Master Thesis

Limitations for civil society actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina:
The road to social cohesion and sustainable peace, twenty years after Dayton


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This image is part of a campaign created by the civil society organisation of two of the informants in this research. The image is modelled after the message that is printed on cigarette packages in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which state: ‘Smoking kills’ in the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian language. On this poster, however, the text is changed to: ‘Nationalism kills’. With this campaign they hope to create more attention for the issue of nationalism and the lack of social cohesion in BiH (UDIK, 2016).
At its best, civil society is the story of ordinary people living extraordinary lives through their relationships with each other, driven forward by a vision of the world that is ruled by love and compassion, non-violence and solidarity.

- (Michael Edwards¹)

¹ Edwards, 2004, p. 112
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1. Introduction

From 1992-1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia or BiH) experienced the most brutal civil war in Europe since the Second World War. After three years of violent conflict, 97,207 people were killed or are missing and presumed dead. Over 170,000 people were injured and 2.2 million people (which was half of Bosnia’s population) had to flee their homes and became refugees or internally displaced (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010; Clark, 2009). The defining characteristic of the violence during the war, was the mass killing and deportation of civilians along ethnic lines, generally known as ‘ethnic cleansing’ (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005).

On the 21st of November in 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords (hereafter DPA) were drafted, and in December of that year the peace agreement was signed. The DPA ended the violent war in BiH and formed the beginning of an ambitious peacebuilding mission. The accord created an institutional structure of two federal units (or entities): the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter FBiH) for Bosnian Croats and Bošniaks, occupying 51% of the territory, and the Republika Srpska (hereafter RS) for Bosnian Serbs, occupying 49% of the territory. The massive human dislocation resulted in “ethnically homogeneous areas being controlled by the same political parties responsible for the carnage” (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 129). The post-Dayton political system therefore still reaffirms the identification with the groups that fought against each other during the war on a daily basis (Stroschein, 2014).

The start of Bosnia’s peacebuilding mission, conducted by the international community, can be characterized as having a liberal peace approach, which focused largely on democratisation and economic liberalisation (Fischer, 2011). By the late 1990s, the focus shifted somewhat towards a sustainable peacebuilding approach and the issue of building civil society was placed on the agenda. There was a growing attention for the development of civil society in order to supplement the top-down peacebuilding approach with bottom-up initiatives (ibid). The international community, however, was “overeager to develop civil society as ‘local partners’ and as a vehicle for restoring social cohesion and instilling a culture of participatory democracy. It had unrealistic expectations of how quickly this could or should happen [...] (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 129).

We find ourselves now twenty years after the DPA was signed, and yet one can still not speak of a sustainable peace in BiH. Rather, there only exists a negative peace, meaning there is an absence of conflict but no sustainable restoration of relationships (Clark, 2009). The lack of a sustainable peace is largely due to low levels of social cohesion in the Bosnian society. Social cohesion can be understood as:
a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations. (Chan, To, & Chan, 2006, p. 290)

The members of society in this definition refer to the individuals, various groups, organizations and institutions that make up a society (Chan, To, & Chan, 2006, p. 290). Vertical interactions among these members refer to the relations between the state and society at large, while the horizontal interactions refer to the relations among different individuals and groups in society (ibid). In Bosnia, levels of social cohesion are low, both on the vertical and horizontal levels. In 2014 the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation index (SCORE index) was used to measure the levels of reconciliation and social cohesion in BiH quantitatively. Bošniaks regarded the overall level of social cohesion to be a 3.8 out of 10; Serbs gave a 4.4 out of 10 and Croats a 4 out of 10 (SCORE, 2016).

The Bosnian citizens have low trust in institutions, with a score of 3 out of 10 for all three ethnic groups. Social institutions are trusted somewhat more than the governing institutions, with the lowest levels of trust in the political parties and politicians. In FBiH, the most trusted social institutions are of religious nature. Trust in associational life is also low. In RS the most trusted associations are those who focus on health care, while the least trusted ones are NGOs, possibly due to the perceived links with the international community (Ioannou, Jarraud, & Lordos, 2015, p. 150).

Interactions on the horizontal level are also problematic. Levels of trust, interaction and social distance between the three ethnic majorities are low (Ioannou, Jarraud, & Lordos, 2015, p. 159), and this also applies for the other ethnic minority groups (ibid, p. 160). Croats seem to have the highest score of reconciliation with both other ethnic majorities, yet “while Bošniaks and Serbs have come some way in terms of reconciliation, trust between the two groups remains relatively low, with levels below the midpoint” (ibid, p. 173). The behavioural manifestations of these norms and attitudes are particularly low, with scores for civic engagement below 1 out of 10 (ibid, pp. 153-155).

Brown and Zahar (2015) explain that the focus on social cohesion within peacebuilding can bridge top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997), reduce inequalities, link state with society and (re)build bridges within (bonding) and among (bridging) communities (Putnam, 2000). The strengthening of social cohesion is one of the most often performed functions of civil society in peacebuilding (Paffenholz, 2010). This is also the case for BiH, where many civil society actors focus on social cohesion projects and initiatives (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). Yet, while civil society has made important contributions to this goal, social cohesion levels have not returned to pre-war levels. In most cases, “Bosnians seem to have accepted the inevitability of coexistence [...] but they have rejected intimate interethnic relations, and more broadly, multiculturalism
(Belloni & Hemmer 2010, p. 147). These relations are, however, needed to create a more sustainable peace (Brown & Zahar, 2015).

Within Bosnia’s peacebuilding mission there is thus a strong focus on civil society, and within civil society the focus lies largely on the goal of strengthening social cohesion. However, there seems to be little progress. It is of importance to look more into the question why these civil society initiatives are not reaching their intended results. Therefore, this research will look into the possible limitations that civil society actors who focus on social cohesion and sustainable peace experience in their work. Next to this, it will look into the complexities and interdependency of these limitations by analysing the limitations with the use of a holistic and integrated theoretical framework. This leads to the following research question:

**What are the limitations experienced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion, and what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?**

The objective of this research is to shed some light on the limitations that civil society actors, who focus on social cohesion and sustainable peace, experience in their work and to analyze these limitations with the use of an integrated approach, in this case a holistic framework such as Edwards proposes in his 2004: ‘civil society’. This integrated approach will be used in order to gain some perspectives about the connectedness, complexities and interdependency of the limitations that the civil society actors experience.

**1.1 Societal relevance**

There are many societal issues that underpin this research. Twenty years after the DPA formed the start of an ambitious peacebuilding mission, one can yet still not speak of a sustainable peace in BiH. Bosnia’s society is still extremely divided (Clark, 2009; Fischer, 2006b) and levels (both vertical and horizontal) of social cohesion are low (Ioannou, Jarraud, & Lordos, 2015). There is civil unrest, which accumulated in February of 2014, when the most violent protests since the Bosnian war broke out\(^2\). Civil society functions, especially those that focus on social cohesion, are falling short of the expectations that were upheld by the international community (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010; Belloni, 2001; Fischer, 2011).

\(^2\) In 2014 a series of (violent) protests were held in multiple cities in BiH (incl. Sarajevo, Visoko, Zeninca, Mostar, Tuzla, Jajce, Gorazde and Brčko). Tens thousands citizens took to the streets and set fires to government buildings, due to dissatisfaction with the economic and political situation (Dzidic, 2014).
1.2.1 There is no sustainable peace in BiH and the level of social cohesion is low

Mac Ginty (2010) explains BiH finds itself in a ‘no war, no peace’ situation. The DPA did end the violence, yet the full implementation of the peace process has become stalled. There is little progress in the establishment of reconciliation and interethnic trust, and BiH is failing to move towards a truly transformative and sustainable peace. The low levels of social cohesion lead to an environment where there is only coexistence – people living side by side but not together (Clark, 2009). Clark (2009) argues that here is insufficient contact between interethnic groups and the existence of denial and competing truths about what happened during the war is making the situation worse. There are “three broad competing versions of the truth [...]. Each group seeks to portray itself as the main victim and to minimize, to deny, or to rationalize the suffering inflicted on others” (p. 362).

There are many towns in BiH where people live separate lives. Lack of contact is limiting the road to a greater social cohesion. Clark (2009) explains that:

some of the areas in BiH that present the most significant challenges for reconciliation, therefore, are not necessarily those in which the worst crimes were committed, like Srebrenica, but rather the divided cities and towns in parts of central BiH and Herzegovina where different ethnic groups live completely separate lives and have minimal contact with each other. (Clark, 2009, p. 365)

The creation of more contact, ways to diminish nationalistic thinking, and discussions about what happened during the war could lead to more social cohesion (Clark, 2009). The SCORE index found evidence of a positive correlation between both contact and trust, and contact and political integration across the ethnic groups (Ioannou, Jarraud, & Lordos, 2015, p. 173). Both of these are considered to be crucial components to a “sustainable peace and the development of a joint vision of the future” (ibid). The civil society actors are the ones who are trying to help provide these contact points by projects focusing on e.g. interethnic dialogue, public protests about dealing with the past and nationalism, discussing the denial of war crimes and teaching critical thinking. In order for the civil society actors to be capable to do their work, there needs to be more insight in what is limiting them.

1.2.3 Civil society actors feel disempowered

During this research, one point became very clear: the civil society actors who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion feel disempowered by the multitude of limitations they experience in their work. Few of them had ideas about how to resolve the limitations they were experiencing, claiming that “the whole society needs to change” (Small talk 33) and that this will most likely never happen. They all admit to never really have thought about how they could tackle these limitations, or are of the opinion that the changes that need to be made are simply “out of their hands” (Small talk
24). All agree, however, that change is needed, and these limitations need to be resolved, since the current trajectory the Bosnian society is on will lead to a downward spiral of more nationalism, ethnic divisions and according to some, a possible re-burst of violent conflict (Interviewee 1; 2; 5; 14). However, the fact that the civil society actors all experience a multitude of limitations to which they have no guided resolutions, keeps them trapped in the same negative spiral. Many of them notice a growing trend of colleagues with burn-outs, they claim to have run out of ideas, their impact is not big enough to beat the work of the political system and most of them see a dark future ahead when it comes to social cohesion, the civil society sector and BiH in general (Small talk 1; 19; 34; Participant observation). Most of them are not actively involved in trying to resolve the experienced limitations, mainly because they feel powerless (Small talk 20; 24; 33). It is therefore of great importance to gather more insight about the limitations they experience and how these limitations are connected to one another. This way the civil society actors can have a little more clarity on what obstacles they are actually facing.

1.3 Scientific relevance
The important role that civil society can play in peacebuilding has become more acknowledged since the mid 1990s, when failures of international interventions in Somalia, Rwanda and the Balkans showed the need for different perspectives instead of the focus on liberal peacebuilding (Fischer, 2011; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). The strengthening of civil society is now a key element in many peacebuilding missions and the concept is important in academia as well. However, the debates among politicians, practitioners and scholars about civil society capacities, impacts, legitimacy, and achievements are controversial (Fischer, 2006a).

1.3.1 The importance of the use of a theoretical, holistic and integrated framework
The concept of civil society is difficult to define, and more importantly: the meaning of the concept can differ greatly between - and within - societies and settings (Edwards, 2011). This makes understanding the impacts of civil society within peacebuilding complicated, but this does not make it less interesting to explore. Within the current schools of thought there is a tendency of scholars to stay within their own line of argument, limited by rigid and narrow definitions of civil society (Edwards, 2004; Pouligny, 2005). The civil society debate is ongoing between adherents of three different schools of thought: those who focus on associational life (or forms of civil society), those who focus on the idea of the good society (or norms of civil society) and those who focus on public spheres (or the spaces of civil society) (Edwards, 2004). The different schools, however, barely interact with one another (Edwards, 2011).

While these schools of thought each offer important insights, they cannot fully explain the
complex realities in which civil societies function on their own. Michael Edwards (2004; 2011) however, offers a different point of view: when one combines the insights of all three schools of thought, one can try to understand the interconnected complexities that are the building blocks of civil societies. This integrated, holistic, framework as described by Edwards is highly theoretical, but it can be used to offer more insights on practical cases, such as civil society peacebuilding activities in BiH. For this thesis, the integrated approach as proposed by Edwards will be used to gain more understanding about the complex interconnectedness of the limitations that the local civil society actors experience in their work. This will not only offer theoretically grounded insights on practical problems, but will in turn also try to shed some light on the possible importance of the use of integrated holistic frameworks when trying to understand the complex realities of civil societies.

1.3.2 The importance of local understandings

Oftentimes the quest for generalization of examples of civil society achievements within the main debates overlook the need for more focus on the contexts in which civil societies function (Pouligny, 2005). Therefore, this research has a local perspective and will explore the local experiences of a particular group of civil society actors: those that focus on sustainable peace and creating greater social cohesion in Bosnia’s divided society. This research on local experiences in Bosnia’s civil society can possibly contribute to the debates within critical civil society peacebuilding scholarship, which is currently experiencing a shift in focus that Richmond and Mac Ginty (2013) call the local turn. They explain that:

The ‘local turn’ is connected to the critical approach to peace and conflict studies and has been heavily influenced by critical and post-structural theory, postcolonial scholarship and practice, interdisciplinary, as well as a range of alternative ethnographic, sociological and action-related methodologies. (2013, p. 763)

Within this shift the attention for ‘the local’ in academic debates on peacebuilding has been established, however, this has not resonated in peacebuilding practices (Paffenholz, 2010; Pouligny, 2005). While the term is becoming more popular in policies, it seems that the relevance is only present on paper (Paffenholz, 2010). In practice, once can still easily see the contrast between the “concentration on bottom-up, localized, and particularistic conflict-calming measures” dominating critical peacebuilding debates and the “emphasis on top-down, standardized, technocratic and institutionalized approaches to peace favoured by many international institutions (despite their conversion to a rhetoric of the local)” (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 549).

An obstacle to the ‘local turn’ in peacebuilding practice lies in the epistemologies and research methodologies that key actors in the liberal peacebuilding agendas use to understand local situations. They are often working with standardized formats that are unable to capture local nuances
What happens at the local level is thus becoming more important, but is still greatly misunderstood. Many critiques in this debate shed light on the limits of Western understandings about peace and peacebuilding in diverse contexts (ibid.). They call for a “retreat from the certainties and binaries that underpin Western models of thinking” (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2013, p. 780). Trying to understand local ideas and experiences calls for a more open approach. An emic perspective can offer some insights into local ideas, opinions and experiences (Eriksen, 2010). This research will apply such a perspective to the case of civil society actors in BiH by using an ethnographic methodology, in the hope to shed some light on local understandings and experiences of civil society actors in BiH.

1.3.3 The nexus between civil society, peacebuilding and social cohesion

More research is needed on the nexus between civil society, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. Paffenholz (2010) argues that although there has been a significant growth of civil society peacebuilding, research often focuses on specific achievements or critical findings about the effectiveness of NGO peacebuilding. She claims that “the understanding of civil society as it applies specifically to peacebuilding has yet to be adequately explored” (p. 43). While there is a significant body of work about the critiques of civil society in peacebuilding, there is a lack of research about what main supporting and limiting factors exist to civil society peacebuilding (p. 60). This research tries to provide some insights about those limitations.

Brown and Zahar (2015) explain that social cohesion is increasingly accepted as an important objective for building sustainable peace. However, scholars often focus more on “social cohesion as an end goal, than they do the policy-making and implementation aspects of the concept” (Brown & Zahar, 2015, p. 10). They do however argue that “the social cohesion approach to peacebuilding is part of a new wave of scholarship that seeks to grapple with the diversity and complexity of peacebuilding contexts” (ibid). This research will also apply such a focus to the complexity of the context in which the civil society actors are functioning, and will argue for a more holistic integrated approach to studying civil society.

1.3.4 The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The case of BiH has been a popular topic for peacebuilding and civil society research (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005). Keil and Perry (2015) even refer to BiH as a laboratory for peacebuilders and researchers aiming to understand and address the root causes of the conflict and how to resolve them. However, even twenty years after the DPA was signed, BiH remains an interesting case due to the fact that the country is still “changing and shifting, although the direction of these changes and shifts is not yet clear (Keil & Perry, 2015, p. 468).
1.2 Outline of the thesis

In chapter 2, the methodological background to the research question will be explained. In order to gain more understanding about the experiences of the civil society actors, an ethnographic methodology will be used as the basis for this research. The ethnographic methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, small talk and a visual method that were used to gather empirical data will be explained in greater detail. The selection of the group of informants on the basis of both a theoretical selection, based on the functional model of civil society research as proposed by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010), and practical limitations will be discussed. The chapter will end with the discussion of coding and the integration of theory, by use of the holistic framework of civil society as proposed by Edwards (2004).

Chapter 3 will focus on the theoretical background of the research question. Here, the theoretical concepts of civil society and civil society in connection to peacebuilding will be discussed. Hereafter the theoretical background of the functional model, used as the theoretical basis for the selection of informants, as proposed by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) will be discussed, followed by a focus on one of these functions of civil society in peacebuilding: social cohesion. Then, an overview of the previous academic literature on the limitations of civil society peacebuilding in general, and in particular focused on the Bosnian case, will be given. Thereafter, Edwards’ (2004; 2011) arguments for an integrated holistic approach to understanding civil society will be explained and a usable framework for analysis based on his argument will be presented.

In chapter 4, a short case description will be presented in order to provide sufficient information on the context that the civil society actors are functioning in. The period before the war, the war itself, the peacebuilding mission, Dayton Peace Agreement, political system and educational system will be briefly discussed. Thereafter a short overview of the assessment of the functions civil society has in Bosnia’s peacebuilding mission, as made by Belloni and Hemmer (2010), will be provided in order to mitigate the practical limitations of the selection of informants.

Chapter 5 will provide the answer to the first part of the research question: what are the limitations experienced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peace and social cohesion? The experienced limitations have been grouped into seven main limitations, namely: the political system, donor structures, corruption, competition, the educational system, public spheres and the perceptions of the Bosnian citizens. These limitations will be discussed in a descriptive order.

In chapter 6, the second part of the research question: what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations? will be answered. The limi-
tations will be analyzed with the use of the integrated holistic framework based on Edwards’ (2004) arguments.

Chapter 7 will offer a conclusion, and the thesis will end with a discussion of societal and scientific recommendations, and a brief explanation of the limitations of this research in chapter 8.
2. Methodology

There are several methodological choices that will be explained in this chapter. Looking at the scientific relevance of this study, there are two important methodological arguments to be made for the posing of the central research question:

*What are the limitations experienced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion, and what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?*

Firstly, as the local level is becoming of greater importance in peacebuilding research and policy, but is still greatly misunderstood, this study focuses on emic perspectives of what is happening ‘on the ground’. Therefore, this research is based on an ethnographic methodology that focuses on the experiences of local civil society actors. The following ethnographic methods were used to gather empirical data: participant observation, small talk, semi-structured interviews and a visual method. Next to this, there is more need for understanding the complexities of civil society peacebuilding and social cohesion contexts. Therefore, a holistic theoretical framework such as Edwards (2004) proposes, will be used in order to analyse the complexity of the limitations that are experienced by the local civil society actors.

In this chapter the ethnographic methodology, delimitation of the group of informants, used research methods, and coding/analysis techniques will be discussed.

2.1 Ethnographic methodology

Ethnographic methodology is often used when research topics require in-depth understanding “that is obtained through detailed examples, rich narratives, empathy and experience (examining negotiated lived experiences)” (O’reilly, 2005, p. 29). Ethnography can be, in its minimal definition, understood as:

iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researchers own role, and that views humans as part object/part subject. (O’reilly, 2005, p. 3)

Here, iterative research implies a “sophisticated inductivism and flexible research design” (O’reilly, 2005, p. 26). In this research there is a focus on a zigzag movement between inductivism and deductivism. As Eriksen (2010) explains:

Induction consists of going out there, ‘watching and wondering’, collecting information about what people say and do. Deduction consists of attempts to account for facts by means of a
general hypothesis or theory. We can envision the search for insight as a zigzag movement between the observation of fact and theoretical reasoning, where new facts modify the theory and (modified) theory accounts for the facts. (p. 31)

Within this research, the inductive focus lies on gathering empirical data about the limitations that the civil society actors experience, by use of ethnographic methods. Deduction took place by focus on a theoretical holistic integrated approach.

2.2 Informants
The group of informants that is researched needs to be delimited. As O'reilly explains:

All ethnographic research, however flexible and free-floating it is made out to be, has to make choices which will affect what is learned. These choices should be theoretically informed where possible, but may have to be made on the basis of practical limitations. (2005, p. 39)

The theoretical foundation that is used to delimit the research group finds its basis in the debate regarding actor- and function-oriented approaches to researching civil society involved in peacebuilding. Firstly, the group of local civil society actors in BiH is delimited to those who focus on (sustainable) peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is here understood as the “aims at preventing and managing armed conflict and at sustaining peace after large-scale violence has ended. It is a multidimensional effort, incorporating all of the activities that are linked directly to that objective” (Paffenholz, 2010, p. viii).

