Blessed are the peacemakers _{Matthew 5:9}
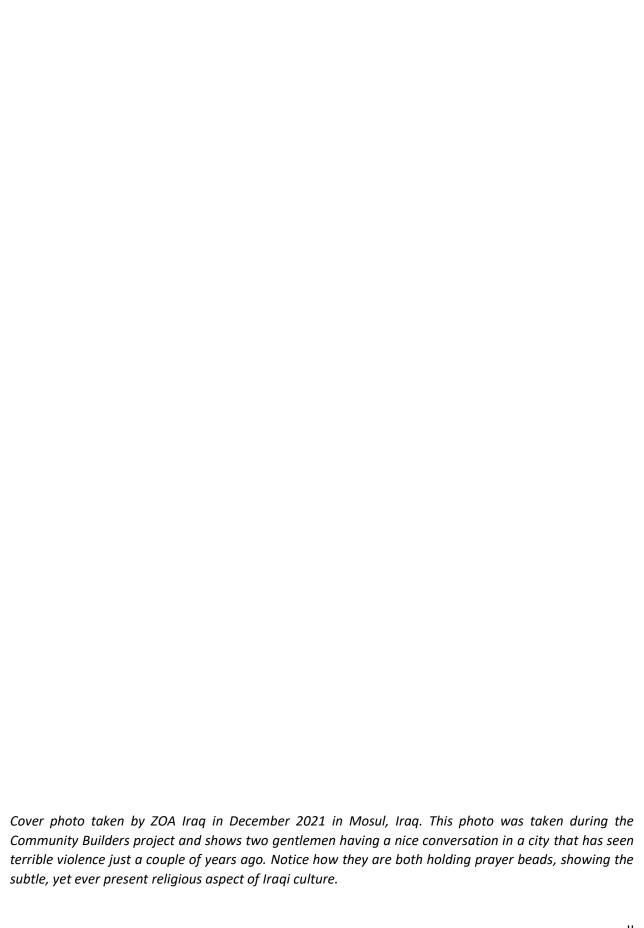
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Collaboration between INGOs and religious actors on peacebuilding in northern Iraq

Abstract

This research seeks to understand how international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local religious actors collaborate on peacebuilding in northern Iraq. Northern Iraq, which is rich in different peoples and religions, has known many violent conflicts, conflicts that were often shaped along sectarian lines. International interventions have had various results, but as long as there is a lack of local ownership of the peacebuilding process, there seems to be a lack of sustainability as well. Through a collective case study, and with use of academic debates concerning external/local collaboration and the role of religion in conflicts, collaboration between INGOs and local religious actors has been explored. This subject is placed in Iraq's historical context, addressing conflicts, interventions, collaboration and religion. Overall, the participants in this research value collaboration, but while the theoretical framework of this thesis highlights the emerging concept of localization, with its focus on local ownership, this kind of collaboration is not yet put fully into practice. Despite current challenges in this regard, the vast majority of the respondents are very optimistic about the current exchanges between different groups of people and feel that such involvement, and ideally even stronger collaboration, will contribute to effective peacebuilding in northern Iraq.

Key words: Iraq, religion, collaboration, international, local, peacebuilding

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List of acronyms

CSO - civil society organization
CSR - corporate social responsibility
FBO - Faith-based organization
IDP - internally displaced person
(I)NGO - (international) non-governmental organization
IS - Islamic State
LNGO - local non-governmental organization
NCCI - NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq

List of tables and figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

If not during a conflict, than at least when a conflict is past its fiercest, most violent stage, it is time to bring people together and start rebuilding society and societal relations. It is time for peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is a complex process, encompassing many actors and it can be built upon many different strategies. This is also the case in northern Iraq. In its relatively short history Iraq has had to deal with many conflicts. An important component of Iraqi culture and thereby also of the conflicts, is religion. From the formation of Iraq out of three Ottoman provinces, up to the terror instigated by Islamic State (IS), the sectarian divisions in Iraq have been a source of much trouble. At first, international actors were intervening in Iraq, pushing their own agendas on the local population. Whether we talk about the English protectorate of the newly established state, or the US-led intervention in 2003, the peacebuilding strategies implemented in Iraq have had a one-sided character, lacking ownership by the local population. In the last two decades, more and more attention has been given by international actors to the Iraqi population itself, involving them in shaping their own future. The many international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working in Iraq on subjects such as social cohesion have seriously invested in this concept of localization. Among the varying local actors involved in these peacebuilding projects are religious actors.

As was just mentioned, religion is very important in Iraq. Religion is comprised of a system of beliefs or dogmas that are often also normative in nature, thus serving as directives for how someone should be living their life (Harpviken & Røislien, 2005). A religion is often spread widely, encompassing many people. In Iraq, this is especially the case for the Islamic religion, but there are minorities of Christians and Yazidis as well. These people are connected with each other in a religious community, sharing similar convictions, norms and values. The religion shapes the identity of its adherents and because the convictions and sense of community can be of great influence, it gives the identity a robust nature. The system of beliefs and the community of adherents gives religion an organizational structure which is a vital part of its ability to reach out and influence society at large. Harpviken & Røislien (2005) notice how, not just in Iraq, the wars in recent times have been mostly civil wars. These civil wars, such as the rise of IS and their establishment of an autonomous region in Iraq, have a big impact on society and will change society in varying degrees. This change will also affect the role of religion in society and thus its role in peacebuilding in this post-conflict context. How much the role of religion in this regard will change and whether the change presents opportunities or constraints, depends on the role of (a particular) religion in the conflict.

This research focuses on two topics that concern peacebuilding: how peacebuilding processes are shaped by the balance between external interventions and local initiatives on the one hand, and by the role of religious actors on the other. As is already clear at this point, the case study used for this research focuses on northern Iraq. The choice of this particular region involves several subjects. Obviously, the case study to pick has to include the topics of external/local relations and religious actors. Iraq has had, certainly during the last two to three decades, much experience with both of these topics. International interventions have dominated peacebuilding activities in Iraq, but since the beginning of this century many local organizations have become involved in peace-related activities as well. As for religion, Muslim actors can be found throughout Iraq, but the northern region is specifically interesting given its rich diversity of peoples and religions. Because the northern region is also one of the more accessible parts of Iraq, this is the area where many NGOs have their locations and projects. By bringing these two topics together, this thesis explores how INGOs and local religious actors view collaboration and, according to them, how their collaboration will contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq.

1.1 Societal relevance

There are many actors involved in peacebuilding projects across the globe. Some are operating on an international level, while others are mainly locally involved. Some have a religious identity, others do not. The rich diversity of northern Iraq has been visible in the sectarian divisions, but can also lead to valuable exchanges. Collaboration between the various actors is obviously a necessity when trying to bring conflicting parties in Iraq together and address the root causes of the conflicts. Which actors will collaborate with each other and what the level of mutual engagement is, can be (and often is) very different. Sometimes collaboration can cause friction, at other times it might result in positive changes.

This research addresses collaboration between international and local actors in order to find out what levels of engagement there are and what seems to work best. Regarding the local actors, there is a specific focus on religious actors. Religion is an important part of most cultures and peoples' identities, and this is definitely the case in Iraq. In other words, it is paramount to involve religious actors in peacebuilding projects. However, they are not always involved. And even if those actors are involved, it can be quite difficult to collaborate in an effective way. Some INGO-staff who are involved with peacebuilding projects in Iraq are wondering if and how they should collaborate with religious actors in their projects. There are also religious actors who want to be involved in such projects, but have difficulty in establishing an effective relationship with international actors. By addressing these issues, this research aims to gain more knowledge regarding the question of how, in practice, collaboration between international actors and local religious actors functions and how this can impact the peacebuilding projects. As this research also deals with relevant historic events in Iraq and addresses the religious landscape to be found here, this will provide important context for international actors to acknowledge the importance of taking religion and religious actors into account when working on subjects like social cohesion. This research will highlight commonalities between international actors and local religious leaders as well as barriers experienced on both sides with regard to collaboration. The conclusion of this research can be shared with peacebuilders in Iraq, whether they are INGO-staff, religious leaders or even government officials, in order for them to recognize current best practices and barriers, thereby providing points of interest to improve collaboration between the different actors and, thereby, possibly also positively affect the way peacebuilding projects are shaped and implemented.

1.2 Scientific relevance

With regard to the external/local balance, there has already been a decades-long academic debate concerning the focus of activities. At first, peacebuilding strategies have had a state-building character whereby international actors were actively intervening in local processes to set up (liberal) systems that would deal with problems of state failure. To get a better understanding of this approach to peacebuilding, *Chapter 2* will review the works of scholars like Paris (2006), Chandler (2013), Verkoren & Kamphuis (2013) and others. In recent years, more academic attention is paid to the notion of hybridity between international interventions and local initiatives, while at the same time the definitions and meanings of 'external' and 'local' are more critically addressed. Among the authors who deal with these matters are Millar, Van der Lijn & Verkoren (2013) and Van Leeuwen et al. (2019). This section of *Chapter 2* will also deal with collaboration between international and local non-governmental organizations as discussed by Al Adem et al. (2018) and Tran & AbouAssi (2020) in order to expand beyond state actors. By delving into the literature regarding this topic, this research aims to get a better understanding of the development of the debate concerning the apparent division between the external and the local. By conducting a case study research, the literature on this topic is related to what people on the ground and in the field experience themselves. It will also highlight any new ideas and/or initiatives relating to the external/local relationship.

The second topic of interest addresses the role of religious actors in peacebuilding. Again, over the years there has often been a sharp distinction between the views of religion being an important cause for conflict versus those that see religion as a driver of peace. The former's critique of religion will be discussed by means of involving articles from Huntington (1993), Fox (2004) and others who write on how religion can fuel conflicts by sharpening distinctions between different identities. The latter's differing view is apparent in the works by Little & Appleby (2004), Harpviken & Røislien (2005), and several other studies that elaborate on religious values and the roles of religious actors in peacebuilding. In response to the religiously-inspired terrorist attacks during the first decades of the 21st century, a renewed interest in the role of religion in (post-) conflict has arisen. This research aims to find out how religion is incorporated in peacebuilding activities, whether it has a role at all, and if so, whether it helps in bringing people together, or rather if it causes (new) problems instead.

Although there is already quite some literature available on the subjects, there is less to be found specifically on the role of religious actors in peacebuilding processes and on possible collaboration between these actors and (international) NGOs. Religion and conflict as such is often a topic of discussion, but less so religion and peace. Regarding the literature on NGO collaboration, this often deals with collaboration between NGOs, between NGOs and governments, or between NGOs and corporations. Less can be found on collaboration between (I)NGOs and religious actors. This research will provide more material on these specific topics. Focusing on these points of interest will provide information for reflection on the respective literature and makes it possible to add to the debate. This research has a specific interest in finding out whether the development of thought in the literature is continuing in the same direction, or if, also based on the basis of this case study, nuances have to be added. The conclusions of the case-study research can be shared with peacebuilders themselves, both from the INGOs and local religious ones. This might also result in a better collaboration between the various actors and, thereby, the peacebuilding process.

1.3 Research objective and research questions

This research essentially concerns peacebuilding. It delves into a specific part of this subject, by focusing on collaboration between international non-governmental organizations and local religious actors. The element of connection here is the effect the collaboration can have on peacebuilding in northern Iraq. Combining these various topics of interest into one topic of research results in the following research question: ***What assumptions do international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local religious actors have on collaboration and how, according to them, will collaboration between them contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq?***

This question addresses all the topics and connects them. But in order to properly deal with this question, it first needs to be divided into several categories, containing sub-questions, to arrive at a substantial answer. The following questions need to be addressed:

- Conceptual questions
  - What can be considered international non-governmental organizations?
  - What can be considered local religious actors?
  - How is peacebuilding defined by scholars?
  - What do academic sources say that collaboration entails?
  - How do scholars view the role of religion in conflicts?

- Contextual question

- What does the conflict-situation in northern Iraq look like?

- Empirical questions
- How do the actors in northern Iraq define peacebuilding?
- What peacebuilding projects can be found in northern Iraq?
- What roles do local religious actors have in peacebuilding in northern Iraq?
- What assumptions do the actors in northern Iraq hold on collaboration?
- According to the actors in northern Iraq, how will this collaboration contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq?
- Is there a difference between how the INGOs and religious actors answer these questions?
- How do these answers relate to the theoretical framework?

A theoretical framework and literature review functions as a solid starting block for this thesis and will address the conceptual and contextual questions. This will deal with the concepts of INGOs, local religious actors, peacebuilding and the academic debates on external/local collaboration and the role of religion in conflicts. Another important subject here is the context of the case study. Analyzing relevant historical events and the current conflict-situation in Iraq connects the theory to the field. This research further has a qualitative character in which interviews will have a prominent role in the collection of data. Desk research and a survey fill in the gaps. The qualitative data is used to form an understanding of the peacebuilding activities in northern Iraq and the collaboration between INGOs and local religious actors.

1.4 Research outline

The next chapter elaborates on the concepts that are dealt with in this research and includes a table that shows how these concepts are operationalized. This is followed by a literature review, discussing articles that fit in the academic debates. All this is summarized and visualized in a conceptual framework. *Chapter 3* explains the methodology that has been used throughout this research, addressing the scope of this research, data collection, data analysis and a discussion on the whole, specifically discussing the choices made and addressing the limitation of this research. *Chapter 4* gives an overview of relevant historical events that took place in Iraq and the current conflict-situation. It also paints the religious landscape, thereby giving an understanding of the context of this case study. This will be followed by *Chapter 5* which presents the collected and analyzed data gathered through a survey and interviews with INGO-staff and religious leaders. Finally, *Chapter 6* brings this research to its conclusion, followed by a reflection and recommendations for future research and praxis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework & Literature review

In this chapter literature will be discussed that relates to the conceptual sub-topics of the research objective. Before discussing the different viewpoints on intervention, collaboration and the role of religion in conflicts, there will first follow an elaboration on some key concepts used throughout this thesis, followed by an operationalization of the concepts. After discussing the literature, a research framework is presented.

2.1 Conceptualization

In order to find an answer to the central research question of this Masters' thesis, some key concepts need to be defined more clearly. This will help to set the right focus for finding appropriate literature and collecting relevant data.

The first concept to define is that of international non-governmental organizations or INGOs. An NGO is "an organisation that is not part of the structure of government" (Verkoren, 2008: 36). It is self-governing, not-for profit and – in the context of this research – humanitarian; that is to say that it works on behalf of other people, usually people considered to be marginalized and/or in need of support, and it is geared towards improving the quality of life for these disadvantaged people (Verkoren, 2008; Al Adem, 2018). It this sense an NGO would not really differ from a civil society organization (CSO) and Cordery & Sim (2018) position CSOs within the broader spectrum of NGOs. Along with CSOs, this spectrum also includes community groups, charities and social networks. A critical view on the distinction between the terms ' NGO' and 'CSO' is given by Mohanty (2002) who remarks that CSOs are NGOs that have been influenced by the 'neo-liberal agenda', working on the ascendancy of markets and promoting good government and democratization. Aside from this emphasis on neo-liberal politics, NGOs have indeed gone beyond 'just' providing relief to also trying to eliminate the root causes of humanitarian crises, thereby, as Barnett (2005) explains, entering the world of politics. As the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) gained momentum, more and more private businesses have also started to invest more in addressing social and environmental issues (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). However, this research will not include these actors, as they are not considered to be non-profit. In general terms, NGOs/CSOs differ from political parties and organizations, as they are interested in political power, and from trade unions and professional organizations, which are concerned with specific interests of a specific sector (Génot, 2010). An NGO is considered to be international when it operates in multiple countries. Often the headquarters and/or place of origin of an INGO is not located in the countries where it provides relief and/or recovery.

Then, shifting to the local level, there are local religious actors. Religion can encompass several dimensions, such as a set of ideas, a community, an institution, a set of symbols and practices, and spirituality (Frazer & Owen, 2018). Most commonly, religion refers to a system of beliefs and values, often associated with particular organizational forms, and with some sort of supra-natural deity (or deities) (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015). Actors can range between faith communities, i.e. formal organizations of persons with common beliefs and commitments, and specific religious leaders, i.e. ordained or lay religious leaders of any rank at a certain level of formal and non-formal leadership (Watson et al., 2020). In this case, it concerns communities and leaders on a local level. This research will focus on religious leaders as religious actors. 'Local' means that these religious actors are present and active in a specific area and that their presence is not 'new' due to peacebuilding activities and interventions. They are firmly grounded within the local community.

