

## Bosnian Organizations in Germany: The Limits of Contributions to Post-War Recovery

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## Bosnian Organizations in Germany: The Limits of Contributions to Post-War Recovery

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## Abstract

This paper explores the perspectives of Bosnian organizations in Germany on the institutional and structural conditions for transnational engagement in post-war recovery processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its point of departure is the empirical finding that Bosnian organizations in Germany are not intensively and regularly involved in transnational activities directed toward Bosnia, despite a continued emotional attachment to the origin country and an estimated strong capacity for such engagement among the Bosnian population in Germany. The paper argues that this situation can in large part be explained by taking an actor-centered perspective and analyzing Bosnian organizations' perceptions of the structural conditions created by the Bosnian authorities. The empirical data have been obtained from an explorative research on Bosnian organizations in Germany, which studied how Bosnians in Germany organize and what types of transnational activities oriented toward the settlement and origin country they pursue. First, the paper introduces a distinction between capacity and willingness of migrants and their organizations to engage in the origin country and outlines why this distinction is important in the context of conflict-generated migrants' involvement in a post-conflict setting. Second, it identifies the limited efforts the Bosnian government has made so far to mobilize its population abroad and discusses why there is such reluctance to develop a diaspora strategy. Third, the paper presents the perspectives of Bosnian organizations in Germany on the conditions for transnational engagement in post-war recovery processes in the origin-country, including opinions on the Bosnian government and the relationship with the local population in Bosnia. The empirical findings presented in this paper suggest that the researched organizations' perception of the unfavorable Bosnian context severely decreases their willingness to transnationally engage in origin-country developments. Thus, the structural constraints in the origin country and the way how they are perceived by the researched organizations form crucial limits to stronger transnational engagement in post-war recovery processes.

## Introduction

More than 20 years after the destructive war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia or BiH, referring to the entire state territory) came to an end in 1995, the country remains divided in its political structures and social life – a situation that severely impedes its post-war recovery process.<sup>1</sup> One of the war's long-term outcomes is a large Bosnian population scattered throughout the world. Displacement as a central element of 'ethnic cleansing' campaigns during the war (Haider 2012) led an estimated 1.6 million Bosnians to seek protection abroad (Halilovich 2012: 163). Today, Bosnians living abroad are estimated to constitute more than a third of the total Bosnian population (Tihic-Kadric 2011: 6; Valenta and Strabac 2013: 1), with most of them having been forcefully displaced during the war. Germany, as a country with a considerable population from Bosnia and former Yugoslavia already prior to the war, hosted 320,000 Bosnian refugees during the war - the highest number received in a Western European country (Valenta and Strabac 2013).

This paper explores the perspectives of Bosnian organizations in Germany on the institutional and structural conditions for transnational engagement in post-war recovery processes in the origin country. Its point of departure is the empirical finding that Bosnian organizations in Germany are not intensively and regularly involved in transnational activities directed toward Bosnia, despite a continued emotional attachment to the origin country and an estimated strong capacity for such engagement among the Bosnian population in Germany. The paper argues that this situation can in large part be explained by taking an actor-centered perspective and analyzing Bosnian organizations' perceptions of the structural conditions created by the Bosnian government. The empirical findings presented in this paper suggest that the researched organizations' perception of the Bosnian context has a significant impact on their willingness to transnationally engage in origin country developments. Concentrating on this particular aspect, however, it is cautious not to undermine the relevance of two further aspects that certainly also play a role in this context: On the one hand, compared with other European host states that received Bosnian refugees

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<sup>1</sup> In the cause of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, politics of ethnicization rendered the ethno-religious group identities, which prior to the conflict rather informed a national identity, into exclusive political identities (Bieber 2006: 2). The political and ethnic conflict lines are inscribed in the geography of the fragile Southeast-European state: Of the three constituent peoples (narodi), predominantly Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks populate the entity of the Bosniak-Croat Federation (Federacija), while in the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) Bosnian Serbs make up the majority.

under a temporary protection regime, Germany has been considered one of the least favorable (Valenta and Ramet 2011: 10) due to a strict reception policy that exacerbated settlement and a migrant incorporation regime that offers less opportunity structures for migrants and their organizations to participate in political life. Despite its restrictive return policy immediately after the war came to end (id., 13), an estimated number of 228,000 people born in Bosnia live in Germany today, and meanwhile, more than 75,000 of them acquired German citizenship (as of 2011; Ministry for Security 2014: 67f, data provided by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany). On the other hand, the heterogeneity and fragmentation among Bosnian organizations in Germany resulted in weak organizational structures and severely limited internal solidarity. In Germany, like in many host or settlement countries, people from Bosnia established organizations (see e.g., Halilovich 2013; Valenta and Ramet 2011), which in many cases reflect the ethno-national divisions within the origin country (Graafland 2012: 6). While prior to the war traditional collective identities based on ethnicity and religion represented rather nominal categories for many Bosnian citizens, the experience of forced displacement had a profound influence on processes of identity (re)formation and collective organization (Halilovich 2013: 119). In Germany, most of the organizations that consider themselves as ‘Bosnian’ are predominantly constituted of Bosniaks/Bosnian Muslims or sometimes are mixed regarding their ethnic composition, while Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats are more attracted to Serbian, respectively Croatian migrant communities and organizations (Graafland 2012: 6).

The empirical data presented here have been obtained from an explorative research on Bosnian organizations in Germany, which studied how Bosnians in Germany organize and what types of transnational activities oriented toward the settlement and origin country they pursue. Their orientations and activities have been analyzed against the background of the institutional settings and opportunity structures given in both contexts. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of six different Bosnian organizations throughout Germany have been conducted between May and June 2015.<sup>2</sup> The research revealed that the Bosnian population in Germany is disorganized and that the landscape of Bosnian organizations in Germany is highly fragmented. Organizations are often focused on identity maintenance and integration into the settlement context, while transnational activities conducive to recovery

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<sup>2</sup> Those organizations have been included in the sample that are either constituted only of people that self-identify as Bosnians or that have been founded mainly by people that self-identify as Bosnians.

processes in post-war Bosnia are limited (the findings are presented in COMCAD Working Paper 149).

