K4D

Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Addressing societal divisions in post-conflict city settings

Huma Haider
Independent consultant
17 Aug 2020

Question

What interventions have been tried to overcome post-conflict divisions in city settings (with particular focus on the Western Balkans)? To what extent have these been effective, and what factors seem to make an intervention more or less likely to be effective?

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1. Summary

Cities are often theorised as having great potential to transcend societal divides and foster coexistence, with diverse populations mixing in everyday life (Gusic, 2020a). The post-war city may, however, be contested by ethno-nationalist actors who regulate, territorialise, and symbolise space in a way that sustains polarised communities and war gains (Björkdahl, 2013). 'Divided cities', as such post-war cities are often labelled, are stuck in war-to-peace transitions (Gusic, 2020a). Residential segregation, non-contact and exclusion tend to undermine urban qualities of heterogeneity, mixing and accommodation (Gusic, 2020a). War can also destroy other aspects of what makes urban settings unique – the cultural and creative 'scenes' – art spaces, bars, libraries and cafes – alongside intangible elements such as open-mindedness and tolerance (Howell, 2018). While divided cities may lose many contact points, it is unlikely, however, to shut them down completely. Post-war cities still hold the potential to transcend divides and bridge communities (Gusic, 2020a). Shared public spaces (not associated with any one particular group) are considered a core feature of cities and offer potential for inclusion and social interaction (Björkdahl, 2013). In order to effectively address the post-war city, attention must be given to both its post-war *and* its city-specific dynamics. There is limited research, however, that adopts such an interdisciplinary perspective, combining peace research and urban studies (Gusic, 2020a).

This rapid literature review surveys interventions aimed at overcoming post-conflict divisions in city settings, centring primarily on academic and NGO studies of programmes and projects implemented in the Western Balkans. There is also some discussion of initiatives in Northern Ireland as they were prominent in the literature. The review also looks at everyday encounters that can counter divisions. Women's NGOs were often relied upon by donors after the end of the conflict in Bosnia and Heregovina (BiH), and in other Western Balkan countries, to build bridges between conflict groups. There seems to be limited literature in recent years, however, that discusses gender and the role of or involvement of women in the context of initiatives to overcome divisions. Much of the literature is focused on youth-oriented activities.

Structured or formal encounters are those that occur as a matter of choice, rather than as the result of everyday needs (Fridman, 2013). These include:

Dialogue: Nansen dialogue (representing a particular form of dialogue rooted in neutral ground, respect and relationship building) has proven to be an effective tool in changing people's perceptions and attitudes and in creating a shared narrative. Operating in divided cities and towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), dialogue workshops have also contributed to the formation of new, common identities among participants, the discovery of shared concerns and de-ethnicising of everyday problems that local communities experience (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). The combination of inter-group dialogue with support for local activism has been instrumental in rebuilding trust and fostering cooperation across conflict groups (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019; Kelleher and Ryan, 2012). This has been supported by the establishment of multi-ethnic coordination bodies and action groups (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019).

Youth and children: There are various initiatives aimed at young people in city settings. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights' exchange programme for young people from Serbia and Kosovo exposed them to life in Pristina and Belgrade, respectively (Fridman, 2013). This has helped to counter susceptibility of Serbian youth to nationalist anti-Albanian propaganda (Fridman, 2013). A youth mentoring programme in visual and digital media in BiH sought to build the capacities and voices of young civil society activists from all ethnic groups to produce

counter-narratives that challenge divisive public discourse and media (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). The programme strengthened participants' trust in other ethnic groups; positive attitudes toward inter-ethnic collaboration; and resolve to engage in civil society and work towards durable peace (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). Peace education in schools in BiH, while directed at youth, also targeted teachers and school staff, as a by-product, through inclusive trainings and workshops. Training provided them with opportunities to bridge psychological and social divisions (Clarke-Habibi, 2018). Students extended their peace learning to the wider community through 'Peace Events' – involving cooperation and exchanges between ethnically divided communities (Clarke-Habibi, 2018).

NGOs addressing shared needs: In supporting a shared need, NGOs can foster a new common in-group identity among members of different ethnic groups - in the pursuit of this common goal (Freeman, 2012). The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), for example, works with families across the ethnic divide, uniting them in the common goal of finding their loved ones who disappeared during the war (Freeman, 2012). The League of Women Voters Education Fund also sought to promote dialogue among women and to strengthen their leadership and networking skills such that they could engage in civic activism across divides. These training sessions were found to be highly effective at improving inter-group relations (Freeman, 2012). The diaspora-supported organisation, Our Kids, in Mostar has focused on support to orphans and youth with disabilities, regardless of their ethnic background (Karabegović, 2018). It also provides employment to individuals of all ethnic backgrounds as a way to counter divisions in the city (Karabegović, 2018).

Arts and culture: Music can be seen as a 'universal language' – a neutral form of communication that can bring different groups together (Howell, 2018). A cross-cultural project in BiH (Sarajevo and Mostar) and Scotland brought together children and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds to compose, perform and record music together. This fostered cooperation, risk-taking and confidence building (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). Interacting with new people as equal collaborators helped to challenge children's previously held perceptions and beliefs (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). The Pavarotti Music Centre has made a significant contribution to the restoration and revival of Mostar's urban culture (Howell, 2018). It has provided a safe space for like-minded individuals to gather across nationalist divides, giving them a semblance of normality (Howell, 2018 and 2015). The interactions, friendships and social networks fostered at the Centre have resulted in the creation of new artistic projects in the city – increasing the scale of impact on cultural life in Mostar and on countering divisions (Howell, 2015). Arts festivals also have the potential to forge connections across conflict groups. The *mirëdita, dobar dan!* festival fosters people-to-people exchanges between Kosovo and Serbia with the aim of countering negative portrayals of Albanians from Kosovo. Such activities can effectively challenge and contest the role of ethnic and national categories (Fridman, 2020). The UK City of Culture 2013 (CoC13), hosted in Derry/Londonderry, was also aimed at delivering events that would help bring communities in the city closer together (Devine and Quinn, 2019). Some of the events helped to build social capital across conflict communities, particularly between young attendees, and between event organisers, who built trust in one another by working together (Devine and Quinn, 2019). In contrast, passive encounters in spectator type events are not expected to build ties between disparate groups (Devine and Quinn, 2019).

Sports: Participation in sport can also facilitate social inclusion and integration of divided ethnicities (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) provides an opportunity for continuous interpersonal contact among volunteers, participants, and parents,

through one-to-one training activities, mixed football teams, and communication between leaders/trainers and parents (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017). In Kosovo, this has contributed to a relaxation in tense inter-ethnic relations among those involved and to a positive change in perceptions of the 'other'. Convincing parents to become involved has been crucial in foster openness among children (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). The OFFS have also contributed significantly to social inclusion of other marginalised minorities groups, such as Roma, Turks and Egyptians (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017).

Unstructured or informal encounters are understood as 'occurring as part of everyday life of ordinary people living in divided and/or mixed spaces' (Fridman, 2015).