Within the academic literature there are two approaches to studying civil society involved in peacebuilding: an actor-oriented approach and a function-oriented approach. Actor-oriented models often focus the debate on the characteristics of civil society actors. Questions regarding ‘who is doing what?’ and single-actor oriented studies that analyze the identity and role of particular civil society actors (mostly NGOs) in peacebuilding are of importance within this approach (Spurk, 2010; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). However, Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) argue that an actor-oriented focus often fails to identify purposes and objectives of different civil society actors and therefore propose a function-oriented model to analyze civil society. Spurk (2010) explains that “in contrast to actor-oriented models, the functional approach concedes that various models or concepts of civil society exist, none of which is prioritized over others” (p. 20). Therefore, they are building on the ideas of e.g. Michael Edwards (2004), whose holistic theoretical framework will be used for analyzing the empirical data that will be gathered during this research (Spurk, 2010).

In order to study the different functions that civil society can have in peacebuilding, Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) have created an analytical framework comprised of seven different

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3 For more theoretical background on peacebuilding and peacebuilding in connection to civil society, see page 23-41.
functions: protection, monitoring, advocacy, in-group socialisation, social cohesion, intermediation and facilitation, and service delivery⁴. Next to these functions, they stress the importance of analyzing the context in which civil society is functioning. Here, issues such as the socio-political environment, culture, the legacy of conflict and the status and composition of civil society are of importance. For this research, the focus lies on civil society actors who are focusing on one of these functions, namely social cohesion. This distinction has led to a main focus on civil society actors who work for certain peacebuilding NGOs, peace activists and youth workers who have creating sustainable peace and greater social cohesion as their mission.

Besides these theoretical delimitations, there are some practical limitations that are of influence on the sampling process. The focus on civil society actors who are working on peacebuilding and social cohesion, leads to the exclusion of those actors who focus on other functions and those who are actively working against peacebuilding-goals (the so-called uncivil society actors). The civil society actors who focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion are mainly NGOs, peace activists and youth workers and therefore make up the group of informants in this research. This does, however, not mean that other actors are not of importance. Traditional and/or uncivil actors are often overlooked by researchers and within international peacebuilding policy (Spurk, 2010; Pouligny, 2005). Next to this, there are civil society actors who influence social cohesion but are not directly involved in peacebuilding, such as sport- and cultural organizations, religious institutions etc. They are however of great influence on Bosnia’s levels of social cohesion. In order to mitigate these limitations, a background of Bosnia’s civil society and discussion of the assessment of all the seven peacebuilding functions made by Belloni and Hemmer (2010) is included in the case description chapter⁵.

The theoretical focus on civil society actors who are working towards sustainable peace and social cohesion and the encountered practical limitations led to a selection of 41 informants. Three key-informants functioned as ‘gatekeepers’ and helped with obtaining access to other informants, and research settings. The group consists of civil society actors who work for NGOs, peace activists and youth workers (also included are two OSCE employees who provided some background information on Bosnia’s civil society). Amongst the group of NGO employees, a balance between those that represent the bigger organizations (7 informants) and the smaller/newer organizations (9 informants) was made. The researcher tried to ensure that civil society actors from both FBiH, RS and the Brčko district were represented within the group of informants. Next to this, there is a balance between different projects and initiatives that are focused on both the vertical and horizontal

⁴ For more information about the theoretical basis of these concepts see the theoretical framework, page 23-41
⁵ See page. 43.
aspects of social cohesion, such as: interethnic dialogue, public protests/projects about nationalism/dialogue/dealing with the past/interethnic trust issues, non-formal education projects about critical thinking, participating in a multicultural society and associational life, and how to use media.

**List of informants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant nr.</th>
<th>Info [kind of association, geographical, other]</th>
<th>Method used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(key) Informant 1</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Participant observation (long-term), small talk, semi-structured interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(key) Informant 2</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo and Brčko (FBiH, Brčko district)</td>
<td>Participant observation (long-term), small talk, semi-structured interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(key) Informant 3</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Small talk, semi-structured interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informant 4</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 5</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 6</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Participant observation (long-term), small talk, semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 7</td>
<td>Former employee of NGO, Banja Luka (RS)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 8</td>
<td>Former employee of NGO (RS)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 9</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH), focus on public peaceful protests,</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview, participant observation (short)</td>
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<td>Informant 10</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 11</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 12</td>
<td>Youth center, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 13</td>
<td>Youth association, Mostar (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 14</td>
<td>NGO, Mostar (FBiH)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 15</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo, (FBiH) previous work experience for international donors</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informant 16</td>
<td>NGO, Banja Luka (RS)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 17</td>
<td>NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH) focusing on establishing civil society networks</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
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<td>Informant 19</td>
<td>Peace activist, Bratunac (RS)</td>
<td>Small talk</td>
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<td>Informant 20</td>
<td>Peace activist, Srebrenica (RS)</td>
<td>Small talk</td>
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<td>Informant 21</td>
<td>Peace activist, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Small talk, participant observation</td>
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<td>Informant 22</td>
<td>Peace activist, Sarajevo (FBiH)</td>
<td>Small talk, participant observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informant 23</td>
<td>Peace activist, Prijedor (RS)</td>
<td>Small talk, participant observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informant 24</td>
<td>Peace activist, Prijedor (RS)</td>
<td>Small talk, participant observation</td>
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6 The numbers in relation to the informants do not correspond with the numbering of interviewees, participant observation and small talk used in the data presentation and analysis, due to confidentiality.
| Informant 25 | Peace activist, Mostar (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation |
| Informant 26 | Peace activist, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk |
| Informant 27 | Peace activist, Tuzla (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation |
| Informant 28 | Peace activist, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk (long-term) |
| Informant 29 | Youth worker, Srebrenica (RS) | Small talk |
| Informant 30 | Youth worker, Visoko (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation |
| Informant 31 | Youth worker, Gorazde (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation |
| Informant 32 | Youth worker, Srebrenica (RS) | Small talk |
| Informant 33 | NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation (long-term) |
| Informant 34 | NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation (long-term) |
| Informant 35 | NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation (long-term) |
| Informant 36 | NGO, Sarajevo (FBiH) | Small talk, participant observation, visual (long-term) |
| Informant 37 | NGO, Tuzla (FBiH) | Small talk |
| Informant 38 | NGO, Prijedor (RS) | Small talk |
| Informant 39 | NGO, Srebrenica (RS) | Small talk |
| Informant 40 | OSCE employee (background information on Bosnian civil society) | Small talk |
| Informant 41 | OSCE employee (background information on Bosnian civil society) | Small talk |

### 2.3 Ethnographic methods

Ethnographic methodology suggest that “we learn about people’s lives (or aspects of their lives) from their own perspectives and from within the context of their own lived experience” (O'reilly, 2005, p. 84). Therefore only asking questions (in the form of doing interviews) cannot provide enough information. Next to this, one should also learn from informants by observing them, participating in their lives and engage in small talk (O'reilly, 2005). For this research several methods were used: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, small talk, and a visual method. This multitude of methods leads to methodological triangulation.

#### 2.3.1 Participant observation

The main method within ethnographic methodology is participant observation (O'reilly, 2005). Participant observation refers to “the informal field methods which form the basis for most fieldwork, whether or not it is supplemented with other techniques. The aim of this method is to enter as deeply as possible into the social and cultural field one researches” (Eriksen, 2010, p. 28). O’reilly (2005) explains that the term participant observation is sometimes regarded to be problematic as it can be perceived as an oxymoron. However, she explains that:
to participate involves getting involved, joining in, being subjective, immersing yourself; to observe involves being objective, keeping your emotional and perhaps physical distance, being scientific, clear-eyed, unbiased, critical. This tension does not have to be resolved: it is what gives the participant observation its strength. (O’reilly, 2005, p. 102)

In practice the researcher often moves on a scale somewhere in between a full participant and full observant, dependent on the situation and research question. Data is often recorded by taking mental and actual notes, and “collecting other relevant data though interviews (or [small] talk) and the collection of whatever else might be relevant” (O’reilly, 2005, p. 84). The role of the participant observer is also of importance. Within this research the researcher chose to start with an overt role, to then settle into a semi-overt role, where informants know what the researcher is doing but do not always have it in the forefronts of their minds (O’reilly, 2005, p. 87).

Participant observation was conducted during a five-month internship at the Post-conflict Research Centre (P-CRC) in Sarajevo, an NGO that focuses on sustainable peace, social cohesion and reconciliation in BiH. It is their mission to “cultivate an environment for sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the greater Balkan region using creative multimedia projects that foster tolerance, moral courage, mutual understanding, and positive change” (P-CRC, 2015). The internship consisted of both office- and field work and formed a good basis for participant observation during the research period. The P-CRC offered an unique opportunity to learn about Bosnia’s conflict history, post-conflict present and peacebuilding future, while at the same time enabling the researcher to experience the limitations the organization, its founders and employees face on a daily basis. Besides experiencing these limitations in an office setting, the researcher was also able to work on several large projects that focused on creating more social cohesion in BiH. These projects took place in different places in the country, ranging from the big cities to smaller towns. This gave the researcher more insight in the different ranges of the level of social cohesion and the limitations the civil society actors encounter, while at the same time enabling access to new informants.

The opportunity to participate and observe in the daily lives of a group of passionate civil society actors created ample opportunities for studying the limitations they were experiencing. The researcher was able to observe and experience the limitations first-hand. And was able to ask questions as soon as the limitations are being experienced, and to fall back on these (shared) experiences in small talk, and interviews.

2.3.2 Small talk
Small talk was used intensively during the research period. Driessen and Jansen (2013) refer to the Oxford English Dictionary, stating it defines small talk as “light talk or conversation, chit-chat and gossip” and explain that it “belongs to systematic ‘hanging around’ which is the core of fieldwork”
(p. 249). It also forms an opportunistic style of interviewing, where interviews consisting of a few short questions can take place in relevant moments during participant observation (O'reilly, 2005). Small talk can provide helpful data, can help with establishing and maintaining a network of informants, and can help the researcher understand local customs, culture, and language. It can lead towards new ideas, concepts and insights that one did not think of in the first place, and it can help build trust between researcher and informant. The open work environment within the office, the small but very active community of civil society actors in Sarajevo and the multiple projects and events that were held throughout BiH provided many occasions for small talk. This method was used on a daily basis with colleagues in- and outside of the office, with youth workers and peace activists during projects and with civil society actors at home, in the cafés and restaurants of Sarajevo.

Several kinds of data were gathered by using this method. Topic-specific data was gathered by opportunistic interviewing, ranging from conversations surrounding one particular question to small-scale interviews or group discussions regarding experienced limitations. Next to this, there was ample opportunity to ask for small updates or pose questions and ask for clarifications about observations that were made by the researcher. Besides this, small talk was used to gather data about context-information, for example, Bosnia’s culture, civil society, nationalism, the political system etc. This method was also used for building and maintaining a network of informants. Small talk was always held with those who were aware of the research.

2.3.3 Semi-structured interviews
Within qualitative research, the researcher is less concerned with how many people are interviewed, and more focused on the quality of the interview itself (O'reilly, 2005, pp. 114-115). With this in mind, seventeen multi-hour semi-structured interviews were held with civil society actors. The interviewees were asked about the limitations they experienced in their work, the current status and importance of improvement of social cohesion and civil society peacebuilding in BiH, and the possible resolutions to the limitations they were experiencing. The first few interviews were used to broadly explore the possible limitations that were experienced by the interviewees. The limitations that were named were then slowly grouped into seven main limitations. These main limitations formed the topic list for the remaining interviews, while leaving enough space for the own input of the interviewees. Rapley (2004) explains the importance of this ‘openness’:

the point is to follow the interviewee’s talk, to follow up and to work with them and not strictly delimit the talk to your predetermined agenda. [...] you don’t have to ask the same question in the same way in each interaction. You often cover the same broad themes in different interviews – either through the interviewee or you raising it as a subject for talk.
This is a central rationale of qualitative interviewing – *that it enables you to gather contrasting and complementary talk on the same theme or issue.* (Rapley, 2004, p. 18)

To ensure this openness, the interviews were quite informal and the interviewees were free to choose their preferred place to meet for the interview. They chose to either hold the interviews in their offices (10 out of 17 interviews) or in public places such as café’s or restaurants (7 out of 17 interviews). It is of importance to be aware of how the immediate environment can affect the interview (Rapley, 2004). Within the offices it might be more difficult to talk about dynamics within the organisation, while in public spaces it might be more problematic to talk about topics such as corruption or competition between organizations. These possible limitations have been taken into account and have been, if needed, updated by use of small talk where questions could be posed in a different environment.

An important ethical issue that needed to be considered was confidentiality. All interviewees opted for the possibility to remain anonymous. It is of great importance to uphold this promise, due to the atmosphere of secrecy surrounding different projects, the large amount of gossip in the civil society sector (especially in Sarajevo) and the fear that other organisations, donors and the government will recognize them. Especially the topics of corruption and competition are sensitive. While most of the civil society actors were willing to openly discuss these limitations, they all asked for insurance their words could not be linked to them or their organisations. Therefore, the data gathered in the interviews is anonymised by assigning random numbers to the interviewees. These numbers do not correspond with the numbering on the list of informants.

2.3.4 Visual method
Next to the three main methods, a visual method was used with one of the informants. This resulted in three drawings which were thereafter used to talk in-depth about the limitations with the informant, and used as topics for small talk with several other informants. Edgar (2004) describes this type of visual method as *image work,* whereby informants’ drawings or other artistic representations become a way of communicating about their experiences. He explains that: “the imagework method is an active process in which the person ‘actively imagining’ is able to let go of the mind’s normal train of thoughts and images and goes with a sequence of imagery that arises spontaneously from the unconscious” (2004, p. 91). The method is descriptive, meaning that the images are not used for analysis by the researcher, but rather as a vehicle to learn about the experiences and thoughts of the informant. The creative use of images thus works especially well in combination with other methods such as interviews and small talk (O’reilly, 2005).
2.4 Coding and analysis

The iterative-inductive dimension of this research has guided the process of coding and analysis of the empirical data that was gathered. A coding procedure as developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) (based in grounded theory methodology) was used during this research. The process is consisting of three progressive steps: deconstruction (or open coding), construction (or axial coding) and confirmation (or selective coding), leading to a “sophisticated procedure which enables systematic and efficacious analysis. It generates a spiral reflexive process in which sampling (S), collection (C) and analysis (A) are repeated with a progressively narrower focus in each of the three phases” (Gobo, 2008, p. 227) (see figure 1).

The step of deconstruction takes place in the beginning of the research, when the researcher finds oneself in an exploratory phase and gathers data in a more unsystematic manner, paying attention to all that might be interesting and being ready to change focus (Gobo, 2008). Hereafter, the gathered data will be analyzed via one of three main strategies: the use of check lists or conceptual grid, the use of a framework, or classification (ibid). In this research the strategy of classification was chosen in order to classify the multiple limitations.

Hereafter, in the phase of construction, the concepts that were developed in the first phase are reassembled into new patterns, in order to try and construct a first coherent framework (Gobo, 2008). It was in this phase that a framework of seven main limitations was constructed.

In the third and last phase, the analysis “integrates the data at a level of generality higher than in the previous two phases. The [researcher] here constructs a ‘story’, a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990 in Gobo, 235). In this phase the main limitations were described and connected to the holistic framework that Edwards’ (2004) proposes. In order to analyse the seven main limitations in connection to this holistic framework, a visualisation of the linkages within the ‘civil society puzzle’ was made by the researcher. By the use of this theoretical framework, theory (focused on insights from the three main theoretical debates regarding civil society) was integrated with the empirical data. This integration was of great importance, as:

![Figure 1: three phases of coding (Gobo, 2008, p. 227)](image-url)
The relationship between theory and empirical material, or data, is fundamental in all empirical science [...]. No science can rely on theory alone [...] just as it cannot rely on pure facts, it would be unable to tell us anything interesting. (Eriksen, 2010, p. 31)
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter a theoretical framework will be constructed in order to support the following research question:

*What are the limitations that are experienced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion, and what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?*

To answer this question, a theoretical basis is needed in order to understand the different concepts within the research question. Firstly, one needs to understand what civil society is and who (local) civil society actors are. Within the current debates surrounding civil society there is no consensus about a clear definition of the concept (Fischer, 2006a; Spurk, 2010), which in turn carries over into practices of civil society building. However, while civil society is a broad and contested concept, a working definition will be given in order to study the limitations that are faced by the local civil society actors.

Civil societies have many tasks, one of which can be peacebuilding. A closer look into the concept of peacebuilding will follow, especially focused on sustainable peacebuilding. In order to analyze civil society engaged in peacebuilding activities, Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) designed a functional framework in which they distinguish seven functions that civil society can have when it comes to peacebuilding practices. These seven functions will be explained briefly. One of these functions is the strengthening of social cohesion, which is the function the local civil society actors who are important to this research engage in. The function of social cohesion will be explained. However, besides the positive influence civil societies can have on peacebuilding processes there have been many critiques on civil society peacebuilding. First, a few general critiques about civil society engaged in peacebuilding will be explored. Thereafter, the focus will shift to critiques about civil society peacebuilding specifically in BiH.

After this, I will argue that a holistic theoretical approach can be used in order to study the limitations that the civil society actors experience. Such a framework, in this case the one proposed by Michael Edwards (2004) will be explained. This integrated theoretical framework will eventually be used to analyze the limitations the civil society actors experience in BiH.

3.1 Civil society

The concept of civil society has become increasingly important, both in theory and in practice (Spurk, 2010; Fischer, 2006a). However, civil society remains a complex and contested concept, one with many different definitions and understandings (ibid). It is used to “justify radically different ideological agendas, supported by deeply ambiguous evidence, and suffused with many questionable
assumptions” (Edwards, 2004, p. VI). Civil society can thus mean different things to different people (Spurk, 2010, p. 3).

The current interpretation of the concept of civil society is largely based on the ideas of Alexis de Tocqueville, Antonio Gramsci and Jurgen Habermas. De Tocqueville (1805-1859) (currently represented by a large group of neo-Tocquevillians within the civil society debate) placed great significance on the role of independent associations as civil society. He believed (voluntary) associations to be schools of democracy. It was in these associations that democratic thinking, attitudes and behaviour and civic virtues like tolerance, acceptance, honesty and trust could be learned and integrated into the characters of civic individuals (Spurk, 2010). The associations could then “defend individual rights against potentially authoritarian regimes and tyrannical majorities within society” (Spurk, 2010, p. 5) and could “contribute to trust and confidence, or as Putnam\(^7\) later phrased it, social capital” (Spurk, 2010, p. 5).

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) understood civil society to be part of the superstructure as an addition to the state. However, civil society would have a different function: while the state served as the arena of force and coercion for capitalist domination, civil society represented the space where values and meanings were established, debated and contested, thereby producing non-coercive consent for the system (Spurk, 2010, p. 5). Civil society would be comprised of a multitude of organizations and ideologies and could offer initiatives for change.

Jürgen Habermas focused on the roles that civil society could play in the public sphere. He argues (in line of his theory of communicative action) that “legitimacy and consensus on political decisions are provided through open communication, that is, by the unbiased debate of social actors” (Spurk, 2010, p. 6). However, many believe this theory to be highly normative and too idealistic. Spurk (2010) refers to Flyvbjerg (1998) who believes that a more realistic approach is needed and one should consider (based on Foucault’s understanding of power in societies) that societal contexts are filled with power imbalances in the relations between social actors. Only then could one obtain a realistic picture of civil society’s limited potential (Spurk, 2010, p. 6).

It can be useful to start with narrowing down the complexities and contestations into a functional definition that can be used in this thesis. A broad starting point that is often used to better one’s understanding of civil society is an interpretation of the concept by Michael Walzer (1998): “Civil society is the sphere of uncoerced human association between the individual and the state in which people undertake collective action for normative and substantive purposes, relatively independent of government and the market” (In Edwards, 2011, p. 4). There are however lively

\(^7\) Putnam (2000, p. 19-26)
debates about “what level of coercion actually exist in practice, how independent civil society can be from these other spheres of action, which norms are reproduced and represented, and what purposes are pursued to what effect” (Edwards, 2011, p. 4).

One of the main disagreements within the debate about civil society is about the position that civil society has in a society. According to Walzer’s definition, civil society is relatively independent from the government and the market. But in reality, the boundaries are more ‘blurred and fuzzy’ (Fischer, 2006a; Spurk, 2010; Edwards, 2004). It would be better to regard civil society as an intermediate sphere (see figure 2). Fischer (2006a) refers to Merkel and Lauth (1998), who distinguish:

A political sphere (state administration, political parties and parliaments), economic sphere (business and companies) and private sphere, defining civil society as the space where all these overlap. They suggest that civil society is ‘the space in between’ social actors, meaning that actors can be related to specific sectors, but occasionally also act in ‘civil society’. (in Fischer, 2006a, p. 4)

Therefore, the definition of the concept of civil society that will be used in this thesis is as follows:

Civil society is a sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private and economic spheres, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organisations – competing with each other and oriented to specific interests – that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organised, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with them. (Spurk, 2010, pp. 8-9)

3.2 Civil society and peacebuilding

Civil society has become increasingly important in peacebuilding since the mid-1990s onward (Pouligny, 2005; Paffenholtz, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2009). Similarly to the concept of civil society, so is peacebuilding a contested term, both in theoretical and practical spheres. The conceptual origins of the term of peacebuilding lie in the concepts of positive peace and negative peace as introduced by Johan Galtung in 1975 (Paffenholtz, 2010). Galtung explains that:

Whereas negative peace is defined as the absence of direct and organised violence between human groups or nations, the notion of positive peace is part of longer term conception according to which establishing a sustainable peace is made possible through cooperation
between these groups or nations and the eradication of the root causes of the conflict. (Galtung 1975, p. 29 in Chetail 2009, p. 1)

A positive peace would go beyond “passive peaceful coexistence” and would be able to “bring forth positively synergistic fruits of the harmony” (Galtung, 1996, p. 61).