The paper first introduces a distinction between the capacity and the willingness of migrants and their organizations to engage in origin-country processes, arguing that this distinction is important in the context of conflict-generated migrants' involvement in a post-conflict setting. Second, it identifies the limited efforts the Bosnian government has made so far to mobilize its population abroad (dual citizenship, external voting rights, migration and development policies, and initiatives toward a diaspora strategy) and discusses why there is such reluctance to develop a diaspora strategy. Third, the paper presents the perspectives of Bosnian organizations in Germany on the conditions for transnational engagement in post-war recovery processes in the origin-country, including opinions on the Bosnian government and the relationship with the local population in Bosnia. The concluding section reflects on how the perception of the unfavorable conditions created by Bosnian authorities forms crucial impediments and thus severely limits the organizations' willingness to transnationally engage in post-war recovery processes.

## **1 Involvement of migrant organizations in the origin country: potential and willingness**

Migrant organizations are organizations that are mainly constituted of migrants (not only of the first generation) and whose interests, objectives, and functions are related to the migration experience, the common origin, and questions concerning participation in both the origin and receiving society (Fauser 2010: 268; Pries 2013: 2). Migrants and their organizations can engage in origin-country development through various sustained and continuous trans-border practices (Faist 2008: 26). Their mobilization of diverse forms of resources, ranging from financial capital (remittances, investments), knowledge and professional experience to political ideas (e.g., on human rights and democracy), can stimulate social, economic and political transformations in the origin country (id., 27). Engagement in such processes requires their continued interest in the origin country and in cultural, economic, and political exchanges with it (Sheffer 2003: 81). A continued affiliation to the country of origin is considered especially critical in the case of involvement in processes of post-conflict recovery, including economic and social reconstruction and peacebuilding (Kent 2006: 450; Haider 2014: 212). In the present research, the strength of connections to and the forms of involvement in the origin country have been analyzed

through the identification of transnational activities toward Bosnia as well as the relationships and attitudes of Bosnian organizations to the government and the local population in Bosnia.

The way how migrants experience and interpret the structural context in which they act influences their orientations and activities toward the settlement and/or origin context, their strategies and the resources they mobilize to deal with different external constraints (Valenta and Strabac 2013: 2). The conditions in both the origin and the settlement country influence the emergence and maintenance of transnational ties to the origin country (Fauser 2010: 272ff; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001). They create an environment of institutional and societal opportunity structures that enables or constrains migrants' transnational contributions to the origin country (Brinkerhoff 2012). This can either be directly by shaping conditions that motivate or discourage involvement in the origin country (e.g., diaspora and development policies, Fauser 2010: 173) or indirectly through integration policies and opportunity structures that enable participation in the receiving context (id.) and in turn allow for the mobilization of resources useful for involvement in the origin context.

The policies of the origin country can be more or less welcoming toward external influences from their population abroad. Activities through which the state reaches out to its nationals beyond its territorial boundaries have become a trend among emigration countries (Bakewell 2008) and can be understood as 'transnationalism from above' (Valenta and Ramet 2011). This paper considers the difficult process of developing diaspora policies in Bosnia and the extent to which Bosnian authorities make efforts to maintain ties to the population abroad (e.g., dual citizenship, external voting rights).

From a migration-development perspective that asks how migrants contribute to socio-economic development processes in the origin country, the large Bosnian population abroad - in this context often referred to as 'Bosnian diaspora'<sup>3</sup> in an undifferentiated manner - is considered by international organizations to have great development potential for BiH (e.g., IOM and IASCI 2010). This expectation is primarily based on the long-lasting high levels of remittance flows to Bosnia. In 2010, remittances amounted to 13 to 20 percent of Bosnia's

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<sup>3</sup> By contrast, an essentialist notion of diaspora which considers all members of the community as a part of diaspora is avoided here, and the term is rather associated with collective mobilization of elites for a national or ethnic cause. This follows Brubaker's suggestion to think of diasporas as a category of practice. This perspective considers that not all those who feel connected to the 'homeland' and share a common identity actually adopt a diasporic stance, but only a small minority (Brubaker 2005: 12). This perspective underlines that border-crossing processes are not the single criterion for a diaspora identity to emerge, but that diasporas are discursively constructed (Haider 2014: 211).



GDP (data by the World Bank and the Central Bank of BiH differ) (Graafland 2012: 5).<sup>4</sup> Still many families depend on the support from their relatives abroad due to the instable socio-economic situation that is characterized by an unfavorable investment climate (Jakobsen 2011: 195), severe labor market problems (e.g., high formal unemployment rates and lack of general working skills and specialized qualifications on the labor supply side, IOM 2007: 23), and a lack of social welfare (IOM and IASCI 2010: 39). Under these circumstances, remittances still play an important role in mitigating poverty, but their effect on inequality is not clear (Oruč 2011: 3f). Furthermore, Bosnia currently is an emigration country with a considerable “brain drain” (IOM 2007: 14), because the economically most active population emigrates - the share of emigrants with tertiary education is exceptionally high (MHRR 2011: 6; Tihic-Kadric 2011: 9) and many more leave the country to complete tertiary education abroad (Nikolic et al 2010: 6).

It is for these reasons that international policy makers and Bosnian institutions concerned with diaspora affairs aim to integrate emigrants into national development strategies (see e.g., GIZ 2013; IOM and IASCI 2010; MHRR 2011).<sup>5</sup> Since the still conflict-ridden country has not fully recovered from the war yet and is less stable requires more attention to migrants’ contributions to the recovery of the society (Van Hear 2011), such as economic and social reconstruction and peacebuilding. The Bosnian diaspora is assumed to “carry considerable potential to assist reconstruction” (Kent 2006: 450). However, since the Bosnian migrant population has largely been constituted through conflict-induced displacement, it is necessary to be attentive to the inclination of these migrants to assist in post-conflict recovery processes. That means to distinguish between their capacity to engage in transnational activities for post-war recovery, and their actual willingness to do so (Van

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<sup>4</sup> As one of the leading migrant “exporters” to OECD countries (Nikolic et al 2010: 5) and one of the leading countries in terms of remittance inflows as share of GDP, the country is highly dependent on these financial inflows, which by far exceed foreign direct investments and official development aid (Oruč 2011). But they rather sustain the current situation than develop it to the better.