Everyday encounters – work and school: A sense of normality can be restored through economic ties and the recognition that the everyday needs of different communities and, in particular, the need to make a living are shared. (Fridman, 2015). Shared space in shops, workplaces, and academic institutions allow for interactions that transcends differences (Jarstad and Segall, 2019; Fridman, 2015).

Activism: Protests are informal events that can be more visible and accessible to the public than organised events (Lai, 2020). Structured events and shared spaces, such as cultural and youth centres, can, however, provide the basic stepping stones for cooperation along common interests and free thinking that can eventually translate into civic activism in the public sphere (Belloni, 2020). Widespread protests in recent years in BiH over poor socio-economic conditions and political deadlock have demonstrated that unifying citizenship identities can supersede ethno-nationality when there is a powerful, shared cause (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020; Milan, 2017). There is evidence that contact established through protesting, meetings and volunteering have helped to forge civic solidarity and establish activist networks that persist (Lai, 2020). In order to support such developments, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights provided funding to informal civic groups after the 2014 protests against socio-economic conditions broke out. Most of the groups supported were able to establish a permanent office, which provides the necessary space for events, discussions, and activism (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016).

The following are factors that contribute to greater effectiveness of outcomes, drawn from various research and studies of initiatives and everyday encounters.

Buy in from key people: The involvement of key people, who are respected and play an important role in the everyday life of communities and participants, is an important factor in the success of initiatives. Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo, for example, got buy-in from municipality councillors of all three major ethnic groups, and health and education workers, which enhanced its credibility and trustworthiness (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019).

Grounded in the local: The involvement of local communities in the process of designing the strategies and contents of events is much more effective than treating them solely as passive targets or beneficiaries of programming (Dorokhina et al., 2011). Sports initiatives, such as OFFS, have been lauded for forging inclusive relationships with local actors – relying heavily on local coaches or volunteers (Giulianotti et al., 2017).

Attention to shared concerns/goals/experiences: Much of the research on the various structured/formal and unstructured/informal encounters emphasise the unifying role that the discovery of shared concerns and working toward a shared goal can play across conflict groups. This includes, for example, initiatives involving women and youth, such as the collaborative composition produced by children in BiH together with peers in Scotland (Linklater and Forbes,

2012). In the realm of informal activism, shared socio-economic concerns in BiH have forged strong civic solidarity and action across ethnic divides (Lai, 2020).

Development of alternative identities: Activism and the formation of the identity of 'citizen' has been instrumental in bridging ethnic divides (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020; Milan, 2017). The encompassing identity of the 'Nansen kids', adopted by students in Jajce who participated in the Nansen dialogue workshops, contributed to their effective opposition to mono-ethnic schools. These alternative identities are effective in countering the salience placed on ethnicity and can also contribute to participants seeing the 'other' in a different light.

Sustainability and space for action: In order for trust-building and new relationships and friendships to be sustained, there needs to be repeated interactions over time. NDC Sarajevo designed their dialogue process to continue over multiple years, for example, with alumni then working with wider groups, creating a sustained partnership and outreach to the wider community (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). The impact of the UK City of Culture 2013 in Derry/Londonderry was undermined by the lack of legacy planning (Devine and Quinn, 2019). Initiatives that seek to promote civic activism have been more effective with the establishment of multi-ethnic coordination bodies and action groups that provide the space and resources for people to come together, plan and take action (e.g. Nansen Coordination Bodies and Plenums - informal citizens' councils).

Scaling up and broader reach: Much of the research on various initiatives find that participants are often *already* more opposed to ethno-nationalist divisions and more open to crossing divides (Fairey and Kerr, 2020; Fridman, 2020; Howell, 2015; Fridman, 2013). In addition, for much of the population, music and arts, such as offerings at the Pavarotti Music Centre, are luxurious pastimes that may be inaccessible (Howell, 2015). As a result of these constraints, it may be the case that structured initiatives only manage to reach a relatively small number of people and among them, often people whose views are already less in need of changing. The way in which projects and programmes are able to scale up and attain broader reach is to give participants the tools for activism, enabling them to become 'multipliers of peace' within their own communities and societies (Fairey and Kerr, 2020).

Political climate and macro-level environment: A considerable challenge to initiatives at the micro level is that their outcomes and effectiveness is often constrained by the divisive macro-level political environment - including a divided school system and a nationalist media (Clarke-Habibi, 2018; Giulianotti et al., 2017). Rather, if media throughout the Balkans were to give attention to positive stories such as the relationships forged through initiatives like OFFS, there could be an echo effect of more projects that could raise awareness and create momentum for sustainable change (Dorokhina et al., 2011). Still, the mere presence of alternative options provided by various spaces and initiatives – including new online platforms and forms of social media - maintains the potential for active citizenship and for a more diverse, inclusive society (Fairey and Kerr, 2020; Howell, 2015).

2. Urban peacebuilding and divided cities

Post-war cities, while no longer experiencing war, are often still sites of contention (Gusic, 2020a). It is important to adopt an urban perspective that brings the city, as a place full of contradictions and complexities, into peacebuilding research and practice (Björkdahl, 2013). Cities are generally understood to be heterogeneous (in terms of people, institutions and ideas),

dense and open (Gusic, 2020b). They are often theorised as having great potential to transcend societal divides, bridge communities and foster coexistence, with diverse populations mixing in everyday life (Gusic, 2020a). The post-war city may, however, continue to be contested by ethno-nationalist actors who regulate, territorialise, and symbolise space in a way that sustains polarised communities, power-relations and war gains. This, in turn, obstructs interactions across communities (Björkdahl, 2013). In order to comprehensively address the post-war city, attention must be given to both its post-war *and* its city-specific dynamics, requiring the interdisciplinary combination of peace research and urban studies (Gusic, 2020a). There is limited research, however, that adopts such an interdisciplinary perspective (Gusic, 2020a).

'Divided cities', as such post-war cities are often labelled, are stuck in war-to-peace transitions (Gusic, 2020a). **Residential segregation, non-contact and exclusion tend to undermine urban qualities of heterogeneity, permeability, mixing and accommodation** (Gusic, 2020a). Ethno-national predominance in Mostar, for example, has made mixing with 'the other side' something that is best avoided in order to keep your job or avoid intimidation (Gusic, 2020a). Parallel institutions that provide education, healthcare, and services exclusively to different ethnic groups also obstructs contact and undermines the development of shared concerns and common ground that could foster cooperation (Gusic, 2020a; Gusic, 2020b). **In the absence of inter-group contact, members of conflicting societies lose the opportunity to gain first-hand experience with one another that can lessen fear of the 'other'** (Freeman, 2012).

War can also destroy other aspects of what makes urban settings unique – the cultural and creative 'scenes' – art spaces, bars, libraries and cafes – and intangible elements such as open-mindedness and tolerance (Howell, 2018). Combatants may target cultural infrastructure through indiscriminate destruction or as a deliberate display of their intention to remove all tangible manifestations of the local culture (Howell, 2018). In Mostar, the loss of urban culture has occurred not only through Mostar's physical destruction, but also through the significant shift in population due to displacement (or deaths) of much of the pre-war urban population and arrival of thousands of displaced persons from rural areas (Howell, 2018).

