obviously limits the workability of organisations that are effectively reflecting grassroots opinions or real interethnic reconciliation. The IC tends to downplay the local capacities, which in turn made local community leaders think that they should behave as non-capable persons if they want to attract foreign funding (Belloni 2007, 170-171). Furthermore, there is a long-lasting lack of coordination between authorities and international donors, when approval for local projects has to be given, as well as a clear absence of a coherent long-term strategy and understanding of the local context (Dipa 2008, 66; Belloni 2001, 162-164; Hoxkha 2011, 22). It is obvious that this is not a positive development at all for the civil society sector in Kosovo and other ex-Yugoslav, war-torn countries (Pickering 2007, 123-131). Foreign organisations should help the local population to understand why it is beneficial for them to cooperate in the internationally organised programmes that focus on reconciliation, why they should try to establish a multi-ethnic, co-operating and coexisting society (Pickering 2006, 79-80). Up to now, indeed, the local population still believes that locally based CSOs are listening more to what their international donors tell them to do than to the needs of the population, in spite of the fact that this population became more engaged and that the IC started to listen more to the population during the last few years (Pickering 2006, 91). Truly, changes in the programmes of CSOs have in general been slow and/or inadequate, and these organisations should soon start to adapt their programmes to the actual needs of the local population they are working for (*Kosovo's First Month* 2008, 18). Some of the problems can be related to the constitutional situation of Kosovo, but other problems could probably be solved when the CSOs would slightly adapt their programmes, after having listened to the opinion of the local population. This is a concern voiced by most of the civil society actors interviewed, and during the last few years they effectively changed their policy and started to focus more on the local population than on the demands of their foreign donors, who also transformed their own approach to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the problems that were mentioned just above still exist today, proving that a lot has yet to be done by all the

actors involved. Next to that, the negative perception of the concept of reconciliation among the local population further complicates the issue.

As was the case with peacebuilding and reconciliation processes (cf. *supra*), an important aspect of the development of the civil society sector is of course the role of young people in this process. This, obviously, has to a great extent to do with the connection between peacebuilding and reconciliation processes on the one hand, and the parallel development of a civil society sector on the other. A group of authors argues that young people must “learn what democratic citizenship entails and figure out how to satisfy their needs” (Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, Silbereisen and Youniss 2002, 122). Indeed, when a society is changing, it is up to the youth to shape their future, hopefully peaceful, environment. The scholars do not deny the general feeling of apathy and discouragement among youth when it comes to civil engagement, a problem that was already described earlier on in this master’s dissertation. However, a considerable amount of young people are genuinely interested in civil involvement and should be encouraged even more to express their interests and contribute to the whole society in a positive way. Young people living in war-torn societies, who are showing some curiosity in civil society should also be made aware of the fact that their degree of ethnic tolerance can be improved. This can be achieved by for example involving the family, the educational system and politics (Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, Silbereisen and Youniss 2002, 123-128). Acting within a community, moreover, offers young people the opportunity to become part of this community and to broaden their identity (Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, Silbereisen and Youniss 2002, 132). Finally, the authors argue that, in unstable societies such as Kosovo, special attention should be devoted to young people, since, feeling a high lack of opportunities, they can also easily be dragged towards the criminal part of the society (Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, Silbereisen and Youniss 2002, 135). This argument was also raised when describing the role of young people in peacebuilding and reconciliation projects (cf. *supra*). Indeed, many other scholars also mention that young people living in war-torn societies need a certain structure in order to be able to work on

their level of social integration, tolerance, employment and so on. If not, they are prone to be attracted by the criminal milieu, as mentioned just above, or by the idea of emigration. Both lead to the disappearance of capable young people in the civil society environment (Fischer 2006a, 234; Kasumagic 2008; Dipa 2008, 49). Fischer, writing about the youth in Bosnia, says that they

Offer a strong potential for social innovation and therefore a promising target group for reconciliation work, especially in war-torn societies. Younger age groups (especially those who were born after the war) are generally more open to dialogue and cooperation, compared with the generations that have been directly affected by war and atrocities. But that does not necessarily mean that they will become agents for social change or peace processes. Young people also have a highly destructive potential, which can be sparked by society's neglect of this group (Fischer 2006a, 234).

This destructive potential has to do with the fact that young people living in conflict-ridden countries such as Kosovo today carry the weight of the ethnically divided country they are living in. The main part of their society still encourages ethno-nationalist sentiments and keeps the negative stereotypes about the other ethnic communities very much alive, for example by telling destructive stories about them (Brethfield and Vadakaria 2012, i,; 35), while the young population created a feeling of apathy towards their society, thinking that they are not capable of changing the policies that were shaped by the previous generation (Brethfield and Vadakaria 2012, ii). Another problem connected to this issue is that, even if young people want to interact with the other ethnic groups, they are afraid to do so, fearing the reactions of people of their own society (Brethfield and Vadakaria 2012, 38). In other words, CSOs who are active in Kosovo and/or Bosnia today, should be aware of these problems, which are widely discussed in academic and non-academic publications, as well as in the interviews that were conducted for this research paper. Thus, the local CSOs should probably adapt their programmes in order to be able to solve at least part of this problem. Only then, it seems, they will be able to get young people fully and genuinely involved with their organisation. Next to that, it has to be questioned to which extent the young population can actually be influenced by the projects of CSOs. This is a question that has been raised already in this research paper, and that will

be raised again later on. The empirical chapter of this research paper will furthermore offer an example of an organisation in Mitrovica, namely Community Building Mitrovica, which tries to work on the general perception of society on cooperation and coexistence, while trying to get young people from different ethnic groups together. Despite these good intentions, they face a lot of resistance and are unable to engage all Mitrovica's youth, both from the northern and from the southern part of the city.

The educational system as well could play an important role in trying to overcome these problems and to create the possibility of living in a more mixed community. A well-functioning educational system should help children that live in a war-torn society to get rid of their destructive prejudices and to create a more or less stable and non-violent society for themselves (Sinclair 2002, 7-9; Dipa 2008, 4; Besic 2014, 13, 30; Hoxkha 2011). Educational programmes in Kosovo, according to a lot of scholars, should focus on capacity building, while the separate school systems should be abolished and students from both Albanian and Serbian communities should be unified in one building and one curriculum. This could be one way of learning them how to live together with people from the other ethnic community (Sinclair 2002, 51; 73).

It is evident that articles, such as the one summarised just above, will be kept in mind throughout this master's dissertation, since the main focus of this dissertation is on the young population of Kosovo and their development in a war-torn society, through the role played by the civil society sector. In doing so, all the factors mentioned in the first part of this research paper will come together in the next big chapter.

In this section, it has become clear that the IC started to turn towards the civil society sector when it noticed that it needed this sector to achieve something sustainable in, for example, Kosovo. Indeed, the increasing emphasis that has been placed on the role of the civil society sector can be connected with the shift from short-term towards long-term results, which the IC made during the last few years and which was described in the first

part of this theoretical chapter already. Noticing that the local population became more aware of its new problems and, moreover, more willing to interact with the civil society sector, both the IC and the locally based CSOs started to get this local population, and especially the young people, more involved in their projects. However, the locally based CSOs only recently started to realise that their projects would have no success, if they were not supported by the local population. Besides, it soon became clear that this local population does not really like the concept of reconciliation, because they relate it to what the IC tried to do right after the war, when the local population was not yet ready for this at all. Thus, reconciliation turned into a rather indirect goal for most of the locally based CSOs, while youth unemployment and education, two fields in which every inhabitant of Kosovo sees obvious problems that should be solved sooner rather than later, started to function as direct, less problematic and less provocative goals that should the local population get motivated to cooperate, and thus, in the end, should hopefully lead to a sustainable form of reconciliation. Next to that, another point of criticism that was already slightly touched upon in this section, has to do with the question of how young people can be really involved in civil society sector and to what extent their involvement is reflected in general on the young population in Kosovo. These problems, connected to the young population of Kosovo and the concept of reconciliation, will be central in the next, empirical chapter of this master's dissertation.

Empirical Findings

In this empirical chapter, which constitutes the main body of this master's dissertation, two kinds of empirical findings will be described, and thereafter analysed in the final, analytical chapter of this research paper. First of all, information obtained from websites, publications, annual reports and so on of the youth CSOs relevant for this master's dissertation will be provided. The basic information about the CSOs that were interviewed can be found in the appendix of this research paper, which has been included to keep this master's dissertation clear and well-structured, while the publications will be described in the first section of this empirical chapter. After that, the information distilled from the interviews that were conducted with representatives from youth CSOs in Kosovo will be analysed. Together, this empirical evidence should lead to a well evidenced study of the current situation of the youth CSOs in Kosovo, the changes in their programmes that have occurred throughout the years, and, if this is indeed the case, their shifting understanding of the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation that have led to these changes. The organisations are structured in a very specific way, according to the research question that was formulated in the beginning of this thesis. As has been demonstrated in the theoretical chapter, there seems to have occurred a shift from fast emergency help to longer-term reconciliation projects. This was to a large extent said to be a shift in the mind of the IC and that of the local population. It is clear that none of the organisations interviewed in Kosovo is preoccupied with emergency help anymore, but, on the contrary, that all of them are now working on creating a more cooperative and multi-ethnic society. It is interesting to notice, and this was not that much present in the academic sources that were consulted, that most of the youth CSOs are working on reconciliation in a rather indirect way. This means that they focus on direct, easier to achieve and less provocative goals such as youth unemployment and education, in the hope to achieve reconciliation in the end, through these less provocative projects. Other organisations focus on transitional justice, considering this as a precondition for reconciliation. In any case, none of the organisations seems to deliberately use the term reconciliation too often, the reasons for which

will be explained in more detail below. The organisations are structured according to their main area of focus, namely according to how they try to achieve reconciliation in the long term. Next to that, donors and think tanks were also taken as separate categories, because they often have a different view on what is going on, compared to the view of activist CSOs. Lastly, two independent persons were interviewed, which are put in a separate category in the last part of this chapter, in order not to make the reader feel confused. Those independent persons are not a part of the first section of this chapter, since they did not offer any publications that are relevant to this master's dissertation. They are not a part of the appendix either, because they function as independent beings, and not as representatives of a youth CSO or any organisation in Kosovo.

Information obtained from websites and publications of CSOs

Activists: Transitional justice and reconciliation

In March 2013, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo (hereafter YIHR Kosovo) organised a youth conference in Pristina. On its website, this CSO published a diary of a Serbian participant of the conference. According to this diary, the focus of the discussion was on improving the degree of tolerance among people from different ethnic backgrounds or nationalities, by putting together many people from Kosovo who had never met a Serb from Serbia and vice versa. It is important for this research paper that nothing is mentioned about post-war traumas or other emergent needs of the participants. Indeed, since this conference was organised in 2013, the focus was clearly on the longer-term concept of peacebuilding and reconciliation, which involves putting people together who do not have any direct experience with the war in their countries (<http://democratic-youth.net/yihr/prvi-put-u-pristini/>). In contrast with other organisations that will be mentioned below, through this project YIHR Kosovo does not for example avoid to use the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation by working on other, less provocative issues, such as youth unemployment. The interview that was conducted with the representative of YIHR Kosovo gave more or less the same picture, although the role of transitional justice became more clear during this interview, a concept which is not very present on the

website of YIHR Kosovo. In general, the organisation puts young people together with the goal to let them talk about what happened in the past, and also strongly focuses on the problem of missing persons. All of this can be put under the concept of transitional justice. The meaning of transitional justice and its role in YIHR Kosovo will become more clear later on, but it should be stressed here already that the project on its own, without the interview, shows that YIHR Kosovo does not focus on for example youth unemployment and education, but instead focuses on transitional justice, which is considered by this CSO as a necessary precondition for reconciliation. In this sense, YIHR Kosovo also avoids to work on reconciliation directly.

Activists: Youth unemployment and education and reconciliation

Community Building Mitrovica (hereafter CBM) organises quite a lot of activities that involve both the northern and the southern part of this divided city in Kosovo, trying to let Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians cooperate more, thus trying to make Mitrovica more coexistent and peaceful. Although the organisation faces a lot of resistance from the people of Mitrovica when trying to do this, they do have achieved something in the city. CBM focuses quite specifically and openly on reconciliation on its website, which can be explained by the fact that the organisation is active in a very divided city. On the other hand, it will soon become clear that CBM organises projects that have to do with languages and youth empowerment, thus avoiding to use the term reconciliation too often towards their possible participants. It seems indeed to be the case that, and this was mentioned several times during the interview as well, although reconciliation is a very important part of the organisation's programme, the society of Mitrovica in general does not like this concept and prefers to cooperate on other, less problematic projects, for example on learning English. In other words, and this will be elaborated in a little while, there seems to be a contradiction in the approach of CBM, which does use the concept of reconciliation explicitly in some projects, while it avoids to use the same term in the description of other projects which have more or less the same goal.

One main pillar of the total amount of projects organised by CBM is called "linking", under which for example the Mediation Center Mitrovica is mentioned, which was

established together with, among other organisations, ACDC Mitrovica (cf. *infra*) and which has as its most important goal to improve the degree of cooperation and coexistence between the northern and southern part of Mitrovica (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/linking/178-mediation-center-mitrovica>).

CBM also played an important role in the project “Bridging the Divide”, which will be mentioned when the organisation SPARK will be discussed as well (cf. *infra*). Bridging the divide between the southern and northern part of Mitrovica, improving its degree of cooperation among the citizens, seems to be, in general, a very important part of CBM’s programme. The motivation behind that part of their programme, behind the “linking” that is, is the following:

Particularly in Mitrovica it is difficult for people of different ethnic groups to meet and engage with each other. CBM’s linking projects aim at bringing people of various ethnic backgrounds together to facilitate contact, understanding, cooperation and friendship among them. These activities are, though not exclusively, focused on youths and children, who are the basis of the future Kosovan society (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/linking?start=10>).