Peacebuilding regained more attention in 1992, when a report by UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace, was published. This report presented a narrowed definition of peacebuilding (often called Post-conflict peacebuilding), which focused more on the stabilization of negative peace. It defined peacebuilding as: “preventing the recurrence of violence immediately after armed conflicts and helping a country set parameters for beginning the journey to positive peace” (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 45). With this definition, attention shifted towards activities such as disarmament, repatriating refugees, training of security forces, monitoring elections and advancing the protection of human rights (ibid.). After disappointing experiences of peace interventions in the Former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda, the concept of peacebuilding was re-conceptualised to a wider understanding that can be seen in the 1995 supplements to An Agenda for Peace. Ever since, the debates on peacebuilding have focused on two understandings of the concept: liberal peacebuilding and sustainable peacebuilding (Paffenholz, 2010).

The Western concept of liberal peace is currently dominating the international peacebuilding sector (Paffenholz, 2010). Liberal peacebuilding mainly focuses on establishing democratic states and liberal market-economies in the wake of armed conflicts. In this line of thought, peacebuilding is often equated with state-building, and therefore “peacebuilding ends when a post-conflict country is perceived by the international community to guarantee minimum security to its people, as well as its ability to establish working democratic structures” (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 47).

Sustainable peacebuilding can be seen as a somewhat broader concept, founded by John Paul Lederach (1997). According to Lederach, sustainable peacebuilding should be understood as:

A comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains, the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct. (Lederach 1997, p. 20)

It is of great importance to acknowledge that the concepts of peace and peacebuilding are embedded in local societies, which influences their understandings of peace and peacebuilding (Paffenholz, 2010). These understandings can thus vary considerably, which can be seen in approaches, activities and time frames that are used by civil society actors (ibid).
3.3 The functions of civil society in peacebuilding

The contested nature of the definitions of civil society and peacebuilding and the influence of local contexts on peacebuilding realities, make it difficult to find general insights about the effectiveness of civil society in peacebuilding. In order to find these insights, Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) developed a comprehensive analytical framework to analyze and assess the contributions that civil society can make to peacebuilding missions. They have identified seven different functions that civil society engaged in peacebuilding can have: protection, monitoring, advocacy, in-group socialization, social cohesion, intermediation/facilitation and service delivery.

1. **Protection**: The protection of citizens is regarded to be a core function within civil society and a pre-condition for fulfilling other functions. Civilian lives, freedom and property need to be protected from attacks and despotism by the state and other authorities (p. 67).

2. **Monitoring**: Local and international organisations/groups can monitor the conflict situation, and with this information are able to advise those that are making decisions regarding peacebuilding. This function can be regarded as a precondition for the functions of protection and advocacy. Activities are for example: reporting of human rights abuses and the establishment for early warning systems (p.68).

3. **Advocacy**: is an important function within the democracy discourse and is considered to be one of the core functions of peacebuilding. Activities such as agenda-setting by lobbying, creating public pressure, awareness workshops, public campaigns etc. are important in this function (p. 68-70).

4. **In-group socialization**: is focused on (re)building relationships within groups. This function is especially important to support democratic behaviour of citizens. The main objective is develop incentives for conflict resolution and reconciliation, in order to promote attitude changes within society However, this function is only focused on socialization within groups (bonding social capital), and not between or among former adversarial groups (bridging social capital) (p. 70-71).

5. **Social cohesion**: focuses on socialization between former adversaries, and is seen as an essential function to ensure the (re)building of communities. Social capital is often broken down during conflicts, and a reconstruction of inter-group connections is important for groups to live together peacefully (p.71-73).

6. **Intermediation/facilitation**: civil society functions here as the mediator between citizens and the state, and among or between groups. Important activities are (p. 73-74).
7. **Service delivery:** refers to activities such as the provision of aid and services to communities (p. 74).

The above named functions range in importance according to four different phases of conflict: (1) war, (2) armed conflict, (3) window of opportunity for peace negotiations, and (4) after large-scale violence has subsided. During wars and armed conflict: protection, monitoring, advocacy and facilitation are important functions for civil society. When violence is of a lower level, functions such as socialization and social cohesion become more important. Advocacy is regarded as considerably relevant during windows of opportunity for peace negotiations. After large-scale violence has come to an end, the functions of social cohesion and socialization become increasingly significant, as people try to rebuild social capital that is largely destroyed during times of violent conflict (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010). As BiH finds itself now in the time-period after the war, and the lack of social cohesion is greatly influencing the road to a sustainable peace (Clark, 2009), the function of social cohesion is increasingly becoming of more importance.

### 3.4 The function of social cohesion

Social cohesion is the most often performed civil society peacebuilding function, especially in group-identity conflicts that gain international attention (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 398). This function is “particularly important for cultivating and sustaining peaceful communities” (Hill, 2011, p. 156). Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) refer to Gramsci, de Tocqueville, and Putnam as being the main influences in the debate surrounding social cohesion and peacebuilding. The main goal of this function is to support groups in learning how to live together (again) in peaceful coexistence and harmony. Social capital is often destroyed during violent conflict, especially conflicts that played out along ethnic lines. Putnam (2002), therefore, claims that it is “crucial to build bridging ties across adversarial groups, not just bonding ties within specific groups” (in Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010, 72).

However, Paffenholz (2010, p. 394) warns for oversimplification of which groups should be ‘bridged’. Cleavages can exist along different lines (for example along class, caste, ethnicity, religion, region, political preferences etc). Oftentimes in civil society peacebuilding that focuses on the creation of greater social cohesion, the focus lies on one or several of these cleavages. This is also the case in BiH, where the main focus lies on the divisions between Bošniaks, Serbs and Croats, while minorities such as the Roma- and Jewish communities are often forgotten. There is also a strong focus on ethnic cleavages, while, for example, the cleavage between rich and poor in BiH also forms great problems according to Bosnian citizens (UNDP, 2009).

Paffenholz and Spurk (2010) distinguish between three types of activities that can be of importance within the function of social cohesion. Activities can be relationship-oriented or
outcome-oriented. Relationship-oriented activities are used to bring together members (or representatives) of (former) adversarial groups in order to foster peaceful relationships. Workshops, dialogues and exchange visits are popular activities, and are in this case used to develop long-term attitude changes towards the ‘other’. Outcome-oriented activities can focus either specifically on peace or non-peace outcomes. Outcome-oriented activities that focus on peace take the goal of relationship-oriented activities a step further. They are an attempt to bring together (former) adversaries in order to a larger outcome, such as initiatives for peacebuilding. Popular activities are, for example, conflict resolution workshops. Outcome-oriented activities that do not specifically focus on peace are cohesion activities that work towards, for example, business or development work: “here social cohesion is achieved by bringing together the conflicting groups for some objective other than peace [...] This way, new trust and social capital are built up almost unconsciously” (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010, p. 72).

Currently, the function of social cohesion is essential within Bosnia’s peacebuilding context. Blagojevic (2007) claims that “positive and constructive interaction among different groups reduces ethnic animosities, while ensuring equal access to rights and resources further transforms and reconciles inter-group relationships” (p. 556). According to Lederach (1997) an important goal of civil society within this function is to seek innovative ways to create a time and place to address the past, and focus on a shared future as a means of dealing with the present.

In post-conflict societies there can be many strong socialization institutions (such as the government, schools, families, unions and religious organisations) that have influence over the bonds between different groups. Paffenhofl (2010) explains that these institutions can have negative effects on reaching greater social cohesion, especially if they “preach hatred and formulate enemy images over a long period (usually generations)” (p. 396). Civil society, here, could provide a counter voice. It is therefore of great importance to implement a policy of reconstruction of social ties in close cooperation with civil society, to encourage a culture of peace (Chetail, 2009).

3.5 The limitations of civil society in peacebuilding

3.5.1 Big critiques
Despite the popularity of civil society building in peacebuilding missions, there are several big critiques to be found in the literature surrounding civil society peacebuilding: (1) The definitions of civil society (and also of peacebuilding) that are used in practice are frequently leading to problems. Definitions are often rigid and narrow and differences of meanings in non-Western contexts are not always taken into account. (2) Peacebuilding missions often neglect the fact that civil societies have a range of different (sometimes traditional) actors, which leads to an unbalanced favour for Western-
style NGOs. (3) The ways in which international donors are supporting civil societies are often counter-effective. (4) The ideas of ‘local peacebuilding’ are popular, but are not often visible in practice. (5) This often leads to discrepancies between what outside peacebuilders and local communities want. (6) Civil society is often romanticized and its abilities overestimated. (7) There are questions and disagreements surrounding the presence of ‘uncivil society actors’ within civil societies.

The ways in which international donors are supporting civil societies are often counter-effective. The ideas of ‘local peacebuilding’ are popular, but are not often visible in practice. This often leads to discrepancies between what outside peacebuilders and local communities want. Civil society is often romanticized and its abilities overestimated. There are questions and disagreements surrounding the presence of ‘uncivil society actors’ within civil societies.

The definitions of civil society and peacebuilding that are used in practice are often rigid and narrow, leading to discrepancies between theoretical ideals and practical realities. Often, definitions that are used in peacebuilding policies make it seem as if the boundaries between civil society, the state, the market and the private sphere are clear-cut (Pouligny, 2005). However, as discussed before, these boundaries are blurry and contested. Within peacebuilding missions, this especially leads to problems when one looks at the relations between civil society and the state:

The civil society concept, as it is commonly used, conveys the idea of a clear dichotomy between what is supposed to be and what is not supposed to be political. [And] it tends to be considered in an even more rigid way in places where civil society is presented as an alternative to a dysfunctional or even ‘failed’ state (Pouligny, 2005, p. 500). This often leads to confusion about who should be regarded as civil society actors. The tendency to strictly define ‘who is in (civil society) and who is out’ leads to the exclusion of a range of organisations that do in fact fulfil civil society functions, but do so in the ‘fuzzy’ areas of the different spheres (Pouligny, 2005). This problem is exacerbated when outside interveners cling to Western ideals about civil society while working in non-Western contexts. The great diversity of which civil societies are built is often lost on outsiders who try to find the same type of associational life one can find in Western contexts. Funding and support for civil society has primarily been focused on urban elite-based NGOs (Paffenholz, 2013). This focus leads to traditional organisations and actors being overlooked and creates an unbalanced favour for the support of Western-style NGOs. This is especially harmful when actors that are deeply rooted and trusted within local societies are overlooked (Verkoren & van Leeuwen, 2013, p. 164). It also leads to trends of professionalization within civil societies, as local groups adapt to the requirements of donors and become organized as NGOs (ibid).

Not only the focus on who they want to support, but also the ways in which international donors are supporting civil societies are often counter-effective: “many NGOs remain limited by ad hoc or narrowly directed funding sources and by the overall policy environment in which they operate. As a result, their ability to promote and implement truly autonomous policies is often compromised” (Evans-Kent & Bleiker, 2003, p. 104). Civil societies are often donor-driven and
unsustainable, where local partners function as extended hands of the donor’s agenda’s. Many studies come to the conclusion that “donor-driven NGO civil society initiatives have limited the capacity to create domestic social capital and ownership for the peace process” (Paffenholz, 2010, p. 59-60).

While the ideas of ‘local peacebuilding’ and the importance of local actors in peacebuilding processes are generally accepted as the way forward, they are often not visible in practice (Paffenholz, 2013). According to Paffenholz this is due to the understandings of the ‘local’ by the ‘international’. As Verkoren and van Leeuwen (2013) explain:

What we see in the realm of civil society support for peacebuilding is that although there is increasing recognition that Western civil society discourses do not fit well with local circumstances in many places, intervening actors nonetheless have largely been unable to let go of these discourses and their accompanying intervention models. (p. 160)

Therefore, in practice, there are often discrepancies about ideas/policies between the international community and local actors. This is because many policies regarding civil society building are still rooted in Western discourses, which results in frictions on the ground (Verkoren & van Leeuwen, 2013).

The propensity of post-conflict peacebuilding missions to focus on economic and physical infra-structures and the strengthening of formal institutional processes can also cause strife between international ideals and local needs:

[Outside interveners] have tended to forget that wars destroy not only buildings and bodies but also trust, hope, identity, family and social ties. In other words, insufficient attention has been paid to the radical transformations in political cultures and codes of conduct of the individuals and communities who have experienced mass violence, and the way these basic values and beliefs affect the way a state is conceived and governed. (Pouligny, 2005, p. 496)

From this point of view, the strengthening of civil society is of great importance. However, when civil society is used within a peacebuilding strategy, it is often romanticized (Kappler & Richmond, 2011) and its abilities overestimated:

Civil society is often understood as a solution to social, economic, and political problems […] But there is a risk that this view overestimates the scope of social actors and neglects the complexity of needs in war-to-peace transition, especially in situations where different processes of transformation overlap. (Fischer, 2006a, p. 14)

It is necessary to keep in mind that post-war societies are often burdened with multiple processes of transformation (for example, transformations into democratic political systems and capitalistic market-economies). Next to the overestimation of the abilities of civil society, the idea that civil societies are always in search for norms such as peace, trust, tolerance, and democracy can lead to
disappointments. A strong civil society is one that is diverse, not only in its associations but also in its ideas (Edwards, 2004). All ideas should be represented in order to form a honest mirror of society. This means that so-called un civil society organizations are also present in civil society. Similarly to the concept of civil society, so is uncivil society ill defined (Bob, 2011). Within peacebuilding contexts, one can generally understand them as associations working against- or hindering peacebuilding goals. These groups are often overlooked within research as legitimate civil society actors (Spurk, 2010).

3.5.2 The Bosnian case
The building and strengthening of civil society is a core element of the Bosnian peacebuilding mission (Fischer, 2006a). A well-developed civil society is regarded to be of great support to the building of a (more) democratic state, weakening the grip of nationalist politicians, stimulating the development of the economy and entrenching the rule of law in BiH (Fagan, 2005). International institutions are providing financial and technical support to a growing civil society sector based on NGOs, in order to challenge the [nationalist] segmentation that divides the country (Chandler, 2004, p. 225). Yet, despite the confidence that is placed on the capabilities of Bosnia’s civil society and the major investment of resources from the international community, the results have been unsatisfactory (Belloni, 2001; Belloni & Hemmer, 2010).

Many of the critiques that were discussed above also present themselves in the case of BiH: (1) The definitions of civil society and peacebuilding used by the international community do not always match Bosnian ideas. (2) This results in tensions between the international community and local civil society actors (and the Bosnian citizens). (3) The international community has overconfidence in what civil society can accomplish in regards to peacebuilding. (4) The pre-war context of communism/socialism has not been taken into account, as BiH is not only going through a war-to-peace transformation, but also economic, political, and cultural changes. (5) Therefore, many traditional civil society structures are largely ignored while the international community has focused on creating a multitude of Western-style NGOs. (6) The large influence of the international community has formed a paradox: Bosnia is a semi-protectorate and while this is an important part of the peacebuilding mission, it is at the same time disempowering civil society. (7) The same issue applies to the Dayton Peace Agreement which was needed to end the war, but is now regarded to be holding BiH back from reaching a sustainable peace. (8) The surge of donors that came to Bosnia after the war led to corruption in the sector. (9) Today, the Bosnian civil society is unsustainable, largely reliant on international funding, but these donor structures are often counter-effective.

The ideas the international community upholds about civil society and peacebuilding do not
always match Bosnian ideas. Belloni (2001) explains that the idealized conception the international community has of Bosnia’s civil society-building is a technical one. Therefore, their support is mostly focused on allocating resources and delivering services. They are misunderstanding the importance of overcoming nationalist fragmentation, lack a coherent long-term strategy, and have “a conception of civil society that is often at odds with Bosnian context and history [which] hinder[s] the transition to genuine reconciliation among the three ethnic groups” (Belloni, 2001, p. 163). This leads to tensions between the ideals that the international community upholds and the local realities in which the local civil society actors have to function (Kappler & Richmond, 2011).

Next to this, Evans-Kent and Bleiker (2003) explain, that many local peacebuilders and civil society actors resent the fact that they are dominated by the funding power of the international community. While at the same time, the international community perceives the local actors as lacking sufficient skills or competence. This leads to tensions between international donors and local civil society actors. The perceptions of the Bosnian citizens about the international community and its peacebuilding mission are also not regarded to be positive (Belloni, 2001), leading to low levels of participation (UNDP, 2009).

The civil society level was largely ignored in the DPA, but from 1998 onwards an increasing amount of funding was allocated by international organizations for projects undertaken by civil society actors “in the hope that the entrenched fronts at the political level could be broken open by encouraging development at the grassroots. In this way, the DPA’s top-down approach was supplemented, to some extent, with a bottom-up approach” (Fischer, 2006b, p. 455). But while this shift was welcomed as a “long-term international commitment to democratic transition in Bosnia, it could also be seen as the expression of a more disillusioned approach to democratisation” (Chandler, 2004, p. 240).

According to Fischer, the ambitious expectations of civil society that were held by the international community were not fulfilled. Many of the CSOs funded by the international community are still very distant from the ordinary people (Fischer, 2006a; Chandler, 2004). And while civil society has achieved, for example, important steps towards a stronger culture of dialogue (by facilitating public debate about facing the past and responsibilities for war crimes), civil society actors can simply not:

compensate for the deficits and distortions which mark the state-building process and economy in post-war Bosnia. [...] As long as nationalists in all parts of Bosnia are supported by political alliances from abroad – the government of Serbia, Montenegro or even Russia for example - Bosnian policy will not change. Positive developments of civil society will not be able to counteract these trends. (Fischer, 2006b, p. 458)
Bosnia’s pre-war context is often forgotten in its civil society peacebuilding mission. The situation is often perceived as if 1995 was year zero (Pouligny, 2005). The transition to a democratic political system and capitalistic market system certainly have their influence on the peacebuilding process (Oberschall, 2007). This is also true for the focus on civil society building within Bosnia’s peacebuilding mission. The legacy of the pre-war associational life has been overlooked by most international actors. While a civil society as we can see today in BiH did not previously exist, there were forms of associational life before the war that have their influence on the creation and evolution of the civil society sphere. BiH has a strong history of associational membership, voting and community activity and the level of participation in associational life was high (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). However, the motivation for this participation cannot be regarded as ‘voluntary’ or ‘uncoerced’ (UNDP, 2009), as it was more top-down inspired (by the government) instead of being bottom-up initiatives (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010): “Some of these forms of civic action were not necessarily the kind of collective actions in which citizens freely and voluntarily associated in order to express shared interests, ideals and objectives” (UNDP, 2009, p. 61). The period of war itself was too violent for civil society to develop and to play an important role, but there were some examples of associational organizations to be found. The period between the cease-fire and peace agreement was too short for the creation of a civil society that could be of assistance (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 129). The rise of Bosnia’s civil society, however, catapulted after the peace agreement was signed.

During the rise of Bosnia’s civil society, traditional actors were often overlooked. Fischer (2006b) explains:

The international actors’ mistake was to assume that by promoting the NGO sector in general, a strong and powerful civil society would emerge. As a consequence, it has largely neglected key civil society actors such as the media, trade unions, faith communities, women’s groups and youth organisations and the interests and needs, and has disregarded for citizens’ participation in the political and social process. (p. 456)

Fagan (2005) notes that the development of NGOs is central to the Bosnian peacebuilding mission of the international community. They are trying to balance out the top-down influence of the international community. But civil society support has mainly resulted in the development of multitude of peacebuilding NGOs.

Belloni and Hemmer (2010) point to the central paradox of post-war Bosnia: the international community created a semi-protectorate state that was simultaneously necessary to end the war but is also disempowering the road to a sustainable peace. This is especially hindering the legitimacy of civil society. They explain: “in the post-war period, the overbearing presence of the international community, although providing some space for civil society to develop, impeded the development of
a democratic relationship between civil society and politicians” (2010, p. 150) and that the “international intervention had harmful effects on the effectiveness, legitimacy, cooperation, and networking of the emergent civil society” (2010, p. 129). Chandler (2004) believes that an extension of autonomy and self-government could create better conditions for the growth of civil society (p. 225).

