MAPPING REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS/NETWORKS
AS MEANS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN RECONCILIATION:
THE CASE OF WESTERN BALKANS

MASTER THESIS

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TIRANA, ALBANIA
FEBRUARY 2024

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Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science in Political Science and International Relations

EPOKA UNIVERSITY
2024

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Date of Defense: 29 February 2024

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ABSTRACT

Based on the context of the armed conflicts in the 1990s and persistent post-conflictual issues among the Western Balkans, this study focuses on the involvement of regional civil society organizations and/or networks (RCSO/Ns) in the reconciliation process. In particular, the research maps the role of RCSO/Ns in advancing and promoting reconciliation across the region. To comprehend this role, the work employs existing indicators and categorizes them in accordance with its three main sub-questions. These sub-questions, that guide the piece, include: i) What is the approach of RCSO/Ns towards reconciliation? ii) What are the capacities of these actors to act? iii) What is their work in the field of reconciliation? In such manner, this mixed-methods research explores how civil society contributes to transformative processes in these post-conflict societies. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate the outcomes and challenges of RCSO/Ns on reconciliation, and provide comparisons between these actors' experiences. The findings of this research work support scholarly knowledge and provide useful practical implications in regional reconciliation efforts across the Western Balkans.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Civil Society Organizations/Networks, Approach, Capacity, Projects, Western Balkans

HARTËZIMI I ORGANIZATAVE/RRJETEVE RAJONALE TË SHOQËRISË CIVILE SI MJETE TË BASHKËPUNIMIT RAJONAL NË PAJTIM: RASTI I BALLKANIT PERËNDIMOR

ABSTRAKT

Duke u bazuar në kontekstin e konflikteve të armatosura të viteve 1990 dhe në çështjet e vazhdueshme post-konfliktuale në Ballkanin Perëndimor, ky studim merr në fokus përfshirjen e organizatave/rrjeteve rajonale të shoqërisë civile (O/RRSHC) në procesin e pajtimit. Më konkretisht, hulumtimi hartëzon rolin e O/RRSHC-ve në avancimin dhe promovimin e pajtimit në të gjithë rajonin. Për të eksploruar rolin e këtyre aktorëve studimi përdor tregues ekzistues, të cilët i kategorizon në përputhje me tre nën-pyetjet e tij kryesore. Nën-pyetjet që drejtojnë punimin përfshijnë: i) cila është qasja e O/RRSHC-ve kundrejt pajtimit, ii) cilat janë kapacitetet e këtyre aktorëve për të vepruar dhe iii) cila është puna e tyre në fushën e pajtimit. Kështu, kjo punë kërkimore, e mbështetur në metoda të përziera, studion mënyrën se si shoqëria civile kontribuon në proceset transformuese në këto komunitete post-konfliktuale. Për më tepër, hulumtimi kërkon të evidentojë rezultatet dhe sfidat e O/RRSHC-ve në rrugën drejt pajtimit dhe synon të paraqesë krahasime midis përvojave të organizatave apo rrjeteve. Gjetjet e këtij studimit suportojnë njohuritë akademike dhe ofrojnë implikime praktike të dobishme për pajtimin në Ballkanin Perëndimor.

Fjalët kyçe: Pajtimi, Organizatat/Rrjetet e Shoqërisë Civile, Qasja, Kapaciteti, Projektet, Ballkani Perëndimor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Master Thesis, titled Mapping Civil Society Organizations / Networks as Means of Regional Cooperation in Reconciliation: The Case of Western Balkans is based on my original work except quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously or concurrently submitted for the award of any degree, at EPOKA University, any other university or institution.

Iris Buçiqi

29 February 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current world is one where, as liberal institutionalism would argue, non-state structures have become more prominent. Civil society organizations (CSOs) have gained significance notably as social and civic actors in politics and academia (Fischer, 2011). Nonetheless, this role of theirs has advanced deeper, penetrating into more complex areas. In the last decade, a connection, which has been deemed unquestionable, has been witnessed between CSOs and peacebuilding attempts (Obi, 2018). Even international actors like the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have recognized the civil society's contribution to peace processes, not only domestically, but regionally as well. In line with scholars like Söderbaum (2007), who have written concerning the regional involvement of civil society and its importance, the EU particularly has been invested in CSOs and reconciliation initiatives peculiarly in the Western Balkans (WB) (Minić, Nechev, and Nikolovski, 2019).

The Western Balkans have been witnesses of armed conflicts following the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Vučković, 2020). The 1990s, as Vučković explains, were marked by the ethnic war of Bosnia and war of Kosovo - events that have left lasting legacies manifested in societal and political divisions that persist into the present day (Haider, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of consensus on the origins and face of violence in the region has produced a shift of blame between ethnic groups and has led to the instrumentalization of war crimes (Kostovica, 2013). In response to these consequences, efforts toward reconciliation in the Western Balkans have been underway. The European Union has been committed to reconciliation through active participation in projects and financial support, intertwining the process closely with the concept of regional cooperation (Vučković, 2020). Consequently, regional cooperation has been treated as a foundation for reconciling the region.

To advance regional cooperation across the Western Balkans, the EU has advocated for the involvement of civil society (Minić, et al., 2019). According to Minić, et al., civil society assumes a pivotal role, standing as a crucial pillar for EU integration aspirations among the six Western Balkan member states. Beyond these practical implications, the link between civil society and regional cooperation is grounded in theory, especially within the New Regionalism Approach framework. The New Regionalism Approach accepts and emphasizes the role of non-state actors in regionalism. Furthermore, this theory recognizes collaborations, networks and platforms as forms through which CSOs can engage regionally. Given that this study focuses on institutionalized regional forms that work on reconciliation, CSOs, and networks are taken jointly into analyses as they fit such criteria.

Considering the relationships that have been established between civil society and reconciliation practically and theoretically, this work studies regional civil society organizations/ networks as a means of regional cooperation to pursue reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Since the region still suffers from the past, it is essential to analyze the regional non-state actors which are working to move forward the process in this specific case study. Minić, et al., (2019) evidenced a gap in literature for regional civil society organizations mapping in the Western Balkans, whereas Obi (2018) revealed the necessity for studying CSOs beyond their organizational form. Therefore, this research addresses the approach, activities, and organizational capacities of regional civil society organizations/networks working on reconciliation. These general areas are studied via indicators borrowed from previous research on peace and reconciliation. The parameters are separated as the following: (1) Typology, (2) Capacity (3) Projects and each constitutes of several subsections. Typology is comprised of topology, areas of intervention and target group; Capacity consists of geographical coverage, membership, partnership, staffing and leadership, funding, and others. Based on these parameters this study employs mixed methods to take into account the seven CSO/Ns working regionally on reconciliation. To do so it gathers secondary data from what the organizations/networks have published and primary data from interviews with representatives of the actors involved in the study.

By following the upper mentioned structure, the work brings together all the regional civil society actors and explores what their role is in the reconciliation of the region. This constitutes the main research question that directs the study. Furthermore, the research question is broken down into three sub-questions, namely: what is the

organization/networks' approach towards reconciliation, what are their capacities, and what is their work on reconciliation. The first question aims to detect how these organizations look at reconciliation and how they address it. The second evaluates the capacities of these organizations/networks to operate regionally. The last question examines the projects and activities conducted by these actors to comprehend how much every CSO/N has done and if there are any measurable results. Finding responses to these questions provides a significant assessment of these regional actors' importance in how they help reconciliation in the Western Balkans. This must be acknowledged as the primary objective of this work. A further objective relies on offering a comparative perspective on their experiences, in their efforts towards reconciliation, and other aspects of their profiling. In addition, displaying results and challenges faced when conducting reconciliation work stands as another objective of the research. By accomplishing its objectives, the study assists in the practical understanding of RCSO/Ns in reconciliation and not only. It also provides support to the New Regionalism theory. Lastly, this research is beneficial for policymakers who consider making informed decisions involving regional reconciliation initiatives across the Western Balkans.

To serve its purpose, this work initially elaborates on the theoretical background and the previous writings from scholars on the topics of reconciliation, civil society organizations, the relationship between the two, the Westen Balkans and region's own civil society. Following, it describes the methods used and the data utilized in conducting the analysis. The results, which constitutes the successive section, combines primary and secondary information in accordance with the parameters mentioned above. This part is ensued by the findings that interpret the data presented and discuss the research questions by proving links with the literature. Lastly, while concluding, the research offers recommendations for future works and limitations regarding its realization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reconciliation and civil society organizations are topics of great contribution for scholars worldwide. The concepts have been studied independently and as combined variables in numerous conflict/post-conflict societies in distinctive case studies. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the existing academic discourse surrounding reconciliation and civil society organizations/networks, emphasizing the established connections between them. Therefore, it introduces the theoretical foundations supporting reconciliation and regional civil society organizations and then explores conceptualizations, characteristics, and means of measurement. The review also sheds light on the Western Balkans reality and its civil society.

2.1 New Regionalism, Regional Cooperation and Reconciliation

There is consensus among the scholars that regionalism constitutes of a political process/project characterized by cooperation and that regionalization is a social, bottom-up process that involves interaction (Mansfield & Solingen, 2010; Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003). In addition, regionalization is recognized by some as a constituent of regionalism (Mansfield & Solingen, 2010). Nevertheless, despite such agreement on both concepts, there is contestation among studies on the actors involved specifically in regionalism. One viewpoint looks at regionalism as state-driven and consequently understands cooperation from an inter-state perspective (Gamble and Payne, 2003; Pempel, 2005, as cited in Mansfield & Solingen, 2010). In contrast, the other position held by scholars like Boas, Marchand and Shaw (2003), recognizes the existence of other political actors apart from the state and their involvement in the regional project. These perspectives align with the various forms of regionalism that have evolved from the mid-20th century.

Regionalism has been attributed two waves that appeared in the late 1940s and mid-1980s, respectively the old and new regionalism (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000). Söderbaum & Shaw (2003) elaborated that the first wave was a Western European approach that originated from the experiences of the Second World War and inter-state war nationalism but diminished during the late years of 1960 and early 1970. The latter, similarly had its roots in Western Europe as well, yet it managed to slowly spread further (Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003). The appearance of the new regionalism was accompanied by numerous worldwide happenings such as the shift in the Cold War bipolar structure; greater openness from the USA toward regionalism; development of economical actors: the European Union, the Asia-Pacific, and the North American Free Trade Area; growth of transnationalism and different forms of interdependence; new sectors globalization; the increasing importance of Non Trade Barriers and concerns over multilateral trade (Hettne and Söderbaum 1998; Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000).

The new regionalism or the New Regionalism Approach (NRA) departed notably from the old form. Mittelman depicted the global nature of the new regionalism by emphasizing the spreading of this wave all over the world as compared to the old regionalism which was marked as narrow (as cited in Hettne, 2003). Hettne (2003) went beyond the scope and pointed out differences in the issues, orientation and actors involved in the two approaches. Initially, the scholar described that while the old regionalism was concentrated on trade agreements and security matters, the new form surpassed its focus to include other cultural and social aspects. Secondly, in contrast to the "introverted" old approach, he regarded the new regionalism as "extroverted", recognizing the accelerating global interdependence. Lastly, Hettne implied that the New Regionalism Approach moved away from a state centric perspective and recognized the role of non-state actors like civil society in regionalism. The new regionalism acknowledged the engagement of these actors in collaborations, networks, and partnerships (Söderbaum, 2004). Additionally, concerning the civil society, Hettne shared the idea that this player served as a means of protection of the weak and the poor, and highlighted the transformative and opposing role of the civil society to regionalization (Söderbaum, 2007). Söderbaum revealed that Mittelman was following the same line of thought when he expressed that the strength of the civil society contributed to transformative regionalization. Nevertheless, in contradiction the scholar showed in his work that civil society does not influence the transformative regionalization by definition and that it is a quite complex matter to be further studied (Söderbaum, 2007).

The New Regionalism Approach is in agreement with Schulz, Söderbaum, and Öjendal (2001) on the explanation of regional cooperation as an open process, belonging to regionalization, through which state or non-state actors interconnect under common engagements. Moreover, other definition on the term derives from Anger (2012) who conceptualized regional cooperation as a means of supporting activities whose impacts would be higher through a regional approach. Focusing specifically on the Western Balkans, Anger (2012) considered regional cooperation as a tool to accelerate reconciliation and challenge intolerance and nationalism, encourage dialogue, and mutual understanding. His interpretation followed the comprehension that "regional cooperation enhances reconciliation" from the European Union Enlargement Strategy 2012-2013 (Anger, 2012).

Reconciliation evolved as a definite area of study in the political and politico-psychological domains in the last decade (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004). Bar-Tal and Bennink argued that the notion developed from the demand of expanding peacemaking since formal peace agreements failed to produce peaceful relations that were genuine. Reconciliation went further than the widely accepted conflict resolution and, according to the scholars' suggestion, it corresponded to the process of building stable and lasting peace, when required. Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004) implied that reconciliation is not mandatory for all conflicts, but only for those involving conflicting societies who develop shared beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and emotions that sustain the conflict, and discredit the opponent, thereby obstructing the chance for peaceful resolution and peaceful relations. Furthermore, they added that depending on the outcome of the conflict, the status of the conflict parties, and the attributed responsibility for the origins of the conflict, reconciliation might differ (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). Additionally, it is indicated that reconciliation is mostly expected to take place after the conflict resolution when a peace agreement is accepted by all sides (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Kelman, 2010; Rigby, 2006). Efforts for reconciling, however, can initiate, according to Rigby, at any point in time during a conflict (2006).

Ther term has been categorized as an outcome and a process (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rigby, 2006). Reconciliation as a goal refers to restoration and healing (Rigby, 2006; (Hampson & Lederach, 1998)). It consists of mutual recognition and acceptance, respective trust, positive attitudes and so on (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). To achieve reconciliation as an outcome, Bar-Tal (2000) identified five areas of change for the involved actors, namely, societal beliefs on: the goals of one's group, one's group, the rival group, relations with the

past enemy, and peace. Alternatively, reconciliation as a process comprises of two dimensions, reconciling with the losses of the past and reconciling with former opponents (Rigby, 2006). Rigby stated that the first dimension must be fulfilled by at least one of the conflicting actors, for the second phase to take over. Moreover, the scholar further noted that both dimensions require memory work (Rigby, 2006).

In the widely accepted and simplest version reconciliation is understood as the peaceful restoration of relationships between actors like individuals, groups, people, or nations (Rigby, 2006). In similar lines with the basic understanding of reconciliation, Mastrorocco (2020) gathered few definitions of what reconciliation can be understood as. The scholar presented the proposal of Bloomfield who defied reconciliation as a process that based on mutual understanding and respect, deals with the past for the purpose of enhancing cooperation. Then, he put forward an OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) conceptualization which according to him, was more clear and complete. OSCE considered reconciliation the process of erupting vicious cycles of shared misconceptions and separative memories linked with violent actions, through political and social transformations, with intention to overcome conflicts (OSCE, 2018, as cited by Mastrorocco, 2020).

In addition, Touquet and Vermeersch (2016) in their study brought forward three different approaches to comprehend the concept of reconciliation. The first definition relied on the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) which portrayed reconciliation by punishing the perpetrators to avoid the reappearance of conflict, individualizing the guilt, and establishing a historical record. The second derived from the European Union that depicted reconciliation as a diplomatic process that reaches an agreement between states and grassroots, as a precondition for EU accession. Lastly, the third was the civil society approach in which Touquet and Vermeersch (2016) explained specifically the perception of RECOM (Initiative for the Establishment of a Regional Commission), which viewed reconciliation as contingent on the recognition of the victims. Furthermore, Devaek (2019) perceived reconciliation as "conditio sine qua non for developing understanding, cooperation, and progress of the Western Balkan region" (p. 186). The author considered reconciliation increasingly significant in terms of preventing conflict and cooperating in the areas of development (Davaek, 2019).

2.2 Civil Society, CSOs and Reconciliation

As scholars explore diverse interpretations of reconciliation, a parallel emerges in conceptualizing civil society organizations, with various lenses being offered to reflect their multifaced nature. The term can be understood as the social areas between the private section and the state where self-organization is feasible (Bryant 1995, as cited in Mastrorocco, 2020). In this perspective, civil society is a space in which several actors like associations or groups come together under similar interests. Similarly, Klingelhofe built on his definitions of civil society from an alike perspective. Klighehofe described civil society as a societal element that separately from the government and business field, can represent the work of the people toward reaching their goals (n.d., as cited in Borah, 2011). Furthermore, Söderbaum (2007) presented another definition by Jan Art Scholte in which civil society is presented as a political sphere where voluntary actors like non-governmental organizations (NGO), interest groups, trade unions, social movements, youth-based associations, and so forth, aim to change governing rules of a community. His approach concentrated on the players inside the realm of civil society. Along this line, Gellner considered civil society as the set of non-governmental institutions which can inhibit the controlling power of the state upon the entire society (1995, as cited in Mastrorocco, 2020) and OSCE regarded the concept as a composition of different actors, associations, and communities which under diverse roles work to achieve their aspirations in the public life (2018, as cited in Mastrorocco, 2020). Amidst all these definitions, a common point of agreement regarding what civil society constitutes is: voluntary acts autonomous from the state, that are collective and try to reach common interests and objectives (White, 2004, as cited in Fischer, 2011).