Another section of the projects organised by CBM is called “youth”, which is of course of special importance for this thesis, mainly because of the intensive work of CBM on “linking” the young society of Mitrovica as well. The organisation offers, for instance, the yearly opportunity to go on joint summer camps or on an intercultural sightseeing tour in Mitrovica. This, again, clearly puts Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians together, but by using the goal of discovering the city in another way, the concept of reconciliation does not explicitly have to be mentioned, which makes the project probably more acceptable for the Mitrovica’s population. Indeed, the announcement on the website does not mention the term reconciliation once, which probably, and this was confirmed during the interview that was conducted with a representative of CBM, makes it more easy for parents to let their children take part in this project, who somehow do participate in a project that has as ultimate goal reconciliation, although this concept is nowhere to be found on the website of the organisation and is probably not frequently mentioned during the project either

<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/youth/345-must-haves-of-mitrovica-intercultural-sightseeing-tour>).

Recently, CBM started to organise English courses, which have to help Mitrovica's youth to find their way on the job market, in which some opportunities are only available for people who know English, as well as to put people from the Albanian and Serbian part of Mitrovica together. This last aspect was, in contrast with the announcement for the sightseeing tour, explicitly mentioned in the press announcement, during which quite a lot of attention was put to the fact that both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs attended the course, and that, in doing so, they were able to overcome the negative prejudices they still have about each other in this divided society (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/youth/348-language-helps-to-overcome-prejudices>). As was the case with the "linking" part, for the "youth" part of its projects CBM has a clear motivation as well, which is both to empower the large young population of Mitrovica, as well as to bring young people from different ethnic groups together (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/youth/34-cbm-focus-area-youth>). In other words, the organisation does not always avoid to use the term reconciliation or synonyms of this word, but in some cases does use the concept indeed quite openly. The interview with the representative of CBM should bring more clarity about this apparent paradox in the use of the concept of reconciliation and the strategy behind this use.

As was also mentioned in the interview with the representative from CBM, the organisation tries to create an as free and independent as possible media in Mitrovica, in order to be able to give every inhabitant of the city the same, unbiased information (<http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/projects/media/35-cbm-focus-area-media>). This can somehow be connected with what YIHR Kosovo tries to do, namely informing Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs in the same way about the past, thus offering them the same version of what has happened in this past (cf. *supra*). In other words, this project has some links with transitional justice, but the overall approach of CBM seems to be focused more on cooperation through common goals that are often connected to youth unemployment and the educational system in Mitrovica.

All of these projects organised by CBM give the impression that reconciliation is a rather important goal of this CSO, although the term is not mentioned in some projects at all. Indeed, the organisation avoids to focus too much on reconciliation when other urgent problems, such as youth unemployment and education, can be mentioned, but does put reconciliation to the foreground in a quite explicit way, when it is obvious that this is a direct goal of a certain project. If this goal is less obviously present, less emphasis is put on the term reconciliation as well. So far, a clear reason for this distinction has not been found yet. Of course, Mitrovica is one of the most difficult cities in Kosovo today, and the interview with a representative of CBM proved that there is a certain degree of resistance of the local community when it comes to the concept of reconciliation. That could be one of the reasons for not mentioning the term when it does not really play a role in a project in a direct way, in order not to make the population of Mitrovica angry and unwilling to cooperate in a certain project. However, the term reconciliation is mentioned quite explicitly in the project that has to do with learning English. In this case, one could wonder if this strategy does not make the people of Mitrovica unwilling to cooperate in this project as well, as they seem to dislike the concept of reconciliation in general, and as this concept is explicitly mentioned in a programme that has to do with the problem of youth unemployment. This is a clear contradiction in the use of the term reconciliation, for which no adequate explanation has been found so far.

The Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (hereafter ACDC) organises several activities, for example sport nights, to gather Mitrovica's ethnically diverse population in a rather informal setting. This is a strategy that we have come across with several times throughout this research paper so far, and one that was also voiced in many of the interviews, for example in the interview that was conducted via email with a representative from ACDC (cf. *infra*).

With the "Mediation Center Mitrovica", which was mentioned shortly before already, and which has offices in both the southern and the northern part of Mitrovica, ACDC tries to offer an alternative to the highly bureaucratic judicial system in Kosovo, in

this way trying to lower the amount of crimes committed in Mitrovica, by showing the local community that it can solve its disputes quite easily, without having to go through the whole administrative system, which can take a long time for the citizens (http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?str=centar_za_medijaciju). Once again, this project thus unites people from different ethnic backgrounds, without explicitly using terms as reconciliation to attract these people. Indeed, it seems to be the case that a lot of organisations in Kosovo nowadays do try to involve the local population, as preferred by the IC as well, but they prefer to do this in a rather non-provocative way, for example, in this case, by trying to improve the crime rate. The past appears to have learned locally based CSOs that approaching peacebuilding and reconciliation in a direct way, even if they have a long-term approach and do involve local people, does not work or does not have enough legitimacy in Kosovo today, because people in Kosovo connect these terms with bad experiences from the past.

Just as Aktiv (cf. *infra*), ACDC also has a project for improving the unemployment rate among Mitrovica's youth, but just as is the case with Aktiv, the description of the project gives the impression that this project has little to do with improving the rate of cooperation, and, ultimately, to reach reconciliation, cooperation and coexistence that is, with the Albanian population of Kosovo living in Mitrovica (http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?str=jacanje_zaposljavanja_mladih). Improving the cooperation may be the ultimate goal of this project, but this is not stated in the description of the project that can be accessed online, in which the main focus is on improving the youth unemployment rate, almost a concern of the whole population of Kosovo.

Another project, with a broader, rather cooperative goal, and with a different starting point, is the project called "Strengthening of cooperation of K-Albanian and K-Serbian young lawyers". This project does want to put young people, in this case lawyers, from different ethnic backgrounds, who often have strong negative stereotypes about other ethnic communities, together in one room, in which they have a common goal. In this particular case, the main goal is gaining practical skills for lawyers through a series of workshops and seminars. However, the underlying goal is probably to reconcile these

young, academically skilled people, who apparently still struggle with the negative ideas they have about their peers, transferred to them by, for example, their parents (<http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?str=YIHR>). Indeed, as was the case with projects described above, this projects also “forces” young people from different ethnic backgrounds to sit together, without forcing them to talk about their stereotypes or without even mentioning the word reconciliation. However, by putting them together, trying to achieve something else, it is of course hoped that the young people, throughout this project, would realise that their stereotypes about the others are wrong and thus would help to create a better image. Nevertheless, the interview that was conducted with the representative of ACDC learned that the goal of this project is not reconciliation, even in an indirect way, but improving the capacities of Mitrovica’s lawyers only (cf. *infra*). In this case, the interview apparently contradicted the information found online, a contradiction which could be investigated more thoroughly in another research paper.

SPARK currently runs several projects in Kosovo, for example the “Diploma Acceptance Programme” or the “International Business College Mitrovica”. Unfortunately, the annual reports are the only publications available on SPARK’s website, and getting an appointment for an interview with a representative of SPARK Kosovo was impossible. Fortunately, however, the annual reports are very extended, offering a complete overview in terms of the projects organised that year, the financial situation, the executive board and so on. Besides, although only reports from 2008 and later are available online, the same projects are evaluated yearly in these reports, which could make it possible to give a preliminary comparative description of these reports. This is the reason why SPARK has been included in this dissertation although it is very hard to reach them personally.

One of the projects that is repeated yearly, has to do with improving the skills of the local people when it comes to entrepreneurship and jobs in general. The reasoning of SPARK for undertaking these initiatives reflects one of the central ideas of this dissertation:

Fragile states are marked by poor governance and deficient economic institutions. The unstable climate of fragile states affects society and state, and can result in a mutually unsustainable climate in which neither state nor society is able to escape from poverty and conflict (*Annual Report 2011* 2011, 30).

SPARK develops higher education and entrepreneurship so that young ambitious people are empowered to lead their post-conflict societies into prosperity. It does so by building the capacity of local economic and educational organisations and institutions (*Annual Report 2010* 2010, 8).

Indeed, as can be seen in the appendix as well, SPARK, a youth CSO active in Kosovo today, is focused on establishing a stable and peaceful, multi-ethnic environment mainly by creating more and better job opportunities for Kosovo's young population. This information clearly shows that SPARK is one of the many organisations that try to achieve a degree of peaceful coexistence and cooperation in Kosovo, by focusing on problems that concern every citizen of Kosovo, such as youth unemployment, problems that make the local population most probably more willing to cooperate. If they would use the concept of reconciliation explicitly, they would probably face more resistance against their projects. However, having conducted no interview with SPARK, this is only a guess here, but it seems to be the case that SPARK rather avoids the use of the problematic term reconciliation, just as many other CSOs in Kosovo.

In 2008, SPARK organised thirty-three summer courses, in which 750 students in total in Pristina, Macedonia and Mitrovica participated. From the very beginning, the annual report from 2008 makes clear that one major goal of this summer university was to put people from different ethnic backgrounds together in a non-formal educational setting (*Annual Report 2008* 2008, 9; 24). The same motivation can be found behind the establishment of the International Business College Mitrovica and the Mitrovica Winter University and Summer University Pristina. All these projects try to offer Kosovo's young people a better level of education, mainly through informal education, but the organisation also wants to achieve a more stable and reconciled society in the long run. This is exactly what most of the youth CSOs that were interviewed in Kosovo are currently doing: they focus on "easy" problems such as youth unemployment and education at a first level, with which the whole society can identify and for which the whole society is thus willing to cooperate, but the goal of stability, cooperation and reconciliation is always present, albeit

at a secondary level. So far, only YIHR Kosovo seems to approach peacebuilding and reconciliation rather directly in its projects, although they focus more on transitional justice than on actual reconciliation, for which they see the society of Kosovo not ready yet either. It will be interesting to compare the information found on websites and in publications of CSOs with the information obtained in the interviews conducted with their representatives.

In 2009, the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) was established. This institution was founded to provide in EU-approved vocational education, as well as in Bachelor programmes. The central goal of this project is to “increase the social and economic stability in northern Kosovo through cross-community business education and entrepreneurship development” (*Annual Report 2012* 2012, 56). By September 2011, SPARK was able to attract a lot more students to its programme compared to the number of students that were enrolled during the first year (*Annual Report 2011* 2011, 19). Throughout the years 2012 and 2013, the International Business College was gradually expanded, both in terms of infrastructure and in terms of students and teachers (*Annual Report 2012* 2012, 52-57). This project shows that, by offering a specific form of education, CSOs in Kosovo and other conflict-ridden countries are to a certain extent well able to achieve a degree of cooperation and conversation among the different ethnic communities living in a certain country. This approach often fills gaps present in the political or institutional system of this country, which would try to achieve the same goals in a more direct, more confronting and thus, as has become clear in this thesis so far, unsuccessful way, or which would not try to achieve these goals at all.

The Mitrovica Winter University is part of the Mitrovica Youth programme, a project established in order to encourage regional academic cooperation and enhance the development of higher education in the region. Next to that, a summer course called Summer University Pristina is also organised yearly, which, besides, in 2011 had more participants compared to 2008 and issued more certificates to those students. Furthermore, and more important for this research paper, students continued to take the opportunity to meet peers from other ethnic groups during these courses and to exchange experiences

with them. On the other hand, a lack of political will and a lack of human resources (skilled professors, for example) caused some difficulties to both the Mitrovica Winter University and the Summer University Pristina. In 2012, the organisation of the project tried to keep these remarks in mind and to make the programme more successful, among other things by getting the participants more involved in the decision-making processes connected to the summer or winter classes (*Annual Report 2009* 2009, 6; *Annual Report 2010* 2010, 14-17; *Annual Report 2011* 2011, 22-27; *Annual Report 2012* 2012, 59-60). Once again, these projects prove that Kosovo's young people are well able to cooperate with and talk to young people from other ethnic groups if they are put together for, for instance, the sake of a better level of education, but that they are often not able to cooperate in everyday life due to the institutional divides in the country and the negative stereotypes that continue to exist in their daily life, for instance through stories told by their parents. Thus, youth CSOs such as SPARK have to provide an alternative for these youngsters to come together, get rid of their negative stereotypes and work on a better degree of coexistence and cooperation within the country. After all, the problem of the educational system affects both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, and thus ensures that both ethnic groups will be willing to cooperate on this issue. Using the concept of reconciliation in the project title, on the contrary, might face more resistance.

In 2010, a highly interesting reconciliation project called "Bridging the Divide" was established, a project that was already mentioned when describing other CSOs. The goal of this programme is to unite CSOs from both sides of the Ibar river in Mitrovica, in order to create one civil society sector. In doing so, SPARK also hopes to decrease the degree of fragmentation and thus to improve the general image of the civil society sector in Mitrovica, which was in as late as 2010 still largely considered as being driven by donor's needs, and not by the needs of the local community. The Centre for Resources, Youth and Media was established to meet these goals, and serves as a platform for cooperation, grassroots initiatives and participation. By 2011, the main results achieved had to do with infrastructure, such as playgrounds and public lightening on both sides of the Ibar river. A multi-ethnic youth centre was also established, ran by seven local, cooperating NGOs. Although

a lot was, indeed, achieved when it comes to, mainly, infrastructure, the level of local participation could, according to the annual reports, still be improved (*Annual Report 2010* 2010, 22-24; *Annual Report 2011* 2011, 57-61; *Annual Report 2012* 2012, 39-42). Nevertheless, this project shows, once again, that the local population, having different ethnic backgrounds, can nevertheless to a certain extent be involved in projects on for example infrastructure, a common concern among Kosovo's population, as long as the problematic concept of reconciliation is not put forward explicitly as the main goal of a certain project.

