8. The Life Stories on Peace: Towards Instrumental Reconciliation: Balancing Moral and Instrumental Reconciliation on the Institutional and Individual Level

"Even if an Albanian has sexual intercourse with a Serbian female, [it] becomes politics here."[233]

Introduction

Peace building[234] refers to actions undertaken by "international or national actors to consolidate or institutionalize peace" (Call, 2008b, p. 5). The current chapter shows that, in addition to Call's definition, not only institutional actors but also individuals play a significant role in peace building activities. These activities mainly seek to strengthen various state functions, thus creating an overlap with state building and reconciliation agendas (Call, 2008b, p. 5; Goetze & Guzina, 2008, p. 319). Similarly, Greener states that reconciliation is also an element of contemporary state building, consisting of the "technical" activities of (re)building democracy, the rule of law and the economic system (Greener, 2012, p. 418).[235] In contrast, Rosoux argues that due to the "many ambiguities and shortcomings" associated with reconciliation, it should not be used as a key concept in peacemaking and stabilization (Rosoux, 2008). In contrast to Rosoux, this chapter based on life stories argues that reconciliation may contribute to state building and peace building if the dynamics of reconciliation at the institutional and individual level, in the public and private domains in Kosovo, can be understood. This chapter therefore focuses on analysing the second element of peace building, namely reconciliation, since the state building element has already been analyzed in the previous chapter.

In addition, the peace building literature comprehensively analyses the impact of policy programs at the institutional level, such as security sector reforms, disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former fighters in Kosovo (Barakat & Özerdem, 2005; Bernabéu, 2007; Özerdem, 2003). It also discusses policy initiatives such as inter-faith dialogue, initia-

[233] Shkodran, p.13

[234] Peacebuilding is defined in the mainstream theoretical chapter as "Peacebuilding aims to end war and prevent a relapse through various interventions, by rebuilding institutions, promoting national peace and fostering reconciliation between former adversaries."

[235] Please see the policy areas for each aspect of statebuilding: (re)building of democracy (constitution, electoral processes & offices of state), the rule of law (security and justice) and the economic system (taxation, etc.).

tives concerning gender and everyday issues like employment, education and youth. Current reconciliation research usually focuses on changes at the institutional level, which leaves the individual level under-researched. On the one hand, it addresses in detail judicial mechanisms such as criminal trials, which are of special importance for fulfilling the "duty to prosecute". The latter aims to bring justice to victims and simultaneously achieve a deterrent effect. Special attention is given also to the non-judicial mechanisms, such as political apologies, truth and reconciliation commissions and amnesties, implemented at the institutional level. On the other hand, such research looks at political mechanisms, including power sharing mechanisms and institutional agreements. However, many consider it misguided to view transitional justice tools as having the potential to achieve peace building, seeing them as lacking the potential to fulfill their stated purpose and seeing their implementation as problematic. The following chapter therefore compares international perspectives, most of which highlight the institutional level, with local community perspectives on individual and institutional reconciliation. Special attention is hence paid to the individual level and to the local community's perception of the impact of the international community's involvement in reconciliation through life stories. This follows Ross's argument that cross-cultural practices (that is, social practices that assist citizens to live together) also need to be addressed (Ross, 2003). Nadler points out that there is a lack of a body of knowledge on the theory of peace building and social-psychological research (Nadler, 2005). Ross proposes solutions to address the basic threats to identity and the intense sense of victimization expressed in cultural as well as political acts (Ross, 2003).

Turning to the case study, the Stability Pact aimed, among other things, at inter-ethnic reconciliation as envisaged in Resolution 1244, demanded full cooperation in the area of criminal justice by all parties, including the security presence, and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). However, inter-ethnic reconciliation remains a delicate issue in Kosovo as it is shown in life stories. Many life story interviewees pointed out the need to improve institution building across the main state functions (security, justice and economic reconstruction), along with the need to address the impunity of perpetrators, truth telling and missing persons. In addition, the need for basic democratic functioning is emphasized as necessary for political stability and peace building. The (un)integration of Northern Kosovo and (un)reconciliation pose a high risk to the viability of peace and of the state of Kosovo. This chapter therefore addresses international and local perspectives on institutional efforts only briefly, as extensive research has already been conducted on this aspect.[236] Instead it focuses in-depth on the individual level of reconciliatory efforts through life stories. The following

[236] For more information, please consult articles by Jitske Hoogenboom, Nora Ahmetaj and Natasa Kandic.

questions are posed: How is reconciliation understood by the local community and the international community? What are their main differences and commonalities? How, why and when does reconciliation occur from these perspectives? What should be the first steps toward reconciliation and how it may impact peace building in the long term? This chapter thus aims to understand how the former enemies in Kosovo are moving forward with each other after the 1999 war. It argues that instrumental reconciliation is the first step toward moral reconciliation. This step promotes inter-ethnic cooperation at the individual and state levels, which intentionally or unintentionally dispels myths and restores dignity and a human view of the other, due to everyday inter-ethnic cooperation. Research in political science focuses on instrumental reconciliation at the institutional rather than the individual level. However, life stories from the local community reveal that instrumental reconciliation is also present at the individual level and in civil society.

To come to these understandings, three sociological tools were used to uncover in-depth knowledge of political science themes (peace, nation, state) usually studied from a realist/security perspective: the life story method for interviews, the snowballing method for data collection and grounded theory for analysis.[237] This presents an inter-disciplinary and original research. The life story approach is used to provide an understanding of reconciliation at the individual level to exemplify the challenges of and solutions for instrumental reconciliation. It provides in-depth investigation through the life stories of individuals living in Kosovo's divided post-conflict society, people whose interaction and involvement with reconciliation is very political and personal. Around eight life stories were chosen through snowball sampling, population criteria, involvement in post conflict reconstruction period, interactions with international community, availability, access and grounded theory. The latter required theoretical sampling, which respectively necessitated using life stories that introduce new theoretical concepts concerning the challenges to reconciliation,[238] and which exemplify the challenges of reconciliation at the institutional and individual levels. In addition, the life stories interview method was used for the first time as far as I know in the fields of peace building and reconciliation. This therefore contributes to the current body of literature in these fields, which lacks analyses of the kind that result from this innovative methodology and empirical research. The life stories that offered the ability to transfer the main threads and were rich in details were used in this chapter. Artan's life story exemplifies the non-reconciliatory initiatives passed in legislation that arose from the international community's policies as usually implemented by servile political elites. Mira's narrative describes the distorting role of Serbia's government in Northern Kosovo. Gjin's story discuss-

[237] Please consult the methods chapter for more information on methodology.
[238] Ibid.

es the unequal representation of minorities that impacts reconciliation among minorities. Vera's narrative is crucial for understanding the role of non-judicial mechanisms in promoting peace building. Dhurata's life story raises questions about the role of the international community in the Northern Kosovo and is used to uncover positive reconciliatory practices among NGOs and citizens. Mira's story similarly shows how myths can be questioned through the regular interaction between communities if the context allows it, as is the case in Kosovo with moderate levels of security. As will become clear below, the latter could be obtained in an easy and cost-efficient manner by involving researchers that speak the local languages.

Towards an Instrumental Approach to Reconciliation

Reconciliation is "fundamentally disjunctured and uneven" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 182). It is a process rather than a goal, and is thus "not linear, but a continuously evolving relationship between parties: at each stage a relapse into violence is possible" (Rosoux, 2008). Political reconciliation is understood as a complex process where two fragile processes exist in the same moment, former adversaries open up to each other but also question them. This is viewed as a never-ending process (Schaap, 2004). Delicacy is "required" at every step of reconciliation as it is

> impossible to return the tree to its prior self, just as it may be impossible to reconcile fully following terrible events, but the belief in a healthy tree, strong in its foundation and confident in its branches, gives hope to the possibility of a better future (Verdeja, 2009, p. 185)

According to Lily Gardner Feldman (2012), the distinction between moral and instrumental reconciliation is that moral reconciliation deals with moral issues like values and friendship while instrumental reconciliation concerns business and economic relations and benefits derived from engaging in intrastate relations. Analyzing German foreign policy aimed at reconciliation and overcoming the legacy of the war, Feldman argues that motives transform from shared values and friendship to instrumental business and economic calculations. She observes that while German-French reconciliation presents a case of instrumental reconciliation, the German–Israeli case mirrors moral reconciliation (Feldman, 2012). Verdeja proposes a closer focus on discussion, deliberation and politics based on the democratic values of the "others" to achieve reconciliation, rather than "deep acceptance, or willful embrace of the "other"" understood as moral reconciliation (Verdeja, 2009, p. 181). Kelman argues that the "key is mutual acceptance of the other's identity and humanity" (Kelman, 2008, p. 16). In other words, reconciliation

> is, in its final calculus, about reintroducing former antagonists back into the same moral sphere and (2) that this requires an honest and sustained en-

> gagement with the past and with the moral issues surrounding perpetrators, bystanders, and victims (Verdeja, 2009, p. 25)

On the one hand, the liberal peace building approaches promote reconciliation through legal mechanisms (i.e. courts), institutional mechanisms (peace agreements and/or power sharing) and non-legal mechanisms (political apologies, truth and/or reconciliation commissions and amnesties). On the other hand, critical peace building approaches recognize the need to address reconciliation as part of peace building. To enable a just peace, the main requirement is to combine a focus on the everyday with a global ethic of "care" associated with morality, solidarity and "empathy" (Richmond, 2009a, p. 574). On other words, it may be understood as a freedom that may escape or moderate "the hegemonic tendencies of liberal social and political governance" (Richmond, 2009a, p. 575). Taking an empathic approach meaning dealing with local-local interactions with empathy and care may result in better peace building. Questions such as who must presumably provide care remain unanswered (Richmond, 2009a, p. 573). The understanding of peace from marginalized citizens would presumably be incorporated by the resulted Allan and Keller's "just peace" (achieving peace by peace rather than war). The everyday peace focuses on free speech, human rights of people, recognition and reconciliation. They argue that on contrary, the liberal peace building rejects recognition of some "others", prioritizes liberal groups and hence reproduces the process of marginalization (Richmond, 2009a, p. 573). The latter process may hinder reconciliation.

According to the post liberal peace theory, a hybrid liberal peace appears when politics is emphasized rather than institutional frameworks and "where negotiation, mediation, assistance, consensus, consent and reconciliation form the basis of any peace" (Tadjbakhsh & Richmond, 2011, p. 235). To enable a hybrid liberal peace, the genuine inclusion of locals, and their agency that may be in forms of compliance, resistance and non-participation, is necessary. So far most of the cases of post conflict reconstruction seem to have resulted on a hybrid peace (usually resulting on negative peace). However the post liberal peace theorists preferred outcome would be everyday or just peace resulting on positive peace. Several critiques arose developed in reaction to the everyday peace viewing it as illegitimate, Eurocentric, hypercritical, understating the role of excessive international or local power and power politics in the current multipolar world.[239] Following the reasoning of everyday peace, achieving reconciliation through the notions of care and empathy and the genuine inclusion of locals is the preferred result. However, many conditions that are under-researched by post-liberal peace theorists are necessary for it to occur. The instrumental reconciliation approach (which may also lead to moral reconciliation) may assist post-liberal peace theory in extending the understanding of how reconciliation may be achieved, and through what steps. These understand-

[239] Please consult the post-liberal state and peacebuilding chapter for more information on the everyday peace and local turn.

ings derive from a combination of the empirical data collected in Kosovo and a theoretical framework originated in the psychological field.

The combination of the frameworks of (i) mutual trust and (ii) instrumental and moral reconciliation may take into account the former barriers to reconciliation in everyday life. Verdeja has developed a theoretical framework, which combines interest and identity approaches in order to understand the process of reconciliation. His framework consists of five concepts: public dissemination of truth about past atrocities, the accountability of perpetrators, public recognition and acknowledgment of victims, a commitment to the rule of law and the development of mutual respect among former enemies (Verdeja, 2009, p. 180). His model focuses on the principle of mutual respect between perpetrators and victims, implemented at the state or individual levels. His understanding of reconciliation presents "a condition of mutual respect between former adversaries that necessitates the reciprocal recognition of moral worth and dignity" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 180). In successful reconciliatory cases, new identities replace the older ones that contributed to the conflict, individuals see each other as "moral beings" and maintain the goals of "tolerance and respect". In other cases, a lack of acceptance and forgiveness by the victims and a lack of acknowledgment of victims about the wrongdoings of the perpetrators will remain, but respect may prevail. This model is developed across four different levels: the political level (political leaders' messages, often based on state legitimacy and stability rather than reflecting on responsibility), the institutional level (the functioning of state and legal responses), civil society and the interpersonal level (individual citizens). Actions at one level alone are insufficient for reconciliation, as various factors influence it.

This chapter focuses on how reconciliation is manifested at the individual/interpersonal level, since it also complements the methodology of life stories (Verdeja, 2009, p. 4). The individual level is important because of the variety of responses to past crimes shaped by the everyday experiences of individuals. Responses can range from vengeance, through resentment to forgiveness. Everyday experiences may assist in rebuilding societal relations through sustained personal interactions, resulting in the rehumanization of the other. These processes are full of distrust, anger, and fear, but Verdeja argues that *mutual respect* can develop. Forgiveness may not be possible, but mutual respect can serve as the cornerstone of new relations. His suggestions are more pragmatic, and expectations are limited since post conflict countries are filled with bitterness, threats of more violence, and emotional, material, political and social instabilities. Mutual respect does not require forgiveness from victims, but nor does it exclude the possibility of forgiveness. Thus it is significantly deeper than "mere coexistence" and is morally defensible (Verdeja, 2009, p. 168). It provides the "most basic commitment by individuals themselves to live within a shared moral sphere with their former adversaries" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 179).