<sup>5</sup> These expectations reflect the recent trend in migration-development thinking promoted by many international organizations, national governments and development agencies since by 1990s. The increased recognition of migrants’ origin-country contributions has been fueled by the rapid upsurge in financial remittances since the late 1990s (Kapur 2004). Researchers and policy-makers point out that migrants can positively contribute to origin-country development by channeling financial and social remittances, transferring technology and circulating skills (Castles and Miller 2009: 70). As “new development agents” (Faist 2008) they can bring about social change, either on an individual level as a form of self-help for families and friends with poverty alleviation effects (Faist et al 2013: 21) and significant economic effects in the aggregate (Van Hear 2011: 95), or on a collective level through hometown associations, business networks or diasporas (Lacomba and Cloquell 2014: 21; Castles and Delgado Wise 2008: 3). For critical perspectives dealing with dependence on remittances or the inherent neoliberal paradigm that shifts attention away from structural constraints toward individual responsibility, see e.g., Kapur (2004); de Haas (2012); Faist (2008); Castles and Delgado Wise (2008).

Hear 2011: 95). The *capacity* is very much influenced by attendant experiences of flight and refuge in a host country, including a secure legal status, which open up avenues for labor market participation and further opportunities for the accumulation of resources required for transnational engagement (Turner 2007: 95f; Van Hear 2011: 94). The *willingness* describes personal motivations, such as protecting family, kin, and friends, wider humanitarian concerns for the community, society or nation, as well as political motivations driven by loyalties and attitudes toward the post-war government or ethno-political sentiments (Van Hear 2011: 94f). However, even if the capacity is given, the political environment in the country of origin may not welcome such transnational commitment (Swain and Baser 2008: 24) and limit opportunities for it (Van Hear 2012: 95). This in turn can decrease migrants' concern with broader social change and limit the focus to immediate support of significant others (ibid.). Thus, structural constraints can significantly affect the willingness to engage in post-war recovery in the origin country. Also, the cohesion and organization within a migrant group influences the willingness for collective activities: for instance, ethnic and religious identities, class, gender, age, urban/rural background, level of education or migration experience can lead to segmentation and divisions within a migrant group (Haider 2014: 2012). The literature on diaspora influence in conflict and post-conflict settings therefore draws attention to existing segments with different interests and objectives, and their peace and conflict promoting inclinations (e.g., Spear 2006; Swain and Baser 2008; Haider 2014). Likewise, their interests and attitudes can diverge from the local population and thus decrease their influence there (Swain and Baser 2008: 24).

## 2 Mobilizing the population abroad?

### 2.1 Dual citizenship and external voting rights

Since 2013, Bosnia allows for *dual citizenship*. The *Law on Citizenship BiH* abolished the provision that conditioned dual citizenship on bilateral agreements with a destination state (otherwise BiH citizenship was lost upon acquisition of a destination country citizenship) (Nikolić et al 2010: 27). Such bilateral agreements existed only with Serbia, Croatia and Sweden (mail correspondence with A. Telalović, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, 10/02/2016), so that it is likely that the former legislation has resulted in the loss of a significant number of BiH citizens abroad (Nikolić et al 2010: 26f). Now, BiH citizens can keep their original citizenship provided the country whose citizenship they wish to acquire allows for dual citizenship. However, the issue of losing the Bosnian citizenship remains for

Bosnian emigrants living in Germany, which upon citizenship acquisition demands the renunciation of the former citizenship (Ministry for Security 2014: 68).

*External voting* as a crucial citizenship right is regulated in the following way: BiH citizens (assumed to reside abroad only temporarily) can vote in person (at a polling station in BiH or at a Bosnian diplomatic and consular representation office) or by sending the ballot via mail. They can vote for the municipality where they held permanent residence prior to departure, provided they are registered as permanent residents in that municipality at the moment of submitting the application for out-of-country vote.

## 2.2 Efforts taken toward developing a diaspora policy

Active diaspora policies are considered to encourage migrants' engagement in socio-economic development of their country of origin (Castles and Miller 2009). In Bosnia, a diaspora strategy still is in the process of development that is soon to be finalized (mail correspondence with A. Telalović, 18/02/2017). Bosnia neither has a coherent diaspora policy, nor a separate ministry for diaspora issues (IOM 2007: 32). So far, programs on maintaining ties with the diaspora – argued to be crucial for ensuring migrant contributions – have been kept at a minimum (Graafland 2012: 11). Resulting from the missing initiative to establish an effective cooperation with them, it is likely that a significant number of nationals abroad become increasingly less motivated to engage in the country's development (Nikolić et al. 2010: 23). Migrants have repeatedly called for a coherent diaspora policy and cooperation with Bosnian authorities (Nikolić et al. 2010; Graafland 2012: 12).

Bosnia lacks behind its neighbors Serbia and Croatia, which have developed comprehensive regulations and provisions for the cooperation with their nationals abroad. At the BiH central state level, responsibilities for diaspora issues are dispersed over several ministries and agencies (Graafland 2012: 11). The jurisdiction for diaspora predominantly remains within the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) (MHRR 2011: 4). In 2000, a Department for Diaspora was established within the ministry, which "acts as a resource point for BiH citizens living abroad, providing up-to date information on citizenship laws, investment opportunities and developments within the country" (IOM 2007: 32f). There are two units within the Department – one for Cooperation with the Organizations of BiH Diaspora and one for Cooperation in the Areas of Economics, Education and Culture (Tihic-Kadrić 2011: 2). The Department's activities involve the collection of data on its population abroad, including information on the flow of financial contributions (e.g. remittances) and on

highly qualified experts and entrepreneurs, and the establishment of contacts with diaspora networks (Nikolić et al 2010: 24; Tihic-Kadric 2011: 12).<sup>6</sup>

Until now, the ministry has not been successful in developing a diaspora policy (Graafland 2012: 11). One basic reason is the lack of data on BiH citizens abroad, which makes it difficult to identify this part of the population abroad and its resources (Nikolić 2010: 20, 24f). More importantly, since a preparatory process has been started in 2008, several attempts of policy adoption have failed (for details see, e.g., Graafland 2012; Tihic-Kadric 2011; Nikolić et al 2010). The Diaspora Department submitted a draft Law on BiH's Cooperation with her Diaspora for adoption in 2010, however, this draft has not been adopted neither by the Council of Ministers of BiH nor by the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (mail correspondence with A. Telalović, 21/09/2015). In recent years, the MHRR proposed to the BiH Council of Ministers to appoint an inter-sector working group involving representatives of all administrative levels in charge of drafting the Strategy of BiH on her Diaspora and the Law on BiH Diaspora (mail correspondence with A. Telalović, 21/09/2015 and 10/02/2016). Meanwhile, the inter-sector working group completed a draft for a Policy of BiH on Diaspora and public consultations on it have been arranged by MHRR. At the end of 2016, the draft has been submitted to the BiH Council of Ministers for further harmonization and discussion and the final adoption is expected soon (mail correspondence with A. Telalović, 18/02/2017).