All these projects show that certain CSOs, such as SPARK, which are active in difficult, extremely divided countries as Kosovo, are able to bring together people from different ethnic groups, but that the institutional and political structure of a war-torn country as Kosovo often prevents these initiatives to expand from a rather local, small-scale level to a broader one, which would change the whole society of Kosovo, politics and institutions included. CSOs often prefer to work on "easy" and less problematic problems such as youth unemployment, which also gathers people from different ethnic backgrounds and thus helps to achieve the goal of reconciliation in the long run, instead of working on this goal of achieving reconciliation in a direct way. They seem to have learned in the past that this approach does not work.

Activists: Capacity building and reconciliation

An example of a project organised by Aktiv is the one called "Community Mobilization - Capacity building programme for CSOs in the north of Kosovo", which started in as recently as January 2014 and will continue until the summer of 2015. The goal of this project is to improve the ability of the local CSOs in Mitrovica to organise themselves, to become more important, more visible and to attract more engaged community members to their activities. For example, by teaching local CSOs how to use the internet and other media, they hope to show them how to get more people involved in their organisation. This project was, in other words, explicitly focused on the capacity-building of the local CSOs, but did so far also achieve to put different CSOs from different ethnic communities together, talking with each other because they have the same, practical goal. The project was, in other words, not focused directly on peacebuilding and reconciliation, but did try to mod-

erate the ideas the communities have about each other by letting them work together on an important matter. Thus, judging from the website and the projects of other organisations, Aktiv seems to hope to achieve reconciliation in the end, focusing for now on “easier”, less provocative projects, such as capacity building of locally based CSOs

http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/community_mobilization_capacity_building_program_for_csos_in_the_north_of_kosovo_/38).

The project “Youth Employment Awareness Initiative” is a good and clear example of Aktiv’s focus on Kosovo’s youth, especially on the young people living in the still problematic northern, Serbian part of the country (http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/mladi_do_karijere_youth_employment_awareness_initiative/47). This project does, again, not explicitly has the goal to unite and reconcile young people from Kosovo’s different regions in the long-term. However, the description of this project does give the impression that this CSO is focused on creating a stable environment for Kosovo’s youth that will last for a considerable period of time, and not just to answer to a recent peak in youth unemployment. Most probably, this stable environment also includes a certain degree of non-violent inter-ethnic cooperation. Although reconciliation is more or less hidden behind the problem of youth unemployment in this project, one should be aware of the fact that Aktiv does seem to hope that in the end reconciliation will be achieved, although they do not mention this explicitly in the project descriptions.

There is also the “Youth Employment Awareness Initiative” going on at the moment, but is not clear from the description given on the website of Aktiv if this project will be limited to the Serbs living in Mitrovica, or if it will include Albanians as well, thus working indirectly on reconciliation once again

http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/mladi_do_karijere_youth_employment_awareness_initiative/47).

Aktiv does also work indirectly on reconciliation in the sense that it cooperated on a project of Germany and the United Kingdom, that had as its main goal to make the Kosovo market in general more open, thus giving the opportunity to Kosovo Serbs to trade with Kosovo Albanians and vice versa, which obviously has its benefits for the whole socie-

ty of Kosovo. The main focus might have been the northern, that is Serbian, part of Mitrovica, but it did most probably benefit the whole country, that is all ethnic communities living in Kosovo. This is even explicitly mentioned in the description of the project ,in which it is acknowledged that “Economic development is an essential factor in the process of stabilization and normalisation of inter-community relations in Kosovo”

(http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/single_market_kosovo_launch/32).

The project that focusses on Security policy and decision-making processes shows the same approach, namely bringing people, or, in this case, organisations, from all over the country together to discuss common concerns and let them cooperate better. Once again, it seems that Aktiv uses shared and urgent problems like security for bringing people from different ethnic groups together, thus trying to improve Kosovo’s situation in general and to achieve a form of reconciliation in the end (http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/security_policy_and_decision_making_processes/30).

The project called “Mitigating Conflict Through Community Leadership Connections”, has a similar interethnic approach. This project puts together leaders from different ethnic communities in Kosovo, and let them cooperate better on common, problematic issues that should be solved as soon as possible (http://ngoaktiv.org/projects/mitigating_conflict_through_community_leadership_connections/49).

Lastly, Aktiv also published a report, called “People’s view on key peace and security issues”. This is the report of an event organised in 2013, which had as its goal to bring people from different communities together, to discuss issues that have an influence on the everyday life of these people, such as police, traffic, drugs and so on (*People’s view on key peace and security issues* 2013, 3). The main goal of this gathering was to match the needs of the people with the political and institutional solutions for these needs; solutions that are until today indeed often imposed on these people through a top-down approach (*People’s view on key peace and security issues* 2013, 5). Thus, one of the main recommendations made by this policy paper is for the Kosovo government and the Kosovo civil society to

Engage in an open dialogue with CSOs and communities in order to greater reflect peoples' peace, conflict and security related concerns in their future agreements with Belgrade as part of the dialogue process (...) While Kosovo's civil society should establish contacts and engage in constructive discussions with local and national authorities in order to seek greater transparency and accountability and promote an inclusive and participatory security policy and decision-making which addresses peoples' needs and concerns and contributes to long-term sustainable security in Kosovo. (*People's view on key peace and security issues 2013, 7*).

In other words, by showing a certain concern for, for example, the security situation in Kosovo today, Aktiv, together with many other CSOs, tries to unite the Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serbs, by letting them discuss about matters that have importance for both communities. Once again, this is a rather indirect approach towards reconciliation, an approach that causes less resistance and but that was not really voiced as such during the interview conducted with the representative of Aktiv (*cf. infra*).

As can be read on its website, INTEGRA is one of the locally based CSOs which was founded by young people, who themselves wanted to change the society they were living in. This should help to ensure that the actual needs of the young people of Kosovo are actually taken care of and that the solutions are reflected towards all young people living in Kosovo, although this approach was already problematised shortly before and will be criticised in a more elaborate way further down in this master's dissertation. INTEGRA organises a lot of projects and events, about which information can be accessed directly through their website. Unfortunately, it is not always clear when exactly a project or event took place. This makes it difficult to consistently use a diachronic approach for this specific youth CSO, especially since no interview with a representative from the organisation was conducted for this master's dissertation.

In the early years of the existence of the organisation, INTEGRA was a high school group, organising activities such as conducting surveys, writing a school newspaper, broadcasting the school radio, organising a HIV/AIDS campaign and so on, always having the needs of their peers in mind. After this first phase, INTEGRA established itself as a real youth CSO, not connected to the high school of its founders anymore in terms of its organ-

isational structure. However, most of its projects are still started with the motivation to improve the situation of Kosovo's youth of today, as well as to improve their participation rate. INTEGRA appears to be one of those CSOs in Kosovo that is concerned with bridging the divide between Kosovo and Serbia as well, and not only, between communities within Kosovo. Most of the projects have as a goal to give the youth of Kosovo a face and a voice in the society and in the world. An example of raising awareness about Kosovo's youth in the world is the project "Europe, wait for us!", in which Kosovo's youth was informed about the European Union and vice versa (www.ngo-integra.org/projects).

Although the latest project apparently dates back to 2011, it is clear that this CSO has always been focused on the needs of Kosovo's young population and on increasing its capacities for giving a louder voice to these needs. The event called "Shape Your Critics on Silent Wall", for example, encouraged young people to make their problems more visible to the society they are living in. The main conclusion of this event was that the young people clearly did feel the need to express their frustration, anger and so on, which motivated the NGO to further work on raising the awareness of the needs of Kosovo's youth (www.ngo-integra.org/events/443/).

It is never mentioned somewhere explicitly, but the description of these projects does lead to the conclusion that INTEGRA is most often working on the problems young people face on a daily basis and on the capacities of Kosovo's youth to increase the visibility of these problems, and thus not directly on reconciliation as such. It is difficult to conclude from the publications alone that reconciliation in fact is one of the, albeit rather indirect, goals of this CSO. However, it seems to be the case that the concept of reconciliation is not mentioned very often in the descriptions of the projects, while the CSO probably has as its goal, in the end, to achieve a peaceful, multi-ethnic, cooperative and stable society. This is, unfortunately, a conclusion that cannot be confirmed by an interview with the representative of INTEGRA.

One project organised by Students Helping Life-Kosova (hereafter SHL-K), is the "Youth Capacity and Action for Change project". This is a project funded by the EU, aimed at of-

fering youth organisations in Kosovo more useful knowledge and skills in order for them to let their voice be heard better during decision-making processes in their country (<http://shlkosova.org/English/ycac.html>). This is the only project about which a bit of information can be found online. Therefore, most of the information about this organisation was taken from the interview conducted with the representative of SHL-K. However, it is clear from the description of this one project that the goal of it was to empower local people and improve their capacities, young people who are at the same time put together with their peers from different ethnic backgrounds, cooperating in order to achieve common goals. The concept of reconciliation is again not used in the description of the project, but seems to be the longer-term goal of this project and of this youth CSO in general.

The Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (hereafter KFOS) is yet one of the many CSOs active in Kosovo, mainly focusing on capacity building and relations between Kosovo and the EU. It has a lot of publications which are easily accessible online, but which however most often fall outside of the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the interview with the representative of the organisation was quite helpful, so it seems appropriate to at least mention those publications that have a certain connection with what is being discussed in this research paper. The publication called “Culture of Impunity in Kosovo” has a topic about which, among other CSOs, YIHR Kosovo is also highly concerned, namely transitional justice. In this publication politicians who can do whatever they want with the money they have at their disposal are the central topic (*Culture of Impunity in Kosovo* 2014, 9). Broader seen, however, this is also the case for those who committed atrocities during the war and who have not yet been punished for those facts. This clearly stands in the way of a form of cooperation and coexistence, as well as of a form of forgiveness, and thus in the way of reconciliation. The publication “Who Guards the Guardians” puts into question the accountability of CSOs, a stream of criticism that was shortly mentioned in the theoretical part of this master’s dissertation (*Who Guards the Guardians* 2013). However, since this provides enough sources for another research paper, it has been decided to leave this matter aside here. KFOS also published a report that investigates how Kosovo Serbs live in

their communities in the south of Kosovo, surrounded by Kosovo Albanians. Generally speaking, there has been made some progress, but there are severe limitations for the Kosovo Serbs living south of the Ibar, while the report also acknowledges the problem of the negative stereotypes that are being very much kept alive in Kosovo's society. This report, in other words, can serve as evidence for one of the important arguments made in this research paper, namely that young people from different ethnic backgrounds should first be gathered for, for instance, informal education, a framework that can make them get rid of their stereotypes, before one can actually think of establishing a certain degree of reconciliation among these young people (*Serb Community in Kosovo* 2012, 12).

Donors

A lot of information can be found on the website of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (hereafter RBF). Although this organisation works for more countries than only for Kosovo, it does have a specific programme for the Western Balkans, including Kosovo. Logically, the website of this organisation does provide quite some information about the situation in Kosovo today and its policies towards this country. For this reason, and because the interview with the representative from RBF was extremely interesting, it has been decided to include RBF in this master's dissertation.

One of the publications that drew the attention in the context of this research paper, is the summary of the conference called "Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days", organised in 2007, among others by RBF. This is an interesting document, because it shows that RBF has been concerned with the future status of and situation in Kosovo since the country has been planning to declare its independence, in this case how the government of Kosovo should manage its affairs on its own without the interference of the big international organisations, for example in terms of its economic development. Indeed, so says the report, the IC would better not all of a sudden stop to control Kosovo, but should check what happens from a distance (*Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days* 2007, 1). To quote the summary of the conference, it was

Designed to provide senior Kosovar political and civil society leaders with an opportunity to jointly consider the significant challenges they will face in building an independent and democratic nation as envisioned in the Ahtisaari Plan presented to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in March 2007 (*Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days* 2007, 3).

All participants, furthermore, agreed that the whole society should get involved in this transition process, including the Kosovo Serb community, and thus not only the most important politicians (*Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days* 2007, 4). It was also acknowledged that Kosovo's civil society should be part of the process, and that this civil society sector should be well-prepared for its new task and the upcoming challenges (*Developing a Strategy for Kosovo's First 120 Days* 2007, 10). The goals set in this conference, as well as the goals set for the peacebuilding programme, did come back in the interview conducted with the programme director of RBF (cf. *infra*).

Thinking about the conference more, RBF in 2007 acknowledged the fact that the politicians of Kosovo, and indeed the society in general, should be focused on establishing a reality in which Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs can live together and cooperate. However, in spite of the conference that was organised in 2007 and the publication that was written afterwards, the programme director of the Western Balkans programme of RBF nowadays seems to realise that it is not easy at all to create this kind of society. In other words, using only the one publication about the conference might be misleading, since RBF clearly adopted another policy after 2007 when deciding about which projects would receive its financial support. Nowadays, seeing the reality in Kosovo, RBF still tries to bring people from different ethnic backgrounds together, but they do realise that this is a difficult task, especially if terms as reconciliation are used in the title of a project. Thus, the organisation, as many other organisations in Kosovo seem to be doing, tries to achieve reconciliation rather indirectly, funding for example projects focused on youth unemployment. This approach will become more clear when the interview with the representative from RBF will be described.

Think tanks

The Kosovar Stability Initiative (hereafter IKS) can be helpful for this thesis in the sense that it publishes a lot of studies on problematic aspects of Kosovo today, such as the ethnic division in Mitrovica. This organisation is a think tank rather than a locally based activist CSO, but nevertheless can help to point out the most important problems present in Kosovo's society today. It could be interesting, for example, to compare the reports on Mitrovica, written in 2012, with those that were published in 2009 (<http://www.iksweb.org/en-us/publications>). One of the reports perfectly phrases one of the main arguments of this master's dissertation:

Kosovan youths' concerns and hopes have changed little since UNICEF's first Young Voices Opinion Poll in 2001. Nearly a decade ago, 43 percent of youth believed that Kosovo would become a better place to live. They liked their country, and 87 percent wanted to continue living in Kosovo. They hoped for an improved standard of living, fewer social problems and a better political situation. In 2010, neither international assistance nor the declaration of independence has brightened future prospects for Kosovan youth. Kosovo must invest more in its young people towards becoming a competitive economy within the larger European market. Investment must begin in the education sector. The legacy of the 1990s, outdated teaching methodologies and poor infrastructure have left youth disenfranchised with Kosovo's education sector. The positive relationship between education and employment mean that a strong education sector is crucial for reducing unemployment and poverty towards greater social stability

(...)