Following the discussion of civil society and its actors, the World Bank regarded CSOs as "not-for-profit organizations which have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations" (2005, p. 3). Similarly, the CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation called the civil society organizations products of collective action created to pursue shared interests separately from the family, state, and market (2012). A more expanded interpretation of the term is forwarded by Rigby (2006) who regarded civil society organizations and groups as essential in respect to interest representation, participation of excluded parts of the population, democracy, and citizenship training. The scholar named CSOs as significant infra-structural links between the state and the society

(Rigby, 2006). All in all, CSOs are understood as representative, independent actors that pursue common interests and act as intermediates. This study adapts and follows this definition of civil society organizations.

The literature of CSOs has significantly covered the strengths and limitations of these actors. Fischer (2011) looked at NGOs and explained that non-governmental organizations, according to her, showed some strengths concerning their political independence, flexible mandates, high standards of credibility, and their impartial roles (Fischer, 2011). Furthermore, she suggested that they can initiate new ideas, establish informal methods of communication, and create informal networks (Ricigliano, 2003, as cited in Fischer, 2011). In other words, they can do what governments are not able to. On the other hand, NGOs display several limitations or weaknesses as well. Fischer (2011), taking from the studies of Reimann, Debiel, and Sticht summarized five main constraints. In her research, the scholar indicated that NGOs were often state driven; the functioning of NGOs had changed due to donors and media influence; the international NGOs, coming from the west, imported their values in other parts of the world without considering the local contexts; international NGOs may be seen as interfering in internal state affairs; and NGOs lacked legitimacy since they were not democratically controlled. Moreover, Söderbaum (2007) stated that civil society organizations could be "corrupted" by individual interests and may be unwilling to exert influence over the political sphere. The scholar illustrated the argument with the case of CRIAA Southern Africa-Development & Consulting (CRIAA SADC) which exhibited itself as a civil society organization while at the same time aiming to be viewed as a firm of professional consultancy. Additionally, he elaborated on other limitations on regional civil society organizations like the rivalry inside; matters of accountability, legitimacy; and contradictions arising on national versus regional levels (Söderbaum, 2007).

Focusing particularly on post-communist societies, other scholars generated further weaknesses regarding civil society. Hence, studies by Jawlowska & Kubik (2007) and the Civil Society Forum, argued that civil society in post-communist countries is structurally weaker (2009, as cited in Ekiert & Foa, 2011). Other works revealed low voluntary involvement among these societies (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer 2012, as cited in Ekiert & Foa, 2011). Similarly, low engagement and low levels of trust in political institutions were found to be relevant in such countries according to the work of Rose (1999, as cited in Ekiert & Foa, 2011). Nonetheless, in response to these studies, Ekiert and Foa claimed that the civil

society of post-communist countries like those in Central and Eastern Europe is not as weak as perceived by previous scholars. Moreover, the authors emphasized the diversity of outcomes among such post-communist regimes while considering the different civil societies of these countries and the factors that have shaped them (Ekiert & Foa, 2011).

Lastly, Mastrorocco (2202), relying specifically on the Western Balkan reality, pointed out three other issues regarding civil society organizations. First, he mentioned the aspect of funding and how these organizations were dependent on international funds. Second, another problem for the civil society of the region was the ethnic separation of the organizations which strengthened the divisions within societies (Brankoviᶜc et al, 2017, as cited in Mastrorocco, 2020). Third, he held that the lack of developed coordination between civil society players was an issue on its own (OSCE, 2018, as cited in Mastrorocco, 2020). Mastrorocco's explanation on strengths and weaknesses of CSOs is grounded on the discourse on reconciliation in the Western Balkans. Nonetheless, it touches only the surface of the discussions that link both topics with one another. To explore greater connections, it is necessary to look at supplementary studies that examine the role of these actors in reconciliation.

Civil society organizations have been recognized as critical players in peacebuilding processes (Obi, 2011, as cited in Obi, 2018; Skocpol 2003, as cited in Obi, 2018; Lewis 2002, as cited in Obi, 2018). Subsequently, the literature in this regard has focused on understanding the roles CSOs partake in making peace possible. Obi (2018) highlighted that civil society organizations are included in: promoting reconciliation; contributing to conflict management and transformation; preventing violence, establishing bridges, trust and interdependence between societies, and monitoring and advocating peace, human rights, and social justice. Likewise, according to Fischer (2011) NGOs have been more active in the prevention of conflicts, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. More particularly, they have been engaged with third-party intervention as a form of preventive diplomacy, mediating, dialogue facilitating, negotiating, informal exchanging, networking, and more (Fischer, 2011).

Further literature depicted the role and essentiality of CSOs particularly in the domain of reconciliation. For one, as Volčič and Simić (2013) argued, similarly to Obi, that civil society actors foster tolerance and shared trust, and provide direct information concerning the local

setting via citizen participation. Second, according to Rigby (2006), civil society organizations and/or groups can work as intermediaries between the people and the national and regional elites facilitating interaction. Third, CSOs are able to undertake peace and reconciliation initiatives that the state is unable or unwilling to (Rigby, 2006). Several of these initiatives have been presented by Rigby (2006) under three categories. These include: i) Memory Work: Dealing with the Past; ii) Human Security- Peace work; iii) Making Things Right - Justice Work (Rigby, 2006). The first grouping according to the scholar, consists of reconciling with the present situation by reframing what has happened in the past. It engulfs tasks on Dealing with Personal Trauma and Truth Commissions. The second, as Rigby pointed out, is concerned with building personal and collective peace by putting an end to wrongdoings and assisting in transforming a "culture of violence into a culture of peace and reconciliation" (Rigby, 2006, p. 49). Rigby distinguished here six sub-categories of activities: Early Warning and Peace Monitoring, Human Rights Advocacy, Education, Training and Capacity Building, Bridge-Building, Mobilizing Peace Constituencies and Lobbying for Peace, and Reintegration of Combatants. The last categorization, as described by Rigby, builds on reconciliation as a process that concentrates on means how justice is employed and ways to encourage amicable relations between parties. Justice Work is separated into Retributive and Restorative Justice, and Relief and Reconstruction acts (Rigby, 2006). The CSOs can play a vital role in reconciliation by involving in any of these areas.

Civil society organizations have been engaged considerably in reconciliation and regional cooperation in concrete cases all around the world. Borah (2011) in his work showed that when the northeast of India was engulfed in a series of conflicts it was the civil society that played a fundamental role in fostering peace and cooperation. He presented instances like the Meira Paibis in Manipur which played a crucial part in protecting human rights from state violations; the Baptist Church Council of Nagaland that created the Peace Mission in 1964 and made it possible for the leaders NSCN (insurgent group) to agree to a process of unconditional dialogue; the peace movement by Jamatiya Hoda in Tripura which resulted in a Jamatiya Tribal that put a stop paying taxes to terrorism groups and more (Borah, 2011). Due to the actions that civil society organizations undertook in northeast India, Borah classified these organizations into four groupings. The first category consisted of groups and bodies that represent an ethnic community and get involved in regional conflicts. The second group constituted civil society-type organizations that ease peace processes through e.g., the

preparation of dialogues. The third type was composed of groups and organizations like the church of Manipur and the mothers' group in Manipur. The last involved popular initiatives which are still in their early stages and have not been established as organizations.

Returning to the evidence regarding the correlation between civil society and reconciliation, Elmi (2021) delved into the post-conflict reconciliation process in Somalia. He contended that the engagement of civil society in reconciliation had markedly intensified compared to preceding periods in the nation. Elmi elaborated that there was a higher number of civil society actors like PUNSAA, SOCCENSA, SONSAF, and others. In addition, some representatives of such organizations were even part of high-level dialogue like the Somali New Deal Compact on peacebuilding and state building (Interpeace & CRD, 2012, as cited by Elmi, 2021). Furthermore, Safa (2007) conducted a study on Arab reconciliation and civil society with a focus on Lebanon and Morocco. He highlighted the role of Moroccan civil society in bringing the outcomes of the National Commission for Equity and Reconciliation into the public discourse and in pushing the works of this body to be more transparent; the initiatives of Lebanese civil society activists such as the establishment of Permanent Civil Peace Observatory; the creation of Permanent Peace Movement, an NGO formed in 1991 following the war; the emergence of Lebanon Conflict Resolution Network and more. These new organizations were involved in training, building, and rebuilding relationships among the people, adopting projects on peace, arms control, and so on (Safa, 2007). Additionally, Safa revealed that the future of civil society looked promising even from a regional perspective. In 2005, a regional association, that focused on the resolution of conflict in the area, named Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention and Human Security, had been founded by civil society groups and individuals (Safa, 2007).

2.3 Measuring CSO/Ns in reconciliation

In continuation of the literature on CSO's role in reconciliation, it is crucial to delve into the measurability of their contributions in this realm. Heinrich (2005) claimed that during the ending of the 90s and beginning of the 2000s various comparative studies on civil society and related concepts had been implemented. Numerous methodologies have been established to examine the non-profit sector. For instance, Johns Hopkins University founded the Comparative Non-profit Sector Project (CNP) which was a well-recognized endeavor in analyzing the economic aspect of civil society (Heinrich, 2005). Following CNP, other

measurements began generating. The United States Agency for International Development (US-AID) created an annual assessment of sustainability of NGOs in post-communist countries, whereas the Civics Civil Society Index developed its measuring index of civil society based on external environment and its attribution to development and democracy (Heinrich, 2005). These tools served to measure civil society and its actors, nonetheless, they were general in what they examined.

An assessing method more fit to the subject of reconciliation was the report on "Mapping civil society organizations in peace and security in West Africa", produced by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and influenced by the IDRC Organizational Assessment Framework parameters (2019). To study CSOs IDRC entailed six different areas: i) Strategic Leadership, ii) Human Resources, iii) Financial Management, iv) Program Management v) Infrastructure and vi) Institutional Linkages. The first indicator examined the qualifications - expertise or specializations, and experience - years of involvement in the field, of the leadership of the organizations. The second looked at the staffing and the numbers regarding full-time, part-time, and other staff. The third area assessed the processes of managing funds, income, and expenses mainly through financial reports. The fourth parameter analyzed the procedure behind planning, organizing, and executing an/a activity/project. The fifth checked the capacity of the organization to carry out its duties in terms of its office, address, and equipment. The last indicator explored the connections of the organization e.g., its partners.

Similar to the above-mentioned parameters, the ECOWAS report showed its own initial profiling to measure organizational development and capacity. Hence, the ECOWAS profiling took into analysis elements like the following: i) Founding year, ii) Operating budget of CSOs, iii) Infrastructure, iv) Geographic coverage, and v) Institutional linkages. The operating budget of the organizations reflected the annual budgets of such actors and their funding. Infrastructure measured the presence of offices rented or owned, the existence of websites, legal registrations, and the staffing of the organization. The geographical coverage referred to the geographical spreading of the organizations. Lastly, the institutional linkages observed the partnerships and model of the organization whether it is membership-based which includes networks, coalitions, platforms, forums, and other forms of association, or non-membership which contains only one sole organization. Furthermore, the report added the Areas of Intervention measure to this characterization: Early Warning,

Preventive Diplomacy, Democracy and Political Governance, Human Rights and The Rule of Law, Media, Natural Resource Governance, Cross-Border Initiative, Security Governance, Practical Disarmament, Women, Peace and Security, Youth Empowerment, Humanitarian Assistance, Peace Education, Counter-terrorism and radicalization, Maritime Security, Human and Drug Trafficking, Money Laundering, Cyber-crimes, Corruption. The areas were attached under the framework of peace and security (ECOWAS, 2019). The report provided then a mixture of all the upper mentioned measurements by applying the Type of organization, Mandate, Geographical coverage, Areas of intervention, Partners, contact details and a brief assessment on the bases of IDRC framework to study the civil society organizations in West Africa.

To map the role of regional CSOs in reconciliation in the Western Balkans, this research will initially focus on the typology of the CSO operating regionally, relying on the classification of reconciliation work produced by Rigby (2006), elaborated above. Consequently, the work will take into analyses the type of organizations/network operating in the Western Balkans by depending on the three main categories (Memory work - Dealing with the Past; Human Security - Peace work; Making Things Right - Justice Work) and their subcategorizations. Afterward, it will produce an organizational profiling according to the indicators introduced by ECOWAS. Following the same logic as ECOWAS's report, this study will employ for the analysis a combination of the indicators. Precisely it will focus on Geographical coverage; Areas of intervention; Infrastructure/organizational capacity which will fuse together human resources, leadership and other capacities like Office, Web page; Institutional linkages by including type of membership and partnerships; Funding, and two further parameters regarding the Projects and the Target group will be generated. In particular, the first indictor will focus on the projects completed and ongoing under reconciliation and it is almost borrowed from IDRC. The second will be included to understand which group of society tackled by CSO/Ns is considered important concerning reconciliation. Furthermore, the areas of intervention indicator will consist of only seven categories, six retrieved from the report including Early Warning, Human Rights and The Rule of Law, Cross-Border Initiative, Women, Peace and Security, Youth Empowerment, Humanitarian Assistance, and Peace Education and one added from the literature, Dialogue Building. This selection is conducted based on the best fit with reconciliation by looking at the literature on reconciliation and civil society.
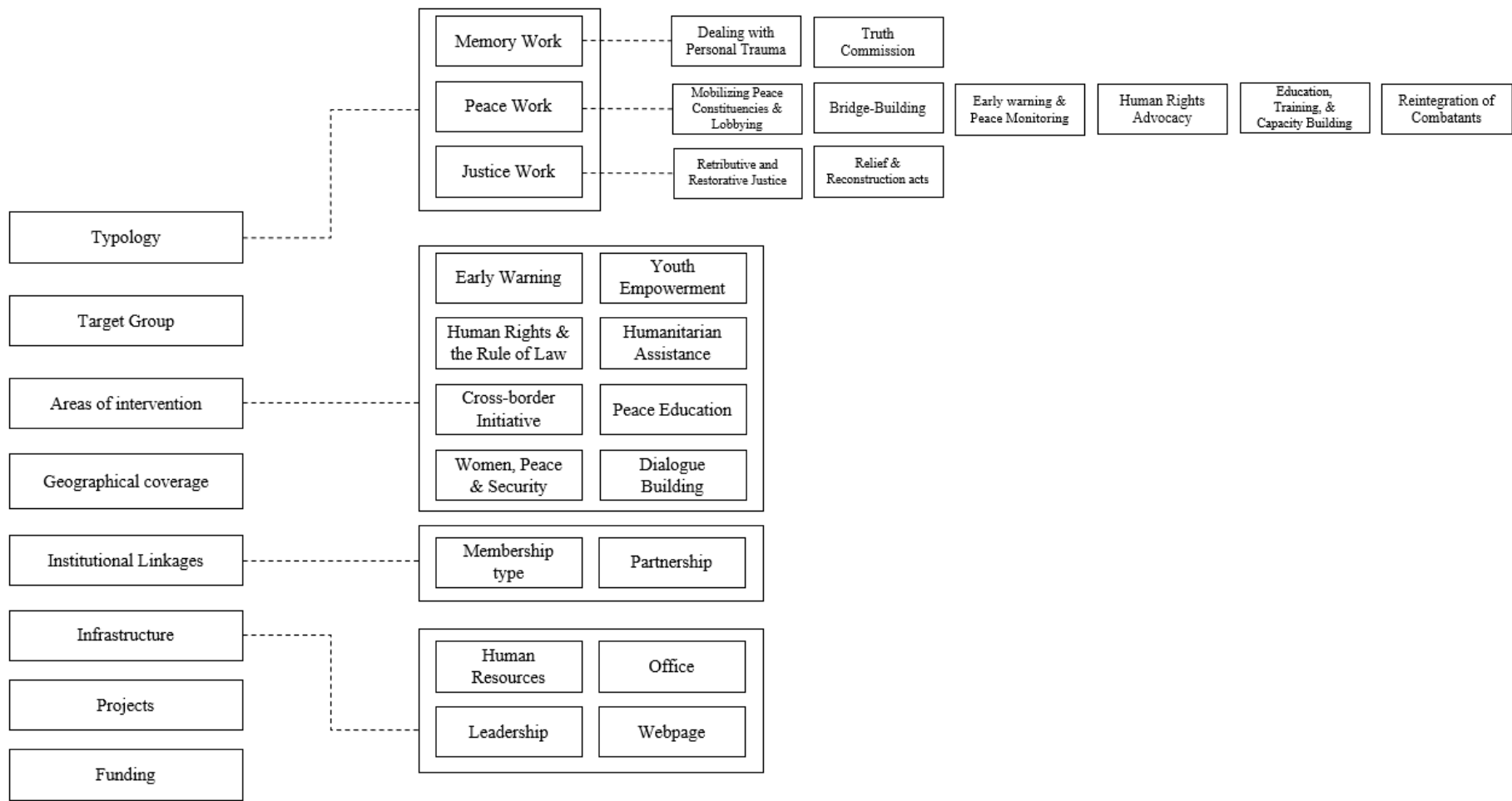
Figure 2. 1 *Indicators for mapping the CSO/Ns*

2.4 Western Balkans

2.4.1 Historical Overview

All of the Western Balkan countries share a past of communist ruling. For one, Albania adopted the communist regime after the World War II, when the People's Socialist Party rose to power in 1945 (Kovaci, 2014). Led by Enver Hoxha, the party gained full control over the country and remained the single governing actor for a period of about 45 years (Baltaci & Zenelaj, 2013). During this timeframe, as Baltaci and Zenelaj describe, Albania remained a fully isolated country under a severe Stalinist doctrine. Hence, in comparison to similar regimes, the country "embraced" the cruelest adaptation of communism, counting the highest number of killings, imprisonment and exile caused by political reasons (Amy & Gjermeni, 2013, as cited in Kovaci, 2014; Montias, 1965, as cited in Kovaci, 2013; Schwander-Sievers & Fischer, 2002, as cited in Kovaci, 2014). Similarity, the rest of the WB states experienced communism as part of Yugoslavia. In the former country, communism formally began with the foundation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945 (US National Archives). As the US archives show, the federation was composed of six republics which all fell under a Soviet-style regime, after the elections of November 1945. The newly established one-party system in Yugoslavia was headed by Josip Broz Tito, leader of the communist party (Carmichael, 2010). Tito extended his control over the government and the armed forces while his communist fellows supervised industries and other officials (US National Archives). He ruled the federation until his death, in 1980, and the party remained in power for 10 more years until falling apart in 1990 (Monnesland, 2011). With Tito no longer present, secessionist aspirations started emerging in the country, leading to its separation subsequently (Kawczyńska, 2013).