In order to discuss the interaction between the INGOs and local religious actors, I shall elaborate on the concept of collaboration. Collaboration concerns organizational engagement between at least two actors. It can be differentiated by the 'broadness' of this engagement. Fowler (2000) distinguishes five types of relationship: 1) development ally (in which there is an agreement between the parties on the goal they want to reach together); 2) project funder (a focus on negotiating certain projects, dealing with the set-up, implementation and evaluation of these projects); 3) program supporter (with a focus on a specific area of development work. This support could be financial, technical or having to do with networks); 4) institutional supporter (concerns the effectiveness and viability of the programs and the organization itself); and 5) partner (often involves full, mutual support and concern for the other party or parties). Something similar can be found in a study by Bowen et al. (2010) who label three types of community engagement as (1) transactional, (2) transitional, and (3) transformational. The transactional engagement concerns information sharing, financial donations and building infrastructure. The relationship between provider and recipient has a one-way character. Transitional engagement has a more two-way character and involves dialogue and consultations. Control of resources, however, still remains with the provider. Transformational engagement is characterized by joint learning and sensemaking in which the local community has an important role in framing problems and managing solutions. In this case there is often joint decision-making and co-ownership of resources. Having such degrees of engagement will provide this research with some parameters when studying the levels of engagement between INGOs and religious actors. Pedersen & Pedersen (2013) find that since 2000 more scholars and practitioners have been arguing for cross-sector collaboration whereby different actors can combine their respective expertise and have a more holistic impact when dealing with social and environmental issues. In their research, Pedersen & Pedersen paid specific attention to partnerships between NGOs and businesses. When studying the motives for these partnerships they found that joint awareness raising and developing partner skills, knowledge and competences are important factors, but what stands out is that NGOs place the most importance on getting access to partner resources (including financial, technical and human resources). This research will also highlight the motivations for collaboration between the different actors.
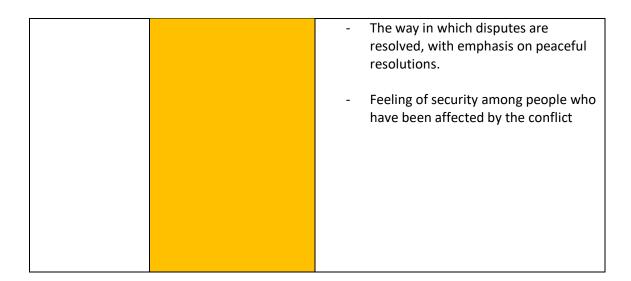
Then there is peacebuilding, the subject on which collaboration between INGOs and local religious actors will take place. Peacebuilding goes beyond peacekeeping (keeping warring parties apart) and peacemaking (negotiating to reach a settlement) in that it "strives for lasting solutions that address the underlying causes of a conflict" (Verkoren, 2008: 51). This distinction between peace-strategies was made by Boutros-Ghali (1992) and is referred to in a lot of academic literature on this topic. Boutros-Ghali views peacemaking as the operation of resolving the issues that have led to conflict, peacekeeping as a way to preserve peace by assisting in the implementation of agreements, and peacebuilding as the process of rebuilding institutions and infrastructure as well as creating peaceful, mutually beneficial bonds between former foes. Central in Boutros-Ghali's vision is the aim to address the root causes of conflict; economic, social and political. Specific indicators on peacebuilding are mentioned by McCandless et al. (2012) who differentiate between indicators that address negative peace, i.e. levels of violence, and indicators that address positive peace, i.e. social cohesion and effective mechanisms to handle conflict. These indicators will be incorporated in the operationalization of peacebuilding in *Table 1*. Diehl et al. (1998) describe this 'evolution' in conflict resolution as they highlight important changes in the functions of peacekeeping operations that went from interposition and cease-fire monitoring to focus on things like election supervision and nation building as well. They notice that these changes also include more coercive tactics, something that will be discussed in *section 2.2.1*. Verkoren (2008) distinguishes three peacebuilding 'tracks': 1) interventions aimed at the leaders of the warring parties. This could involve diplomatic actions and mediation to prevent or end violent conflict; 2) initiatives aimed at important figures in society to involve them in the peace process, thereby having the probability of reaching the broader communities of which these figures are representatives. This often involves "consultations, workshops and dialogues

in which representatives of different sides in a conflict are involved" Verkoren, 2008: 53); and 3) a focus on 'ordinary people', i.e. the communities at the grassroots level. This focuses on the roots of a conflict and may include "development work, peace education, the training of community mediators" (Ibid), etcetera. These tracks are helpful in this research to differentiate between the possible levels in society with which international actors can collaborate. As the local actors in this research consist of religious leaders, the focus will be on track 2. Furthermore, this research will examine if these concepts and the theories following below line up with current assumptions of peacebuilders in the field on collaboration and peacebuilding.

These concepts are operationalized as follows:

Table 1: Operationalized concepts

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators
INGOs	- International	- Number of countries where NGO is active - Having a central administration
	- Non-governmental organization	- Having self-governance - Policies aimed at improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people
Local religious actors	- Locality	- Established in the area - Engagement with local population
	- Religiosity	- Having systematic beliefs - Having a structured organization
Collaboration	- Transactional	- Sharing information - -Funding
	- Transitional	- -Support (technical/facilitating access) - -Dialogue and consultations
	- Transformational	- Co-ownership - Full, mutual support throughout projects
Peacebuilding	- Peacemaking	- Resolving issues that led to conflict
	- Peacekeeping	- Assisting in the implementation of agreements
	- Addressing root causes of conflict	- Perceptions on reconciliation and feelings of trust among former adversaries, e.g. social cohesion

		- The way in which disputes are resolved, with emphasis on peaceful resolutions. - Feeling of security among people who have been affected by the conflict

2.2 Literature review

Since this study focuses on collaboration between external and internal actors with regard to Iraq, literature on the topic of peacebuilding will be discussed, starting with an intervention strategy that has a one-sided character, state-making, and then shifting to collaboration with local actors, the process of localization, which is increasingly replacing the previous strategy. Thereafter, two perspectives on the role of religion in conflicts will be discussed. Starting with literature in which religion can be seen as a driver of conflict and then, conversely, switching to literature that elaborates on how religion can be a driver of peace. Lastly, there will be elaboration on literature that deals with the role religious actors specifically can have in the process of peacebuilding.

2.2.1 State-making

Especially since 1989, foreign policies and international agencies have paid much attention to post-war state-making (Paris, 2006). This is tied to the increasing amount of attention that was paid to the emerging concept of 'failed states' which were seen as serious problems for the international order (Newman, 2009). Although definitions of state 'failure' vary, it can be characterized as a situation where central government has a deficient capacity to control public order, its borders, and maintain viable public institutions and services. Newman, reviewing the debate on this topic, mentions the link between the weakness of a state and the emergence of violent conflicts. These possible sources of conflict can also threaten other states, which is why the international community became heavily involved in these matters. Newman notices how several writers urge for new methods to address failed states by 'temporarily' suspending their sovereignty to facilitate international involvement. One of the proponents of this view is Krasner (2004) who supports protectorates of international actors, or shared sovereignty contracts with regard to collapsed or poorly governed states. Paris (2006) explains that these interventions often concerned a 'liberal peace' approach that promoted democratization and marketization. He argues, though, that the reconstituting of war-shattered states should not only focus on a standard 'package' of reforms that includes elections, civil liberties and a market-oriented economy, but that there should also be more attention for the construction of effective institutions that can support such changes.

Chandler (2013) describes a switch from international state-making to societal transformation. This pattern initially follows the line of Paris, in that the external liberalization of a country must go deeper and involve institutional change, but in this case the interventionist approach to the societal milieu goes even further. The issue of 'post-conflict resilience' goes to the roots of society and focuses on communities, societal practices and associations to make a change. By addressing ideological issues, it can build (liberal) peace from the ground up. However, Chandler finds this 'development' questionable because, to him, it seems superficial, not addressing structural constrains and power relations.

Also, Mazzar (2014), in analyzing state-making missions in the 2000s, came to the conclusion that forcible state-making cannot be accomplished by outsiders. According to him, internal motives for reform and the responsibility of local leaders are undermined by outside interventions. He proposes gradual progress that includes long-term advisory, aid relationships and enhancing effective governance. This should include a clear focus on supporting local patterns and needs.

Verkoren and Kamphuis (2013) also find it questionable to build Western-style states in unstable developing countries through outside intervention. However, they specifically address the issue of international aid, more specifically *aid rentierism*, as something that hampers state formation and capacity building. They argue that because of the external rents, the government of a 'rentier state' does not depend on the economic activity and taxes of its citizens. This way they are barely accountable to the citizens and form a patronage-based ruling system or even develop warlord politics.

To summarize, as a recipe for peacebuilding, state-making had its springtide in the 1990s and 2000s and can refer to different intervention strategies, whether it concerns economic aid with strings attached or taking almost full control through a protectorate. In either case, the intervening party is very much in control and there is often little room for local initiatives, let alone local ownership of the recovery process. It thus appears to be a transactional way of 'collaborating', with in some cases maybe some transitional elements as well. This paradigm on peacebuilding tends to focus on international security, rather than local peace. It works on peacemaking and peacekeeping, and while it also wants to address root causes of conflict, it does this in a one-sided way. Even though Chandler (2013) mentions the newly developed notion of societal transformation, this does not align with the transformational dimension of collaboration as mentioned by Bowen et al. (2010). Seeing how the lack of collaboration in such peacebuilding-missions affected the sustainability of peace, this system was increasingly criticized and more was invested in localization.

2.2.2 External/local collaboration
This shift in vision is apparent in the work of Millar, Van der Lijn & Verkoren (2013) who find that in the period following the conclusion of the Cold War, many international actors viewed 'state failure' as a source for conflict and that this had to be addressed by creating strong, democratic states, influenced by Western ideals. Nowadays this system is, by many, seen as a failure itself, not being able to engage with local actors. They notice that certain Western 'universals', e.g. liberal peace, and civil society theory and policies, are locally inapplicable and are often intertwined with a divergence of interpretation of conflict by local and international actors. Based on research contributions being discussed, Millar, Van der Lijn and Verkoren argue that hybridity between international interventions and local configuration cannot be planned due to inherently emergent frictions. This friction-concept "adds to the analysis of peacebuilding by helping to understand the complex interaction processes in which various local actors and international interveners meet" (Millar, Van der Lijn & Verkoren, 2013: 139).

Another scholar who agrees with the previously mentioned critics is Ervin (2015). She agrees with the criticism on external peacebuilding, which efforts often achieve limited results in local conflicts. According to her, this problem is linked to what she refers to as the NGO-donor complex, whereby a single-minded (Western) system is rolled out over very different situations. She argues that there should be

more interest in and support for grassroots peacebuilding. Her idea of 'emergent peacebuilding' is "the product of a dynamical process; it is evolving based on continuous input and adaptation in a grassroots, ground-up, participatory process" (Ervin, 2015: 49). This then is part of the process of localization, whereby local people and groups have ownership of peacebuilding and recovery. Something similar can be found in post-colonial critique on interventions. Mahdavi (2015) challenges the way in which conflict-affected people, for instance in Iraq, can be perceived as passive recipients, rather than active agents with a possibility for bottom-up emancipation.

Verkoren (2008) also highlights the value of indigenous knowledge on conflict resolution. According to her, combining external and local knowledge and taking into account the benefits of both tradition and innovation is very important. Both perspectives can learn from each other. She writes that, theoretically speaking, "a good capacity building strategy uses participatory techniques and is embedded in the specific local and organizational context. Its approach is people-centered but also pays attention to systemic elements" (Verkoren, 2008: 143). This shows that external actors should not completely set themselves aside, but rather cooperate with local actors in such a way that the external actors can contribute where necessary, without disrupting the local ownership.

Using words such as 'local' and 'local actors' may paint a straightforward picture, as the above may seem to do. However, what this 'local' encompasses is not really so apparent.

Van Leeuwen et al. (2019) acknowledge a revival of interest in the 'local' and the development sector took hold of the idea that "local community's interests and capacities should become the key concern of peacebuilding interventions, and that the local is the place where peace should be defined" (Van Leeuwen et al., 2019: 1-2). However, they notice that the 'local' is an ambiguous classification as there is diversity to be found within the 'local'. Instead of 'romanticizing' the local, one should analyze differences and incoherence within the local and also not conflate 'local' with 'domestic'. Often, it is national and international intervening organizations that have an important role in stating who are valid representatives of the local. They suggest that interveners "may want to more actively engage with and even nurture such debate [about legitimacy and relationships of authority; JH] between local peacebuilders" (Van Leeuwen et al., 2019: 19).

Lee (2020) finds that local and national elites are important actors in shaping 'localization' and that there is often a gap between what these elites want and what local communities and social minorities actually need. He is critical about local agency as he finds that many local communities are struggling to manage their daily lives and have little time and energy to spare for all-encompassing programs of transformation. 'Localization' implies ownership and ownership implies responsibility, but in some cases the local population does not want to assume responsibility.

So then again, it is important to find a way in which collaboration between external and local actors results in both these actors flourishing in their respective roles as peacebuilders, bringing their own expertise to the table and finding a way to integrate this.

Al Adem et al. (2018) mention three types of collaboration between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs): (1) information sharing, building relations for networking purposes and working together on developing solutions; (2) conducting projects jointly through initiatives, setting up guidelines and knowledge sharing; (3) long-term commitment and high levels of interaction, sharing and employing supply chain processes. These types of collaboration roughly align with the dimensions of collaboration as mentioned in *Table 1* and so it seems that a similar way of differentiating can be found in various contexts. According to Al Adem et al., NGOs collaborate to "enhance their organizational capacities, alongside the effectiveness and efficiency of their relief operations" (Al Adem et al., 2017: 296). For example, INGOs can benefit from LNGOs' knowledge and experience in the area, and LNGOs can benefit from INGOs' resources. They can also unite to "develop

a focal point to facilitate the communication with governments" (Ibid: 300), increasing their influence in lobbying activities. Common challenges experienced by NGOs in their collaboration concern power imbalance and a poor distribution of responsibilities, conflicting priorities, objectives and terminology that leads to poor communication as well as tension in terms of respect, commitment and trust.

Tran & AbouAssi (2020) have also studied collaboration between local and international NGOs and found both opportunities and risks associated with this collaboration. When INGOs get involved with local actors there are risks of "bypassing local authorities, damaging local NGO ecosystems, and causing mission drifts for local players" (Tran & AbouAssi, 2020: 2). There is also the question of power imbalance as local NGOs are often holding the short end of the stick, going through (serious) transformations to meet the demands and pressures of INGOs. However, collaboration can also bring many advantages. For INGOs, collaboration with local partners means they get a better understanding of and connection with local communities which often improves sustainability and enhances legitimacy. Local NGOs can benefit from the INGOs' technical expertise and managerial professionalism, get support in capacity building and gain access to international networks. An interesting conclusion in the study by Tran and AbouAssi is that INGOs are increasingly using a scientific, managerial approach with regard to collaboration with local partners that includes "effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, top-down rational planning, and scientific management practices such as quantitative impact evaluations as the key principles" (Tran & AbouAssi, 2020: 13). This shows that there is still a disbalance in the collaboration and that the process of localization is still very much in a developmental phase.

Looking back at this section, there indeed seems to be an increasing focus on localization, i.e., the importance of local ownership of peacebuilding and recovery activities. The transformational dimension of collaboration that was missing in the state-making strategy is now emphasized in localization. However, it also seems difficult to put this ideal into practice. It can be challenging to find the 'right' local actors to work with and when there is collaboration, there is often a disbalance between the external and local actors. In this sense, the outspoken ideal in the process of localization is to reach a transformational way of collaborating, but in practice collaboration seems to be stuck in a transitional dimension. In the next sections literature on working with a specific group of local actors will be discussed to find out if these issues also play a part in this collaboration.