While divided cities may lose many contact points, it is hard to shut them down completely. Post-war cities still hold the potential to transcend societal divides, bridge communities and foster coexistence (Gusic, 2020a). Despite decades of entrenched contestation, cities like Mostar, Mitrovica and Belfast, for example, retain pockets of heterogeneity, contact points and avenues for mixing. In Mitrovica in Kosovo, the Bosniak Mahalla remains populated by Albanians and Serbs who not only live side-by-side but also trade and socialise with each other. In Mostar, while the urban layout is largely coded into ours/theirs and Bosniak/Croat, there are 'shared' cafes and 'border' parks along its Austro-Hungarian Boulevard (the former battlefront) – providing those who wish for coexistence somewhere to interact (Gusic, 2020a).

Urban peace is about everyday practices that can transcend divisions (Björkdahl, 2013). The post-conflict urban space – constituted through interactions - is the target of urban peacebuilding (Björkdahl, 2013). **Shared public spaces (not associated with any one particular group) are considered a core feature of cities and offer potential for inclusion and social interaction** (Björkdahl, 2013). The construction and consolidation of such spaces, and strategies to avoid them being turned into segregated, ethnic spaces, are essential to urban peacebuilding in divided spaces (Björkdahl, 2013). Due to density and proximity, the urban is also a key space for collective mobilisation within civil society (Björkdahl, 2013).

3. Structured/formal encounters

Structured or formal encounters are those that occur as a matter of choice, rather than as the result of everyday needs (as in the case of unstructured daily encounters) (Fridman, 2013). Such meetings and projects are initiated and facilitated by local and/or international groups and organisations (Fridman, 2013). These initiatives may include inclusive dialogue, youth groups, women's groups, music and dance groups, shared festivals, and sports teams.

Dialogue

Since political elites in ethnically divided societies are primarily interested in preserving the status quo, spaces for inter-ethnic encounters and dialogue need to be constructed by neutral parties (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Given the varying definitions and understandings of dialogue, the ways in which dialogue is used in peacebuilding processes may differ (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). **Nansen Dialogue** is a project initially created at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1995. The term 'Nansen dialogue' refers to a specific dialogue approach, based on three concepts: movement, visibility, and relations, as defined by Steinar Byrn, the originator of these dialogue centres. Movement represents the physical movement of participants of dialogue workshops to 'neutral ground' and the mental movement away from stereotypical perceptions of the 'other'. Visibility refers to making yourself visible to others and allowing others to become visible to you, which supports the mental movement. Lastly, relationships can be strengthened through dialogue by fostering mutual respect and understanding. This in turn can facilitate problem solving and peaceful conflict resolution (see Šerá Komlossyová, 2019).

Dialogue has proved to be an **effective tool in changing people's perceptions and attitudes and in creating a shared narrative** (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Dialogue has the **potential to contribute not only to personal change but also to broader socio-political changes**. This is the approach adopted by Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Sarajevo, which works in ethnically divided communities in BiH with the aim of rebuilding a functional society (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Through a series of individual and group semi-structured interviews (with staff, the workshop facilitator, diverse participants and members of local action groups), a recent study finds that the Centre has created a viable model that contributes to **de-ethnicising the everyday problems that local communities experience** (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Workshops examined in this study took place in cities – Zvornik and Jajce and in rural towns - Srebrenica and Bratunac.

The same study finds that the dialogue workshops contributed to the crucial **formation of a new, common identity among dialogue participants** and in many cases the **discovery of shared concerns.** In the case of Jajce, youth participants started to refer to themselves as the 'Nansen kids', forming an encompassing identity that allowed participation of all ethnic groups (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). It is also in Jajce that students – direct and indirect beneficiaries of the Nansen dialogue processes - successfully initiated protests against the plans of the cantonal government to divide the now-multi-ethnic secondary education along ethnic lines, wanting instead to be educated together (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). The government ultimately dropped their plans. For further discussion of activism, see the section on Activism under unstructured/informal encounters.

Key aspects in the design of NDC Sarajevo's dialogue initiative include:

- The **involvement of respected community members who played an important role in the everyday life of the target communities**, e.g. municipality councillors of all three ethnic groups and employees of local municipalities; directors of schools and teachers; and medical doctors. This provided NDC Sarajevo with significant support and created the image of a credible and trustworthy organisation (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019).
- **A model of engagement that combines inter-group dialogue with support for local activism**. Dialogue involved discussion of contrasting viewpoints of wartime and post-war experiences in order to tackle stereotypes and prejudices and the rebuilding of trust. Such dialogue allowed for the realisation of shared problems and similar perspectives on these problems. This in turn fostered the will to cooperate to address these problems (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Similarly, NDC Skopje facilitated dialogue seminars among Albanian and Macedonian communities that led to the identification of a shared concern for better education, regardless of ethnicity (Kelleher and Ryan, 2012).
- **Crucial follow-up in the form of financial support for community actions and the establishment of multi-ethnic coordination bodies and action groups.** Members of Nansen Coordination Bodies (NCBs) from various areas of public life (e.g. groups of young people, teachers and parents) and all ethnic groups were responsible for the identification of local needs and ideas for small-scale local projects (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). There have been concerns, however, that members of the NCBs did not have a common vision for the long-term impact of their activities on a socio-political level (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019).

Youth and children

The **Youth Initiative for Human Rights** (YIHR) is an NGO, operating throughout the Western Balkans, which is considered to have successfully facilitated the development of meaningful inter-group relationships through inter-ethnic education. This includes youth exchanges (e.g. the 'Visiting Programme'), aimed at increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of the out-group, and eventual discussions of the past once trust is established (see Freeman, 2012).

The Visiting Programme, initiated in 2004, is an **exchange programme for young people from Serbia and Kosovo**, with the aim of enabling them to see the actual situation and social changes in the two countries through the direct experience of life in Pristina and Belgrade (Fridman, 2013). It also aims to connect young people with peers 'from the other side', meeting people with similar interests and establishing new relations. For participants from Belgrade, motivations to go to Pristina may stem from activism; whereas for participants from Kosovo, visiting Belgrade primarily means travelling to a large, cosmopolitan city, with a lot to offer culturally and socially (Fridman, 2013). Interviews with participants revealed that the programme was found to have **debunked myths held by many Serbians of Pristina as a village-like town**, with exposure of Serbian youth to a new image of a city they realise they knew very little about (Fridman, 2013). The dominant discourses in Serbia manipulate such ignorance with anti-Albanian propaganda (Fridman, 2013).