The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia Republic was followed by conflicts, tensions and grievances among the Western Balkan countries (Vučković, Vukanović, & Popović, 2020). These disputes remained unresolved and they continued to "haunt" the former members of the federation and Albania as well (Dąbrowski & Myachenkova, 2018). Vučković et al. (2020) depicted the main developments, that took place all around Western Balkans, whose legacies persist even in today's times.

The authors elaborated on Bosnia and Herzegovina's history emphasizing the armed conflict that occurred between 1992 and 1995 (Vučković, Vukanović, & Popović, 2020). As they expressed, the war involved three main groups including the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the forces of Herceg-Bosna, and the Republika Srpska. The parties engaged in the armed dispute due to differences in their stance toward independence. On one hand, there was the Serbian community that wanted to remain in what was left of Yugoslavia where Serbians made up the majority, and on the other, there were the Croats, and Bosnian Muslims that aspired to break free (Cottam, et al., 2016). The situation, which had been also fueled by previous ethnic hatred, resulted in the siege of Sarajevo and genocide in Srebrenica (Cottam, et al., 2016; Vučković et al, 2020). The conflict, according to Vučković et al., ended in December 1995 when the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia was followed by the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) composed of Serbia and Montenegro (Vučković, et al., 2020). As Vučković, et al. mention, the republic lived until May 2006 when the latter member decided to declare its independence. Meanwhile, in 1998, FRY got involved in war with Kosovo (Vučković, et al., 2020). The conflict had many complex root causes, but it was triggered by the rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) associated with the brutal counteracts of the Yugoslav troops (Webber, 2009). According to Webber, (2009) despite international attempts for negotiations between the two parties, the dispute deteriorated as Serbs rapidly increased their military actions towards Kosovo. After generating mass killings and refugees, the conflict was brought to an end by the NATO intervention in 1999 (Webber, 2009; Vučković, et al., 2020). Ever since, as Vučković, et al. revealed, Serbia lost control of Kosovo which in 2008 declared its independence. Kosovo's independence was and still is rejected by Serbia. The consequences of the war spilled not only on the involved countries but on third parties as well. Particularly, North Macedonia suffered destabilization in 1999 due to the Albanian refugees coming from Kosovo (Vučković, et al., 2020). In the years to come, this wave of migration, according to Vučković, et al., produced ethnic conflicts driven by issues of recognition and political participation for the Albanian minority.

Succeeding the conflicts in the Western Balkans, there were attempts to foster regional peace through cooperation (Minić, Nechev, and Nikolovski, 2019). Minić et al. identified the European

Union as an initiator in this process immediately after the ending of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the launch of the EU Regional Approach in 1996. The initiative was considered by Minić et al., a founding stone in developing a regional aspect for the construction of a post-conflict framework in the region. Ergo, the Regional Approach served as a supporter of the previous peace agreement and strived for stability and economic well-being (Minić et al. 2019). In the upcoming years, specifically in 1999, as Minić et al. showed, other regional initiatives were launched for the purpose of promoting reconciliation through regional cooperation. The Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) and Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe were the two that followed the same line of work (Minić et al. 2019). According to the authors, these two programs invited civil society into the equation by regarding it as an essential actor in the recovery process. Following, in 2014, the Berlin Process, a medium for high level cooperation between the six Western Balkan countries and partners from the EU, was initiated by Germany (Jovanovic & Holzer, 2022). As a cooperation platform, according to Jovanovic and Holzer, the Berlin Process seeks to solve bilateral and internal issues of the WBs, to reconcile societies of the region, to enhance economic cooperation, and to establish a foundation for sustainable growth. This process led to the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and to the creation of many projects related to transport, energy, and sustainability as well as to the development of the Transport Community, and the regional economic zone (Jovanovic & Holzer, 2022).

2.4.2 Civil Society Organizations in the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans states have been characterized by a history of various and vibrant civil society activities that took numerous shapes and forms (Sterland & Rizova, 2010). Nonetheless, as Sterland and Rizova explained, during the 1940s the civil society of the region experienced a lengthy pause in its activity. In other terms, the establishment of the communist rule under authoritarian regimes restricted significantly the freedoms to engage in associations and express oneself. Sterland and Rizova provided that authoritarian Yugoslavia allowed for social associations and groups of interest that were controlled by the party, while banning any type of religious groups. Similarly, the quite harsh nature of the regime in Albania prohibited the development of the civil society in the country (Kovaci, 2014). Only when the one-party system in the region began to falter, did the civil society in Yugoslavia and Albania start to develop (Sterland & Rizova, 2010).

The civil society in the region thrived particularly because of the support coming from international actors (Mastrorocco, 2020; Minić, Nechev, and Nikolovski, 2019). According to Mastrorocco (2020), the OSCE has been one of supporters of civil society in the region. The author elaborated that the organization has assisted several NGOs across the WB like "Vaša Prava" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Belgrade Center for Human Rights" in Serbia, and regional initiatives like "Fostering NGO Human Rights Network in the Western Balkans Region" and "Follow Us". Furthermore, the European Union has also been supporting the civil society networks in the region via programs such as the Civil Society Facility (Minić, et al., 2019). As Minić, et al. (2019) depicted, numerous organization networks working in the areas that the EU pointed as conditions for accession, benefited from the funds of the program.

In the Western Balkans there have been several regional initiatives and projects of regional cooperation which incorporated the civil society level in the form of international organizations like the Regional Cooperation Council, the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, and the Western Balkan Fund; platforms like The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South East Europe; and regional independent organizations like RYCO (Minić, et al., 2029). RYCO precisely is in itself a practice of aiming reconciliation via regional cooperation. Speaking of reconciliation, the civil society in the WB, according to Kostovicova (2013), has played a crucial role in the process. The scholar argued that credit should be given to the civil society for bringing the matter of war crimes accountability into the Balkans agenda, for serving as a watchdog in policies, and for creating channels of contact between ethnic division within and among the states of the region. Nevertheless, at the same time, civil society organizations in the region can make reconciliation difficult to achieve due to their weak capacity, ethnic fragmentation, lack of financial autonomy, and the impact of an illiberal political environment on them (Kostovicova, 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

This exploratory, mixed-methods study focuses on finding an answer to the question: What is the role of civil society organizations/networks, operating regionally through the Western Balkans, on reconciliation. Precisely it aims to understand what is the approach of these actors towards reconciliation, what is their work so far and what are their capacities to act regionally. The exploratory approach allows for flexibility and openness in analyzing these topics and enables the work to present new insights and connections. Moreover, it offers in-depth exploration of the research question via literature searches and interviews. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach provides the methodological diversity needed to fulfil the purpose of this study. The qualitative methods assist in investigating the reconciliation approach, and operational capacities whereas the quantitative data enrich the operational capacities and work done by numerical evidence. Combined they build a comprehensive understanding of the research.

3.2 Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis combines secondary and primary data from respectively desk analysis and content analysis. Hence, to perform this analysis initially secondary information from reports, documents and webpages of the CSO/Ns was gathered. Subsequently, the data was categorized according to the mapping model employed by the research, following a deductive approach.

In such wise, the information was grouped to explore the typology of the organization/network - Peace Work, Memory Work and Judiciary Work; areas of intervention on where the actors concentrate their projects; groups targeted by these CSO/Ns; their scope of action; their partnerships; funding means; staffing and leadership; the existence of offices and webpages; and these actor's works/projects. In addition to the secondary data, primary information was utilized as well in complementing further revelations on these indicators. This primary information derives directly from the interview answers from the representatives of the organizations/networks.

Comparably, the qualitative data analysis is based only on the primary data. The analysis began after concluding the interviews and separating the responses into groups. This step was followed by witnessing and underlining points of similarity and departure among the CSO/Ns via NVivo. After evidencing reappearing aspects in the interview answers, graphs and percentages were used to numerically present similar approaches to reconciliation, key activities on reconciliation according to the CSO/Ns representatives, major methods utilized for measuring success in the area of reconciliation, main forms of partnership, and common challenges.

As mentioned, to conduct the content analysis for the interview answers, NVivo program was utilized in this research. The answers were uploaded to the program and then seven different codes were created. The codes included the approach to reconciliation, target group relevance, measuring success, projects, staffing, partners, and challenges. Separately form the rest, the code "projects" was further divided into projects on reconciliation and achievements, using the coding on option. Each one of the words, phrases, and sentences from the responses, that matched these categories, was sent to the appropriate location. This allowed for all the references to come together under specific codes. Consequently, in each of these codes, common themes, as in commonalities between the actors, were evidenced and noted in order to depict whether the primary data corresponds to the secondary data analysis, and provide comparison among the respondents.

3.3 Sampling

The sampling for the research comprises only those institutionalized forms of CSO/Ns that (1) have a regional spreading (membership or project wise) and (2) work on reconciliation via regional cooperation. To approach this group, purposive sampling was used. Thus, the civil society

organizations fitting the criteria were approached through online means throughout May- June 2023 and November-January 2024. Apart from HLC and PCRC, all the other organizations were established as regional cooperation initiatives. These two were selected given their collaborations and participation in regional programs and projects. The total number of organizations/networks that were involved in this research was seven and only six of these participated in the interview.

3.4 Interview

The interview questions used in this study were influenced by the Report of CSOs mapping in the ECOWAS region developed by a partnership between ECOWAS and the EU. The model of questions was chosen as it offers a profiling of the civil society organizations/networks concerning their approach, organizational capacities, and projects or work done in reconciliation. The participating parties were asked questions on approach to reconciliation, relevance of target group, activities contributing to the field, achievements in this regard, measuring success, partnerships, staffing and allocation. Moreover, in parallel with the literature on the weaknesses of CSO/Ns, driven by the literature on civil society organizations a question concerning the challenges of the organization was added. Hence, the first two questions were utilized for the further study of the approach, the following couple were used for enriching the data on projects, whereas the rest were employed on understanding more on the capacities of these actors. All in all, the questions were generated with the purpose of providing a broader analysis of the role of the CSOs. It must be clarified that all the responses were used solely for the purpose of this thesis.

4. RESULTS

Given the three guiding sub-questions on the approach, organizational capacity and projects on reconciliation of RYCO, RWLSEE, RECOM, SEEYN, YiHR, HLC and PCRC, three main categories are explored in this section: Typology, Organizational Capacity, and Projects. The first engulfs type according to Rugby's categorization, target group and areas of intervention. The second corresponds to geographical scope, membership, partnership, staffing and leadership, and others. The third looks at the regional work done on reconciling the WB so far. All these indicators are primarily analyzed using secondary data research.

4.1 Typology

Following the categorization by Rigby (2003), the organizations are grouped, according to their activities, in Peace Work, Memory Work and Justice Work and their respective subsections.

The desk research reveals that the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) falls under the Peace Work classification. In more specific terms the organization can be associated with Education, Training and Capacity Building, and Bridge-building. The main purpose of this CSO aligns with youth mobility in the region and youth empowerment, hence the activities it conducts have been attributed to the upper mentioned grouping. E.g., Superschools is a completed project of RYCO that promotes reconciliation and peacebuilding through establishing dialogue between pupils, schools, and communities by exchanging youngsters. Additionally, ROUTE WB6 is another project that follows the logic of Bridge-building. It is an initiative to support and encourage volunteering across the Western Balkans for the purpose of bringing young individuals of the region closer. On the other hand, RISE and YOUth Inspired by Peace are two projects that pertain

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to Education, Training and Capacity building. The first aims to foster social entrepreneurship to open new spaces for reconciliation whereas the latter is concerned with raising awareness and increasing efforts on peacebuilding and reconciliation. Thus, both lean more on education and enhancing capacities to push forward with reconciling the region. The South East European Youth Network (SEEYN) as an CSO/N works on several fields, one of interest being peace development. Accordingly, most of its projects are concentrated in peace related initiatives, namely peacebuilding. These activities are held in the form of courses offering various trainings, thus making SEEYN an actor belonging to the Peace Work categorization of Rigby. Some of its main projects like Peacebuilding Framework Competence in Youth Work and NFE, Divided Past Joint Future. and Active Role of Youth in Peace Building fit in the subgrouping of Education, Training and Capacity building. The Peacebuilding framework comprises of three different training courses that try to equip the youth with new skills concerning peace promotion, conflict, transformation, dialogue, peace building and keeping, and so forth. Similarly, Active Role of Youth in Peace Building serves as a training means to exchange knowledge on tools necessary for cooperation and conflict resolution. The Divided Past Joint Future different from the others is concerned with developing civil society organizations capacities in reconciliation and the process of establishing peace. Moreover, SEEYN has been a partner in the RISE project, strengthening thus its position in this classification. Nonetheless, SEEYN is also involved in initiatives such as ROUTE WB6, a Bridge-building project and Youth Standing up for Human Rights for Albania, a human right promoting program which can be included in the Human Advocacy subsection. Yet, despite these two, the majority of SEEYN undertakings suit the Education, Training and Capacity building subgrouping.

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YiHR) breaks down into five branches: YiHR Croatia, YiHR Bosnia-Hercegovina, YiHR Kosovo, YiHR Serbia, and YiHR Montenegro, and each one of these organizations organizes projects, and/or activities concerning reconciliation and more. Many of these initiatives are connected to Dealing with the Past – Memory Work, and Peace Work. Across the branches, explaining to youngsters about war crimes, victims, the importance of commemoration, exchanging narratives, promotion of human rights and so on, appears to dominate the scope of purposes of YiHR. The division of Croatia lists several projects on memory work. Inclusive Memory is one set of activities that have been conducted for the purpose of developing

a culture of memory and remembering the 1990s wars victims. To add, Shared narratives – past continues and Youth memories follow the lines of memory work, one by offering the opportunity for WBs youth to tell their own narratives of history and the other by providing a platform to exchange memories through the region. Another project by YiHR Croatia concerning memory is also the ICTY Youth Outreach that works on familiarizing Croatian high schoolers with the war crimes. Furthermore, YiHR Kosovo has built a webpage in the form of a Virtual Museum of Refugees, remembering all those individuals that fled the country during the war and their stories. Lastly, regarding Memory Work, YiHR Bosnia-Hercegovina conducts a project named Schools of Memories, focusing on sharing experiences of various communities on reconciliation and dealing with the past. Other branches consider dealing with the past as one of their main initiatives as well. Therefore, Memory work is an area where reconciliation activities concentrate greatly for YiHR, nevertheless the subcategories affiliated with it do not seem to fully match the projects. Neither Dealing with Personal Trauma nor Truth Commissions can be used to identify these initiatives. On the other hand, another considerable part of YiHR activities falls under Peace Work, more concretely on Human Rights Advocacy and Education, Training and Capacity Building. Thus, concerning the first, YiHR Croatia organizes projects like: New approaches to reconciliation, New Beginning, Enhancing Youth Cooperation for Promotion of Human rights, and Human rights Monitoring and Advocacy Social Mechanisms advancement which are concerned with rising awareness, promoting, advancing, and monitoring human rights. As per the second subcategory, YiHR BH conducts activities on Art and culture to use such fields in promoting reconciliation whereas YiHR Croatia performs projects like and Social Innovators to provide trainings on gaining new skills for the youth. A regional program in this regard is the Training for Social Integration for Young Political Leaders working with youngsters from all over the Western Balkans. Despite the presence of more than one category for YiHR, on a regional level, the reconciliation activities of the umbrella organization lean more toward memory work.

The Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE), as a regional peacebuilding network, is revealed to come under Rigby's Peace Work categorization and slightly under Justice Work grouping. Principally, the RWLSEE is involved in Education, Training and Capacity building, Mobilizing Peace Constituencies and Lobbying for peace. The organization has conducted several projects that aim to empower women in peace process and equip them with

mediating, peacebuilding, and leading capabilities. In addition, RWLSEE's projects have a bridge-building face as well. The list of the network's initiatives goes as follows: Regional Academy for Women leadership and Mediation, local mediating and peacebuilding training projects, inter-ethnic dialogues, regional roundtables, and international and regional conferences. For one, the network's Regional Women's Academy for Leadership and Mediation is a program on consolidating and increasing women's role in the areas of peace, security, and politics across the region. It comprises of modules like Leadership in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation and Leadership in Peace Diplomacy, among others. The Inter-ethnic dialogues serve as mediums of bringing women form various communities to discuss together. With respect to the third subcategory, the RWLSEE conducts Regional Dialogue Roundtables where women part of the network and beyond gather to delve into topics of women, peace, and security; dialogue between women in Kosovo; normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia; women empowerment in local level; peacebuilding efforts in regional level; women, regional cooperation and European integration; and community level peacebuilding in Kosovo. Furthermore, RWLSEE is organizer of international and regional conferences that serve as platforms where women leaders and decision-makers from the region gather together to advance on issues like women in conflict and post-conflict. Regarding the lobbing work, the desk research shows that the network lobbies for equal involvement of women in formal peace talks to international figures like Martti Ahtisaari, to the United Nations and to European Union bodies. Further, it is also depicted that the RWLSEE's activities and aims correlate with Justice work and specifically with Retributive and Restorative Justice. The organization is devoted to ensuring international justice for women that were raped in the conflicts happening in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia and Kosovo and the punishment of perpetrators as a result. This is discussed in its conferences as well. Lastly, the Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe practices advocacy through publications, petitions and letters to pursue its purpose.

The role of the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) center in reconciliation is affiliated with the categories of Memory work and Justise work. Initially, the organization works with programs that bring forward the truths of the past through publicizing dossiers on war crimes in post-Yugoslavia states, writing a memory book on Kosovo's victims and war, and using social media platform to showcase facts of wars, like the Batojnica Memorial Initiative. Furthermore, the organization has

created its own database with thousands of truth-telling facts. Indeed, these types of projects are to be associated with memory, nevertheless, yet again they do not necessarily suit any of Rigby's subgroupings of this section. On the other hand, programs of the Humanitarian Law Center pertain to the subcategory of Restorative and Retributive Justice of the Justice work as well. The Humanitarian Law Center particularly aims to contribute to the punishment of the perpetrators involved in the war crimes, through criminal complaints and reports. Therefore, HLC has conducted reports on war crimes in Serbia, reports on the implementation of the national strategy for the process of war crimes, an analysis of the prosecution of the war crimes in Serbia 2004-2013, material reparations, and reports on victim's right to reparation in Serbia. Furthermore, the organization has even filed lawsuits to pursue its purpose. Despite majorly falling under the two mentioned categories, HLC touches on the education, training, capacity building, bridge building and human rights advocacy groupings of Peace work also. The organization holds national and regional schools of respectively justice and transitional justice to bring together youth and equip them with knowledge on the past, war crimes, human rights, the reconciliation process, and so on. Additionally, it is evident that many of the organization's projects have a human rights aspect to them.

Reconciliation from the perspective of the Post-Conflict Research Center is treated mostly from the peace work perspective. The organization is highly involved in Education, Training, and Capacity building. A large number of its projects are directed towards trainings on human rights, peace, peacebuilding, reconciliation, among others. One of the projects belonging to this subgrouping is Preventing and Responding to Genocide and Mass Atrocity Crimes which consists of a regional initiative aiming to train CSOs in identifying, asserting and preventing mass atrocity crimes, and educate them in peacebuilding and transitional justice. Furthermore, Countering violent extremism through social media in Bosnia and Hercegovina is another capacity building project that seeks to equip the youngsters in the country with capabilities to fight extremist narratives online. The Srebrenica Youth School, that gathers youth across the Western Balkans to educate them on how to deal with the past, transitional justice, prevention of genocide and mass atrocities, is another project that falls under this subcategory. Similarly, PCRC organizes other projects like the Peace Youth Academy and WARM Academy. Additionally, Ordinary Heroes, Working with ICTY: Multifaceted Approach to Historical Memory and Transitional Justice,

Research on Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community, and so forth belong to this grouping as well. Some of these initiatives like the example of the Youth School, the Academies, and others such as the Multidisciplinary event "There is always a choice" and #PCRC Talks can be considered Bridge-building projects as they offer pathways for youngsters of the region to converse and interact with one other. Furthermore, additional programs of Post-Conflict Research Center fall under the category of Memory work as well. Activities pertaining to Memory Work try to bring to the attention of the public truths on wars, testimonials, and stories of victims. This category is conveyed mainly via 10 documentary films, research works: Archives of testimonials, and other projects like the Siege of Sarajevo through the judgements of the ICTY, and events like the 30th anniversary of the Siege of Sarajevo.

RECOM as a reconciliation network has been established for the sole purpose of "bringing out the truth" from the past. RECOM's initiatives are directly under the Memory work grouping and Truth Commissions subsection. Until now there have been 18 Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, the first happening in 2006 and the last in 2023. Commissions provide a medium for hearing the victim's voices, listening to their experiences during the war period, and fact-checking what has happened. Moreover, RECOM displays in its webpage photos and stories of war victims, data and locations, memorializing the losses as a means of encouraging reconciliation.

4.1.2 Target Group

The research on the organizations/networks operating regionally on reconciliation revealed that the majority of these actors is focusing on youngsters. More precisely, RYCO, SEEYN, and YiHR are all centered on a specific age group of the population identified as the youth. Their activities, objectives, and purposes are all directed to this target group. Likewise, the Post-Conflict Research Center in its programs targets mostly the youth. Furthermore, RWLSEE is concentrated on a specific gender, namely women. The projects and scope of work of this organization/network addresses women and their involvement in peace processes, gender inclusive justice, peacemaking and so forth. Differently from the organizations/networks mentioned above, HLC and RECOM's target groups are not as defined. RECOM works primarily with victims to deliver their stories, but also their families, associates, civil society, refugees, veterans. Therefore, the truth revealed

throughout the commissions is to benefit a much larger audience. In addition, the Humanitarian Law Center is concerned about the post-Yugoslavia societies, thus its programs are centered around the victims and war crimes that these populations have experienced. Consequently, they differentiate from the four previous actors.

4.1.3 Areas of Intervention

Depending on the areas presented in the literature review it becomes evident that the organizations/networks are involved in mutual and distinguishable categories. Relying on the fact that the organizations/networks work at a regional level, thus beyond state borders, the Cross-border initiate is a commonality among all the actors involved. Other abundant areas seem to be Dialogue building and Youth empowerment. The dialogue building area is detected in the instances of RYCO, SEEYN, RECOM, YiHR, HLC and RWLSEE. The first two are engaged with youth exchange programs that target developing communication among the youth; RECOM is affiliated with truth telling commissions that gather people from all over the region; YiHR conducts regional memory sharing activities; HLC has few activities focusing on bringing youth together for transitional justice education; and RWLSEE generates dialogue between high positioned women at a political level. The youth empowerment area is present in organizations that share youth as their target group, to wit the Post-Conflict Research Center, RYCO, SEEYN, and YiHR. The latter couple intervene through their projects in the area of Human rights and the rule of law as well. These two organizations/networks have undertaken endeavors regarding the protection and promotion of human rights. For instance, YiHR conducts programs like the New Beginning, Enhancing Youth Cooperation for Promotion of Human rights, and Human rights Monitoring and Advocacy Social Mechanisms whereas SEEYN is involved in projects such as Youth Standing up for Human Rights for Albania. Furthermore, SEEYN and the Post-Conflict Research Center work in Peace Education by offering trainings such as respectively Active Role of Youth in Peace Building and Srebrenica Youth School that serve the purpose of providing young individuals with skills necessary for the establishment of peace. Additionally, the Research Center offers movies, expositions, online platforms, articles for the goal of informing the audience on peace. In parallel, RWLSEE, operates in the area of Peace Education and Women, Peace and Security, considering the involvement of the organization in including more women in peace

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processes and its educating programs in the form of academies for constructing mediating, negotiating, peacebuilding capacities.

4.2 Operational Capacities

4.2.1 Geographical scope

The organizations/networks involved in the study are all working on a regional level, nonetheless the scope of the region varies from actor to actor. RYCO and the Post-Conflict Research Center, according to the information presented in their main webpages, are spread throughout the six countries of the Western Balkans, specifically Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The projects of RYCO are all of a regional nature as compared to the Center that works regionally and locally. The RWLSEE has a larger geographical range as it operates in seven Balkan countries namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. RWLSEE's initiatives comprise of a mixture of local and regional. Similarly, HCL and RECOM's programs are expanded in seven countries of the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia). Compared to the previous a much-limited spreading of operation can be attributed to YiHR. The organization/network works on local and joint regional initiatives in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. For example, Inclusive Memory is a national project of YiHR in Croatia whereas Shared Narratives-Past continues belongs to regional activities aimed at reconciliation. It is the actor with the narrowest geographical spreading in this group. Lastly, the South East European Youth Network (SEEYN) acts in twelve countries including the Western Balkans region and Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia, and Turkey. Equivalent to RWLSEE, SEEYN performs projects on a regional level - the case of RISE and national level - the instance of the human rights project in Albania. Furthermore, SEEYN is the organization/network with the largest geographical scope among all the actors participating in the study.

4.4.2. Membership type

According to the categorization membership or non-membership-based organization, it is evident that the minority of the actors involved in this work belong to the first grouping. The membership organizations include RECOM, SEEYN, and YiHR. RECOM is a network of 2,050 non-governmental organizations that are concerned with a variety of issues like human rights, refugees, and so on. Moreover, the network involves individuals of different fields: law, art, writing. As of membership RECOM is the largest out of the membership-based organizations taken into analysis. Second to RECOM is SEEYN which is composed of 19 members: Association for Democratic Prosperity - Zid (ADP - Zid), BalkanIDEA Novi Sad (BINS), Beyond Barriers, Citizens in Action, creACTive, CVS-Bulgaria, Educational Center Krusevac (ECK), Ideas Factory, LDA Sisak, LENS, Munja, Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı (TOG – Community Volunteers Foundation), Vojvodina Environmental Movement, Volunteers' Centre Zagreb (VCZ), Yopa, Youth center BIT, Youth Cultural Center – Bitola, Youth Peace Group Danube, and Young Researchers of Serbia. YiHR is another membership-based organization that functions as a regional network for its five members: YiHR Bosnia and Hercegovina, YiHR Croatia, YiHR Kosovo, YiHR Montenegro, and YiHR Serbia. On the other side, HCL, RYCO, the Post-Conflict Research Center and RWLSEE are non-membership organizations. All these actors function as one sole organization, despite having local branches as only in the case of RYCO.

4.2.3 Partnership

RYCO displays a wide array of partnerships with actors of different levels. This organization throughout its projects has partnered with civil society actors like Beyond Barriers, Lens, SEEYN, Young Researchers of Serbia Institute for Youth Development KULT, GROUPE SOS Pulse, Youth Cultural Center Bitola, Association for Democratic Prosperity Zid; international organizations such as UNICEF, the Franco-German Youth Office, agencies of United Nations; and state actors like the Institut Français, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). RWLSEE is connected to mainly agencies of United Nations: UN Women in Kosovo, UN Women and UN Women ECA, and state actors particularly the Swedish government and its embassy in Kosovo. In addition, according to the webpage of the organization

they partner also with other civil society organizations, experts, and local governments. In its reconciliation projects the Post-Conflict Research Center, similarly, has joined partners belonging to the civil society such as War Art Reporting and Memory Foundation, Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst Bosnia and Herzegovina, Proof: Media for Social Justice, Association for Concentration Camp Detainees Bosnia-Herzegovina (ACCDBiH), etc.; local government units like the City of Sarajevo; and international organizations such as UN Office of the Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide, International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Different from the three above SEEYN, RECOM, YiHR, and HLC are mostly partnering with civil society organizations in regard to reconciliation projects. SEEEYN lists as its partners local and international actors like the following: the Alliance Of European Voluntary Service Organizations, Institute for Social Research Zagreb, European Association of History Educators, Interkulturlelles Zentrum, Networks Int., European Volunteer Center, International Organization For Volunteer Effort. RECOM despite its broad membership is involved with several partnerships such as the Association Transitional Justice, Accountability and Remembrance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Humanitarian Law Center in Serbia and Kosovo, YiHR in Serbia and Croatia, Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past, the Center for Democracy and Transitional Justice, the Center for Civic Education, and the Center for Research and Policy Making. Most of these patterns operate locally in their respective Balkan countries. Furthermore, RECOM until recently was supported by the state institutions of the post-Yugoslavia countries, nonetheless now expect form Montenegro other have relinquished their support. YiHR for its projects has been joined by HLC, Post-Conflict Research Center, RYCO, Autonomous Women's Center (AŽC), Women in Black, War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Documenta, ForumZFD, Center for Peace Studies, etc. HLC is a partner of RECOM, Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, YiHR, among others.

4.2.4 Leadership and Human resources

SEEYN is built on a framework that involves a four-member Steering board, Secretariat, Advisory Board. In total SEEYN's team is composed of 12 individuals. The Secretariat consists of the Executive Director, the Communication and Administrative Officer, Financer, and the Online learning and Content Manager. According to the information presented by the organization Mirela

Rajkovic holds the position of Executive Director and she belongs to the first generation of volunteers, making her experience with civil society quite lengthy. In addition, SEEYN counts 300 youth activists, experts, workers, and more than 2400 volunteers.

RYCO has a somewhat alike structure as it is composed of a Secretariat of 15 members, a Governing Body of 12, and an Advisory Board of 16. These compose the head office of the organization. The Governing Body is composed of Ministers from the member countries and 6 young people. Besides the Board, the leading role is held by Secretary General, head of Secretariat, Albert Hani. Mr. Hani displays an extensive involvement in activism and international peacebuilding organizations, and peace processes. Further, he has made publications on mediation and tools of mediating, as RYCO introduces. In addition to the main office, the local offices employ a staff of 30 members in total. The local office in Albania constitutes of 5 members, the one in Bosnia and Hercegovina and North Macedonia comprise of 4 members, the branch in Kosovo and Montenegro contain 3 members whereas RYCO Serbia has the largest number of staff with 6 members. Additionally, each office is directed by the head. Kreshnik Loka is the head of the branch in Tirana. He reveals generous experience with RYCO and other international organizations, and civil society. Mr. Loka holds an MSc. in Public Law and another in Human Rights. The branch in Sarajevo is headed by Sandra Čule who specializes in Finance. In Prishtina, RYCO is directed by Krenare Gashi-Krasniqi, an MBA student with more than 10 years of involvement with civil society. The local branch of Podgorica is headed by Edin Koljenović. Mr. Koljenović was a member of the Working Group for the founding of RYCO and his participation with NGOs has been great. In Skopje, Vladimir Gjorgjevski conducts the leading role for the organization. Mr. Gjorgjevski is a co-author and author of many materials on youth, youth work, and vocational education, and he displays an engagement of more than 13 years in the field of youth. Lastly, the RYCO branch in Belgrade is led by Marija Bulat, who shows many years of experience with CSOs.

RWLSEE comprises of a 7-member Steering Committee, an Advisory Board, 1 Coordinator and 27 members. The members consist of women who either have had influential positions in state/ non-state institutions or continue to perform such roles. This encompasses parliamentarians, former ministers, recognized legal professionals and similar individuals. Currently, the

organization counts 7 members from Kosovo, 4 from Croatia, 6 from Serbia, 4 from Bosnia-Hercegovina, 7 from Albania, 3 from Montenegro and 3 from North Macedonia. As per the Committee, it is selected every two years from the members of RWLSEE and it is directed by the Chair. The chair position is currently held by Edita Tahiri. Ms. Tahiri served as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Diplomat for Kosovo. Her commitment in the field of peace negotiations, conflict resolution, peacebuilding encompasses 12 years. Moreover, she is an author and co-author of several publications.

RECOM is constructed differently from the previous as the network works with an Assembly, a Regional Council, and a Public Advocate. The first body operates with a large number of people as it is formed by the coalition members and manages the network. Nevertheless, no qualifications/responsibilities are provided by RECOM on this operating Assembly. The Regional Council is a body consisting of the founders of RECOM, Nataša Kandić and Vesna Teršelić, along with 10 non-governmental organizations from post-Yugoslav countries, serving as Partner Organizations in the RECOM Project. Ms. Kandić is the project manager for the network. She is a well-acknowledged personality in the field of human rights, and transitional justice, and award-winner in the field of human rights. The last structural component of RECOM, the Public Advocate, is an 8-member structure composed of professors, journalists, and activists.

Another organization/network that fails to show its full structures is YiHR. The network has no central structure, rather is dependent on local branches which follow their own establishments. YiHR Kosovo is composed of a board and staff. The board consists of 5 members who display academic qualifications in the fields of war crimes, conflict resolution, civil society, and so forth. At the top position of YiHR Kosovo is the Executive Director, occupied by Marigona Shabiu. Ms. Shabiu is equipped with a master's degree and 8 years of experience in civil society. The staff works with 11 individuals holding responsibilities as Project coordinators, Project manager, Program coordinator, Finance and Administration officer, Legal researchers, Communication coordinator, Manager of Finance and Administration and Graphic designer. YiHR Bosnia and Hercegovina has a team of 5 members, in which the seat of the Executive Director is held by Irena Hasić and that of the Program Director by Alja Borazon. Ms. Hasić has been part of the organization since 2012, making her commitment with YiHR quite lengthy. Moreover, Ms.