Youth still have limited impact on decision-making processes for two reasons: institutions rarely feel obliged to respect youths' right to participate, and young people do not consider participation a civic responsibility. Failing to involve youth in decision-making processes may easily contribute to future instability (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 5) .

This report asks for urgent educational reforms, since the educational system of Kosovo has been suffering from a lack of infrastructure, too many children, small classes, old teaching methods and so on. The legacy of the Albanian parallel school system, established because a lot of Albanian children did not have an official school in Kosovo to go to, is also still visible today. Although a number of institutional and curricular reforms have been pushed through since 2001, with the support of UNMIK at that time, the system today can still be improved a lot (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 14-16). The same concern was

voiced by the representative of YIHR Kosovo, who claims that the educational system has to be reformed while those reforming the system have to have a clear idea about what they want to achieve with the reform (cf. *supra*). This seems to be especially the case during the last years, standing in strong contrast with the previous reports. Although young people in Kosovo – Albanians more than Serbs – seem to be generally satisfied with the education system of their country, when asked in more detail, they do show some signs of dissatisfaction. The curricula are, for example, still focused on acquiring knowledge, not on learning skills that could be useful to find a job. Next to that, the teachers are not trained well enough and are often extremely conservative, a factor that again helps the negative stereotypes to survive in Kosovo's society. Another urgent problem has to do with the infrastructure of schools in Kosovo – gyms, libraries, computers and so on – which is insufficient to teach the young population of the country (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 17-27). In spite of the many problems connected to it, a lot of young people living in Kosovo think that education is highly important for them (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 27). Next to education, and connected to the problems in this field, the problem of unemployment among Kosovo's youth is also extremely urgent:

In 2009, unemployment continued to plague 45.4 percent of Kosovo's population. Youth have been among the most affected. The young, working population aged 15 to 24 comprised 20 percent of Kosovo's labour force (48.1 percent) and 73 percent of them were unemployed. Such high unemployment rates are unsustainable. Not only is high youth unemployment positively related to social instability and higher crime rates, but it also means that youth lack reasons for remaining in Kosovo (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 33).

Youth living in Kosovo are highly preoccupied with this problem of unemployment. They are aware of the fact that it is connected with the problematic situation of the educational system, while, and in this sense they are not improving their own situation, sometimes knowing that the educational system is not sufficient in any case, they deliberately try to choose a field of study that offers them better employment opportunities, which they somehow value even higher than receiving a decent education. In other words, the problem of youth unemployment might be an even more decisive factor in the daily life of young people in Kosovo, than the problem of education is. Besides, most young people

are also aware of the fact that the job market in Kosovo is not a meritocracy yet, but is still based on the system of knowing somebody (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 37-43). This again does not really give optimistic perspectives to most of Kosovo's youth, and does not motivate them to strive for better education. The report also argues for a higher degree of youth participation:

Without official channels for representing their interests, disillusionment with the status quo, including poor education and widespread unemployment, could make Kosovo's youth brokers of instability rather than positive change. The improved integration of young people in society and working life is essential for ensuring a return to consistent and sustainable growth (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 47).

Although young people might have the desire to participate in their society, the donor-driven approach of many CSOs in Kosovo left them discouraged, having the feeling that their voice was not heard and their needs were not solved. Although the government appears not to have been adequately supportive, for example in terms of funding the building of youth centres, it did establish some reforms since 2005, trying to get Kosovo's youth more involved in its own society, for example by establishing local youth councils. In spite of these efforts, however, young people still feel very much excluded from the decision-making processes in their country (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 51-55):

At the same time, the research findings suggests that securing young people's trust will be among the most crucial challenges to increasing their participation. Despite the rhetoric, decision-makers' assertions that youth are a priority have yet to be translated into action. Kosovan youth still feel that they have very limited influence on decision-making processes. In order to build trust with youth, decision-makers must follow through with their promises and address youths' identified needs. Such actions will likely encourage greater youth involvement in decision-making processes in the future (*Unleashing Change* 2010, 57).

This problem was also mentioned in the theoretical part of this dissertation, where it was claimed that, although the IC has indeed changed its approach, the local population still remembers the old approach and to a certain extent is not involved enough yet in the civil society sector of Kosovo. Thus, a lot of time has to be invested in capacity building of the young population first, before actual reconciliation can take place. This is where the

changing approach towards reconciliation by the locally based youth CSOs comes in. On the other hand, this master's dissertation also voices the criticism that getting all young people in Kosovo involved in civil society and effectively solving their problems, is not as easy as it might seem at first sight.

The Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (hereafter KFOS) is something between a donor and a think tank and is located in Pristina. It mostly serves as a platform for other CSOs, helping them to receive funding and so on. KFOS is thus not really working as an activist CSO, but mostly gives advice to other organisations. In this sense, it seems to be appropriate to label them as a think tank, although this is not explicitly stated on the website of the organisation. KFOS does not offer any helpful publications on its website. Therefore, most of the information was obtained during the interview with the representative from the organisation, and will be discussed below.

The Group for Legal and Political Studies (hereafter GLPS) is a think tank active in Pristina, which publishes a lot of reports about the situation of the civil society sector in Kosovo. Since the think tank does not have any specific publications on the youth civil society sector or on the concept of reconciliation, their publications, which cover a wide range of other problems in Kosovo's society today, will not be treated here (<http://legalpoliticalstudies.org/>). Instead, the interview with the representative from GLPS will be described more extensively, because it was quite contradictory and resulted in different answers given to most of the questions, compared to the other interviews that were conducted for this research paper.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereafter OSCE) is an international organisation which does not really intervene in the civil society sector of Kosovo. Neither is it a donor or a real think tank, and it certainly is not an independent person. This made it difficult to give it an appropriate place in the empirical part of this research paper. In the end, the organisation was put under the heading "think tanks", although it

certainly deserves a separate section in this dissertation. A lot of employees have previously worked in the civil society sector of Kosovo, and the organisation as such has a good overview of what is going on in Kosovo's civil society sector today. Thus, it made most sense to put the organisation under this heading, although other interpretations about where to put this organisation are certainly possible and perfectly justifiable. Because the representative of OSCE Kosovo had some experience with and quite a clear view on the civil society sector in Kosovo today and in the past, it was decided to use the interview with the representative of OSCE Kosovo in this master's dissertation. OSCE Kosovo published a lot of reports on the security of the country, the return of internally displaced persons and so on. It also provides reports on specific municipalities of Kosovo, which could be useful for another research. All these publications, however, will not be described extensively in this master's dissertation, because they largely fall outside of the scope of it (<http://www.osce.org/resources?fields=12>).

Information obtained from interviews with CSOs

Activists: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

The interview with the representative from YIHR Kosovo started with an explanation of the working of the organisation, since it was hard to find this information online. YIHR Kosovo consists of four sections, namely human rights; transitional justice; youth and education; and small grants. Each section has its own programme coordinator, although they brainstorm together and most of the staff is aware of what happens in all four sections.

YIHR Kosovo is probably most known about its street protests and other actions for missing persons in Kosovo. Next to that, they do try to help to achieve reconciliation by giving the inhabitants of Kosovo, both Albanians and Serbs, the same information about what really happened during the war, as well as to assist people who try to find their house again or who try to find out who exactly committed murder against one of their family members. All of this should help the population of Kosovo to feel less agony about their turbulent past, by giving them the feeling of being part of a programme of transitional justice. This in turn, according to YIHR Kosovo at least, will also make the citizens

more motivated to become an active participant of Kosovo's society. To be clear, this is how it was mentioned by the representative of YIHR Kosovo. According to the author of this research paper, it seems to be quite idealistic to think that, if everybody has his or her own house and is feeling less troubled by its past, everyone would almost automatically become more active in society and maybe even become an active member of a CSO. Indeed, the criticism has to be clearly voiced here that there is more needed to achieve a more active, cooperating society, than dealing with the past in a practical way only. However, it is difficult to strengthen this criticism, since most of Kosovo's society is still dealing with the transitional part, not with being active participants of their society, and thus support for this criticism is hard to find in Kosovo's youth CSOs today. Throughout the interview, it became clear that YIHR Kosovo strongly focuses on making citizens active, in order to create a more stable and peaceful society. The representative of YIHR Kosovo was moreover quite sure that this was effectively happening, because, since most of the staff of YIHR Kosovo consists of youngsters, the needs of these youngsters should almost automatically effectively be heard by this organisation. However, there seems to be a big difference between the small amount of young people working in organisations like YIHR Kosovo, and their peers from different ethnic backgrounds living in the problematic society of Kosovo, who still are not too much inclined to get involved in the different projects organised by the CSOs in Kosovo. Putting the needs of the young people central by making some youngsters part of the board of a CSO does not automatically imply that ever young person gets enthusiastic about a certain project, thereby becoming an active citizen, nor that the problems of the young people will be actually solved in real life, because those problems are mentioned during a board meeting, in which some young people are present.

As was mentioned in other interviews as well (cf. *infra*), the representative of YIHR Kosovo considered reconciliation a rather negative term, which is not liked by the local population in general, and which moreover does not include apologies that should forego the more complicated concepts of reconciliation or forgiveness. As is the case with many other organisations, therefore, YIHR Kosovo deliberately tries to avoid the use of the term

reconciliation. In the interview, the representative of YIHR Kosovo stressed multiple times that they deliberately do not use the word reconciliation in a direct way, because this word is perceived negatively by the majority of the local population in Kosovo, which is reminded of the many programmes that the IC installed right after the war, often using the concept of reconciliation explicitly during their projects. Indeed, the interview, projects and publications all appear to suggest that YIHR Kosovo is instead focusing on problems that must be solved before reconciliation can actually be achieved, for instance on transitional justice, and not on for example education or youth unemployment, which are no part of the programmes of YIHR Kosovo but which are an important part of the programmes of many other youth CSOs in Kosovo that were interviewed for this master's dissertation. In other words, YIHR Kosovo seems to share the opinion that using the term reconciliation too often does not make it popular among the local population, but focuses on processes of transitional justice, while most other organisations that were interviewed chose to focus on the problems connected to youth unemployment or the educational system. Both approaches, in any case, avoid to use the term reconciliation directly, thus finding the local population often more willing to cooperate in their projects, be it transitional justice projects or projects about education and youth unemployment.

Asked about the relationship between the civil society sector in Kosovo and its government, the representative of YIHR Kosovo considered the organisation as a form of constructive opposition to the government, helping this government by writing recommendations, amending laws and so on. In other words, the organisation does protest, but does this with an argument, trying to find a real solution to everyday problems. This stands in contrast with other countries such as Belgium, where most of the CSOs try to stay away as far as possible from politics, drawing, to the experience of the author, a sharp line between them and the government. The attitude of YIHR Kosovo, in turn, shows that the Kosovo government does attach a great deal of importance to the civil society sector, but, at the same time, that this importance is not always reflected in the participation of the local population in civil society. Indeed, although good relationships with the Kosovo government were mentioned in a lot of interviews, this research paper has so far

also made clear that the local population is still facing huge problems and a lack of cooperation or reconciliation, in spite of the laws drafted by the government and the civil society sector together. In other words, there is a lack of communication with the local population in Kosovo today, while it also has to be acknowledged that many opportunities for cooperation are offered to this local population nowadays, which is not always willing to grasp these opportunities even today.

The last question asked was one about the connection between peacebuilding and reconciliation. Both concepts were seen by the representative of YIHR Kosovo as central in a big package, in which many processes take place and in which peacebuilding is the beginning, and reconciliation the end. It will become clear soon that almost everybody gave a different definition of peacebuilding and reconciliation, in doing so reflecting the policies of their organisations and the fact that reconciliation can be interpreted in several ways and can be approached in at least as many ways. This should help to explain to the reader of this thesis why the different CSOs interviewed adapt different approaches, while all of them nevertheless have reconciliation in their mind as one of the final goals (Interview with YIHR Kosovo, E. Tolaj, 01/12/2014).

Activists: Youth unemployment and education and reconciliation

The interview with CBM, one of the few interviews that took place in Mitrovica and not in Pristina, was extremely helpful for this master's dissertation in the sense that this organisation is trying to establish a degree of cooperation in Mitrovica, a city in which the deep divisions are highly visible on a daily basis. In general, the interview confirmed the ideas that were formed after having consulted the website of the organisation (cf. *supra*): Mitrovica is a very difficult and divided city in Kosovo, in which organisations like CBM have to face a society which is in general not ready yet for reconciliation. Indeed, although some projects organised by CBM explicitly focus on reuniting Albanians and Serbs within Mitrovica (e.g. the English language class, which was mentioned in the first section of this empirical chapter), a large part of the local population does not accept this kind of projects and prefers to continue living as separate ethnic groups within Mitrovica. One of the

main arguments made throughout the interview by the representative of CBM was that the youth in Mitrovica is to a great extent manipulated by local politicians, who are only concerned with maintaining the political situation in their city or country. One of the main difficulties connected to this problem is that schools in the northern part of Mitrovica, for example, are connected to the Serbian political system and are, consequently, not very open for any kind of cooperation with the south. As a consequence, CBM has almost no access to schools in north Mitrovica, run by the Serbian government. Nevertheless, CBM does try to get the students from the northern part more active. This problem shows once again that Kosovo's society in general is not ready yet for projects like the ones organised by CBM.