### 2.3 Migration and development-related programs

Underdeveloped Bosnian diaspora policies do not imply that Bosnian migrants are not involved in the country's development at all. Although a coherent policy strategy on migration and development has not been elaborated, some programs have been implemented that seek to reconnect emigrants with the country (Valenta and Ramet 2011: 17) and to counteract the post-war "brain drain" effects through the facilitation of temporary or permanent return and knowledge transfer (Nikolić et al 2010: 26; Tihic-Kadric 2011: 13).

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<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for protecting the rights and interests of Bosnian citizens living temporarily or permanently abroad, coordinates the work of Bosnian embassies and other consular bodies, and with emigrated Bosnians, either via the embassies or directly. The Ministry of Civil Affairs and the BiH Agency for Labour and Employment have responsibilities concerning bilateral agreements on employment, for instance. (Graafland 2012: 11; Ministry for Security 2014: 76f; Tihic-Kadric 2011)

These activities have mainly been initiated and carried out by international organizations and NGOs, with assistance of Bosnian institutions (MHRR 2011: 4). The most important programs are *Return of Qualified National (RQN)*, *Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN)* and *Migration and Development in the Western Balkans (MIDWEB)* run by IOM<sup>7</sup>, and UNDP's *Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN)* (Nikolić et al 2010: 26; Graafland 2012: 11). However, Nikolić et al. (2010: 26) point out that even though the Bosnian government supported these international projects to a certain degree, when it was asked to take over the implementation of the TOKTEN project no interest was shown; foreign governments investing in these initiatives responded with decreased funding.

Furthermore, the Diaspora Department has supported and hosted several regional gatherings on migration and development since the late 2000s (GIZ 2013: 6f). Responsible BiH ministries, predominantly MHRR, also assisted initiatives by diaspora organizations. For instance, the Diaspora Department has supported congresses organized by the Bosnian scientific diaspora organization BHAAAS or the Diaspora World organization SSDBiH as well as projects on knowledge transfer implemented by diaspora organizations. Complying to the accomplishments defined in the IOM Framework Agreement on initiatives that aim at linking migration with Bosnia's development, Bosnian authorities have assisted several research projects (e.g., a report on the diaspora's financial contributions by IOM and IASCI 2010). An initiative that aims to promote diaspora networking and information sharing is the annual business directory published by MHRR, which gathers information on experts and professionals abroad. (Graafland 2012: 13, Tihic-Kadrić 2011: 13)

These examples hint at a focus of government-supported programs on highly educated migrants. However, these are isolated efforts of a sporadic nature that are neither part of nor lead to an overarching migration-development strategy. Sustained attention to the

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<sup>7</sup> IOM's RQN programs are concerned with the repatriation of qualified migrants that intend to use their professional abilities for the social and economic development of their origin country. In order to encourage the return of highly qualified refugees to key positions, IOM started a program similar to RQN for Bosnian returnees at the end of 1996. By the end of 1999, almost 800 highly qualified refugees were repatriated. For employers who hired qualified returnees, subsidies for loan and employment costs have been granted for 12 months. According to IOM, around 85 percent of the returnees remained employed afterward. Initially planned for a longer term, the project came to an end in 1999 due to scarce project funds and difficulties to find suitable returnees. From 2000 onward the regional office in Sarajevo planned further RQN projects through which the reform of the BiH justice system and the development of the private sector was to be assisted. (Aumüller 2005: 35f, 46)

MIDWEB aimed to contribute to the reconstruction and development of the participating countries Albania, BiH, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo by supporting temporary returns of 60 higher educated professionals from the Western Balkans residing in Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and UK and ended in November 2012 (GIZ 2013: 28; BAMF 2012).

establishment of ties with the skilled Bosnian population living abroad is missing (Graafland 2012: 13; Nikolić et al 2010: 32).

Besides a general lack of state interest to provide support, professionals and others face several systematic obstacles to contribute. For instance, a common obstacle to mobility many people have been faced with is diploma recognition, particularly among students returning to Bosnia after studying abroad (Nikolić et al 2010: 26ff). Likewise, there is no strategy on remittances capture or on financial incentives for migrants to invest in BiH that could facilitate and encourage financial contributions (Graafland 2012: 15).

## 2.4 Explaining (the lack of) a strategy – diaspora policy as a contested field

Considering the high development and reconstruction potential of Bosnians abroad that is recognized by international agencies and the Bosnian diaspora department, “Bosnia’s passive role in its adoption of a national legal framework is remarkable” (Graafland 2012: 13). Bosnia’s lack of a strategy to establish and maintain ties with its population abroad forms a crucial impediment to an ‘enabling environment’ (Brinkerhoff 2012) for Bosnians abroad to pursue activities conducive to the country’s development. How can this reluctance be explained?

At first sight, it appears that there is no official interest to improve the current situation, as even an expressed willingness of Bosnians abroad to make contributions has not been met with an effective response by the government (Nikolić et al 2010; Graafland 2012: 15). This stands in stark contrast to a recent trend among countries with a large share of emigrants to maintain links with their nationals abroad by actively engaging them and by creating conditions and programs that facilitate a transfer of their remittances, knowledge and votes, or encourage their return (Bakewell 2008: 289f).

Although Bosnia allows for dual citizenship, and thus expands the political community beyond its territorial borders (Waterbury 2010: 135), the Bosnian case demonstrates that the development of diaspora policies often is a contested process that can evoke repercussions against diaspora engagement (ibid.). Waterbury points out that policies expanding the boundaries of political membership beyond the state borders in order to maintain ties with the diaspora are often met with “widespread resistance to accepting members of the ethnic diaspora as ‘real’ members of the civic community who deserve the full rights and benefits of citizenship.” (id., 143f)

Thus, for a sending state to take any action toward diaspora engagement requires the recognition of the diaspora and its potential for favorable contributions (Brinkerhoff 2012: 82). In this aspect, Bosnia's stance is rather ambivalent: As pointed out above, the MHRR promotes a strengthened diaspora involvement (Graafland 2012: 16) and aims to raise awareness about diaspora contributions (IOM and IASCI 2010: 7). However, it appears to be the only body interested in strengthening ties with Bosnians abroad in order to utilize their resources, and it has only limited capacity and insufficient funding available (Graafland 2012: 16). Among decision makers in other state-level institutions no consensus for a systematic promotion of diaspora contributions exists (Tihic-Kadric 2011: 17). Hitherto, no official policy statement on diaspora recognition has been adopted and effective actions for inclusion remain largely absent (Graafland 2012: 16).