Borazon has been working with YiHR since 2019, one year after specializing in International Security and Law. Other roles held by the staff include Project coordinator, Program assistant and Head of administration and finance. The YiHR Montenegro is constituted by a Board of Directors and an Assembly of 6 members. The Board comprises the Deputy Excitative Director, Amina Murić, and Program Director Aleksandra Dubak. Ms Murić shows a significant involvement with international projects, public relations, management, whereas Ms. Dubak, a university law graduate, demonstrates involvement in several civil society initiatives concerning youth work, human rights, judiciary, and war crimes. Moreover, the staff of YiHR Montenegro includes a Coordinator as well. YiHR Croatia does not offer any information concerning the structure of the organization, except for the Executive Director, Morana Starčević. The other division of YiHR, YiHR Serbia, does not present any data regarding the current structure they have implemented, nor the staffing.

The HLC displays a simple organizational construction with a Governing Board composed of 5 members, an Executive Director, and 17 members working as normal staff. The role of Executive Director has been conducted by Nenad Golčevski, since last year. Mr. Golčevski has spent more than 10 years with the Humanitarian Law Center and has experience in the areas of Transitional Justice and Reconciliation. He even participated in publishing articles and book chapters on the first topic. The staff, on the other hand, holds positions like Deputy Executive Director, Office coordinator, Chief accountant, Finance manager, Project coordinator, Researchers, Legal analyst, Project assistant, Archivist, Outreach manager, and Associates.

The Post-Conflict Research Center is built on team of 10 people, 4 Consultants and an Advisory Board composed of 6 Practitioners, 4 Business Advisors, 7 Academic and Research Advisors, 9 Creative Advisors, and a President. The team constitutes of positions like Program director, General manager, Project manager, Evaluation expert, Project developer, English editor, Project assistants, and Campaign manager. The Presidency of PCRC is held by Velma Šarić, journalist, and founder of the PSRC, with 20 years of experience in the organization and beyond. Ms. Šarić has completed an MA in Political Science and she is author of numerous publications on war and peace. In addition, PCRC's structure includes 10 research fellows who assist the organization.

4.2.5 Other Operational Capacity

The great majority of the organizations/networks have their own premises in the Western Balkans. RWLSEE, PSRC, SEEYN and HLC are the only ones with one office. Hence, RWLSEE is located in the capital of Kosovo, in Prishtina; SEEYN and the Post-Conflict Research Center's premises are in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovina; and HLC's office is found in Belgrade, Serbia. RYCO is the only organization with local branches in Belgrade, Podgorica, Prishtina, Sarajevo, and Skopje, and a head office in Tirana. Contrastingly, YiHR counts only local offices which are situated in Belgrade, Podgorica, Prishtina, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. Lastly, RECOM does not reveal any official location. As per the online operational capacity, is necessary to point out that all the actors provide webpages. In the instance of YiHR the webpages of the branch organizations are separated as compared to RYCO that works with only one main page, similarly with the rest.

4.2.6 Funding

The desk research on SEEYN shows that its funding is dependent of several donors belonging to different categories. Hence, the organization is funded by actors like the European Union (EU), Visegrad Fund; private bodies like Peace Nexus; state relate actors such as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs FRESTA Program and Council of Europe European Youth Foundation; and program like Danube Start Program. Similarly, YiHR is funded by the European Union, organizations like Civil Rights Defenders; foundations such as The Rockefellers Brothers; state actors like GIZ, US Embassy, and USAID.

Donators range also in the instances of PCRC, HCL, and RECOM. The Post Conflict Research center gets its funds from the donations of international organizations like the EU, and the World Bank; foundations like The Rockefellers Brothers, The Sigrid Rausing Trust, and Art and Humanities Research Council, private actors like NED, and state actors like OSCE and Slovakia. HCL is supported by NGOs like French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development – CCFD, Civil Right Defenders, organizations like the EU and United Nations Fund for Victims of Torture, foundations such as The Rockefellers Brothers, The Sigrid Rausing Trust, etc., and state actors like the Kingdom of Netherlands, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and so on. RECOM shares almost identical donors and categories namely the European Union; Civil Rights Defenders, and CCFD; Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and National Endowment for Democracy; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Switzerland.

RWLSEE, on the other hand, does not show a very broad category of donors. The organization reveals mainly the UN and its agencies and state actors like Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian Embassies as main partners and supporters. Comparably, RYCO shows no diversity concerning the donors. The organization is funded in its projects by state actors like GIZ, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, French Embassy, Austrian Embassy, Regional Cooperation Council, etc. Nonetheless, the principal contributors to RYCO are the Western Balkan countries.

4.3 Projects

For insights on the work of the organizations/networks, there is a need to have a look at the regional reconciliation projects that have been conducted by them, whether ongoing or completed, and that fit the topology of each one of these CSO/Ns.

In this respect to reconciliation, RYCO has completed five projects already. ROUTE WB6, RISE, Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6 Superschools, and EU-WB-SI, all fall into the category of terminated initiatives under reconciliation and peacebuilding. Firstly, ROUTE WB6 took place from 2021 until 2022 to promote volunteering as a tool of reducing the distance among the youth in the region. It resulted in a total of 213 volunteer exchanges and 45 long-term exchanges throughout the region in 2022. Secondly, RISE operated from 2019 until 2020. The project supported 391 young entrepreneurs and implemented 6 local incubators as shown in its own webpage. Moreover, RISE generated a forum between August to September 2023 which gathered 120 young people, members of academia, and representatives of municipalities, from the region. Moving forth, Super Schools was a three-year exchange project that ended in 2023. As of 2022 the Superschool had funded 30 partnerships, and had conducted 60 exchanges that involved 841 students and 120 teachers. Additionally, Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB6, which focused on improving youth mobility as a means of

contributing to reconciliation in the region, developed from 2019 to 2022. The project led to the formation of 500 partnerships across the region. Lastly, EU-WB-SI was conducted from 2021 to 2023 and it brought 110 youth participants in 6 regional meetings. To add, RYCO report shows that in the framework of this project a summer camp, where 25 representatives from student organizations took part, was organized and above 50 activities were held locally.

SEEYN is a partner of RYCO in ROUTE WB6 and RISE projects, consequently the outcomes of these two projects can be attributed to the network as well. Nevertheless, SEEYN is not affiliated with these initiatives only. There are other projects on reconciliation that the network has been involved in, particularly Divided Past Joint Future, Peacebuilding Framework Competence in Youth Work and NFE, and Active Role of Youth in Peacebuilding. To start with, the Active Role of Youth in Peacebuilding was a project on equipping youngsters with competencies to initiate projects on peace and dialogue, and it lasted 8 months. The network does not provide further data concerning the results of this program. Secondly, Peacebuilding Framework Competence in Youth Work and NFE, beginning in 2017, sought to educate youngsters on peace through a timeframe of 18 months. The project consisted of three training courses, respectively Changing Realities, Yellow Brick Road, and Serbia Action Lab. The first course gathered 26 participants. Lastly, the Divided Past-Joint Future, which aimed at increasing capacities of CSOs and others in reconciliation and peacebuilding, led to the creation of The Social Innovation Lab for peace and reconciliation and workshops in 7 countries. The initiative was concluded during the period 2016-2020.

The Regional Women's Lobby for South East Europe has been an initiator of several projects on the topic of reconciliation. First of all, RWLSEE so far has concluded around 6 International Conferences addressing women and peace process, their challenges and empowerment in the post-conflict Balkan societies and about 8 Regional Dialogue Conferences throughout 2008 to 2023. Participation in these events varies from one case to another. The Regional Conference "Women in peacebuilding" held in 2012 gathered over 100 participants; the Regional Conference "Women in decision-making at local level/Role of women mayors as potential agents of change" organized in 2016 invited 70 participants; The International Conference of 2018 on "Meaningful participation of women in peace building in Western Balkans: Sustaining peace, development and

European Integration through women's empowerment" involved 40 participants; The International Conference conducted in 2019 on the topic "Beijing+25:Regional Review for the Western Balkans" assembled 37 participants; and The International Conference on "From Fragility to Empowerment: 20 years of Women, Peace and Security" of 2020 got together 44 participants. In addition to the participation, the activities have generated recommendations as well. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that these conferences are ongoing projects of the network. Similarly, another ongoing work of RWLSEE is the Regional Academy for Women Leadership and Mediation that focuses on capacity building for women and young girls. The project trained 35 participants in 2020 and 46 participants in 2021. To add, RWLSEE has 2 completed publications and one ongoing since 2021, all on the field of peace. These include, respectively, the "Drafting and Adopting National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in the Countries of Southeast Europe", the "Progress Report on Implementing NSCR 1325 in Southeast Europe" and the Guidebook on Gender Inclusive Peacemaking. Other initiative from RWLSEE that is completed, is the establishment of the Association of Women Mayors in the Western Balkans.

Over the years, 15 Forums for Transitional Justice have been conducted by RECOM. The three first forums and the sixth gathered more than 300 participators from the former Yugoslavia including associates of victims, representatives of NGOs, journalists, human rights activists, judges, prosecutors, and so forth. The fourth forum was the largest as it brought together 325 victims or individuals representing the victims, 100 human right activists and members of NGOs, 100 youngsters from youth organizations and high schoolers, 20 representatives form Associations of victims in Kosovo and Serbia, and various individuals working in the law sector. It was during this forum when the network was founded. The rest of the forums were attended by more than 200 individuals from across the region.

	Year	Participants	Theme	Location
I	2006	300	Initiative for establishment of the truth of the past	Sarajevo
II	2007	+300	Truth on war crimes	Zagreb
III	2008	+300	Regional body needed	Belgrade
IV	2008	325	RECOM	Pristina
V	2009	316	RECOM model	Budva
VI	2010	+300	RECOM	Novi Sad
VII	2010	-	RECOM model	Zagreb
VIII	2011	+200	Assessing the results of TJ in the region	Sarajevo
IX	2013	240	TJ and Reconciliation	Jahorina
X	2014	308	Utilizing art and listening to victim's voices	Belgrade
XI	2018	250	The truth on Serbia's war crimes	Belgrade
XII	2019	200	TJ, Reconciliation and Memorialization	Zagreb
XIII	2020	240	Memorialization	Remote
XIV	2021	-	Disruptive Reconciliation-How to proceed?	Belgrade
XV	2023	-	Reconciliation has no alternative	Zagreb

Table 4. 1.Regional Forums for Transitional Justice throughout the years

Consequently, ever since its creation RECOM has held 11 forums in total. These forums have been treated as mediums to discuss issues of reconciliation, memorialization, transitional justice, and to listen to the stories of the victims. In addition to the forums, RECOM has collected lists of victim's names from the war in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina, under the project Voice of Victims. There are thousands of names recorded in this publication. Other projects supported by RECOM include the Kosovo Memory Book 1998-2000, displaying numbers of forced displacements and killings in the country, Documenting Human Losses in Croatia 1991-1995, Mapping detention camps in Bosnia 1992-1995, and the Map of war victims in former Yugoslavia 1991-2001, revealing 2555 killings.

YiHR has organized several regional projects on reconciliation, via its local branches. The office in Croatia has conducted projects like Different paths-shared values, Youth Memories, Europe equals equality and Shared narratives- past continues. The first initiative was implemented in 2021 and it consisted of several events. One activity particularly concentrated in a coming together of youth from the region. It was developed in the form of a traveling exhibition through Croatia,

Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a total of 211 participants. Secondly, Youth Memories which gathered personal memories from the region, was finalized via video content, a YouTube channel, and a Facebook page to showcase histories of the past. Thirdly, Shared narratives – past continues was an 18-month project that began in 2018. The initiative engaged 150 participants from Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo to help generate shared narratives of the past. Lastly, Europe equals Equality project consisted of a series of trainings between Croats and Serbs on responsibility debates. The first training brought together 24 participants. YiHR BiH, has developed further regional projects under the umbrella of reconciliation. Animating Youth for Reconciliation - Be Inspiration is an initiative of this organization, that assembled over 200 participants from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia and Croatia. Another initiative of the office in Bosnia and Hercegovina is Societal Transformation and Reconciliation that launched in 2018. This project constitutes of events like Sarajevo Film Festival and International Theater Festival MESS, among others. In 2020, in these activities 35 individuals took part, 15 of which were remote. The project was finalized on the same year. Football Zajedo also constitutes of a regional project developed by YiHR BiH. The initiative was implemented as an endeavor to increase inclusion and strengthen capacities among participants from BiH, Serbia and Montenegro from 2016 to 2020. Nonetheless, it was decided for the program to continue until 2024 only for the first two countries. More than 2000 children have been taking part in this project. Proceeding, the local organization in Kosovo, in cooperation with the other branches, except Croatia, organized in 2021 a project titled "To reconcile is to Reinforce", which aimed to increase the capacities of CSOs in this regard. Further, the office of YiHR in Serbia has been involved in regional conferences such as Truths are divided - 120 participants and training programs like Youth Program - 40 participants. To add, YiHR as a whole, since its creation, has performed 150 regional exchange programs from which over 15,000 youngsters and adults have benefited from.

The Humanitarian Law Center has worked consistently on fact telling projects throughout the years. HLC has produced until now 14 dossiers on crimes and victims across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia from 2011 to 2023. Subsequently, the organization has developed an online platform named Zone of Nonresponsibility in 2014 to reveal facts on Kosovo and Yugoslavia wars and has filed around 25 criminal complaints mainly to the Serbian Republic on killings of Croats, Albanian, and Bosnians from 2008 to 2018. In addition, from 2013 to 2015

HLC has established 4 Regional Schools of Transitional Justice. The first three schools, those of 2013 and 2014 brought together 25 participants each. Significant work of HLC involves its data base that depicts 13,535 killings form Kosovo (included in Kosovo Memory Book), around 2000 from Serbia and Montenegro, 8000 files from Bosnia-Hercegovina, and 8,000 files of victims of other violations of international humanitarian law, and more than 1,500 files of possible perpetrators of human rights violations and war crimes. This database counts more than 40,000 documents from 2004 to 2012. These projects and activities of the Humanitarian Law Center are ongoing.

The PCRC to date has conducted several initiatives regionally on reconciliation. Initially, the organization has 3 completed projects in the field of reconciliation: the research article on Seeking the Truth in the Balkans, the Multidisciplinary event "These is always a choice" on acts of heroism, and Picturing Moral Courage: Stories of Survival. The second event was held in 2015 and it gathered 150 regional participants whereas the third was concluded in 2011. On the meanwhile, PCRC counts 9 regional ongoing programs on the reconciliation field. Preventing and Responding to Genocide and Mass Atrocity Crimes is one of the ongoing projects since 2011. The initiative has led to the creation of the Western Balkans Coalition for Genocide and Mass Atrocity, a platform for promoting reconciliation, that has trained 80 CSOs or 120 representatives of CSOs and has conducted 6 seminars across the Western Balkans. On the same year, Ordinary Heros was initiated as well. The program has brought 2 exhibitions, 5 documentary movies, an educational curriculum, a competition and a platform that offers youth a medium to publish their thoughts and works, named the Balkan Diskurs. The Balkan Diskurs counts 150,000 readers and more than 1000 published articles. Additionally, the research on Art and Reconciliation and that on Seeking the Truth in the Balkans are other ongoing projects of PCRC. Furthermore, the Peace Youth Academy, the Srebrenica Youth School and WARM Academy are still continuing. The first began in 2023 and has gathered so far 50 participants form the Western Balkans, the second has begun in 2020 with 25 participants whereas the third initiated in 2019. The Post-Conflict Research Center also possesses a program on Genocide in Srebrenica through legal Judgements which started in 2020 and until now it has accumulated 1500 witness testimonials. To conclude, PCRC is a partner in the Manifesta 14, a regionally collaborative medium for opening the Western Balkans.