A limitation of such programmes is that while they offer the opportunity to meet young urban people who are like them, it raises the question as to what extent it addresses otherness and differences in a systematic way (Fridman, 2013). This is a common challenge faced by civil society groups - to broaden the circles of participation in their projects that may be perceived as

elitist or as **catering to people whose attitudes are already more tolerant and less in need of changing** (Fridman, 2013)

Similarly, the **Balkans Diskurs Youth Correspondents Programme** (BDYCP), led by the peacebuilding NGO Post Conflict Research Centre **attracts young people who are already open to and supportive of inter-ethnic cooperation**. The BDYCP is a youth mentoring programme in BiH, which seeks to catalyse new forms of participatory youth-produced visual and digital media in order to build an inclusive civil society. It seeks to **build the capacities and voices of young civil society activists from all ethnic groups to produce counter-narratives** that challenge divisive public discourse and media (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). A recent qualitative methods study that followed the experiences of the 2017 cohort group finds that the programme has successfully amplified and extended the profiles and networks of its active participants as cultural actors, media professionals and young peacebuilders (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). While not framed as a peacebuilding or reconciliation project, the programme **strengthened participants' levels of trust in other ethnic groups; positive attitudes toward inter-ethnic collaboration** and reconciliation; and resolve to engage in civil society and work towards durable peace (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). As such, the programme can be seen as **expanding their capacities as 'active citizens' to influence and become multipliers of peace** from within their own societies and peer groups (Fairey and Kerr, 2020).

PCRC **encouraged youth correspondents to find stories from within their communities relating to inter-ethnic cooperation** and moral courage for specific projects. However, with general projects the young people were free to choose topics (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). The programme's success was, in part, demonstrated by the number of stories and other forms of creative outputs (e.g. photo exhibitions, digital media projects) that were generated with, for and by its active participants and the audiences they reached. The 11 active participants on the Balkan Diskurs platform published 29 stories and photo-essays, which were viewed 61,699 times via PCRC and Balkan Diskurs online platforms and social media (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). Topics covered included the challenges faced by the disabled community, minority religions and groups in BiH, local heroes, Sarajevo's graffiti, animal cruelty, cyber-bullying, gender discrimination in the workplace, and the Bosnian music scene (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). These topics **shifted the narrative away from a focus on memory, past conflict and inter-ethnic relations towards a more future-oriented, rights-focused and positive perspective** (Fairey and Kerr, 2020).

What is particularly effective about BDYCP is that **the programme invested in the capacities of youth not just as peacebuilders but as independent young people seeking to cultivate their career**, networks and professional prospects (Fairey and Kerr, 2020).

Education for Peace (EFP) is another programme in BiH directed at youth in schools. It explores peace concepts and pedagogies across the K-12 curriculum and practices peace values and skills in all spheres of primary and secondary school life. **Teachers and school staff are targeted as a by-product through inclusive trainings and workshops** for them to learn to execute the programme (Clarke-Habibi, 2018). Teachers were encouraged to engage their students in the exploration of peace themes in connection with their academic subjects and everyday social realities (Clarke-Habibi, 2018). **Students extended their peace learning to the wider community through 'Peace Events'**, held locally and inter-regionally each year, aimed at further strengthening intra- and inter-group cohesion through cooperation and exchanges between ethnically divided communities. **Teachers, peers, family members, the local media and government officials would participate in these various activities** taking place in schools across a full week. In the early years of the programme, such peace events represented

some of the first-ever opportunities for people of different ethnicities, including former acquaintances, to meet and speak with each other since the war began (Clarke-Habibi, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews with participating EFP teachers reveal that their trainings provided unique opportunities to bridge psychological and social divisions in their society – providing them with the language and support to then begin 're-opening the boundaries' between ethnic groups. Such **tools and activities included the construction of more inclusive social realities among ethnically diverse students or politically symbolic acts** such as donning the traditional clothing of 'enemy groups' (Clarke-Habibi, 2018). Overall, the EFP programme, particularly in the early post-war period, was regarded as having successfully enabled inter-regional peacebuilding processes despite concerns over parental resistance to classroom discussions on sensitive subjects such as interethnic dialogue and reconciliation (Clarke-Habibi, 2018).

NGOs addressing shared needs

While the communist legacy weakened civic engagement; and ethnic divisions left much of civil society groups in BiH ethnically homogeneous, there are notable exceptions to this trend. This includes, in particular, non-governmental organisations that address shared needs – and in so doing, **create a common in-group identity among members of different ethnic groups in the pursuit of this common goal** (Freeman, 2012).

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), for example, works with families across the ethnic divide, uniting them in the common goal of finding their loved ones who disappeared during the war. The severe grief suffered by these families has become a common shared identity, resulting in the development of cross-group relationships and cooperation (Freeman, 2012). Participants have made a conscious decision to put aside any feelings of resentment, recognising that they each share these feelings, regardless of their ethnic background, and that by working together they are better able to lobby the government and demand support in uncovering mass graves (see Freeman, 2012). In addition to improving relations through cooperative behaviour, the ICMP **facilitates the sharing of personal information between members of different ethnic groups which helps them to see each other as individuals** rather than as a group stereotype (Freeman, 2012).

The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) provides another example, having launched an innovative project in 1998 entitled 'Votes for Women - Forces for Change: Building Peace in the Bosnian Community', designed to engage women in peace building and reconciliation. This project had diverse objectives, including to strengthen grassroots efforts; promote dialogue and reconciliation among the different ethnic communities in BiH; and improve the leadership and networking skills of women who are involved in political and civic activism (Freeman, 2012). Trainings were conducted with women from throughout BiH, bringing them together, across the ethnic divide, to discuss challenges to reconciliation in their communities. They also learned skills, such as conflict resolution and negotiation, lobbying, community organising and civic education, to help them engage in nonpartisan grassroots work related to elections and political processes (Freeman, 2012). Trust building exercises were also a priority to help women overcome their feelings of anger, fear and guilt. The **trainings were highly effective and efficient at improving inter-group relations in BiH due in large part to the combination of trust-building and skills and confidence development** (Freeman, 2012).

In Mostar, BiH, diaspora have supported **Our Kids**, a non-profit diaspora organisation, whose activities are focused on orphans and youth with disabilities, regardless of their ethnic background (Karabegović, 2018). The organisation is a strong proponent for 'local empowerment' – providing employment to individuals of all ethnic backgrounds in an effort to alleviate the divided society between Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats in Mostar (Karabegović, 2018). Autonomous spaces in the diaspora can allow certain groups to promote an inclusive, multi-ethnic vision of their homeland, in contrast to the divisive ethnic politics of the city and country (Karabegović, 2018).

Arts and culture

In urban settings, combatants may target cultural infrastructure through indiscriminate wide-scale destruction or as a deliberate attempt to remove all tangible manifestations of the local culture (Howell, 2018). In the post-conflict period, local or external actors may intervene to rebuild cultural assets and restore cultural life – a key characteristic of the city (Howell, 2018).

