

WHOSE INTEGRATION? A CRITICAL
PERSPECTIVE ON LABOR REFORM IN
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA BETWEEN
2015 AND 2018

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by
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September 2025

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A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LABOR REFORM
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Bilkent University 2025

...to Farah and Nura,
may you always find faith and courage in uncertainty.

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of
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By Emina Durmisevic

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

WHOSE INTEGRATION? A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LABOR REFORM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA BETWEEN 2015 AND 2018

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This dissertation examines mechanisms of supervised sovereignty in Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2015-2018 labor market reforms, investigating how international actors shape domestic policy outcomes while maintaining the appearance of consensual reform. Drawing on decoloniality theory, the study employs discourse analysis of 84 policy documents, social network analysis of coordination architectures, and interviews with 20 labor market experts to analyze how supervised sovereignty operates through discourse legitimation, coordination architecture, and expert intermediation.

The research reveals that international and domestic actors deploy complementary legitimation strategies that make externally-driven reforms appear simultaneously scientifically necessary, politically inevitable, and democratically legitimate. Social network analysis exposes structural design flaws in the Reform Agenda's coordination architecture, including excessive centralization and systematic marginalization of implementation actors and constitutionally mandated governance levels. Expert interviews demonstrate how local professionals become institutionally formed subjects whose identities require compliance with international frameworks, creating cycles where structural alienation generates deeper attachment to exclusionary systems rather than resistance.

These findings contribute to understanding contemporary international governance by revealing how post-conflict interventions have evolved beyond overt administration toward sophisticated forms of epistemic control that maintain hierarchical relationships while preserving the appearance of partnership. The research challenges conventional explanations that attribute reform failures to insufficient political will or administrative capacity, demonstrating instead how structural design inadequacies reproduce the problems they claim to address while systematically marginalizing locally grounded alternatives to externally imposed development paradigms.

Keywords: sovereignty, labor, reform, international supervision

ÖZET

KİMİN ENTEGRASYONU? 2015-2018 YILLARI ARASINDA BOSNA HERSEK'TEKİ EMEK PİYASASI REFORMUNA ELEŞTİREL BİR BAKIŞ

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Bu tez, Bosna Hersek'in 2015-2018 işgücü piyasası reformlarındaki denetimli egemenlik mekanizmalarını inceleyerek, uluslararası aktörlerin uzlaşmalı reform görünümünü korurken iç politik sonuçları nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırmaktadır. Dekolonyalizme teorisinden yararlanan çalışma, 84 politik belgenin söylem analizi, koordinasyon mimarilerinin sosyal ağ analizi ve 20 işgücü piyasası uzmanıyla yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla denetimli egemenliğin söylemsel meşrulaştırma, koordinasyon mimarisi tasarımı ve uzman aracılığı üzerinden nasıl işlediğini analiz etmektedir.

Araştırma, uluslararası ve yerel aktörlerin dışarıdan yönlendirilen reformları aynı anda bilimsel olarak gerekli, politik açıdan kaçınılmaz ve demokratik olarak meşru gösterecek tamamlayıcı meşrulaştırma stratejileri geliştirdiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Sosyal ağ analizi, Reform Gündemi'nin koordinasyon mimarisindeki yapısal tasarım hatalarını, aşırı merkezileşme ve uygulayıcı aktörlerle anayasal olarak yetkili yönetim düzeylerinin sistematik olarak marjinalleştirilmesi dahil olmak üzere açığa çıkarmaktadır. Uzman görüşmeleri, yerel profesyonellerin kimliklerinin uluslararası çerçevelere uyumu gerektiren kurumsal olarak oluşturulmuş özneler haline geldiklerini, direnişten ziyade dışlayıcı sistemlere

daha derin bağıllık yaratan yapısal yabancılaşıma döngüleri oluşturdıklarını göstermektedir.