Org./Net.	HCL	PCRC	RECOM	RWLSEE	RYCO	SEEYN	YiHR
Topology	Memory & Justice Work	Peace & Memory Work	Memory Work	Peace & Justice Work	Peace Work	Peace Work	Memory & Peace work
Target Gr.	Victims and perpetrators of post-Yugoslavia	Youth	Victims of post-Yugoslavia	Women	Youth	Youth	Youth
Area of Int.	Cross-Border; Dialogue creation	Cross-Border; Peace Education; Youth Empowerment	Cross-Border; Dialogue creation;	Cross-Border; Dialogue; Women, Peace, and Security	Cross-Border; Dialogue; Youth Empowerment	Cross-Border; Dialogue; Youth Empowerment; Peace Education; Human Rights	Cross-Border; Dialogue; Youth Empowerment; Human Rights
Geo. scope	Victims from former Yugoslavia	WB6	Victims from former Yugoslavia	WB6 & Croatia	WB6	WB6 & Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Greece, Slovenia, Turkey	BH, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia
Membership	Non-membership	Non-membership	Membership	Non-membership	Non-membership	Membership	Membership
Partnerships	Mostly CSOs	Various	Mostly CSOs	Various	Various	Mostly CSOs	Mostly CSOs
HR & Leader.	7 staff; Qualified & Experienced	10 staff; Qualified & Experienced	Large number	27 members; Qualified & Experienced	25 staff; Qualified & Experienced	14 staff; Experienced	40 staff; Depends on the branch
Op. Capacity	Office; Webpage	Office; Webpage	Webpage	Office; Webpage	Office; Webpage	Office; Webpage	Office; Webpage
Project	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	No ongoing	No ongoing	Ongoing
Funding	Variety of donors	Variety of donors	Variety of donors	UN and State Contributions	State Contributions	Variety of donors	Variety of donors

Table 4. 2 Visualization of the mapping of CSO/Ns operating regionally in the Western Balkans

4.4 Summary

As shown in Table 1, the results reveal that the majority of the organizations/networks organize activities that belong to the categories of Peace and Memory Work, with only two actors focusing on Justice Work. Therefore, the reconciling roles that these actors have chosen to perform fall under the Peace and Memory Work categories and their subgroupings. Furthermore, the projects generated by these organizations are mostly directed towards the youth, as one of the main target groups that appear in the research. In terms of the area of intervention, Cross-border initiative, Dialogue creation, Peace education, and Youth Empowerment are seen to be the most common domains in which the analyzed organizations conduct reconciliation activities. Cross-border initiative is present in all the CSO/N since they operate on a regional level. Nonetheless, not all of the actors include every member of the Western Balkans. Thus, HLC, PCRC, and YiHR do not incorporate Albania in their geographical coverage. Regarding Membership and Partnerships, the analysis depicts that most of the studied participants belong to non-membership organizations, meaning they function solely. Nonetheless, the case of RYCO is somewhat unique as it comprises of local offices as well. Only YiHR, SEEYN, and RECOM serve as networks composed of local organizations spread through their geographical scopes. In addition, these three actors are mostly partnering with CSOs in reconciliation projects as compared to the majority that have partnered with various bodies. Forth, with respect to infrastructure, the results point out that all the organizations/networks are equipped with webpages and offices, excluding RECOM which does not provide information on the existence of premises. Moreover, all the actors employ their own organizational structures and are staffed. To add, many of the individuals holding leadership roles are depicted as qualified and experienced, however RECOM, SEEYN and YiHR have problems in identifying the experiences, and/or qualifications of the leadership. Proceeding, there is a variety of donors for the vast majority of the participatory CSO/Ns, omitting RYCO and RWLSEE. The first depends profoundly on WB6 donations whereas the latter mainly on the UN, and state actors. Lastly, data from the project's parameter reveals that most of the organizations have active reconciliation initiatives, and all of them show extensive work in the field with their completed activities. Following the outcomes from the desk research, primary data, collected by means of interviews with the organization/network's representatives, is elaborated below to supplement the results.

4.5 Approach to reconciliation

When questioned on their viewpoint on reconciliation the respondents offered somewhat similar answers on behalf of their organizations/networks. The YiHR representative considered the approach of the network comprehensive. Thus, the interviewee linked reconciliation with "networking, education on the past, and commemorative activism, to strengthen preventive practices as the guarantees of non-repetition, and the manipulation and instrumentalization of historical narratives and the past" (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). According to her, YiHR engulfs all of these aspects. Similarly, the response from HLC regarded the organization's approach towards reconciliation as comprehensive. Moreover, the answer revealed that the Humanitarian Law Center advocates for "truth-telling on a region level" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). This approach resembles the past education answer coming from YiHR since both have informing purposes and emphasize the past. In addition, HLC seeks "the establishment of a Regional Commission to work on war crimes facts and other serious violations of human rights" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). Hence, this conveys the idea that the organization looks at reconciliation from a responsibility or accountability perspective, but also from a regional aspect. The Post-Conflict Research Center shared a comparable attitude when describing its reconciliation approach. The organization emphasized a comprehensive outlook at reconciliation as well. Its responses showed that PCRC relates reconciliation with understanding diversity, building bridges of comprehension, and peace education as "the backbone for sustainable reconciliation and positive peace" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). On similar lines, RWLSEE's approach is deemed as comprising different dimensions, involving "trust building, mutual understanding, and mutual acceptance" (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). The actor's point of view resembles PCRC's understanding of reconciliation since both tackle comprehension or understanding between post-conflictual societies. To add, RWLSEE takes a broad approach on the topic in parallel to YiHR, HLC, and PCRC. Thus, the majority of the organizations, 6 of them or around 67 %, follow this all-embracing approach to reconciliation. Also, RWLSEE interviewee spoke of the organization as "a force of coming together to put behind the tragic past and look forward, but not forget" showing more alignment with the YiHR's viewpoint on the past and reconciliation (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Moving forth, RYCO's

response exposed a youth-focused approach that portrayed reconciliation via youth mobility, cooperation and capacity building. The capacity building and networking answerers of RYCO somewhat follow the same logic as the past education approach of YiHR. In contrast to the rest of the answers, RECOM's approach appeared to be not as exhaustive. The network, as the interviewee stated, perceives reconciliation through a "fact-based" viewpoint. Hence, the response highlighted the documentation of victims, missing people, detention centers, and truth-telling to pursue reconciliation in the region. In this regard, RECOM's perspective resembles that of HLC on the truth-telling aspect.
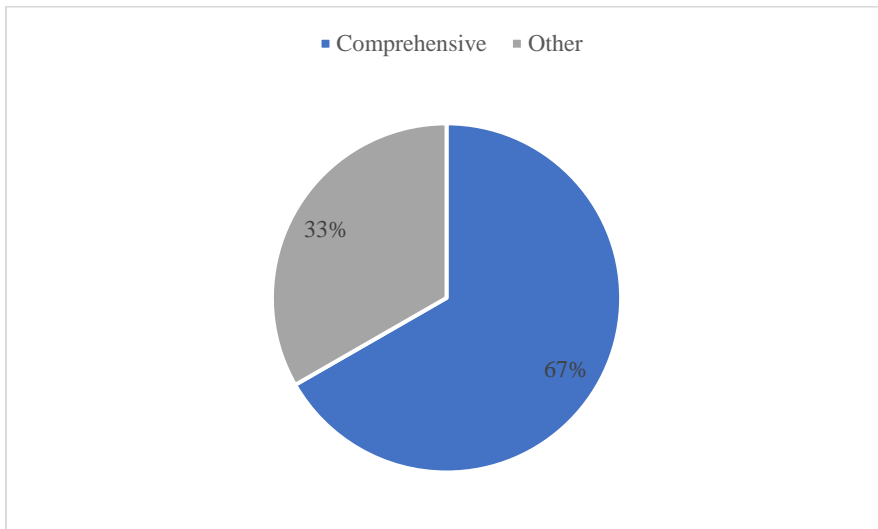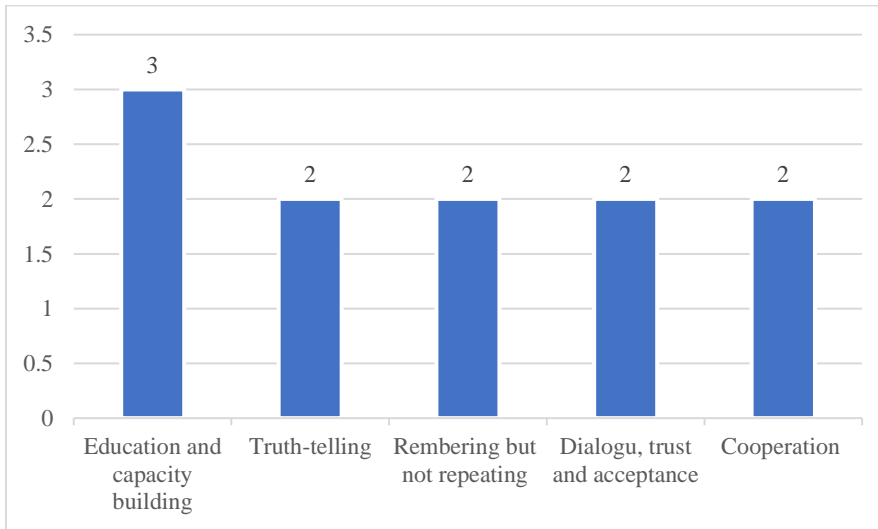

Figure 4. 1.*Approach to reconciliation*

Figure 4. 2.*Reappearing themes in the approach towards reconciliation*

4.6 Relevance of target group to reconciliation

The question on the relevance of their target group showed new viewpoints as to whom these actors direct their projects. For one, the interview with YiHR disclosed that the network targets the youth as crucial actors for reconciliation in the Western Balkans. This emphasis is put on the youth since they represent the region's future. Furthermore, as the response from YiHR claims, engaging the youth means that there is chance to shape the direction of the Western Balkans towards reconciliation and that cycles of violence can be broken. In this regard, youngsters are seen relevant to the process of reconciling the WB due to their capacities in bringing a change. Sharing the same target group as YiHR, RYCO as well concentrated its answers on the potential of the youth. Thus, RYCO's representative pointed out that the youth could reshape "inherited divisive narratives and stereotypes; play a significant role in shaping perceptions and attitudes; and could build bridges" across the region (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). Again, targeting youth, specifically girls, RWLSEE interviewee stated that "there is a lack of understanding of young people about the region, and about each other" and that the young "build our future" (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Hence, she looked on the youngsters as a target necessary for the future and as a group that must be more knowledgeable in matters of the Western Balkans. In addition, she mentioned women as part of the organization's target group as well. The respondent elaborated on the women's vision of peace as a requirement for reconciliation. She cited that peace from a women's perspective is when "the needs of citizens are addressed, and are fixed, and resolved", providing a response quite different from the rest (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Following, PCRC's response listed youth, like the rest of the organizations/networks, and members from minorities and marginalized groups as target groups. Moreover, the organization specified that the members of such communities are "directly involved" and that their stories are a significant part of the reconciliation process (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). In this regard, the organization interestingly sees relevant to reconciliation two groups quite distinct - one that has been exposed to conflicts and one that have no such experience. HLC depicted the victims and perpetrators indirectly as targets while the organization's answer stressed that transparency and accountability are a step closer to reconciliation. Additionally, similarly to the rest, it touched upon youth briefly as a target unit which is addressed by the organization's educational initiatives. Lastly, the interviewee from

RECOM pointed that "experts and academics in the fields of transitional justice, memorialization, humanitarian law, and contemporary history are the only realistic target group considering the reach and format of RECOM's activities. Victims are almost completely left out, although declaratively, they are stated as a target group" (Aksentijević, A. personal communication, 31 January 2024). Distinctive from the rest, the interviewee presented another point of view when considering the target population in reality.

4.7 Activities that fall under reconciliation

Giving response to the activities that fall under the area of reconciliation, initially, YiHR provided a general response by bringing forward activities on memorialization and remembrance, human rights education and awareness. Secondly, HLC considered documentation and naming of human losses and detention centers, policy-oriented research on memory politics as main projects that touch upon reconciliation. Moreover, the participant in the interview numbered 3 million files related to armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia, RECOM, the Regional School of Transitional Justice, and Forum for Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries as completed activities. Finally, Kosovo Memory Book on cases of deaths and losses in Kosovo between 1998 to 2000 was presented as an ongoing project with only the volume in 1998 being published. Similarly to HLC, the representative of RECOM considered the research on memory politics and the Kosovo Memory Book as projects under reconciliation. Nonetheless, the interviewee also added that the latter activity has been ongoing for more than ten years and only one volume has been published in 2011. Fourthly, PCRC's response included the Western Balkans Coalition for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Crimes Prevention (CGMAP), founded to connect and ease the cooperation of CSOs; the Balkan Diskurs and the Ordinary Heroes. All four actors, YiHR, HLC, RECOM, and PCRC responded with programs on memory and recognition of the past. Hence, about 67% of the CSO/Ns find such projects to be under the umbrella of reconciliation. RYCO, on the other hand, considered mainly RISE, Superschools and Regional Cultural Fund as more fitted for reconciliation. Superschools project mirrors the Balkan Diskurs of PCRC and HLC's mentioning of RECOM as cooperation mediums for the region. Thus, activities on cooperation are pointed out by 50% of these civil society organizations/networks. Lastly, the interviewee from RWLSEE named three level platforms which correspond to regional dialogues, inter-ethnic dialogues, and

annual international conferences when responding the question. The dialogue affiliated activities are put forwards by RYCO as well, composing 33% of the answers. In addition, RWLSEE representative emphasized, as another project on reconciliation, the Regional Academy for Leadership and Mediation. The academy can be parallelized with YiHR's education emphasis, the PCRC's Ordinary Heros and HLC's Regional School of Transitional Justice, revealing a resemblance between these actors. As a consequence, around 67% of the CSO/Ns choose activities on education (along others) to illustrate their reconciliation initiatives.
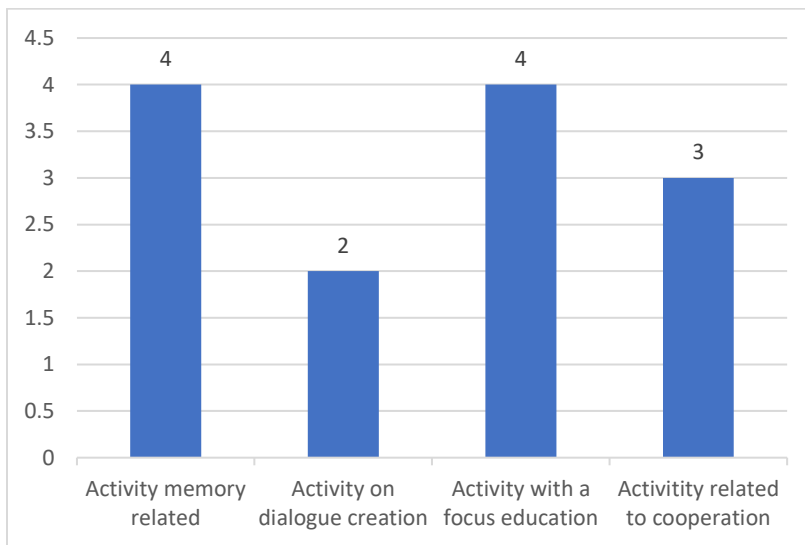

Figure 4. 3 *Activities that fall under reconciliation*

4.8 Achievements on reconciliation

When questioned on their accomplishments in the field of reconciliation, the answers from the organizations/networks involved in the study varied. YiHR interviewee considered "the successfully engaged young people in reconciliation efforts, empowering them to build peace and promote human rights actively"; the support towards RECOM; and its collaboration with other organizations (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). Thus, mainly participation and partnership are regarded as achievements by the network. Another response quite different from the previous, coming from HLC, revealed that the organization regards as successes its engagement in "policy research and advocacy; its memorialization program; its legal representation of war crime victims before Serbian courts, monitoring war crimes trials, representing victims in compensation proceedings, and filing legal complaints against

perpetrators" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). Most significantly, the interviewee from HCL named as one of the greatest accomplishments of the organization in reconciliation, the 3 million copies on war crimes/conflicts from former Yugoslavia. Hence, it appears that HLC's approach to reconciliation achievements leans more on the projects and activities it has conducted. Furthermore, RWLSEE's respondent took another approach to the question as she focused on the potential of her network in addition to its work. The interviewee firstly interpreted "the establishment of the organization in the aftermath of strategies and war" and its operation in "a fragile context and in a post-conflict context" as an accomplishment of RWLSEE (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). To this she added that "to come up with conclusions and recommendations, then to influence decision makers at national, local, and regional levels in the Balkans" was the biggest accomplishment of the network (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Moreover, the ability to provide "dialogue between women and government officials, to make the women's voice more strong, more influential" is also deemed as a success (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Different from the previous broad answers, PCRC offered a more concrete and quantitative response to the question. The organization listed its reconciliation projects respectively "CGMAP, Balkan Diskurs, Ordinary Citizens, peace education programs, art exhibitions and documentaries" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). It was emphasized that Balkan Diskurs specifically has been regarded as a successful model with 80% of the participatory youth finding jobs after the program and "over 160 young writers, researchers, and multimedia producers" trained (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). Additionally, its documentaries gathered an audience of "1.5 million views across the WB and 380 million worldwide" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). Lastly, again using numbers, the response from the PCRC representative stated that the peace education programs of the organization have reached "7000 youth from the region whereas its art exhibitions have captivated 300 thousand people from the Western Balkans" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). RYCO referenced the completed projects and the participation as a response for the accomplishments. All in all, the majority of the CSO/Ns participating in the interview, picked their work as achievements in the field. Nonetheless, only 40% choose only their projects/programs as another 40% selected their work and the participation it brought along as a form of achievement. The least named demonstrator of achievements was the partnership option with around 17%.
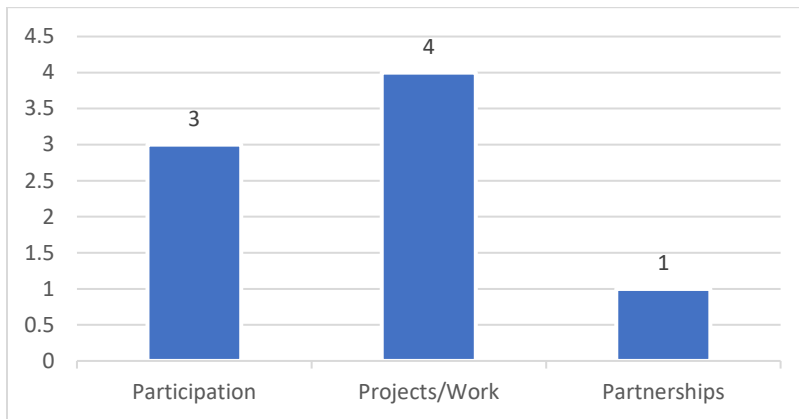
Figure 4. 4.*Achievements on reconciliation*