CBM itself is an example of fruitful cooperation between the Albanian and Serbian communities living in Mitrovica: there is only one office, in the south, in which both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs work together. However, the reactions of the local population to this cooperation is most often negative, which points to the lack of general will of working together, as stressed several times before already. Due to the problems connected with the political system in Mitrovica, the people working for CBM are forced to establish their projects through personal contacts, thus largely avoiding the political system. They go to a café with a personal friend, for example, to design and implement a project, and not to the politicians that should be responsible for implementing this project. This is a way of avoiding the political system, which does not really allow cooperation between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs in Mitrovica. If the employees of CBM want to achieve something that crosses *the* bridge, they feel forced to go through personal contacts and thus to avoid the rigid political system. This negative fact has, however, proven to be a successful approach, because people living in Mitrovica now come to the office themselves, to ask certain things for which they otherwise might have to go through the bureaucratic political system, being well aware of the fact that the people working at CBM are sometimes able to achieve more than the local politicians when it comes to projects involving both south and north Mitrovica.

As was mentioned in many interviews, the representative of CBM, throughout the whole interview, kept emphasising the fact that the society in Mitrovica, or in a more broad sense in Kosovo, is not yet ready for reconciliation, although some individuals, especially young people, might be by now. There is a lot to be done indeed. The office of CBM happens to be very close to the bridge, which offers a valuable insight in the reality of Mitrovica today. The fact that many Kosovo Serbs in Mitrovica are connected to Serbian public institutions, does in general not really encourage them to, for example, drink a coffee with a Kosovo Albanian at the other side of the bridge. The fear to be fired, because the Serbian institutions do not appreciate any kind of interaction with the Albanian community, is bigger than the will to be friends with a Kosovo Albanian. If there are positive examples to be mentioned, the media in Mitrovica most often turn these positives examples into negative ones, thus contributing to the general atmosphere of enmity and non-cooperation between both communities. This confirms the idea that reconciliation might not be achieved in the next few years in Kosovo, because the biggest part of the population is still not ready to interact with people from a different ethnic background.

Even if CBM can enthuse young people living in Mitrovica to go on a trip together with people from another ethnic group, their parents often are reluctant to let their child go on this trip, even if CBM tries to make clear that the trip can be beneficial for, for instance, the employment opportunities of the child. This again shows that the society in general is not ready to accept someone from the other ethnic group (see also *Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?* 2006), which in turn sometimes discourages people who are working for CBM, and who see a lot of their initiatives being turned down by the society. CBM does not hesitate to use the term reconciliation, but when the organisation does so, a large part of Mitrovica's society reacts in a very negative way. In contrast to other organisations interviewed for this research, however, this fact does not cause CBM to not use the term during some projects, although they are well aware of the negative impact of the concept. An explanation for this seemingly contradiction, mentioned above already when talking about CBM's projects, was not given during the interview. This contradiction, in turn, confirms the argument that, while the society today does not seem to

be ready for reconciliation, the bad perception of the term should be improved over the next years, if organisations are planning to gradually use the concept in a more direct way. In this sense, it is not totally illogical that CBM does use the term sometimes, if only in order to let the people get used to it.

Asked, to conclude, about the connection between peacebuilding and reconciliation, the representative of CBM said that peacebuilding needs reconciliation, in the sense that in order to have sustainable peace and to avoid the same mistakes to be made, trust between the communities is absolutely necessary. This is yet another definition of the concepts, and corresponds to the general approach of CBM. Indeed, the organisation seems to be focused on changing the perception of the society, on making the inhabitants of Mitrovica willing to cooperate with people from a different ethnic background. Only if they are willing to do so, real progress can be made. The projects are there yet, but the implementation of these projects and the results of those need the approval of the whole society of Mitrovica, in order to really change something in the city. This is not yet the case today, and CBM is forced to wait until the general perception changes, although they do try to change some things themselves, for example by sometimes using the term reconciliation, in order to let the inhabitants of Mitrovica slowly get used to this concept, and to let them, hopefully at least, cooperate in projects that are organised explicitly for the sake of reconciliation in a less negative and less problematic way (Interview with CBM, M. Golubovic, 5/12/2014).

The Rock School started as a project, as an idea from both Serbian and Albanian communities in Mitrovica. The Rock School has been placed among organisations working on education and unemployment, since the Rock School is an actual school, charging the students for its music classes. Most of the information about this organisation was obtained during the interview with the representative of CBM, the organisation that helped establishing the rock school as a project and thus has a lot of information about this project. The Rock School seems to focus on education in order to attract students from all over Mitrovica, who are put together with people from different ethnic backgrounds, in a ra-

ther informal setting. In 2011, it was established as an independent organisation, in which students from both the Serbian and the Albanian part of Mitrovica take part. Although they might not play together openly in Mitrovica, they do so hidden, as well as openly, albeit in other countries. The Rock School is funded by a music school in Tilburg and has been able to achieve recognition from almost all over the world for the work it is doing. It is symptomatic for Mitrovica's society today that its youth is able to play as a whole, without visible ethnic separation that is, abroad, but that they are not able to do so in their own city. Indeed, the Rock School has been able to gather inhabitants of Mitrovica who are willing to cross the bridge and cooperate with people from different ethnic backgrounds, but the society in general does not accept this interethnic cooperation. For example, participants have a hard time convincing their parents to let them go on a trip, because these parents, and most of Mitrovica's society in general, do not accept the fact that Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs can actually be united and work together in a joint project. This attitude gives the organisation a limited scope when it comes to its results, because the participants are only able to play abroad as both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs together, and not in their own city. In other words, despite its good intentions, this organisation seems to face the same problems like most of the youth CSOs in Kosovo (Interview with CBM, M. Golubovic, 5/12/2014).

The interview with ACDC was conducted via email, because the representative of this organisation was traveling when the author of this research paper was in Mitrovica. The representative of ACDC took her time to answer all the questions extensively, and thus gave the answers she would probably have given in a face-to-face interview as well. As was mentioned in other interviews too, it seems to be very hard for youth CSOs in Kosovo to find local people who actually want to get involved in projects connected to reconciliation. Indeed, even if the situation in a certain city, such as Mitrovica, is quite urgent and even if the projects for reconciliation are effectively designed and ready to be implemented, there is very little positive response from the local population towards these projects, and a lot of resistance coming from these people instead.

The consultation of the website and the publications of ACDC seemed to suggest that the organisation was indirectly working on reconciliation, for example by gathering both Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian lawyers to improve their skills (cf. *supra*). However, the representative of ACDC quite explicitly stated that these projects had no goal of reconciliation at all, only the goal of education as such. Of course, a face-to-face interview would have given the author the opportunity to ask further questions about this seemingly contradiction; now, it is the words of the website against those of the representative of ACDC. It might be possible, nevertheless, that the representative of the organisation would have continued to use this explanation even when more questions would have been asked. However, the interviews with other persons, such as donors and freelancers, seem to suggest that reconciliation is very often an indirect goal of an organisation, even though it might not be explicitly stated as such. In other words, although it is difficult to choose a side here, it seems highly probably that ACDC does hope to reach a certain form of reconciliation in Mitrovica in the end, but that the organisation for the moment, as the society is not ready yet for reconciliation, focuses more on the problem of unemployment. Also, the representative of ACDC did acknowledge that gathering young people for solving shared problems works to lessen the impact of negative stereotypes as well, and thus slowly helps the process of reconciliation. Only when asked rather directly, the representative of ACDC apparently found it important to stress that reconciliation as a goal is not present in their projects (E-mail communication with T. Kolutac).

Activists: Capacity Building and reconciliation

The interview with Aktiv took place via email, due to a lack of time and resources. The representative of Aktiv admitted that it is very difficult to involve both the Serbian and the Albanian communities in their projects. Nevertheless, they do use the term reconciliation quite explicitly when applying for grants or designing the description of a project. The most successful projects in uniting both sides of Mitrovica, according to the representative of Aktiv, are those that have to do with professional affairs. Thus, once again, it seems to be the case that Mitrovica's youth is willing to cooperate with people from the other eth-

nic group if this can help their professional career. Although the organisation itself may use the term reconciliation rather explicitly, the participants of the projects organised by these CSOs clearly do not participate for the sake of reconciliation. This can partly help to explain why the publications of the organisation seem to approach the concept of reconciliation in a rather indirect way, while the interview with the representative of Aktiv showed that reconciliation is very much on the agenda of this CSO. Indeed, once again it seems to be the case that, although the CSOs itself highly values the concept of reconciliation, in the descriptions of the projects more emphasis is put on for example career opportunities, in order to be able to gather more young people from both the northern and the southern part of Mitrovica in this way.

Asked about the relation between reconciliation and peacebuilding, the representative of Aktiv stated that reconciliation is the basis for a long-lasting peace. Once again, the representative of Aktiv acknowledged that the process of reconciliation is a long and slow one, which needs the now lacking cooperation of all donors and stakeholders included (E-mail communication with Z. Mileta).

The people of INTEGRA were not willing to let the author of this master's dissertation conduct an interview with one of them, and instead sent a list with their projects that the organisation considered as having to do with reconciliation. Therefore, this part consists of a description of these projects, but does not include the opinion of a representative of INTEGRA itself, as this could, unfortunately, not be obtained.

The "People and Memories" project was organised mainly in 2013, and tried to collect individual and collective memories about the war in Kosovo. The initial goal for this project was to make the victims of the war less marginalised and thus more cooperative in, among other things, decision-making processes. The end goal was to make the audience recognise the universal nature of human solidarity and suffering (<http://peopleandmemories.org/en/>). As part of this project, four interesting publications were made available through the website. Unfortunately, one of them is written only in Albanian, which makes it impossible for the author of this research paper to consult this

book. However, two of the other publications were accessible in English and would, most probably, also be mentioned by the representative of INTEGRA that would have been interviewed. "Attitudes towards inter-ethnic relations and truth telling in Kosovo: An Empirical Research Truth Telling in Kosovo; Which Way Now?", connected to the Truth Finding Project, for example, was written out of a feeling of lack of understanding among the people of Kosovo of what exactly constitutes the truth. Indeed, in order to ultimately reach the stage of reconciliation, Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians should both accept the same version of the past, instead of continue to blame each other for what has happened 15 years ago (Muhaxhiri 2007-2008, 23, see also *supra*). This corresponds to the interpretation of reconciliation given by the representative of YIHR Kosovo (cf. *supra*). Again, transitional justice is seen by INTEGRA as a necessary precondition if CSOs ever want to establish a form of reconciliation in Kosovo. The society of Kosovo in general is not yet ready to work on reconciliation, so it is better for organisations in Kosovo to focus on projects that can help prepare the process of reconciliation, for example on projects connected to less problematic and less provocative issues such as transitional justice, in which a lot of work still has to be done. A critical role in finding the "one" truth is ascribed to the CSOs, who enjoy a greater amount of trust than the institutions, and who could thus help to raise awareness about the topic and lobby with the institutions (Muhaxhiri 2007-2008, 36-53).

Another publication connected to the project of truth-finding is the book called "Youth and Diversity in Europe". This publication argues, among other things, that people have to accept cultural differences that exist in their society, in order to be able to live together. Only when they tolerate each other, even to a low extent, in other words, does reconciliation become possible (*Youth and Diversity in Europe* 2012, 49). This is not yet the case in Kosovo, as was mentioned several times in this research paper, and this is one of the main reasons why CSOs themselves, without pressure from their international donors that is, changed their interpretation of the concept of reconciliation, from a very idealistic one to something where the society is not yet ready for at all, preoccupied with the problems connected to transitional justice, unemployment, education, and so on, which should

be solved first by the CSOs. It is evident that they subsequently changed their policies, programmes and projects as well. In other words, one of the main findings of this master's dissertation indeed is that there are two changes in the interpretation of peacebuilding and, especially, reconciliation; one of the IC, which after some years started to focus on long-term results and not only on solving the emergent needs of the population, and one of the locally based CSOs themselves, which realised that the use of the concept of reconciliation causes a lot of problems in Kosovo's society today, and thus made it a rather indirect goal, focusing instead mainly on less problematic issues, such as youth unemployment or education.

Another main problem that is dealt with in this publication by INTEGRA, and which for sure is true for the whole of Kosovo, is the lack of political participation of the young population, although this part of the population will soon be part of the decision-making processes in their country and does in fact want things to be changed. However, they are not motivated enough to take effective steps, while the current political system from its side does not take efforts to engage young people in its processes (*Youth and Diversity in Europe* 2012, 52-53; 74-78). This corresponds to the criticism that was expressed earlier on, namely that having young people in your board does not mean that this makes it easier to actually solve the problems of the young people, neither do they ensure that all their peers will become active citizens, because some of them have become members of CSOs.

The interview with the programme director of SHL-K was a special one, in the sense that SHL-K is one of the few organisations that successfully made the transformation from being a foreign CSO in Kosovo, in which the Germans, in this case, were physically present, to a local CSO, which still gets funding from the German organisation, but is able to determine its own agenda and has only locals as employees. The representative of SHL-K emphasised that this organisation is one of the few local NGOs that survived after the international donors left the scene for other emergency cases.

SHL-K tries to see the youth of Kosovo nowadays as active citizens, not merely as beneficiaries of their programmes. This is one of the elements that has been mentioned

during most of the interviews. In line with this vision, young people are part of the board and management team, thus having, according to its programme director at least, a real influence on the agenda of SHL-K. In this way, the projects organised by the organisation should reflect the real needs of Kosovo's young population. As mentioned before, however, this approach does not guarantee that the few young people active in CSOs will be able to motivate their peers to become active citizens as well. There appears to be a large gap between those young people being active as civil society actors, and most of their friends that will probably keep the stereotypes they hear about the other ethnic community on a daily basis in their environment very much alive, instead of adopting the attitude of the few active young people in Kosovo, who are trying to abolish these negative stereotypes. Moreover, it still has to be proved that all of Kosovo's young population benefits from solutions to the problems that were suggested within a CSO.