Bu bulgular, çatışma sonrası müdahalelerin açık yönetimden ortaklık görünümünü korurken hiyerarşik ilişkileri sürdüren sofistike epistemik kontrol biçimlerine nasıl evrildiğini ortaya koyarak çağdaş uluslararası yönetişimi anlamaya katkıda bulunmaktadır. Araştırma, reform başarısızlıklarını yetersiz politik irade veya idari kapasiteye bağlayan geleneksel açıklamalara meydan okuyarak, bunun yerine yapısal tasarım yetersizliklerinin ele almaya çalıştığı sorunları yeniden ürettiğini ve dışarıdan dayatılan kalkınma paradigmalarına yerel temelli alternatifleri sistematik olarak marjinalleştirdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: egemenlik, işgücü, reform, uluslararası denetim

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most people would not think to dig through the world of labor market reform documents in search of answers to large questions about power and sovereignty, but then again, most people have never tried to make sense of Bosnia and Herzegovina's politics through policy. Where others might see only tedious policy papers filled with implementation matrices and coordination frameworks, I see the architectural blueprints of a quiet evolution in how international actors have learned to govern without appearing to govern. The conventional wisdom in political science suggests that if we want to understand international power dynamics, we should study the spectacular: military interventions, trade wars, diplomatic crises. This is not wrong, but it may not be the only way. The most consequential forms of contemporary governance often operate through the mundane machinery of technical assistance, capacity building, and policy reform, and through what appears to be a partnership but functions as something else entirely.

Consider the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2015-2018 Reform Agenda. By most accounts, this was a success story where macroeconomic indicators improved, employment rose, and international observers, for the most part, praised the collaborative spirit between domestic and international actors. However, behind many great stories about successful marriages, in this case of the domestic and the international, or the private and the public, stands another story where one side wins and another loses. What happens between the four walls of, in this case, state institutions, cannot be explained by traditional frameworks focusing on political will or administrative capacity. Instead, it points toward more sophisticated mechanisms through which international actors shape domestic outcomes while maintaining the fiction of consensual reform.

This dissertation examines how these mechanisms operate by asking: How do mechanisms of supervised sovereignty operating through discourse legitimation, coordination architecture, and expert intermediation enable international actors to shape labor market outcomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina? As this dissertation aims to demonstrate, the answer reveals something important about how power works in the contemporary modern state: not through tanks or sanctions, but between the lines of reports and worker regulations, through language, coordination matrices, and many other similar instances.

The Context of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina, a small country occupying a portion of the Western Balkans, has often been branded "the most complex political system in the world, and maybe in history" (EUObserver, 2022).¹ While Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter Bosnia or BiH) and its "complicated politics" often make headlines for grim topics such as ethnic divide, election fraud, high air pollution and organized crime, life in Bosnia - and more importantly, active political life - has went on since its declaration of independence in 1992. Not only has life went on through a bloody war that followed independence between 1992 and 1995, but also through financial crises and recessions, sporadic spurs of intensive ethno-nationalist discourse and constant loom of another possible war.

It isn't only Bosnia that had a bad reputation throughout the Western world - The Balkans have also been branded the "Other" of Europe, a place where ancient tribal conflicts are manifested in war, bloodshed, backwardness and barbarism.² In 1995, with no end to war in sight, Bosnia and Herzegovina - and its peoples - seemed destined to fail due to exactly war, bloodshed, backwardness and barbarism. The war in the early 1990s happened at the right time to be covered by global media, and the world watched in horror as a place that seemed to finally reach prosperity and peace under the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter Yugoslavia)

¹ Banović, Damir, Saša Gavrić, and Mariña Barreiro Mariño. *The Political System of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021.; Rogers, Simon. "Bosnia-Herzegovina elections: the world's most complicated system of government." *The Guardian*, October 8, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/oct/08/bosnia-herzegovina-elections-the-worlds-most-complicated-system-of-government>.

² Todorova, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

disintegrated and crumbled to pieces. The events that took place in Bosnia seemed to affirm what Todorova later explained the West had constructed and imagined the Balkans to be: a powder keg of Europe, perennially plagued by ethnic strife and irrational violence, supposedly incapable of peaceful coexistence unless taught to do so by the West.³

Not contributing to the dismantling of this stereotype of dire need of Western guidance, in 1995 a peace treaty was signed between representatives of three states at war: Alija Izetbegović, president of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Slobodan Milošević, President of Serbia, and Franjo Tuđman, president of Croatia. The negotiations were held in the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, USA, from November 1 to November 21, 1995, under the auspices of the United States and with significant involvement from the European Union. The agreement was formally signed in Paris, France, on December 14, 1995. The war had ended, Croatia and Serbia, initially intent on dividing Bosnia between the two countries upon "cleansing" it from Bosnian Muslims which were neither Catholic, as the majority of Croats, or Orthodox Christian, like the majority of Serbs, accepted Bosnia's independence.⁴

The story of Bosnia's complicated post-independence politics starts here. The Dayton Agreement (hereinafter Dayton) did not only end the war, but also designed Bosnia's internal structure, from constitution (Annex IV of the agreement), to system of government (decentralized federal state with two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), to its main offices and its composition. Perhaps the most famous example is Bosnia's tripartite presidency with three presidents elected in an election cycle, each representing one of Bosnia's "constituent peoples", namely Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. The three Presidents take turns as formal heads of state every eight months.