To establish interpersonal reconciliation, a partial pardon is instead required. It can be "partial and offer a kind of acceptance of the perpetrator as an equal for the purposes of social coexistence without any deep requirement of deep ontological transformation on the part of victim and violator" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 169). It is more robust than thin coexistence, because even to consider pardoning there must be some acknowledgment of past wrongs and recognition of victims. The pardon is "premised on the belief that any stable and just future must focus on creating a common moral, political and social space for former enemies" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 172). Nevertheless, it does not excuse the perpetrators from responsibility. In this case, interpersonal relations are based on principles of mutual respect that balance the requirements of both victims and perpetrators. Respect "emerges from personal relations, from changes in attitudes and behavior, and from a willingness to accept others as moral equals, though not necessarily as friends or intimates" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 173). Therefore mutual respect emerges over time rather than in "one moment" since former enemies, through continued and sustained interaction, need to build trust by working together on common initiatives (Verdeja, 2009, p. 173). As a result, tolerance is created by establishing and nurturing relationships over time, even when differences are still part of the social background. Tolerance is based on notions of respect, of "recognition of the value of others, not because of their political views or identity but because of their status as beings carrying moral rights and that we have an obligation to recognize" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 170).

Generally, Verdeja argues that time alone is not sufficient for reconciliation. Victims must feel "hope" rather than that the future holds "fragile peace or continued impunity", as then the sources of violence are contained rather than removed. It is essential for former enemies to work together to address the deepest causes of conflict. Political elites need to stress "unity" based on "justice and respect" rather than emphasizing differences. Individuals need to experience these changes in everyday life, thus respect and tolerance need to be practiced in everyday life (Verdeja, 2009, p. 175). The personal experiences of survivors must be told publicly, since this provides recognition to victims and also rehumanizes them as moral agents where "critical histories reframe history and bring stories of individuals to the fore, thus drawing the importance of human rights and the dignity of victims". Commemoration ceremonies and memory sites are also important, since they serve as links "between individual experiences and social reflections on the past". They could assist in combating the impunity and marginalization that often accompanies "victimhood" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 176). Material reparations due to poverty are also necessary. Care should be paid to reparations, since giving a small amount merely to silence the victims is not only irresponsible and insensitive but may also harm the process of reconciliation in the long run. Interpersonal reconciliation also requires institutional reforms (rule of law, transparency, accountability) and civil society must represent the needs of victims. When citizens have little trust in institutions, reconciliation is

unlikely to develop, as they may choose private vengeance instead. On the other hand, accountability "signals to the population what values should be protected in the new society" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 178). But the values of accountability and recognition "require more than merely legal enforcement" (Verdeja, 2009, p. 22). Leaders can also change the debate to confront the past in the public and private domains, providing reparations and apologies. Interpersonal reconciliatory efforts are sensitive to developments at other social levels, such as the political, civil society and institutional (Verdeja, 2009, p. 179).

Motives for reconciliation can be both pragmatic and moral (Rosoux, 2008). The approach suggested by the psychology professor Arie Nadler for assessing the different needs of adversaries provides two paths for intergroup reconciliation: socio-emotional and instrumental reconciliation. This distinction refers to various needs and motives at the individual level that can also have an impact at the state level. Socio-emotional reconciliation focuses on recognizing the "equal and worthy identity of each party". Its goal is to integrate adversaries into a "we" feeling and to address the causes of conflict. This approach is revolutionary, and occurs after the completion of the cycle of apology and forgiveness by victims and perpetrators. This is similar to the understanding of moral reconciliation explained above. Instrumental reconciliation is the second path to reconciliation, focused on building trustworthy relationships between the parties. This approach involves evolutionary change through gradual learning in which former adversaries work together on several projects until they earn each other's trust. For instrumental reconciliation to succeed, it is important to repeat the events regularly and in the correct order. The goal is "separation between the enemy parties" so that they can co-exist in a conflict free environment (Nadler & Schnabel, 2008, p. 43). Instrumental reconciliation is the first step towards socio-emotional/moral reconciliation. In fact, victims seek more "power and justice", while perpetrators seek "acceptance and empathy". In politics, apology-forgiveness may be perceived as a "springboard for further demands and accusations". Under conditions of "double-victimhood" (where both parties claim the role of the victim) socio-emotional reconciliation is more difficult (Nadler & Schnabel, 2008, pp. 51–52). Therefore the forgiveness-apology cycle is difficult to achieve at the political/institutional level in the case of Kosovo, since both Serbs and Albanians perceive themselves as victims.

Also, this model may be inappropriate, since Verdeja has already shown that there are cases where forgiveness is not possible at the individual level. For some victims, forgiveness is viewed as a denial of self-respect and dignity. Therefore, the concept of mutual respect that promotes a robust integration of communities (Verdeja) is proposed to be central for instrumental reconciliation, rather than the mere co-existence in separate communities as Nadler argues. In other words, instrumental reconciliation may lead to mutual respect rather than mere co-existence. So far, the notion of instrumental reconciliation has been rarely used in political science. The case of reconciliation in Somalia has been analyzed through instrumen-

tal reconciliation from the institutional level perspective. According to Cobb and Yusuf, reaching a peace settlement in Somalia through power-sharing agreements at the national level and the truth telling/compensation model reveals assumptions that peace can be negotiated. Somalia still faces difficulties in creating sustainable peace at the national level using instrumental reconciliation. Instrumental reconciliation has been successful so far at the local level, but it cannot easily be transferred to the national level. Thus Cobb and Yusuf conclude that socio-emotional reconciliation is necessary in Somalia (Cobb & Yusuf, 2011, pp. 336–7). This paper does not take into account instrumental reconciliation on the interpersonal level in Somalia. Similarly, Lily Feldman, a political scientist analyzing German foreign policy aimed at reconciliation at the institutional/state level rather than the individual level, uses the model of reconciliation distinguishing moral and instrumental reconciliation (Feldman, 2012). This chapter therefore primarily focuses on understanding reconciliation, whether moral or instrumental, primarily at the interpersonal/individual level and only secondarily at the institutional level. This attempts to fill the gap already shown in the political science literature with empirical evidence from Kosovo, and to bridge the gap between the institutional and individual levels of reconciliation, and that between theory and practice, through life stories about reconciliation. It suggests that instrumental reconciliation can engage with the past while focusing on the present at the individual level, and does not necessarily lead to communities living as separate entities once they start cooperating and interacting with each other. Instead, if mutual self-respect is developed between the conflicting parties, the situation goes beyond mere coexistence, perhaps even leading to moral reconciliation. The following section presents the international perspective on reconciliation and peace building.

The International Perspectives on Reconciliation

International actors on the ground and in Brussels and New York seem to hold a common view on why the international community should engage in reconciliation in Kosovo. Regarding the general role of the international community, James, an international official working for a development organization said: “I still want to believe in good”. He views engagement in Kosovo as part of a common goal for the international community: humanity, human security, peace and EU integration. According to him, intervention in Kosovo and the continued engagement with Kosovo has two aspects: “global aspects of why countries intervened” and a humanitarian aspect.

Reconciliation and Peace through the European Union Integration

According to him, peace in the Balkan region seems to depend on the EU integration of Balkan states, the necessity of which is strongly emphasized and is backed by the United States. James provides several reasons for Kosovo to be integrated into the EU. First, EU states real-

ize that the "white spot on the EU map needs to be integrated basically from a historical and traditional point of view, that this is part of the EU", thus "everybody in Kosovo has one common goal". Secondly, the geographical location, specifically its proximity, plays an important role in accession to Europe and peace in the Balkans. He says that nobody wants a "crisis in your back yard". He drew a comparison between Congo and Kosovo at the time of intervention, arguing that intervention in Congo was more necessary than in Kosovo due to the high scale of human rights breaches there. He believes that the international community did not intervene in Congo since it considered the situation "ok", despite the situation there at all times being "much worse than it has ever been in Kosovo". The international community also does not acknowledge that "it was a problem or really problematic", since it is "so far away, it's not part [of the EU]". Thus the scale of human rights breaches seems to be less important than geographical proximity to the EU when interventions take place for the purpose of maintaining regional or world peace. James and his colleagues traveled to the FRY frontlines to see how the war developed:

> I think it [intervention] has nothing to do with any particular friendship, it has nothing to do with Albanians, Serbs or whatever. It has to do with that humanitarian catastrophe being so close. It's there, you can just go there. I was in Sarajevo in '97. There were people traveling with cars from humanitarian catastrophes to see where their frontlines were, where the problems were and things like that. So it's very close, you can just go there, so I think the place is an incentive [for intervention and peace]

According to him, Americans "also want to have Kosovo in the EU" for two reasons: to take the problem out of hands and to help their allies achieve their aims, as "they are their friends and Kosovo wants to be part of the EU and that's where they belong".[240]

But there are also some national interests for some European states, i.e. Switzerland, Germany, Austria and others which host large numbers of the Albanian diaspora. James says that what "we shouldn't underestimate the repatriation of Kosovo [Albanians]" since there is no "economic necessity" for these states to hold them. That is that we should not underestimate the likelihood that all the states hosting Kosovo Albanians will suddenly decide to repatriate them en masse, creating problems for Kosovo in reintegrating them. Furthermore, domestic politics pushes these states to deport more, as "how you talk about us, foreigners and repatriation" is a major issue in national elections.

Regional and world security is another important aspect of Kosovo's integration into the EU. For instance, it is very important for Romania, Bulgaria and Greece to maintain security in the Balkans due to their economic connections with Europe. If instability in the Balkans grew they would suffer direct economic damage.[241] Many other interviewees, including Patricia

[240] James, p.2
[241] James, p.2

and Eric, see regional security and peace as similarly important.[242] Thus, the international community's aim is to create "a safe and secure environment for all Kosovars regardless of their ethnicity".[243] According to James, the "priority is to build a place that does not produce security risks" and to prevent things going "wrong", since it is the "center of peace and stability". Thus, minimizing confrontation with "high security risks" is a priority. Currently, the military presence on the ground provided by KFOR, is very small. James points out that "the more you loosen the strings of supervision, the more you have to rely on local dynamics to be sustainable". Thus, the aims of providing security and maintaining peace are achieved through political stability, the functioning of the Assembly and regional cooperation. James indicates that Serbia has a strong influence over Kosovo's peace and security: "This matters more in Serbia then Kosovo". However, he emphasizes that it is important to "build something that functions, that can stand on its own feet" but he is also skeptical: "In theory … this will work, but in reality this is different, we need to keep a close watch". Thus it seems that peace and security may be fragile in Kosovo.

In addition, Kosovo's state building is viewed as the best available means for creating peace in the Balkans. The goal was "peace, stability and possible long term integration into the EU".[244] It is not only presumed that Kosovo's integration into the EU will achieve peace, but also that it will help nation and state building, as argued by the international officials in the last two chapters.[245] Institutional initiatives are at the heart of discussions about peace and reconciliation.

Politicization of Reconciliation

After securing security, other tasks, such as reconciliation, can follow: "[the international community would] be able to do many of the other tasks much more smoothly, also including reconciliation, turning the page on the war". [246] For Eric, it is important that the population shifts away from the emotional state that the war created: "the baggage of old feelings and bitter emotions left behind from that episode and the history of Serbia and Kosovo".[247] Reconciling fully with Serbia and with Kosovo Serbs "would be very important".[248] For Rohan

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[242] Patricia, p.1
[243] Eric, p.3
[244] This has been already dealt in the statebuilding chapter: 'James argues that the 'biggest differences among the international community' are over how peace can be achieved through a state or other model such as autonomy within Serbia. In the case of Kosovo, the international community 'wants to build a state' but this was 'not the aim'. The goal was 'peace, stability and possible long term integration into the EU'…. Generally, it is hoped to bring peace by making a 'big push' to make Kosovo 'a member of EU'.'
[245] James, p.7
[246] Eric, p.3
[247] Eric, p.3
[248] Albert, p.6

and Milton, reconciliation and transitional justice resonate more with moral understandings of reconciliation:

> you try to re-endorse those who have committed serious crimes against justice in the first place, but in a broader way you also try to bring a certain form of reconciliation. That means bringing perpetrators and victims together.

They perceive that judicial mechanisms are limited since they may be politicized, as observed with the transfer of Serbian war criminals, presumably linked to the IMF credit and aid packages.[249] Rohan and Milton believe that UNMIK, the international community and the United States failed to foster reconciliation by "not investigating properly" war crimes "in the best possible way", specifically cases of murder and disappearance. Serbians are more likely to initiate judicial proceedings regarding such cases than Albanians. According to them, after the war the international powers' prejudices against Serbia led to "discrimination" and to "no support [being] given to Serbs; in the beginning everything was against the Serbs: international, world public opinion. It was certainly like that and with good reason and I think that you could also feel that within the UN". In addition, they claim that the United Nations promoted double standards regarding justice implementation. International actors promised to bring justice to people since it's "possible to bring everyone to justice" but "not in the way you would do it in a Western European country… something more could have been done". Political interference in the judicial mechanisms for dealing with war crimes presumably stems from American power. Rohan and Milton believe that this irregular type of justice is "a bit easier to do under UNMIK" due to American power, as "Americans would not like to get involved in all these criminal cases, or they prefer to leave it like it is, I think it's a missed, opportunity". They presume that these processes occur across the whole Balkan region, not only in Kosovo. [250]

In addition, the establishment of EULEX is viewed as "not a coincidence".[251] Despite the rationale that the EU institution may be subject to less American influence, the case of EULEX seems to show similar political interference as presumed with UNMIK. Carlos, who worked for EULEX, explained that the American Ambassador phoned to stop a house search and arrest in a high-level corruption and war crimes case. The reason provided by the Ambassador was that he needed some contracts to be performed for a company, and the criminal arrest would jeopardize his contracts. As a result, the arrest was delayed.