2.2.3 Religion as a driver of conflict

This thesis focuses specifically on religious actors as the local actors who collaborate with external actors. For the sake of this study, religion is the defining 'attribute' of this group of actors. While identities are always multiple, this research focuses on the religious dimension as explained in *Chapter 1*. With regard to conflict, religion can play various roles in the beginning of, during, and settling of conflicts. First, some literature will be discussed in which religion can be seen as a driver of conflict.

According to Huntington (1993), contemporary conflicts are mainly conflicts between different civilizations. A civilization is the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species" (Huntington, 1993: 24). He argues that the most important differentiating factor between civilizations is religion. Religion plays a very important role in shaping peoples' identity, one that transcends national boundaries. Huntington finds that this religious identity can become so strong as to discriminate sharply and exclusively among people – even more so than ethnicity – as religion can reinforce the revival of ethnic identities. He believes that the most civilizational clashes will occur where 'the West' meets 'Islam'. Huntington argues that this is partly due to Islam being "the least tolerant civilization of the monotheistic religions" (Huntington, 2013: 52). It seems that for Huntington religion is inherently discriminating and thereby a very important factor in creating the 'Other' which fuels fear and aggression. In this case he

does not really delve into the actual beliefs of a religious person but simply distinguishes one person's identity from another's. This view seems to align with a 'primordial' view on conflict as it is described, for example, by Oberschall (2000) and Fearon & Laitin (2000). The primordial view on conflict holds that identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity, e.g. unchanging, essential characteristics of a group of people and that conflict between different such groups is inevitable.

Fox (2004) too states that religion is an important influence on ethnic conflicts. The way conflict crosses a border can be intensified along religious lines because, for example, minorities who share the same religion as a minority that is engaged in a conflict in a bordering state can be swept up in the engagement as well. Interestingly, he argues that this only applies to conflict as it crosses a border, not peaceful movements. He paraphrases Girard (1977), who says that violence is an intrinsic element of religion because it takes "man's natural inclination for violence and institutionalizes it into a more socially acceptable context" (Fox, 2003: 101). This intrinsic violence then acts as a transmitter of violent conflict. Again, this description is very vague as it does not really address religious beliefs, but more how religion can be instrumentalized as part of an aggressive campaign, as might be done with any identity marker. This is what Oberschall (2000) calls the instrumentalist view on conflict whereby identities can be manipulated by, for instance, political leaders for their own ends.

It is this that Philpott (2007a) elaborates more on. He states that when religious violence takes place, it is often linked to political violence. Whether a religion favors an integrationist state that makes its religion official and suppresses other faiths, or whether they are the ones being suppressed, according to Philpott every religion has seen violence. Religion can fuel conflict by shaping the identities and loyalties of warring parties as well as their political goals. As an example, he says that "radical Islamic Revivalism was launched by early-twentieth-century intellectuals who perceived that Islam was decaying due to Western imperialism and internal corruption" (Philpott, 2007a: 508). In this case, conflict was brooding due to political and cultural issues. It does not necessarily include the religious beliefs of, in this case, Muslims. All in all, the previous cited authors do not seem to qualify religious identity as a cause of violence per se, rather this can be a means, i.e. a mobilizational fault line, for fueling a conflict.

Harpviken & Røislien (2005) find that the normative system found in religion may bolster conflict, even as a way to legitimize the use of violence. This is not to say that the normative system itself contains hateful messages, but specific texts could be interpreted and used in such a way. Dogmatism within religion can prevent such misuse of sacred and normative texts, but at the same time, such a dogmatic approach can also foster an uncompromising attitude which, again, can feed conflict. Harpviken and Røislien agree with what has been said previously regarding the issue of religion being a very important part of someone's identity, and because of that can also serve as a demarcation between different groups of people. This is especially the case "when religiously defined boundaries for inclusion and exclusion coincide with other identity markers [because then] the dividing line between 'Us' and 'Them' becomes most clear-cut" (Harpviken & Røislien, 2005: 13). In some cases, religious organizations are cooperating with a warring party, such as the state. They can provide legitimization for actions of this party and can be used to gather support and recruits for the regime. As such, Harpviken and Røislien find that while religion's role in initiating a conflict is often limited, it can play an important role in propagating it once it is already burning. But as was mentioned earlier, such conclusions do not only apply on religious identities. When researchers on the topic of identity and conflict, such as Fearon & Laitin (2000) mention religious identity, this is always mentioned alongside other identity markers such as ethnicity, nationality, language, etcetera. However, Sen (2008) noticed that when it concerns conflict, theorists that have a 'civilizational' approach, such as Huntington, often focus on one aspect of human identity and this mainly concerns religion. This may be the case because religion can be seen as a salient identity marker.

Gingerich et al. (2017) notice that such projections on religion and its role in society makes that, in humanitarian circles, religion has often been viewed as something so controversial and charged that it

would be best to avoid it all together. Aside from avoidance, there may also be a neglect of religion in humanitarian and developmental work because of religion's decline in Western society, at least in public. Philpott (2007a) mentions that religion "has waxed in its political influence over the past generation in every region of the globe except perhaps Western Europe" (Philpott, 2007a: 505).

(2003) adds that "those who argue religion is important tend to focus on the Third World and those who argue it is not important tend to focus on the rest of the world" (Fox, 2003: 116). This illustrates a discrepancy that can further shape an erroneous frame on religion as viewed by Western scholars, politicians and aid workers.

2.2.4 Religion as a driver of peace

There are also scholars who highlight a very different perspective on the role of religion and religious actors in conflicts. They find many values in various religious beliefs that can contribute to a peaceful society and they acknowledge the influence of religious leaders on their communities to encourage them to play a role in the peacebuilding process.

Among these scholars are Little and Appleby (2004), who argue that several negative religious events that have gotten wide public attention have set religion in a bad light. However, there is also more acknowledgement for constructive dimensions of religion with regard to social welfare and peacemaking activism. They write about 'religious peacebuilding' and define it as follows: "the range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of *resolving and transforming deadly conflict*, with the goal of *building social relations and political institutions characterized by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence."* (Little & Appleby, 2004: 5) According to them, local religious actors are among the first to notice signs of emerging conflict. They have been mediators, observers and advocates in conflict transformation as well as educators and institution builders in post-conflict settings. Negotiations are crucial moments in conflict transformation and religious communities and individuals can have a very important role to play here. Little and Appleby refer to Bartoli who says that religious mediators

> "are successful because (and to the extent that) they: (1) exhibit an intimate knowledge of the language and culture of the peoples in conflict; (2) enjoy access to first-hand information about the conflict as it evolves; (3) possess or draw upon political expertise; and, (4) help to develop and embrace a long-term vision of peace for the conflicted society" (Little & Appleby, 2004: 11).

Because of this, religious actors can very much be of added value in conflicts that have major religious, cultural and ethnic components. They find that where religious communities and individuals are effective in conflict situations, official religious establishments seem more effective in post-conflict situations. "Religious ethics, rituals, and disciplines can promote humility, compassion, and discernment in their practitioners, and these nonviolent religious militants often display the patience, timing, and judgment required of diplomats and agents of reconciliation alike" (Little & Appleby, 2004: 14). Philpot (2007b) adds that reconciliation practices have been implemented publicly and communally for many centuries in varied religious contexts, especially in Abrahamic faiths. For example, he finds that many thinkers and doers who have promoted the concept of transitional justice have been Christian.

Something similar can be found in the toolkit *Engaging with local faith actors and communities* (2020), where it says that religious actors "have a long history of engaging in disaster relief and providing humanitarian assistance […] as well as provision of hospitals, healthcare, education and care for the elderly" (Watson et al. 2020: 7). Religious actors are also oftentimes "first-line responders and on site before, during and after the time of an emergency" (Watson et al. 2020: 5). In a conflict situation it might be very difficult to reach out to local communities, especially marginalized groups. In these situations, religious leaders are sometimes the only way to reach out to these communities. At the same time, these

religious leaders have contact with local authorities and are often part of international networks. This way, they can be a bridge between the international, national and (very) local.

The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (2015), in their study on a similar topic, find that religious actors are very often valued for their reach, access and trust. Religious actors, as mentioned before, can access isolated groups and can be perceived as more trustworthy than foreign organizations, which are often regarded with suspicion. They also mention that religious actors and faith-based organizations (FBOs) can have a serious impact with regard to advocacy and influencing behavioral change. This is due to the (often large) religious communities that listen to their leaders, who can link necessary interventions to the values and beliefs held by the communities.

Harpviken & Røislien (2005) find two basic ways in which religious actors can play a role in peacebuilding. Religious actors can often connect with a variety of actors, including the actors that are driving the conflict, due to their moral status and, in situations where religion is not part of the conflict, their neutrality. In this instance their role is like that of a diplomatic liaison. Conversely, religious actors can use their network to find openings outside of the established diplomatic process. This is somewhat different in situations where religion is part of the conflict, but also in such a situation, Harpviken and Røislien find that it would be more beneficial to include religious actors in the peace process instead of isolating them. In the latter case, religious groups could become spoiler groups, hampering the peace process.

Although there are differences – sometimes many differences – between religions, Harpviken and Røislien see important similarities with regard to their experience with issues of politics, social relations and ethics. The knowledge of and experience with these subjects, make that religion and religious actors can very much be of added value in post-conflict society. The organizational structure of a religion is very relevant in assessing their possible role in peacebuilding activities. A highly structured and organized religion often has access to lots of resources which can be used for influencing other strategic actors. The structure of a religious community and its resources then also function as leverage and gives shape to a certain reputation. All of this can be utilized in bringing conflicting parties together or mobilizing support for certain activities and resolutions. Furthermore, in cases of civil war or other such conflicts that are crippling to the effectiveness of state institutions, people will look to alternative sources for help and guidance. In such cases, well-structured religious organizations will often fill the gap left by these weakened institutions.

Specifically with regard to Iraq, Wainscott (2019) finds that religious leaders can encourage their community to take positive action and foster reconciliation. They can shape beliefs, model new behavior and mobilize resources and therefore they are critical partners in the recovery process. She illustrates just how critical they are, saying: "[a]lthough involving religious actors in reconciliation does not guarantee success, excluding them seems certain to guarantee failure" (Wainscott, 2019: 4). Religious leaders exercise influence through formal positions and social media and can be aligned with political parties or even nonstate armed groups. However, with regard to politics, Wainscott finds that Iraqis don't want religious actors to get (too) involved in politics as they are increasingly critical towards the sectarian system.

This section has shown that religion and religious actors can indeed contribute to peacebuilding and recovery. The various religions present in Iraq hold beliefs that esteem human dignity, justice and reconciliation. The practitioners of these religions, i.e., the religious actors and leaders, can work from these beliefs, influencing people around them and thereby foster a peaceful community. While many of the aspects of religious actors could be ascribed to other leaders within society as well, this section highlights some values that are especially deeply embedded in religion. But overall, it really depends on the context in which these religious actors work. In societies in which religion is a salient identity marker, the position of religious leaders as drivers of peace will be stronger than in secular societies. As this thesis

focuses on (northern) Iraq, where religion has an important place in the culture, it is valuable to pay specific attention to the role of religious actors.
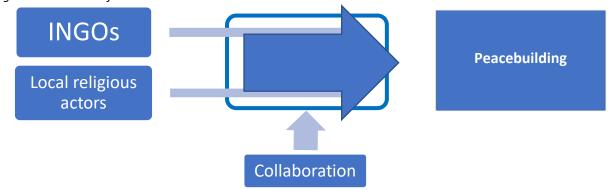
2.3 Research framework

The dependent variable, or the primary interest, concerns peacebuilding, i.e., peacebuilding projects in northern Iraq. The independent variables, or influencing factors, are the INGOs and local religious actors. They are the actors which have an impact on peacebuilding in the area. This results into the following framework:

Figure 1: Preliminary theoretical framework

Adding a moderating variable, being collaboration, shows the possible contingent effect on the independent-dependent relationship and results in the following framework:

Figure 2: Theoretical framework

Following the development of literature with its emphasis on the value of good collaboration between international and local actors and the positive contributions made by religious actors to peacebuilding initiatives, leads to the hypothesis that good collaboration between INGOs and local religious actors will have a positive effect on peacebuilding in Northern Iraq. The empirical part of this study will examine how the actors view this framework and will be followed by a comparison between the hypothesis and the experiences in the field.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research is aimed at finding an answer to the question: *What assumptions do international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local religious actors have on collaboration and how, according to them, will collaboration between them contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq?* This chapter elaborates on how this question has been answered by first explaining the scope of the research and addressing the sub-questions, then discussing data collection and analysis, and finally attention is given to the limitations encountered in this research.

3.1 Scope

As mentioned in *Chapter 1*, I have worked on a case study. A case study fits well in the context of a masters' thesis as it narrows the scope of the research, while still being a rich source of valuable data. A case study is an approach that can be very helpful when studying a certain phenomenon. It places the phenomenon in a specific context and will explore it from various angles, thereby facilitating an understanding of multiple facets of the phenomenon (Hafiz, 2008). Especially the contextual conditions of the topic of research seem relevant to me, which is why a case study is a helpful approach. The case I have used for this research focuses on northern Iraq. The choice of this particular region involves several issues. The case should involve the different concepts discussed in *Chapter 2* such as external/local relations, INGOs, religious actors and peacebuilding activities. Iraq has had much experience with all of these topics, certainly during the last couple of decades. International interventions have dominated a large part of this timeframe and over time, many local organizations have become involved in peace-related activities as well. As for religion, Muslim actors can be found throughout Iraq, but the northern region is specifically interesting given its rich diversity of peoples and religions. Because the northern region is also one of the more accessible parts of Iraq, this is the area where many NGOs have their locations and projects. Therefore, this region seemed worthwhile to investigate in order to get answers to the research questions.

This research mainly concerns an instrumental case study in which a specific issue is selected and illustrated by a case (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Creswell and Poth name two types of instrumental case studies: a single instrumental case study; and a collective instrumental case study. Since the actual 'case' in this study concerns multiple INGOs and multiple religious actors that have not been collectively involved on a single project, it might be best to speak of a collective case study. It seemed to me that focusing on one particular partnership between an INGO and a local religious actor would result in too little data for this research. By comparing several instances of collaboration, I can say a little more on what stands out and how it relates to the literature and hypothesis. Because this research involves specific actors and a specific context, the results of this research should not be generalized beyond this case, but according to Creswell and Poth, generalizing isn't a necessity; "The intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information (…) but to elucidate the particular" (Creswell & Poth, 2016: 126). There is room for what they call 'naturalistic generalizations' which refer to my understanding of the case by means of a case study as well as what readers of this thesis learn from it themselves. In either case, this research might have commonalities with other cases that involve similar actors and a similar context, such as in Nigeria. I specifically mention Nigeria because during a majority of this research, from January 2021 until September 2021, I have been working as an intern with ZOA, a Dutch INGO operating in 15 countries, including Iraq and Nigeria. This research partly stems from ZOA's interest in learning more on collaborating with religious actors on peacebuilding projects. In both Iraq and Nigeria they work on peacebuilding and in both cases, religion is an important component of the conflicts, but also of society as a whole.

Ideally, in addition to a substantial literature review regarding the key concepts and notions of the anticipated research, a case study such as this will also involve fieldwork. Given the many COVID-19 restrictions throughout my time of study, traveling was not really an option. Therefore, the 'fieldwork' in this research consist of online data collection.