Beyond recognition, political will to facilitate migrants' influence from abroad is a critical aspect explaining this lack of consensus. Even if they are conducive to the country's progress, politicians are not necessarily welcoming vis-à-vis diaspora intervention in domestic affairs and may view them as threatening or competing with their own legitimacy and effectiveness (Brinkerhoff 2012: 88). They may view the external influence in opposition to their interests and hence prevent policies that encourage such activities (ibid.). Especially in countries with a history of ethnicized conflict, decision makers may view the interference of the population abroad as a source of political opposition (ibid.)

Seen from the other side of the coin, tensions in the relationship between migrants and the origin-country government can emerge when migrants' interests differ from government priorities (Bakewell 2008: 299) and diasporas act as additional interest groups alongside domestic actors that seek access to power and resources. This raises questions regarding their right to access to power, such as whether they should be allowed to influence policies to which they will not be subjected (Brinkerhoff 2012: 89). While some origin countries facilitate the political involvement of their population abroad, for instance by granting them external voting rights or providing seats for them in parliaments, Bosnia's complicated political structure does not provide the possibility for citizens abroad to exert significant political influence (Graafland 2012: 17).

A prevalent notion among Bosnian politicians is that any external interference may become a threat to the political equilibrium in Bosnia's delicate division of power that is based on ethnic division (Graafland 2012: 17) – its 'stable instability'. An increased influence from abroad would be detrimental to those recently profiting from political offices, because it may shift power relations and question their legitimacy. Even migrants' philanthropic and economic contributions in support of the country's transitioning process may increase their influence or

the influence of particular groups, and could affect the fragile ethnic balance of power (ibid.). Accordingly, ethno-nationalistic politicians fear that any systematic government support for emigrants may encourage external influence as well as large-scale return, which could alter the ethnic composition in areas of return and shift the political and societal majority/minority-relations (Graafland 2012: 17). Moreover, from the perspective of many politicians, there is no Bosnian diaspora; they conceive of migrants as primarily linked to their ethnic groups rather than to the Bosnian state: “Hence, by many politicians (...) Bosnian Serbs living abroad are considered Serbian diaspora, which is also fully supported by the authorities in Serbia. Likewise, Bosnian Croats are viewed, and treated by current Croat diaspora strategy, as Croat diaspora, and Bosniaks are seen as Bosniak instead of Bosnian diaspora.” (Graafland 2012: 16). Thus, the absence of an official diaspora policy is partly explained by the political unwillingness to agree on who belongs to the respective diaspora population (Graafland 2012: 18; Tihic-Kadric 2011: 17).

Furthermore, Bosnia has started the EU accession process, in which the country is expected to fulfill a number of accession requirements that influence Bosnian policy priorities. Since diaspora issues are not part of the accession requirements, the Bosnian government with its limited capacity does not see an obligation to address them (Graafland 2012: 17). But it should also be taken into consideration how the recent war history has shaped policy priorities. For instance, more pressing domestic concerns related to economic and institutional reconstruction and the repatriation of refugees and IDPs received most government attention (Graafland 2012: 16). For Bosnian politicians opposed to diaspora policies, the absence of this topic in the EU accession process appears to be a good excuse to ignore it or consider it irrelevant (id., 17).

### **3 Perspectives from abroad: The relations of Bosnians in Germany to Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Turning to the core of the paper, this section presents the empirical findings about the perspectives of Bosnian organizations in Germany on the conditions for transnational commitment to post-war recovery processes in the origin country. The words of an interlocutor about the relations to Bosnia are telling: It is an “unhealthy relationship”, fraught with many difficulties. Speaking about the relationship between Bosnians residing in Germany and the origin country, two levels have been addressed by the interview partners: On the one hand, the relationship with the Bosnian government and the institutional obstacles, and on the other hand, the relationship with the local population in Bosnia.



### 3.1 Opinions and expectations toward the Bosnian government

The interlocutors have a critical perspective toward the Bosnian authorities: The state is weak<sup>8</sup>, bad-functioning, and inactive. Corruption is widespread. Vested interests prevail. Ethno-nationalist politicians in political offices are preoccupied with themselves, and not attentive to issues pertaining to its population abroad. These aspects are most commonly mentioned. Furthermore, the complicated political system created under Dayton, the lack of democratic control and the complicated external voting regulations for Bosnian citizens abroad are criticized. Complaints are made that the government does not strengthen the economy and that the system bears many bureaucratic obstacles that demotivate investments of Bosnians living abroad, as interviewed persons experienced themselves.

*Disappointment: “not heard down there”.* The dominating theme in the interviewees’ criticism is the lack of attention to the concerns of and support for the population abroad. The informants unanimously state that they “are not heard down there”, and that the government is not interested in their efforts and achievements, even if they are in the interest of the country's progress. They are disappointed about the missing support and the lack of the government’s efforts to improve the relationship:

“(…) [O]ur government makes it difficult for us. And this is a general phenomenon that I observe, not only in Bosnia (…) that the people do not count on us. They know that during and after the war (…) nearly half the population emigrated, and the best educated and most talented people emigrated. (…) And this is a phenomenon that these governments in our homelands do not want us, the diaspora. (…)”

According to the interview partners, Bosnians abroad, equipped with good qualifications and financial resources, could achieve more in favor of their country of origin if only they had the official support from the Bosnian government. The impression prevails that the state missed many chances to involve them and to cooperate with them.

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<sup>8</sup> The political system of BiH is characterized by a weak central state, a very complicated structure and divisions along ethnic lines (see, e.g. Bieber 2006; Stiks 2011). It significantly complicates the process of reconstitution, because it gives opportunities for elites to hamper reforms or at least to shape them in a way more favorable for themselves (Jakobsen 2011: 195): “[V]ested interests on all sides appearing to be more interested in preserving the largely dysfunctional status quo than providing for Bosnia's political, institutional, and economic development” (id., 187) led to political stagnation and low economic capacity (IOM and IASCI 2010: 138). On the other hand, it is argued that the limited success of the restructuring process is a result of an economic strategy more or less imposed by international actors (e.g., IMF, World Bank, EU), which advocate principles of economic growth and development through privatization and liberalization; this agenda lacked domestic legitimacy and commitment by Bosnia’s elites that were reluctant to relinquish their economic privileges (Jakobsen 2011: 187). Thus, although a certain degree of political and macroeconomic stabilization has been achieved (IOM and IASCI 2010:129), the reform process of post-Dayton BiH is far from finalized (Jakobsen 2011: 187).