Collaborative music: Similar to sport (discussed below), **music can be seen as a 'universal language' – a neutral form of communication that can bring different groups together** (Howell, 2018). A cross-cultural project that took place in both BiH (Sarajevo and Mostar) and Scotland brought together children and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. In partnership with Musicians without Borders BiH, a Bosnian-based NGO, the project's aim was to set up a musical collaboration between groups of children from four schools in the two countries. The schools were keen for their children to participate in inter-ethnic artistic collaborations, with the possible outcome of fostering inter-ethnic friendships (Linklater and Forbes, 2012).

This collaboration centred on song-writing and traditional Bosnian song (*sevdah*). The choice of *sevdah* was significant because these songs represent a shared cultural, inter-faith, heritage of all Bosnian people, which post-war became perceived as exclusively Islamic and thus divisive. In order to lessen such association, the project sought to engage the children in transforming and re-contextualising the song into a new musical genre: reggae (Linklater and Forbes, 2012).

While the children in the four groups did not meet in person, they worked collaboratively, over two weeks, to compose a new song called *Moj Brat, Moja Sestra* (My Brother, My Sister), with lyrics concerning love and friendship. This **act of working toward a common goal - to compose, perform and record music together - fostered cooperation, risk-taking and confidence building** (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). The *sevdah*-reggae song and the new composition were recorded, and CDs were sent to the children (Linklater and Forbes, 2012).

Imagining *sevdah* in a new style encouraged the children to find new meaning and relevance in BiH's shared cultural heritage and to separate the musical tradition from its post-war over-association with religion (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). By **interacting with new people as equal collaborators, children were also able to examine previously held perceptions and beliefs, potentially transforming pre-existing stereotypes and conceptions of the 'other'** (Linklater and Forbes, 2012).

Shared spaces: The **Pavarotti Music Centre**, planned by War Child, opened in Mostar in 1997, funded through private donations and fundraising, most significantly from Italian opera singer Luciano Pavarotti. The project aimed to bring relief to residents of Mostar and others in BiH through music education and training, music therapy, and recreational and cultural activities

(Howell, 2018). The Centre offers a range of in-house learning opportunities for young people in various musical genres (e.g. rock, African drumming).

The Centre has made a significant contribution to the **restoration and revival of Mostar's urban culture** with its wide array of musical offerings and activities (Howell, 2018). The Mostar Blues Festival, for example, organised by staff members of the Centre in 2002 supported the reinvigoration of a vibrate music scene in the city and enabled Mostar to be 'known for something other than the war' (Howell, 2018).

Interviews with diverse people close to the Centre's projects reveal that the Centre has provided a key contact place – a **safe space for like-minded individuals to gather across nationalist divides.** It offered an idea of normality – that it was possible to meet youth from other ethno-religious backgrounds, who they have been told and fear and hate – and to do things together, to make and create music. Others from throughout the region were also curious to go there to see what was on offer (Howell, 2018 and 2015). There is a sizeable section of the Croatian community, however, for whom the Centre remains out of bounds because of its location in the Bosniak side of Mostar. It is unclear how effective the Centre has been at attracting young people from Croat/Catholic communities and providing benefits to a wide range of groups as people who frequented the Centre were often resistant to use ethnic labels and to register participant backgrounds (Howell, 2018 and 2015). Still, there were reports of it being a place where everyone – Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, Jews – could all hang out, take part in music and interact with 'others'. The Mostar Rock School, in particular has registered a large multi-ethnic enrolment and a long waiting list among youth unconcerned about nationality (Howell, 2018). There is also an openness about where such interactions could lead (Howell, 2018).

The interactions, friendships and social networks fostered at the Centre have had a 'snowball effect', increasing the scale of impact on cultural life in Mostar and on countering divisions (Howell, 2015). Some groups began to generate new artistic projects together, becoming cultural producers and building opportunities for others, often younger generations to become involved in urban culture. One group of friends, for example, went on to establish a much-loved bar and arts venue (the Alternative Institute) in the centre of town. This venue has sought to explore an alternative culture away from the rigid confines of politically-imposed cultural identities. Members of the Alternative Institute then went on to found the Abrašević Youth Cultural Centre (Howell, 2015), which continues to engage in important work, breaking down and providing alternative narratives to life in Mostar. It is challenging for such cultural and arts-based projects to effectively counter the pervasive political nationalist rhetoric in the city and country (Howell, 2015). Still, **the presence of alternative spaces, options and narratives enables individuals to collaboratively imagine alternatives lives**. This can create the potential for active, critical citizenship that enriches the cultural life of other citizens and **highlights the possibility of a more plural, diverse society to other segments of the population** (Howell, 2015).

Arts festivals also have the potential to forge connections across conflict groups. The **mirëdita, dobar dan!** festival, for example, was founded in 2014 in cooperation between NGOs based in Belgrade and Prishtina. In the first three years, the festival was led by the Civic Initiative (Gradjanska Inicijativa) and the Policy Center, two NGOs from Serbia, in cooperation with Integra, an NGO from Kosovo. In the fourth year (2017), the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia joined as a partner organisation (Fridman, 2020). The festival serves to introduce people-to-people exchanges between Kosovo and Serbia. The primary aim is to counter negative portrayals of Albanians from Kosovo in local forms of everyday nationalism in Serbia; and the

general lack of information of Kosovar culture among the Serbian public (Fridman, 2020). The festival **brings live music, plays, and documentary and feature films from Kosovo to various locations in Belgrade**. There are also roundtable **discussions that tackle topics and themes that would often otherwise not be addressed**, such as the legacies and the consequences of the 1998 – 1999 war in Kosovo, including the issue of wartime sexual violence. Both Albanian and Serbian are official languages of the festival, which offers simultaneous translations in both languages. (Fridman, 2020).

A recent study focused on perceptions in Serbia and activities in Belgrade, aimed at countering everyday nationalism and improving Serb-Albanian relations, finds that **such activist forms of everyday peacebuilding diplomacy can challenge and contest the role of ethnic and national categories** (Fridman, 2020). Performances by Kosovar artists at the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra house, for example, had large turnouts – opening the door to artists from Kosovo being invited directly by theatres and art houses in Serbia. This could gradually pave the way to additional forms of normalisation (Fridman, 2020).

At the same time, **a key limitation of these events, similar to other initiatives aimed at bridging divides is that the reach may be limited to the 'already converted'** - to those already engaged in anti-nationalist peace activism or those who already hold views supportive of coexistence (Fridman, 2020). A key feature movie from Kosovo about sexual violence during the war, for example, was viewed primarily by an audience involved in Serbia's civil society, human rights and anti-war/anti-nationalist NGOs (Fridman, 2020). Further, the festival drew protests from nationalist actors and led to clashes between ultra-nationalist and anti-nationalist actors (Fridman, 2020).

The **UK City of Culture 2013 (CoC13), hosted in Derry/Londonderry**, was also aimed at delivering a programme of events that would help bring communities in the city closer together (Devine and Quinn, 2019). Research, based on interviews and focus groups, finds that in some cases, such events can help to build social capital across Catholic-Republican-Nationalist (CRN) and Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist (PUL) communities, particularly between young attendees, and between event organisers. In the case of the latter, **working together and cooperation contributes to trust building and goodwill between volunteers**. Some of the cross-community relationships developed have been sustained (Devine and Quinn, 2019). In other cases, however, particularly in the case of spectator type events, findings suggest that social interaction was fleeting and superficial. Such **passive encounters are not expected to build ties between disparate groups** (Devine and Quinn, 2019).