In order to find an answer to the central research question '***What assumptions do international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local religious actors have on collaboration and how, according to them, will collaboration between them contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq?***' I have divided this question into several categories, containing sub-questions. The conceptual questions have been part of the set-up of this research by addressing relevant concepts and theories, thereby highlighting gaps in knowledge that this research will address. The questions are 'what can be considered international non-governmental organizations?, 'what can be considered local religious actors?', 'how is peacebuilding defined by scholars?', 'what do academic sources say that collaboration entails?', and 'how do scholars view the role of religion in conflicts?'. The first two questions make clear what type of actors I need to contact in this research and the latter three questions address the theoretical framework of this study. The contextual question, 'what does the conflict-situation in northern Iraq look like?', will present an overview of historical and actual events in (northern) Iraq and will serve as a general understanding of the situation in which the actors find themselves and how they have related to each other in the past. With this conceptual and contextual foundation in mind, the empirical questions will form the actual research of this study in that it results in primary data. These questions are 'how do the actors in northern Iraq define peacebuilding?', 'what peacebuilding projects can be found in northern Iraq?', 'what roles do local religious actors have in peacebuilding in northern Iraq?', 'what assumptions do the actors in northern Iraq hold on collaboration?', 'according to the actors in northern Iraq, how will this collaboration contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq?', 'is there a difference between how the INGOs and religious actors answer to these questions?', and ' how do these answers relate to the theoretical framework?'. What may become apparent when reading these questions, is that this research has somewhat of a constructivist approach. This means that I specifically study the participants' understanding of certain concepts and how this understanding affects the way they act (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

3.2 Data collection

Because I have chosen to conduct a case study, I have used multiple data collection and analysis methods to further develop and understand the case (Hyett et al. 2014). Using a triangulation of methods, such as desk research, textual content analyses and interviews, as well as using a variety of sources, I get a well-rounded set of data to support the conclusion of this research.

As mentioned earlier, ZOA has played a part in this research. Because they work in Iraq and also specifically work on peacebuilding-projects, ZOA is interested in learning more about collaborating with religious actors in this regard. This, in combination with my own interest, led to the research that is described in this thesis. Although I wasn't travelling to Iraq myself in order to conduct this research, ZOA has a big team working from Erbil in northern Iraq. Through ZOA Iraq, along with colleagues working from The Netherlands, I have been able to get information on the context of the conflicts and the current situation in Iraq, as well as contacts for interviews.

One of the focal points in my methodology has been desk study. For all of the sub-questions involved in this research, I needed to work from a theoretical framework, such as has been set up in *Chapter 2*. Also with regard to the relevant actors involved, e.g. INGOs and religious actors, I have conducted a desk study to map the actors and familiarize myself with what I could find about them on the internet. In order to map the INGOs working on peacebuilding in northern Iraq, I have used my contacts within ZOA Iraq to

connect with the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI), a committee comprised of (I)NGOs in Iraq that coordinates collective action on numerous subjects, including peacebuilding. The NCCI has an interactive "Iraq NGO Geographic Sectors Map[1]" that, among other things, shows which INGOs are working on peacebuilding-projects in the northern governorates of Iraq. Using this INGO-mapping tool, there are 29 INGOs to be found in northern Iraq, working on reconciliation, peace and social cohesion. This tool, however, is not complete, as some of INGOs that have been interviewed do not appear in this tool at all, and some of the others are not listed among the INGOs working on reconciliation, peace or social cohesion. With regard to the latter issue, it is very much possible that there are different definitions and interpretations of the concepts of reconciliation, peace and social cohesion. Other organizations were located through my contact with ZOA Iraq and colleagues in The Netherlands.

In order to find out which of these INGOs indeed fit within the context of this research, I first send an e-mail to the organizations introducing myself and my research and a link to an online survey I created using KoBoToolbox[2], a data collection-tool that it widely used by humanitarian aid-workers. I received eight filled in surveys from eight INGOs working in Iraq. These INGOs are:
- Action Contre la Faim (ACF) ;
- Caritas;
- (Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC));
- Malteser International;
- PAX;
- Tearfund;
- Un Ponte Per (UPP);
- ZOA.

Enabling Peace in Iraq Center has been put in brackets as they qualify themselves as international and their headquarters is based outside of Iraq but their projects only focus specifically on Iraq. In at least two instances, additional respondents filled in the survey but some fault in the system prevented the data from being shared with me. The unput gathered with this survey helped me to get an understanding of what kind of organizations are working in Iraq, where in Iraq they have projects running, if they work on peacebuilding-activities and whether they have collaborated with religious actors in these projects. This functioned as a means to filter out any organizations that were not internationally operating and/or working on peacebuilding, as well as providing me with some guidelines to use in preparing the interviews. On their websites, INGOs state who they are and elaborate on the projects they are working on. This also helped in gathering some basic knowledge of these actors that I used as a springboard for the interviews.

All in all, 11 INGOs participated in this research as they met the requirements (INGOs working in northern Iraq (Nineveh, Duhok, Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah) on peacebuilding projects) and were able to participate in this research. Since the number of INGOs that responded to my invitation to participate was very limited, I decided to include all 11 of them because otherwise I would find the number of participants too low to make meaningful observations. As such, while I was initially planning to work with a simple random sampling design, I ended up with convenience sampling, selecting respondents that were available to participate in the research. In the end nine staff members from different INGOs were available to meet me for an interview. The INGOs that were interviewed in this research are:
- Action Contre la Faim (ACF) ;
- Aid to the Church in Need (ACN);
- Caritas;

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[1] [Microsoft Power BI](#) (NCCI mapping-tool)
[2] [KoBoToolbox | Data Collection Tools for Challenging Environments](#) (data collection-tool)

- Cordaid;
- Malteser International;
- Search for Common Ground (SfCG);
- PAX;
- Tearfund;
- ZOA.

EPIC and UPP were not able to be interviewed, ACN, Cordaid and SfCG were contacted via my personal network and although they did not fill in the survey, they were able to be interviewed. I prepared the interviews by setting up an interview guide, formulating questions with regard to the INGO's definition of peacebuilding, the work that they are doing, collaboration with partners and, specifically, collaboration with religious actors. The question regarding their definition of peacebuilding will answer the first empirical question and can be used in comparison with the answer from religious actors and theoretical ideas as discussed in *Chapter 2*. Examining the kind of work these INGOs are conducting will give an answer to the second empirical question and will link the INGOs' definition of peacebuilding to their practice. Addressing collaboration with partners and, specifically, collaboration with religious actors will partly answer the fourth and fifth empirical questions. This guide has been semi-structured, which means that I have prepared a number of questions that relate to the subjects just mentioned, but that the interview itself takes place in a conversational manner in which both the researcher and the participant can explore certain features more or less as they go through the questions (Clifford et al., 2016). The interviews took place via Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. In both cases it concerned audio-calls, but with Microsoft Teams we also used webcams to see each other. The interviews via Microsoft Teams were recorded and "transcribed" with the features build into its system. I have used quotation marks because the texts that were produced with this tool were seriously lacking in quality. However, I also made extensive notes during the interviews and these were supplemented by the recording where necessary. For the WhatsApp calls this has not been the case, due to a lack of such features. With the audio on speaker, I took notes of these interviews. All the notes give an almost complete overview of the interviews, but here and there I have made some editorial changes to present a more fluent conversation. These small edits may be subject to my own interpretation of the interview, but I do not believe this has had a serious influence on the way the interviews are presented in the annexes of this thesis. In either case, it will fit nicely in the context of the constructivist approach of this research. All the interviewed INGO-staff members were able to speak in English. Using the semi-structured interview guide, I could ask further when things were not clear, or delve deeper into interesting issues.

With regard to religious actors, I have had to take a different approach. Because I was not sure which religious actors would be traceable online and which of them would be able to communicate in English or another European language, I thought it best to establish the population and sample via snowball sampling, as this sampling method increases a sample size by using the already participating cases and is a method that is most applicable when dealing with populations that are difficult to access (Taherdoost, 2016). By asking the INGO-interviewees about their contacts with religious actors we came up with nine religious actors, seven Christian, one Yazidi and one Muslim. Again, I set up a semi-structured interview guide, this time addressing the religion of the interviewee and how it is involved with and/or affected by the conflict as well as discussing their definition of peacebuilding, whether or not they work on peacebuilding projects and collaborate with INGOs. Their definition of peacebuilding will partly answer the first empirical question, their work on peacebuilding will answer the third empirical question and discussing collaboration will partly answer the fourth and fifth empirical questions. In the end, I managed to interview three of these religious actors, a Catholic priest, a Yazidi from the sheikh-caste and a Sunni imam. Unfortunately, more religious participants did not work out. This means there is a disbalance in the sample with regard to the INGOs that participated. Although the input from these interviews are valuable in this research, it is important not to generalize the outcomes. I interviewed the Catholic priest via a

WhatsApp call and we conversed in French. I interviewed the sheikh also via a WhatsApp call and because he spoke only in Arabic, there was a translator present as well who translated between English and Arabic. The translator was one of the INGO-staff I interviewed earlier and who is a Yazidi himself. The meeting with the imam was arranged by this same translator and he again translated the conversation in English and Arabic, this time on Zoom. These interviews have not been recorded, but extensive notes were made by me during the conversations. The conversation with the priest was translated by myself in order to have English notes that could be coded like the other data-documents. Again, these notes give an almost complete overview of the interviews, but here and there I have made some editorial changes to present a more fluent conversation. These small edits may be subject to my own interpretation of the interview, but I do not believe this has had a serious influence on the way the interviews are presented in the annexes of this thesis.

At the start of all the interviews the participants have been informed about my research and I explained to them that the interviews would be treated confidentially and that I would refer to them in the thesis in an anonymous way (Ngozwana, 2018). The Yazidi and Muslim religious actors let me know that they have no objection to being mentioned in the thesis by name.

3.3 Analysis

Because this research has a qualitative character, I have used analysis techniques that are appropriate for this. As mentioned above, some of the sub-questions required desk study to be done. Many relevant scientific articles were read and specific subjects of interest were highlighted. Comparing the highlights within the different articles resulted in summaries, paraphrases and citations that can be found in *Chapter 2*. The same also holds for the context of this case study as described in *Chapter 4*.

Other data was gathered through a short survey and interviews. This data was approached trough content analysis, specifically by using a coding system. Coding is often used in qualitative research for taking a text apart, studying it, and putting it back together in a meaningful way (Elliott, 2018). There can be different categories containing codes and so it can fit with a similar system as I have presented in *Table 1* where I use dimensions and indicators. The coding in this research was mostly done deductively, whereby the concept-table in *Chapter 2* was used as a starting point. Here the concepts have been operationalized by dividing them into dimensions and indicators. Both the indicators and dimensions have been used as codes while analyzing the survey and interview results. For the actual coding, the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti[3] has been used. With this tool I could create a codebook consisting of the indicators and dimensions as mentioned earlier. The colors used for different sets of codes correspond with the color-scheme found in the concept-table in *Chapter 2*. By uploading the data-documents into ATLAS.ti I could read through the data and assign codes to specific excerpts. Although the approach has been mostly deductive, there was also room for inductive coding. While analyzing the data, some interesting indicators emerged that could be found among the different interviews. This concerns certain words or themes that were not initially included in the codebook but that came up several times in different data-documents. These were also color-coded and some were grouped into new dimensions.

3.4 Discussion

There are some matters in this thesis that should be discussed to see how they have impacted the findings and conclusion of this research. This concerns both choices made by me, the researcher, as well as circumstantial issues that had to be dealt with. As mentioned in the scope-section of this chapter, the

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[3] [What is ATLAS.ti | ATLAS.ti (atlasti.com)](atlasti.com) (Coding-tool)

choice to conduct a case study has several consequences. Due to the concentrated focus of this study it provides a certain depth and insights into the situation in northern Iraq and how peacebuilders collaborate with partners. The methods used in this research aim to establish a robust internal validity. On the other hand, the set-up of this research can mean that there is a limited external validity, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Similar situations and actions encountered in this research may also be found in other cases, which means that the results of this research may also contribute to understanding similar cases elsewhere, though this is not the explicit aim of this case study.

The many and varying restrictions implemented throughout the world due to COVID-19 has had a significant impact on this research. Again, as mentioned under the scope-section of this chapter, the COVID-related restrictions meant that traveling became a serious challenge, which is why I choose to conduct this case study in a home-based setting from The Netherlands. In any kind of research involving 'field-work' this is a serious limitation and, of course, especially so for a case study. Instead of experiencing the situation in northern Iraq firsthand and being able to meet people in an easy and spontaneous way, I had to work online and in a more deliberate manner. Instead of meeting people on local project sites, or simply walking into a church or mosque to find religious actors, I had to rely on snowball-contacts and internet searches. In the end this tactic did provide me with the necessary interviews, but it also implies a certain amount of bias due to a lack of random sampling and the limited amount of interviewees that were able to participate online or via telephone.

It was very difficult to find actors who wanted to participate in this research. Many INGOs have been emailed and an invite was also shared by the NCCI among its members. I have received data from the survey of only eight of them and nine we able to be interviewed. Although this number is enough to work with, it may have been better if the population had been bigger and the sample more diverse. With 'diversity' I refer to the fact that almost all the INGOs who participated in the research have Christian roots and/or a Christian identity and they all deliberately worked with religious actors in one way or another. I would have liked to include some more diverse perspectives. On the other hand, since many INGOs had the opportunity to participate, I shall assume that the actual participants represent some sort of norm of the population. Something similar was also the case with regard to the religious actors. Although in this case I really depended on a snowball-effect. It was very fortunate that one of the INGO respondents is a Yazidi who then could connect me with a religious leader from his community. The Yazidis, being such a small Iraqi minority, would have been very hard to reach if not via this liaison. Finding a Muslim actor also took a lot of time, but again the same INGO respondent managed to connect me with a Sunni imam. The Christian actors, on the other hand, were more easily accessible because many of the participating INGOs have Christian roots and/or a Christian identity. Seven Christian actors came into the picture of which I managed to contact six, however, the contact was very challenging. Two of them did not speak a European language and did not respond to messages, even though I translated my messages into Arabic. The others were open to an interview, but because they were all very busy it resulted in only one interview with a Catholic priest. Again, I have to work with what I get, and I can, but I would have preferred to meet also with Christians from other denominations as well as a Shia Muslim as this would have provided me with more perspectives. Specifically with regard to the Shia perspective, it is a shame that this could not be included. As *Chapter 4* explains, the conflict-dynamics in Iraqi history have a lot to do with the Shia-Sunni divide in the country. With only three religious actors from different religions participating in this research, there might be a problem with representativeness. However, the Sunni imam has a senior position within the Sunni community in Iraq and has many colleagues with whom he discusses similar issues that were addressed in the interview. Him being such a public figure, I do not think it very likely that he would strongly divert from opinions and experiences of the wider Sunni community, especially as he does not have a problem with being called by name in this thesis. The Catholic priest is also familiar with discussing the conflict situation in Iraq as he often gives interviews to journalists and takes part in conferences in different parts of the world. I came into contact with this priest through the respondent from Aid to the

Church in Need and since ACN is connected with all levels of the Catholic Church in Iraq, their referral to this priest as someone who can share valuable knowledge, seems also to be trustworthy. About the Yazidi community and the religious leader I interviewed I know the least, but since the INGO-respondent who connected us and translated the interview is himself a Yazidi and, when speaking with him separately (and anonymously), did not deny or water down anything the sheikh said, I assume that the ideas and experiences of the sheikh are not just his own. All in all, as with this research in it entirety and specifically with regard to the input from the religious actors, it is important not to simply generalize the conclusions of this research. However, I do believe there is a certain amount of representativeness to be found and so I am confident in the internal validity of this research.

Finally, another important subject is my own positionality within this research. This concerns my own identity and background and how this could have affected this research (Bourke, 2014). Although the central research question of this thesis was shaped partly by ZOA's interest in this topic, I had my eyes set on a topic that included religion and/or religious actors. Since I am a Catholic myself and my faith is very important to me, I wanted to find a way to connect this part of my identity and interest with my masters' thesis. Because of the academic nature of this research, I had to locate and discuss relevant theoretical debates, although I was primarily interested in presenting the 'religion as a driver of peace' section, a position in the academic debate on religion that was already my own. During the course of this research I was again primarily interested in finding support for the position that religious actors have a positive and important role to play in peacebuilding. Due to the academic nature of this research, in which I have to present both sides of debates, use references for all nearly everything I write and support my conclusion with data, I believe that my own bias does not obstruct a fair conclusion. However, as an important part of this research also has a constructivist approach, I have interpreted the data through my own frames and so there is always a need for a critical perspective when reading through this thesis. Which is why I very much value the feedback from my thesis supervisors.