Furthermore, the impunity of the political elite due to the international community's lack of willingness to investigate seems to hinder reconciliation. Presumably this reasoning prioritizes stability over justice, as Rohan and Milton explain. They distinguish two types of crimes in

[249] Ramon, p.13
[250] Rohan and Milton, p.7-8
[251] Rohan and Milton, p.7-8

Kosovo, crimes committed against Albanians and those in which non-Albanians are the victims. In their view, UNMIK's ability to deal with crimes against Albanians is limited, since "the people who did such things do not stay here [in Kosovo], they left immediately". As for crimes committed against non-Albanians, they presume that the international powers have identified some members of the political elite who could easily be caught. However, the political will to investigate the current political elite is lacking, as it seems necessary to maintain stability:

> more or less we can imagine who committed these crimes with structures, which politically we know are very important for keeping stability in Kosovo and controlling this progress, you know, and then nobody dares really to go into this and I do not believe this is out of the records, I do not believe EULEX will achieve very much in this respect. Because this is [a] political problem, it's not a question of evidence against these people or will, but there are political aspects, which really create the problem[252]

Andreas adds that during his work in Kosovo after the war, international actors knowingly and willingly allowed Serbian and Albanian criminalization that even today seems to hinder reconciliation. He pointed out examples of Albanians demolishing houses and expelling Serbs. On the one hand, Andreas presumes that the rule of law regarding minorities failed in the aftermath of war, as "We have been too lenient on harassment by Kosovo Albanians". He recounted a personal conversation with a leader in which he attempted to convince him to work with Serbs and cease the threats:

> I remember saying to [a leader] that Serbs are no threat to you. They are only 7% and you can be the most undisputed statesmen in Europe, you can look so good. You can be like Nelson Mandela "I want peace, you are my brother and let's all build this together"[253]

The leader rejected the offer because, due to "so much resentment and bitterness from ethnic cleansing before and in the old days of repression from Belgrade, there was no tolerance towards the Serbs". However, Andreas points out that the international community could have promoted better policies to protect minorities "We could have forced our hands on that issue better by imposing a stronger rule of law". He remembers the destruction of Serbian houses after the war being tolerated by the international community: "In my first half year in '99, every night there were fires all over Pristina. Every Serb house was on fire absolutely. It was so hard. So we let the minority [down]".[254]

On the other hand, he presumes that international actors also allowed the deterioration of the Serbs' situation "to continue for way too long". Thus the rule of law is essential not only in nation building but also to peace building and reconciliation, even though he acknowledges

[252] Rohan and Milton, p.8
[253] Andreas, p.2
[254] Andreas, p.2

that there is little trust in the rule of law and a lack of capacity, despite attempts by the international community to build it. He explains the establishment of the rule of law:

> If there's lawlessness, nation building is affected, and it does not work because people have to believe in the rule of law. And in enforcement, because you can have law on the books, but there has to be a credible police and justice system, and we brought the international justices to coach and sit together with domestic judges, we tried all that, according to the book, and we did foster the domestic police also but that could have been more forceful.[255]

As a result, UNMIK "failed…bringing a sort of justice and again leaving communities to live together". The divisions within society still remain. Kosovo's future seems to be hindered by the UN's neglect of inter-ethnic reconciliation. Andreas says "[it's] a missed opportunity, because there is now the state of Kosovo which has bad relations with its neighbors, or at least with its biggest neighbor Serbia, and you could say the UN has not done enough to take measures to bring the two communities together again".[256]

Judicial Mechanisms Incompatible with Victims' Needs

A high level of skepticism is expressed by an international official, Stacey, about the value of judicial prosecutions in bringing justice and material reparations for victims. Stacey claims that locals have unrealistic expectations from the UNHRP, as according to her neither reparations nor justice can compensate for human suffering/loss. She also cynically hints that justice may be impossible for victims, despite being desired:

> They need somebody to blame, and it would be nice to be able to blame somebody for the fact that you've lost your relatives. Their body wasn't discovered and all of that. That would be lovely. It'd be lovely too that it was somebody's fault. Doesn't change the fact that your relatives are not coming back, but it's just not possible.

She claims that victims who brought their cases to the Human Rights Advisory Panel (HRAP) had "unrealistic expectations", such as expecting to repair the damage. She believes that neither prosecutions nor material reparation would repair the damage already done: "there's nothing that's going to repair the damage that has been done here, no amount of money, no amount of reparation. It's time". According to Stacey, nothing can bring "satisfaction to anybody who has suffered", and "this is a horrible thing…, all this suffering, there's either nobody to blame or, no way to claim".[257] However she acknowledges that "there wasn't a proper reconciliation process here and that's unfortunate". On a critical note, being involved in the prosecution of war crimes and maintaining a skeptical attitude towards prosecutions and reparations, it is doubtful whether these aims can be achieved through this attitude. In addition, Verdeja argues that time is insufficient for reconciliation. Some victims may prefer justice

[255] Andreas, p.2
[256] Rohan and Milton, p.8
[257] Stacey, p.9

through prosecutions or material reparations to cope with their loss before opting for vengeance (which some do) (Verdeja, 2009).

The International Community's Unwillingness to Change and Other Limitations

In addition, reconciliation and peace building failures seem to develop from the lack of attention paid to reconciliation and the need to present Kosovo as a success case. Rohan and Milton claim that no criticism of ongoing processes in Kosovo was allowed, despite the suffering of citizens. This has been pushed by the

> big powerful member states of [the] United Nations standing behind the whole intervention because for different political reasons they needed a success. Not necessarily a success that could be seen on the ground, but it must be a success.

This furthered the perception that "peace and success [happened in Kosovo] over the years, but it was not really that visible on the ground". Rohan and Milton experienced difficulties when they expressed discontent with the international community's approach to administering Kosovo after the war:

> It was very difficult to pass any critical or negative message concerning this international enterprise [and] question its price. The people paying the price don't matter. It must be a success.

Rohan and Milton's view is that the political situation has not yet been solved. They conclude that there is no "big difference" compared to the situation in 1999. They recognize that the nature of the conflict has changed: "We don't have people killed every day. We don't even have killings among Albanians, as was the case some years ago. It also means that the internal political situation is now under control somehow".[258] However, Rebecca and Rachel consider that the international and local community [referring to the government elites] is uninterested in promoting changes, except the population: "no one was really interested in making a change, neither internationals nor of course the local community. The population wants the change, but the government doesn't want a change, so it's a case of keeping the status like before". Following Galtung's theory of peace, the international actors signal that negative peace has been reached, while positive peace is far from being achieved.

Other general limitations that create an un-sustainable peace are identified, such as the short length of involvement and the lack of local ownership.[259] These limitations seem to have hindered not only reconciliation and peace building but also state and nation building, as argued in the earlier chapters. Lastly, economic incentives are important in peace building, but they can fail if reconciliation is not taken into account. Andreas shows that using only "economic incentives" to build Kosovo failed, despite post-conflict reconstruction being "very expen-

[258] Rohan and Milton, p.6
[259] James and Stacey.

sive". He says that the international community "spent 100 times per capita more than what we spend in Afghanistan. 400 thousand military and so much money there in such a small place. It was highly unusual, such an effort". He hints that failures can partly be blamed on the lack of attention paid to reconciliation, since "more could have been done on joint reconciliation".[260]

Northern Kosovo as an Obstacle to Reconciliation

Kosovo currently faces four major peace building challenges at the institutional level, the gap between the state and its citizens, the lack of the rule of law, dire interethnic relations and the fraught relationship between Kosovo and Serbia (Hoogenboom, 2011, pp. 14–15). However the biggest challenge is the integration of Northern Kosovo, where Northern Mitrovica is located. The north is mainly Serb dominated, and serves as an example of the still unresolved tensions between the communities. The divided city of Mitrovica separates the southern and northern parts of Kosovo. To provide a short background, the city of Mitrovica was an ethnically mixed city inhabited by both Albanians and Serbs before the war. The military intervention undertaken on NATO's initiative ended the conflict, and NATO took the side of the Kosovo Albanians against Serbian forces to protect civilians from expulsion, gross human rights abuses and war crimes. The French battalion of KFOR, NATO's force in Kosovo, was located in Mitrovica. They placed a fence across the bridge connecting the northern and southern parts of the city. The reasons for this remain untold to the public, but it was more than likely a semi-political agreement based on a security rationale rather than being built semi-spontaneously, as revealed through interviews and life stories. After the war, the protests erupted on the Albanian side, following attempts to cross the bridge and reach the Serbian/northern side. The Kosovo Albanian political elite ended these protests after several days by dispersing the protest crowd with the support of international community. Since 1999, the bridge blockade has served the function of a wall dividing Mitrovica into southern and northern halves. As a result, the composition of the population changed after the war. Serbs inhabit the northern part (except for a few families in the Bosnian neighborhood) and only Albanians inhabit the southern part. The fence on the bridge has blocked freedom of movement, resulting in the only "divided city" in Kosovo. Northern Mitrovica is the political epicenter for Serbs in the north who organized a referendum in 2012. The outcome was a majority rejection of Kosovo's government institutions, but both the Serbian and Kosovo governments proclaimed the referendum invalid.

The EU's major focus lies on improving institutional relations between the states through dialogue and minority rights, however "support on reconciliation and building Serb-Albanian

[260] Andreas, p.4-5

relations is limited" (Hoogenboom, 2011, pp. 14–15). Jitske Hoogenboom from IKV Pax Christi argues that Northern Kosovo is the biggest challenge. The inclusion of the north into Kosovo's political structures has been the main theme of the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue started by the European Union in 2011, which resulted in the Brussels Agreement in 2013. The agreement foresees the abolishment of Serbian parallel structures and their integration into the rest of Kosovo. The Kosovo government agreed to provide Serbs with an autonomous space of governance within Kosovo's system, which is highly decentralized. The first steps towards the realization of the agreement consisted of establishing common border management points, holding elections with the participation of Serbs, and passing a problematic amnesty law to the benefit of those who were involved in the parallel structures (Rrustemi & Baumgärtel, 2014). Furthermore, the agreement aims to create an Association of Serbian Municipalities.[261]
The EU seems to be reluctant to increase its role in the north as "de facto they expect the division to stay" (Hoogenboom, 2011, pp. 14–15). The EU seem to be more interested in "stability and propping up the current leaders than in promoting sustainable change" which hinders reconciliation, and respectively state and peace building. She also argues that the failure of EULEX to use its executive mandate when necessary (i.e. in high level corruption) allows trust in state building to diminish, and that by not being accountable to the people of Kosovo EULEX is promoting double standards (Hoogenboom, 2011, pp. 14–15). Thus, the focus of the EU seems to lie more on institutional (i.e. dialogue) rather than individual approaches to reconciliation, which theoretically resonates with instrumental reconciliation at the institutional level.
Similarly, many international officials recognize that Northern Kosovo remains a challenge for reconciliation. Adena points out that UNMIK has played a hindering role in solving the problem, since UNMIK's official stance is status neutral but in practice they "want to maintain the status quo", the isolation of Northern Kosovo.[262] Also, access by international organizations to the north is limited. Daryl says that only UNMIK has access to the north, whereas EULEX is not present since their access is only "occasional".[263] KFOR is also present. Thus, the solution for the north falls more on the international community as they play the main role there since "Pristina has no authority in the north and is important too for the development of Kosovo".[264]
The second factor hindering the solution of the problem of the north is the barrier installed by the French division of UNMIK, consisting of several barricades, which separates Southern

[261] In the life story, Artan fears that this may create an institutional deadlock in the Pristina parliament. He even compared it to the Bosnian setup, where Republika Srpska often halts political progress. For more information, see the local perspectives section.
[262] Adena, p.9
[263] Daryl, p.1
[264] Salvatore, p.4

and Northern Mitrovica. This not only hinders state building, but also peace building and reconciliation. Andreas views this as "the biggest mistake, because the population themselves were reconciliatory". He experienced more reconciliatory efforts in Southern Kosovo enclaves, such as Caglavica, Gracanica and Pristina, but the north was a different case since "they [the French battalion] built a wall". He could sense in his personal conversation with a French official that Serbs and the French see themselves "more [as] natural allies". [265] This may have been one of the reasons for placing the barricades/wall on the bridge, as Andreas argues. Furthermore James alludes that Belgrade supports the radical Serbs, who are portrayed as "very radical" and the bridge watchers. Therefore he considers that the wall and the conflicts on the bridge will continue since a common political consensus is lacking in Mitrovica and Northern Kosovo.[266] James still views the barricades installed by the French division as necessary after the war but removable after two years. He saw a high presence of "security fear" after the war, which was more "imaginative than real", but he believes that "you don't need barricades to stop people going inside and outside, and people had to move on" after a couple of years. Thus the prolonged existence of the barricades/division produced "a mental barricade" which is problematic for reconciliation: "if you have barricades, that is already your mental barricade and that is transferred to reality and lasts too long. It is like a wall, how can you pass the wall?". Therefore, he concludes that attempts to start reconciliation should have followed very early, meaning "to really cooperate with each other, and try to foster integration between both sides".[267]