“Oh, yes, I think this is a pity. (...) There is so much potential here, also regarding the people, that means, experts and money and so on. (...) It's a pity, because there are so many good things and the people would also realize more projects if only they had noticed more support from down there. (...) Because, I think down there they think that those here are well off anyway ... . (...) If only more exchange could take place. But they don't bother about it.”

A common impression among all interlocutors is that citizens abroad are only addressed when it comes to financial remittances and votes. For instance:

“They only address the people when it comes to elections. This I have to emphasize. In this moment, all people, the entire diaspora is important all of a sudden.”

“(...) only elections, that's important. Maybe also that we send money, that as well.”

“It's only money, you can say that. (...) I can imagine that they expect that we send money to Bosnia, and that we leave money there. And this is why I can imagine that the politicians do not recognize the poor people, because they think that 'they have rich relatives abroad, so we don't have to look after them'. (...) It's simply a fact that nearly everyone has family members abroad.”

*Resentments against 'those abroad'.* The last quote stands exemplary for the interlocutors' impression that the Bosnian state depends on the resources of its population abroad. Considering this, it is even more surprising for them that the government does not make efforts to strengthen connections to them. Interview partners suggest that Bosnian politicians may think that living in good conditions they are not interested in the fate of their origin country and therefore have no reason to intervene in internal dynamics:

“When somebody from the diaspora wants to say something, they'll say, 'why does it concern you, you're not here anyway and you're doing fine there'.”

That origin-country governments discredit exiles and emigrants by portraying them as traitors to national interests (Quinsaat 2013: 957) has been recognized in other cases, too. In Bosnia it appears that “a disturbing discourse has (...) emerged whereby the Bosnian diaspora is either overlooked or even resented as a distant and privileged cousin to those currently weathering the transition in Bosnia.” (Esterhuizen 2005: 47) Politicians reinforce tensions within society by nurturing resentments toward emigrants and prevailing war hostilities, and the present case delivers evidence that such rhetoric is likely to deter migrants' transnational activities.

*Expectations toward the Bosnian state.* That the Bosnian citizenship law meanwhile allows unconditionally for dual citizenship is viewed as the latest positive decision made for those abroad, even though it has less relevance for those living in Germany. With regard to *political inclusion*, interviewees address regulations concerning external voting and the lack of a diaspora law and a diaspora ministry. These represent elements of the institutional setting that essentially affect the relationship between the Bosnian state and its population abroad and the ways in which those abroad can exert influence on their origin country.

Voting from abroad is a relatively complicated process, organized through ballots; voters first have to register, then they receive a list of candidates from an electoral commission. Interviewees consider the complicated procedure as an example of how the Bosnian government tries to hamper possibilities for Bosnian citizens abroad to be involved in political processes in BiH.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as form of emigrant politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001) that involves claims toward the origin country, some informal groups in Germany promoting the cause of a Bosnian state that unites all ethnic and religious groups try to mobilize Bosnian citizens abroad to register and participate in elections. They even mobilize people to travel to the municipalities where they are registered (particularly in Republika Srpska), in order not to manifest the results of ethnic cleansing and to influence political relations in this way. For them, it is important that citizens abroad vote, even though they know that the likelihood to bring about change is rather low. Some of them consider the participation in elections as an important practice that does not only allow expressing discontent with political developments, but also ensures that they do not lose the attachment to their origin country.

According to the informants, the establishment of institutions responsible for diaspora affairs, such as a ministry for diaspora and a diaspora law, would give them not only a feeling of symbolic recognition, but also a stronger position. Improved attention to this part of the population, for instance through external voting regulations that also allow for active voting rights, would reveal the real strength and the influence they could have on political processes in Bosnia, and could bring about severe changes in Bosnian politics. They consider that they could become “inconvenient” and shift the majority/minority power relations, and thus the results of ethnic cleansing. However, among them prevails the conviction that ethno-nationalist politicians are aware of that and fear that too much influence exerted by those abroad could jeopardize their political offices and create pressure to change the recent political status quo. For the interlocutors, this is the reason why proposals for a ministry for diaspora and a diaspora law do not find consent in Bosnian politics so far. They are blocked by politicians' vested interests that reinforce ethno-national divisions. They believe that if this situation continues, those citizens abroad that are still interested in Bosnia may eventually be lost for the country:

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<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, some of those representatives that still hold Bosnian citizenship have the feeling that it makes no sense to vote. The state that voting would not bring any change, because Bosnian politicians are irresponsible anyway, that they do not know the candidates, and that for them the elections and political decisions in Bosnia do not affect them anyway.

“The problem is, once again, politics, because different interests exist. There are politicians that would like to do it, in order to reconnect the people to the country. And obviously, there are politicians (...) that do not have an interest in this. And if this is not going to be regulated in the country soon, half of the people in diaspora will probably have obtained foreign passports soon.”

Considering themselves as non-partisan and non-political, most of the researched organizations do not engage in claims-making in Bosnia and do not make public political statements about events in their country of origin. The interviewed representatives' viewpoints presented here are personal opinions that indicate attitudes among the population abroad. Claims-making as a form of emigrant politics is practiced by some of them in rather informal networks, and only one of the researched organizations publicly criticizes certain circumstances through protest letters and press releases. In contrast, religious communities rather aim to take a neutral position toward Bosnian politics and to focus on the representation of religious interests of their members in the settlement context.

When it comes to *improved economic opportunity structures for Bosnians abroad*, interlocutors expressed particular concern about the living conditions and social situation of the local population. They express the wish for a more democratic political system with less nationalistic cleavages and corruption and an improved economic situation, because this could have two crucial effects: it could decrease unemployment rates and thus strengthen the country, which in turn may eventually allow overcoming ethno-religious divisions in politics:

“That the social and human relations, or let's say these barriers, these religious or whatever, faint. Because then people will have a work place, they can afford something... Then, religion will be thrust aside and everyone deals with religion, but privately. This needs to disappear from politics.”