Chapter 4: Context of Iraq

This chapter will sketch the context of this case study in order to relate the topics of interest to historical and actual situations in Iraq. The first section of this chapter gives a brief historic overview of the history of Iraq with a focus on (religious) conflicts. This is followed by a review of recent events. Next, the topic of external/local collaboration is addressed and, finally, there is an overview of the religious landscape in Iraq.

4.1 Brief historic overview

Iraq is a relatively new country. It was formed by the British in 1921, after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Three Ottoman provinces, Mosul, Baghdad and Basra were unified to form Iraq. From this beginning of the new Iraq, religion has been an important factor in social issues. Sunni Islam had been the state religion of the Ottoman empire and so Sunni Muslims in Iraq were again quick to position themselves in influential positions, even though the provinces that formed Iraq consisted of a Shia Muslim majority (Wainscott, 2019). The divide between Sunni and Shia Muslims exists since shortly after the prophet Mohammed's death. This divisions has been felt ever since and is also a serious issue of conflict in the Iraqi region (Luna & Zoltán, 2015). The new government of Iraq was dominated by Sunni Muslims, but included members of other religions as well. The other religions though, especially minorities, did not trust the Iraqi state to protect them. This led to a promise by the Iraqi state to the League of Nations in 1932 to ensure religious freedom of its citizens, among other things.

Throughout the years, the Iraqi state was not able to fully keep its promise as there have been several incidents involving discrimination or attacks against religious minorities that were not adequately addressed by the government or even instigated by the government itself, such as hostilities against the Jewish community in the 1940s (Wainscott, 2019). The relationship between Shia Muslims and the Sunni dominated government was deteriorating and took on new proportions with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood among Sunni and the Da'wa party by the Shia in the 1950s. Both wanted to extend their religious influence in the political arena as the government became more secular during the 1970s, often targeting both Shia and Sunni leaders and institutions if they got in the way of government plans. This oppression and exploitation of religious actors continued in the coming decades, largely under the leadership of Saddam Hussein.

During the 1980's, Iraq and Iran were at war with each other. Because the Kurds in northern Iraq aligned themselves with Iran, they were targeted by the Iraqi government and severely persecuted. This persecution was also part of an 'Arabization' process the Iraqi government instigated. The Arabization process also targeted religious minorities who did not identify themselves as 'Arab'. Another reason for the regime's aggressiveness against the Kurds as named by Luna & Zoltán (2015) is the wealth in oil to be found in the Kurdish region. Whatever the reasons for conflict were, it is clear that there was huge rift between the Kurds and Saddam's regime.

Another main catalyst that leads to more recent conflicts is the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that dramatically changed the socio-religious make up of Iraq. A new sectarian system was set-up with this time the Shia in a dominant, but weak position and empowered Kurds in the north (Luna & Zoltán, 2015). Ministerial positions were divided between Shia, Sunni and Kurds and the Ministry of Endowments was split into three ministries serving the Sunni, Shia and minority religions. Although this intervention tried to facilitate a more balanced system, the Shia, Sunni and Kurds had (and have) very different views of and visions for the 'new' Iraq (Luna & Zoltán, 2015). It becomes clear that the US-led intervention was still strongly influenced by the ideal of state-making, as discussed in *Chapter 2.2.1*. Because the previous

existing system was so radically undone, many Sunni were suddenly excluded from higher office and found themselves unemployed.

All the changes in Iraq also affected the structures in the religious sphere that kept extremism in check. Now that these structures were removed, religious extremists were free to operate as they pleased, exploiting the already existing tensions in Iraqi society.

4.2 Recent events

Since the US-led invasion, sectarian divisions exacerbated the distrust and tensions that were present in Iraq for many decades. As previously mentioned, religious leaders and institutions were suppressed by the Iraqi government for a long time. But since the US-led invasion the Sunni population of Iraq felt that they were specifically targeted (Wainscott, 2019). In 2013, protests broke out among Iraqi Sunni against the oppression and there arose a desire for autonomy.

Islamic State (IS), as the group call themselves, also known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State in Levant (ISIL) as coined by the Obama administration, and Daesh as it is called in Arabic, gained infamous prominence in 2014 but it existed already since 1999 under different names. This Sunni-extremist sect had been slowly growing in strength after an alliance with al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2006 and the group became better organized (Luna & Zoltán, 2015), but the 2013 protest among Sunni in Iraq fueled recruitment by IS. The withdrawal of the US military in 2010, the weak Iraqi authorities and the subsequent power vacuum put IS in a strategic position. Exploiting the sectarian divisions in Iraq, including divisions among the Sunni themselves, the suppression by Iraqi authorities and social unrest, IS made bold moves to create an autonomous region and declare itself a caliphate, claiming authority over all Muslims worldwide. Under IS control, there was a strict sharia law with severe punishments for those who did not obey. Other religions were suppressed and there were attacks against several minority groups, especially Yezidi's (Strang & O'Brien, 2017). The amount of violence resulted in mass displacement, both within Iraq and refugees that fled abroad.

The success of IS was short-lived. Since 2015 IS has lost most of its territory in fights with its many opponents. Some jihadist splinter cells remain active, targeting Iraqi police, soldiers, government officials and power sources (Historicoblog4, 2021[4]). Many problems, however, that existed before and during the terror of IS still exist in Iraqi society. There are still sectarian tensions, something that the Iraqi government is keeping alive. The state religion of Iraq is Islam and its Muslim citizens are legally not able to convert to another religion. A child that is born of at least one Muslim parent will be listed as a Muslim as well, something that is required, no matter the circumstances. The religious identity is also listed on Iraqi identification papers and there are only three options to 'choose' from: Muslim; Christian; and Sabean-Mandean (Wainscott, 2019).

4.3 NGOs in Iraq

While studying the history of civil society in Iraq, Hassin (2015) finds that with the foundation of the Iraqi state there came also a development in NGO presence, or as Hassin labels them; grass-roots CSOs, Western-type CSOs and INGOs. He finds that during the monarchical period (1921-1958) civil society flourished, but after the ending of the monarchy it became very difficult for civil society actors to operate independently because the regimes that followed the monarchy were very strict and controlling. As the

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[4] The document that I refer to has been shared via a mailing list by the author. The author works with an anonymous account because of security reasons. The account can be found on Twitter and has a blog under the name Historicoblog4.

previous sections explained, the Iraqi state was weak and divided after the interventions and withdrawal of foreign states. Ideally, civil society would counter-balance such inefficiency.

Génot, (2010) finds that the international community supported Iraqi NGOs to work on the issues of democratization and humans rights, although Génot remarks that this might not have been suitable for the Iraqi context. This is something that corresponds to the critique on NGOs becoming CSOs with a neo-liberal agenda as mentioned by Mohanty (2002) in *Chapter 2.1*. Génot has studied (I)NGOs in Iraq and focused mostly on Western INGOs due to easier access. She finds that about 10 Western INGOs were present in Iraq during the Saddam Regime. About 20 were operating in the Kurdish region since 1991. An enormous amount followed after the US-led intervention in 2003. Mainly due to security risks, Génot finds that many INGOs were working with local staff and partner organizations who were concerned with the implementation of projects. There was a big difference between the highly organized INGOs that have lots of experience and the newly created local NGOs. Due to the constantly changing situation in Iraq and many security issues, the INGOs have been occupied mainly with emergency response and have not been able to develop long-term planning. With the decrease of violence around 2010, Génot finds that INGOs were starting to invest more in sustainable development and thus in capacity building of local NGOs. Collaboration between INGOs and LNGOs has had various shapes and levels. However, the rise of IS and the subsequent violence put this process in reverse. Now that the major threat has passed, (I)NGOs can again invest in sustainable development.

Hansen (2008) also studied international humanitarian presence in Iraq and how the local population viewed this presence. It is interesting to find that many religious actors also participated in the study by Hansen and that they had mixed views on both the INGOs presence and how they would relate to these international actors. The religious actors were often concerned with issues of conflict sensitivity, resolving disputes over the allocation of resources. Another interesting find by Hansen is that many of the consulted religious actors were open to the idea of increased collaboration with INGOs, but that there was often mistrust as well.

4.4 Religious landscape

According to Alfahham (2020) the cultural and national identity of Iraq is heavily influenced by religion and although religion has this prominent place in peoples' lives, many people also strongly identify with their family or tribe. According to Wainscott (2019) the current religious make up of Iraq is estimated to be 55% Shia, 40% Sunni, and 5% minority religions - which include Christian, Yazidi, Sabean-Mandaean and a very small group of Baha'i and Jews. Similar statistics also show up in a study of sects and religions in Iraq by Alfahham (2020). Wainscott notices that the minority groups have dropped slightly from 8% before World War I. The World Factbook, coordinated by the US Central Intelligence Agency (2021), has slightly different numbers. They estimate Shia to be 64-69%, Sunni 29-34%, Christians 1% and other minority religions 1-4%. In either case, it seems clear that Shia is by far the largest religious community in Iraq, followed by Sunni and that there is a very small percentage of other religions. Wainscott (2019) finds much diversity within the Christian community, including Chaldean Catholics, Assyrians, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Armenian Apostolic, Anglicans, and Protestants. Both Wainscott and The World Factbook mention the steep fall in numbers of Christians in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Since then the number of Christians in Iraq has dropped 50%, perhaps even up to 90%.

Ever since the time period surrounding the prophet Muhammed's death, Islam has been major religion in Iraq. While sacred writings such as the Quran and hadith have a prominent place in both the Sunni and Shia sects the Sunni adhere to certain schools of jurisprudence while Shia follow what is called the 'Twelver rite' (Alfahham, 2020). The Yazidis in Iraq are mostly concentrated in the Nineveh governorate and their religion has characteristics of surrounding religions, such as Christianity, Islam and

Zoroastrianism and angels take primacy in their beliefs (Alfahham, 2020). Most of the Christian denominations decent from Christian communities in the Iraqi region that have not converted to Islam while newer denominations have been established by Protestant missionaries. For Christians the Bible has prime authority, and next to that, the older denominations also have Sacred Tradition as the second pillar of their faith. The Jewish community, although very small, can probably trace their origin way back to the Babylonian Exile (597-538 BC). In Judaism, the Hebrew Bible and commentaries such as the Talmud and Midrash are, to a greater or lesser extent, the basis for Hewish beliefs.

Displacement caused by recent conflict have affected mostly Sunni and minority religions. IS, which is a Sunni sect, has prayed on the minorities, but has also targeted Muslims, both Sunni and Shia. The many victories against IS since 2015 has also affected Sunni who were not involved with IS. Because of their shared Sunni faith, many Sunni have been shunned by community members and thus moved away to other parts of Iraq. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has tracked displacement in Iraq. Between 2015 and 2018 there were more than three million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since then the numbers have been dropping and currently there are 1,191,470 IDPs (*Home Page - IRAQ DTM*, 2021)[5].

These religions are structured differently, which affects how they influence adherents and broader society. Wainscott (2019) finds that because the Sunni have had dominant positions within the Iraqi state throughout most of the country's history, they have relied on state institutions and have invested less in nonstate institutions. On the other hand, Shia and Christian communities have a hierarchical religious authority and religious institutions separate from the state. The Shia have clerics with certain degrees of religious 'learning'. These educated clerics are called 'ayatollahs' with 'grand ayatollahs' as the most educated among them. These ayatollahs serve as reference points for the Shia and they act as Shia's religious authorities. Catholic and Orthodox Christians also have a hierarchical structure with priests and bishops. The bishops govern a diocese which includes multiple priests. The Catholic Church also has the Pope as the most authoritative bishop, governing the worldwide Church. The Sunni, with their lack of nonstate institutions in Iraq, are also somewhat internally divided due to their four schools of jurisprudence that regulate the legal practices of local communities. Sunni can choose between one of these four schools. In an interview with a religious leaders from the Yazidi community, he explained that the Yazidi religion is a single whole and that there are three groups or castes to be found, namely the sheikhs, pirs and murids. These three groups have separate responsibilities and marriage cannot take place between the different castes.

Looking back at the context of this case study, there are some relevant issues to take into account. Iraq's relatively short history has known many conflicts that have brought severe divisions in Iraqi society. It is unnecessary to point out that peacebuilding is a prime goal, but also a very difficult challenge. Earlier interventions seem to align with the state-making paradigm of peacebuilding that was still quite dominant in that time. As this intervention did not succeed in actually building a robust state, (I)NGOs were increasingly filling the gaps. Collaboration between INGOs and local actors has for most of the time been unbalanced and somewhat hectic due to the rapidly changing context and many security risks. However, when violence is at a low point and the situation is relatively stable, there is an opportunity for sustainable development. Because religion is so very important in Iraqi culture, it seems also very important to take religion and religions actors into account when working towards sustainable peace. But so far, the relationship between INGOs and local religious actors seems to be underdeveloped.

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[5] *Home Page - IRAQ DTM*. (2021). DMT Iraq. http://iraqdtm.iom.int/

Chapter 5: Peacebuilding in northern Iraq

In the previous chapters the theoretical framework of this thesis has been explained, discussing relevant concepts and perspectives, as well as the contextual embedding of this case, highlighting important historical events that took place in Iraq, addressing external/local collaboration and sketching the current religious landscape. With this background in mind, this chapter will discuss recent and actual peacebuilding activities in northern Iraq, the role of INGOs and religious actors in the peacebuilding process as well as collaboration between these two kinds of actors. The sub-questions in this research, mentioned in *Chapters 1* and *3*, will be discussed and answered, leading to the set-up that will answer the central research question of this thesis. In order to find the answers to these questions, the analyzed data that has been collected through a survey and 12 interviews will be discussed, each time focusing on one (set) of the sub-questions.

5.1 Defining peacebuilding

Before discussing the way in which the participants in this research view peacebuilding, it might be valuable to first see how the conflicts have affected local actors, in this case the local religious actors.

All three of the religious actors and their communities have been impacted by (recent) conflicts in Iraq. As *Chapter 4* explained, a lot of the conflicts are related to sectarian struggles and this causes animosity between the groups. The imam, for example, explains how "[t]he conflicts between Shia and Sunni have existed for a long time, and began soon after the prophet Muhammed had died" (Personal communication 3, November 11, 2021). He further elaborates on the "international political game" that aims to strengthen the Shia community in Iraq (and other places around the world) at the cost of the Sunni. Also the emergence of ISIS had a distressing effect on the Sunni community. In *Chapter 4* it is mentioned how ISIS emerged as a Sunni-splinter cell and in the interview the imam shared his experiences with Sunni in Iraq and abroad and he says that initially the Sunni were welcoming ISIS and thought of them as brothers in the faith, making a stand against oppression. This initial "confusion" about the nature of ISIS, the imam explains, is also shown in the numbers of people joining ISIS, even coming from outside of Iraq. These people were quite "ignorant" of the Islamic faith and were easy prey for the ISIS propaganda-machine. However, it soon became clear that ISIS had no good intentions and they were recognized to be terrorists. Although this realization took place within the Sunni community, it didn't go quite so fast for other parties. The imam mentions how ISIS was painting a very disturbing image of Sunni Islam, further weakening the Sunni position in Iraq.

The Catholic priest also acknowledges that current conflicts in Iraq have a long history. He talks about the political and religious divisions and how this is related to the "political religion", present not only in Iraq but throughout the Middle East. He specifically points out the political Islamic struggles as there are pro-Iranians, Hezbollah militias and pro-Saudis active in Iraq, and of course the history with Saddam Hussein. The conflicts have also deeply hurt the Christian community in Iraq. The priest mentions that a change happened after 2000, when another Sunni jihadist sect, Al-Qaeda, became active in Iraq. The priest refers to the enormous amount of Christians who have left Iraq since then, with another wave due to ISIS.