Civil society contributions have also been limited by the post-war constitutional structure that was formed through the Dayton Peace Agreement. According to Belloni (2001) the DPA does “not encourage local initiatives for peacebuilding and is ambiguous about the possibility of reconciliation among the three ethnic groups” (p. 164). The DPA has institutionalized the ethnic divisions within the political system, and according to Fagan (2005) it would therefore not be fair to measure civil society’s effectiveness purely on the account of the election victories of nationalist parties.

The abundance of funding that was made available for civil society in the first few years after the war, formed strong incentives for many Bosnians to start a civil society organisation in order to earn some money. This led to a mushrooming of NGOs in BiH, and at the same time to widespread corruption (Belloni, 2001). Stories about these practices of, for example, money laundering still influence the perceptions about civil society that the Bosnian citizens uphold.

The donor-structures in Bosnia’s peacebuilding mission are regarded to be unsustainable and sometimes even counter-effective. The donor’s agendas have not always been in agreement with the needs on the ground in BiH (Evans-Kent & Bleiker, 2003). The relationships between Bosnian civil society organisation and international donors are short-term, usually for the duration of one project. Evans-Kent and Bleiker (2003) explain:

In stark contrast to the long-term nature of the peacebuilding process the specific missions are often dictated by pragmatic and short-term imperatives. Since renewal of funding is contingent on meeting the requirements of donors, it is virtually impossible for NGOs to develop a vision that can be implemented in the long run [...] The clash between long-term needs and the short-term realities of the reconstruction process creates serious difficulties. (p. 109-110)

3.6 A better approach: Edward’s holistic theoretical framework

Within the current academic debate about civil society one can see three main schools of thought: those who see the importance in associational life (or forms of civil society), those who focus on the idea of the good society (norms of civil society), and those who see civil society as the public sphere (spaces of civil society) (Edwards, 2004; 2011). While the debate between these three schools of thought is ongoing, and most scholars focus solely on one of these strands to the exclusion of the other two, Michael Edwards (2004; 2011) takes the debate a step further. He claims there is no need to search for theoretical consensus on which of the schools is correct, but instead it is of great
importance to “embrace the fact that civil society does indeed mean different things to different people, plays different roles at different times and constitutes both problem and solution” (Edwards, 2004, p. VI).

Central to Edwards’ argument is the idea that the civil society debate should not be regarded as a zero-sum game. It is not necessary to prove one school of thought to be correct and subsequently prove the others to be wrong. The only way forward is to accept that each school of thought has important insights to offer, and that integrating these insights into a holistic theoretical framework can shed light on the complex interdependency that characterises civil society in reality (Edwards, 2004). Edwards’ holistic theoretical framework will be used to analyse the gathered empirical data within this research. In order to do so, it is of importance to understand the main ideas within these three schools of thought and the ‘puzzle’ that the integration of these ideas will form.

3.6.1 Civil society as associational life
The first school of thought can be seen as having a focus on analytical models of civil society (Edwards, 2004, p. VII). It focuses on the idea of civil society as a part of society or, in other words, on the forms of civil society. In this theoretical strand, civil society is understood to be one of three sectors (next to political institutions and the market sector) that comprise a society. One could say that this is the most common of the understandings of civil society in use today (Edwards, 2004, p. 20). The main idea within this school of thought, according to neo-Tocquevillian thinkers, is that “economic and political success [of a state] is directly related to the strength and health of associational life” (Edwards, 2004, p. 36). A strong and healthy associational life would then automatically lead to the norms of the good society. This neo-Tocquevillian argument finds its basis in the line of thought Robert Putnam proposes: associations breed social capital, and social capital breeds success (Edwards, 2004, p. 36). And while associational organisations can be very important, there is a danger in overestimating the ability of associational life. Civil society here, is usually seen as a ‘third sector’ or ‘non-profit sector’ and contains “all associations and networks between family and the state in which membership and activities are voluntary - formally registered NGOs of many different kinds, labour unions, churches and other religious groups, social movements, community and self-help groups” (Edwards, 2004, p. 20).

There are, however, strong disagreements within this school of thought. A point of contention is the question who should be regarded as part of associational life and who should not. Especially the boundaries between civil society and the state; and civil society and the market are contested. It is a popular theoretical assumption that the state, market and associational life are separate from each other, sometimes even hermetically sealed from one another, but in reality these boundaries are
blurred, fuzzy and fluid (Spurk, 2010; Edwards, 2004; Fischer, 2006a). This is especially the case when looking at civil society and the state, as they are very interdependent. Edwards also points to discussions within the debate about whether civil society is something universal, or whether there are cross-cultural differences between – and even within – civil societies. The question: *When associational life is different in different contexts, are then associations the correct unit of analysis to use?* is becoming increasingly important in the academic world (Edwards, 2004).

Civil society in practice tends to be much more complex than the theoretical ideals in this school of thought. Edwards (2004) refers to two shortcomings within this debate. First, there is a tendency within this school of thought to not only see civil society as separate from market and state, but also to regard it as one entity. Neo-Tocquevillian thinkers even tend to focus solely on one part of associational life: the non-profit sector (or NGOs). It would be better, according to Edwards’ line of thought, to view associational life as an ‘ecosystem’:

> [Look] at the different components of civil society and how they interact both with each other and with public and private institutions, like a complex and fragile ecosystem, civil society gains strength when grassroots groups, non-profit intermediaries and membership associations are linked together in ways that promote collective goals, cross-society coalitions, mutual accountability and shared reflection. (2004, p. 35)

In reality, these ecosystems are “replete with gaps, weaknesses and donor-led conformity” (Edwards, 2004, p. 32). Neo-Tocquevillian tendencies among donors lead to a focus on professionalization of the non-profit sector, which one can clearly observe in the trend of the substantial growth of formally registered NGOs since 1989 (Paffenholz, 2013; Edwards, 2004). According to Edwards, ecosystems thrive on pluralism. The current shift of focus towards the formation of NGOs while traditional ways of association are left behind, leads to an ‘uneven ecosystem’, therefore making civil society weaker. Much like in a biological ecosystem, if parts are removed, weakened or artificially strengthened, the system will break down (Edwards, 2004). Overrepresentation of certain types of associations “on the basis of preconceived notions of what civil society should look like” (Edwards, 2004, p. 35) harms this pluralism. The second critique focuses on the main idea in this debate: that a strong associational life would automatically lead to a strong civil society. However, in reality these linkages are not as clear-cut and are dependent on the norms of society, or in other words what one understands the ‘good society’ to be (Edwards, 2011).

### 3.6.2 Civil society as the good society

The norms of civil society are the focus of the second school of thought. Within this debate, civil society can be seen as the institutionalization of ‘civility’, as a kind of society in which “all institutions operate in ways that reinforce positive social norms” (Edwards, 2004, p. 39). This does
However, not mean that there are no contestations within this school of thought. Edwards explains that in reality the connections between: “a strong civil society (measured by a healthy associational ecosystem) and a society that is strong and civil (defined as one considered ‘good’ by the majority of its citizens) are complex and contingent” (Edwards 2004, p. 53). This means that having a strong associational system, does not necessarily lead to having a *good society*, which is dependent on the norms the civil society actors have.

It is also of importance to keep in mind that the exact definition of what a *good society* might be, differs between - and within - societies. Norms of tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, trust and cooperation can usually be considered as important, but one should realize that: “voluntary associations are arenas for personal ambition and power as well as for sacrifice and service” (Edwards, 2004, p. 44). This can, for example, be seen in presence of civil society organisations that can act as spoilers, the so-called *uncivil society* actors. The norms and values that associational organisations have can differ greatly.

Amongst neo-Tocquevillian thinkers the idea that a society is civil when it contains high levels of trust and cooperation (or social capital), is popular. However, Edwards explains that in reality:

\[
\text{the correlation between associational life and the generation of generalized trust and cooperation is often weaker than supposed [and] to say that civil society requires trust and mutuality is true, but associational life doesn’t generate these things by itself, especially in deeply fractured societies. (2004, p. 48)}
\]

There are great normative differences to be found between associations, mainly due to the fact that strong civil societies should have a high diversity.

It is also of great importance to realize that governments, firms and families, while not being part of the associational sector, do have much influence on whether a society is *good*. They have a large influence on both social norms and the political settlements that translate these norms into public policy (Edwards, 2004; Paffenholz, 2010). According to the arguments of Gramsci, the family sphere is especially important because it is here that values, norms and dispositions of individuals are shaped (Ewards, 2004, p. 49). Next to this, the government has a great influence on many pre-conditions that associational life has to operate in. Of influence are, for example, equal opportunities for everyone, levels of discrimination (whether this is, for example, on gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation etc.) basic incomes, security, and the availability of food/clean drinking water etc.

Thus, not only within associational life there might be differences about what a good society should entail, the influence of the other spheres (political, market and family) are of great importance. The *good society* requires “coordinated action between different institutions all pulling
in the same direction” (Edwards 2004, 53). The main question that remains now is: “how do societies decide in which direction to go, and whether it is the right one as conditions and circumstances continue to change over time?” (ibid). In order for associational life (amongst oneself and with the other spheres) to come to a consensus about this question, places of deliberation are needed: the so-called public spheres.

3.6.3 Civil society as the public sphere

The public sphere is of great importance to the tradition of civil society thinking that focuses on the spaces in which citizens can engage with each other and with the state and market institutions. The public sphere is seen as an arena for discussion and collaboration between associational and institutional life. It forms a “non-legislative, extra-judicial, public space in which societal differences, social problems, public policy, government action and matters of community and cultural identity are developed and debated” (Edwards, 2004, p. 55). Societies possess multiple public spheres and their ‘success’ is greatly dependent on the health of the democracy in which they function, since:

If only certain truths are represented, if alternative viewpoints are silenced by exclusion or suppression, and if one set of voices is heard more loudly than those of others, then the public interest suffers [because] only broad-based debate can define the public interest, not dictats by government. (Edwards, 2004, p. 55-56)

These ideas stem from Jürgen Habermas who theorized about “a sphere where citizens could talk about common issues in a non-violent and free way” (Edwards 2004, p. 57). Edwards explains that in this line of thought “participants in the public conversations will come to a consensus about the great issues of the day through the force of rational argument. It is the best idea that will triumph, not the loudest voice” (ibid). However, in reality, inequalities in voice and access are rooted in all contemporary societies and certain orthodoxies dominate over others (Edwards, 2004, p. 69) which “legitimizes ideas through raw power instead of through the power of rational argument between different but equal actors” (ibid).

For public spheres to function, support from a healthy associational ecosystem and the pursuit of ideas about the good society (across civil society, the state, market and family sphere) are needed, but this will not be enough. Public spheres can only offer good spaces for deliberation when they are not completely captured by states or markets (Edwards, 2004, p. 58), if information is not restricted and communication channels are ‘open’, ‘belong to the public’ and are thus not all privatized (ibid, p. 61-65).
3.6.4 The ‘puzzle’ of civil society

Luckily we do not need to see this debate amongst the three different schools of thought as a zero-sum game, where insights of one model exclude those of another. Edwards suggests a holistic approach that integrates insights from all three models, so that we can:

focus on insights that lead to more effective action rather than worrying in the abstract about which theory is correct. [...] This is because civil society gains strength both as an idea and as a vehicle for social change when the weaknesses of one set of theories are balanced by the strengths and contributions of the others. (Edwards, 2004, p. 72)

The link between the creation of a larger civil society (in quantity) does not necessarily lead to a stronger civil society. Although some theorists posit a direct transmission belt between associational life, positive social norms and the achievement of specific goals, there is little empirical evidence to support these claims (Edwards, 2004, p. 73-74). Civil society is only one of the many forces at work within societies and while civil society can offer solutions, they can also cause problems.

As Edwards explains: “each set of theories, then, is related to the others, but not, unfortunately, in any universal or easily predictable way. The truth is that these connections are extremely complex” (2004, p. 73) and that in untangling these “complicated patterns of cause and effect, all the richness and diversity of civil society thinking must be brought to bear on the analysis” (Edwards, 2011, p. 12). However, in order to use these insights and complex connections to analyse the case of the local civil society actors in BiH, it is necessary to create somewhat of a usable framework for analysis. Therefore, a visualisation of the connections between the insights of the three schools of thought was created in order to offer some guidance during the analysis of the limitations experienced by the civil society actors (see figure 3).

The good society

Figure 3: proposed visualization of Edwards’ puzzle of the three schools of thought

1: Ideas about the good society can help associational life to focus on normative goals such as poverty reduction, peace and strengthening democracy. But, as said before, in order to reach these
goals action is required across multiple institutions. Therefore, one should not only look at associational life but at the whole of a society, including the political-, market-, and family-spheres and treat it like an ‘ecosystem’ where all the spheres have influence over one another. Besides this, one needs to realise that these ecosystems are situated in specific cultural and historical contexts that are of influence. The school of thought surrounding ideas of the good society does not explain much about how to achieve these goals. Ideas about associational life do offer some insights on this: structural definitions about civil society are useful in order to see what gaps and weaknesses in associational ecosystems should be fixed in order for them to be able to reach these ideas of the good society (Edwards, 2004).

2: Thinking about associational life and the ecosystems that societies form can thus be able to offer some explanations about how to achieve the goals of the good society. However, there are many disagreements and competing views within associational life about the ends and means that generate a good society. As Edwards explained, civil society is also an arenas for personal ambition. Things that could make associational life healthier are: overlapping memberships, cross-interests, coalitions, hybrid organisations, and the appropriate mix of bonding and bridging, grassroots groups and intermediaries (Edwards 2004, 87). Trust and cooperation are of great importance here. Besides this, equal opportunities for citizens to participate in civil society lead to debates about the good society in which all opinions can be represented. It is here that the government has to offer certain preconditions that make it possible for the level of participation to be high. For example, low or insecure wages take away time and energy for people to participate in civil society, but also social and political equality are of great importance:

If people feel exploited by the economic system in which they work, ignored by the political systems in which they vote, and excluded by social systems that discriminate by race, gender, or sexual orientation, it is not surprising that ‘exit’ often seems a better option than ‘voice’. (Edwards, 2004, p. 88-89)

3: In order to ‘voice’ their opinions about the ends and means of the good society, coordinated action across all the spheres is needed. But with all these disagreements with (and within) civil society, debate is needed in order to come to a consensus. It is in the public spheres that we can look for a just and democratic way to reconcile the differences and competing views:

public spheres enable citizens to sort through their differences and achieve at least a functioning sense of the interests they hold in common so that they can be translated into norms, rules and policies that govern one or another aspect of social and economic life. (Edwards, 2004, p.73)
A healthy associational ecosystem is fundamental for healthy public spheres, since voluntary organisations and the media are often used by citizens to carry on conversations (Edwards, 2004). Voluntary organisations could try to counteract the current trend of growing privatization of the public spheres (for example, media and the internet is becoming more privatized) (Edwards, 2011) in order to offer free and democratic places of (peaceful) debate.

According to this holistic approach what is needed is:

in theoretical terms, though drawn from a wide range of empirical experiences [...] the ideal would be a well articulated and inclusive ecosystem of locally supported voluntary associations, matched by a strong and democratically accountable state, with a multiplicity of public spheres that enable full and equal participation in setting the rules of every game. (Edwards, 2011, p. 489).

3.6.5 Why would this model be a good fit for studying the case of BiH?

A holistic approach which integrates insights from the three schools of thought within the civil society debate can shed some light on the complex relations in BiH. Not only civil society is of influence on the goal of reaching greater social cohesion and eventually a sustainable peace. From previous research it shows that both the political system and the international community have much influence on the development of civil society and social cohesion in BiH. An integrated approach, does not leave those influences out of ‘the puzzle’. One of the great complexities of this case is that BiH has a government that does not necessarily support civil society and its goals. Next to this, BiH is a semi-protectorate, and thus the influence of the international community also weighs heavily in the equation. The international community does not only have influence over the political system but is also of great significance for Bosnia’s civil society in the form of international funding. With this approach, ‘the ecosystem’ of BiH, with its different spheres and their inter-relations, can be studied.

Not only the influence of the other spheres on civil society require attention, a look into the differences of the ideas about the good society within civil society are of utmost importance. Civil society organizations can be ‘uncivil’ or focus more on private goals, for example, the practice of corruption within the sector. Also of great significance in this holistic framework is the focus on public spheres, something that has been studied in BiH, but not often in combination with questions regarding civil society and what the current public spheres in BiH can offer civil society in its mission.

Analyzing the different limitations that the civil society actors experience in their work according to this holistic framework, can possibly give insights on what steps the civil society actors can take to overcome the obstacles they are facing. Amongst the civil society actors there is an atmosphere of disempowerment. Many of the informants explained they did not know how the
experienced limitations could be resolved, or believe that the limitations are simply too large to overcome. They believe that “the whole society has to change” (Small talk, 24) or that “the political system has to be changed” (Small talk, 33) and feel like this will never happen or that these changes are out of their hands. As Edwards (2004) explains:

an integrated approach should enable the design of interventions that are more likely to be effective, since – rather than isolating particular parts of the puzzle and failing to see where the other pieces fit – all the relevant factors can be addressed collectively, and in some rational order. (Edwards 2004 92)
4. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina

In this chapter the context in which the civil society actors are functioning will be discussed. A short look into the pre-war period, the war itself, the Dayton Peace Agreement will follow. Thereafter, the current political and educational system will be explained and an overview of the assessment of the seven peacebuilding functions of Bosnia’s civil society will conclude this chapter.

4.1 Before the war

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was originally formed in the wake of World War I (in 1918). The republic was again re-formed in the wake of the Second World War, under leadership of Josip Broz Tito. The SFRY consisted of a federal structure with six constituent republics: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia (Oberschall, 2007; Whittaker, 1999). The SFRY was considered to have more freedom compared to the communist Soviet bloc, but was still a totalitarian state where all media were controlled by the political party, and only a-political communist associations were allowed to exist (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 130). BiH was made up of three ethnic majorities (43 percent Bošniak, 32 percent Serb, and 18 percent Croat) and had valued ancient traditions of harmony and inter-marriage among its people, and ethnic discrimination was deemed illegal (Whittaker, 1999, p. 96). The different groups were distinguished principally by religious heritage, yet many were secularized by communism and socioeconomic development (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 130).

Important power-shifts started to happen in 1980, when Tito died and communism weakened. In the late 1980s the Communist Party was losing its grip and an independent and politically vocal civil society began to develop (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 131). In November 1990, the first post-communist elections were held, and ethno-nationalist political parties representing the three ethnic majorities quickly rose to power (du Pont, 2002). This overshadowed the rise of a nascent liberal civil society (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). As frictions between the three main political parties were worsening, Slobodan Milošević (president of neighbouring Serbia) sought to dominate the SFRY, driving Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence in June of 1991. While a Serb-dominated federal army tried to intervene, focusing on the borders of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia (where a large Serb minority was situated), tensions between the Bosnian political parties were rising. In April of 1992, the Bošniak and Croat majorities in BiH too sought independence, however, the referendum was boycotted by Bosnian Serbs. Opportunistic nationalist politicians used their power and control

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8 The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) for Bosnian Muslims, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) for Bosnian Croats, and Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) for Bosnian Serbs (du Pont, 2002).
over the media to gather support via the politics of fear, and within days the most brutal civil war in Europe since the Second World War started (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 131).

4.2 The war
As the warring ethnic groups were intermingled, the war is considered to be particularly brutal. (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). 41 percent of those who died (or are still missing) were civilians, of which 66 percent Bośniaks, 26 percent Serbs, and 8 percent Croats. At least 170,000 people were recorded as injured (Clark, 2009). And thousands of men were taken to prison camps. Mass displacement of civilians (around half of the population) and the ethnic cleansing strategy of the Serb nationalists led to the creation of a purely Serb area, named Republika Srpska. Next to this, there was widespread rape of females, especially by Serb paramilitaries and soldiers, for whom this was part of the ethnic cleansing strategy (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 131). The war was fought by a mix of irregular and regular forces and can be described as a ‘symmetric nonconventional’ war, as the forces were fighting in “territories defined by clear frontlines and a political context shaped by state collapse (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005, p. 212)

4.3 The Dayton Peace Agreement and the political system
The Dayton Peace Agreement ended the violent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of 1995 and formed the beginning of an ambitious peacebuilding mission (Sebastián, 2012). The DPA divided BiH into two entities: Republika Srpska (49 percent of the territory) and the Bosnian-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (51 percent of the territory) (du Pont, 2002). The framework included equal representation, far-reaching autonomy and veto rights (Gromes, 2010). The post-Dayton political system reaffirms the identification with the groups that fought against each other in the war on a daily basis. This does influence the attempts of building interethnic ties between the groups, which are needed to build a sustainable peace in BiH (Stroschein, 2014).