In their eyes, a crucial factor that blocks opportunities for the country's development is the missing recognition of the (economic) potential of emigrants. In their eyes, a more favorable environment for Bosnians abroad to pursue economic activities in Bosnia would be a prerequisite for economic development that would ultimately attract foreign investors and tourism.

In brief, the wish for more recognition of those abroad involves acknowledging their significance beyond votes, remittances and money spent in Bosnia during summer holidays. Underlining the skills and qualifications as well as experiences that the citizens abroad can offer, interlocutors demand the equal involvement of the diaspora in the political and economic development of the country as long as it is still willing to contribute, and the recognition of the manifold accomplishments of the population and organizations abroad - ranging from humanitarian relief and remittances to lobbying and the promotion of the country's culture and history through diverse cultural events in the settlement context. Explicit

demands are a ministry for diaspora affairs, easier voting procedures in consulates, and active voting rights to stand as candidate in elections from abroad, and support for projects implemented in cooperation with Bosnians abroad. The wish is expressed that more responsibility is taken by Bosnian politicians to harness nationalist propaganda, which is perceived to be particularly pervasive in the Serb entity.

The other side of the relationship, however, is addressed by only very few interlocutors. Some of them point at the responsibility of the population abroad, which is disorganized and not sufficiently working together. If they would act together, they could exert more pressure on Bosnian politics to realize a diaspora law, for example. Such efforts would also signal that the Bosnian population abroad is still interested in the country's future. Likewise, other actors – international actors (e.g., the EU) and the local Bosnian population – would need to act to change the recent situation, for instance by pressuring Bosnian politicians. Regarding the latter, the interlocutors express their support for the popular protests in Bosnia in 2014 that subsided relatively quickly, and they hope for more such local mobilization in the future.

### 3.2 'Us here' and 'them there'

While on the institutional level basically no established formal connections between the Bosnian authorities and its population abroad exist, connections to Bosnia are most commonly based on informal ties to relatives, friends and acquaintances. These ties highlight the emotional attachment of the interlocutors (as individuals rather than in their function as representatives) to their country of origin, and contribute to an understanding of their motivation for transnational practices, predominantly on a private level. The interlocutors underline that Bosnia's population depends to a considerable extent on support from family members abroad because of the government's inactivity to foster economic progress. Some state that Bosnia "could not survive without us": "And because politics down there are the way they are... (...) It [the diaspora] is somehow forced. And this lies in our hands." From this awareness about their significance as supporters derives a particular concern among the informants: they feel responsible for the well-being of the population: "And so we actually feel responsible. At least toward the people down there."

"(...) without the diaspora many down there could not survive. No money, could not pay this or that, and ... we really feel an obligation. Because, one could also see it this way: Last year there was this flood (...) And... there it was us again, the diaspora, that reacts faster than the politics down there."

Due to the insufficient social security system in Bosnia, informal social protection through family members abroad is an important guarantor for the social protection of the local population. Beyond a household level, much money is also spent by those abroad during summer holidays with the family ‘down there’.

“That means, we are also financing. This is obvious when in summer we all travel down there. All the cafés, all restaurants, all are happy and have a smiling face, because we bring money and are generous (...). Some businesses in these two months earn the turnover for the whole year.”

However, the informants emphasize that even though they play a crucial role by supporting the local population there are limits to what they can do from a distance. For them, only the local population itself can decide in which directions future developments should go, including to end the dependency from family members abroad:

“But the change in thinking, the consciousness, needs to take place among the citizens on-site. (...) The people eventually need to deal with a range of issues of local nature, so that the country can make some progress. And such things they can only deal with down there. From a distance we can only assist, even though we play an important role.”

*Of ‘stayers’ and ‘leavers’.* Apparently, not only the relations to the Bosnian government, but also the relationship between those abroad and the local population is described as “tense”, or “not the best”. Especially the asymmetry between those abroad that (have to) support the ‘stayers’ seems to explain the tensions in their relation to each other.

The reports of the interviewed persons reveal a couple of stereotypes that exist about ‘those abroad’. For instance, interviewees report about the feeling of being treated like ‘traitors’. To be a ‘traitor’ means having fled from the war, evading the hardship of living in post-war Bosnia, and instead living in prosperity abroad where money allegedly “grows on trees”, without considering returning and becoming increasingly disconnected from the origin country. Apparently, a widespread belief among ‘stayers’ is that former refugees have accumulated wealth abroad, while they themselves have had to struggle with post-war hardship. In light of the economic and political situation none of the interviewed ‘leavers’ could personally imagine returning to Bosnia permanently. One interviewee states:

“But then, once again, it’s said that we don’t do enough, or that we are no real Bosnians or that we have betrayed the fatherland, because we did not return after the war. But where can you return to? (...) ... but nevertheless, we are the ones that do not return voluntarily. But there one cannot return because of the economic situation. But nevertheless, we are disregarded for it, so to say. That’s a pity.”

Scapegoating of ‘those abroad’ appears to occur as soon as something is not going the right way in Bosnia. In turn, the interviewed persons have the feeling that their efforts for Bosnia are not sufficiently acknowledged by many people ‘down there’:

“We in diaspora are fed up with that... When something is going wrong down there they complain about the diaspora. But when there are emergencies, such as last year [the flood in 2014] then the diaspora is great. And we are fed up that we always have to excuse ourselves for living here, that we are well off here (...). And that I do work here and try to contribute to my country is not seen by those down there.”

To be called ‘svabo’ or ‘svabica’ (a local expression from Austro-Hungarian times initially used to call German-speaking people, which was later used, in a teasing way, for guest workers that went to Germany and Austria) appears to be kind of a bitter aftertaste of living in Germany. For them, this contributes to an uncomfortable feeling of belonging neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ – never being fully accepted in Germany, and being a stranger among the ‘own’ people. For the local population, they have become ‘Germans’, no matter what passport they have. For instance, an interlocutor who grew up in Germany, reports:

“And nevertheless, we are ‘the Germans’ and we are always called ‘the Germans’. And they always say ‘Hey, Švabica’, and you think ‘thank you, I have a Bosnian passport, too. I am also born here, but now for you I am a German, and in Germany I am also not a German.’ So, basically you are nothing. In Bosnia not a Bosnian; in Germany not a German. Because the Bosnians do not recognize you as such. My uncle is also saying this, always. Somehow in a kind way, but still, I do notice you want to tease me... That sucks, because one does not have a real ‘Heimat’, is nowhere at home, but lives between two states.”