Another painful experience was shared by the Yazidi sheikh. He describes a long range of conflicts between the Yazidi and Muslim communities, resulting in 74 "genocides" against the Yazidis. The sheikh can list all 74 of them and the person(s) responsible; "[e]ach genocide thousands have been killed and kidnapped. The last one was by ISIS, led by Abu Bakr Baghdadi" (Personal communication 4, November 7, 2021) The majority of these genocides have taken place in the Sinjar mountains. The government is not

supportive in these matters, no searches for missing and kidnapped Yazidis are organized by government initiative. This leaves the Yazidi community psychologically, physically and financially hurt. The sheikh sees religion, and specifically the Muslim religion as a source of conflict. The Yazidis were attacked because they were "unbelievers" and because they have a special connection with nature, something the Muslims do not respect. They find themselves unable to live safely among the other groups.

These harsh realities should not cast a shadow on the many good and hopeful attitudes and projects that that can be found in this same area. All participants in this research elaborated on their own goals for peace and the means with which they try to achieve it. The key concepts, or indicators of peacebuilding according to the framework in *Chapter 2*, that were constantly recurring in the interviews were 'reconciliation' and ' trust', i.e. building bridges.

This goal has various ways of being named, some calling it 'social cohesion' or 'common ground', others refer to 'trust' or 'peaceful coexistence'. It is clear that the commonality is strong. Peacebuilding does not simply imply the absence of violence, but is aimed and bringing people together, to have them live together harmoniously. One INGO-staff member describes this notion of peacebuilding quite strongly:

"Because of the religious pluralism, ethnic diversity, and the different nationalities of the Iraqi people, the process of eliminating the differences and overcoming the differences between all these groups and paving the way for them to live in peace in one country loving and united with each other without paying attention to their ideological, religious, ethnic and national differences that distinguish them, this process in itself gives a clear concept of peacebuilding between the components of one people, which is not an easy process in a multi-component country like Iraq".

(Personal communication 1, September 16, 2021)

Note that they acknowledge the many differences in the population of Iraq, which is very much so the case in the north, and that this makes the search for common ground very complex. For that reason another respondent added:

"We actually don't use the word 'peacebuilding' in Iraq. We rather focus on social cohesion. There is so much diversity here and we can't have the pretention to just 'do' peacebuilding. But we can do our part by bringing more social cohesion".

(Personal communication 2, November 25, 2021)

Nonetheless, all INGOs have expressed a similar goal in the interviews, and the religious leaders agree with this to a large extend. One of the religious leaders described it like this: "Peacebuilding is to shake other people's hand, respecting and protecting all people, all communities. Living together in peace and working together for the best of the country" (Personal communication 3, November 11, 2021). They all value brotherhood and emphasize that when someone adheres to another religion, this does not affect their intrinsic worth as a human being. It is quite something that the religious actors think of peacebuilding in such a way, even with the (brutal) interfaith conflicts in mind.

The actors' understanding of peacebuilding corresponds to how peacebuilding is described in *Chapter 2*. Instead of peacemaking or peacekeeping, this peacebuilding addresses the roots of conflicts, working on social cohesion and peaceful dispute resolution. It adheres to the notion of 'positive peace' as described by McCandless et al. (2012). However, as the INGOs point out, the situation in northern Iraq is very complex and this can also make peacebuilding a very complex task.

5.2 Peacebuilding in northern Iraq

Now, how does the actors' definition of peacebuilding relate to the practice? Of the nine interviewed INGOs about half of them have already been present in Iraq for two or three decades, as one of the respondents explained:

"it [Caritas Iraq] was established in 1992 after the embargo which forced Iraq at that time as a result of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990, where the economic situation for the people was very bad and this is what prompted the establishment of Caritas Iraq to support this need."

(Personal communication 1, September 16, 2021)

However, all of the INGOs either started or elevated their peacebuilding activities in northern Iraq in response to the ISIS-conflict.

The ways in which the goal for peacebuilding ought to be realized are, again, quite similar among the respondents. There are, however, differences to be found in the original set-up of such projects. For some INGOs 'peace' is not a direct objective as they focus more on emergency relief. In such cases, there is often also attention being paid to mental health and psycho-socio support. In these instances, 'feeling safe' is of importance, which results in meetings that also deal with the topic of social cohesion. For others, finding common ground and working on conflict transformation are the primary concerns.

For the former, projects started as emergency relief, focusing on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. These projects mainly dealt with health issues, both physical and mental. Then, the projects expanded into topics such as livelihoods and social cohesion. In many cases this also involves rebuilding destroyed houses, schools and religious buildings such as churches and mosques. By constructing places where people can meet and providing the necessary infrastructure people can literally be brought together. Others started their program with the aim of strengthening social cohesion and erected projects that would facilitate this to happen. They recognize that conflict is part of life, but it should not become violent. In this case, it is important to address dispute resolution. As one respondent remarked: "[t]he magic word is 'dialogue'" (personal communication 5, October 28, 2021). One INGO implements this concept of dialogue on different levels:

"First we speak with different groups and give them training on communication, temper control, aggression, etcetera. Then we bring them together. This is not easy, because a lot of people are distrustful and hateful towards each other. There are many frames. We are in the same country and have similar problems. All groups lost people. We have to find common ground."

(personal communication 6, September 20, 2021)

Youth is important in the process of peacebuilding. One INGO explained that they started their program with projects focused on youth in order to make them actors of peace. They visited universities and worked on ways to enable the students to be peacebuilders in their communities. Another INGO is involved with a course on preventing violent extremism that is being thought in several Iraqi schools. These projects are also linked to civil society and governmental institutions to include various aspects of society. They are trained in conflict resolution and fostering social cohesion. Working towards peace is very much done through informal approaches. There is lots of community work and citizens are provided with opportunities that will change their social environment. This is a socio-political approach and that is necessary because, as one respondent noted, Iraq is a very 'political' country and conflicts are related to this:

"The government is formally democratically elected, bit it is not there for all the people. Sectarian groups, meant to include all, led to nepotism. There is no merit based approach, people vote along with the sectarian constitution. People with the right connections stay in power. […] People should cooperate to achieve more, and not focus on their own group."

<div align="right">(personal communication 7, July 23, 2021)</div>

Thus the projects are designed in such a way as to reach over these sectarian boundaries. Something similar is also applied to projects that are focused on the reintegration of former ISIS members and/or their families. With regard to the earlier mentioned course on preventing violence extremism, this also includes former ISIS members who are now key players in this program as they can share their experience with being caught up in extremism and how this impacted their life and that of the people around them.

The religious leaders believe that they can play a valuable role in peacebuilding as well. The imam thinks religious leaders can do great things, if given the chance. He acknowledges the very influential position of Islamic religious leaders as he points to the more than 5000 mosques in the Kurdistan region with millions of people who attend Friday prayers. This provides a great opportunity for sharing a message of peace with a large group of people. The priest sees many roles for the Church and her religious leaders to act as diplomats, fostering positive relationships among different communities. In principle, the sheikh seems to think that religious leaders can play a positive role, sharing their core message of peace and unity among people, but he is not very hopeful about the inclusion of Yazidis in this process.

For the imam it is important to avoid and prevent the use of violence, to stop a conflict from escalating. It is important to not be radical and try to agree on certain matters. On a deeper level, the imam says:

"Peacebuilding represents feeling safe or good in mind and actions, protecting himself, family and community. In Islam, 'salam' has the same meaning. Peace is heaven. Peacebuilding is to shake other people's hand, respecting and protecting all people, all communities. Living together in peace and working together for the best of the country."

<div align="right">(personal communication 3, November 11, 2021)</div>

The imam brings this into practice, for example, with regard to relations between Muslims and people adhering to other religions. There have been several cases where the imam was approached by someone in his community with the questions whether it is 'haram', e.g. lawful, for a Muslim to help Christians, or doing construction work on a Christian religious building or eating food made by Yazidis. The imam then explains that it is 'halal', e.g. lawful, to do these things. Not only is there no problem in this regard, the imam mentions that even the prophet Muhammed encouraged such cordial relations. Since the imam is also a member of the Kurdish parliament he is very well known with peacebuilding operations in northern Iraq and underlines the value of meeting people and to engage in dialogue. He also travels to other Islamic countries, such as Jordan and Egypt, to meet with like-minded people and find out how they can share the message of peace.

The priest is familiar with the fracture in Iraqi society as well as discrimination of minorities. Reconciliation is thus very important. A good example of seeing not only the Christian minority being uplifted but also seeing unity flourishing across different groups of people was the visit of Pope Francis to Iraq in March, 2021. With such a visit also come meetings to plan for peace in Iraq. It involves working on brotherhood, freedom of speech and also freedom of religion. Such things didn't exist under ISIS occupation. Current priorities are rebuilding Christian homes, making sure the rights of Yazidi citizens are respected and lots of dialogue; interfaith, inter-community and inter-denominational dialogue.

The sheikh underlines the very important practice of dialogue by meeting with different parties and trying do decrease or prevent conflict through sharing problems and organizing conferences. It is important that local leaders encourage their communities to accept and respect other communities. The sheikh wants people to focus on their shared humanity. He is also looking for ways to protect the Yazidi community in particular as it is a very vulnerable group, being such an isolated minority.

The shift between emergency response to sustainable development as discussed in *Chapter 4* can also be seen in this section. Where at first there were some INGOs working on humanitarian aid, the focus on peacebuilding as they are implementing it now, clearly aims to work bottom-up towards a sustainable peace. The concepts of reconciliation and trust are not only part of the INGOs' definition of peacebuilding but are also core parts of current projects. Other indicators mentioned in *Table 1*, such as feelings of security and preventing violent dispute resolution also return in the interviews. The indicators concerning assisting in the implementation of agreements and specifically resolving the issues that led to conflict do not return in the conversations, though the latter might be implicitly part of the projects that are dealing with reconciliation and dialogue. Some of the projects can be connected to one of the 'tracks' as described by Verkoren (2008). Projects such as the course on preventing violent extremism in schools fit within the third track which focuses on the grassroots level, while the meetings between religious leaders fit within the second track that deal with important societal figures. The first track, which includes interventions and diplomacy, is not part of current activities.

5.3 Collaboration in general

There is much more to be said about peacebuilding as practiced by both the INGOs and the religious actors, but because 'building bridges' and 'dialogue' are such important concepts in this process, it is best to focus now on how these matters are dealt with in collaboration.

The INGOs never work alone on their projects. They have various ways of collaborating with a wide range of actors. They collaborate with other parties both on a low level, by sticking with funding certain projects without being involved any further, as well as well-organized consortiums in which the partners have a shared mission and strategy. In either case, there is an emphasis on localization. Many INGOs train and employ local staff to become active members, who can also continue similar projects themselves when the INGO has left Iraq. This also means that sometimes only the local partners do the implementation of the projects and that the INGO has an advisory role. There are also more hybrid situations in which a couple of INGOs form a consortium, determining mission and strategy and also work with local partners who then do the implementing work. This does not necessarily have to be a top-down operation as oftentimes the local partners are also included in the design-process of a project and thus can influence the mission and strategy of the program that they will implement themselves.

The three dimensions of collaboration as they can be found in *Table 1*, transactional, transitional and transformational, are thus used by the INGOs, although this does not seem to apply to all kinds of partners they work with. The transformational form of collaboration, which includes co-ownership and full mutual support is used in consortiums where and INGO collaborates with other INGOs. Although the INGOs in this research do value localization, collaboration with local partners often goes no further than a transitional way of working in which local actors are indeed involved in different levels of a project, but are not on an equal footing with the INGOs.

The religious leaders also do a lot of collaborating when working on peacebuilding. The imam, as mentioned earlier, is also a politician and is very familiar with working together with a wide range of actors on topics such as peacebuilding. First of all, he works closely together with other imams in the area so

they can share a unified message with their community that will influence the communities' behavior. When dealing with reconciliation, building bridges, the imam also finds it very important to bring religious leaders from different faiths together, among them of course Christians and Yazidis.

The priest also does a lot of work as part of broader peacebuilding efforts done by the Catholic Church. He therefore works in close collaboration with other priests and religious brothers and sisters in Iraq, as well with bishops, all the way to the Vatican. The Pope, for instance, has an important diplomatic role, visiting countries and other religious communities to foster positive relationships and mutual understanding. It is part of the Vatican's policy with regard to promoting human dignity. The priest also reaches out to other channels by inviting journalist to Iraq to share the experiences of the people in Iraq who have been hurt by conflicts and also by trying to work with government authorities to establish a clear vision for Iraq to work towards sustainable peace.

For the Yazidis it is more difficult to reach out to other parties. The sheikh does have contact with religious leaders from other faiths and they meet now and then to discuss important issues at stake. Since the sheikh is also a school manager, he also collaborates with colleagues from other schools, such as Islamic schools to build a good relationship. But being a minority makes it difficult to do more than this. Although the Christians in Iraq are also a minority, they are still part of a worldwide Church that has an incredible amount of (inter)national contacts. For the Yazidis, this is not the case. The sheikh sums this up by saying: "as a minority no one cares about us. If China was Yazidi there would be more respect for us, but as a minority, no" (personal communication 4, November 7, 2021).

All three religious actors value collaboration and want to be involved. With the emphasis on dialogue in the work they do, there is at least a strong transitional aspect to the way that the imam and priest collaborate, but the sheikh experiences difficulty in reaching this level of collaboration. With regard to the definition of peacebuilding as shared between the religious actors, with their emphasis on collaborating with colleagues from different religions, it seems that they envision a transformational way of collaborating across sectarian boundaries.

5.4 Collaboration between INGOs and religious actors on peacebuilding in northern Iraq
All the actors collaborate with partners in one way or another, but what about collaboration between the INGOs and the religious leaders?

Most of the INGOs are very positive with regard to the role that religious actors can play in bringing about more social cohesion. One of the respondents remarks: "Religious people can do a great thing here, teaching people to be supportive to each other, accept each other, build peace. When people are sick, for instance, they often contact religious leaders" (personal communication 8, October 21, 2021). This last point shows that people put trust in religious leaders, specifically in times of need and distress. Another respondent refers to a study from 2017, conducted by Strang & O'Brien from Queen Margaret's University, that shows that displaced groups as well as hosting communities put a lot of trust in God. They, and for the most part men, also put a lot of trust in religious leaders. The importance of God and religious leaders in Iraqi society makes that religious leaders can indeed play a role in social cohesion, bringing groups together. One INGO gives an example of what religious actors can do for society: "Bishop Warda in Erbil could be a Richard Branson, but is now an archbishop. He is running a big organization there. The Catholic university really is something, the president of Kurdistan is very happy with it" (personal communication 9, August 11, 2021). They refer to the foundation of the Catholic University in Erbil, founded in 2015 by Archbishop Warda. This university welcomes students from different cultures and faith and puts emphasis on the promotion of human dignity. It hosts conferences on social peace as well (Catholic University in Erbil, 2021).

There are also more critical views on the role that religious actors play in the Iraqi context. One respondent says that "[t]he old ways are part of the problem" (personal communication 7, 23 July, 2021), referring to religious actors who strengthen the sectarian divisions. Suppressive authorities such as these antagonize other groups that then rebel. If one focuses too much on a certain authority in society, such as religious leaders, you will strengthen them and that is not necessarily a good thing because this respondent sees religious leaders as part of the problem. They do not mean that religious leaders can not play a positive role, because they can, but you have to be careful on who to approach and whether you want to strengthen their position, and in what way. They acknowledge that religious actors can act as a role model, something that is interesting with regard to interfaith dialogue, but the role of religious actors should not be exaggerated: "Not every Iraq blindly follows what religious authorities say […] In reality people can just become violent and won't listen to authorities in the heat of the moment" (Ibid). Another respondent summarized this ambiguous role of religious actors quite nicely:

"They have a big role to play. al-Sistani, for example, being a very senior scholar in Shia Islam, has a big influence. Someone like Pope Francis, who visited Iraq earlier this year, as well. They take away intolerance and prejudice. So we can do much more with them. But at the same time people have grown weary of religious leaders because of sectarian conflicts in the past. There is also much frustration that many mosques have been renovated but many homes not yet. Still, religion, and God specifically, is often the 'go to' when it comes to trust and peace of mind. It is a very ambiguous situation."
(personal communication 2, November 25, 2021)

All in all, the general view on the role of religious actors in peacebuilding is positive. It is clear that religious leaders have an influential position in society and if they use this influence to promote peace, it seems a good thing to include them in projects that aim to strengthen social cohesion. Some INGOs are still figuring out how to include the religious actors exactly. This is partly due to the ambiguous role religious actors played in the past and it also depends on what kind of project is being implemented and where this takes place. In a homogeneous community that also holds the same convictions, it is not really of added value to specifically include religious actors. Sometimes an INGO has a specific program that aims, for instance, at sectarian minorities. Because discrimination is an important facet of such a case, they organize interreligious exchanges to alter the frames the different groups have with regard to the other. For some INGOs religious actors are just part of a wide range of partners and beneficiaries, relevant when working on improving social relations, but not much else. One respondent finds that most 'power' is to be found in governmental and security actors, so that is where the focus should be.