Reconciliation was, once again, called a slow process, but was in this interview, for the first time connected very strongly with peacebuilding, almost as if they are interchangeable concepts. This was not seen as such by most of the other people that were interviewed and who see peacebuilding as a process that took place right after the war, to stop the violent crimes, while considering reconciliation as a longer, slower and more difficult process. As was mentioned earlier on, this reflects the fact that different CSOs in Kosovo have different approaches towards reconciliation, depending on how they understand or interpret this concept exactly. Similarly to the people in the other interviews that were conducted in Kosovo, however, the programme director of SHL-K also said that his organisation deliberately does not use the term reconciliation in the title of its projects, since this might scare people. It is better to emphasise other projects, such as language classes, than to emphasise the concept of reconciliation. The manager might be talking freely about reconciliation during the interview, but he consciously adjusts his speech when talking to Kosovo's youth. Emphasising the term too much could ruin a whole project, of which reconciliation might be the end goal, and the activities of this project tools of the end goal. It is important to build trust and a society ready to cooperate, before pushing them towards reconciliation. It is a good idea, according to the programme direc-

tor of this youth CSO, not to force the youth by what politics say, but to let them work together in a more informal setting of projects such as educational ones. This corresponds to the approach that most youth CSOs today seem to adopt: it is better to work on education and youth unemployment, thus putting people from different ethnic backgrounds together to work on a common goal, than to force them to talk about what happened in the past, when society in general is not yet ready for this stage. At the very least, it will prepare these young people to live in a multi-ethnic country, once the society in general is ready to take the next step towards reconciliation, a step that is not possible yet at the moment. In other words, the young people should, in this way, get slowly used to cooperating with people from different ethnic backgrounds, and thus should be more ready to cooperate on projects on reconciliation that will be organised later on as well (Interview with SHL-K, S. Arifi, 03/12/2014).

According to the representative of KFOS, the concept of reconciliation in Kosovo should not be interpreted according to the classical paradigm, namely that of the Christian culture of confession. This paradigm was, in the opinion of the author, exactly what Agon Mailiqi, a Kosovo freelancer with experience in the civil society sector, and which will be introduced further down in this research paper (cf. *infra*), meant, when he was saying that the Albanian people in Kosovo are waiting for Serbia to apologise for what has happened in the past. KFOS, to return to the actual interview, is concerned with what will reconciliation exactly look like in Kosovo and is mainly trying to achieve a status of co-existence, for example by making the Serbs part of the voting process in Kosovo. They see reconciliation mostly as an external push, which often stands in contrast with the local population, who is mainly concerned about its daily needs. This once again supported one of the main hypotheses of this master's dissertation, namely the one about the changed approach towards reconciliation by locally based CSOs, having learned important lessons from the past.

As was mentioned in other interviews as well, the existing dialogue today is considered to take place mostly between Pristina and Serbia, not within Kosovo. Although there are some isolated cases of success, raising mass support for initiatives that involve

more than one community still remains difficult (see also *Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?* 2006). This is, according to the representative of KFOS, one of the main problems on which Kosovo's civil society has to focus today. It has, however, little to do with the scope of this master's dissertation and was mainly mentioned for the sake of being complete (Interview with KFOS, I. Kacaniku, 04/12/2014).

Donors

On one of the first days of the fieldwork trip in Pristina, an interview was conducted with a representative of RBF, more specifically with the programme director of the programme for the Western Balkans of the donor. RBF is a donor that is currently active indeed, giving grants to the civil society sector in, among other countries, Kosovo. The interview with the representative of RBF helped to clear the mind of the author of this master's dissertation in some important aspects, for example when it comes to the relationships between grassroots youth initiatives and think tanks. Because RBF functions as a donor and not as an activist in Kosovo's civil society sector, it is well able to give an overview of what exactly is going on in a more neutral way than the activist organisations can, who will always have the general ideology of the organisation in mind and interpret whatever happens according to this ideology.

In accordance with the academic literature and the projects described above, a lot of attention in the interview was attached on how to raise the genuine interest of citizens, not on how to ensure their forced participation. Indeed, and not mentioned for the first time in this research paper, a cooperative, multi-ethnic, peaceful society can only be achieved if the inhabitants of Kosovo, in this case, actually believe in this project and take part in projects because of this belief. If their participation in a project is forced by for example the IC, this might give a short-term result, but will probably not help in the attempt to build a genuine reconciled society. In contrast, by giving funds to projects that really attempt to raise the interest of Kosovo's population in a more sustainable way, RBF tries to come to a society which is to a great extent reconciled, and, most importantly, in which all inhabitants participate to a certain degree.

According to the programme director of RBF, the main problem that currently stands in the way of reconciliation in Kosovo is the fact that a lot of politicians and donors interpret the conflict in a wrong way, using a lot of stereotypes while doing so, thus reinforcing the separation between the different ethnic communities living in Kosovo today, instead of trying to soften those stereotypes and thus contributing to the process of reconciliation. According to the representative of RBF, the politicians and donors might need reconciliation, but the average inhabitant of Kosovo does not feel the need to use this term. This is another explanation for the absence of the term reconciliation in most of the projects today, although it clearly also reflects the view that the term has a rather negative connotation among Kosovo's population, who prefer to engage in projects improving the rate of unemployment, thus also cooperating with the other ethnic community, than to engage in a project which has the term reconciliation explicitly in its title. It is, in other words, another approach to the same problem. This again emphasises the fact that reconciliation should only be implemented when the society is entirely ready for it, when they do not have to think about losing their job anymore and can focus on broader goals, such as reconciliation. On the other hand, indeed, CSOs do have some work to do when it comes to the use of the term reconciliation. Although most of the projects will probably be focused on the problems of education and youth unemployment for the next few years, the fact that the local population does not like the concept of reconciliation might appear as a problem in the future, when reconciliation becomes a direct goal of CSOs and is thus explicitly mentioned in their projects. The programme director of RBF does see a change in the mentality of most of the donors as well, who since 2003 show a more realistic approach, in which reconciliation can only be achieved gradually, after letting the people deal with their problematic past. A lot was also changed when the big international donors left the scene for other countries in emergency, and when local "survivors" had to find their own definition of reconciliation, instead of simply adopting the one imposed by the IC, while trying to achieve a more stable situation. This partly supports the hypothesis about the changed understanding of reconciliation by locally based CSOs, although the

programme director seems to indicate that this change was partly donor-driven, namely driven by the absence of donors.

As was and will be repeated often throughout this whole master's dissertation, the programme director sees reconciliation as the end result of many processes, such as for example having access to proper information, facing the past, finding the "real" truth and so on. This corresponds with the answer given by the representative of YIHR Kosovo, when asked to define the concepts of peacebuilding and reconciliation (cf. *supra*). This is also reflected in the projects funded by RBF in general, focusing a lot on transitional justice and less on problems connected to youth unemployment or education in Kosovo (Interview with RBF, H. Abazi, 04/12/2014).

Think tanks

The interview that was conducted with a representative from IKS confirmed the impression that the organisation, a think tank to be more specific, is working on youth unemployment while having reconciliation in mind, since improving youth unemployment is, according to IKS and other CSOs in Kosovo, one of the key factors that can contribute to a better stability in Kosovo's society. The organisation highly criticises the donors that arrived in the country right after the war, using the blueprints they had developed for their intervention in other countries. A better approach would be to really examine the society, and, then, to develop programmes that are tailored to this society. This concern can also be read in the academic sources, and was thus mentioned in the literature review that was given in the beginning of this thesis. In this view, reconciliation should be an end-product, not a primary goal. This goal can, for example, be improving youth unemployment, which as a process may eventually lead to reconciliation. The donors that were active in Kosovo in the first years after the war, did not want to come out of their comfort zone of capacity-building, for which they used blueprints like they always did, and tried to tackle the economic problems that Kosovo is currently still facing. However, the IC changed its approach, and the locally based CSOs as well started to focus more on problems like education and unemployment, trying to gather people from different ethnic

backgrounds in one room, cooperating on a clear and emergent problem which all the people in the room shared and wanted to solve. This seems to combine the two changed interpretations of the concept of reconciliation, namely that of the IC and that of the locally based CSOs.

Another problem, which has been mentioned several times already, is the almost non-participation of Kosovo's young population, which IKS connects to the educational system, a system that creates apathy among the youth. Addressing the problems connected to this educational system may indeed be one of the projects that addresses the needs of both the Serbian and the Albanian communities living in Kosovo, thus making the groups networking among each other while dealing with their daily, shared needs. We could call this indirect reconciliation, which appears to be the approach of most of the CSOs that were interviewed for this master's dissertation. The term indirect reconciliation was not found in the academic sources available, but the representative of IKS did immediately agree with it as fitting for what most activist CSOs are currently doing in Kosovo. Indeed, as emphasised multiple times by the representative of IKS, people do not have to talk about reconciliation, and only about reconciliation, to start liking each other. Although this might be the ultimate goal of a project, people are initially put together because they are facing the same problem. This approach, until today, stands in sharp contrast with the approach of the embassies, which fund most of the CSOs but still talk about reconciliation in a very direct way, thus ignoring what the society in Kosovo today is really sensitive of. As long as they, together with other actors, do not change their discourse and do not give more money to projects that let people in Kosovo cooperate on shared problems, they will not reach a lot with this discourse of direct reconciliation yet, especially since the society is not yet ready for this step. This interview, in other words, confirmed the main hypothesis of this research paper, namely that the IC has shifted its understanding of peacebuilding and reconciliation, but that the locally based CSOs have changed this interpretation a second time on their own, noticing that their projects that mentioned the term reconciliation explicitly did not have the desired result and fundamentally lacked legitimacy in Kosovo's society. Connecting those two shifts, in a way, would result in a bet-

ter civil society sector in Kosovo and in a more reconciled society in general (Interview with IKS, F. Duli, 01/12/2014).

The Kosovar Civil Society Foundation gave a general overview of the civil society in Kosovo. Since this was one of the first interviews that was conducted in Pristina, it was helpful in structuring and preparing the other interviews. As was mentioned in other interviews as well, the representative of the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation stated that most of the CSOs in Kosovo nowadays do not work directly on reconciliation, but on the specific needs dealt with by the society on a daily basis. Economy, for example, will be very important during the next few years, together with the creation of more active citizens, by contributing to a better, less frustrating educational system. This last element of course reminds us of the interview with IKS and activist CSOs active in Kosovo today. Indeed, because of the bad reputation of the term reconciliation, most of the CSOs do not work on this concept in a direct way. Either they focus on more urgent problems such as youth unemployment and education, or they focus on processes that must forego reconciliation, for example transitional justice. In any case, they started to understand, learning from their previous projects, that it is not very wise to use the term reconciliation explicitly during a project.

An important side-note at the end of the interview was made, namely that, although most initiatives, grassroots initiatives included, are still funded by donors, they are not always as bounded to their donor as previously when, for example, structuring their agenda (Interview with Kosovar Civil Society Foundation, D. Puka, 01/12/2014).

GLPS gave a somewhat different view on the civil society sector in Kosovo, compared to the other organisations that were interviewed. The representative of this organisation said from the very first moment that youth initiatives, activists youth CSOs working in the daily reality that is, do not know what reconciliation actually is. For that reason, they do not understand what the impact of their projects on the progress of this concept is. Therefore, they do not include reconciliation as a part of their agenda, not in order to not to of-

fend people, but simply because they do not understand their own role. This is a rather different explanation for the fact that reconciliation today is not very present in the project titles of CSOs, and was not really appreciated by other persons that were interviewed in Kosovo. Neither was it the impression of the author of this research paper, after having interviewed already quite a lot of CSOs before this particular meeting took place. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that some think tanks, like GLPS, have disconnected themselves from the so-called grassroots initiatives and have developed their own approach towards the sector. Although GLPS was the only one to formulate such an argument, other visions have to be accepted and there can probably be found other CSOs that have the same approach towards grassroots initiatives and towards the term civil society in Kosovo for sure. After all, one should not forget that only a limited number of CSOs were interviewed for this dissertation, and that this selection was mainly based on the central research question, thus excluding quite a lot of CSOs that are active in Kosovo today.

According to the representative of GLPS, and in this GLPS does say the same thing as many other organisations that were interviewed do, the concept of reconciliation is not one of the daily concerns of Kosovo, but is mainly part of a foreign policy. Thus, most people in Kosovo have a negative attitude towards reconciliation and have no interest in cooperating for this goal, although there was, according to the representative of GLPS, a positive tendency visible since 2008 onwards. Turning our attention to the north of Kosovo, we should be aware, says GLPS, that reconciliation is negatively perceived as a policy of the internal government. This might sound a bit weird after the interviews with CBM and Aktiv, both active in Mitrovica. Neither of them voiced the same opinion. Nevertheless, it is possible that the questions asked by the interviewer did not encourage the representatives of the organisations to voice the same opinion, which they might have, while it is also possible that, just as was the case with the concept of reconciliation in general, GLPS has developed its own understanding, which is not shared by the other CSOs that were interviewed for this thesis.

The representative of GLPS was not really clear about the exact connection between peacebuilding and reconciliation, although he seemed to be using both terms as

interchangeable. When asked to clarify this, the representative basically said that his organisation is not really conducting research on this topic, and that he thus does not want to expand on this theme. Nevertheless, this representative is one of the few person who used peacebuilding and reconciliation as interchangeable terms, while most of the other representatives somehow made a clear distinction between the two concepts. Once again, it is difficult to draw important conclusions from this fact, and should mainly make the reader of this master's dissertation aware of the fact that there are several interpretations of reconciliation, each having its own approach towards this concept (Interview with GLPS, D. Doll, 03/12/2014).