While the consensus among scholars, experts and statesmen alike is that the Dayton was a major success in terms of bringing an end to the war, more than thirty years later Bosnia is in dire need of reform. The Dayton Agreement, once praised as the

³ Ibid.

⁴ United Nations Security Council (1994). *Final report by Expert Commission on Yugoslavia*. Available at [UN Documents](#). Retrieved 13 February 2024.

brightest example of the international community bringing about peace in a troubled environment, became a straitjacket.⁵ However, the document does not have an "exit clause", and it has no expiration date.⁶ Currently, Bosnia is stuck with structures and institutions designed by the International Community, meant to ensure a speedy recovery from the war, and secure consensus in times of high conflict. The Dayton agreement, as well as Bosnia's highly fragmented federalism which came out of the agreement, causes high inefficiency in policymaking, non-existent political participation of minorities, particularly Jewish and Roma people, and overall very little social and economic progress over the course of the past 30 years.⁷ The Dayton went from bringing peace to being instrumentalized by ethno-nationalists to maintain the country in a perpetual status quo of policy blockages, institutional deadlock and conflict-driven discourse, away from progress and giving little chance to new political actors to gain traction.⁸ Once meant to bring about democracy and increase democratic participation, it became a tool for democratic erosion, witnessed by recent ranking of Bosnia in all major democracy indices.⁹

To make matters worse, it is not only Bosnia's politicians that call the shots in policymaking in Bosnia. Three main groups of international actors have plenty of influence on Bosnian politics and policymaking: the High Representative for BiH and the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), and several other states with strong bilateral relations to actors inside BiH. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) and the position of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina were established in 1995 through

⁵ Gilbert, Andrew, and Jasmin Mujanović. "Dayton at Twenty: Towards New Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 4 (2015): 605-610.

⁶ Gaeta, Paola. "The Dayton Agreements and International Law." *European Journal of International Law* 7 (1996): 147.

⁷ Gilbert, Andrew, and Jasmin Mujanović. "Dayton at Twenty: Towards New Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 4 (2015): 605-610.

⁸ SAJIĆ, Nina. Culture of Dependency and Federal Spirit in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *The Western Balkans in Changing World Dynamics*, 2023, 122.

⁹ For example, see Freedom House Index which ranks Bosnia as a "Partly Free" state in 2023: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2024>. Likewise, V-Dem rankings on the Liberal Democracy Index show that the quality of Bosnia's democracy has been on a downward trend since 2003, based on expert estimates on protection of civil liberties, strength of the rule of law, judicial independence, and effectiveness of checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. See more at https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/CountryGraph/.

Dayton. Their main role is to supervise the civilian aspects of implementing the Dayton Agreement. Additionally, they act as the representatives of the nations participating in the Dayton Agreement's enforcement, via the PIC, which is responsible for appointing the High Representative.

In 1997, the PIC granted the High Representative a certain set of powers called the "Bonn powers", which gave the High Representative ultimate veto power in Bosnia, their decisions overpowering even the Supreme Court. They may single-handedly, among other things, enact laws through decrees, change existing laws, and regulate any rule or process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including appointment and dismissal of civil servants, and scrutiny over election, candidates and election processes. The High Representative is accountable to virtually no-one, but subject to reporting to and, on occasion, interrogation by the Security Council of the UN, as well as states part of the Dayton Agreement. Finally, in terms of other states that exert influence on political actors and politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, recent reports indicate a high degree of Russian and Chinese influence through economic channels (Chinese investment) and peace-destabilizing activities (Russia through Bosnian Serb actors).¹⁰

Against this backdrop of low autonomy vis-a-vis the international community and other states, a complex institutional setup, and no prescribed way out of its current situation, it is no wonder Bosnia has not been able to implement reform or significantly change its laws since the end of the war. For example, the Constitution, which is an Annex to the Dayton Agreement has been amended only once since 1995, to form a subnational unit. The federal structure of the state demanding high degree of consensus makes it extremely difficult to propose and amend laws. Political actors often use this designation to block laws that they perceive as potentially damaging to their constituencies. Entity-level laws were amended more frequently, but often through impositions by the High Representative.