4.9 Measuring success

The CSO/Ns depicted their own various methods of estimating success in reconciliation. The response from YiHR outlined three methods of measuring: i) Monitoring and Evaluating, ii) Feedback, and iii) Recognition. Thus, the network argued that "YIHR measures its goals through monitoring and evaluation. Also, we seek feedback from our participants to get insights into the effectiveness of our programs and activities" (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). Recognition, as the interview reveals, is given through awards like Vaclav Havel Award. "YIHR received the Vaclav Havel Award, a great recognition of the network's work dedicated to enhancing human rights and establishing a culture of peace instead of the dominant culture of war in the region" (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). Recognition stands as a means used to measure success by HLC as well. The organization reveals to have assessed its success from "the recognition coming from the victims and proponents of transitional justice in the region" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). Monitoring and evaluation, and feedback, on the other hand, are also utilized by RYCO. As the interviewee communicates, the first means are employed through Activity Questionnaires. The 2022 surveys, according to the RYCO representative, show that "90% of young people attending activities self-reported positive experiences of collaborating with peers from the WB6 region" region (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). Additionally, periodic feedback is collected from two key

target groups: close partners, institutions and youth actors, whereas direct feedback is received from young participants in various mobility programs and activities. RYCO further elaborated that success is also measured though the "friendships formed, exchange enabled, memorable cultural experiences" (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). Such human relationships are pointed out only by RYCO when measuring accomplishments. PCRC shortly mentioned a "10-year evaluation" for its projects, without providing more data on the matter (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). Lastly, when asked, RECOM's representative stated that the information on success measurement "is kept confidential" (Aksentijević, A. personal communication, 31 January 2024). Thus, most of the respondents use evaluation, among other means, to measure their success - 60% of the participants, and only 1 or 20% use human relations. Among these 60%, 40% utilize evaluation and monitoring together and only 20% use evaluation only. Similarly, 20% use recognition only, and 20% employ recognition with other forms of assessment. Moreover, 40% resort to feedback along further means.
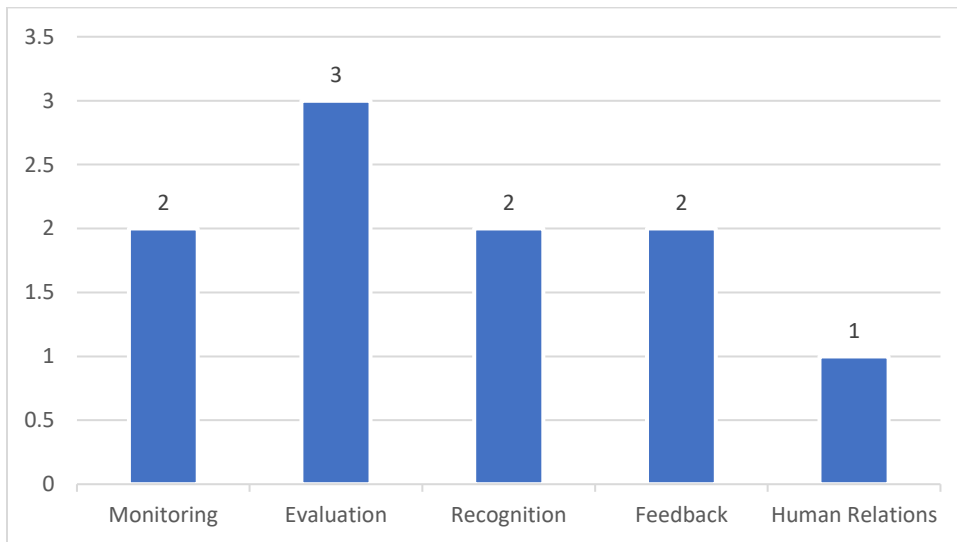

Figure 4. 5.*Measuring Methods*

4.10 Staffing and allocation

Continuing with the staffing and allocation question, the YiHR participant responded that the network comprises of "40 people directly working with YIHR as staff members" (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). This staff is allocated regionally according to the interviewee. Differently, HLC indicated to have only "20 staff members working in Belgrade" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). A similar number was presented by RYCO as well which revealed to have a staff of "23 employees" spread regionally (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). In addition, the representative from RYCO named the Governing Board as the highest central authority, with "12 members, 6 ministers in charge of youth policies and 6 young people" (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). A larger staff is displayed by the answers of PCRC. Thus, the organization is composed of a "Governing Board of 3, an Assembly of 13, an Advisory Board of 27, 6 full-time staff, 5 part-time staff, and 35-40 volunteers per annum" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). The individuals working at PCRC are diverse as they come "all three major ethnic groups—Croat, Serb, and Bosniak" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). In the same manner, the RWLSEE interviewee pointed out that there is "local staff throughout the region", nonetheless, "there are no formal branches" (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). As per RECOM, the interviewee stated that there are "approximately 7 people working in Belgrade, 5 in Kosovo, and 5-7 members in Sarajevo and Banja Luka" (Aksentijević, A. personal communication, 31 January 2024). She also pointed out that "the staff in Kosovo changes constantly" (Aksentijević, A. personal communication, 31 January 2024). As understood, almost all the participants - 83% have more than 20 staff members and around 67% or 4 of them have a regional spreading.
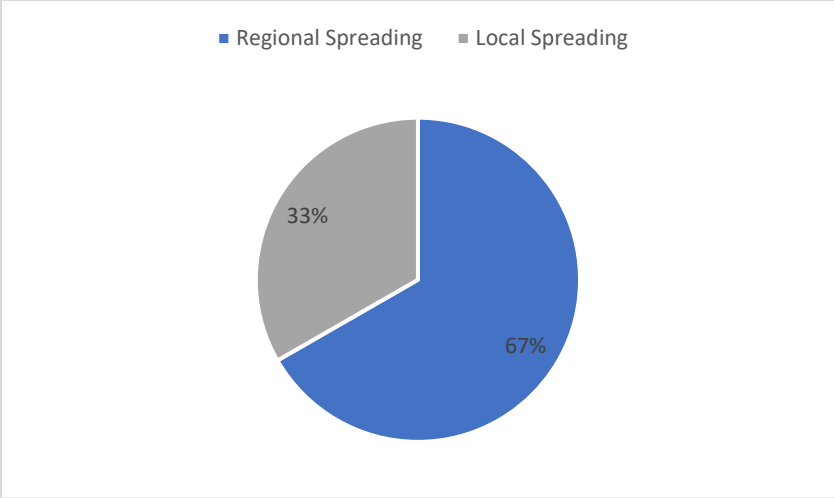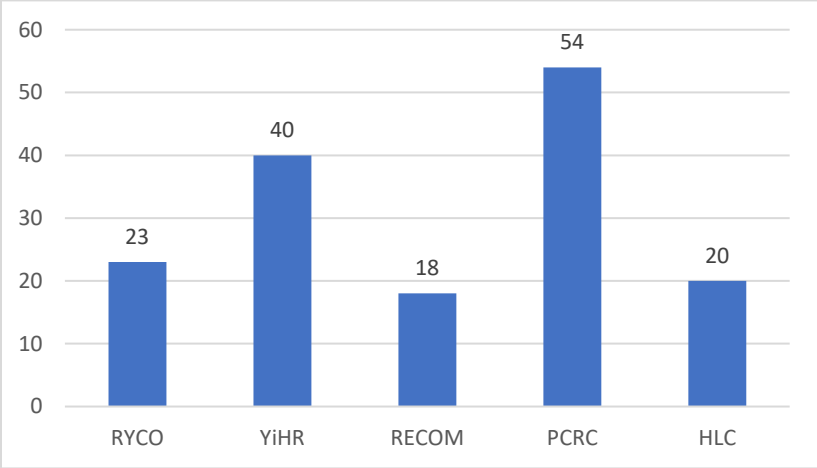
Figure 4. 6.*Staff allocation*

Figure 4. 7.*Staffing*

4.11 Partnerships

In terms of partnerships, YiHR mentioned "Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC), Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Autonomous Women's Center (AŽC), Women in Black, War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Documenta, ForumZFD" among some of its main partners in reconciliation programs (Javanović, I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). Furthermore, HLC listed "the Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo,

the Association Transitional Justice Accountability and Remembrance (TJAR) in Sarajevo, the Center for Democracy and Transitional Justice (CDTJ) in Banja Luka, the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) in Montenegro, and European Policy Institute (EPI) in North Macedonia" in the same regard" (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). RYCO apart from giving recognition to other partners, particularly named CSOs as "critical contributors" and high schools as partners valuable for its Super Schools project (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). RWLSEE emphasized UN Women as its "main strategic partner" and "UNDP for a small period, but it is not relevant anymore" (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Lastly, PCRC responded in general terms that the partners vary from "state to non-state institutions at local, regional and international level" (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). Hence, as understood there is an abundance of CSOs as partners, with 4 from the sample or 67% relying primarily on their partnership.
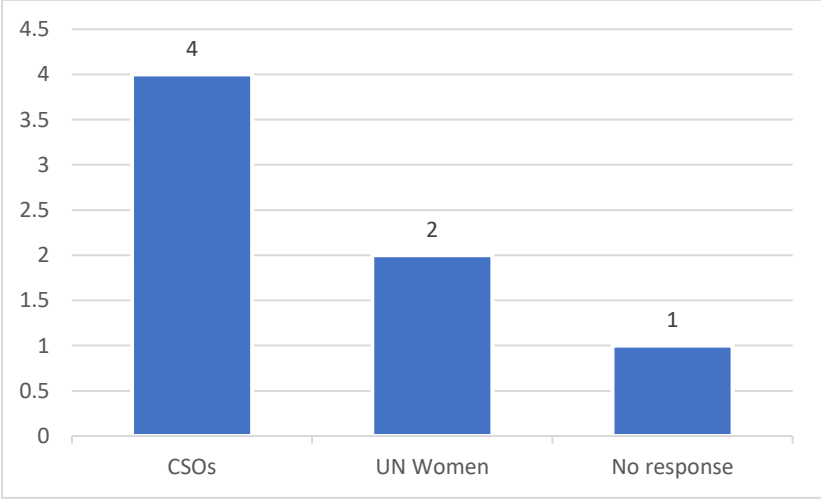

Figure 4. 8.*Partnerships*

4.12 Difficulties working on reconciliation projects

The organizations/networks that participated in the interviews numbered several obstacles on their reconciliation works. Firstly, YiHR mentioned the "resistance form the political actors interested in perpetuating divisive narratives or maintaining the status quo and their lack of will" (Javanović,

I. personal communication, 19 June 2023). The interviewee elaborated that it is some of the political interest to maintain divisive narrative as they are. Secondly, HLC highlighted factors like incomplete transitional justice in former Yugoslavia, flawed judicial initiatives, limited space for civil society, lacking post-conflict policies, and narrow recognition of war victims as they are excluded from the public debate. HLC representative explained that "politicized and divisive narratives have a monopoly" in addressing the past whereas CSO are excluded (Kadaric, J. personal communication, 22 January 2024). Thus, a parallel can be drawn between the two organizations/networks as they both name politics and divisive narratives as challenges in their work on reconciliation in the region. Moreover, the respondent from HLC stated, concerning post-conflict policies, that "they have not tackled gender inequalities" during and after the wars. Thirdly, RYCO emphasized six challenging elements on its reconciliation works including here "political sensitivity and divisive narratives, trust between government and society, brain drain, discrimination, hate speech, and external factors like COVID-19 pandemic" that hindered the execution of mobility opportunities (Brakaj, F., personal communication, 29 January 2024). The actor follows similar response to HLC and YiHR in the two first difficulties. Fourthly, PCRC evidenced "ethnic division, corruption and trans-generational trauma" as difficulties when addressing reconciliation (PCRC team, personal communication, 10 January 2024). Following, RWLSEE identified a lack of funding especially in the context of external aspects like COVID-19. Hence, there is a similarity between RWLSEE and RYCO as they are both challenged by events occurring in the world when operating regionally. Furthermore, the interviewee depicted "not enough culture of peace and no investments" in this regard (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). She explained that "ethnicity, especially in the Western Balkans, plays a role in generating tensions and hostilities, nationalism", hence acceptance of others is missing (Tahiri, E. personal communication, 9 February 2024). Lastly, the interviewee for RECOM emphasized that "radicalization, extremism, media manipulation, nationalistic narratives, non-cooperative institutions and post-war elites involved in politics" harden the work on reconciling the region (Aksentijević, A. personal communication, 31 January 2024). Significantly, she mentioned issues in management within the network to have caused difficulties as well. Despite showing a variety of challenges, most of these non-state actors face struggles attributable to narratives, politics, institutions, ethnically separated societies and external aspects. Hence, around 67% show difficulties related to narratives, 50% reveal to experience difficulties

due to politics, while 33% are respectively restrained by ethnic divisions, external factors like COVID-19 and institutions.
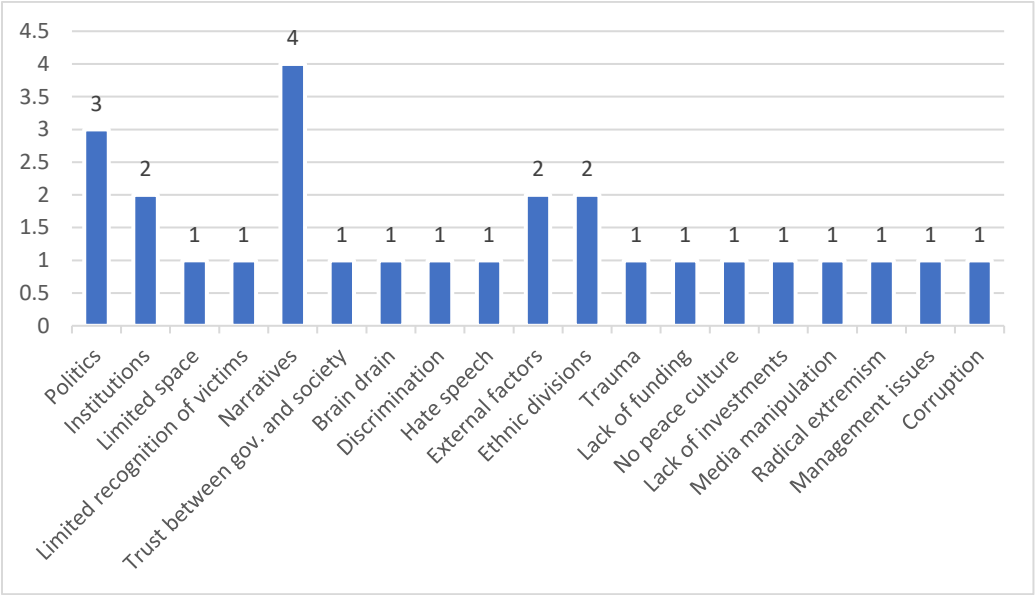

Figure 4. 9.*Difficulties*

Questions	YiHR	RYCO	RECOM	RWLSEE	PCRC	HLC
Approach to reconciliation	Comprehensive	Youth-focused	Fact-based	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Target relevance	Youth as future actors of change	Youth's potential	Experts & academics	The need of women & girl's vision of peace	Youth & minorities/marginalized groups- importance of stories	Victims & perpetrators as necessary for transparency & accountability/ youth
Activities/Projects	Memorialization, education, & awareness	Cooperation, dialogue mobility	Research, memorialization	Dialogue, education	Memorialization, cooperation, education	Documentation, policy research on memory politics, cooperation, education
Achievements	Participants, capacity building, collaboration	Projects and participation	-	Establishment, dialogue, influence decision-making, recommending	Educational, & memorialization projects and programs, participants	Advocacy, representing, documenting, monitoring
Measuring success	Monitoring & Evaluation, Feedback, Recognition	Monitoring & Evaluation, Feedback,	-	-	Evaluation	Recognition
Staffing & allocation	40, Regional	23, Regional	17-19, Regional	Regional	54, Local	20, Local
Partnerships	CSOs	CSOs, schools	-	UN Women	Variety	CSOs
Difficulties	Divisive narratives, politics	Politics, narratives, trust, brain drain, discrimination, hate speech, external factors	Radicalization, extremism, media manipulation, political elites, institutions, narratives, management issues	Lack of funding, lack of peace culture, no investments, external factors, ethic divisions	Ethnic division, corruption, trauma	Incomplete TJ, flaws in judiciary, limited space for CSOs, no post-conflict policies, low recognition of war crimes, divisive narratives