Just as was the case with the interview with the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation, the interview with a representative from OSCE was also helpful in offering a general framework of the civil society in Kosovo. As was mentioned quite extensively already throughout this research paper, a lot of CSOs in Kosovo were founded right after the war, focusing on rapid reactions and relief. These CSOs had as one of their goals fast peacebuilding, not yet reconciliation as such, because this was the approach of the IC who funded these first CSOs in Kosovo. These organisations had little knowledge about the situation in Kosovo, since they were unexperienced, both in terms of the situation of Kosovo at that time in general and in terms of reconciliation. These organisations did focus on young people by offering them for example language courses, which should make them think more globally, thus again working more on "easy", less problematic and less provocative topics than on reconciliation. Reconciliation was, indeed, something for which there was no room at that time, since people were still angry and reconciliation was too sensitive as a topic back then. The international donors that were funding these first CSOs, were, also, more focused on infrastructure projects than on ensuring a constructive dialogue among the young population of post-war Kosovo. As most of the international donors disappeared after a while to other countries in need, most of the rapidly founded CSOs disappeared with them, not having established a reliable and sustainable status during those first post-war years. In contrast, the CSOs that are active in Kosovo nowadays focus more on con-

ducting research, capacity-building and improving their quality, a focus that is highly valued by OSCE. According to the representative of OSCE, CSOs active in Kosovo today should specialise, become more professional and become more accountable at the same time. She claims that only three locally based CSOs are really active today, which means that they have an impact on the decision-making processes. It could be argued quite easily of course that more CSOs can be considered as active, working for example on cooperation between the communities or simple training of Kosovo's unemployed youth. However, each argument has its place in this research paper, and for this reason this particular vision of OSCE was included here. No doubt, there can be found people in Kosovo who voice yet another opinion.

Talking about reconciliation, it was mentioned in the interview that there were some initial attempts in the early 2000s, mainly through youth groups. Between 2003 and 2007 there were only a few initiatives, mainly because that was expected by the central institutions (see also *Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?* 2006). In 2008, however, more initiatives took place, for example working groups that tried to solve the issue of the missing persons with the government. This was mainly a dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, not within Kosovo, a factor that was seen as problematic in many interviews. A dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia means, namely, that Pristina and Belgrade agree on certain topics, while the relationships between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians within the country are not really taken into account. Thus, it is understandable that the local population reacted against the reconciling dialogue talks between Serbia and Kosovo, making clear that, first of all, the issue of guilt within Kosovo's society should be tackled. Indeed, although the Kosovo government likes to talk about young people, not a lot of voices are raised through the conventional ways; the power of the social media, nevertheless, should be taken into account as well.

Although the IC still puts a lot of pressure on youth empowerment, little is happening on the ground, according to the representative of OSCE. Therefore, it is important to support the few initiatives that do try to achieve reconciliation in a rather indirect way, testing the ground for this process, for example by organising meetings for projects and so

on. This is exactly what most of the activist civil society actors in Kosovo nowadays try to do, by having a more indirect approach towards reconciliation. The main hypothesis made in this master's dissertation, namely that most of the CSOs have changed their approach towards reconciliation because they learned from their past, was thus confirmed in the interview with the representative of OSCE. Indeed, an institutional approach to reconciliation seems to be the wrong approach in a country like Kosovo. Especially in the first years after a war, reconciliation can never be sustainable and thus should be reached in a rather indirect manner. However, the IC does not help here, having no consistency in how to approach reconciliation, but instead working separately and thus, probably, further dividing the society it is active in. In other words, although it has been shown before in this thesis that the IC has shifted its approach towards CSOs in Kosovo lately, focusing more on long-term projects and on the local population, the representative of OSCE emphasised that a lot remains to be done. The process of reconciliation should be considered as sensitive and slow, especially in north Kosovo. In other words, the changed interpretations of reconciliation of both the IC and the locally based CSOs should be put together, in order for the IC not to hinder the progress made by the locally based CSOs (Interview with OSCE, S. Hajredini, 02/12/2014).

Independent persons

Agon Maliqi, a freelance journalist who has worked at UNDP and YIHR Kosovo, gave up one of his free hours to talk to me about his vision of civil society. As he has some important experience in CSOs, but is now working independently, his view was useful in the sense that he did not talk as a representative of a certain CSO and thus was able to voice a more critical view of Kosovo's civil society sector. His main argument was that the general environment of the civil society in Kosovo is not genuine, but forced and dominated by international donors. It is, according to him, even today hard to get local communities engaged in projects that have to do with reconciliation, because the wounds, for example the loss of certain property to the other ethnic community, are still very fresh. Agon Maliqi was often referring to Serbia, who has, according to the Albanian community of Kosovo

at least, to accuse for its wrongdoings before the Kosovo Albanians can really start the process of reconciliation. In other words, Maliqi was thus emphasising that the needs of the process of transitional justice have to be fulfilled first, before reconciliation can even be slightly touched upon. This term of reconciliation moreover has a stigma in the negative sense, since it was artificially integrated by the international donors, and thus not genuinely developed within Kosovo's society. The society sees economy as the main problem now and, therefore, does not really think about how to reach reconciliation in the best possible way. In other words, the interview with Agon Maliqi confirmed exactly the idea of this thesis about the position of reconciliation in Kosovo's civil society sector today, and was thus a useful source in the sense that he serves as a kind of external source in this dissertation, having several years of experience in the field, but being able to express himself totally freely. What he did confirm, is the main hypothesis of this master's dissertation, namely that the IC now has another understanding of reconciliation, one that focuses more on long-term results and the locals, that is, while the locally based CSOs have themselves developed another understanding of this concept, because they have noticed that approaching the concept in a direct way does not have the effect everybody was hoping for. Only when bringing these two changes together and by letting the IC listen more to the locally based CSO, reconciliation could be finally achieved in the end, after a long and slow process.

Agon Maliqi made an important point in stating that the people in Pristina are less inclined to engage themselves for the process of reconciliation, because the population in this city is mainly Albanian. According to him, and this was also confirmed in interviews that were conducted with organisations active in Mitrovica, the topic of reconciliation is more on the agenda of this last city, since they have to face the daily reality of living in a very divided city every day. This unavoidably changes the perception of people when it comes to the importance of peacebuilding. It has been noticed indeed that CSOs like CBM and Aktiv stress the concept of reconciliation more than their colleagues in Pristina seem to do (cf. *supra*).

Talking about the relationship between peacebuilding and reconciliation, Agon Maliqi sees peacebuilding as the first of many stages in a post-conflict situation, although a society can always return to this first stage. This happened, for example, in 2004 in Kosovo, when riots broke out and the society had to go the process of peacebuilding again (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3521068.stm>). A quote from another source can be used here to support this argument

The violence that shook Kosovo in March 2004 came as a blow to the people of Kosovo, and, especially to the IC. After nearly five years of significant investment in a variety of economic, social and cultural initiatives aimed at bridging the gap separating the different ethnic groups, the events of March 2004 were a sad reminder of the urgent need to assess critically whether such interventions were contributing towards the goal of building a peaceful, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. This was particularly important for those specifically peacebuilding initiatives which focused on promoting conflict management and resolution through dialogue and mediation, as well as through the implementation of a diversity of development interventions in ethnically mixed areas (*Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?* 2006, 1).

These events showed that the dispute is still very much alive, and that it is thus difficult even to think about reconciliation, as was mentioned several times indeed already throughout this research paper. A lot of money goes to reconciliation, money of the IC that keeps giving money to Kosovo that is, but there is, according to Agon Maliqi, a fundamental lack of grassroots initiatives. This lack can be explained by the above mentioned argument, namely that the population of Kosovo is focused on for example its economic, daily needs, not on the process of reconciliation. This is part of the irritation that is present in Kosovo's society today: its society is focused on economic needs, while the international donors, through their grants, keep focusing on reconciliation. In other words, there is an ongoing friction or tension between the strategy of the IC and the needs of the local population, better reflected by the locally CSOs today, which started to understand what impact the use of the term reconciliation has on the local population of Kosovo and consequently changed their own approach (Interview with Agon Maliqi, 04/04/2014).

The interview with Ardian Arifaj was quite clarifying, in the sense that this person is now working at the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, outside of Kosovo's civil society sec-

tor that is, but worked for the Kosovo CSO KIPRED until two years ago. It was very interesting to hear that he tried to establish his own CSO, but that he failed in this attempt and, then, started to work for the Prime Minister. Because of this bad experience, Arifaj has the feeling that the environment of Kosovo is highly difficult and harsh for people who want to start a new organisation, especially if they have new ideas concerning the civil society. Of course, it is not that difficult to start a new CSO in Kosovo, but it is indeed difficult to receive funding for projects that will probably have no clear results in the next few years. Ardian Arifaj, for example, wanted to found an organisation that would help changing the narrative in Kosovo. This is an approach for which a lot of foreign donors are not willing to give money today. Arifaj, nevertheless, is convinced that changing the narrative is exactly what needs to happen in Kosovo at the moment. According to him, indeed, the main obstacle to reconciliation is the fact that negative stereotypes are still transmitted in society, and that all Serbs are still considered as enemies by Albanians, because of the prejudices that did not cease to exist. Getting rid of these stereotypes by changing the narrative could, according to Arifaj, be a first important step towards reconciliation. This argument has been voiced earlier on in this research paper as well; as long as Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs keep their enmity towards each other, they will not cooperate on something like reconciliation, a term which they moreover perceive rather negatively. First, a society with less negative prejudices about the other ethnic communities should be established, either by putting these ethnic communities together to cooperate on shared problems like education, or by focusing on transitional justice first. The interview with Arifaj thus confirmed what was said in the interviews that were conducted with the activist CSOs in Kosovo.

Although the term reconciliation was, according to Arifaj, sexy right after the war and was used by many international donors, the local population was not ready for reconciliation yet. Nowadays, CSOs have become more organic, listening more to the needs of society than to those of the donors, but this society does not want to hear about reconciliation as of today. This argument was voiced quite a lot throughout this master's dissertation, both in the interviews with representatives from CSOs and in small conclusions that

were drawn by the author after having read most of the academic sources available, having the results of the interviews already in mind. The main dialogue about the normalisation of relations is held, according to Arifaj, between Kosovo and Serbia, not between the Albanians and Serbs living in Kosovo, who are still not thinking about basic elements of reconciliation, such as tolerance. Those people have other needs than reconciliation; economic ones for example, since the number of Kosovo's young people leaving their country becomes alarmingly high. However, the international donors had reconciliation as a wish, not as a well-thought strategy, and had a big influence on the society, as they dominated the politics. The international actors were, moreover, indirectly more focused on peacebuilding than on reconciliation. This especially becomes visible in the fact that the local, ethnically diverse population was not consulted at all, while it has been proven by now that reconciliation efforts need the consent of the local population, while ending the war can happen on the political level only (see also *Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?* 2006).

According to Arifaj, the main task of civil society in Kosovo is to change the narrative, to change the perception of most of the inhabitants of Kosovo. Today is a turning point, since most of the international donors left for other emergency cases and thus left the locally based CSOs behind, who are this time able to define their own agenda. The main point on this agenda, according to Ardian Arifaj, should be to change the narrative, for example by making the curricula equal for both Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo. This will, however, be a long process, since each and every person of the society has to become part of this process. Only then, sustainable reconciliation can come in the agenda of CSOs as a direct objective. This changing of the narrative is connected to the many negative prejudices that exist in Kosovo's society today, mainly created by the international politicians. Indeed, Kosovo Albanians buy products from Serbia without any problem, and the hatred in general is not so big as most foreign people tend to think. Nevertheless, the reasons for the hatred have to be solved, for example by punishing certain people for certain war crimes, before the process of reconciliation can really start. It would be good to understand reconciliation as tolerating each other and cooperating, and not as loving each

other, in Kosovo. Unfortunately, the biggest part of civil society today, according to Arifaj, is not working on changing this narrative, because this does not sound as an attractive idea for their donors. This is exactly why Ardian Arifaj faced so many difficulties when trying to establish his own CSO; he simply could not find a way to get funding, because his idea did not sound attractive enough. The IC is, says Arifaj, still mainly focused on crisis management and emergency cases, not on how to make things really better (Interview with Ardian Arifaj, 04/12/2014). It can be argued for, however, that a lot of the CSOs that were interviewed for this research paper did realise that they had to focus on problems connected to negative stereotypes and youth unemployment, before even start thinking about something close to reconciliation.

The interviews have sufficiently shown that there have been two changes in the understanding of reconciliation. The IC, on the one hand, shifted from fast results to a more sustainable approach, involving the locals more, influencing the CSOs that are funded by their money in this way. The CSOs, on the other hand, have changed their understanding of reconciliation as well, without being forced to do so by the IC. Indeed, their experience has learned them that it is better to approach reconciliation in an indirect way, in order not to provoke the population of Kosovo and to achieve this goal slower, in the meantime working on other, less problematic issues, such as youth unemployment.

Analytical Analysis

In order to make sure that the findings of this research paper are clear to the reader, this thesis will be concluded by an analytical analysis, which will compare the theoretical framework with the empirical findings more explicitly. By doing this, the main hypothesis of this master's dissertation will be repeated and will become more clear, since everything will be put together in this section.

Let us start with repeating the central research question formulated in the introduction of this dissertation, which was wondering how the focus of youth CSOs in Kosovo has changed over time, and what were the most decisive factors for these changes. The interpretation of the concept of reconciliation, both by the IC and by the locally based CSOs, played a central role in this research paper.