Andreas adds that currently the north "is delicate" and filled with resentment. His view is that "It was not easy to bring them together". Common projects were rare. In a project launched after 2002/2003, he became aware that the Northern Mitrovica youth "were reluctant and they really didn't see any perspective". Thus he believes that international actors "could have started to revive the dynamic" but instead they ignored the northern problem from the beginning.[268] Andreas considers that the international community would have been more successful if they had dealt with reconciliation at the beginning: "We could have done better if we had fixed ethnic rivalry". [269] Salvatore is also skeptical about the international community's achievements in the north: "I don't think that the international community has achieved a lot in making a multiethnic community"[270]. Insecurity is still felt by Kosovo Albanians in the North. In 2007 James went to Northern Mitrovica with an Albanian colleague who had lived there before the war. She was forced to live in the south after the war due to the division, and

[265] Andreas, p.4-5
[266] James, p.5
[267] James, p.5
[268] Andreas, p.4-5
[269] Andreas, p.4
[270] Salvatore, p.3

"never went there [to Northern Mitrovica]". He explains that she felt quite unsafe, despite being surrounded by international employees and in a cafe considered very safe by international officials.[271]

Possible Solutions for the Northern Kosovo

Many suggestions have been made for improving the situation in Northern Kosovo and reconciling individuals from the North and South. Eric proposes that political rhetoric should provide positive messages about the north, resources gathered, and priority given to "creating a better future for the people" in the region. According to him, the international community should actively discourage the "high pitched narratives" by both sides that undermine the creation of an atmosphere that could encourage the success of dialogue. This would reverse the attitude of the Serbian political elite, since they would "connect themselves in a mature and statesmanlike attitude and drop some of the poison that they have released in the past in their public discourse towards Kosovo". This approach would be more reconciliatory and might contribute to the "gradual normalization of relations". He foresees normalization as a form of "peaceful coexistence at the beginning, leaving the issue of status and political loyalties aside". The latter may be "full integration or some form of affiliation that would be acceptable to both parties".[272] Furthermore, international actors have a positive view of institutional power sharing and the integration of southern and northern Serbs. Ramon institutionally suggests a "form of political power sharing which is as inclusive as possible" and an early engagement with enclaves, as the Kosovo government has done in the south. Local elections are viewed as a tool to promote reconciliation. Ramon views the Serbian community as divided, therefore the participation of southern Serbs who accept Kosovo in local government would be beneficial. He says that at least some southern Serbs "know that they have a future in Kosovo and are willing to participate". This in turn assists the international community "to invest and also clearly helps the process of reconciliation to move ahead". He also suggests that Kosovo Albanians develop projects, which "reach out for reconciliation [towards Serbs]".[273] Other suggestions include an economic boost so the opposing parties' are encouraged to implement projects together. Andreas explains

> I would insist on forcing reconciliation, you cannot force people to be friends but you can force people to be decent and respectful. That would bring them neutral trust, and give them all kinds of reasons to do things together, rewards, cooperation… continuing, so investing positively and discovering.[274]

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[271] James, p.5
[272] Eric, p.3
[273] Ramon, p.1-2
[274] Andreas, p.8

The rationale seems to be that developing common projects creates responsibilities and benefits for adversaries that presumably may assist integration at an individual level. This reflects the idea of instrumental reconciliation that combines interests and thus encourages cooperation and may result in mutual respect or moral reconciliation.

Lastly, it is perceived appropriate to establish truth commissions in Kosovo "to show people what happened". Ramon believes that this may be of help, since a common perception that war crimes prosecutions present "selective justice" is present among both communities. This is essential since "in the Balkans there is always this sense that I am the victim and the other guy you know is the (assassin), but of course the reality [differs]". Instead, truth commissions may reveal that "nobody is impartial", which may result in apologies since "I should also apologize and not just wait for the other guy to apologize to me". This resonates with proposals to promote the understanding of truth and the public telling of stories that would recognize the victims but also break "historical myths". This may also serve for educational purposes.[275]

To conclude, international officials' representations on peace and reconciliation seem to prioritize security, placing it as a prerequisite for reconciliation and other peace building tasks. State building through EU integration seems to represent another tool for achieving reconciliation and peace. Trust on the institutional level through judicial mechanisms (prosecutions) for promoting reconciliation seems to be low. Justice is presented as politicized by American power and not as being pursued for the aim of maintaining stability in Kosovo. The current political elite was presumably involved in the past in committing crimes against both communities. Politicized justice and the impunity of the political elite may hinder the long-term sustainability of peace and reconciliation. In addition, the rule of law seems very important but has lacked support from the international community from the beginning. Negligence of the rule of law seems visible in the international community's toleration of destruction and deaths after the war. Furthermore, the removal of the mental and physical barriers in the north seems very important for reconciliation, alongside the establishment of truth commissions. As a result, apologies may follow. Politically, great attention is paid to power sharing models, elections and the messages of leaders. On the individual level, the international community emphasizes the forceful development of projects through IOs as a key to reconciliation. The next section introduces local perspectives on reconciliation through life stories.

[275] Ramon, 20-23

Local Perspectives

Deterring Reconciliatory Attempts at the Institutional Level

Call argues that local places are the "central locus of social conflict", which therefore should not be treated as a platform for implementing technical reforms (Call, 2008a, p. 385). The life story data reveals similar conclusions regarding institutional reforms in Kosovo, such as decentralization. The latter reform is part of state building programs in fragile states, associated with providing minority rights, enhancing transparency, accountability and so on. The following section shows that the international community promotes instrumental reconciliation in Kosovo institutionally, living as a separate rather than as an integrated community. Implementing instrumental reconciliation at the institutional level as defined in the literature, which also seems to be implemented by international officials, arguably neglects the local context and history as revealed by local life stories. The life stories below reveal that before the war the communities lived and worked together, and there seems to be a willingness to resume the lifestyle of coexisting with each other. Promoting decentralization policies aimed at living separately along ethnic lines hinders the reconciliation process. These policies may result in alienation among the population and the political elites. Thus, implementing instrumental reconciliation, as defined by political scientists, can be counterproductive if the conditions on the ground are open for moral reconciliation. It may also alienate the local community from international reconstruction efforts, create and/or maintain deeper cleavages in already divided societies, and in the long-term cause communities to strongly resist integration. It may be called into question whether these decentralization policies even reflect any reconciliatory efforts. Instead, it is suggested that instrumental reconciliation should be promoted which is focused on and aimed at bringing communities closer to cooperation and integration rather than living as separate communities, for long-term sustainability. The latter leaves open the possibility that frequent interaction will lead to moral reconciliation. As Call argues, in order to effectively build both peace and states, the international community should:

> strategize between negotiated deals and their consequences for a sustainable state; between capacity and legitimacy; between urgent short term measures and long term sustainability; international interests and recognition versus national interests and legitimacy; and between the interests of elites, especially combatants and of the population at large (Call, 2008b, p. 3).

A group of local actors, as revealed by life stories, affiliated mainly with the political elite argue that peace will also prevail through institutional approaches by joining the EU. However, there is interethnic distrust between Kosovo Albanians and the Serbian political elite at the political/state level. For instance, Kushtrim's life story shows frequent interaction with the local and international political elite.[276] He claims that Serbia's "appetite cannot be known".

[276] His life story is explained in the statebuilding chapter.

Currently, there is "a nonstop production of tension and nationalism, political or social" that raises nationalism and increases political tension between both ethnicities.[277] However, according to him, integration into the European Union could bring peace. Specifically, fast track integration for Kosovo, as with Romania and Bulgaria, would be very beneficial. This is based only on an expressed hope that Serbians would be more peaceful within Europe, but there is hesitance about a positive result (i.e. reconciliation) being achieved even through the EU: "things would be done in a more relaxed way and in the end they [Serbians] would say, after all we are all in Europe, maybe the situation like that would be different".[278]

Now we turn to the next salient life story on understanding reconciliation at an institutional level, which is Artan's story. His background has similarities with many individuals from Kosovo, including his level of poverty, his desire for education and his political activism. Artan comes from a poor family, as is the case with most individuals born in Kosovo in the 1950s. His family was also very patriotic and the extended families of both parents were politically prosecuted and some were killed. He was educated in the FRY, suffered torture and political manipulation in prison and fought for the Albanian side with the Rugovian approach (peacefully oriented/human rights and self-determination) for a while, later joining the KLA. The latter was defensively oriented aiming to end discrimination and injustice against the Albanian community through war. After the war, he became a member of parliament and he participates in veteran and literary meetings. In the parliament, he served on various commissions dealing with legal and judicial matters, the mandates of international mission, European integration, foreign relations and drafting the constitution. Thus, Artan's life story discussed more in depth in the section below exemplifies the challenges faced by local actors at the institutional level in promoting policies of inter-ethnic cooperation and reconciliation.

Legislative Frameworks

Artan's life story points out the challenges rising from the international community's ambiguous role in promoting separate ethnic policies at the state level through legislative frameworks. He views this type of legislation as harmful to reconciliation and peace building in the long-term. Firstly, he perceives that the decentralization process failed to benefit Kosovo, and thus needs to be improved in order to provide better services to citizens, regardless of ethnicity. As a member of a parliamentary group on decentralization, Artan views the current decentralization process established along ethnic lines as hindering reconciliation and inter-ethnic cooperation due to non-practicality and the separation of Kosovo's various communities. He describes the formations of municipalities along ethnic lines, as in the case of a village, which

[277] Kushtrim, p.28
[278] Kushtrim, p.28

had been attached to an Albanian municipality 2 km away for many years, but due to the decentralization process joined a Serbian municipality 30 km away instead:

> a neighborhood in Gjilan is populated by Serbs. They need to be detached from Gjilan to become part of Novoberde, which is about 30 km away and this then is presented as decentralization. I am for decentralization to respect minority rights but if you detach the citizens of Gjilan from the center of Gjilan which is 2 km away, you damage Gjilan and the Serbian community and instead of bringing closer their reconciliation, you are creating their separation, their cantonization… I reject in principle this.

In addition, he points out that double standards are being applied in legislation for majority and minority communities, which may limit reconciliation in long term. For instance, he worked on the Law on the Use of Languages, which allows minority communities to name their localities, their streets etc. Each provision requires compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo but some dubious names are still given to streets despite being associated with war crimes. He says:

> if a community in Gracanica say "we have the right to choose the name" and we respect, and "we want to name our locality 'Karadzic' or 'Milosevic'", then this needs to be reviewed because it clashes with the law, with the constitution, with the majority's will and with the aim to create peace. So if you choose that, I will respect it, you can do whatever you like, but when a citizen passes by there instead of creating a feeling of amicability, it will create a bad feeling, reservation, etc.

In fact, the Serbian town of Ranilug in Kosovo proposed that some streets be named after "Serbian heroes" (Draza Mihajlovic[279] and Milosevic[280]), who Albanians view as perpetrators of crimes. Mihajlovic's name remained on a street sign for four years. After harsh criticism from Albanian newspapers, the street name was put under municipality review. Furthermore, Kosovo's Ministry of Local Government Administration argued that naming a street "Milosevic" could not be implemented in practice. Lastly, Kosovo's Cadastral Agency challenged the Ranilug municipality's decision "because it contains names of streets that are considered unacceptable" (Collaku, 2015). In practice, the unacceptable street name remained in place for several years. This may have decreased the chances for reconciliation as it fuelled further alienation of Kosovo Albanians.

Similar concerns have been highlighted regarding double standards concerning the law on the protection of cultural monuments and areas for minority and majority monuments. In Kosovo, only Orthodox monuments are protected, hence Artan points out the inequality on protection of monuments: "why not Catholic and Islamic ones too? We should protect our cultural heritage, everybody's heritage". Moreover, he raises the question of why these monuments, which are religious, need to receive an ethnic connotation: "why should Orthodox monuments be

[279] A WW II leader of the nationalist Chetnik movement.
[280] Viewed by Kosovo Albanians as the initiator and perpetrator of war crimes in '99.

called “Serbian monuments’?”. Religious monuments are usually liturgical and belong to the believers who could be of different ethnicities. In Kosovo, there are Orthodox believers of different nationalities: Greek, Bulgarian, Russian and Albanian. As a result, the non-Serbian Orthodox believers may feel discriminated against due to the ethnic connotation given to the religious monuments.

There is also skepticism about the ratification of the amnesty law, which was part of the EU’s negotiation process between Kosovo and Serbia. According to Artan, there appears to be double standards stemming from “high international pressure” in the EU dialogue. He says that during the Rambouillet negotiations in 99, Kosovo Albanians were “obliged to pardon acts that are forgivable on both sides”, but Serbia “never forgave any of the war leaders”, since their files remain open. The Amnesty Law is seen as the second obligation placed by the international community on Kosovo Albanians to “forgive all those in the north who opposed the Republic of Kosovo”. He considers the law unfair, non-reciprocal and setting double standards for temporal reasons, pardoning post war crimes and not pre-war ones: “They decided to grant amnesty to everybody who participated in the armed conflict against the Republic of Kosovo, but they didn’t grant amnesty to those who participated in the liberation of Kosovo”. In addition, the amnesty law may strengthen criminal impunity regardless of ethnicity, as in practice all communities may claim to have committed crimes against the new Republic of Kosovo, in cases of smuggling, speculation, forgery or burning houses. If people committed crimes for economic/survival needs (supporting family due to the high poverty level), despite not wanting to oppose the Republic of Kosovo they will be obliged to say the contrary (that they opposed the state) in order to be pardoned. Artan says “if a Serbian admits to committing the same crime because they wanted to oppose the Republic of Kosovo, they get amnesty. So every Serbian businessman will now be obliged to say they have done so to oppose the independence of Kosovo”. In this case, even the southern Serbs, who are integrated and politically support the new state, are forced to say the contrary to receive a pardon. This may weaken Kosovo’s sovereignty. In addition, individuals who committed crimes for reasons of survival will need to cite opposition to the state in order to be pardoned since: “If they say I smuggled because my children needed to eat, they won’t be pardoned”. He is also afraid that this may have a spillover effect: “I am convinced that Bosnians, Montenegrins and even Albanians will do the same [say that they committed criminal acts in order to oppose the Republic of Kosovo]”. He personally discussed with some Albanian businessmen who said that “they will use the same excuse; they will say that they were pro-Serb and had political reasons because we’re talking about tens of thousands or even millions of Euros, a police file or imprisonment”. Similarly, it is argued that the amnesty law poses many risks and is short-sighted despite being legal (Rrustemi & Baumgärtel, 2014).