The problematic legacy of the DPA has provided additional difficulties to the already difficult peacebuilding mission in BiH. Ethnic tensions and extreme nationalist discourses continue to drive Bosnian politics (Evans-Kent & Bleiker, 2003, p. 106). The complex structures that make up the current political system in BiH have created many difficulties for effective governance. Belloni and Hemmer (2010) explain that in order for all the posts to be filled, roughly 40 percent of GDP is spent in the public sector (p. 132-133). And that: “The key problem is that nationalistic parties continue to dominate elections, [while] the nationalist parties generally do not have well-developed programs for socioeconomic and democratic progress, because their focus is on holding power through the politics of fear (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p.133).
4.5 The Bosnian educational system

Within the DPA, no common strategy for education was established, which ultimately led to the political domination of educational policy. Hill (2001) explains that oftentimes political leaders see the educational system as a means of sustaining nationalistic ideologies and promoting politico-cultural identities. Currently, there “three parallel yet separate education systems with opposing policies guiding the administrations, teachers and students, which has led decentralized and fragmented school systems” (Hill, 2011, p. 160). Segregation is thus being institutionalized in the educational system and is of great influence on the level of social cohesion in BiH.

This fragmentation of the educational system manifests itself in “mono-ethnic classrooms, segregated schools, opposing pedagogies and an absence of a common curriculum” (Hill, 2011, p. 155). Perhaps the most obvious segregation is visible in the ‘two schools under one roof’ system, where students from two different ethnic backgrounds go to school in the same building but are separated by different classrooms or shifts, have different entrances and two sets of school boards, directors and teachers (Hill, 2011). There are currently over 50 of these schools in BiH and are primarily based in the FBiH (Dzidic, 2015). This leads to a lack of interaction amongst students, teachers and staff.

While the languages spoken by the three ethnic groups are considered to be similar, and were seen as dialects before the war, the languages are currently politicized as being different (Hill, 2011). Courses are taught in separate languages of instruction and “issues such as the teachers native language, potential mixing of languages, and improper syntax use have become controversial issues of contention” (Hill, 2011, p. 162). Each ethnic group has their own textbooks, where often members of the respective group are victimized or made heroes while ‘the other’ is demonized (Hill, 2011, p. 163). The curricula are also characterized by fragmentation and politicization. Courses such as history, geography and social studies are taught by different teachers, even in the ‘most unified schools’ (ibid., p. 163). Danesh (2008) and Stabback (2007) criticize that the curriculum in most schools does not encourage critical thinking, personalization or peace education.

4.7 Civil society assessment: the seven functions of Bosnia’s civil society

Belloni and Hemmer (2010) have assessed the performance of Bosnia’s civil society according to the functional model created by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010). Here, a short overview of that assessment will be provided as a background of the different functions that Bosnia's civil society has in its peacebuilding mission. Belloni and Hemmer (2010) found that most of Bosnia's civil society organisations do not focus on peacebuilding objectives. The ones that do, mostly focus on the functions of (psychosocial) service delivery, socialization and social cohesion. Civil society's
engagement in peacebuilding had a slow start since most of the functions were provided by the international community, but its engagement has steadily increased over time. Yet, civil society in BiH is still “weak and divided but is slowly rising to the political role that it must play if it is to make peace and democracy sustainable” (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 129).

1. Protection: during the war the violence was too intense for local CSOs to perform this function. After the war, the deployment of robust international military and police forces took away the need for civil society to focus on protecting Bosnian citizens (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). A multitude of IGOs (including NATO, OSCE, EU, UN agencies and the OHR) have been the main providers for the function of protection, especially for returning refugees and displaced persons (ibid.) Several CSOs have been involved in this function, mainly providing protection for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence (especially focused on women). This focus is, according to Belloni and Hemmer (2010), “a safer issue than openly protecting ethnic minorities” (p. 139). While the civil society sector is not really involved, the current evolving departure of the international community might give local civil society organizations more incentives to take over this function, as they are currently too comfortable in the international security blanket they enjoy (ibid.).

2. Monitoring: similar to the function of protection, the function of monitoring has primarily been performed by the international community. There are some individual human rights NGOs but they are regarded to be not very effective. The building of CSO-networks, which is deemed important for the function of monitoring and advocacy has failed in BiH. Belloni and Hemmer (2010) also explain that ”monitoring by civil society appears futile when political structures are unresponsive” (p. 142). The departure of the IC is of great importance to this function, as local civil society does not seem prepared to take over this function.

3. Advocacy: despite the strong prioritization of international donors on developing stronger public advocacy, "the overall extent and quality of advocacy by Bosnian civil society remain behind those of other states in the region"(Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 143). Those who do focus on this function are greatly dependent on funding, policy analysis and technical assistance from international actors. Belloni and Hemmer (2010) believe that Bosnia's civil society "caught between two massive impediments that have only slowly been improving: the grip of unresponsive politicians, especially nationalists, on political intuitions, and the distracted and disempowered mind-set of the citizens they would need to mobilize for stronger political influence" (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 142).
4. **In-group socialization:** before the war there was already a strong emphasis by ethnonationalists within civil society on ethnic identity and the discouragement of building bridging ties between different ethnic groups. After the war, the ethnic segregation only became stronger, and it is believed that currently most CSOs are ethnically homogeneous, especially outside of the larger cities. The largest CSOs are religious humanitarian organizations with strong in-group identities. While there are some exceptions, the majority of single-identity groups are trying to socialize their members to exclusionary, confrontational values and norms. This is especially true for, for example, veteran organisations. It is here that some uncivil society organisations can be spotted. Belloni and Hemmer name the example of a network of eleven hard-line NGOs stationed in Republika Srpska who are interested in RS secession and encourage Serbs to stay in RS.

5. **Social cohesion:** After the war ended, social cohesion efforts were spurred by support of the international community. Civil society has certainly had some positive influence on social cohesion. However, this has generally merely led to acceptance of coexistence (negative peace) while “intimate interethic relations and, more broadly, multiculturalism (as part of positive/sustainable peace)” has been largely rejected (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 146). Many of the social cohesion initiatives that have been implemented have been disguised as being recreational or educational, especially in the early post-war years, due to the fact that terms such as ‘reconciliation’ were not popular (ibid.).

6. **Intermediation:** After the DPA, it were mostly the international agencies that focused on mediating between estranged communities (especially in the first years after the war). In the later years local civil society organizations became more involved in this function, especially combining it with the function of social cohesion in providing intermediation for returning minorities. Several civil society organizations have focused on organizing public debates about ‘dealing with the past’ (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010).

7. **Service delivery:** the majority of Bosnia’s CSOs are involved in service delivery. Those who focus on peacebuilding are, for example, providing war trauma therapy or humanitarian relief. The focus here lies largely on women. The function of service delivery is often connected to the function of social cohesion, as educational and recreational activities often serve as vehicles for covert social cohesion aims (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 149).
5. Data presentation: Limitations experienced by civil society actors

In this chapter the first part of the research question will be answered:

What are the limitations experienced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion, and what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?

The Bosnian civil society actors who work towards social cohesion experience many limitations in their work. In this chapter the first part of the research question will be answered, as these limitations will be explained. The data has been categorized into seven limitations: 1, the political system; 2, donor structures; 3, corruption; 4, competition; 5, the segregated educational system; 6, public spaces; and 7, perceptions of Bosnian citizens. The chapter hereafter will focus on the analysis of these limitations with the holistic theoretical framework as proposed by Edwards (2004).

Limitation 1 - The influence of the political system

“All government is eternally an obstacle for any project here. We are still seen as enemies for many parts of the government. As enemies and as irrelevant [laughs] they are pretty much right about being irrelevant” - Interviewee 4

As civil society is regarded to be distinct from the state and political sphere, but interacts closely with - and is even oriented towards - it (Spurk, 2010, p. 8-9), it is no surprise that the civil society actors name the current political system as one of the largest limitations to their work. The political system forms both a structural limitation to their goal of reaching greater social cohesion in the Bosnian society, and forms more practical limitations that hinder them in their day to day work. These structural limitations are in accordance with previous research about the Bosnian civil society: the paradox of the semi-protectorate and the Dayton Peace Agreement are still of influence. The civil society actors also believe that nationalist politicians are using distractions, such as the Srebrenica resolution in order to divert attention away from problems regarding social cohesion and nationalism. And that their mission is irreconcilable with the mission of the politicians (which is focused on retaining political power by the use of nationalistic voting). Next to this, the civil society actors experience several other (more practical) limitations: They experience difficulty and obstruction in obtaining permission and permits for their projects. They also believe that Bosnia’s civil society is becoming more politicized, as they see that the influence of the Bosnian government over

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9 See chapter 3 (page 30-36) for explanations of these limitations based on the literature.
10 See box 1 On page 53
civil society is growing now that the international community is slowly leaving (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010).

The civil society actors name the current political system as the largest structural limitation to reaching a greater social cohesion in BiH. One of them explains: “It is 20 years after the war, and we have still not moved forward. This is largely due to the influence of the political system” (Interviewee 1). The political system in BiH is strongly ethnically divided and has a nationalistic focus. This leads, according to the civil society actors, to competitiveness between government structures and civil society (Interviewee 4; 7; 16). Many of the interviewees believe this is because the government feels threatened by certain civil society organisations and their goals of reaching a greater social cohesion and reconciliation:

They [the politicians] are the ones who make things really hard for us, they make and keep the divisions. It is not in the interest of the politicians to work towards reconciliation. They are playing a game. Sometimes they say nice things, they say they are willing to work together and that we should accept each other. But then, for example right before the elections, they start giving nationalistic speeches again. And they play on the fear that people still have that things will go bad again. And that works. People will vote for them. Every time again. (Interviewee 1)

It is believed by the interviewees that once a greater social cohesion is reached in BiH, the current politicians will lose their power. In order to maintain their power they will do anything to block civil society from reaching that level of social cohesion. After all, it is regarded that “the people who played important roles during the war are still the ones who are in power. They still have the same goals, but try to accomplish these goals in different social circumstances” (Interviewee 8). The interviewees believe the government is very suspicious of some of the organisations, especially the ‘the noisiest ones’ (Interviewee 2; 9; 11; 12), of which some of them consider themselves to be a part: “They see us as some kind of control to their work. Like watchdogs you know. And they don’t want us to have that kind of pressure. It’s easier for them not to have it” (Interviewee 16).

*(Deleted figure 5)*

**Figure 5:** Pictured are the three current presidents of BiH (from left to right): Dragan Čović (representing the Croat population), Mladen Ivanić (representing the Serb population), and Bakir Izetbegović (representing the Bošniak population). The block-tower represents the instability of BiH (Small talk 5). The representation of the work of the politicians is seen by several of the informants
as a game: “They are playing a game and power is the price” (small talk 13). One of the interviewees explains:

It is all related to a balance of powers that has maintained itself for 20 years, and it’s not just: ‘there is a corrupt government and they are trying to maintain the situation in order to profit from it with their families and all that’. [...] It is a very delicate balance and there are stakeholders in there who are not based in Bosnia. So it is not possible to blame up or down or left or right. It is more complex. (Interviewee 12)

The interviewees believe that the politicians are playing games and that they are using superficial problems to keep the attention away from the ‘real issues’ in BiH. An example that comes up often when talking about this limitation is the current attention in BiH for the Srebrenica resolution and 20th commemoration of the massacre (see box 1). They are convinced that the BiH government is using “the resolution as an opportunity for new divisions” and that it is “profitable for politicians, it leads the attention away from bigger problems” (Interviewee 8). The more practical issues that the civil society actors experience are mostly related to gaining access to the Bosnian citizens. The civil society actors experience the counteracting position of the government for example in the blocking of certain permissions and permits. They all have a multitude of examples where permits to use public spaces were blocked (for example for peaceful protests on city squares), permission to enter

Box 1: The Srebrenica resolution and commemoration

One topic that still occupies the minds of many Bosnians is the fall of Srebrenica and the subsequent massacre that took place in 1995. The killing of approximately 8000 Bošniak men near the end of the war is still a topic of great contention in the Bosnian society. The civil society actors believe that this is mainly due to the fact that nationalistic politicians use it as a means to maintain – and create more – hostility between the FBiH (read Bošniaks) and Republika Srpska (read Serbs).

The UK has recently proposed a UN resolution, requesting that the massacre in Srebrenica would henceforth officially be categorized as genocide. The process leading up to the vote, and the eventual veto of Russia against the resolution caused an uproar among Bosnian citizens, fueled by politicians and nationalistic media-outlets. Next to this, many petitions (and discussions) were held about who should - and more importantly who should not - attend the 20th commemoration of the massacre. Representatives of Republika Srpska, who mostly do not want to recognize the genocide, and are often accused of genocide denial, were requested by their citizens not to attend. Other petitions focused on the fact that Serbian vice-president Vučić was planning to attend the commemoration, which ultimately led to him being attacked during the ceremony (Participant observation 8). This incident was thereafter widely covered in the (Bosnian) media. Many of the civil society actors explain that this is just the current focus of the politicians to keep nationalistic tendencies strong: “Soon they will find something new to make us angry at each other” (Small talk 21).
schools was blocked and even large funding deals would not go through because government officials would not sign off on it. These rejections are often linked to the topic of their projects. They claim that projects with neutral topics, such as computer classes, the environment, or English lessons; form no problem, but once the focus lies on history, social cohesion, reconciliation, corruption or political issues, they will encounter blockades from the (local) government. There is also a lack of cooperation when the civil society actors try to include decision makers and government officials in their projects. When they invite them to events, openings or important seminars, they “just don’t show up” (Interviewee 4; 16). The perception is that this trend is worsening:

We have experienced that NGOs [especially those who focus on social cohesion] do not have really good reputation within governmental institutions. Because government sees NGOs as a threat, not as a partner or somebody who brings good things to society. So, they are trying to, like, limit our work in terms of asking for permissions for starting to cooperate with schools or to have different activities in city centre. Authorization that you can have a public event in square or something like that. And it’s more than before. And it’s something that is really changing, especially in Republika Srpska. If you are an organization that’s based in Federation of BiH and you have a project in Republika Srpska, it is very very hard to get permission or even to implement something. (Interviewee 16)

Box 2: 'Law of Putin'

In May 2015 a draft law, nicknamed ‘Putin’s law’ or ‘the law of Putin’ was proposed in Republika Srpska. The law would seek to put NGOs in RS, whom receive funding from foreign donors, under government control and regard their members as ‘foreign servants’. It also envisaged bans and fines for associations who are seen as ‘politically engaged’ (Reuters, 2015). The law is nicknamed after a similar Russian law that was approved by Putin in 2012, obliging NGOs who receive foreign funding to register with the Ministry of Justice as foreign agents, and to be submitted to monitoring and regulation (ibid). The executive director of the NGO Helsinki Citizen’s Parliament, based in Banja Luka (RS), explained: “If this law is passed, it will mean the end of any critical activity in the Serb Republic and will close the circle of limitations for public and free civic expression” (Reuters, 2015).

Gladly, the law was soon thereafter rejected, but many interviewees are afraid that the law will be passed in the foreseeable future: “It could easily happen. They have the right to just decide” (Interviewee 3). One interviewee explains the law would not apply for local organizations who are funded by the Bosnian government or municipalities and that the political system is thus trying to block the organizations that they do not have influence over (small talk 10): “What you would end up having is a politicized civil society” (Interviewee 3). Another civil society actor worries about the lack of engagement of her colleagues in RS on this matter: “Even when they proposed that law, not too many NGOs were fighting against that. We organized a conference in Banja Luka [about the issue], and not too many NGOs showed up” (Interviewee 13).
The government in RS is regarded to form an even greater limitation to the civil society actors than the government in FBiH. There are more civil society organizations in FBiH and they are regarded to be more active. The civil society actors believe this is due to the stronger centralization of the government in RS, which gives the politicians more power and are able to put more pressure on civil society (Interviewee 3; 13; 14). The law on social media\textsuperscript{11} and the proposed ‘law of Putin’ (see box 2) are seen as forms of repression for the civil society sector. They all see the government is becoming more powerful and they feel less and less equipped to “fight back” (Interviewee 8; 13; 14).

Another limitation the civil society actors experience, is their perception that Bosnia’s civil society is becoming increasingly politicized. The civil society actors believe this is a trend that is worsening now that funding pools are becoming smaller\textsuperscript{12}. This is especially bad for the NGOs, they claim. A significant number of NGOs are linked to certain political bodies while still presenting themselves as independent NGOs (Interviewee 5; 16). In some of them, the government is solely responsible for the funding, which gives them much power: they decide what the NGOs can and cannot do. Other NGOs are used for political ends such as campaigning for certain politicians during elections. One civil society actor explained there was an NGO in his hometown, that was raising money for sick children, where the director was openly affiliated with a political party. While the director was doing his job he would wear t-shirts and hats to promote this political party. And more importantly, he used the volunteers for his NGO to campaign for this political party around the time of the elections. The civil society actor could not believe that nobody cared about this direct conflict of interest (Interviewee 5). What the interviewees believe to be even more worrisome is that there are also politicians who have their own NGOs and most of the time these links are covered up. However, sometimes NGOs and politicians are openly affiliated. The government has much influence over the civil society sector and the civil society actors cannot believe the laxity of the public about this issue (Interviewee 5; 9; 10). The governmental influence is strong in FBiH, but felt even more in RS, where many NGOs are solely reliant on local government funding. Therefore these organizations: “are not real neutral and independent NGOs which are able to fight for civil society aims” (Interviewee 15).

The interviewees believe that civil society organisations that work towards other goals than social cohesion and/or peacebuilding, such as the environment or service delivery are less limited by the Bosnian government. They see trends that, for example, permits are more easily granted and public projects are more often allowed to take place. The Bosnian government is thus not blocking

\textsuperscript{11} Law on social media: see limitation 7, page 73

\textsuperscript{12} See chapter on donors, page 56.
all the efforts civil society is trying to make, but it is clearly blocking the efforts to create more social cohesion:

We in BiH say that there is not enough political will to get more concrete results when it comes to these social integration processes. And political will is, it’s easier to get it in democratization, or some other fields of functioning of BiH civil society. But with these kind of things, about integration or social cohesion, you still don’t have enough political will to get more concrete and visible results. Because political parties at this moment are not ready for such a level of integration. (Interviewee 15)

Most of the civil society actors are negative about future possibilities of being more supported (or at least less limited) by the Bosnian government. They believe their goals are irreconcilable and if the incentives of the current politicians to block social cohesion keep existing, they will continue to counteract the efforts that civil society is making. However, a few of the bigger organizations are seeing some positive trends: they are experiencing a decrease of denied permits from certain municipalities and occasionally local politicians will visit, or cooperate with, one of their projects. They, however, admit it costs a lot of time to navigate the complexities of the political system, with its two entities and one district, several cantons and many municipalities. A lot of effort is put in to keep the dialogue between them and the government open, and they understand that most organizations do not have the capacities to work on this: “it’s not easy, you have to really know people there and have a lot of time to meet these people regularly” (Interviewee 11).
Limitation 2 – Donor structures

“Donor requirements are limiting us. Especially a project in a post-war context where you cannot do any harm, or you shouldn’t, there is a real kind of mismatch there. And a lot of projects have holes in them. And even the best organizations or even organisations with good intentions such as ours, will fall into that trap. Simply through the pressure of the funding system”

- Interviewee 6

Donor structures form many limitations to the work of civil society actors. The more structural problems correspond to the limitations that have been discussed in the literature. Bosnian civil society is unsustainable, donor-driven and the discrepancies between international donors and local civil society actors form problems. Next to this, there are some more practical issues to be found that are mainly connected to the fact that social cohesion projects require a different approach than, for example, service delivery or advocacy projects. Social cohesion requires more long-term funding, outreach and impact cannot be measured quantitatively, and donor demands connected to ethnicity undermine the quest for social cohesion. Other practical issues are: administrational constraints, the lack of core funding, the use of partial funding and the unpredictability of the environment civil society actors have to work in.

Most NGOs within civil society are reliant on international funding. The civil society sector is not self-sustainable. However, the international donors are slowly leaving\(^\text{13}\) (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010) and the civil society actors are afraid that organizations cannot exist anymore unless they switch to local government funding. This is, however, in many cases not possible, because either the Bosnian government does not want to fund them, or because the organizations will not fulfil the demands of the local government as a donor:

As an organization we actively choose not to use any funding from the [Bosnian] government. Because it allows us to be impartial, and we can’t be influenced, or at least we can’t be influenced that easy by any governmental actors. But this has restraints on us because as an NGO some level of government funding, within maybe, let’s not go with post-conflict country, but in the UK or Holland or wherever, that would be a big chunk of an NGOs funding. Here, that is an option, but one that comes with a price. (Interviewee 6)

Because the Bosnian government is trying to keep the nationalistic divisions while the civil society actors are trying to create more social cohesion, great discrepancies between those missions are formed. The interviewees believe this system is making them dependent on working with

\(^{13}\) Four years after the peacebuilding mission started, international funding slowed down. Even now, international funding is becoming increasingly scarce (Belloni & Hemmer 2010). In the last decade the international community’s attention has been shifting to ‘more pressing situations’ such as the Middle East, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Ukraine and the South Chinese Sea (Keil & Perry, 2015).
international donors, which is becoming increasingly difficult since the donors are leaving (Interviewee 9; 4; 2; 13; 3). This situation is even more difficult in RS, where the amount of international funding is lower\(^{14}\) than in FBiH and more organizations are reliant on government funding (Interviewee 3; 13).