¹⁰ For Chinese influence, please see "Economic Interests and Strategic Positioning in the Region," by Zurnal <https://zurnal.info/clanak/economic-interests-and-strategic-positioning-in-the-region/26307> . For Russian influence, please see "Russia's Influence in the Balkans," Council on Foreign Relations <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/russias-influence-balkans>

In terms of public policy reform, while some efforts have been productive, for the most part Bosnia is considered a state with very low state capacity.¹¹ Regarding socio-economic reform, while important reforms in Bosnia were instigated by international organizations, each encountered opposition from political hardliners.¹² However, two particular attempts at economic and labor reform stands out as more successful than others: the Reform Agenda 2015-2018 (the Agenda) and its labor market reforms from 2016. As they were implemented simultaneously by the same government and targeted the same policy sectors, this dissertation treats both these changes in policies as part of a single reform attempt.

Following a six-year period of stagnation since the Great Recession of 2009 that pushed Bosnia to the brink of collapse, this extensive set of reforms was strategically designed to impact all three governmental levels. The Reform Agenda was driven largely by Bosnia's attempts to join the EU, and its focus was as determined by EU access conditionality. Steered by EU recommendations and initiatives, the Agenda aimed to introduce a wide array of measures targeting corruption and patronage reduction in labor, enhancing market economy conditions, tackling the shadow economy, adjusting wages and pensions, reducing the public sector, strengthening the rule of law, and overhauling the tax system in the FBiH.¹³

In terms of its higher level outcomes, such as targeting corruption and strengthening the rule of law, reports on its success are disputable as both qualitative and quantitative measures imply the intervention carried little to no effect.¹⁴ However,

¹¹ Chandler, David. "State-building in Bosnia: The Limits of 'Informal Trusteeship.'" *International Journal of Peace Studies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 17-38.

¹² Fischer, Martina. "Bosnia's Challenge: Economic Reform, Political Transformation and War-to-Peace-Transition." In *Peacebuilding and Civil Society in Bosnia-Herzegovina—Ten Years after Dayton*, 441-470. Münster & London: Lit-Verlag, 2006.

¹³ The Reform was funded by an IMF loan under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). See more at "Bosnia and Herzegovina: IMF Executive Board Approves US\$553 Million Extended Arrangement," International Monetary Fund, September 7, 2016, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/09/06/NA090916BosniaandHerzegovina>.

¹⁴ The Corruption Perceptions Index shows a steady downward trend since 2016 in Bosnia's perceived corruption score, showcasing an increase in perceived levels of corruption. For more data, please see "Corruption Perceptions Index 2022: Bosnia and Herzegovina," Transparency International, accessed [date], <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/bih>. Likewise, the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index shows a steady trend of decline in Bosnia's rule of law since 2015 when the Reform Agenda was initiated. For more data, please see "Rule of Law Index 2023: Bosnia and Herzegovina," World Justice Project, accessed April 14, 2024, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina/>.

more tangible results as showcased by relevant macroeconomic indicators on labor market outcomes such as the labor force participation rate, employment, formality of labor and share of youth not in education, employment or training have been steadily improving since 2015. Not even the pandemic - probably the largest economic shock Bosnia has seen since 2009 - stopped the positive trend. Apart from these, this reform package also claimed there was "a broad national consensus on the country's largest challenges and priorities".¹⁵

While these reforms are generally perceived and praised by the EU and international financial institutions as successful, they have faced criticism and challenges on behalf of organized labor since its inception. Some trade unions, rights groups and experts have expressed concerns that the reforms might erode workers' rights and social protections.¹⁶ Some feminist organizations also claimed that the Reform Agenda was pushed despite lack of consensus with social partners - or, in other words, organized labor, rights organizations, and other non-governmental formal and informal groups.¹⁷ In 2015, when the Agenda was just adopted, domestic and international organizations warned that the Agenda's aim to decrease social contributions might have serious repercussions on the quality of healthcare and unemployment benefits for the most underprivileged.¹⁸

The Agenda, some argued, is an example of IMF-led neoliberalization of labor where business and social risk is transferred from the state and corporations to workers and their families.¹⁹ Workers' rights in Bosnia have been consistently violated over the years, reaching levels of exploitation. These violations include compromised

¹⁵ "Bosnia and Herzegovina Overview," World Bank, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bosniaandherzegovina/overview>.