Unequal Power Relations and Servile Political Elites

Artan life story reveals many cases when he himself was present at the ratification and negotiation of these laws, and describes some conversations and reflections created by a few private and public discussions with local and international actors. He describes Kosovo as being "full of such absurdities", referring to the laws above. He perceives these presumably negative laws as a consequence of unequal power relations with the international community, resulting in the acceptance of potentially harmful laws. The latter may be at the expense of sustainable reconciliation and peace. He considers that the current situation is "a consequence of not having built partnership relations". These laws are drafted "partly by foreigners" and afterwards imposed through a "servile political elite" by the international community. According to him, the servile political elite of Kosovo Albanians avoids questioning these laws, even though these models are being implemented and introduced into Kosovo for the first time without arguably harmonization with European standards. In addition, in personal conversation with internationals he questions why certain standards that are non-existent in Europe are being promoted in Kosovo:

> Why do we need this? Do you have it in your own country?' Find a model and we do it but if they tell me that you have to do it here, that Serbs must have rights that an Albanian doesn't, I will ask them 'Do you do this in your country, sir? No. So why are you providing this to me as a European standard when you don't have this in the heart of Europe?

According to him, individuals like him who oppose international suggestions face resistance and are considered "bad", while individuals who support international suggestions, even if harmful to the state and peace building, are considered "good", referring to the servile group. His friends view internationals as "allies", to be "honored" and are "grateful" because of the "help" given to Kosovo. He agrees, but criticizes the unconditional support when laws are in conflict with Kosovo's interests. Despite his friends' acknowledgment of the flaws of international policy, they still offer unconditional support to international actors, whereas the international community resists the types of individuals posing critical questions. The servile locals are named stretchers, their characteristics and strategies, have already been discussed in depth in the state building chapter. The local stretchers "sign everything" suggested by the international community. This unconditional support to the international community is based on reciprocating the help given through the humanitarian intervention in 1999. Therefore, he believes that the current legislation has been informed "partly by foreigners, partly by our servility", resulting in limitations that "you can't find anywhere else", which may have a long-term negative impact. Thus the servile category assists the international community in promoting laws, which are possibly harmful to reconciliation at the institutional level. He himself has "opposed" these laws, not only through discussions but also with written amendments, which have been overthrown (e.g. in the protection of cultural monuments regarding

ethnicity). According to him, the Orthodox churches are integral to Serbia's sovereignty according to the Kosovo law, which infringes the principles of UNESCO and Kosovo's sovereignty.

The Role of Serbia and the Minority Perspectives

Another layer of obstacles originating from Serbia at the institutional level is revealed by Artan based on his communication with the local and international community on minority integration. Artan adds that there are local actors instructed by Serbia to "set up traps wherever possible". Some Albanian groups oppose these individuals "without allowing it to come to a confrontation with the Serbian community [in Kosovo]". However, another group of Albanians who are "burdened [with war]" say to him that "Serbs do not merit anything, they made the war". He is especially concerned about the ethnic division that seems to be promoted in the negotiations with Serbia facilitated by the EU. He explains that a Special Customs Fund is requested by Serbia for the Serbian community, which may interfere in the internal functioning of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society. He also brings up the inequality of treatment of minorities in Kosovo and Serbia. He raises the question of why it is not possible for Albanians in Serbia to receive a special fund like that received by Kosovo Serbs. For him, it seems that there are double standards in the resolution of the problem of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, in which Serbs are privileged while the Albanian minority in Serbia is ignored. This is viewed as a result of Kosovo's servile political elite.

Similarly to the perceptions of international officials, he considers that the normalization of relations with Serbia depends on Belgrade, since the problems within Kosovo stem from Belgrade, not Pristina. Concessions by Kosovo's political elite are viewed as damaging the image of Kosovo as it gives the impression that "Kosovo Albanians are the guilty ones while Serbs were righteous". He believes that concessions will continue, since the political elite wins politically from the international community and "get[s] praise". However, he is more interested in resolving the issue and negotiating an equal footing with Serbian government than being praised. These developments between Serbia and Kosovo strain relations between Kosovo Serbs and the Kosovo Albanian political elite:

> I don't wish for them [Kosovo Serbs] to be repressed, I don't wish to take revenge against them, I wish for us to build the best model for the treatment of minorities. To treat them well, to integrate. We've always had a norm of understanding those that are weaker, but not for Serbia.

He even claims that Serbia has "never cared for Kosovo Serbs", nor "treated them seriously", but has "treated them as second class citizens or third" and "ruined their fate". Therefore he believes that Kosovo Serbs must be supported rather than punished. In addition, the Kosovo government should not allow the Serbian minority to become an "instrument of Serbia" against Kosovo's independence, since this is presumably Serbia's aim. He even claims that

the "Bosnization of Kosovo" is being undertaken through negotiations with Serbia. According to him, the Bosniazation of Kosovo will not honor all the victims that died during the war, but will "block" Kosovo from moving forward, integrating or progressing. It is therefore essential to "understand each other correctly" and secondly "move forward quicker and better". He also calls for caution when implementing such potentially harmful policies, and urges the international community to refrain from pressuring and imposing this type of political solution. The latter are viewed as hindering rather than promoting reconciliation. Despite the above skepticism expressed in Artan's life story, his aim is to support the "process of building bridges of cooperation with Europe and the world, with the aim of being part of it, but while maintaining our traits, our identity and our dignity".

At the same time, Mira, a Kosovo Serb women and the mother of two children, concurs with Artan's views regarding the unequal treatment of Kosovo Serbs by Serbia. She prefers to move forward with Kosovo Albanians or relocate to other places, rather than relocate to Serbia, due to the possible discrimination her family may receive. She believes that Serbs in Serbia have negative perceptions of Kosovo Serbs. She claims that they would experience poor quality of life in Serbia, like life in Kosovo, and may experience difficulties in relocating:

> So, if it's not good, we are going to Serbia but how to go to Serbia when we do not have a job. You don't have an apartment. So we would rather stay here than go to Serbia, because they don't like us too much, because we are coming from Kosovo...Yeah it's true….I would kill them…I would rather go to Istanbul to live than in Serbia… also, we still have problems, the same problems with water, electricity, and the economic situation is a disaster…we actually have the same problems. We [Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo] are suffering together from the same issues now.

Turning to the life story of Shkodran, described in the earlier chapter, who seems to have lost trust in the international community's willingness to work for Kosovo Albanian interests and independence. He views the relationship between Kosovo and the West as paradoxical, attempting to help Kosovo rhetorically while helping Serbia in practice:

> We depend on the West, while on one side we seek help from the West, on the other side we protect our back from Serbia. The West says 'I will solve your issue', while on the other side, they introduce Serbia.

He fears that the German model is being introduced into the Kosovo/Serbia conflict. Both German sides had their own state, recognized each other's independent status, and afterwards their common interest was to unify and they did so. Therefore he concludes "that Albanians will reconcile with Serbs".[281]

In addition, the other minorities support institution-building to ensure the respect of minority rights and maintain peace but claim that the Serbian minority is being privileged over the oth-

[281] Shkodran, p.16-17

er minorities. For instance, Gjin[282] considers that peace occurs naturally when a state has strong independent institutions. He suggests focusing on institution-building since Kosovo lacks them. Due to Bosnia's non-recognition of Kosovo as a state[283], the Bosnian minority faces everyday difficulties in Kosovo. Gjin's life story shows that Kosovo Bosnians cannot travel to Bosnia since they hold Kosovo travel documents. In fact, one of his children is unable to travel to Bosnia despite that his family is originally from there. He feels unsupported by Bosnia, since Bosnia lacks functioning institutions and since Bosnians lack a motherland or a national state to support minorities outside its border. He therefore views the position of the Bosnian minority in Kosovo as weak compared to the Serbian minority. The weak position of Bosnians in Kosovo is perceived as stemming from institution-building by the international community that sees discrimination between minorities as the "price" of peace. Gjin claims that there are double standards regarding minority rights, in practice not in the legal framework, for the sole purpose of maintaining peace and the convenience of the international community and system. He therefore, expresses fear for the Bosnians in Kosovo since the Serbian community may be favored over the Bosnian community by the Kosovo Albanian government and the international community, which presumably results in discrimination against Bosnians. He says:

> In practice, I am myself afraid that the Serbs will be favored. 'Why?' For peace in the house because it is convenient for all, the West, Europe, just to have peace, it does not matter that they will have more.[284]

Northern Kosovo and the Question of Demilitarization

Furthermore, questions are raised over whether the international community backs Northern Kosovo's "isolation" politically and institutionally. The integration of Northern Kosovo is one of the main aims of the EU Dialogue, since the situation is considered fragile despite the high number of KFOR forces in that area. Dhurata's life story raises questions over whether there is a political consensus to tolerate high-level crime in the North, as the DDR should have been implemented in the whole territory of Kosovo, as stipulated in the Kumanovo Agreement. If KFOR has the authority to maintain security then she questions whether they are unwilling to contribute to a more secure environment. She explains the difference between everyday life in southern and northern Mitrovica, such as the lack of a functioning security and judiciary:

> For example, if you arrested somebody [in the North] because they were shooting in the street and threatening people, the next day he would get out of jail. For example, they attacked a car in the middle of the day, even today,

[282] The relevance of Gjin's life story has already been described in the statebuilding chapter.
[283] Specifically, the Serbian community blocks the recognition of Kosovo despite the wish of the Bosnian community to recognize Kosovo.
[284] Gjin, p.12-13

> you can park the car and block the street and nobody dares [to say something]. In the south if you do that, the car would be taken and you have to pay.

Dhurata claims that incidents have occurred regularly. The targeted individuals mainly originate from the south, but Serbs were also threatened and beaten "because they were doing business with Albanians". In fact, she saw stones thrown at cars, and some of her friends started seeing and recognizing criminals after a while. Northern Kosovo is described as a dangerous environment:

> There was a high level of […] drug users in the north. This is another specificity because the borders are not controlled. You can get it even today. There are alternative ways, which you can bring anything you want, weapons or anything and that's why it became more insecure. If you had a proper border … and because that part was never demilitarized.

Based on her life experiences and interactions with KFOR, she claims that KFOR refrained from demilitarizing the north "because [they] didn't dare to do their work in the north". In fact, only a small area has been demilitarized. She personally asked a general at SHAPE/NATO "why KFOR couldn't face bridge watchers?" The bridge watchers are unknown and sometimes criminal men maintaining security in the north, presumed to be under direction from Belgrade, who create many problems in Northern Mitrovica. She says that "he [the general] became nervous, he did not answer me but [he said] "you know, you are from Kosovo, it was not easy, we had to work with people diplomatically. It was not possible"". Thus she claims that KFOR applied their mandate differently in Northern and Southern Kosovo. She saw KFOR "sometimes patrolling with cars [in the north], not as they would do here in the South"[285]. This raises questions over whether the different application of the mandate in the north and the south was intended politically, since NATO had the power and capability to enforce the demobilization and demilitarization of the north as they did in the south. The north is the critical issue between Kosovo and Serbia, and its non-demilitarization and demobilization by KFOR may in the long term have maintained the segregation of the population between the north and the south and delayed the achievement of reconciliation, peace, nation and state building.

Towards Non-Judicial Mechanisms to Meet the Victims' Needs

The life stories reveal skepticism over the judicial mechanisms promoting reconciliation. Criminal justice is viewed as insufficient for reconciliation purposes. Vera, a committed human rights activist dealing with transitional justice since the Balkan wars, explains that criminal courts are less appropriate for reconciliation, since they focus on "perpetrators" and their "guilt, not on the full picture of what happened". Her life story reveals skeptical views to-

[285] Dhurata's life story.

wards the courts. She views courts as limited since they are "not interested in listening to the suffering of victims" and treat victims as "evidence against the perpetrators", whereas the needs of the victims are different: "[they] need to be respected, they need to speak in public, they need to see that the other side understands and respects what happened to them". She was involved in a trial where 250 crimes were recorded for a single perpetrator but he was charged with only 50 due to legal practicalities. The victims of the crimes not taken into account in this case will not receive justice.