Other INGOs are specifically working with religious actors as they find them to be very much of added value. It is important to notice that two of such INGOs have a Christian identity that is also very much at the forefront of their organization. Being inspired by faith themselves, they see the value of involving religious actors in achieving a more sustainable peace. Aid to the Church in Need, for example, is a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church and, as such, their work is interwoven with religious actors. In fact, they act on the request of a Catholic bishop, which means that the Catholic religious leaders in Iraq know what is needed, draw up a plan and call in ACN for funding and logistics. In this case, not only is there collaboration between an INGO and religious actors, but the religious actors are very much in the lead. Another INGO that has a specific focus on religious actors is Tearfund. Their notion of peacebuilding is "a desire to respond to conflict, especially sectarian and religious conflict, by engaging religious actors in the rebuilding of their communities" (personal communication 10, July 26, 2021). In a country such as Iraq, religion is part of the culture and also a component of the conflicts that have been discussed earlier. In this case it is clear for Tearfund that "[i]t makes no sense to work on these complex issues without including the religious aspect of it" (Ibid). And thus they reach out to religious actors to find out what is important to them, what goals they have and how they want to achieve them. Together, they can find a

way to get this done. Depending on the project, collaboration can mean that the religious actors are part of the design process, the implementation and/or evaluation of a project. However, sometimes they can also just be part of an advisory group, alongside other actors.

This last part is true in most cases. The majority of INGOs do not work with a strategy that includes religious actors from top to bottom, but in nearly all peacebuilding activities, religious actors are involved in one way or another. In many cases, the religious actors are included in the process of building bridges, precisely because they are 'bridges'. Indeed, religious leaders can be bridges towards other faiths in interreligious dialogue, but in this case they can also be the bridge between an INGO and a variety of local people. For instance, Action Contre la Faim organizes workshop and trainings for religious leaders, among others, who then can share ACFs message with their respective communities. They acknowledge that "[r]eligious leaders have more contacts among the local population and they can spread the knowledge and put the right people in the right place" (personal communication 8, October 21, 2021). Exactly the same point was made by Caritas:

"Certainly, there was planning for cooperation with these religious actors, and the reason for this cooperation is to deliver a message to these actors to learn about our ideas and wishes in building a peaceful, united society that includes all the spectrums of society, and this, in turn, will be transferred to the rest of the beneficiaries through these actors and thus the benefit will be more comprehensive and greater, on the basis that these actors have their role and influence in society."

(personal communication 1, September 16, 2021)

This bridge is no one way street, as Malteser International adds that religious leaders are familiar with the shortages and needs experienced by local communities and this can be shared with the INGO. Religious leaders are thus a short cut to share needs, ideas and solutions up and down the ladder.

This way of working is also recognized by the religious leaders themselves. The imam underlines the important roles that INGOs play in the peacebuilding process. He, along with other imams and religious leaders from other faiths, have been invited by INGOs to participate in their events, with the organizations even paying for transportation, booking hotels, etc. The INGOs thus facilitate the dialogue between influential actors in Iraqi society. To some extent, this interest in the partners' resources, either the human resources delivered by the religious actors or the logistics provided by the INGOs, correlates with an important motivation for collaboration as mentioned by Pedersen & Pedersen (2013). Some INGOs have inquired after the needs of the local communities and what the imam thinks is important to take care of. This input from religious leaders is then incorporated in the proposals for new projects. In cases where the projects were already being implemented, the imam, along with other religious leaders, were also invited to participate in workshops and trainings. However, he feels that the INGOs do not give the religious leaders a big enough role. This might be due to some poor coordination, but there might be other reasons as well. He specifically warns for bad motives among some NGO-staff, them being more interested in money than other things. He very much hopes that the INGOs will continue to facilitate meetings and conferences so that there are opportunities for sharing information. He does not want to be stuck with old ideas and very much wants to be informed about new ways to work on peace.

The priest also values working together with international partners, though in his case this mostly refers to the Catholic Church and affiliated organizations such as Aid to the Church in Need. Nonetheless, he values the work that the INGOs do, saying they play a key role by providing training on relevant subjects and bringing people together, thereby breaking down walls.

This is different for the sheikh and the broader Yazidi community. Although he is also invited to conferences and meetings once in a while, he feels that there is no real connection between international actors and the Yazidi community. Language and culture are serious barriers. He shares how they

constantly have to adapt to the others' standard, and even then they are often overlooked. He says that the INGOs only invite religious leaders who speak English or whom they are familiar with. He would like to see this changed. He wants to share the story of his people with the INGOs and wants to involve them in some of the projects that they are working on. In this case, the issue of raising awareness is also one of the motivations for collaboration identified by Pedersen & Pedersen (2013).

To summarize, religious actors, leaders specifically, can play a very valuable role in peacebuilding projects. This is due to their position in society, being something like a spider in the web. They are very well embedded in local society and know what the people need and want. They can communicate this with INGOs and help with the distribution of both aid and knowledge from the INGOs towards the beneficiaries. Because in this case of northern Iraq, where religious sectarianism is such an important component of conflicts, it is these same factors that play a role in overcoming such conflicts by encouraging exchange, taking away prejudices and false frames. Although this sounds good in principle, and it does certainly bear fruit, there can be other factors that hamper a 'successful' outcome with regard to peace. The respondent from Caritas explains:

"This cooperation was somewhat fruitful, and the reason for not obtaining a great and distinct benefit from this subject is due to the bad economic situation of the beneficiaries as well as the effects of the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic in the region, as many beneficiaries refrain from participating in these meetings either due to the lack of financial benefit for the beneficiary to participate in this type of activity or because of the fear of infection with the Coronavirus due to these gatherings. […] In fact, the role of these religious representatives is very important for this type of activity, especially in areas that contain religious, ethnic, and national pluralism. But on the ground, this role remains limited due to, in addition to the economic and health reasons mentioned, some mentalities and ideas that hinder an openness for other communities of people, which negatively and seriously affects the segment of society for which these persons are responsible."

(personal communication 1, September 16, 2021)

Outside of the factors that are very difficult to control or that somewhat fall outside the scope of the issue at hand, there are still issues to work on, such as the inclusion of more isolated minorities and dealing with negative frames that persist to uphold sectarian divisions. But in general, there seems to be a strong will for INGOs to collaborate with religious actors and vice versa.

As mentioned earlier, this section shows that the INGOs value the input of local actors and want to do more with the emergent concept of localization. However, also with regard to the local religious actors, the INGOs still do not go much further than a transitional form of collaboration. There is lots of communication and the religious actors can be involved in different levels of projects and programs, but there is no co-ownership of these projects and the religious actors seem to be either beneficiaries or 'tools', rather than partners of the INGOs. This is something the religious actors notice themselves and they are eager to be involved more.

Working with local religious actors, local religious leaders to be specific, on peacebuilding, connects the second and third track of peacebuilding mentioned by Verkoren (2008). Since the second track of peacebuilding involves working with important societal figures, it is clear that this applies to religious leaders who have a huge influence in their communities. The third track focuses on the grassroots level and includes development work, peace education, the training of community mediators, etcetera. This section shows that religious leaders are an important bridge between the INGOs and the grassroots level and that these religious actors are often trained as community mediators. The collaboration between INGOs and religious actors clearly aims at addressing the root causes of conflict, working towards a positive peace by developing social cohesion.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Reflection & Recommendations

As the theories, context and collected data of this research have passed, this chapter brings everything together and takes the research to its conclusion. The conclusion is then followed by a reflection and recommendations for future research and praxis.

6.1 Conclusion

Trying to bring about peace in a place that has known many conflicts, such as Iraq, is very complex. At first, international actors were pushing their own agenda, believing that they had the knowledge to set things right. This idea of 'state-making' is also what has been applied in the case of Iraq, forming the country from three former Ottoman provinces and putting it under British control. The state-making approach has held a dominant position in international politics until there were more and more cases that showed that this strategy to bring about order and peace did not work. Throughout its relatively young history, Iraq has known many conflicts, often shifting forms of government and having an increasing amount of sectarian divisions. For most of the time the Sunni minority in Iraq held sway over the Shia majority as well as over very small minorities such as Christians and Yazidis. This unbalanced power, coupled with provoking actions from either side and sometimes even oppression, carved the fault lines even deeper.

More and more it was recognized in the international community that local actors should be included in the interventions, working increasingly in a grassroots, participatory process, thereby creating more local ownership. However nice that sounds, it is still a challenge to find the right way of collaborating with the right actors. The 'local' is a very broad term and includes many different kinds of actors. Working together with local elites does not necessarily mean that the rest of the community will be represented in the projects and there could be disparity between what the elites want and the rest of the community needs. After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 local actors where involved in creating a new political system. This system favored the Shia-majority but also divided certain governmental positions along sectarian lines. Not only did this again emphasize the sectarian divisions in Iraq, the dramatic shift in power between Sunni and Shia left the Sunni suddenly in a very vulnerable position.

This vulnerable position of the Sunni can be linked to the question of whether religion is a driver of conflict. In *Chapter 2* several authors were presented and discussed who share their theories on how religion can function as a driver of conflict. In some cases this idea was based on a notion of inherent violence that can be found in some religions, but often this is not elaborated much further. Rather, the link between religion and conflict is more often based on identity and political issues. These issues, however, do not necessarily spring from religion. In this sense, religion is more of a catalyst in conflict, rather than its source. The difficult situation in which the Sunni found themselves after the invasion of 2003 was a brooding place for radicalization. As a result, one sect who calls themselves Islamic State started a massive campaign to, once again, establish a state where the Sunni would be in control. "Sunni" can be written in quotation marks as their interpretation of the Quran differs from that of the majority of Sunni adherents. The (Sunni) imam who was interviewed for this research underlines this observation. He met with many Sunni, both in Iraq and abroad, who were initially supportive of ISIS. In Iraq this support quickly turned into fear and resistance, but abroad this change took more time as they did not have first-hand experience of the terror inflicted by ISIS. The imam explained, both to the Sunni abroad and in the interview for this research, that ISIS was abusing the Islamic religion, taking verses from the Quran out of context and setting up a clever propaganda system. In this case it becomes clear that religion is not really the cause of the terror in Iraq (and abroad) but that religion was used to fuel a conflict that has more to do with socio-political issues.

Although earlier conflicts in Iraq attracted INGOs to work on emergency relief and peacebuilding projects, the aftermath of the ISIS-devastation scaled this up to a much higher level. There are currently many INGOs active in Iraq and most of the projects focus on the northern governorates, i.e. Nineveh and the Kurdish region. This area is of interest of this research not only due to the large amount of INGOs working here, but also because of its diversity in peoples and religions and because this area has been heavily targeted by ISIS. In virtually all the peacebuilding projects that are running here, social cohesion, reconciliation and trust are the main subjects of interest. In practice, this means that the projects include a wide range of participants who come together to share their experience of loss and discuss plans for the future. It means bringing refugees and IDPs home, reconstructing their homes if necessary, and healing community life. This approach to peacebuilding aligns with how Boutros-Ghali (1992) and Verkoren (2008) define peacebuilding, with its focus on positive peace at the local level, including reconciliation and social cohesion. The INGOs rarely implement these projects themselves. They nearly always work with partners, some of them also international, most of them local. The international partners are involved in consortiums, collaborating on mission and strategy. This can be seen as a transformational way of working as operationalized in *Table 1*, based on the ideas of Bowen et al. (2010) and Fowler (2000), which includes co-ownership and full, mutual support. The local partners do the implementing work, but also provide valuable input in the design of a project as well as in the final stages of a project where lessons are being learned with regard to future projects. This collaboration tends to have a transitional character, which includes dialogue and consultations, but lacks local ownership. With regard to the theoretical aspect of this research, the order of theories as they have been discussed in *Chapter 2*, mirrors the development of collaboration on peacebuilding in northern Iraq. The shift from the interventionist, state-making approach to localization can also be applied to this case. Instead of outside, top-down interventions there is put more emphasis on localization. But, as was also discussed in that same chapter, there are still many challenges in the process of localization as there is an unbalance between the external- and local actors.

Another shift in the theoretical section, is that between regarding religion as a driver of conflict and regarding religion as a driver of peace. Up to recent events with IS, religion in Iraq could indeed be viewed as a troublesome cause of conflict. However, in the articles discussed in *Chapter 2.2.3* it already became clear that a lot of the causes of conflict actually have to do with socio-political issues, rather than religion itself. Religion is than more of a catalyst, rather than a source of conflict. This is also the case in northern Iraq. Religion can be abused, but looking at the actual virtues as they are upheld by the religions found in Iraq, they are dealing with justice, reconciliation and peace. The authors discussed in *Chapter 2.2.4* point to the position of religious leaders in society, to the fact that they often have a large following. Religious leaders can share messages of peace with their communities, and they can also express the needs of their communities to other parties, such as INGOs. It is precisely these things that can also be found in northern Iraq. In this case study three religious leaders have been interviewed: a Sunni imam; a Catholic priest; and a Yazidi sheikh. In the interviews they expressed their desire for peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion. They, like the INGOs, find it important to reach over sectarian boundaries, to build bridges. Dialogue is key. These actors are involved in peacebuilding projects, and in many ways they resemble that of the INGOs, focusing on meetings and conferences, reconstruction projects and dismantling biased frames. In this sense they work together with other religious actors, local NGOs and also INGOs.

This research thus underlines the positive developments towards localization and regarding religious actors as drivers of peace. Especially the latter could do with more attention from secularized Western countries that often underestimate the important place of religion in a majority of cultures around the world.

This brings us to the central research question of this case study: ***What assumptions do international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local religious actors have on collaboration and how,***

according to them, will collaboration between them contribute to peacebuilding in northern Iraq? In the interviews with the INGOs it became clear that they are, in general, very positive towards the role that religious actors (can) play in the peacebuilding process. They acknowledge that religion is a very important aspect of (northern) Iraqi culture and that also the conflicts have a religious component. In that capacity it is important to also address religion and involve religious actors in the projects that aim to foster social cohesion. This feeling is mutual as the religious leaders value the INGOs capacity to provide the participating actors with logistics and networks, thereby making it easier to contact and meet other parties. The INGOs can also offer new knowledge on 'state of the art' tactics in peacebuilding, ensuring the religious actors that they are up to date with regard to contextual and academic developments. In practice, this means that religious actors are invited to participate in workshops and trainings, but often also in designing new projects as well as sharing knowledge and experiences between the INGOs and local communities. An exception in this regard seems to be the Yazidi community. The sheikh expressed his worries about the current situation in which the Yazidi community, being a small and somewhat isolated minority, is often left out, not being actively involved, not being heard. It seems that the large Muslim communities and the small, but very well connected Christian communities have easier access to international parties.

Overall, the participants in this research value collaboration, but while the theoretical framework of *Chapter 2* highlights the emerging concept of localization, with its focus on local ownership, this kind of transformational collaboration is not yet put into practice in this case. There is lots of dialogue and consultation, but ownership of the projects and programs seem to remain with the INGOs. That being said, the sentiment expressed by all respondents is that this collaboration is very valuable for the development of peace and social cohesion in northern Iraq. As one of the INGO-respondents mentioned, progress in peacebuilding is currently somewhat limited due to a bad economic situation and the effects of the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic in the region that caused many actors to refrain from participating in the very essential meetings that would foster social cohesion. Despite the current challenges in this regard, the vast majority of the respondents are very optimistic about the current exchanges between different groups of people and feel that such involvement, and ideally even stronger collaboration, will contribute to effective peacebuilding in northern Iraq.