*Table 4. 3.*Key data from the interviews

4.13 Summary

In summary, as shown in Table 4. 3, YiHR, RWLSEE, PCRC and HLC follow a comprehensive approach to reconciliation as opposed to RYCO and RECOM which take respectively a youth-based perspective and a fact-based viewpoint. In addition, a considerable number of the organizations consider youth as the target group with the capacity to influence reconciliation in the region. RYCO, YiHR, PCRC mainly share this viewpoint. Contrastingly, RWLSEE majorly puts an emphasis on the role of women on this regard, whereas HLC stresses the victims as the population who has been directly influenced by the conflicts on the region. On the other hand, RECOM is revealed to pay more attention to the academia as a target group. Moving forth, concerning activities, mainly projects on memorialization are common amidst YiHR, RECOM, PCRC, and HLC; education initiatives are highlighted by YiHR, RWLSEE, PCRC, and HLC; and cooperation programs are pointed out by RYCO, PCRC, and HLC. These areas are, according to the answers, the primary focus point in addressing reconciliation in the WB. To add, the respondents depict further commonalities in terms of achievements and success measuring. Hence, RYCO, RWLSEE, HLC and PCRC name their work as achievements in the area whereas YiHR, PCRC and RYCO add participation as an accomplishment in this regard. Vastly the actors choose monitoring, evaluation and feedback to measure their success in reconciling the region. As per partnerships, RYCO, YiHR, HLC elect CSOs as main partners. Comparably RWLSEE selects UN Women as a key partner whereas HLC named various partnerships. In terms of staffing and allocation, the interview shows that majority of the actors have regionally spread staff. Lastly, challenges appear to be numerous, nonetheless narratives, ethnic division and politics seem as the most common.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The majority of the CSO/Ns, around 67%, are revealed to take a comprehensive approach towards reconciliation in the Western Balkans - HLC, PCRC, RWLSEE and YiHR. Thus, according to the interviews, these organizations/networks encompass several aspects on how they address reconciliation in the region. The data from the desk analysis fits this description on the reconciliation approach, given the topologies of PCRC, RWLSEE, HLC and YiHR. Hence, as the results highlight, the four organizations fall under two different categories. PCRC, RWLSEE and YiHR deal with Peace Work and Memory Work whereas HLC is engulfed in Memory and Justice Work according to their scope of activities. Consequently, they address reconciliation through a very nuanced approach. Furthermore, the interviews provide that common perspectives on reconciliation seem to exist amidst all the respondents. The most abundant themes include education, memorialization, cooperation/networking, truth-telling and dialogue. Among these, memorialization and education are depicted to be the most frequent with 67% of the interview answers emphasizing them as relevant to their addressing of reconciliation. This also resembles the results from the secondary sources since Peace and Memory Work topologies, which conform to the upper mentioned areas, are the most common between the CSO/Ns. The Peace Work topology corresponds to the largest number of the actors studied in this research. The further roles that the organizations/networks play in reconciling the WB are depicted according to the categories that they have been assigned to. As a result, according to the subgroupings, it is evident that most of the actors are working on reframing the narratives of the past to reconcile with the present and on building a collective peace by ending the culture of violence. Hence, in line with the articulation of Ricigliano, (2003, as cited in Fischer, 2011) Borah (2011); Safa (2007) and Fischer (2011) on the capacities of civil society organizations in creating informal communications, encouraging dialogue, and providing training and developing skills, the majority of the civil society actors of

the study, contribute to reconciliation form this perspective. Additionally, it must be emphasized that HLC, RECOM, PCRC and YiHR organize projects on Memory Work as a form of preserving stories of victims and war crimes. This positioning is rather not captured by Rigby's categorization, but it is perceived as integral in RECOM's understanding of reconciliation, as explained by Touquet and Vermeersch (2016), and that of HLC as well. To add, few organizations, like HLC, perform a retributive role in trying to punish the perpetrators to seek justice as elaborated again by Touquet and Vermeersch (2016).

From the desk analysis it is clear that most of the CSO/Ns, participating in the study, consider youth as their main target group, namely PCRC, RYCO, SEEYN, and YiHR. Nonetheless, the data from the interviews reveals that HLC and RWLSEE also regard youth as one of their target units, different from what the secondary data-based analysis suggested. In addition, from the interview responses it is discovered that PCRC considers members of marginalized groups as part of its target population. This goes in line with Rigby's idea which argues that CSOs are representatives of the excluded communities. Another disparity between the secondary information and the interview answers is pointed out in the case of RECOM, in which the interviewee presented the academics, not the victims, as the main target of the network. Despite such incompatibilities, the two analyses agree on the fact that the youth approach to reconciliation is embedded by the majority of the actors. This specific target group is considered as the one with the potential to disrupt the violence cycles and change perspectives, according to the interviews. Therefore, youth perspective is yet another common theme of essential relevance in moving forward with the process of reconciliation in the region. Moreover, the dominating areas of intervention comprising dialogue, youth empowerment, and cross-border initiatives align with what has been discussed so far on the approach of the organizations/networks towards reconciliation.

In the matter of organizational capacity, the secondary data initially depicts that, with respect to the geographical scope, these CSO/Ns have an extensive reach. Secondly, membership-wise, it is concluded that most of the actors operate as organizations rather than networks. As for the networks, it is interestingly apparent that they commonly suffer from the lack of data on their webpages concerning staffing and their qualifications. These networks entail YiHR – primarily its local structures in Serbia and Croatia, SEEYN and RECOM. With reference to staffing, it is

evident that YiHR is the actor with the largest number of personnel, estimated to be 40 people. Moreover, different from the initial analysis, the interviews show that RYCO is composed of 23 not 25 staff members, PCRC has employed 11 staff not 10 and RECOM is revealed to have around 19 personnel. The staffing in 67% of the CSO/Ns is spread regionally with the exception of HLC and PCRC. Furthermore, there are different ethnicities working for RYCO, SEEYN, PCRC, and RWLSEE. Nevertheless, contrary to what the literature suggests, these internal ethnic divisions are not listed as challenging aspects or weaknesses during the interviews. In connection to the structure of these actors it must be underlined that most of the civil society actors show well-organized compositions with defined roles. Only YiHR (Office in Croatia and Serbia) and RECOM fall short in this category when compared to the rest of the group. Also, the majority of the organizations have employed experienced and qualified leadership.

Besides staffing and webpages, the interview questioned the participants on their means of measuring projects to comprehend more on the capacities of these actors. The data highlight that there are three common methods utilized to measure the success, among RYCO, YiHR, HLC, and PCRC. These involve i) evaluation and monitoring, ii) feedback, and iii) recognition. Evaluation and monitoring are the most employed means with 60% whereas the rest take up 40% each. Statistical data on these measurements, apart from the case of RYCO, is not revealed by the interviews and there is no clarity on how measurable the recognition method is. To add, there is another intriguing measurement derived from RYCO. The organization looks at the establishment of human relations as a form of assessing its successes. This seems quite relevant given the conceptualization of reconciliation as a relink between communities and Rigby's (2013) recognition of human relationships in the process of reconciliation.

Moreover, two further aspects to explore in respect to organizational capacity entail partnerships and funding. The data from secondary sources and primary sources aligns together in regard to the partners. Thus, it can be comprehended that in general the CSO/Ns partner with various actors, nonetheless the majority or 67% is mostly working with other CSOs. This grouping comprises RECOM, HLC, SEEYN, and YiHR. Interestingly, these players also have partnerships with each other. HLC and YiHR are supporters of RECOM; SEEYN and RYCO have cooperated in a few projects; PCRC and RYCO have also partnered with YiHR which also considered partnerships as

achievements on reconciliation. Given that the actors, involved in this research, share partnerships with each other and reveal numerous implemented projects, it can be argued against the statement of Mastrorocco (2020) who maintains that there is lack of developed coordination between civil society organizations. The last parameter of the operational capacity is covered by funding. According to secondary data-based research, excluding RYCO, the other actors are dependent on international funding whether from states, organizations, foundations, private actors, or others. RYCO is the only that is significantly dependent on contributions from the member states, the Western Balkans countries. In addition, RWLSEE is majorly dependent on UN Women and state embassies like Swedish and Finish. Furthermore, RWLSEE supports the argument of Mastrorocco (2020), who maintains that funding puts limitations on civil society organizations, as one of the limitations of the network was revealed to be missing funds due to external occurrences.

The work of the CSO/Ns on reconciliation via programs, projects and activities has been considerable through the years. RYCO can count around 5 big projects; SEEYN shares similar number; RWLSEE has conducted around 14 conferences, tens of regional dialogues and regional academies; RECOM has developed 15 Forums on Transitional Justice and numerous publications; YiHR has worked on 8 projects; HLC has finalized tens of documents and complaints and regional schools; PCRC has implemented 7 projects. These numbers portray the cross-border initiatives that fall under the area of reconciliation. All this work has been accompanied by hundreds of participants, tens of mobilities, trainings, some platforms, and publications. The projects on reconciliation and their participation are majorly deemed as achievements in the field by the organization's representatives. Furthermore, during the interviews, when questioned on reconciliation activities, the respondents did not involve all of the above-mentioned projects in their answers. They majorly focused on memory and education related projects (67% each), cooperation (50%) and dialogue creation (33%). Thus, in the answers some projects were missing. In addition, from the interview responses there was only 1 new initiative that had not been illustrated in the desk analysis: Regional Cultural Fund of RYCO. Quite intriguing is the fact that most of the activities, especially from RYCO, do not fall under only category. Rather the projects encompass few fields corresponding to the organizations' comprehensive approach. Additionally, most of the CSO/Ns have ongoing projects, while only RYCO and SEEYN have no current programs ongoing.

In their work on reconciliation, these actors are mostly challenged by different narratives (67%), politics (50%), ethnic divisions in societies (33%), and external factors (33%). Different narratives are recognized by most of the interviewees as a challenge or limitation of their activities on reconciliation in the region, however the literature makes no reference to this point. Similarlily, external happenings like crises, as the instance of COVID-19, which were emphasized by the organizations/networks were not listed by the literature as limitations or weaknesses. On the other hand, the political factor, pushed forwards by Fischer (2011) in her work and by Kostovicova (2019) who spoke on the illiberal political environment and how it inhibits the works of CSOs in the Western Balkans, further strengthen these scholars' stances on limitations of CSOs. Likewise, the limited space to act was also brought forward as an issue for operating regionally, agreeing thus once again with the literature on weaknesses of civil society organizations. In addition, only in the case of RECOM, a problem was depicted with the internal workings of the network. The network's answer followed Söderbaum (2007) remarks on individual interest becoming an issue for CSOs. Surprisingly, none of the other actors elaborated on organizational or other internal factors which can harden their functioning apart from funding. Consequently, the arguments of Jawlowska & Kubik (2007, as cited in Ekiert & Foa, 2011) and the Civil Society Forum (2009, as cited in Ekiert & Foa, 2011), that CSOs on post-communist countries are structurally weak are not supported by the evidence from the research. In addition, not one of the CSO/Ns participating in this study acknowledged the totalitarian past as a weakness when operating in the area of reconciliation and/or in general. Anyhow, issues of trust, stressed by Mastrorocco (2019) and Rose (1999, as cited in Ekiert and Foa, 2011), were brought forward by RYCO in terms of trust between government and society.

In a short summary, looking at the approach towards reconciliation, capacity, and projects or work done so far of these CSO/Ns in the Western Balkans, it is visible that the actors have taken a broad perspective to tackle reconciliation. They have chosen to bring together the Western Balkan societies via mainly peace and memory work by educating, creating dialogue, remembering, cooperating, and empowering, particularly the youth and documenting truths of the past. Their approach has been translated into numerous projects, and accomplishments that have been put to practice through mostly well-structured staffing that in the majority of the cases operate regionally,

and qualified and experienced leadership. The successes of these organizations/networks in reconciliation have been measured and documented while also challenged. Consequently, their role is marked by all these elements and as actors the CSO/Ns have been able to conduct work beyond what the states in the region have accomplished. Most of the work on reconciliation goes along with the first phase of reconciliation as an outcome, which relates to mutual recognition and acceptance, respective trust, positive attitudes and so on. Taking into consideration their recognition and accomplishments, their establishment, and their capacities, it is evident that as New Regionalism Approach guides, non-state actors can play a regional role and their relevancy is conveyed in this study. Thus, this research further supports the theory of the New Regionalism Approach in the case of Western Balkans.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research has delved into the mapping of the role of regional civil society organizations/networks in pursuing reconciliation in the Western Balkans. The difficult history of the region, which was marked by conflicts and ongoing post-conflictual challenges, serves as the backdrop of the study. To surpass such obstacles and re-connect communities, civil society engagement has been increasingly acknowledged by international actors such as the European Union. Consequently, this recognition has emphasized the importance of non-state actors in reconciliation by perceiving them as methods of regional cooperation.

In exploring CSO/Ns as forms of regional cooperation to address reconciliation, the work relied on primary and secondary data analysis to identify several main themes and findings. It initially revealed that most of the participating civil society organizations/networks consider their approach to reconciliation as comprehensive. In support of this outlook, peace education, cooperation/networking, and documentation/memory work emerged as common elements, aligning with the fact that Peace and Memory work were the dominant topologies. In addition, a youth-centric approach, that followed the idea that empowering the younger generation can shape the region's future and contribute to lasting reconciliation, reappeared in their reconciliation efforts. Concerning organizational capacity, the research uncovered variations in the structures of these CSOs. It showed that most operate as organizations rather than networks and spread throughout all WB6. Moreover, these organizations generally exhibited well-organized structures with defined roles and qualified and/or experienced leadership, despite their differences. The research also listed the evaluating methods employed to examine the success of the reconciliation work by the CSO/Ns. Thus, it implied that evaluation and monitoring, feedback, and recognition were common methods. Partnerships and funding were also explored as indicators of organizational capacity. Through this parameter it was elaborated that most CSOs are dependent on international funding, and they have a variety of partners while the majority relied on partnerships with other CSOs. The study also emphasized the challenges faced by these

organizations, mainly divisions between narratives and societies, political sensitivities and external factors. Regarding the third category of work done in the frame of reconciliation, the research collected and presented data on major projects, ongoing and completed. Altogether, this study provided valuable insights for mapping regional civil society organizations and their contributions to the reconciliation of the Western Balkans

Based on the conclusions of this work, a few recommendations could be drawn up for future reference. Firstly, while observing the projects of these CSO/Ns and their outcomes, it becomes evident that the non-state actors are significant in reconciling societies through regional cooperation. Therefore, the study's findings do support the New Regionalist theory. Nevertheless, the work does not take into consideration the transformation that the activities/projects have brought to the participators and beyond. It does not further study whether this transformative role of non-state actors can be measured in practice and if so how. This could be done through engagement with participants of the programs conducted in the field of reconciliation. A study of this nature could produce future contributions to the theory for interested scholars. Secondly, with youth as a common target group for reconciliation, organizations like PCRC, RWLSEE, RYCO and SEEYN, YiHR could produce more cross-border joint projects, exchange programs and platforms to empower this category of people as catalysts for positive change in the Western Balkans. Thirdly, networks like YiHR and RECOM should enhance their organizational transparency. Both actors need to provide more detailed information regarding their structures and leadership qualifications, in order to reinforce their credibility and public awareness.

In addition to recommendations, some limitations in the conducting of this study must be clarified as well. For one, data reliability can be considered a limitation of the research. The accuracy of the information interpreted throughout the research relies on the data provided by the interviewed organizations responses from either current or previous employees of the organizations/networks. Consequently, their answers might be influenced by their positions and relations with the organizations/networks, leading to a biased portrayal. Another limitation of this research includes the temporary aspects of the organizations/networks analyzed. What this means is that the information presented and studied on structures, approaches, and activities of the civil society actors is time-dependent - it can evolve as time passes. Additionally, restricted data constitutes limitation for the study. The thesis relies on the majority of the organizations for primary

information, however not all actors participated in the interviews. Moreover, the study depends on public secondary data on the CSO/Ns activities and impacts, and this information can be limited. In addition, the secondary data is derived from either a combination of reports and webpages or webpages only depending on the availability of the reports. As a result, the depth of the analysis can be affected. The subjectivity of the researcher can be viewed yet as another limitation of this work. The findings and recommendations are based on the researcher's interpretation of data. In this manner, the subjective nature of this study must be recognized. Overall, even though this work offers valuable insights and recommendations, it is essential to acknowledge these limitations that could impact the findings.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Iris Buciqi was born in Shkoder, on the 16th of December 1999. She finished her primary and secondary education in her hometown and moved to Tirana in 2018 to pursue university studies. In 2021, she graduated with high honors from EPOKA University in the department of Political Science and International Relations. At this year she also continued her Master studies on the same field of study while working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the university. Her academic journey has been accompanied by numerous experiences and professional practices. Ms. Buciqi has been actively involved with youth organizations like UNYAA, US Embassy Youth Council, and Youth Advisory Group of OSCE. Furthermore, she has completed internships at international projects like Corona Net and state institutions like the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in Albania. Currently she is working as a Specialist on the EU Directory at the Ministry where she completed her internship. Iris's interests entail international relations, European studies, Western Balkans and recently reconciliation.

APPENDIX 1- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your organization/network's approach to reconciliation?

2. What activities would you say fall under the area of reconciliation and how?

3. What are your achievements in this area?

4. How do you measure their success?

5. How many completed activities in the area of reconciliation do you have so far?

6. In what ways is your target group important for reconciliation in the Western Balkans?

7. Are you partnering with other organizations for your activities regarding regional reconciliation? Which, if yes?

8. What is the number of staff and members you have right now and their allocation through the region?

9. Could you elaborate on the difficulties faced by your organization when operating regionally?