She therefore advocates a truth telling commission in the Balkans, which is currently being set up. She claims that the initiative is bottom-up, but consultation and training is being provided by the ICTJ (International Center for Transitional Justice). She says: "they are basically in charge of theoretically advising how this has to be done". The EU has also provided a budget for it. She explains that the establishing group allowed international officials to observe but not take an active part in meetings: "I am against internationals coming and interfering, since at first they are not prepared and secondly it has to be our initiative".[286]

Similarly, Amanda another human rights activist whose life story shows deep commitment with the challenges of justice and reconciliation. After she spend seven years in court representing the families of victims started to think about the idea of a truth telling commission at the regional level. The aims are twofold: to bring justice to victims and to bring the experience of war closer to everyday life. She says it is important:

> to listen to victims, to respect experiences, suffering, to create a historical record based on the stories of victims, facts… and show that people are equal, that all victims of war crimes deserve respect. [In addition] to break the silence, to stop talking about numbers, to know the names of the victims, to know civilians who were killed, to know the soldiers and policemen, their different situations... to create a Kosovo memory and to document the circumstances in which people …[were killed] [287]

The governments seem to have been reluctant despite saying in conversations that they "support it but only because of EU pressure". According to her, if the EU uses the stick and carrot, even though she does not prefer this approach, the truth telling commission will materialize. But she believes that because of the "normalization of relations" and the enlargement strategy, the EU will "put something under the carpet" on issues dealing with the past and reconciliation.[288] She herself established an NGO to deal with these issues since it is important to "deal genuinely with the transition of justice and not allow others to do this for us" and it is vital for the "next generations" in Kosovo.[289] Thus, non-judicial mechanisms seem to be preferred to judicial mechanisms for reconciliation purposes.

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[286] Vera, p.14
[287] Amanda, p.6-7
[288] Vera, p.13
[289] Vera, p.9

To conclude, institutionally, efforts taken at the local and international levels, often enabled and pushed by the international community, seem to be perceived as hindering rather than promoting reconciliation, as seen in the discussions about the laws implemented in parliament, the EU Dialogue, Northern Kosovo and judicial mechanisms. However, top-down initiatives are recognized as important for dealing with areas of security and missing people.[290] Non-judicial mechanisms like truth commissions seem to be preferred to judicial ones, since they seem more appropriate to the needs of victims and may assist future generations in dealing with the past among the human rights activists. They view the role of internationals only as pressurizing the government to accept the commission but they see no international role in its everyday tasks. The section below analyzes reconciliation at the individual level by firstly describing the theoretical background and then introducing the local life stories.

Fostering Reconciliation at the Individual Level through the Grassroots

Theoretically, the model prescribed by Professor Nancy Nadler based on her fieldwork with Israeli professionals working in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides four conditions for creating effective programs to achieve instrumental reconciliation. The first condition refers to purposefully and deliberately designing and maintaining equality in activities. In case equality is lacking in activities, they may be perceived by the other party as lacking sensitivity and empathy and may create impressions of dependency. Equality between adversaries can be built by creating equal and continuous involvement in projects from design to implementation or by using third parties. Such third parties must be viewed as an impartial valuable resource by both parties, and they may have an equalizing effect, since the power structure changes. The victims no longer feel dependent on or inferior to their former adversary, since both parties have to learn from the third party, whether it is a university or an IO. The second condition is building "interpersonal trust: the safety net" between individuals who trust each other and believe in the success of projects even when faced by crises and setbacks. This can be built gradually. The third condition refers to providing sensitivity to cross-cultural differences as the contrary can derail reconciliation. Although Nadler acknowledges that differences between people from the same culture may be greater than differences between cultures, she still argues that cultural background matters. Thus, one has to be careful to avoid misunderstandings when building international projects. Lastly, she suggests focusing on content, which must address real, pressing and common problems, otherwise projects may easily collapse. Thus it is essential to identify real problems and provide real solutions within a reasonable timeframe (Nadler, 2005, pp. 137–139).

[290] Dhurata, p.15-16

Aiming to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of reconciliation, Aiken argues that models of social learning should be promoted in post conflict states. In unpacking reconciliation, both types instrumental and moral are needed. He argues that transitional justice should work in tandem with distributive learning on opportunities to tackle structural and material inequalities and unequal power relations. In order to achieve reconciliation, Aiken's model of social learning promotes three types of social learning: instrumental, socio-emotional and distributive. These are related to five social learning mechanisms: positive contact, transformative dialogue, truth, justice and amelioration of material inequalities. This model adds distributive learning to the other types discussed so far. The main mechanisms for promoting instrumental learning are "renewed positive interaction and communication across group boundaries". Quantity matters less than the nature and quality of interactions and the social context (Aiken, 2013, pp. 31–34). This resonates with the conditions provided by Nadler for instrumental reconciliation.

We now turn to Dhurata's life story as a more personal experience of both types of contentious reconciliation in post-war Kosovo. Dhurata's[i] story is used heuristically to uncover some of the current challenges that a group of local internally displaced people face in Kosovo. Before the war, she studied medicine in school alongside the Serbian community and like the other Albanians in Mitrovica lived her everyday life with other Serbs since the city was not divided. However, tensions between the communities rose before the war, and the Serbian and Albanian communities were segregated or expelled from inter-ethnic schools and the workforce. Born, raised and educated in high school in Northern Mitrovica, she was forced to move to Southern Mitrovica due to the war. Her life took a different direction to what had she expected before the war when she had dreamed of studying medicine and geology. Her apartment in the north was no longer accessible due to the separation of the city, forcing her to live in rented houses in the south. In order to return to Northern Mitrovica, her birthplace, she decided to work as an NGO activist in the divided city, a job she still holds today. Her encounters with a wide range of local and international political elites and citizens, including Serbs, are very unusual and are telling about power politics in Kosovo and the possibilities of reconciliation.

The war in Kosovo resulted in the expulsion of thousands of people like Dhurata, and she points out that the war was one of the most significant phases of her life. She shared a couple of moments, which illustrate the experience of being a refugee during the war. The first important moment was when she saw people being killed:

> I think I was only two and a half meters away when a man, he was a father with two kids, I don't remember, but he just went to take some water in a place called Klina, in a small river and then they just shot him and then his wife wanted to run and we said 'no, they will kill you too!', so he was just left there.

She also had to use her limited nursing experience to care for her younger brother, who was wounded as a KLA fighter, because nobody else around could treat him. A similarly formative event for her was when the experiences of school and of being a refugee came together. On the border with Albania, she met one of her former professors on the fourth day of queuing at the border crossing, tired and without food. Seeing her former professor with old shoes hurt her a lot, and she did not know whether he would survive, due to the Serbian army practice of targeted killings of professors. At that moment she realized that suffering cannot be understood by others and she drew a comparison between when she read stories of the Holocaust and the suffering she herself experienced. She told her teacher:

> My dear professor, I feel ashamed because I read a lot about holocausts but all the time I thought that, you know, that authors are exaggerating, then I said lucky me, I kept it only for myself, I didn't say it. Now I understand that nobody can ever describe suffering.

Such events evoked in her the feelings of perplexity and powerlessness that often accompany refugees fleeing war:

> I had a feeling that everything is so, you know… and it hurts so much when you don't know if you will be ever able to come back, and you feel how small, in a way you are, how useless and helpless you are.

This period for her was a "struggle for survival" from which she managed to flee. Her life story shows that she returned to Kosovo after the withdrawal of Serbian troops. Dhurata described the immediate aftermath of the war as "one of the moments in which I didn't know what I was going to do, like I knew at the time I could do something and I wanted to do something, [but] I didn't know where to find [it]". She found her first job as a theater instructor at an international donor organization, mostly working with traumatized children. She describes this work as unconscious self-therapy, which had already begun during the war when she had played with children while they were being held hostage. Soon, she moved on to work as a community center administrator, though she continued volunteer work with children. After a while, she came into contact with a Dutch couple in Mitrovica that had worked previously in Bosnia and Croatia. They claimed to be there "just to listen to what people had to say" in order to direct the focus of their activities. This surprised her since "everybody was coming and saying you have to do this, you have to do that", because most donors were only interested in infrastructure. This resonates with the criticism of transitional justice and critical approaches, arguing that top-down solutions ignore local needs and are often implemented without consultation with locals.

Despite the general lack of ownership, this life story shows that it sometimes exists but may not be widespread. She successfully asked the Dutch couple to work in Mitrovica "because there is a lot to do here and nobody else is working with people, everybody builds houses". This request was also a personal desire, as she was hoping to acquire "a job in order to live"

and sustain her family. As the oldest member of her family, this responsibility had fallen on her shoulders. At the same time, she continued to be disappointed by the fact that she could not return to her home as her apartment was occupied and KFOR did not allow her to enter Northern Mitrovica. During her first attempts to return with a group of displaced persons, French KFOR stopped them on the grounds of security since the situation "was so violent". Seeing the obstacles, Dhurata realized that the only potential way to return was by cooperating and starting to listen and understand the Serbian community. So she began working with them through an NGO. This attitude and behavior change was personally very difficult for her due to her traumatic experiences during the war. How she managed to work with both communities is further examined below.

Instrumental Motives for Reconciliation

There are many reasons for cooperation with the other, such as personal interests, like returning to the houses where people used to live before the war. Dhurata, an internally displaced refugee, wanted to return home after the war: "I wanted to go home like everybody else. I think I became nostalgic". She tried to go to the north with her sister to see her flat and pick up a few pictures and other things. No international organization helped her to pick up her items, so she went to the north with her sister. She was attacked in front of her flat:

> [six] Serbian women, one of them was my neighbor. They actually attacked me and beat me and the worst moment was when these two [KFOR] soldiers were looking at me and I shouted: HELP!!! [they] just looked, they had weapons and they just pretended they didn't see me.

She sustained head injuries in the incident, and a vase was even thrown at her, although it luckily did not hit her on the head. When she saw that the KFOR soldiers were not going to help her, she shouted that she worked for an international organization, although in fact she did not. After a while, the son of a neighbor intervened in the attack and the women stopped attacking her. She remains very disappointed about this incident and she is unsure whether the war or this incident represents more of a disappointment for her. She says: "I didn't feel any pain anymore, that was something for me, I don't know if I was more disappointed here or earlier, in '99'". She is disappointed about the incident since she did not think that women could be so violent, and she is also disappointed at KFOR's failure to assist her as an unarmed woman who posed no risk.

Since then, she has lived with her family in nine different rented houses in the south, while the family which occupied her apartment in the north has paid nothing. She sent complaints first to the French gendarmerie and later to UN Habitat. She was initially offered the option of selling the apartment, but she refused to sell and opted for the house to be managed by UN-HABITAT. Once UNHABITAT identified the occupying family, they asked whether she wanted them to be expelled or to pay rent "like Albanians are paying in the South?" She opt-

ed for payment but has never received any money. According to her, the Albanian families which occupied Serbian houses for a few years were obliged to pay rent, since the international community could enforce the law in the south, whereas the Serbs did not since the international community did not enforce the law in the north. Later, the Kosovo Property Agency took over the tasks of UNHABITAT but they were also unable to enforce the law in the north. The situation remains much the same, and some but not all, displaced people have been forced to sell. In the south, a few houses have been built for IDPs but only for citizens who had land. Those, like Dhurata with apartments were excluded. Dhurata claims that a few IDPs who had connections with the government benefited from this program despite not owning land in the north, but she did not benefit from it. She claims that the requirement to own land "was unfair for citizens". Now IDPs either live in expensive rented accommodation or in houses that they have managed to buy. Dhurata still rents. It seems that the institutional solutions for the property rights of IDPs provided by local or international actors failed due to a lack of capacity or unwillingness to enforce rules in Northern Mitrovica.

Dhurata started working with the Serbian community immediately after the war, as her internal rejection was surpassed by everyday economic needs:

> we had these fights, internal fights, because I don't think that we really had the luxury to think and just because I had first of all to find a job in order to live

Her main initiative of "community building" in Mitrovica had the "aim to talk and work with people" as everyone else in '99 was investing in infrastructure, roads, houses and returnees. She only wanted to return to Northern Mitrovica as a citizen and also understand what happened from the Serbian perspective:

> because I was born and lived there in the north. I wanted to go back home, so in a way I had to do something in order to get back [and] I had some questions that I really needed to answer, to hear from people from the other side, the Serbs 'What did they have to say about what happened?' I really needed this for myself

In addition, the life story below shows that inter-ethnic cooperation between women from the divided city occurred for economical needs. Turning to one of the everyday difficulties of Mira, a Serbian mother working for an Albanian NGO, is the bullying of her children at school because she works with Albanians. Her adolescent children are sensitive. One came home in the evening and asked her to explain why she works with Albanians:

> When he started to go to high school there were some kids in his class who came from families dealing with politics, their fathers were in charge of something and they started to ask him where is your mother working? And from time to time, he comes and asks: "look at this, you know that my friend is asking where your mother is working"

As a response, she must sit for several evenings with her husband to talk to her children, explaining the reasons why she has to work with Albanians. The first reason provided refers to

history: Albanians and Serbs lived together in the past for many generations, thus it is normal to live and work together now:

> I remember now what my mother and my father told me and my kids: that they lived together with Albanians, telling them "look at this…we lived together with Albanians" and this is it…so I told them this as well…in the previous time, I had colleagues as Albanians, my director was Albanian guy in [a company] …we were happy… so history is repeating the things…so you should know that it's simply nothing strange, for me it's nothing strange …and my son says "yes for me it's nothing strange because my mother has worked with Albanians since 1999"

It appears that she works with Albanians because she needs to support her family financially and also because Serbia does not help her find a job in the Serbian community.

> [She says to her child] "I had a job before the war. I had a salary from the Serbian government and now the Serbian government doesn't care for me and your father". He has a job, he is paid by Serbia but I'm not. They never found a job for me. They never found classes for me so how you will grow up just with one salary? We paid the rent for our house in that period. I didn't have a salary. [She says to her child] "So Edin, can you imagine [life without me working]? I should do something."

The last reason given to her child is that it is morally good or appropriate to work with Albanians as she is helping people. She considers this a "very important" reason since "I'm doing nothing bad". The perceived good reasons for working with the other are: "doing humanitarian work, helping people, helping adults, helping women". Despite her various reasons, her child was not fully convinced, but did not reject their mother for working with Albanians. The child said: "just tell me that you know better than me".