A large part of civil society is donor-driven. Most organizations are shaping their work to the donors’ needs (Interviewee 4; 16). This means that sometimes they need to do things that they never thought about doing, for a small amount of money (Interviewee 9), which leads to problems:

We are close to the ground, probably you cannot get that much closer. But our agenda as an organization is sometimes subjected to what the international community thinks is necessary for Bosnia. And then you run into this reality where instead of planning projects through conducting a needs assessment, speaking to people over a long period of time, (which again costs money) and building a project from the ground up, you end up designing a project from the donor’s agenda down. In Bosnia the NGOs look at the donor’s agendas, and then think: ah they want this, maybe we can do this and this. \textit{It doesn’t emerge from the local context. It comes from above.} This is another challenge, and a big one. (Interviewee 6)

This leads to the problem of discrepancies between the donor’s agendas and the needs on the ground. The donors have their needs and their priorities, and many civil society actors comply to their wishes. The interviewees do not understand why the donors are not focusing more on doing research about what is actually happening ‘on the ground’: “We are still recycling projects from the late 90’s because those are the projects that donors are asking for” (Interviewee 4). They do however not always correspond with the (evolving) needs on the ground. One interviewee who used to work as a local researcher for an international organization explains:

They [international donors] have no clue about the context and needs. It’s usually Sarajevo-centric. They think: ‘We in Sarajevo know best, not Banja Luka, Srebrenica, Tuzla whatever, we know what to do best’. What they think is, people in Srebrenica or Bratunac are stupid and nationalistic, and ‘we internationals know what’s best for this country’. (Interviewee 4)

Some of the interviewees point to the constraints that donors form within their communications or administrations (Interviewee 12). The hoops that many civil society workers have to jump through both before and after they obtained funding is limiting them greatly in their time:

The amount of planning that is required, long application processes, a long lag time in terms of when you are supposed to hear back, if you even know when you’ll hear back. Which makes planning out activities tricky. (Interviewee 6)
Other demands that donors are making can cause issues within the projects that the civil society actors are developing. Oftentimes this has to do with their donor demands regarding outreach and impact. Donors ask questions such as:

- What is your outreach? What is your impact? How many people have you reached? And then you have to say 500/600. What can you do with 500 people? We really build, we work based on an individual approach. We work with smaller groups for longer periods of time where you can really follow what they are working on and how they are developing. (Interviewee 3)

Projects that focus on social cohesion are considered to be projects that take longer and require more intensive coaching. Many of the interviewees pointed out that you cannot change the behavioural patterns and ideas of someone with nationalistic views overnight. Most of the time, the requirements the donors make in terms of time spent on a project and the number of participants do not match with the processes that are needed for long term- and individual change. One of the civil society actors talks proudly about one of their successes within a project where she saw people change from having nationalistic viewpoints to now being peace activists:

- It took us 10 years and I really can’t produce these impact indicators in 6 months. But that is what they want to see. [It is] especially difficult for social behaviour, social change. It takes time, and that’s what people don’t understand. (Interviewee 10)

They believe that, besides the demands on impact and time, the many demands the donors have about the content of their projects are also very limiting: “donors usually limit you, because they give you the topics, and you basically become their extended hand” (Interviewee 3). Another trend of donor demands that are threatening the mission of the civil society actors is the focus on ethnicity. One of the interviewees who has more freedom to choose which donor she works with is seeing a growing trend of donor demands connected to ethnicity. She sees more and more donors who require a certain amount of each ethnic group to be represented in a project. Which is a way of thinking that they are working so hard for to break:

- Stop thinking about: ‘I’m a Bošniak, I’m a Croat, I’m a Serb’. That’s so irrelevant. And yet this society keeps being hostage of this way of thinking along these national lines for more than 20 years. Which is bringing us to your question which is what are the difficulties that you are facing in your work. That is exactly this. I’m really having very lively discussions these days with the different people. I mean I understand for the foreigners it’s very easy to simplify the picture. This is this people and that people and these were good guys and [they were] bad guys. Which is very wrong and it doesn’t help. And I think that the ethnic and national divisions are really kind of becoming mainstream. And it doesn’t contribute. (Interviewee 10).
It is worrying that many civil society organizations “roll over and accept this way of thinking while it is their mission to break this way of thinking” (Small talk 11). One interviewee explains: “I just really think this is becoming quite dangerous” (Interviewee 10).

A large limitation is the fact that many civil society organizations do not get core funding, they get funding on a project basis. This means they do not get much (or any) money for costs such as renting an office, or paying out salaries (sometimes donors even put a cap on salaries that is disproportionate to the amount of work that is required) (Interviewee 6). There are very few long-term grants; therefore, they have to work from project to project. Long-term planning is therefore impossible, which is something the civil society actors believe is needed for social cohesion and reconciliation projects. They claim only ‘the big shots’ are capable of long-term planning (Interviewee 3). One of the interviewees explains:

We never had core funding to give us the opportunity to develop all of our projects and initiatives on the level where we can work and operate. We divided our focus on youth, media, women, trying to develop a new section with Roma and gender. It’s all important. So it’s not that we don’t have programs and material for work. The fact is that we don’t have capacity to sit and work on it. Because we need to support ourselves from project to project. (Interviewee 9)

These uncertainties are influencing the work ethic in many organizations. Some of the civil society actors with their own organizations struggle because they cannot offer their employees a job for longer than six months (Interviewee 17). Civil society actors who founded their own small organizations are sometimes working two to three part-time jobs on the side to keep their organization running (Interviewee 9; Participant observation 11). This is not only creating unhealthy pressure in the working environment but is also of influence on the quality of their projects:

For projects focused on social cohesion and reconciliation you need good trainers and project developers and leaders. This is not possible when you cannot pay them, or you don’t have enough money or time to invest in writing up a good project. They are the heart of your work. (Interviewee 3)

Another limitation related to funding is that many organizations only get partial funding for their projects. This forces the civil society actors to have multiple funders connected to one project, which can lead to complications with keeping track of the money, reporting to specific donors at specific times during the project about different elements:

15 The civil society actors refer to this group as the big shots and the ruling coalition of NGOs. It pertains a small number (5 or 6) NGOs that are active in Bosnian civil society who are believed to dominate the sector and get all the funding. Most of the interviewees are not very positive about their working-methods. For more information see page 64-65
Sometimes donors like to focus on specific parts of the project, they’ll look through your project and say we really like this, but we don’t think we will be able to fund that, and then you need to find a balance and then they will probably give, a cynic would say, as little as they can. (Interviewee 6)

A large limitation is the unpredictability of the environment the civil society actors have to work within and the inability of domestic actors to respond to external stresses, which leads to shifts in international funding (Interviewee 6). One of the interviewees refers to two big events of the past years (the protests and the floods\(^\text{16}\)) that had direct influence on their funding:

You essentially had a government that was unable to respond out of its own capacity to these pressures or stresses and so, in those instances the international community was forced to step in. Which affects us as an organization in an entirely different sector, peace-building as opposed to humanitarian relief, [...] because as soon as that happens, the international community has to step in, our funding pool changes completely. Organizations whose priorities were peace-building, or interethnic reconciliation processes, suddenly became far more interested in humanitarian relief. (Interviewee 6)

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\(^{16}\) In May of 2014, BiH was hit by devastating floods, due to the heaviest rainfall in more than a century. It affected one million people and destroyed infrastructure, livelihoods, farms and crops (UNDP 2015) damages were estimated to be the equivalent of 2 billion Euros (15% of the Bosnian GDP). Many international donors switched their funding priorities to humanitarian help (Nardelli, Dzidic, & Jukic, 2014; UNDP, 2016).
Limitation 3 – Corruption

“Corruption is in every pore of our society, I’m sure it has not missed the civil society sector”

- Interviewee 3

Corruption forms several direct and indirect limitations for the civil society actors. Indirectly, the rise of the current Bosnian civil society (which was riddled with corruption) still has its influences on the perceptions of civil society today\(^\text{17}\). More direct limitations are formed by the practices of misuse of funding (with large-scale money laundering in the ‘early days’ of civil society and more small-scale misuse today). There are instances where results or entire projects are faked by civil society actors. Funding is sometimes obtained with help of local interlocutors who in return receive part of the funding money. Nepotism is becoming more of an issue because civil society actors are more reliant on local government funding. Another problem is formed by the fact that civil society actors are partaking in unofficial lobbying for funding by international donors.

Many organisations misuse the money they get from donors. All the interviewees agree that this trend was much worse in the first few years after the war and is slowly diminishing, or is at least becoming less obvious. The surge of donors that came to BiH after the war, gave incentives to many people to “just start an organization” (Small talk 14) in order to make a living. The poverty level was high and establishing an organisation was relatively easy. There are many examples of organisations that were just ‘active’ for one project and then closed, multiple organisations registered on the same address, and money laundering (Interviewee 13). While these activities clearly represent the very first few years of Bosnia’s civil society, they are still quite common today, however on a smaller scale and less ‘out in the open’ (Interviewee 4; 9; 13):

There are many ‘organisations’ that are just private businesses with, like, three people with big pay checks. And then you have, like, a few volunteers and those people get, like, nada. And it’s a pity, it’s a pity when all of that money goes to waste. (Small talk 3)

The civil society actors explain that they see that other organisations are ‘faking’ projects, reports or project results. Examples of faking entire projects (where, for example, high school students were gathered in a youth centre, offered lunch, and the pictures that were taken within the half hour they were there, were sent to the donors with fake descriptions) are common. However, the line between corruption and “just making things look a little bit better” (Interviewee 5) is thin. While most civil society actors are comfortable with pointing fingers at other organisations who employ these methods, in practice they do seem comfortable when they use some small-scale tactics themselves

\(^{17}\) For more information see limitation 7, page 74-75
Participant observation 11): for example, taking pictures during a project from specific angles to make it seem as if there are much more participants than in reality.

The form of corruption that is most occurring today, according to the interviewees, is the allocation of funding with help from local employees in international donor organisations. Many international funders seek local expertise and therefore have local employees sitting in on decision-making regarding to whom should obtain funding. Many of these local employees are linked to certain organisations and local tenders. A local employee would, for example, make sure funds would go to a certain organisation, who then in turn would redistribute some of the funding money back to the local employee. One of the interviewees recalls:

The youth centre where I previously worked, got their funds in a really weird way. They got a huge amount of money. And I found out how. It’s because they paid the dude that works for [an international donor] to give them that. Like, they made an agreement with him that if they get that money that he will get a part of it. And everyone knows that if you want to get funding… you can go that way. (Anonymous civil society actor)

Nepotism within the governmental funding system is frequently happening according to the interviewees, especially in RS where the dependency on local government funding is large. One of the interviewees explained that another organization from her town would always get the funding they both applied for at the local municipality level. She looked everywhere for this organization, but has never been able to find it, “it only existed on paper” (Interviewee 13). The nepotistic system that overshadows the civil society sector makes the interviewees feel powerless. One of the interviewees recalls a recent case of corruption where they applied for funding and saw that the money went to an organization that was having a completely different mission:

Now with one huge donor they got 5 million, can’t say which currency, and the money went to an organization who is not doing that work at all, but the woman who was deciding was volunteering with that organization. So it was... what can you do!? You can’t complain, if you complain you get on the blacklist. (Anonymous civil society actor)

Another civil society actor recalled:

A friend of mine is in one political party and she asked me, ‘can you write me some project? I want to open an NGO. We will get that money, we just need a project’. Like, we have a solution, now let’s make a problem! (Interviewee 13)

Another form of corruption that is limiting the civil society actors is the lobbying for donors in unofficial meetings by other organisations. Those organisations would, for example, take international donors out to dinner and/or try to have personal friendships with them. It is perceived
that they would then more easily obtain funding than the civil society actors that “play it fair” (Small talk 12). One civil society actor explains:

I feel sometimes that internationals, when they come to Bosnia they go with the Bosnian flow, you know with the way things are handled here, and its mostly not very professional. (Interviewee 3)

The interviewees clearly state they do not agree with this way of obtaining funding, they rather convince the donors to give them funding through official ways and by the power of their projects (Interviewee 1; 3; 9).
Limitation 4 – Competition and networking

“We are enemies here. I mean, we are all fighting for the same money”
- Interviewee 4

Competition between civil society organizations form a great limitation for the civil society actors. This competition is especially existent between the NGOs in the larger cities. The main driving force behind this competition is funding. Many of the smaller organizations feel disadvantaged by the larger (and somewhat older) NGOs. The competition manifests itself in a lack of civil society networks and cooperation. The stealing of projects is a common occurrence, be it by other organizations or donors. This leads to a culture of secrecy where many civil society actors are afraid of networking and working together. Many feel that replication of projects in cooperation with the original creators can lead to good things, however duplication without consent is considered to be wrong.

The largest driving force behind competition is funding: “When you apply for funding you find yourself in a competitive situation, especially because so many organisations are reliant on international donors. And many are very donor-driven. Competition can get dirty” (Interviewee 2). In the few years after the war the competition was less fierce, but since the donors are slowly leaving the competition gets “stronger and dirtier” (Interviewee 4): “organisations are trying to survive, but it is an unhealthy competition” (Interviewee 3).

Especially in the larger cities of Sarajevo and Banja Luka, where most of the NGOs are situated, this competition leads to a community of civil society actors where envy forms a large limitation to their work:

They are always the same people. Changing from one place to another. But the community is really small. A small circle of people who are all connected, all of them know each other, and they would help each other or you know, hate each other. (Interviewee 14)

This results in a culture of gossip and ‘backstabbing’ where one should be careful not to talk too loud about projects, donor applications, funding deals, and possible partnerships with other organizations, youth centres or peace activists; when out in café’s or restaurants in the big cities (Participant observation 1; 7; 10 Small talk 23; 27).

Especially the civil society actors who work for smaller organizations feel disadvantaged by the presence of larger and/or older NGOs. Many interviewees agree there are a few big organizations that always ‘get the money’ whom they call: ‘The big shots’, ‘the usual suspects’ and ‘the coalition’:

Most of the time, donors also have their sort of favourites and they’re the usual suspects, and those usual suspects have been receiving money for the last 10-15 years and as a new and small organization you need to have a track record in order to get funds which is difficult when you’re starting (Interviewee 3)
Some of the civil society actors who work for smaller/younger organizations feel that when they accomplish something, they are being envied by the “coalition of NGOs that have been active for a long time” (Interviewee 9). These ‘big shots’ are then believed to ‘play dirty’, for example: they will portray other organisations negatively to donors and other civil society actors, or start nasty rumours. Those who work for smaller organizations even claim that the bigger organizations are structurally making ‘life more difficult’ for them by lobbying with the donors, badmouthing the smaller organizations, or simply ignoring their existence when looking for possible partners for projects (Interviewee 3; 4; 9; 13): “it is quite personal, you know, they play mean” (Interviewee 14).

(Deleted figure 6)

Figure 6: The NGO race: a larger NGO is seen ahead in the race towards the finish line where donors are waiting with funding. Smaller/younger NGOs have no chance of winning the race. The larger NGO is pictured as dropping nails on the road, thereby sabotaging the race, and making it even harder for the smaller NGO to compete. Competition between the larger (and usually older) and smaller (younger) NGOs can be very unfair. These larger organisations are seen as ‘the usual suspects’, meaning they are the ones who obtain all the funding from international donors. It is believed by many civil society actors that they purposely make it harder for the smaller/newer NGOs to develop themselves in Bosnian civil society, be it by using all the funding but also by actively limiting their work. Many civil society actors who work for the small NGOs feel like they are being ignored by the larger organisations and are deliberately blocked out of (short-term) partnerships (Small talk 6).
The stealing of projects (sometimes referred to as ‘duplication without consent’ or ‘duplication’) is a common occurrence in the civil society sector. Most of the interviewees have experienced this first hand, others have colleagues and/or friends who have experienced their project being stolen (Interviewee 3; 4; 5; 6; 9; 10; Participant observation 6; Small talk 3; 8; 26; 28; 29). Some interviewees refer to the launch of their project online, with another organisation launching a very similar project under a different name a few months later. Others claim to have their ideas for projects stolen while being overheard in private conversations in bars, restaurants or on the streets. This leads to a culture of secrecy surrounding projects that are being developed or funding that is being requested (Participant observation 3; 7).

While being clear that the stealing of projects (or duplication) is “disgusting behaviour” (interviewee 9), most of the civil society actors believe that replication of projects is acceptable, however, it is necessary that this happens in consultation with the original creator. The ‘replicators’ should take into account the lessons that the original project initiators have learned. Replication could even lead to good things according to some: sometimes other organizations have access to different or larger communities which the first organization could not reach, sometimes they have more resources available, or they can transform certain ideas and models to fit other contexts (Interviewee 6; 10; 17):

So replication is fine and as an organization you have to encourage that. Duplication [without consent of the original creator], is a different thing entirely. When you put out a project and then within three months someone else is doing essentially exactly the same project, just with a different title. Maybe in a different venue, sometimes the same. As a civil society worker it drives me insane to see, because there is so much opportunity lost there in terms of organizations competing against each other rather than working with each other. (Interviewee 6)

Important insights and lessons that were learned by original creators and implementers of projects is often lost when projects are duplicated. The civil society actors believe that those who steal/duplicate projects, actively choose money and funding over their peacebuilding mission and ideals:

In many ways it contradicts the basic principles of peacebuilding. So the fundamental idea of peacebuilding is to do no harm: whatever you do, wherever you go, just make sure you don’t make things worse. And duplication goes against that ethos in the sense that it’s kind of choosing to go your own way, you’re actively ignoring the advice that other organizations might be able to provide. (Interviewee 6)

Not only other organizations are stealing projects, but all civil society actors have experienced (directly or indirectly) that donors would steal projects. One interviewee explains: “There were instances where organizations would submit their proposal and get rejected, and they would learn that either another organization or this institution has implemented their idea” (Interviewee 3). This
makes the civil society actors very cautious. Now they do not only have to fear that other organizations could duplicate their ideas and projects but also donors could possibly form a threat to their work.

Due to the risks of their projects being duplicated, the civil society workers are afraid to enter partnerships and networks. They all believe more cooperation between organizations is necessary to accomplish the goal of creating more social cohesion: “We are fragmented and we are working on our own and individual, and it’s not going to work. We really have to be more of a united force” (Interviewee 10). However, most of them admit to be afraid to enter these partnerships because of previous bad experiences. The civil society actors are very suspicious of each other. All claim that they want to try to work together, but then their possible partners back out, or sabotage them, or try to take all the credit. Most organizations keep their work very closed-off and private:

It is this culture of, kind of, going your own way and looking after yourself as an organization rather than forming, kind of, more regular partnerships that can share knowledge. And at least when it comes to people being paranoid. As an organization we are extremely careful about who we share the information with. [our last project] was kept under wraps for a long period of time. And it’s sad in a sense that organizations have to do that. (Interviewee 6)

There are, however, some examples of cooperation. The larger organisations usually have cooperation with their larger counterpart in the other entity or in other Balkan countries (for example in Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia) (Interviewee, 1; 2; 10, 11), the smaller organisations usually have good cooperation with local organisations, youth workers and peace activists in the smaller cities. Due to the lack of cooperation, there are not many civil society actors that function within large networks. The international community is pushing for partnerships and some organisations will comply to this on a one-time project-basis, but they are too afraid to fully commit. Other organisations prefer to build up their own networks:

We do not really work with other organisations. We create a network from the people that participate in our trainings and projects and if they are motivated to become peace activists then we like to support them and work with them. (Interviewee 1)
Limitation 5 - Educational system

“We have generally three different curricula for all subjects. You have Croat curricula in Croat majority municipalities, Bošniak curricula, and Serb curricula, and they teach three different things but none of them teach about the war.” - Interviewee 3

The segregated educational system is seen by the civil society actors as very limiting. Their projects are mainly focused on youths, and they believe that nationalistic thinking is embedded in the Bosnian educational system. The divided system undermines their efforts to create greater social cohesion. The focus on three different curricula, and for example, the two schools under one roof systems are seen as “the extended arm of the national politicians and [as] contributing to the further deepening of the gap between the young people of the different ethnic groups” (interviewee 10). The educational system is working against their mission of creating more social cohesion, it is very difficult for the civil society actors to gain permission to do their non-formal education projects in schools, and once access is obtained they often encounter much resistance from both teachers and students.