In addition, the narratives of some of the informants also reveal another side of the coin - namely, that prejudices in fact exist on both sides. Although they feel that they are still expected to support their family and friends in Bosnia, 20 years after the war they are becoming increasingly reluctant to send remittances and support their family, and the regularity and amounts are decreasing. They have the impression that people in Bosnia are jealous and think that their family members abroad live in material wealth and have an easy living. While agreeing that they indeed have a higher standard of living, informants emphasize that this is a personal achievement for which they and their families worked hard. They have the impression that the local population does not believe them how hard it is to make a living in Germany; the sheer availability of jobs appears to be unimaginable to ‘stayers’ simply because of high unemployment in Bosnia.

While it is those abroad that are often viewed as ‘unpatriotic’ or ‘materijalistički dijasporci’ (Halilovich 2013: 120), it is reported by informants that often it is the families that ‘stayed’ that still expect material support in form of money and presents, even if they live in decent conditions. Some interview partners report about apparent ingratitude. One of them tells that the disappointment about ungrateful family members led them to the decision to send less money and items, or even stop supporting some family members that did not even say thank you. This disappointment seems to have the potential to turn into prejudices about the locals, such as: they do not have anything to do, they are less patriotic, less religiously observant, hanging around a lot, still having enough money for drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes.

Irrespective of personal relationships, another issue that contributes to the increasing reluctance is that they do not want to maintain the bad-functioning system through their financial support. They consider remittances a limited means to support as long as the structural conditions do not improve.

Finally, interviewees explain that the perspective among ‘stayers’ that the ‘leavers’ are not interested in their destiny is perpetuated by the circumstance that the population in Bosnia rarely gets to know what happens among those abroad, because there is hardly any media coverage about their situation and activities. For instance, some newspapers have a particular section for diaspora matters, however, these sections are only published abroad and not in the regular editions in Bosnia. For the informants, this is a pity as it limits the exchange between those abroad and the local population and nourishes notions that those abroad are not interested in the country's future and, in turn, results in prejudices. Moreover, it affects the work of the Bosnian organizations abroad: it decreases possibilities for networking and finding partners for the joint implementation of projects, because it forecloses channels through which people in Bosnia could get to know organizations abroad with whom they could cooperate.

## 4 Conclusions

This paper has shown that the conditions for transnational involvement in Bosnia are perceived as unfavorable by the researched Bosnian organizations in Germany. Interview partners expressed that they still feel emotionally attached to Bosnia and they consider that today there is a strong capacity for such engagement among the Bosnian population in Germany. From a migration-development perspective, especially in a post-conflict setting, these are important prerequisites (e.g., Van Hear 2011). However, the empirical findings suggest that the negative perception of the structural conditions in Bosnia critically affect the organizations' willingness to transnationally engage in origin-country post-war development processes. Thus, the conditions created by the Bosnian government and the way how they are perceived by the researched organizations form crucial limits to stronger transnational engagement.

As it has been shown, the researched organizations are critical about political developments and structural conditions in Bosnia. Interviewees unanimously expressed the feeling that their commitment is not welcomed and that they are disappointed about the apparent lack of interest and political will on side of the Bosnian government to involve the population abroad



in post-war recovery despite its valuable resources such as skills, qualifications and experiences. They harshly criticize the corrupt economic system, vested interests and ethnic divisions dominating the political structures. In their eyes, a diaspora strategy is prevented by those ethno-nationalist politicians that have once been responsible for their displacement and that today try to preserve their power position and the fragile status quo by preventing too much influence from abroad.

The feeling that they cannot exert considerable influence on the gridlocked political situation from a distance has discouraging effects on the researched organizations' willingness for long-term transnational commitments to promote social, political and economic change in Bosnia. They do not want to support the malfunctioning system, but the relationship to the local population in Bosnia is still important for them. Privately, they feel responsible for the wellbeing of their family members in Bosnia, even though these relations are not free of tensions, too. These ties have also been taken into consideration, because they offer further explanation about the interviewees' personal motivation. Here again, they see only limited scope of their support (e.g. through material goods and remittances, which sustain the system indirectly) and emphasize that the people 'down there' need to actively take things into their own hands. Living abroad, the interviewed representatives do not see themselves in the position to do so.

At the same time, it needs to be considered that the Bosnian population in Germany is disorganized, which negatively affects their strength for collectively exerting influence. The low organizational strength forecloses the option to collectively exert pressure, even though some interlocutors emphasize that an organized Bosnian diaspora in Germany could be a strong and influential actor in Bosnia. Many of the researched organizations do not view their activities directed toward Bosnia as political. They also do not entertain close connections to Bosnian authorities and prefer cooperation with non-state local partners when implementing a project in Bosnia. Except for some representatives' private participation in Bosnian elections, there is less evidence for collective transnational activities that link them with political developments in Bosnia. Some informal groups mobilize among Bosnians in Germany to vote in Bosnian elections or to declare their identity in the census to challenge the manifestation of ethnic cleansing.

In the end, these findings have severe consequences for the realization of a 'reconstruction potential' that 'the Bosnian diaspora' is considered to have (e.g., Kent 2006). For most of the researched organizations, the concern for Bosnia is more related to the support of individuals in need in Bosnia, than to an ambitious promotion of the country's slow recovery process, for instance through economic investments or long-term development projects. In light of the

outlined lack of opportunity structures and unfavourable relationship between them abroad and the Bosnian authorities, it is particularly necessary to critically examine to what extent Bosnian migrants in Germany are not only able to play a transformative role, but also willing to meet these expectations as long as the necessary preconditions for such commitment are not in place. This is important in order to reveal that the country loses out opportunities for post-war recovery processes among its nationals, many of whom still feel emotionally attached to their origin country.

Meanwhile, Bosnians abroad have acquired a stable livelihood as well as resources that would allow for more engagement in transnational activities. But also, many of them have acquired a new citizenship in their settlement country – which in Germany implies giving up their Bosnian citizenship. Due to the structural constraints and the reluctance to develop a diaspora strategy, Bosnia may have lost a considerable proportion of its population abroad willing to engage in their origin country. In this respect, it may also be questionable whether a long-awaited eventual realization of a diaspora law that opens new opportunities for involvement will bring about much change in the motivation of Bosnians abroad.

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