In addition, Shkodran's life story, involved in the north and south, presumes that communities reconcile when they have a common material interest. He claims that "The best way to arrange organized crime is between Albanians and Serbs". Even political obstacles seem to decrease when "they only have their common material interest".[291] Similarly, Gjin's life story shows that successful businesses are built across communities, as he set up a private clinic after the war with an Albanian and still maintains it due to its success and high profitability. This leads to the understanding that only grassroots' movements or purely individual initiatives work inter-ethnically, primarily due to personal interests and necessity rather than willingness to reconcile. The following section shows how placing different ethnicities (which might not agree with or like each other) in one work environment might have the unintended, positive consequence of instrumental reconciliation. Thus I argue that instrumental reconciliation occurs at the individual level, even when institutional attempts to reconcile communities fail due to the low priority in political agenda, lack of attention towards the local dynamics and the lack of participation by citizens. Grassroots and individual initiatives maneuver

[291] Shkodran, p.16-17

around it and engage successfully in reconciliation as is shown below through creating and sustaining mutual trust and respect, even in times of high insecurity.

Wild Mitrovica/Northern Kosovo: Breaking Myths in a Fragile Environment

The context of Mitrovica and the north after the war is very complex. The characteristics of Northern Kosovo, as described from the perspective of Dhurata, provide some insights into her work and her struggles in the north. Both Dhurata and Mira call Northern Mitrovica and the north generally "wild". According to both, this is the best and most frequent term used to describe the lawlessness in security, the poor economy and the fragile social and inter-ethnic relations. In the literature, the term "wild" is not used to describe security or societal and economic relations but to describe justice. Verdeja uses the term "wild" to describe the process whereby justice is taken into the hands of citizens rather than exercised by institutions, which can quickly turn into "reciprocal violence" (Verdeja, 2009). However, Mira and Dhurata use the term "wild" to describe the generally fragile situation in the north, referring to the lack of security, the poor economy and the fragile social cohesion in everyday life. In fact, these unfavorable conditions might even bridge ethnic cleavages, since myths that only the other/enemy is "bad" may be broken. Citizens see that individuals within the group can be more destructive/bad than the other, respectively the Serbian bridge watchers became bad whereas the Albanian citizens in NGO's became good, as the latter helped them dealing with Serbian threats.

For instance, Mira, a Serbian mother of several children, married and living in Northern Mitrovica, seems to have accomplished everything she wished for in her life: creating a family, educating herself and her children, having a job and buying a house. However, she still seems to lack normality due to the unstable situation in Northern Kosovo. She expresses a high level of distress and concern when describing frequent killings of young children and the rapes and killings of young girls. In addition, she claims that citizens in the north, including youth "fight a lot". As a result, she feels very stressed and afraid as a parent. It seems that she does not even sleep until her children are at home. She claims that the crime rate has risen in the post war period. This situation has resulted in two important reflections.

On the one hand, she expresses that she might be forced to leave her current work with Albanian counterparts due to the high risk posed by unidentified local Serbian men armed and backed by Belgrade. She has been frequently stopped when crossing the bridge to travel to her work, located on the southern, Albanian side. She calls the questioning she undergoes from these men on the bridge "small interrogations". The bridge watchers also take note of individuals who cross the bridge. She refers to them as "stupid". In turn, she has developed strategies to deal with it, such as taking different routes and so on. However, she is skeptical as to whether this is sufficient to continue working with Albanians, due to the possible securi-

ty risks these armed men pose to her and to her family. Once her car was stolen, although she managed to regain it through her connections without paying a ransom, which is not common. The Kosovo Police expressed disbelief when she reported that she had regained her car without paying a ransom. These seem to be common forms of intimidation of Serbian citizens who cooperate with Albanians.

She describes the Serbian elite in the north as caring only about: "how much they receive, their salary, and who will win the elections", not really about cooperation or reconciliation. She claims that they also "force" people to go to meetings in a parking lot in the middle of the night or day, when sometimes thousands gather after sirens announce the meetings. She thus has low trust in the political elites in the north, as they seem focused on their personal interests.

Mira also mentioned many deficiencies in the legal system. The dominance of high crime within the Serbian community apparently contributes to reconciliation with the other. Myths about Albanians are being slowly broken since it is not only the other which is "bad" or "enemy", but individuals within the Serbian community may harm Serbians more than the others. Promoting the worsening of the situation in non-reconciled communities is morally indefensible, even if it seems to bring former enemies closer.

On the other hand, turning to the Albanian life story, Dhurata describes an encounter with her Serbian colleague in which the latter expressed a fear of traveling to work on the Albanian side since the bridge watchers take notes and interrogate her. She came to work and "was just crying" and said to Dhurata:

> I'm afraid for my kids"… "I know [the person] but I don't dare tell you, or anybody else" because she said this is the wild north and life is so cheap and then she asked: "Would you then allow me to come either later at work so they change [the shift at the bridge] or she could organize a way that somebody from the south would wait at the other bridge?

Dhurata found a way to accompany her colleague to the north from then on, via another bridge. Another colleague of Dhurata, after many killings and rapes in the north, recognized that not only Albanians were harming Serbs. She said:

> I don't dare now to send my [child] to [sports] training. Where are the Albanians to blame now? Because nobody in this case could blame Albanians, they were in a pure Serbian area and then they arrested one of the boys but then after some time, he got released.

Dhurata also states that individuals can benefit financially, since it's a "wild" zone economically:

> you see so many cars without registration plates, you see even from Tito's time, TM sometimes Titova Mitrovica, you see old KM, Kosovska Mitrovica and that's kind of specific, and if you can just hide, you don't pay any taxes, you just benefit, you don't contribute let's say to anything, so this is kind of wilding.

According to her, many people, including Albanians and Serbs "benefited from that illegal trade, also many politicians". This shows the "best interethnic communication in that kind of dirty business". She presumes that some Kosovo parliamentarians wish to maintain insecurity in the north since it's beneficial for illegal business. They seem to own stonebreaker, oil, cigarettes and drinks businesses:

> which is quite big. They do all the roads and highways and that is really good business. And then an MP from Pristina was registering that business together with a Serb from Leposavic in order to be one of the tender winners. There were also some kind of officials benefiting, not only citizens. Also the petrol companies even today, oil is cheaper in the north than in the south, because it's not taxed and selling goods such as Plazma, we see Cola, cigarettes. For them it would be great if incidents happened from time to time so they can benefit illegally, continue their work and I think, you know, crime is crime, no matter from which side, I think they damaged a lot and they contributed even more to this wilding.

Mira's and Dhurata's experiences of wild Mitrovica complement the argument provided by Call about the tensions between peace building and state building. The fifth tension relates to the dilemma of peace versus justice and sustainability. As Call states, "appeasing spoilers in the interest of peace, while neglecting the development of a sustainable state, can strengthen the hand of repressive or authoritarian state rulers and jeopardize the sustainability of both the state and peace" (Call, 2008a, p. 378). In many cases, the wish to maintain peace comes at the expense of state performance, including undesirable outcomes such as unaccountability, lack of oversight and corruption. Mira's and Dhurata's life stories show that tolerating these radical groups may result not only in unaccountability, but also in organized crime and/or wild justice and the unintentional breaking of some war myths. This section seems to show that security needs to be prioritized but not through tolerating criminal groups, impunity and unaccountability, but rather by providing human security and working with individuals in the community in order to enable sustainable reconciliation and institution building. Prioritizing partners, i.e. Serbian criminal groups, and leaving the population at their hands may not be an available option for the international community to promote either security or reconciliation in Kosovo.

Breaking Myths through Grassroots Dialogue Based on Mutual Respect

Despite the security challenges, Dhurata developed some strategies for connecting with Serbs in order to work and achieve her aim to return to her home in the north. First, she says that it is easier for her to function in the north since she shares a commonality with the other internally displaced persons, as they discuss the common difficulties they face. They discuss together "losing properties and how it is. I could say yes I know, I'm one of you, so in a way I was accepted because I shared the same experiences". Moreover, at her work, she arranged an open, American style office to develop trust between coworkers. She did so since they are

"not real offices but you could hear from one office to the other" building confidence by showing that all are treated equally:

> if you are addressing a Serb, an Albanian, a Roma, internationals, whoever comes in the same way... So it was important that people know that me as a leader, I'm saying the same words in different languages, you know to different people, that helped a lot.

In addition, assessing security risks together with the Serbs enhanced trust between both sides. Serbs would sometimes not want to go to the south because "I cannot go because I'm afraid" then she had to estimate whether it was really a risk or "it was just a habit not to come to work". Thus, she had to balance between risk concerns and work interests. In the north, after she was attacked, her Serbian colleagues would follow her and she would listen to their advice. She still relies on their advice to commute to the north, which she usually does every day.

Her Serb employees were also stigmatized, encountering threats when working with her. This in turn seems to have enhanced trust and cooperation between both groups as they would consult each other about traveling routes. Thus, the wild north brought many difficulties to her everyday work, since her Serb employees were pressured when they crossed the bridge to the south, being asked "What are you doing? Who do you work with?". On the other hand, she was not pressured by Albanian citizens in Southern Mitrovica for cooperating with Serbs. She says that this was because everybody knew her and her war experience due to the small size of the city. She also had family ties with the KLA, which was against Serbs, thus giving her credibility with Albanian citizens. However, she was threatened when she worked on anti-corruption cases:

> when I was working for this anti-corruption network, of course, I had a lot of threats, live, telephone, not to make public the names of some corrupt leaders. They threatened to rape me, calling in the middle of the night and in the morning and in the evening. Of course that was not easy because all my family was upset

While working with Serbs, she started listening to the Serbian community. There she realized that not all members of society were involved in crimes and that some shared the same principles as the victims. She says:

> I started to understand some points of the people, not everybody was involved in the war, not everyone from the other side was involved in crimes and then by listening in a way and also by sharing, you also see that in a way, you find people from the other side that believe in the same principles, the same values as you, and then we started to work, to talk to people, to work with people

Dhurata also discussed the expulsion of Albanians from schools and everyday discrimination with a colleague. Her Serbian colleague ignored and refused to understand the discrimination of the other. She said "I'm really sincere, I didn't see maybe I just didn't care". Apparently even her father also had problems with the Milosevic regime, but she stated that she "simply

didn't know". For Dhurata, it was "hard" to believe what her Serbian colleague said, but she continued to inquire further what happened in her everyday life. She asked her "What did you do, can you just tell me one day, what did you do?". The Serbian colleague responded "I woke up, I went to school, listened to music, went to a bar, and I did not see any Albanian neighbors". Her Serbian colleague conducted her everyday activities as if the other did not exist. Even if she saw them in the street, she greeted them with "hi and nothing happened". Dhurata questioned her further on how she could live in the same community and not see the discrimination. She asked: [when you met Albanians in the street] "You didn't ask them why they are not going to school" and she said: "No, I did not ask and maybe she said in a way I knew but my consciousness didn't allow me or something". This seems to show the everyday denial of discrimination of the other and inaction. Despite this, their work together continues.

Dhurata considers that Serbs face difficulties understanding that humans are all equal, perhaps due to their previous privileged status, since Serbs were "raised with the [privileged] feeling", "a different energy", "belonging to a more powerful nationality", "you are kind of superior, you have everything". She maintains the belief that if the privileged party has never experienced discrimination, they can never really understand. Hence it will be difficult to change the Serbian mindset:

> understand that we are all humans and no one is above the other, and in a way this might sound philosophical but in a way it's so simple. If you are not experiencing [discrimination] under your own skin, you can maybe never really understand.

Similarly when discussing the new reality of independent Kosovo, Dhurata recognized that her Serbian colleagues rejected it and were hoping for Serbia's return:

> we ended up in some unpleasant discussions about this new reality, What does that mean? Because they still believe in Serbian institutions, maybe they will come back and that it will be the same like before.

Her Serbian colleagues disagreed about historical issues occurring in the late 1980's and 1990's and "ended up stuck somewhere in the fourteenth century". According to her, the Serbs would exaggerate about the Kosovo Liberation Army being a terrorist group. But she still maintains the view that it was "good because we talked". They agreed only on the question of minorities and that "we belong to Kosovo, Gazimestan". She recognized that they seemed prepared to speak about these issues early on. After working together for a while, they started to speak and respect the feelings of the others even though it was difficult:

> It was difficult to break that kind of barricade that they had, this was something really... it's so difficult to find somebody unstressed after many years that could speak. Later we opened, we spoke and said let's speak our own history, how we were raised and how the others were raised. We started in a way to respect feelings because that was another challenge was for me, you know, I was really struggling a lot to respect the feelings because sometimes the work needed to be done

Her position was unique as she was accepted by both sides despite claiming that she would have joined the KLA if she had been a man. Dhurata was asked on a television show why she had not been in the KLA herself. She replied:

> I'm a woman, because I don't like women in uniform and then they said if you had been a man would you have gone? I said yes. I would have gone and supported them because I had to defend my family and actually myself and then the family.

As a result, her colleagues were not happy but no real repercussions occurred. Later, she started to rise above the personal perspective in discussions and slowly learned to discuss these issues "because before it [talking] was so hard [but] since anyway you cannot solve it, just talking and arguing [helps]". Despite that, in reality her colleagues "would never agree" on historical questions, they found a common path for working together through agreeing to disagree, as "this is the way I managed to go on with my work". Her life story may indicate that mutual respect was developing from both sides despite their differences. Dhurata works actively on discussing with the others, mediation and the return process, viewed as the only means to reconcile.