6.2 Reflection & Recommendations

Because of the long-distance nature of this research, finding relevant actors, establishing contact and maintaining contact has been a real challenge. But in the end there have been 12 interviews, including three interviews with religious actors from three interesting perspectives. It would have been very interesting to include focus group discussions (FDGs) as well, observing how the different parties would react to each other and finding out whether exchange over sectarian lines is indeed improving. Because of the somewhat constructivist approach to this case study, there has not been a systematical analysis of how collaboration between INGOs and local religious actors actually affect peacebuilding in northern Iraq. It would be interesting to review the evaluation reports of peacebuilding projects that included religious actors. This can provide the research with more information about the actual collaboration between INGOs and religious actors, but would probably also shine more light on the effectiveness of this collaboration on the peacebuilding process in northern Iraq. In this light, organizing FDGs and analyzing evaluation reports of peacebuilding projects that included religious actors could be part of a new case study on this topic. Of the religions that are mentioned in *Chapter 4*, tiny minorities of the Sabean-Mandaeans, Baha'i and Jews were not included in this case study. Also the Shia and several Christian denominations are not represented in this research. It would be interesting to find out whether they have

interesting input. This is especially the case for the Shia, being the main religious community in Iraq and thus having a very important role to play in the peacebuilding process.

As mentioned in *Chapter 3*, a case study very similar to this one could also be applied to Nigeria. In Nigeria there is a division between the Christian south and the Islamic north, with Boko Haram as a terrorist organization and many (I)NGOs that are working towards peace. Conducting research in that context enables comparison between the cases of Nigeria and Iraq and can either strengthen the conclusions of this research or show that it is very context-specific. Apart from additions to a research similar to this one, another interesting topic of research would be to look at the role international religious institutions play in both conflicts and peacebuilding activities. This research focuses on the role of INGOs and local religious actors, but there are also international religious institutions and networks that have a big influence on current developments. For instance, two influential actors are Iran and the Vatican, e.g. the Iranian supreme leader and the Holy See. Research focusing on such international religious actors and their influence on local Iraqi developments would provide insights that will greatly complement this research.

Aside from many interesting ideas for further academic research, the conclusions of this particular case study can already provide some recommendations for peacebuilders, specifically in northern Iraq. Both in academic circles and in the field, there is a growing notion of the importance of localization. In current practices, this means that local partners are often involved on different levels of a project or program, which seems to be of added value. But sustainability of development on the local level will likely be stronger when local actors are not only included in projects but also have ownership of these projects. This will require capacity building of local actors and, afterwards, the humility of INGOs to take on more of a facilitating role, rather than a directional one.

One specific type of local actor that could have a bigger role in peacebuilding is the religious actor. In a context such as Iraq, where religion is an important part of the culture and, perhaps, also a component of conflict, religious actors can have a serious impact. When it comes to conflict sensitivity, it might be difficult to include religious actors if their religion is indeed part of a conflict. But as the literature review and recent conflicts in Iraq showed, it is often not religion per se that is part of a conflict, but rather certain sects or groups of people who abuse religion in order to advance their political agenda. Especially in such circumstances, it could be very beneficial to work with influential religious actors who can maintain order within the larger body of a religious community and prevent adherents from being swept up in radicalization. Aside from 'religious' conflict, religious leaders are usually influential actors because in most societies religion is an important identity marker. Including them in peacebuilding operations, building their capacity in this regard and giving them a leading role in local development, is likely to bring forth many fruits.

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Annexes

Survey – INGO Mapping Northern Iraq

I created this Word document based on an XLS-file of the survey that I created with KoBoToolbox. Many of the questions will only be available if a previous question is answered 'correctly'. For instance, the survey ends with question 3 if the respondent answers 'No' to this question. This process builds up as is somewhat illustrated in the final column.

	Label	Hint	Required	Relevant
1.	What is your name?		true	
2.	What is your organization called?		true	
3.	Can your organization be qualified as an 'International Non-Governmental Organization' (INGO)?	'International' meaning that your organization is active in more than 1 country	true	
4.	What is your function within the organization?		true	${Can_your_organization_be_quali} = 'yes'
5.	Has your organization worked on peacebuilding-projects in Iraq?	'Peacebuilding' goes beyond 'peacekeeping' (keeping warring parties apart) and 'peacemaking' (negotiating to reach a settlement) in that it strives for lasting solutions that address the underlying causes of a conflict	true	${Can_your_organization_be_quali} = 'yes'
6.	In which governorates of Iraq has your organization implemented peacebuilding-projects?		true	${Can_your_organization_be_quali} = 'yes' and ${Has_your_organization_worked_o} = 'yes'
7.	Could you name some examples of peacebuilding-projects that your organization has implemented in Iraq?		False	${Can_your_organization_be_quali} = 'yes' and ${Has_your_organization_worked_o} = 'yes'
8.	Did one or more of the peacebuilding-projects	Collaboration can range between program support	true	${Can_your_organization_be_quali} =

include collaboration with religious actors?	to partner | Religious actors include faith communities, religious leaders, churches/mosques and local faith based organizations (FBOs)		'yes' and ${Has_your_organi zation_worked_o} = 'yes'
9. Would you or someone else from you organization be open for an interview to delve further into these questions?		true	${Can_your_organi zation_be_quali} = 'yes' and ${Has_your_organi zation_worked_o} = 'yes'
Contact details interviewee		true	${_9_Would_you_ or_someone_else_ f} = 'yes__i_would' or ${_9_Would_you_ or_someone_else_ f} = 'yes__someone_el se_would'
Any additional remarks		False	

Interview guide – ORGANIZATION with inclusion of religious actors

My name is Joppe Hamelijnck and I am an intern at ZOA Netherlands. I am doing research for ZOA, which is also linked to my master thesis. For my thesis, I am focusing on the subject of collaboration between INGOs and religious actors on peacebuilding in Northern Iraq.

In order to get an understanding of the (possible) relationship between INGOs and religious actors, I am interviewing INGO staff who are involved with these projects and religious actors from the area of investigation. This research is primarily done for my masters' study and, next to that, it might also give ZOA a better picture of what the benefits and possible risks are in collaborating with religious actors. The information gathered with this interview and your details will be treated strictly confidential and will not be granted to a third person.

I would very much like to record this interview, only for my personal use, so that I can listen to it again later. The data will also be stored in the university archive, but will remain locked unless I give explicit permission (which I will only do with *your* explicit permission). Do you have any objections to this? The interview will take around 45 minutes. Before we begin, do you have any questions? Then I propose to start the interview.

1. Since when are you working for ORGANIZATION?

2. Do you know since when ORGANIZATION is present in Iraq?

3. Could you briefly describe what 'peacebuilding' means for ORGANIZATION?

4. Could you briefly describe what kind of peacebuilding-projects ORGANIZATION has implemented in Northern Iraq?

5. Does ORGANIZATION work on these projects alone or does it collaborate with other organizations?

6. What kind of collaboration takes place in these cases? (e.g. program support / partner, etc.)

7. In the survey you mentioned that ORGANIZATION has collaborated with religious actors in (one of) it's peacebuilding-projects. Do you know if it was planned beforehand to collaborate with religious actors?
   - If so, could you explain why ORGANIZATION wanted to collaborate with religious actors?
   - If not, how did the religious actors come into the picture?

8. What kind of religious actors were involved?

9. What kind of collaboration has taken place with these religious actors?

10. Has this collaboration been fruitful and/or were there any difficulties?

11. Do you think these religious actors have added unique value to the project(s)?

12. Have religious actors been involved in these projects in any other way than which we have discussed just now?

13. Do you know of other peacebuilding-projects in Northern Iraq that included collaboration with religious actors?

14. Wat are your thoughts about the role of religious actors in peacebuilding in Northern Iraq in general?

15. Could you share contact details of the religious actors that ORGANIZATION has collaborated with?

These were all my questions.

- Do you have anything to add that hasn't been discussed so far?

- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for everything that you have shared with me. I will continue my research and when I have come to a conclusion, I can share my findings with you, should you be interested.

Interview guide – ORGANIZATION without inclusion of religious actors

My name is Joppe Hamelijnck and I am an intern at ZOA Netherlands. I am doing research for ZOA, which is also linked to my master thesis. For my thesis, I am focusing on the subject of collaboration between INGOs and religious actors on peacebuilding in Northern Iraq.
In order to get an understanding of the (possible) relationship between INGOs and religious actors, I am interviewing INGO staff who are involved with these projects and religious actors from the area of investigation. This research is primarily done for my masters' study and, next to that, it might also give ZOA a better picture of what the benefits and possible risks are in collaborating with religious actors.
The information gathered with this interview and your details will be treated strictly confidential and will not be granted to a third person.
I would very much like to record this interview, only for my personal use, so that I can listen to it again later. The data will also be stored in the university archive, but will remain locked unless I give explicit permission. Do you have any objections to this? The interview will take around 45 minutes. Before we begin, do you have any questions? Then I propose to start the interview.

16. Since when are you working for ORGANIZATION?

17. Do you know since when ORGANIZATION is present in Iraq?

18. Could you briefly describe what 'peacebuilding' means for ORGANIZATION?

19. Could you briefly describe what kind of peacebuilding-projects ORGANIZATION has implemented in Northern Iraq?

20. Does ORGANIZATION work on these projects alone or does it collaborate with other organizations?

21. What kind of collaboration takes place in these cases? (e.g. program support / partner, etc.)

22. *In the survey you mentioned that ORGANIZATION hasn't collaborated with religious actors in its peacebuilding-projects. Do you know if there were plans to collaborate with religious actors?
- *If so, why has this not happened?
- *If not, do you know if there are specific reasons not to include them?

23. Have religious actors been involved in these projects in another way than which I mentioned in the survey? (i.e. program support / partner)

24. *Do you think religious actors could have played a role in (one of) these projects?

25. Do you know of other peacebuilding-projects in Northern Iraq that did include collaboration with religious actors?

26. Wat are your thoughts about the role of religious actors in peacebuilding in Northern Iraq in general?

These were all my questions.

- Do you have anything to add that hasn't been discussed so far?

- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for everything that you have shared with me. I will continue my research and when I have come to a conclusion, I can share my findings with you, should you be interested.

Interview guide – religious actors – English and Arabic

My name is Joppe Hamelijnck and I am an intern at ZOA Netherlands. I am doing research for ZOA, which is also linked to my master thesis. For my thesis, I am focusing on the subject of collaboration between INGOs and religious actors on peacebuilding in Northern Iraq.
In order to get an understanding of the (possible) relationship between INGOs and religious actors, I am interviewing INGO staff who are involved with these projects and religious actors from the area of investigation. This research is primarily done for my masters' study and, next to that, it might also give ZOA a better picture of what the benefits and possible risks are in collaborating with religious actors. The information gathered with this interview and your details will be treated strictly confidential and will not be granted to a third person.

27. To which religion (denomination) do you adhere?

28. What is your 'position' within your religion?

29. What can you say about the current 'status' of your religion in Iraq? Has this changed from how it was a couple of decades ago?

30. Can you say anything about how religion in general is related to conflicts in Iraq?

31. Are you familiar with peacebuilding activities in Northern Iraq?

32. What do you understand 'peacebuilding' to be?

33. Does your religion, and/or you in your position, play a role in peacebuilding?
    – if yes: can you elaborate on what it is that you do with regard to peacebuilding?
    – if no: do you believe there to be a role to play?

34. Have you or someone else with a leading role within your religion collaborated with INGOs on peacebuilding?
    - If yes: can you describe the relationship between you/them and the INGO? / Has this collaboration been fruitful or did you experience difficulties?
    – if no: do you think it would be good to collaborate with INGOs on peacebuilding and what would this collaboration look like?

35. Do you know of other peacebuilding-projects in Northern Iraq that did include collaboration with religious actors?

36. What are your thoughts about the role of religious actors in peacebuilding in Northern Iraq in general?

These were all my questions.

- Do you have anything to add that hasn't been discussed so far?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for everything that you have shared with me. I will continue my research and when I have come to a conclusion, I can share my findings with you, should you be interested.

دليل المقابلة ــ الجهات الدينية

اسمي جوبي وأنا متدرب في منظمة زوا في هولندا. أقوم ببحث علمي عن منظمة زوا، وهو مرتبط أيضًا بأطروحة الماجستير الخاصة بي. في رسالتي، أركز على موضوع التعاون بين المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية والفاعلين الدينيين بشأن بناء السلام في شمال العراق. من أجل فهم العلاقة (المحتملة) بين المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية والفاعلين الدينيين، أقوم بإجراء مقابلات مع موظفي المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية الذين يشاركون في هذه المشاريع والفاعلين الدينيين من منطقة التحقيق\اجراء البحث. تم إجراء هذا البحث بشكل أساسي من أجل دراسة الماجستير، وبعد ذلك، قد يعطي أيضًا منظمة زوا صورة أفضل عن الفوائد والمخاطر المحتملة في التعاون مع الجهات الدينية.
سيتم التعامل مع المعلومات التي تم جمعها في هذه المقابلة وبياناتك بسرية تامة ولن يتم منحها إلى شخص ثالث.

1. إلى أي دين تلتزم\ تنتمي؟

2. ما هو "موقعك" في دينك؟

3. ماذا يمكنك أن تقول عن "الوضع" الحالي لدينك في العراق؟ هل تغير هذا عما كان عليه قبل عقدين من الزمن؟

4. هل يمكنك قول أي شيء عن علاقة الدين بشكل عام بالصراعات في العراق؟

5. هل أنت على دراية بأنشطة بناء السلام في شمال العراق؟

6. ماذا تفهم عن ماذا يكون "بناء السلام"؟

7. هل يلعب دينك و/ أو في موقعك دورًا في بناء السلام؟
    -إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم: هل يمكنك توضيح ما تفعله فيما يتعلق ببناء السلام؟
    - إذا كانت الإجابة "لا": هل تعتقد أن هناك دورًا تلعبه؟

8. هل تعاونت أنت أو أي شخص آخر له دور قيادي في دينك مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية في بناء السلام؟
    - إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم: هل يمكنك وصف العلاقة بينك/ بينهم وبين المنظمة الدولية غير الحكومية؟ / هل كان هذا التعاون مثمرًا أم واجهتك صعوبات؟
    - إذا كانت الإجابة " لا ": هل تعتقد أنه سيكون من الجيد التعاون مع المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية في بناء السلام وكيف سيبدو هذا التعاون؟

9. هل تعرف مشاريع بناء السلام اخرى في شمال العراق التي تضمنت التعاون مع الفاعلين الدينيين؟

10 ما رأيك في دور الفاعلين الدينيين في بناء السلام في شمال العراق بشكل عام؟

كانت هذه كل أسئلتي.

هل لديك أي شيء تضيفه لم تتم مناقشته حتى الآن؟

هل لديك أي أسئلة لي؟

شكرا جزيلا لك على كل ما شاركته معي. سأواصل بحثي وعندما أصل إلى استنتاج ، يمكنني مشاركة نتائجي معك ، إذا كنت مهتمًا.

Codebook

Name	Code group
Number of countries where INGO is active	INGOs
Having a central administration	INGOs
Having self-governance	INGOs
Policies aimed at improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people	INGOs
Established in the area	Local religious actors
Engagement with local population	Local religious actors
Having systematic beliefs	Local religious actors
Having a structured organization	Local religious actors
Sharing information	Collaboration
Funding	Collaboration
Support (technical/facilitating access)	Collaboration
Dialogue and consultations	Collaboration
Co-ownership	Collaboration
Full, mutual support throughout the projects	Collaboration
Reconciliation / Trust	Peacebuilding
Dispute resolution	Peacebuilding
Security	Peacebuilding
Kurdistan	Inductive codes
Sulaymaniyah	Inductive codes
Kirkuk	Inductive codes
Duhok	Inductive codes
Nineveh	Inductive codes
Erbil	Inductive codes
Religious leader(s)	Inductive codes
Religion	Inductive codes
ISIS	Inductive codes
Yazidi	Inductive codes
Muslim	Inductive codes
Christian	Inductive codes
Rebuilding / Reconstruction	Inductive codes
Cause of conflict	Inductive codes