The interviewees believe many are trying to close their eyes to what is happening and how much influence the segregated educational system has on Bosnia’s society, especially on the young people who are regarded to be the future of BiH (Interviewee 4). All the interviewees state that the educational system has much influence on the level of cohesion:

I absolutely think that opinions that are formed are mostly formed in families and in schools. If you have a teacher who refuses to teach you about the other, who teaches you a nationalist history, very accusatory very intolerant and emphasizing this victim role, the victim-perpetrator relation, on all sides. Then of course what you end up feeling is that you are different and that you should not trust the other and that you should not mix with the other. (Interviewee 3)

The educational system is seen as a form of repression, as the students do not learn how to think critically (Interviewee 3). The civil society actors believe that in this way, the politicians are trying to maintain their power, ingraining them with nationalistic ways of thinking from an early age. The interviewees all have a focus on educational reform and/or non-formal education in their projects. The civil society actors who work for two of the bigger NGOs are trying to pressure the political system to look into educational reforms through lobbying, but both admit to have not made much progress here (Interviewee 11; 12; 15):

We [in BiH] discuss and talk about different reforms, military, police, border control, these things, but unfortunately we never talk about education in a serious way [...] and we should pay attention to this challenging issue because right now we have generations of young people from BiH, whatever their ethnic background, who attend isolated ethnic based curricula
and [...] you cannot think that you can make a functional and operational BiH society if you have that kind of base. (interviewee 15)

Most of the interviewees, however, focus on non-formal education through projects at schools and other venues. Some of the projects are purely focused on bringing kids together, sometimes around topics about the war or the current situation regarding the divisions. Others try to focus more broadly on teaching youth critical thinking, and therefore believe that these youths will be more capable to make their own decisions regarding social cohesion (and hope this will change voting behaviour). Examples of non-formal education projects are peace activism classes, conflict resolution classes, re-enactments of war trials, documentaries about the war and peacebuilding, photography exhibitions, writing competitions about the current nationalistic divisions etc.

However, some organizations focus on bringing people together through other, more general, activities such as a circus for schoolchildren, music and art projects for youths. Youth leaders who work in the youth centres also tend to use this approach. They claim to be more free (they do not have to adhere to strict donor requests) and try to focus on activities that are ‘just fun’ such as music or movies or games (Small talk 17; 22; 31). Some of the youth workers see it is here that they have an advantage over NGOs. They believe that while their projects might not be as well thought-through as some of the NGO-projects, they can provide “learning places where young people can come and can enjoy things in a strategically oriented way” in the form of youth centres (Interviewee 16) and can therefore work with the same youths on a long-term basis.

Gaining access to the youths for non-formal education projects is, however, becoming more and more difficult for the civil society actors. Getting permission to work in schools is difficult to obtain:

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**Box 3: non-formal education project: Ordinary Heroes**

One example of a non-formal education project that focuses on promoting tolerance, reconciliation, interethnic cooperation and social cohesion is P-CRC’s award-winning project: Ordinary Heroes. Central in this project are a series of short documentaries which show how ‘ordinary people’ risked their own lives during the war in order to save someone of another ethnic background. There is the story of Mina who took the ultimate risk while saving the life of Ferid, after he managed to escape an execution in the mountains. And there is the story of Đorđe (a Bosnian Serb) and Salih (Bošniak). The two men had been friends their whole lives until the war changed everything. In 1995, Salih was taken to the notorious Batkovic concentration camp, wondering if he would ever get out until Đorđe came to save him. The documentaries are paired with workshops and a photography exhibition and “encourage intercultural dialogue, collaboration and the building of cross-cultural bridges” (p-crc.org, 2015).
We can’t work in schools. Especially Ministry of Education in Republika Srpska is blocking. You cannot do projects at the two schools under one roof systems. You mostly have to work with local cantonal ministries. To get their approval is very difficult. And even when you get the approval you have to find a school that is open enough to do this work. (Interviewee 4)

All interviewees explain that they tried to work with several schools that function with the two schools under one roof system, but most of them note that they were never allowed to do projects there. These schools are considered to be even more closed-off than other schools, especially the ones with Croat majorities (Interviewee 3). Sometimes this is due to the local government not giving permission, other times the school itself will not give permission. The procedures for gaining permission to do projects in schools is complex, and very dependent on who is in charge. Usually, first, permission from the local government is required, which is difficult to acquire. Then, permission from the school director is needed (and in the two schools under one roof systems, there are usually two school directors). Often, permission from teachers is required too. On many occasions, where permission is finally granted, the space and time the civil society actors get is very limited: “High school teachers would check our content before. And like they would allow us and give us one class, for 45 minutes. So, what we could do is only to screen documentary and do a little bit of discussion” (Interviewee 9).

A civil society actor explained that even when you finally get permission to enter a school, this does not necessarily mean that you will not encounter problems. Her organization was filming a documentary about how different youths cope with the legacy of the war:

So we were working and filming in divided school for like seven days, trying to show the picture. And we talked with kids, we had the chance to talk with them on their breaks, a chance to interact, the Bošniak Muslim side of school… they are willing to allow us to go in the classes, unfortunately the Croat side, catholic Croats were so, like, negative and they didn’t allow us to come to any classes, to even go to hall to talk to kids. (Interviewee 9)

Sometimes the nationality of the project leaders also forms problems when trying to gain access to schools:

Another problem is also if we are going to some school we need to think who are we going to send on a first interview with the head master or director of the school. Because we had problems like, that if we send like to Bosnian Muslims they will ask do you have any Croats you know.. nationality is a big problem of this, of our work. (Interviewee 17)

Many civil society workers find it difficult to adhere to these types of requests, as it is their mission to overcome this way of nationalistic thinking.
Limitation 6 - Public spaces

“Yeah I think the media is controlled… I don’t think it, I know that! Media is controlled by government and political parties, so yeah they do what they want and what is in their interest”

– Interviewee 16

The use of public spaces (or rather restrictions thereof), is also limiting for the civil society actors. Examples that have come up focus mostly on the media, access to public squares for projects and/or peaceful protests, and freedom of speech on the internet. Hate speech is a common occurrence in the media and on online platforms:

Sometimes I see the comments on the internet. You know, comments on a news story or a blog or something. And it scares me really. Young people that were born after the war they make such strong nationalistic statements. (Interviewee 1)

Most media in BiH is influenced, or controlled, by the Bosnian government. Media outlets are used to sustain (or create more) ethnic or nationalistic divisions (interviewee 17; 4). Sometimes you can clearly see these type of messages, but more often it is an underlying message. One of the interviewees recalls a recent news article in his regional newspaper:

For example on Sunday one of the clubs for the mountain hiking they were trying to get in the bus to go to mountain [on the Bošniak side of the town] and some football team came and basically they were fighting. And in the newspaper it was like: Croats came and they fight Bošniaks. [...] Basically when something is small, two boys fight or two girls fight then you will see: ‘ah one Bošniak and one Croat girl fight’ [...] They are just making all the time that negative energy from one side to other side. (Interviewee 17)

Many of the civil society actors feel like some of the media is actively working against them:

We don’t have good cooperation with the media. They always say bad things about our projects. Well some media are good to us. The independent media, but the problem is: there are not many of them and nobody reads them. (Interviewee 2)

Another civil society actor from the FBiH feels especially targeted by several media outlets from Republika Srpska, who often call them liars, and use them as an example of ‘civil society organizations who spread lies’ (Interviewee 7).
Figure 7: **Independent media:** A journalist and cameraman are pictured as marionettes, played by the hands of the political system. The darkness surrounding the hands represents the dark message the media is to convey to the Bosnian citizens: that of nationalistic and ethnic division. Most media in BiH is influenced, or controlled, by the Bosnian government. Media outlets are used to sustain (or create more) ethnic or nationalistic divisions (Small talk 7). International watchdog organisation Freedom house reports that while the constitution of BiH guarantees freedom of press, the politicians still have considerable pressure on journalists and media outlets are often influenced by political parties and business leaders. They see an increase in the use of hate speech in the media in recent years, and it is now even detected on public broadcasters. The two entity-level public broadcasters are organized along ethnic lines and are under the control of the ruling political parties. Harassment, death threats and physical attacks on journalists and those who work for independent media outlets happen frequently (Freedom House, 2014; 2015).
The lack of independent media is concerning to the civil society actors:

I see media as a key point because media should have the role of peacebuilders. They have the tool to build peace. So if you have independent media working for reconciliation instead of doing sensationalism reporting, trying to bring new positive stories and stuff you can create a climate of peace. Especially in the local communities, where I think the problem is, not in the big cities. (Interviewee 9)

Some of the civil society actors experience problems with gaining access to public spaces to do their projects (Interviewee 5; 9; 7; Participant observation 5). One of them explains his organization is often engaged in public peaceful protests in order to ask for attention for nationalism and the ethnic divisions in BiH. He experiences difficulty in obtaining permission to use the public spaces from local government, or when he does obtain permission he often experiences harassment from Bosnian citizens, political actors and the local police (Interviewee 7). Many civil society actors have experienced these kind of set-backs. While they went through the troubles of obtaining all necessary permissions and permits, they will still be blocked from using public spaces for their project. Examples of entire projects that had to be cancelled at the last minute or moved to completely new locations in the matter of hours are bountiful (Participant observation 4; 9; Interviewee 9; Small talk 2; 25; 30).

Another public space that is limiting the work of the civil society actors is the internet. The internet often functions as a forum where nationalistic ideology and hate speech can be expressed, especially on news outlets and social media. Several civil society actors explain they have been harassed and have received death threats online (Interviewee 8, Small talk 15; 32). Next to this, the civil society actors feel limited in their freedom of speech online, referring to what they call ‘the law on social media’ (see box 4) in Republika Srpska (Interviewee 3; 13; 14): “If you decide to tweet against the government and they decide its inappropriate, you can end up being fined because they [the political system] control the internet” (Interviewee 3).

**Box 4: the law on social media**

In February 2015, the assembly of Republika Srpska adopted changes to the Law on Public Peace and Order, ignoring strong criticism from opposition parties, local and international actors including several international rights organizations (Jukic, 2015). The law criminalizes “social media postings that disturb the public order, display symbols, images, drawings or texts containing indecent, offensive or disturbing content or insult or engage in rude or insolent behavior” (OSCE, 2015). OSCE representative on freedom of the Media, called the law “devastating for free expression and free media on the internet” (Jukic, 2015).
Limitation 7 – Perceptions of civil society

“They don’t like us, I mean civil society or NGOs in general. They say: the war stopped twenty years ago, why do you keep talking about it? Why do you bring it up all the time? But then I say: the shootings and killings maybe have stopped but the war is still going on in our minds. There is still so much hate” - Interviewee 1

The perceptions of civil society that the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina uphold are not considered to be positive according to the local civil society actors. They believe this is mostly due to the high level of corruption within the sector during the first phase of civil society directly after the war and the stories of competition, backstabbing and incompetence that currently circulate (Interviewee 1; 3; 9):

NGOs are ridiculed. This is because of the earlier times (with cases of corruption being big and this still continues, but in smaller amount). But also because some organizations have received large amounts of international funding, but have done nothing with it. And this gives the politicians and authorities the right to say: look, they received millions, what have they done, so they lose their credibility. (Interviewee 13)

Most of the NGOs within the sector are perceived as a waste of time, or just as a way to take money from foreigners (Interviewee 16). Civil society actors who receive funding from international donors are often seen as traitors or foreign spies. This mostly pertains to the NGOs. The negative opinion on civil society is limiting their work. One interviewee claims: “even if you are doing something for a good cause, you don’t have their support [...] because they believe you are foreign spies” (Interviewee 13). They feel they do not have the space to work because many people believe the NGOs are “guilty for everything” (ibid). They equate the civil society organizations who receive foreign funding with the international community, and they believe the international community to be guilty (or at least expect the international community to pay for ‘what they did’): “that is the general image: foreign NGOs should pay us for what they did to us” (Interviewee 13). The civil society actors do believe the way the NGO sector started up, riddled with corruption, still has influence on the perceptions of civil society today:

That’s how NGO sector actually formed in BiH and that created very bad, like, atmosphere within the whole society. That they expect that NGOs still do the same things. Just to take the money from stupid strangers and to not do anything, just to wash the money as they say. So it’s not something that is, like, it really limits at some point the work of organizations that are really doing serious and very important work within the society. (Interviewee 16)

The focus on social cohesion and/or reconciliation is also a problem for many citizens:
Basically, we are running out of ideas in a sense that you know, reconciliation, people are very tired of those topics. So were trying but were running a little bit out of ideas. But you cannot neglect the fact that reconciliation is necessary. We cannot just move on when we have people who are still at silent war. (Interviewee 3)

Most of the civil society actors have experienced backlash about their missions and project-focus on social cohesion and reconciliation. “The wounds are still fresh” (small talk 4) as they say, and many people do not want to be confronted with what happened during the war. One civil society actor explains what this means for the war veterans that participate in their social cohesion projects:

Not everyone can appreciate what we are trying to do. And what the veterans are trying to do because they do a lot of public speeches and sometimes people don’t want to hear it. And it’s difficult for them. Because it’s not the mainstream ideology that they are following, forgiving and befriending their former enemies. So many of them have a hard time in their local communities because it is not accepted, what they are working on with us. (Anonymous civil society actor)

Some interviewees experienced negativity from Bosnian citizens when they organized projects in rural areas. The people there simply did not understand why they would come there to talk about the war and social cohesion when they had bigger problems to worry about, and asked them for more concrete support: “that is kind of normal, I mean, people are hungry, they would like to have food, they would like to get this kind of support” (Interviewee 4) but the civil society actors are not in a position to offer this. They believe that a lack of adequate living standards18 is one of the reasons the Bosnian citizens are less involved in the civil society sector.

This negative perception of civil society makes it that participation levels are low. Often times only youths that are already very active in civil society or peace work will participate. Youths from rural areas and divided towns are especially difficult to approach. Next to this, civil society is also a very unpopular choice for employment. Especially the youths are not interested:

I think the whole perception of [civil society] is wrong. That’s why it’s not popular […] That’s also a problem because I know a lot of people who would rather work in a shop than invest their time and everything in the NGO. (Interviewee 13)

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18 Bosnia’s official unemployment rate is 46.1%, with youth unemployment even higher at a rate of 50% (UNDP, 2015).
6. Analysis of limitations with a holistic framework

The limitations that the civil society actors experience are not existing separately from each other, on the contrary, they are connected and interdependent. For example: the way the emergence of civil society from the ‘wrong incentives’ led to corruption and is still greatly influencing the perceptions, and participation, of the Bosnian citizens; to the way the political system is not only directly blocking projects through the denial of permits but also through influencing the media, the internet and keeping the segregated educational system in place. One can see that a focus on solely one of these limitations cannot fully explain the complex situation the civil society actors find themselves in. Therefore, in this chapter an integrated approach, in the form of the holistic framework as proposed by Edwards (2004), will be applied to study all the limitations in order to better understand the linkages and complexities.

First, the complex interrelations will be studied, looking at the complex interplay on a theoretical basis of what Edwards (2004) refers to as a the ‘civil society puzzle’ with in mind the lessons learned from the debates about the forms of civil society (associational life) the norms of civil society (good society) and the spaces of civil society (public spheres).

It might be clear that all the limitations that the civil society actors experience are interrelated and form a complex web that is spun between themselves, the political institutions, donor institutions and the citizens they are trying to represent. The donor structures influence the norms of civil society actors, resulting in practices of corruption and competition, which does not fare well with the Bosnian citizens. The norms of the good society such as trust and cooperation are strongly diminished within the civil society sector. The civil society organisations that focus on social cohesion cannot be seen as one “united force” (interviewee 10), but rather as a group of scattered, competing, organisations who live in a ‘culture of secrecy’.

While a few of the civil society actors have some ideas about how to resolve the limitations they encounter in their work, most of them rely solely on the broad idea that “the whole society needs to change” (Small talk 33) and that this will most likely never happen. They all admit to never really have thought about how they could tackle these limitations, or are of the opinion that the changes that need to be made are simply “out of their hands” (Small talk 24). This is understandable, since all of the limitations are interconnected, related to the messy early days of Bosnian civil society, and are influenced greatly by strong and powerful political -and donor institutions. This complex interplay of forces that work against them create vagueness about how the civil society actors could fight these limitations. All agree, however, that change is needed, and these limitations need to be resolved, since the current trajectory the Bosnian society is on will lead to a downward
spiral of more nationalism, ethnic divisions and according to some, a possible re-burst of violent conflict (interviewee 1; 2; 5; 14).

The ideas the civil society actors have about resolutions are very abstract and broad: “things need to change” (interviewee 2), “we need more the political will” (interviewee 15) and “we need educational reforms” (Interviewee 16) are some of the examples. And while the situation is too complex to offer any clear-cut solutions that would simply resolve the limitations, it can be useful to try and make a bit more sense of the situation, so that at least some ideas about possible steps towards concrete resolutions can be made. Of course, there are no easy answers. But the fact that the civil society actors all experience a multitude of limitations to which they have no guided resolutions, keeps them trapped in the same negative spiral. Many of them notice a growing trend of colleagues with burn-outs, they claim to have run out of ideas, their impact is not big enough to beat the work of the political system and most of them see a dark future ahead when it comes to social cohesion, the civil society sector and BiH in general (Small talk 1, 19, 34; Participant observation). Most of them are not actively involved in trying to resolve the experienced limitations, mainly because they feel powerless (Small talk 20; 24; 33).

The civil society puzzle

1: Ideas about the good society can help to focus on normative goals, in this case the creation of more social cohesion and eventually sustainable peace. However, the school of thought focusing on the good society does not explain much about how to achieve these goals (Edwards, 2004). Ideas about associational life do offer some insights on this. The most important lessons here are that it is always of importance to consider the contexts civil society is functioning in. Next to this, one should understand that civil society and their connections with the political, market and family spheres all form a big ‘ecosystem’ where all influence one another. A good basis for participation in civil society in the forms of “equality, diversity, independence and a supportive context for citizen action, cannot be obtained by civil society acting alone” (Edwards, 2004, p. 87). Civil society is very dependent on the other spheres. Trying to understand the gaps and weaknesses of these ecosystems can help offer more insights about why a strong associational life (in numbers) does not necessarily
lead to a good society.

It is thus of great importance to look at the context in which the civil society actors are functioning, or in other words: ‘the ecosystem’ of which they are part. Bosnia is not only recovering from more than three years of violent conflict, but also of the legacy of communism (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). The war has been categorized as extremely brutal especially due to the high number of civilian casualties (ibid). Approximately half of the population became internally displaced, which resulted in “ethnically homogeneous areas being controlled by the same political parties responsible for the carnage” (ibid, p. 129). Trust in the other ethnic groups is low, as is trust in institutions, associational life and political parties (Ioannou, Jarraud, & Lordos, 2015). Nationalistic political parties still dominate the elections by using politics of fear (Hulsey, 2015; Belloni & Hemmer, 2010). The DPA is legitimizing segregation and nationalistic thinking as it has institutionalised the ethnic divisions, thereby also discriminating other ethnic minorities. Segregation is also felt in the educational system, where curricula, languages and the two schools under one roof system are entrenching the ethnic divisions. The Bosnian government has much power over the public spheres such as the media and the internet.

The current peacebuilding civil society in BiH was set up shortly after the war ended: a mushrooming of NGOs took place, as founding an NGO was seen as a good business opportunity due to high poverty levels. Corruption was widespread in the sector. This still has its influence on the perceptions of civil society today, where Bosnian citizens generally do not trust associations (especially NGOs) and equate those associations who get foreign funding with the international community, or ‘foreign spies’. Participation levels in associational life are very low. One of the reasons for this is the fact that unemployment levels are over 40%. Many citizens focus on fulfilling their basic needs rather than on participation in peacebuilding and civil society (Belloni & Hemmer, 2010, p. 129).

The political system is seen by the civil society actors as the most important block for the creation of social cohesion. They are believed to be trying to exacerbate the ethnic divisions, and are thus actively trying to reduce social cohesion. There is almost no cooperation between the civil society actors and the Bosnian government. According to the civil society actors one could even see a competitiveness between the government and civil society, as they believe civil society is perceived as a threat to the current power of nationalistic politicians. The civil society actors believe they are not taken seriously as equal contributors to the ‘ecosystem’ that is Bosnia’s society.

The political system is blocking the civil society actors from getting access to the Bosnian citizens. It is very difficult for them to obtain permission and permits to hold their projects in schools and other public spaces. There is a general lack of cooperation from the Bosnian government. The
civil society actors see a trend of civil society becoming more politicized (especially in RS). The links to the political bodies are becoming stronger while the organisations are still presenting themselves as non-governmental or independent.

The influence of the international community, here mainly embodied by the donors of which most of Bosnia’s civil society is reliant, forms another large limitation to the work of creating a greater social cohesion. The influence finds its origin in the birth of the current civil society sector, and the current (and near future) developments of donors that are leaving. The multitude of donors that came to BiH after the war for peacebuilding purposes, created a *mushrooming* of organisations that formed a civil society sector saturated with corruption. The strong presence of the (international) donors since then, has created a donor-driven civil society, which in turn leads to strong competition between the organisations. The civil society actors are afraid that the current trend of the donors leaving, will filter out the corruption but will eventually lead to even more competition amongst civil society organisations, which leads to a lessening of an already barely existing cooperation between them.

The donor institutions also form limitations with their requirements for obtaining funding. The hoops that many civil society actors have to jump through to obtain funding are limiting them greatly. Donors rarely give out institutional grants, are mostly focused on short-term results, large ‘target groups’, mostly give partial funding, and have caps on salaries. These are all things that work against the goals and methods of the civil society actors.