Events that were designed to stimulate a high level of cross community interaction and that were integrated into routine service offerings in the city were more effective in building lasting cross community ties. These included events in the city's segregated schools aimed at encouraging students to work together, develop connections, and build trust. In some cases, children from the two sides had had no prior contact. The long-term effectiveness of such projects in the schools is, however, uncertain (Devine and Quinn, 2019).

Other events for young people in informal settings also provide opportunities for youth to interact across divides. Radio One's Big Weekend, for example, attracted young people from both the PUL and CRN communities – providing the space to transcend the physical boundaries imposed on them by the "Troubles" (Devine and Quinn, 2019). These **shared moments, experiences and memories created by CoC13 that would not have been possible in the midst of**

ordinary, routine city life have the potential to pave the way for improved relations (Devine and Quinn, 2019).

Another example of a well-planned cross-community event was the Fleadh Cheoil (an annual festival of Irish culture), which was designed to be inclusive of the entire community in the city. The lead partner, An Gaelaras (an Irish cultural organisation in Derry) forged strong working relationships with the Londonberry Bands Forum and managed to engage four loyalist bands to play. This opened the door for members of the PUL community to come over to the cityside to partake in the event (Devine and Quinn, 2019). Such **programming decisions effectively disrupted routine representations and perceptions of uses of spaces in the city – helping to break down physical and mental barriers** to parts of the city strongly associated with particular community groups (Devine and Quinn, 2019). The relationship forged between An Gaelaras and the Londonderry Bands Forum has also had a snowball effect – leading to an ongoing collaborative partnership and further joint projects such as the International Pan Celtic Festival in 2014 and Driochead in 2015. This represents a key positive legacy of CoC13, allowing for a positive cycle of strengthening and expanding social capital (Devine and Quinn, 2019).

Despite this positive legacy, **the lack of legacy planning more generally has led to the CoC13 resembling more of a one-off opportunity** for dialogue, sharing and expression of identity, with unsustainable benefits. A **missed opportunity was the creation of a permanent venue for CoC13 that could have provided a shared space** that currently is lacking in the city – and an ongoing space for mixed interactions and representations of plural cultures. Instead, the Derry City Council hired a large tent for the year. The lack of investment in legacy planning, and subsequent cuts to public spending, has undermined the positive impacts of CoC13 in terms of community moral, empowerment of ordinary people through culture and a sense of inclusion. **While CoC13 broke down barriers between the communities, this togetherness has largely dissipated** (Devine and Quinn, 2019)

Sport

While the competitiveness of sport and support for national teams can increase antagonism and sporadic fighting between ethnic groups on game nights, participation in sport can also facilitate social inclusion and integration of divided ethnicities (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019).

The **Open Fun Football Schools**, for example, is widespread in various post-conflict and transition regions (the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central and East Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, the Gulf States and Central Asia). The aim of OFFS is for children to enjoy playing football together and to be able to meet and know children of different ethnicities, religions, ages, and physical capabilities – becoming part of the OFFS community of football. Sport is often combined with other social activities, such as eating together, listening to music and singer. Leaders, coaches and assistant coaches also belong to different ethnic groups. Parents are also involved with OFFS, often spending time with the other children and their families (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019).

Research on OFFS in Kosovo, including interviews with trainers, instructors and children, finds that **the programme provides an opportunity for continuous interpersonal contact among volunteers, participants and parents**. This occurs for example, through one-to-one training activities, mixed football teams, and communication between leaders/trainers and parents (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017). This in turn contributes to breaking down social and psychological ethno-national barriers and to the development of friendly relationships

(Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017). While it was initially challenging to bring Albanians and Serbs together after the war, particularly to play together, OFFS ultimately fostered a   relaxation in tense inter-ethnic relations (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). Trainers and children may speak a different language, posing various challenges, however, the use of 'sport language' has been a binding factor, helping people to understand one another (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). Research finds that the opportunity for inter-group contact and cooperation, provided by the OFFS programme, has led to a positive change in perceptions of the 'other' (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019).

An effective component of the design of OFFS programming is the involvement of local stakeholders. The heavy reliance on local coaches and volunteers to undertake sport activities – and the development of inclusive relationships with local and national civil society is considered a key success factor (Giulianotti et al., 2017). In Kosovo, OFFS has been implemented in various regions with the creation of over twenty teams. Local municipalities, trainers and parents are active participants. Convincing parents to become involved, through meetings with trainers and leaders that broke down resistance toward inter-ethnic collaboration, has been crucial in foster openness among children to changing their initial perceptions of the 'other' (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017). Research finds that the OFFS has also **contributed significantly to social inclusion of other marginalised minorities groups**, such as Roma, Turks and Egyptians (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2017). Participants have spanned many different communities, ages, genders and religions (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). **A by-product of such sporting activities is the strengthening of social engagement and civic activism** in Kosovo, particularly among the young (Giulianotti et al., 2017).

Key challenges include sustainability challenges, in terms of political, financial and organisational resources and support; and the persistent countervailing, divisive, forces at the macro level. Unless changes also occur in schools and in the media, for example, it is difficult for such sports initiatives to have a lasting impact (Giulianotti et al., 2017).

4. Unstructured/informal encounters

Inter-group ties are never completely cut off during and after violent conflict that targets identity and entrench divisions (Belloni & Ramović 2020). It is beneficial and productive to explore unstructured/informal activities, rather than giving sole prominence to structured/formal initiatives (Lai, 2020). **Unstructured encounters are understood as 'occurring as part of everyday life of ordinary people living in divided and/or mixed spaces'** (Fridman, 2015). Informality, characterised as 'unforced' and spontaneous, can help to counter criticisms often associated with forced 'reconciliation' projects (Lai, 2020). These have been criticised for being seen as fostering artificial inter-ethnic interactions that are not sustainable and for not giving adequate attention to the hostile political environment (Lai, 2020; Sokolić, 2020). Informality also offers the chance to broaden the constituency of structured processes, for example through the widespread coming together of people across ethnic lines in the face of economic insecurities to engage in protest (Lai, 2020).

Everyday encounters – work and school

Unstructured daily encounters occur among Serb and Albanian-Kosovar communities at particular locations, such as at the **American University in Kosovo (AUK) campus in Pristina** and at workspaces, mostly of international organisations in Pristina. In the case of the latter, this

often entails the daily commute of Serbs from Kosovo who live in the municipality of Gračanica (a town in Pristina district) and commute to the capital. They attempt to interact and partake in the public and social life of the city. Such interactions are almost non-existent otherwise, as Serb communities in Kosovo are largely segregated (Fridman, 2015).