On the other hand, Mira's life story shows that she faced difficulties because she worked with Albanians, including harassment, her car being stolen and her children being bullied at school. As a result, she realized that Albanians are not the "enemies" since it was not they who were committing vandalism and raping young girls, creating problems for the youth and high unemployment. She also appreciates the Albanian work team "they were very good and very nice and we had a very good time together" before the war and she still maintains the same opinion of them. The potential projects that seem to work on the ground from Mira's life story are those, which represent basic needs and individual benefits for both parties. She stresses that reasons for this include the fact that such projects make people "come together, to make some businesses for them" or help them. She has experience in banking, education and the health sector and has worked with marginalized groups such as poor people, women, children and youth.

Lastly, we turn to Vera's life story that is salient in understanding local ownership. She was educated abroad, reported on the Kosovo war and returned to work for an NGO focusing on reconciliation and dealing with the past, since she believes that only bottom-up initiatives will assist these processes. She says

> It is a process that nobody can develop you if you do not want to develop… in the moments when I was down and very exhausted this was the logical argument that made me move on. Since nobody can develop your state or civil society. Since nobody knows better than you the way you breathe. And it is an organic process. It is an organic process and it needs go in organic manner from the bottom up.

She claims that Kosovo will not remain special. It will develop as: "We are not sui generis. It happened with others and it will with us, too".[292] This belief helped her continue her work despite her personal reservations and the local and regional challenges. Personally, she struggles since her efforts will be seen only by the young generation: "our kids will see the different Kosovo". Furthermore, she turned down a "well-paid job for a lower salary" at her current job. Thus, she considers that she is contributing to a more social cause, developing an organic civil society.[293] Her life story shows that personal material condition seems to take second place to her personal ideals to promote state and civil society building while emphasizing local ownership.

This section explained how instrumental reconciliation at the individual level may prevail in very difficult and complex conditions. This furthers understanding of reconciliation from critical approaches focusing on everyday peace. Mac Ginty and Richmond argue that local subjects represents different agencies that aim to identify and create conditions for peace, with or without international help (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 769). Similarly, the life stories seem to show that the local community finds means to promote conditions for peace for instrumental motives, even in cases where the international community, with or without intent, supports policies that are detrimental to peace or state building. These policies include tolerating unaccountable and possible criminal groups, which hinder cooperation by NGOs with other communities as well as creating and maintaining barriers between communities on security grounds. Legitimacy at the individual level seems to remain more with local actors rather than with both local and international actors, as suggested by critical approaches. In addition, critical approaches argue that, in building everyday peace, the local population conduct

> economic, cultural and or survival everyday tasks [that] may allow individuals and communities in villages, valleys, and city neighborhoods to develop common bonds with members of other ethnic or religious groups, to demystify 'the other' and to reconstruct contextual legitimacy (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 769).

The case of Kosovo shows that such interactions are necessary in order to promote instrumental reconciliation based on mutual respect at the individual level. These everyday tasks seem to focus primary on economic-material interests. They occur among marginalized groups (poor people, women, children, youth) and some criminal groups (illegal traders) both of which contribute to demystifying the other.

Prioritizing bottom-up initiatives for peace building through local-local civil society, i.e. not international NGOs or IOs, seems to be important in reconciliation. The staff of Dhurata's NGO consists only of the various ethnicities living in Kosovo. They forgo visibility in the media in order to secure the success of the NGO on the ground. This resonates with Gram-

[292] Vera, p.9
[293] Vera, p.10-15

sci's idea that civil society is very important in state building, but it extends the argument to reconciliation as well. However, civil society needs to be built locally and organically. The life stories of Vera, Mira and Dhurata[294] seem to reflect the above view.

Verdeja argues furthermore that civil society is a means to achieving an end, reconciliation. It is considered key for challenging statist historical narratives and encouraging the recognition of victims through public discussions, but it is limited due to lack of interest or limited resources (Verdeja, 2009, p. 183). This section has showed that civil society might also promote individual/instrumental reconciliation by sharing everyday tasks and building mutual respect among ethnicities. Verdeja proposes to assist the various grassroots organizations, which promote inter-ethnic cooperation, viewed as a first step towards reconciliation. Critical theorists acknowledge the role of civil society in the peace building process and suggest including traditional bodies and other actors, such as local NGOs, community groups, grassroots movements, and women in this process. This would bring further legitimacy in the eyes of the local population, especially in the short term but not always in the long term (Belloni, 2012, p. 27).

Conclusion

On the one hand, international officials reveal that their perspective focuses on providing peace building and reconciliation through EU integration due to Kosovo's geographical location. The internal national interests of some EU countries with a high number of Kosovo Albanian residents are significant since their repatriation is crucial for local politics. Regional security is at the top of the international agenda and is viewed as a precondition for reconciliation. Special attention is paid by the international community to accepting perpetrators as a part of the community and bringing victims and perpetrators together rather than relying on retributive justice and judicial mechanisms in Kosovo. Justice is presented as politicized by American power and as not being pursued with the aim of maintaining stability in Kosovo, since the current political elite was presumably involved in committing crimes. Prosecutions, finding missing persons and material reparations for victims do not seem to be high on the international agenda. The rule of law is viewed as another essential precondition for reconciliation. Some officials recognize that allowing the Kosovo Albanian political elite to be criminalized with impunity in the aftermath of war hindered and still hinders reconciliation, as the international community failed to protect minorities, but also allowed the continued segregation and coercion of minorities in the aftermath of war.

Further shortcomings are recognized, such as the preference for engaging in short-term rather than long-term involvement due to financial limitations and political unwillingness to commit

[294] Her life story is explained in depth in the statebuilding chapter.

in the long term due to criticism of "colonization" etc. There are two main shortcomings related to Northern Kosovo. First, international community organizations have limited access to the north as only UNMIK and KFOR can access the area. Second, the establishment of barricades on the bridge in Mitrovica by the French Battalion is viewed retrospectively as hindering reconciliation and being already unnecessary two years after the war. Suggestions for improving reconciliation focus mainly on sending positive messages to the Serbian minority, promoting peaceful co-existence, institutional power sharing mechanisms, boosting the economy, forcefully implementing inter-ethnic projects, establishing the truth and conveying it publicly by sharing individual stories. Forcing ethnic communities to work together resonates with instrumental reconciliation.

On the other hand, the life stories reveal reconciliatory attempts at the institutional and individual levels. At the institutional level, the policies promoted by the EU Agreement aimed at integrating the Serbian community seem to be perceived as hindering reconciliation. For instance, decentralization policies and the amnesty law are perceived as contributing to the separate existence of communities, as instrumental reconciliation prescribes. However on the ground, policies aimed at bringing communities together seem to be preferred. Potentially negative policies are enabled by the unconditional support provided by local servile elites to the international community, which uses them to sign agreements that may be detrimental to peace or reconciliation. The international community seems to avoid cooperation with any political elites that express resistance to or challenge such disintegrative policies. The international community seems to include the servile political elite in order to exert pressure in long term to achieve national, regional or international interests but exclude the incorporation of political groups that aim at the local development of Kosovo. The life stories reveal that the removal of the criminal/servile political class is a prerequisite for any successful governmental strategies aimed at inter-ethnic reconciliation. On the judicial mechanisms, the willingness of the political elite to persecute the perpetrators seems to be lacking, and even when it exists, the ability of judicial mechanisms to meet the needs of victims seems questionable. Therefore, an initiative to create a non-judicial mechanism, a truth-telling commission is ongoing but the political will to functionalize it seems to be lacking. Thus, reconciliation at the institutional level points more to inter-state reconciliation (Kosovo and Serbia) rather than contributing to reconciliation between communities on the ground. The instrumental reconciliatory policies targeted at states by the international community seem to further ethnic cleavages between communities on the ground. Therefore, it is suggested that top-down initiatives for reconciliation should promote the integrative existence of communities together instead of separate co-existence, as instrumental reconciliation theory suggests. The motives for reconciliation may be instrumental, however the target seems to be different in the case of Kosovo, since it prioritizes living together over separate co-existence.

On the individual level, Verdeja's model of reconciliation based on mutual respect seems to fit the case of Kosovo. The motives seem to resonate more with the instrumental rather than the moral type of reconciliation at the individual level. It refers more to the instrumental type of reconciliation, as reported in social psychology at the individual level rather than instrumental reconciliation at the institutional/political level. The latter refers mainly to power sharing, institutional and/or inter-state arrangements, which the international community seems to focus on. At the individual level, semi-forcing different ethnicities to work together on a project towards a common concrete goal seems to be a good way to promote gradual reconciliation (amongst individuals at least). Top-down international transitional justice policies might have to create such projects targeting basic sectors (health, education, banking), marginalized groups (women, children and youth) and/or profitability (businesses). In this way, by semi-forcing different groups to work together every day, instrumental reconciliation prevails due to personal interests, where mutual respect prevails and disagreement becomes part of agreement in every-day life. However, gradually, through frequent everyday interaction, war myths seem to decrease, leaving open the possibility for moral reconciliation to follow.

For instance, Dhurata's life story shows that her main personal concern was to return to her home in Northern Kosovo, which is why she decided to engage actively with the Serbian community. Facing many challenges at the beginning, she proved very determined to return, which forced her to tolerate differences of opinions about historical events [e.g. denial of discrimination against Albanians before the war] and the current situation. Thus she learned to cope with denial by Serbs in order to achieve her tangible aim to return to the north. She still engages in dialogue with the others to bridge differences and establish mutual respect towards the other. On the other hand, Mira's life story shows how economic needs are very important for the success of inter-ethnic projects, but also for former adversaries to recognize each other as human, reconsider negative myths and understand the other.

Dhurata's life story offers some more conclusions on the current state of Northern Kosovo, institutional and local attempts at reconciliation and promising local strategies. For instance, the property cases show how the institutional framework of all actors, including Serbs, internationals and Kosovans, was limited due to their non-cooperation, the unequal treatment of cases and the lack of enforcement power in the north. This created an open space for the interaction of illegal groups, but left citizens without means of support in matters of justice, the economy and security. Mira's life story reveals similar patterns of illegality and insecurity for citizens in the north. In addition, Dhurata's war experiences portray two very important dimensions. The first reflects the "struggle for survival" under extreme conditions, which made her feel powerless in such a situation. Second, drawing a comparison with the tragedy of the Holocaust, about which she had read but which she could not believe, she points out that others' experience of suffering is never fully understood. But if suffering cannot be fully grasped

and described by others, then questions emerge concerning the role of transitional justice mechanisms, often externally driven and their legitimacy in deciding on somebody's else suffering.

Concluding on the current situation regarding peace in Kosovo, it seems that it is negative rather than positive peace which is present.[295] The positive peace seems to be lacking in Kosovo when structures that enforce ethnic divisions directly (bridge watchers) or indirectly (political policies), are still present in both north and south. In addition, Call suggests measuring peace building through participatory policies, which the life stories imply is necessary. At the individual level, marginalized groups (minorities, women) attempt to incorporate themselves in projects that may promote reconciliation through NGOs. However, they seem to lack access, involvement and representation through political elites at the national level. Political elites seem to represent their personal interests rather than citizens' interests. Call suggests that participatory policies be developed for peace building, referring to "mechanisms for aggrieved social groups to feel that they have both a voice and a stake in the national political system" (Call, 2008b, pp. 6–7). This seems to be necessary in the case of Kosovo, not only for peace but also for reconciliation.

The common representation revealed by the life stories is limited. It is acknowledged that individual stories are important, and the main aim is to open up further debates on the politics of reconciliation at the institutional and individual levels in Kosovo, the city of Mitrovica and the integration of Northern Kosovo. This research calls for further comparisons with other case studies to uncover the reasons and mechanisms behind successful reconciliation, to understand further the initiatives in the local context and identify the international community's institutional policies that may (un)intentionally harm reconciliation. This fragility of reconciliation and peace building should be reviewed with the findings in the nation building chapter that seem to point to an unsuccessful multi-ethnic state and the rise of nationalism. It would also be important to investigate religious reconciliation as deep animosities seem to have been created in the institutional as well as in the social fabric, as explained in the state building chapter.

In addition, specific questions arise about the impact of instrumental reconciliation, such as the kinds of conflicts, which arise when promoting this type of instrumental reconciliation based on mutual respect. So far, only grassroots and individual initiatives seem to contribute to successful reconciliation, even without international assistance. A "neutral" mediating

[295] "Negative peace refers to the 'absence of direct violence' and implies a more or less permanent ceasefire (Call, 2008b, p. 6). Positive peace refers to the presence of direct peace (cooperation), structural peace (equity, equality) and culture peace (peace and dialogue). In other words, when positive peace is present, there should be a 'absence of structural violence'[295] and 'cultural violence that legitimizes direct and/or structural violence' (Galtung, 2007, pp. 30–31)." in the Post Liberal Peace chapter, please consult it for more information.

body (e.g. Europe, universities or IOs) seems unnecessary in these grassroots initiatives (except as a donor), contrary to the suggestion in Nadler's study that a third party be used as it may have an equalizing effect. Further research could extensively examine the role of third parties in reconciliation at the individual and institutional levels. Other questions concern whether the instrumental reconciliation present in Kosovo at the individual level may have a trickledown effect at the broader societal and institutional level. Furthermore, questions of how durable it is at a societal level or in the longer term, if challenges arise, should be researched. Lastly, employing the life stories methodology to analyze peace building and reconciliation processes in the post-conflict period in the case of Kosovo provided new theoretical questions for future research and new policy recommendations as shown below.