The citizens of Bosnia are not regarded to be very supporting of - and involved with - civil society. The civil society actors experience a real disconnect between themselves and the Bosnian citizens. Civil society actors are often equated with foreign donors, of which the citizens do not have a good opinion. Participation in civil society is considered to be low. Many citizens do not like the focus on social cohesion. The civil society actors often get the feedback that people are tired about talking about the war and its consequences for social cohesion. The fact that there is no shared consensus about what exactly happened during the war and who is guilty of what, forms a real blockade to progress the civil society actors are trying to make with their projects.

There are thus clear gaps within the ‘ecosystem’ in which the civil society actors are trying to work towards their goals. These gaps make it more difficult for ideas of the *good society* to come to fruition and clearly show that a large civil society does not necessarily lead to a good society. It is of great importance to understand that these ecosystems are extremely complex and are heavily dependent on context, as all elements influence each other and are constantly evolving (Edwards, 2011).
Ideas of the good society are likely to have influence over the health of associational life. Important, here, are the preconditions of a healthy associational life, ideally provided by the government. Social, economic and political equality are “preconditions for the ability of civil society to nurture consensus, encourage collective deliberations, and achieve democratic outcomes in which all can participate fairly” (Edwards, 2004, p. 88). The Bosnian citizens are lacking these preconditions. For example, economic inequality and insecurity makes earning money such a high priority that participation in civil society fades to the background. The civil society actors experience this, for example, in backlash they get when they want to do a project about social cohesion in poor areas where the people state they need food instead of talking about the war.

Within civil society itself, there are also disagreements about the ends and means that generate a good society. In reality, the norms civil society actors adhere to are not always positive. As Edwards explains: “Voluntary associations are arenas for personal ambition and power as well as for sacrifice and service” (Edwards, 2004, p. 44). This can clearly be seen in the practices of corruption and competition, which are widespread in Bosnia’s civil society. Not only the corruption in the beginning years of civil society (which led to low trust levels of Bosnian citizens towards civil society (UNDP, 2009) but practices of corruption are still prevalent in Bosnia’s civil society. Money is misused, or ‘washed’, and while the civil society actors believe this is happening on a smaller scale than before, and less out in the open, it is still occurring and influencing public opinion. Funding money is spent on fancy hotel rooms, food and drinks, often in combination of deals with local tenders. Reports for donors are often falsely enhanced, sometimes entire projects are ‘faked’. Many civil society actors accuse each other of these practices and this influences their choices for possible partnerships and cooperation.

The form of corruption that is limiting them the most, are the practices of allocation of funding through local interlocutors who work for donor organisations. These locals advice international donors on who should receive funding deals, and are sometimes connected to certain organisations. These interlocutors will make sure that certain organisations will obtain funding deals, in turn for a share of the money. Nepotism within the governmental funding system, is also limiting the civil society actors. And unofficial lobbying by other civil society organisations is creating an unhealthy imbalance for funding opportunities for those who decide to ‘play the game in a fair manner’.

Another substantial limitation is the competition between civil society organisations. The main driving force behind this competition is funding, but is maintained by a culture of backstabbing, gossip and secrecy amongst many of the civil society actors. The stealing of projects by other civil society organisations (and sometimes donors) encourages a culture of secrecy where
sharing ideas about future projects and cooperation with other organisations are believed to be risky. As the trend of the departure of international donors is increasing, the competition for funding gets “fiercer and dirtier” (small talk 35; Participant observation), leading to an unhealthy competition and a lack of cooperation and networking amongst the civil society organisations. However, the civil society actors do believe that creating stronger networks and partnerships are necessary to reach their goals, but the many bad experiences they have had in the past keep them locked in their old ways.

The civil society actors experience a rift between the smaller and bigger (older) civil society organisations. The smaller organisations feel disadvantaged by the bigger ‘coalition’ of NGOs whom have easier access to funding and are considered to make the life of smaller NGOs more difficult by badmouthing them and ignoring their existence when looking for possible partners. The civil society sector is mainly concentrated in the cities of Sarajevo and Banja Luka and have a small but very active community of civil society actors: ‘everyone knows each other’, therefore the competition is often considered to be personal.

Essential to a healthy civil society are mutual trust and cooperation amongst civil society actors (Edwards, 2004). Many (especially neo-Tocquevillians) believe that a strong associational life (in terms of a quantitatively large associational life) automatically generates this, but this turns out not to be true for the Bosnian case. Low trust and cooperation lead here to scattered civil society organisations and actors, who are not able to work together towards their mutual goal of greater social cohesion and sustainable peace.

3: In order to reach the goals of the good society, collective action along the several spheres, in one direction is needed. However, for example, the political sphere is regarded to be working against the mission that civil society has. Next to this, within civil society itself there are differing opinions about the ends and means of the good society. A place is thus needed to come to a consensus. It is here that the importance of public spheres comes to the fore. Here, we can look for a just and democratic way to reconcile these differences and competing views. In order to communicate and debate about ideas of the good society, the ecosystem of actors need access to open public spheres. Where civil society amongst themselves, with citizens, the political system and donors can communicate and debate. However, these public spheres are largely blocked in Bosnia.

BiH has a lack of open, independent, public spheres. The closed nature and lack of independence of, for example, the educational system, media, and free speech on the internet and public spaces are greatly limiting to the civil society actors. The civil society actors believe they are not given fair (or equal) access to these spheres, and therefore have limited meeting points for more interaction with citizens. Next to this, public spheres are used to entrench nationalistic divisions. This
can be seen in the educational system and media which are used as platforms for the creation of nationalistic thinking and thus diminish civil society’s work in creating greater social cohesion.

One of the most important public spheres is the media. In Bosnia, however, the media is all but independent and the government influences media-content greatly (Freedom House, 2015). This sphere is therefore not a viable option for communication for the civil society actors. They even claim the government is using this sphere to work against them, for example, by spreading lies about them in newspapers and on television. This in turn influences the way civil society is perceived by the Bosnian citizens. While the media is controlled by the government and is used for nationalistic propaganda, their influence is even more felt in the segregated educational system where three different curricula and histories are thought to youths.

For public spheres to function well as spaces for dialogue, association and institutional collaboration, the health of democracy in the country is decisive. As Edwards explains: “If only certain truths are represented, if alternative viewpoints are silenced by exclusion or suppression, and if one set of voices is heard more loudly than those of others, then the public interests suffer” (2011, p. 55) and thus “only broad-based debate can define the public interest, not dictats by government” (2011, p. 56). It is here that we encounter a problem that is deemed unsolvable by the civil society actors. The Bosnian government has great power and they focus this on efforts to maintain and exacerbate nationalistic divisions. This can clearly be seen in the influence of the government on the public spheres of the educational system and the media.

4: A healthy associational ecosystem is vital to the public sphere, since it is usually through voluntary organizations and the media that citizens can communicate about ideas of the good society. It is perhaps here that Bosnia’s negative circle can be broken. One can clearly see that many of the civil society actors are trying to improve the public spheres, for example by lobbying for educational reforms (interviewee 11; 12; 15), setting up critical and independent media platforms (interviewee 5; 9; Participant observation) and are trying to create a better environment for public debates in public spaces (Interviewee 1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 9).
7. Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, the research question will be answered:

What are the limitations faced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion, and what insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?

7.1 What are the limitations faced by local civil society actors in BiH who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion?

There are seven main limitations that are experienced by the local civil society actors: the political system, donor structures, corruption, competition, the educational system, public spaces and perceptions of the Bosnian citizens.

1. Political system: The local civil society actors regard the current political system to be the largest limitation to their work. The political system forms both a structural limitation to their goal of reaching greater social cohesion in the Bosnian society, and forms more practical limitations that hinder them in their day to day work. The Dayton agreement entrenches the ethnic divisions into the basis of the Bosnian society, and the civil society actors do not believe they are strong enough to overcome these divisions. They also believe that their mission of creating more social cohesion is irreconcilable with the mission of nationalistic politicians (which is focused on retaining political power by the use of nationalistic voting). The Bosnian government also forms practical blockades for the civil society actors: they experience difficulties with obtaining permits and permissions for their projects. They also believe that civil society is becoming more politicized, as they are becoming more reliant on local government funding, now many international donors are leaving. Another limitation is formed by the fact that the politicians are using distractions with a nationalistic focus in order to draw attention away from the sustainable peacebuilding process.

2. Donor structures: The current donor structures are forming great limitations to the work of the civil society actors. Bosnian civil society is regarded to be unsustainable and donor-driven. Many civil society actors are reliant on international funding, as the local government is not willing to fund them, or they are not willing to concede to the local governments demands. This creates more and more difficulties, as international donors are leaving. Next to this, there are many discrepancies between the international donors and needs on the ground. This is especially the case for social cohesion projects, as these projects are considered to take a long time and require intensive coaching. Most of the time, however, requirements the donors are making in terms of time spent on a project and the number of participants do not match with the processes that are needed for long term- and
individual change. Another limitation is the lack of core funding, which means the civil society actors are surviving from project to project. These uncertainties are influencing the work ethic in many organizations. Oftentimes, donors are only willing to offer partial funding for projects. This forces the civil society actors to have multiple funders connected to one project, which can lead to complications with keeping track of the money, reporting to specific donors at specific times during the project about different elements.

2. Corruption: The widespread corruption in the early days of civil society still has influence on the perceptions of civil society. The surge of donors that came to BiH after the war, gave incentives to many people to “just start an organization” (Small talk 14) in order to make a living. Today, corruption has diminished somewhat but still forms a large limitation for the civil society actors. They explain some civil society organisations are ‘faking’ projects, reports or project results in order to obtain funding. Funding from international donors is sometimes obtained by making deals with local interlocutors who in return receive a share of the funding money for personal use. Nepotism structures in the local government are also becoming more of an issue, now that international donors are slowly leaving.

4. Competition: Competition between civil society organizations forms a great limitation for the civil society actors. This competition is especially existent between the NGOs in the larger cities. The main driving force behind this competition is funding. Many of the smaller organizations feel disadvantaged by the larger (and somewhat older) NGOs. The competition manifests itself in a lack of civil society networks and cooperation and a culture of ‘backstabbing’ and secrecy regarding projects and funding deals. The stealing of projects is a common occurrence, be it by other organizations or donors.

5. Educational system: The segregated educational system forms another great limitation to the mission of the civil society actors. The divided system undermines their efforts to create greater social cohesion. It is very difficult for the civil society actors to gain permission to execute their non-formal education projects in schools (especially in the two schools under one roof systems). They often encounter strong resistance from both teachers and students. The educational system is seen as a form of repression, as the students do not learn how to think critically. The civil society actors believe that in this way, the politicians are trying to maintain their power, ingraining them with nationalistic ways of thinking from an early age.

6. Public spaces: The use of public spaces (or rather restrictions thereof), is also limiting for the civil society actors. This mostly applies to the use of media, access to public squares for projects and freedom of speech on the internet. Most media in BiH is influenced, or controlled, by the Bosnian
government and are used to sustain (or create more) ethnic or nationalistic divisions. Several civil society actors believe that the development of more independent media could support the peacebuilding process. Some of the civil society actors experience problems with gaining access to public spaces to do their projects.

7. Perceptions of Bosnian citizens: The civil society actors believe that the perceptions of civil society that are upheld by the Bosnian citizens are negative. They believe this is mostly due to the high level of corruption within the sector during the first phase of civil society and the stories of competition, backstabbing and incompetence that currently circulate. Most of the NGOs within the sector are perceived as a waste of time, or just as a way to take money from foreigners. The focus on social cohesion forms an additional problem according to the interviewees. They often experience that Bosnian citizens do not want to be confronted with what happened during the war. This negative perceptions are leading to low levels of participation, which is limiting the civil society actors greatly.

7.2 What insights can the use of a holistic theoretical framework about civil society offer about those limitations?

The limitations that the civil society actors experience are connected and interdependent. Therefore, a focus on solely one of these limitations cannot fully explain the complex situation. The integrated holistic approach as proposed by Edwards (2004) can give more insights about the connectedness and complexities of these limitations. The environment in which the civil society actors are functioning should be seen as an ‘ecosystem’. Trying to understand the gaps and weaknesses of these ecosystems can help offer more insights about why a strong associational life (in numbers) does not necessarily lead to a good society.

BiH is not only recovering from years of violent conflict, but is also going through significant political, economic and cultural changes. The level of social cohesion in BiH is low. This can especially be seen in low levels of trust and communication between the citizens of different ethnic groups, and low levels of trust in institutions, associational life and political parties. Nationalistic political parties still dominate the elections by using politics of fear. The DPA is legitimizing segregation and nationalistic thinking as it has institutionalised the ethnic divisions, thereby also discriminating other ethnic minorities. Segregation is also felt in the educational system, where curricula, languages and the two schools under one roof system are entrenching the ethnic divisions.

The political system is seen by the civil society actors as the most important block for the creation of social cohesion. They believe the nationalistic politicians are trying to exacerbate the ethnic divisions in order to maintain their power. The international community, here mainly
embodied by the donors of which most of Bosnia’s civil society is reliant, forms another large limitation to the work of creating a greater social cohesion. Next to this, the citizens of BiH are not regarded to be very supporting of - and involved with - civil society. The civil society actors experience a large disconnect between themselves and the Bosnian citizens. There are thus clear gaps within the ‘ecosystem’ in which the civil society actors are trying to work towards their goals.

These gaps make it more difficult for ideas of the good society to come to fruition and clearly show that a large civil society does not necessarily lead to a good society. One can see this, for example, in the mushrooming of NGOs during the beginning of the civil society building years and how that led to widespread corruption. Ideas about the good society can differ between the different spheres, but also within civil societies. Practices of corruption and competition characterize the Bosnian civil society, proving that a large civil society does not automatically lead to trust and cooperation within the sector.

Within civil society itself, there are also disagreements about the ends and means that generate a good society. Practices of corruption are still prevalent in Bosnia’s civil society. Another substantial limitation is the competition between civil society organisations. The main driving force behind this competition is funding, but the situation is maintained by a culture of backstabbing, gossip and secrecy amongst many of the civil society actors. This is leading to an unhealthy competition and a lack of cooperation and networking amongst the civil society organisations. However, mutual trust and cooperation amongst civil society actors is essential for a good civil society (Edwards, 2004). Many (especially neo-Tocquevillians) believe that a strong associational life (in terms of a quantitatively large associational life) automatically generates this trust and cooperation, but this turns out not to be true for the Bosnian case. Low trust and cooperation lead here to a scattered civil society, consisting of actors who are not able to work together towards their mutual goal of greater social cohesion and sustainable peace.

In order to reach the goals of the good society, collective action along the several spheres in one direction is needed. However, this proves to be difficult in the Bosnian case. The different spheres are not in agreement about the ends and means of the good society, as for example, the political system is regarded to work against the mission of the civil society actors. Amongst the spheres, and within civil society itself, there is a lack of trust and cooperation. There is thus a great need for a place of deliberation in order for the different spheres to come to a consensus of which direction to move in. It is here that the importance of public spheres comes to the fore. However, BiH has a lack of open, independent public spheres. The closed nature and lack of independence of, for example, the educational system, the media, the internet, and public spaces are greatly limiting to the civil society actors.
A healthy associational ecosystem is vital to the public sphere, since it is usually through voluntary organizations and the media that citizens can communicate about ideas of the good society. It is here, that the civil society actors are currently trying to place pressure in order to break the negative spiral they find themselves in. The civil society actors are actively involved in working towards the betterment of these public spheres, as many projects are focused on educational reforms, non-formal education, establishing independent media platforms and creating spaces for public dialogue about nationalism and social cohesion.
8. Discussion

8.1 Recommendation for praxis (societal)
Looking at the ‘puzzle’ of Bosnia’s civil society, several recommendations for praxis can be made. The first shift in the complex interrelations of Bosnia’s society which will reshuffle the cards the civil society actors are dealt, is the current trend of international donors leaving. As said before, donor institutions do not only have an impact on the number and types of associational organisations but also have a strong influence on the norms of the civil society organisations, as the current funding structures are leading to corruption and competition in the sector. Some of the interviewees believe that the exodus of donors will eventually lead to less corruption in the sector. It would, as they argue, become even more difficult to obtain funding for projects, and those who misuse money will be slowly filtered out. As the presence of corruption by civil society actors has influence on perceptions of the government and Bosnian citizens of the sector, this could possibly lead to more positive opinions about civil society.

The downside of the decrease in funding is that it will likely lead to more competition between the civil society organisations, a growing trend that the interviewees are already recognizing. This competition casts a shadow on the perceptions Bosnian citizens uphold about civil society, and leads to a lessening of (an already very low level of) trust and cooperation within civil society. As trust and cooperation is needed to create an healthy associational life, and healthy discussions about ideas of the good society, it is of great importance that incentives for competition will be reduced. A possible resolution for such a reduction is to eliminate the factor of uncertainty and the need to survive from project to project for the civil society organisations. The civil society actors all believe that when they are more free in the spending of their funding money (for example a larger sum to be available for salaries or office-rent instead of “wasting it on fancy hotel rooms” (small talk 2) and less partial funding) the incentive to compete diminishes and the organisations can focus on positive communication, networking and cooperation. This type of cooperation can, then, be genuine, instead of the involuntary and ‘fake’ cooperation they are currently forced into by the donors. Norms such as trust and cooperation will become more represented within the sector and this leads them closer to the idea of a good society, which is ultimately what civil societies strive for.

To accomplish this shift in the relations between donors and civil society, communication and cooperation on a higher level is needed. It is here that the importance of more open public spheres comes to the fore. The creation of meeting points between civil society and donor institutions can open dialogue between them so that steps towards a consensus of future funding structures can be taken. The adaptation of these structures to the needs of the civil society actors and therefore the
possible lessening of competition between them, could lead to more cooperation and stronger networks. This could set in motion an upward spiral of more accountability for the civil society actors as a relevant (and equal) partner within the peacebuilding trajectory, which in turn could lead to more room for dialogue about adjustments for the structures and pressure to root out corruption and nepotism within the donor institutions, leading to a more independent and capable united civil society.

The lessening of corruption and competition could also have a positive influence on the perceptions the citizens of BiH have of civil society. However, there should also be a focus on creating meeting points within the public spheres to accommodate communication between civil society organisations and the citizens they want to represent. As of now, there is a real disconnect between civil society and a large part of the Bosnian citizens.

The creation of open, independent and safe public spheres are thus crucial to resolving the above-named limitations. They form the basis for communication and offer possibilities for cooperation. It is here, however, that a significant obstacle has to be overcome. The influence of the government over the public spheres is large, especially over the spheres of the media and the educational system. Civil society actors believe both of these spheres are used to spread and entrench nationalistic/ethnic divisions among the Bosnian citizens, and are thus not only excluding civil society from the dialogue but are actively trying to lessen their impact on social cohesion. Good functioning of the public spheres relies on elements of a healthy associational system and action in search of the good society. However, it is necessary that the spheres are based on democratic values so that all viewpoints can be represented while none are excluded or repressed (Edwards, 2004). Crucial for the resolutions to this problem is the accountability of the government to uphold democratic values, which is something they claim to adhere to, but in practice do not show.

An optimist would say that the strengthening of the civil society sector through cooperation amongst each other and a stronger backing by the citizens of BiH, would lead to more accountability, and thus more pressure on the political system. The civil society actors themselves, are not as optimistic and the past gives them every reason not to be. Perhaps a more united civil society could put pressure on the international community to demand a higher level of democracy of the government. Perhaps a stronger civil society, focused on creating more social cohesion amongst its citizens, is the key to unlock nationalist voting issues in the long run.

It is here that the international community could possibly apply more pressure on the Bosnian government to uphold the democratic values that they have promised to keep. Examples of the current adoption of the law on social media RS and the proposal of the ‘law of Putin’ show that the
Bosnian government, especially of RS, does not uphold the democratic constitution on which the Bosnian society is based.

8.2 Recommendation for praxis (scientific)

The reality of civil society in peacebuilding contexts is complex. Studying these complex realities can lead to a multitude of problems. The use of integrated approaches and holistic frameworks can shed some light on the complexities of real societies, that otherwise remain hidden. The socio-political, cultural, historical and economic contexts in which the Bosnian civil society actors function have proven to be of great importance for understanding the limitations they experience. Looking at civil societies and the contexts in which they function as ‘ecosystems’ can offer insights about linkages between spheres, institutions and actors. The use of a holistic approach is therefore of great importance. Solely focusing on civil society building is simply not enough to show the entire picture. There is a need for more research that focuses on analysing the complex realities ‘on the ground’. Holistic and integrated approaches, can offer useful frameworks to support this kind of research.

8.3 Limitations of the research

The main limitation of this research applies to the group of informants that the researcher chose to study. First of all, due to the limited time and scope of this research, the group of informants needed to be delimited. While the researcher suggests holistic approaches are of great importance to understanding the complexities of civil society in peacebuilding contexts, she also acknowledges that the small sample size does leave out civil society actors that are of influence on the level of peacebuilding and social cohesion in BiH. Choices for the sample of informants were influenced by a theoretical basis and practical limitations. The group of informants only included those who focus on sustainable peacebuilding and social cohesion. It is, however, of great importance to note that those actors who are not included in the sample, are of importance for studying the linkages of civil society, peacebuilding, and social cohesion.
9. Bibliography