Interviews with students at AUK, a private institution where instruction is in English, reveals that students from Serbian locations in Kosovo attend classes and fully participate in student life, despite being the minority group. **The campus is seen as a safe space, without concerns for safety or judgment.** Serbian students feel free to speak in Serbian and even to practice their Albanian language (Fridman, 2015). There was a strong desire among students to have a sense of normality and restoration of inter-group relations. There was a sense amongst Serbian students that it is their responsibility to break down barriers and to meet Albanian peers (Fridman, 2015).

A sense of normality can also be restored through economic ties and the recognition that the everyday necessities of different communities and the need to make a living are shared. Both communities face the need for better jobs, infrastructure, and a sense of a better future for a normal life (Fridman, 2015). Joint workspaces and surrounding areas (e.g. cafes) in Pristina are sites of daily encounters – where people whose lives are otherwise segregated, can meet and interact (Fridman, 2015). While these everyday encounters are unstructured, the decision to leave Gračanica to get a job in Pristina, and to engage in such professional and social encounters, is a choice made by a number of Serbs in Kosovo in their search and struggle for normalcy. At the same time, many continue to grapple with grievances towards the 'other' and the sense of loss not only of lives and property, but also of power, experienced by Serbs remaining in Kosovo as a minority (Fridman, 2015).

Similarly, in Mitrovica in Kosovo, **instances of shared space in shops, workplaces and the international business school in northern Mitrovica allows for interactions that transcends differences** (Jarstad and Segall, 2019). Such everyday experiences of interaction and shared spaces run parallel to sentiments of fear and distrust between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, exacerbated by top-down measures and political elites (Jarstad and Segall, 2019).

In BiH, diaspora and returnees have been involved in economic investment and the generation of opportunities for workers of different ethnic backgrounds (Belloni & Ramović 2020). The owners of Bekto Precisa and Prevent, for example, relocated their companies to the Bosniak-majority town of Goražde in Eastern Bosnia and hired Serbs from neighbouring towns – particularly younger workers who grew up in mono-ethnic communities – to share multi-ethnic workplaces. Such forms of hiring practices have the potential to play an important role in socio-economic reintegration (Belloni & Ramović 2020).

Activism

Protests are informal activities that usually involve people in their capacity as ordinary citizens getting together in a shared public space, like a street or square (Lai, 2020). They tend to be **more visible and accessible to the public than organised events** where individuals are invited to take part (Lai, 2020).

At the same time, **structured events and shared spaces, such as cultural and youth centres, can provide the basic stepping stones** for cooperation along common interests and for free thinking and expression that is absent in the political sphere. These foundations and

activities can eventually infiltrate into the public sphere in the form civic activism (Belloni, 2020). NDC Sarajevo, for example, fostered a strong shared identity among youth in Jajce (the 'Nansen kids'), who were able to successfully mobilise against mono-ethnic schools in the city in 2016-2017.

In June 2013, an important wave of protests took place in BiH, motivated by widely held frustrations over political deadlock and bureaucratic red tape that delayed newborns from receiving their personal identification numbers in a timely manner. These numbers are necessary for birth certifications, medical cards and passports (Belloni, 2020; Milan, 2017). This cause garnered immense public support for the protesters, who numbered in the thousands — demonstrating the existence of non-ethnic solidarity at a scale unseen since the war (Belloni, 2020). **In an effort to keep the protests independent from interference by political parties and other formal organisations, movement organisers framed their actions with a civic meaning from the start, focusing on the right to citizenship** as granted by the Constitution. The primacy of citizenship over ethno-nationality as a unifying identity was evident on a placard carried throughout the streets of Sarajevo, which read: 'Neither Serbs, Croats nor Bosniaks. Citizens above all' (Milan, 2017). Politicians eventually adopted a new version of the law which enabled the issuance of ID numbers (Belloni, 2020).

In February 2014, protests began in Tuzla, BiH, led by laid-off factory workers - amidst high levels of unemployment in the country, particularly among young people (Belloni, 2020; Milan, 2017). These **socio-economic protests quickly spread to other major urban centres**, including Sarajevo, Mostar, Bihać, Bugojno, Travnik and Goražde, becoming the biggest popular mobilisation since the beginning of the 1992-1995 Bosnian War (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020). Although the Republika Srpska (RS), the Bosnian-Serb entity, remained largely protest-free, there were reports of protests in Banja Luka and other locations in the RS. Further, opinion polls indicated high levels of support in both entities for the protestors (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020). Further, the protests in the Bosniak-Croat Federation involved people of different backgrounds, including Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, and people who do not affiliate with the three 'constituent peoples' (Lai, 2020). The protests also involved different generations – the young with few job prospects and older workers (Lai, 2020).

Similar to the 2013 protests, **the participation of protestors as private citizens contributed to the 'civic' character of the protests** (Lai, 2020). Interviews with grassroots activists involved in the 2014 protests and observations from the protests and gatherings in several cities (Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica) reveal that protestors identified social justice, not reconciliation, as the primary aim of the protests (Lai, 2020). **The socio-economic frame resonated with the general populace and sparked solidarity and mobilisation across the ethno-national divide** (Milan, 2017). This has signalled the recognition of shared aspirations among the Bosnian population and the emergence of alternative forms of political practices (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020).

The protests quickly evolved into plenums (informal citizens' councils), established first in Tuzla than spreading throughout the country (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020; Milan, 2017). **People participated in the plenums as ordinary citizens**, articulating demands and grievances in a coherent way and engaging in decision-making democratically (Milan, 2017). These constituted another opportunity for inter-ethnic contact, through physical presence at the meetings and through the **formulation of plenum demands that transcended ethnic divisions** and focused on Bosnian citizens as a whole (Lai, 2020). While plenums could involve confrontation and disagreement, they were not attributed to inter-ethnic tensions (Belloni, 2020).

The outcome of the 2014 protests was mixed. Anti-government momentum was difficult to maintain due to a combination of media and police pressure and diversion of attention to the devastating floods in May of that year – and the protests fizzled out (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020). There is evidence, however, that **contact established through protesting, meetings and volunteering have helped to forge civic solidarity and establish activist networks that persist** (Lai, 2020).

In order to support such developments, the **Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights** – in partnership with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs – provided funding to eight informal civic groups after the 2014 protests broke out. They are: the Plenum of the citizens in Zenica, Plenum Bosanska Krupa, the Informal Group Srebrenik is ours, the Workers' Union Sindikat Solidarnosti, the Citizens' Movement Gračanica, Banja Luka Social Centre, the Informal Group for Social Justice in Prijedor and the Network 5f7 (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016). **Most of the civic groups were able to establish a permanent office, which provides the necessary space for events, discussions, and activism**. The Plenum of the Citizens in Zenica, for example, established its new office in the heart of Zenica, visible and available to all citizens, with the hope that more citizens particularly youth will become more active in society. Importantly, the space offers much needed space to share ideas without fear of recrimination (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016). The Banja Luka Social Centre is also an open space for the free exchange of ideas, which is very restricted in the city – offering freedom and space for various activities involving awareness raising, activism, and new discourses that deconstruct nationalistic paradigms (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016). The Workers' Union in Tuzla, Sindikat Solidarnosti regularly organises meetings, campaigns and protests, including a protest camp in 2015 in front of the government building of Canton Tuzla against the closure of production units in the city and against corrupt privatisation practices (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016).