First of all, the theoretical framework seems to suggest a changed understanding of the concepts of peacebuilding and, especially, reconciliation, from the side of the IC. Indeed, while being focused on fast results in the first years after the ending of the war, the focus seems to have gradually shifted towards a long-term, more sustainable form of peace and coexistence. However, one should not forget that achieving fast results was often the only approach possible immediately after a war, even in Kosovo. Indeed, even if the war in that country broke out later late and if the IC may have learned important lessons from other war-torn countries by that time, these international actors were still faced with a reality in Kosovo which asked for the fast approach, focusing mainly on rebuilding the infrastructure and on making sure that the war would not break out again. Only when the IC found a society in Kosovo that was more or less ready for it, they started to emphasise the long-term effects of peacebuilding and reconciliation, thus focusing on other projects, with which they wanted to create a multi-ethnic, cooperative background. However, the society of Kosovo was not very fond of these new projects, even if their houses were rebuilt and they were not afraid of a new war anymore. The IC, however kept using the term reconcil-

iation, and this was a term that had a rather bad negative connotation among the local population. Indeed, by using this term too often, the IC created a society in which every project that had the word reconciliation in its title was not really welcomed. Even if the IC was now focused on achieving rather long-term results with its reconciliation projects, and even if it was trying to involve the local population of Kosovo more in these attempts, it was most often unable to effectively implement these projects, due to the high resistance of Kosovo's population against the concept of reconciliation. The interpretation of the concept of reconciliation from the side of the IC was clear from the academic sources that were read for this master's dissertation, although it was less clear that the local population still perceives its approach as rather negative. This is one point where the empirical part of this research paper gave some important insights, which are not yet covered by the academic sources.

This is, indeed, where the locally based CSOs come in. Although they were mainly dependent on international money and thus on the agenda of these international actors, which forced them to implement the reconciliation projects developed by the IC, they quite soon noticed that this approach did not work in Kosovo. Indeed, when they got financially more independent and could thus determine their own agenda, they consciously tried not to use the concept of reconciliation too often in their project titles. Having experienced that this concept has a rather negative connotation among Kosovo's population, as was explained above, they decided not to use the term when it was not absolutely necessary. Thus, they made reconciliation a rather indirect goal of their organisations, focusing instead on problems such as youth unemployment, education and transitional justice, problems that are shared by both the Albanian and the Serbian communities in Kosovo, and that can thus bring together people from different ethnic backgrounds that would probably not gather for the goal of reconciliation as such. However, by gathering these people for projects focused on the educational system of Kosovo, the CSOs also hope to work on reconciliation. By having these people together in one room, indeed, the CSOs hope that these people will effectively cooperate on common problems. By doing this, it is

hoped, they will realise that cooperation with people from different ethnic backgrounds within Kosovo is possible, and they will be able to let go of the negative stereotypes they have about these people. The end goal, so to say, is to create a society in which part of the population is willing to cooperate and knows very well that the “other part” is not as bad as they are often told, and to have part of the society ready for reconciliation when the time will ultimately have come. In this way, they will hopefully be more willing to cooperate on projects that have reconciliation as a direct goal, not as an indirect one.

It has to be emphasised, nonetheless, that a lot of locally based CSOs have delivered good work lately. CBM has been able to gather the youth from Mitrovica, uniting people from both sides of the bridge in this city, although they do have to face a lot of resistance from Mitrovica’s society in general. Next to that, one should appreciate the fact that many locally based CSOs have in fact made the change in their approach of reconciliation, and thus do not confront the local population with the concept in such a direct way anymore. In other words, important steps have been taken, the most important among them being involving the local population and approaching the concept of reconciliation in a rather indirect way, but a lot still remains to be done. Nevertheless, not the locally based CSOs alone are responsible alone for this final change; as long as Kosovo’s society in general is not ready for reconciliation yet, all the locally based CSOs can do is wait and hope the time for reconciliation will eventually come.

Next to that, the question was also asked in this research paper as to how effective it is to have young people in the board of a CSO in Kosovo. Indeed, only a few young people will be willing to do so, and they most often do not represent the general attitude of their peers, who are rather apathetic towards CSOs. Thus, having some young people in a board does not mean that they represent the young people in Kosovo in general, and it does not mean that the whole young population is socially active, because a few of their peers are. Besides, one could also wonder how effective it is if some young people raise the problems of their peers in a CSO. Indeed, they do know what is going on among the young population in Kosovo. but it is not always sure at all if raising these problems at a board

meeting of a CSO will effectively create a solution that will affect the young population of Kosovo as a whole. Of course, there is a relation between the two problems mentioned here: if Kosovo had a young population that would be more socially active in general, most of the solutions offered by CSOs would probably have a greater influence in Kosovo's society. However, young people should always be motivated to get involved in a CSO and become an active citizen, even if the result of this involvement is questionable. At the most, it can be hoped, these young people will be the ones that will be most willing to work on projects connected to reconciliation in some years.

The main contrasts between the theoretical and the empirical part of this research question are, firstly, the real impact of the use of the term reconciliation among the inhabitants of Kosovo and, secondly, the effectiveness of having some young people in the board team of a CSO. These are findings that for sure were not in the head of the author of this master's dissertation last summer. Indeed, only by effectively interviewing the people about which the academic sources most often write, the problems became really clear. If one recommendation has to be made in this thesis, it would be, on the one hand, that the academic sources should cover the problems that exist in the civil society sector of Kosovo nowadays better, and that, on the other hand, the IC should listen more carefully to the experiences of the locally based CSOs. It has become clear by now that there is a big gap between what the IC gives money for and what the CSOs find important. Thus, improvement for the whole society of Kosovo can only be reached if the IC and the locally CSOs start to communicate in a better and more effective way.

Conclusions

The central research question of this master's dissertation was how the focus of youth CSOs in Kosovo has changed over time, and what were the most decisive factors for these changes. The concept of reconciliation was central to this research paper.

Both the theoretical and the empirical framework have made clear that the concept of reconciliation has changed over time, and that this has had important consequences for the focus of youth CSO in Kosovo and their programmes. The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that a double shift has taken place. The first shift was taken by the IC, which tried to focus more on long-term reconciliation projects, and not anymore on fast results, such as rebuilding devastated roads. They also tried to involve the local population more. The second shift appears to have been taken by the locally based CSOs themselves, having learned from their previous experiences. Indeed, although the IC may have shifted the concept of reconciliation initially, the locally based CSOs, without being compelled to do so by foreign donors, realised that reconciliation should be more of an indirect goal, while most of the projects should focus on rather easy and less provocative goals, such as education and youth unemployment. In doing so, it is hoped that reconciliation will be achieved in the end, when everybody within Kosovo's society is ready for this. This second shift became apparent mostly while conducting the interviews, while the first shift is largely covered by the academic sources available. A combination of both seems necessary, in order to achieve a better and more multi-ethnic, reconciled society in Kosovo.

The effect of having young people as members of a board team of a CSO was also put in question, for two reasons. Firstly, the fact that some young people in Kosovo do become active citizens does not necessarily mean that all of their peers will do the same thing. Secondly, it is not sure yet if the solutions for some emergent problems, that are found by young people working in a CSO are effectively felt by the young population living in Kosovo, who is in general not too much inclined to get involved in a CSO.

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Appendix

In this appendix, the CSOs that were used for this research paper will be shortly introduced in the form of a table. Information accessed through their website was used, as well as information obtained directly from the interviews with representatives from these organisations. Every representative gave his/her permission to use the organisation in this research paper. To keep the research paper as a whole more fluent, however, no names were mentioned so far, except at the end of the description of each interview. In the last section of this master's dissertation, more information can be found about the CSOs, as well as about their representatives that were interviewed. Although SPARK and INTEGRA were not interviewed, they are part of this appendix because important information about their mission statement and vision can be given in this way.

Name of the organisation	Date of foundation	Area of focus	Mission statement	Vision statement, objectives	Website	Representative interviewed for the research paper	Function of the representative
ACTIVISTS: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION							
Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)	2003	Youth of Balkans ; transitional justice	To protect the victims of human rights violations, establish (<i>sic</i>) new connections in the region among the post-war generations, as well as to include the young in the process of transitional justice, through promoting the truth about the wars in former Yugoslavia (http://democratic-youth.net/yihr/about-us/).	Truth, justice, responsibility and equality	http://democratic-youth.net/yihr/	Edona Tolaj	Human Rights Project Coordinator
ACTIVISTS: YOUTH EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT AND RECONCILIATION							
Community Building Mitrovica (CBM)	2001 / 2003	Mitrovica ; youth; education and employment	CBM is an interethnic grassroots organisation that identifies, encourages and facilitates joint actions of citizens in the Mitrovica region in order to promote cooperation, co-existence and democratic values (http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/about).	Mitrovica a safe, diverse place where accountable institutions, civil society and active citizens appreciate differences in a democratic culture (http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/about).	http://www.cbmitrovica.org/en/about .	Miloš Golubović	Project Manager

Mi-trovica Rock School	2011	Mitrovica; youth; education (music)	A permanent rock and roll institution, graduating the region's greatest musical and engineering talent (http://www.mitrovicarockschool.org/about.htm).	/	http://www.mitrovicarockschool.org/	/	/
Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC)	2011	Mitrovica; education and employment	Local CSO that identifies and promotes the interests of citizens and Kosovo society itself (<i>sic</i>) through project activities and advocacy, as well as strengthening civil society against accountable institutions (http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?str=O_Nam).	Mitrovica, a safe place where accountable institutions and strong civil society cooperate in developing a democratic culture, where there is an appreciation for diversity and opportunity for citizens to make choices (http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?str=O_Nama)	http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php	Tijana Kolutac	Project Manager
SPARK	1993	Kosovo; education and employment	SPARK develops higher education and entrepreneurship to empower young, ambitious people to lead their conflict affected societies into prosperity. SPARK is determined to increase the number of sustainable jobs and economic prospects for youth in post-conflict regions through the improvement of higher education and the development of the local private sector (http://www.spark-online.org/about-us/vision-mission/).	SPARK believes that sustainable economic growth is essential for establishing self-reliance and thereby poverty alleviation. Creating jobs for youth in conflict affected societies and enabling an environment for youth to improve their socio-economic position, are central in this vision. Through job creation SPARK aims to diminish the potential for conflict, giving special attention to marginalised groups, including women, returning refugees and IDPs (http://www.spark-online.org/about-us/vision-mission/).	http://www.spark-online.org/region/kosovo/	/	/

ACTIVISTS: CAPACITY BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

Aktiv	2009	Mitrovica, youth	To enable the meaningful involvement of the Kosovo Serb community in the construction of a participatory, peaceful, and prosperous future for the region (http://ngoaktiv.org/pages/about).	To provide a sustainable framework for civic participation in Kosovo; to fortify the commitment of local and central level institution to human rights democratic decision-making; to facilitate sustained economic progress in Kosovo communities; to improve cross-community relationships in Kosovo; to reinvigorate the local tradition of positive cultural engagement (http://ngoaktiv.org/pages/about#objectives).	http://ngoaktiv.org/home	Zvezdana Mi-leta	Consultant and Lawyer
Students Helping Life – Kosovo (SHL-K)	1999 / 2008	Kosovo ; youth; capacity building	SHL-Kosova works towards having equal, empowered, well educated and healthy youth, inclusive, cooperative, aware of its potential, capable of making right decisions for their future and competent to generate sustainability for their welfare (http://shlkosova.org/English/mision.html).	SHL-Kosova contributes to Rahovec/Orahovac municipality to have youth with an active role in society, committed to increase quality of life of all communities (http://shlkosova.org/English/vision.html)	www.shlkosova.org/English .	Shkumbin Arifi	Programme Manager
Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS)		Kosovo ; / European integration	/	/	http://www.kfos.org .	Iliriana Kaçani-ku	Program Coordinator ; European Integration

DONORS

Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)	2001 (Western Balkans)	Balkans ; democratic practice, peace-building, sustainable development	The Fund's Peacebuilding program aspires to strengthen grassroots constituencies for peace and to connect them with policymaking on the regional and international levels. It aims to understand the conditions that lead to violence and the processes that support durable peace in order to identify innovative solutions to the most pressing drivers of insecurity. The program's grantmaking focuses on conflicts that have a disproportionate influence on international peace and security (http://www.rbf.org/program/peacebuilding/guidelines) .	The RBF will continue to work closely with civil society groups, governmental institutions, and other funding organisations to highlight the richness of the region's ethnic, gender, age, cultural, and racial diversity and to promote the values of a tolerant and inclusive society (http://www.rbf.org/program/pivotal-place-western-balkans/guidelines).	www.rbf.org .	Haki Abazi	Programme Director "Western Balkans"
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THINK TANKS

Kosovar Stability Initiative (IKS)	2008	Kosovo ; / think tank		Empirical research and analysis of socio-economic developments in Kosovo (http://www.iksweb.org/en-us/about-us).	http://www.iksweb.org/en-us/Home .	Florina Duli	Executive Director
Kosovar Civil Society Foundation	1999	Kosovo; European integration	An independent, not-for-profit organisation focused in supporting local civil initiatives leading to a strong civil society movement that will promote a democratic culture and will be responsive to the socio-economic needs of Kosovo with a strong focus on supporting and contributing to the EU Integration Process (To create a good basic environment for CSOs (http://www.kcsfoundation.org).	http://www.kcsfoundation.org .	Dren Puka	Program Officer

		http://www.kcsfoundation.org/?page=2,10).				
Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS)	Kosovo; think tank;	To conduct credible policy research in the fields of politics, law and economics and to push forward policy solutions that address the failures and/or tackle the problems in the said policy fields (http://legalpoliticalstudies.org/about-us/mission-statement/)	Democratization, rule of law, economy, and regional cooperation and the international cooperation	www.legalpoliticalstudies.org	Dren Doli	Department Member
Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)	International organisation; democracy	The Mission's core mandate is to take the lead role in all matters relating to institution- and democracy-building, as well as human rights, in Kosovo. It concentrates its work, among others, in the areas of protection and promotion of human and community rights; good governance, gender equality and civic participation; the training of judicial personnel, the Kosovo Police and public administrators; and electoral support (http://www.osce.org/kosovo/105907).	/	http://www.osce.org/kosovo o	Shqipe Hajredini	OSCE Mission in Kosovo Communities Section Programme Officer