5. Effectiveness factors

The following are factors that contribute to greater effectiveness of outcomes, drawn from various research and studies of initiatives and everyday encounters:

Buy in from key people: The involvement of key people, who are respected and play an important role in the everyday life of communities and participants is an important factor. NDC Sarajevo, for example, got buy in from municipality councillors of all three major ethnic groups, health and education workers, which enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the organisation and its programming (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). OFFS in Kosovo also reached out to municipalities, trainers and parents and other stakeholders, actively involving them in the project. Gaining the involvement of parents and their buy in, in turn, supported the involvement and openness of youth participants to engagement with the 'other' and changes in perceptions (Krasniqi and Krasniqi, 2019). In terms of ensuring that boys and girls have access to and are able to take part in sporting initiatives equally, it is important to raise identify and bring on board female role models as well as key 'gatekeepers' who have the potential to constrain female participation (Dorokhina et al., 2011).

Grounded in the local: Sports initiatives, such as OFFS, have been lauded for forging inclusive relationships with local and national civil society – relying heavily on local coaches or volunteers to undertake sport activities (Giulianotti et al., 2017). The involvement of local communities in the process of designing the strategies and contents of events is much more effective than treating

them solely as passive targets or beneficiaries of programming (Dorokhina et al., 2011). They are better placed than foreign donors, international NGOs or other outside organisations to determine which issues are ready to be tackled in their particular communities (Dorokhina et al., 2011).

Attention to shared concerns/goals/experiences: Much of the research on the various structured/formal and unstructured/informal encounters emphasise the unifying role that the discovery of shared concerns and working toward a shared goal can play across conflict groups. Dialogue, conducted by NDC Sarajevo, helped participants to come to the realisation that they share similar perspectives on problems in their communities, which, in turn, ignited their interest in working together to address them – fostering local activism (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Music and arts initiatives, such as the collaborative composition produced by children in BiH and Scotland, yielded benefits from working together toward a common goal (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). Similarly, the events implemented at schools during CoC13 in Derry/Londonderry, allowed for children to work together for the first time across divides, which helped to create bonds, some of which persist (Devine and Quinn, 2019). In the realm of informal activism, shared socio-economic concerns in BiH have forged strong civic solidarity and action across ethnic divides (Lai, 2020).

Development of alternative identities: Activism and the formation of the identity of 'citizen' has been instrumental in bridging ethnic divides (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020; Milan, 2017). Initiatives that have promoted other common identities have also been effective, such as in the case of the Nansen dialogue. The encompassing identity of the 'Nansen kids', adopted by students in Jajce, contributed to their opposition to mono-ethnic schools and to their effective lobbying of the government to prevent them. By creating music together, children in BiH in collaboration with peers in Scotland also made steps towards a shared identity based on the repertoire of songs they created (Linklater and Forbes, 2012). These alternative identities are effective in countering the salience placed on ethnicity as the over-arching form of identity and can also contribute to participants seeing the 'other' in a different light.

Sustainability and space for action: In order for trust-building and new relationships and friendships to be sustained, there needs to be repeated interactions and contact over time. NDC Sarajevo designed their dialogue process to continue over multiple years, with alumni of the dialogue seminars then working with wider groups, creating a sustained partnership and outreach to the wider community (Šerá Komlossyová, 2019). Research on sports initiatives indicates that sustainability challenges are a key concern, in terms of political, financial, and organisational resources and support (Giulianotti et al., 2017). The impact of COC13 in Derry/Londonderry was undermined by the lack of legacy planning. Dialogue, sharing and inter-group interactions became short-lived, with positive benefits gained through the events dissipating without any follow-up investment or creation of a permanent shared space to gather (Devine and Quinn, 2019). Initiatives that seek to promote civic activism have been more effective with the establishment of multi-ethnic coordination bodies and action groups that provide the space and resources for people to come together, plan and take action (e.g. Nansen Coordination Bodies and Plenums) (Belloni, 2020; Lai, 2020; Šerá Komlossyová, 2019; Milan, 2017; Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, 2016).

Scaling up and broader reach: Much of the research on various initiatives find that participants are often already more opposed to ethno-nationalist divisions and more open to crossing divides. A key limitation identified in the YIHR's Visiting Programme, for example, is that it catered to people whose attitudes are already more tolerant and less in need of changing (Fridman, 2013).

The BDYCP visual and digital media mentoring initiative, similarly attracted young people who were already more supportive of inter-ethnic cooperation, views that were sustained and solidified over the course of the programme (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). The arts festival events in Serbia and Kosovo often attracted those who were already engaged in anti-nationalist peace activism (Fridman, 2020). In addition, music, and arts, such as offerings at the Pavarotti Music Centre, are luxurious pastimes that may be inaccessible to a wider population (Howell, 2015). As a result of these constraints, it may be the case that such structured initiatives only manage to reach a relatively small number of people and among them, often people whose views are already conducive to alternative narratives and identities. The way in which projects and programmes are able to scale up and attain broader reach is to give participants the tools for activism, enabling them to become 'multipliers of peace' within their own communities and societies, as in the case of the BDYCP initiative (Fairey and Kerr, 2020). Similarly, youth who frequented the Pavarotti Music Centre were given the space to forge alternative realities that can energise people into social action. As discussed, a group of friends from the Centre started the Abrašević Youth Cultural Centre, which has been instrumental in countering dominant discourses and showcasing alternative narratives in the divided city of Mostar (Howell, 2015).

Political climate and macro-level environment: A considerable challenge to initiatives at the micro level is that their outcomes and effectiveness is often constrained and/or undermined by the divisive macro-level political environment. Teachers engaged in peace education, for example, felt that their efforts were undermined by politicians who aimed to stir-up tensions (Clarke-Habibi, 2018). Similarly, in the case of sports, some interviewees emphasised that the positive benefits of inter-group sports activities in Kosovo are undermined by textbooks in divided schools and media that systematically portray Albanians in a negative light (Giulianotti et al., 2017). Rather, if media throughout the Balkans were to give attention to positive stories such as the relationships forged through initiatives, such as OFFS, there could be an echo effect of more projects that could raise awareness and create momentum for sustainable change (Dorokhina et al., 2011). With regards to the arts, research indicates that while projects like the Pavarotti Music Centre direct challenge nationalist rhetoric and structure forces, it is unrealistic to assess their impact by looking for changes in the overall political and social environment (Howell, 2015). The divisive macro-level environment constrains the ability of individuals to continue to explore peaceful coexistence beyond the Centre and other safe shared spaces, such as the AUK campus in Pristina (Howell, 2015). Still, the mere presence of these alternative options maintains the potential for active, critical citizenship and the potential for a more diverse, inclusive society (Howell, 2015).

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Acknowledgements

Suggested citation

About this report