¹⁶ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *"Feministički Osvrt Na Postkonfliktno Restrukturiranje I Oporavak Slučaj Bosne I Hercegovine"*(2017); *Al Jazeera Balkans*, "Reformska agenda za BiH nije uspjela, a već prave novu"(November 7, 2018), <https://balkans.aljazeera.net teme/2018/11/7/reformska-agenda-za-bih-nije-uspjela-vec-prave-novu>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jusić, Mirna, and Amar Numanović. "Flexible Labor in an Inflexible Environment: Reforms of Labor Market Institutions in BiH in Comparative Perspective." Sarajevo: Center for Social Research Analitika, 2015.

¹⁹ Weber, Bodo. *"Novi ZOR u BiH – Reformska agenda EU i međunarodne finansijske institucije: Zakašnjele strukturalne reforme ili neoliberalno umanjenje prava radnika?"* Friedrich Erbert Stiftung. 2018. Available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13298.pdf>. Accessed on 20 February 2024.

collective bargaining and occupational safety regulations, delayed salary payments for extended periods (even several years), often unpaid overtime, deprivation of employees' rights to annual leave, irregular salaries accompanied by the practice of returning half of the paid salary to the employer in cash, and unwillingness and failure to pay for social contributions, which denies workers their legal rights to healthcare and pensions.²⁰ New laws, these reports argue, have not addressed these issues, have not introduced mechanisms to discourage the shadow economy, and lack appropriate prescribed sanctions for violators.²¹ Despite recommendations to strengthen labor inspections and increase penalties for labor law violations, the current process is leading to increased job insecurity, temporary and casual jobs without union representation, lower compensations, lower salaries (which in many cases employers still fail to pay), and deteriorated work safety.²² Additionally, the implementation of reforms has been uneven across the country due to its complex political and administrative structure, with underprivileged regions reaping the least of the few benefits the reform has to offer.

Unfortunately, there is very little recent research and qualitative data on longer-term labor reform effects in BiH. Available statistical data by the Agency for Statistics of BiH, which feeds into the World Bank datasets, as well as provides input for ILO estimates, paint a positive picture of a positive trend based on most indicators.

However, these indicators do not showcase any of the aforementioned issues. In-depth qualitative research such as reports cited in the previous section are donor-led, one-off attempts which are powerful assessments helpful to inform donors, but rarely fall on the radar of policy practitioners. Such studies, I submit, need to be replicated and expanded in order to provide more knowledge about policies, their success, but more importantly what they have to say about Bosnias's current politics and the power relations at play.

²⁰ Hozic, Aida A., and Jacqui True, eds. *Scandalous Economics: Gender and the Politics of Financial Crises*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

²¹ True, Jacqui, et al. *"A Feminist Perspective on Post-Conflict Restructuring and Recovery: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina."* 2017.

²² Ibid.

The persistence of labor market dysfunction despite a decade of internationally-supported reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals a puzzle in contemporary development practice. While macroeconomic indicators suggest policy success, worker experiences and civil society critiques point to deepening precarity and marginalization. This contradiction cannot be explained by traditional analytical frameworks that focus either on political will, administrative capacity, or technical design adequacies. Instead, it requires examining the deeper structural and epistemic foundations of how reform is conceptualized, legitimized, and implemented in contexts where international actors maintain significant authority over domestic policy processes.

This dissertation argues that the persistence of labor market problems despite apparent reform success reflects the operation of what can be termed "supervised sovereignty", a form of governance where international actors shape policy outcomes through sophisticated mechanisms of discourse, coordination architecture, and expert intermediation rather than direct coercion. Unlike traditional colonial administration, supervised sovereignty operates through seemingly consensual processes that nevertheless systematically privilege international knowledge frameworks while marginalizing local epistemologies and excluding affected populations from meaningful participation.

The following chapters examine different dimensions of this phenomenon. The first reveals how international and domestic actors construct legitimation strategies that present externally-driven reforms as technically necessary, politically inevitable, and democratically legitimate. The second demonstrates how coordination architectures embedded within reform action plans systematically exclude domestic actors responsible for implementation while concentrating implementation burden among federal institutions already operating at capacity limits. The third exposes how expert communities become psychologically invested in reproducing the knowledge systems that marginalize their own analytical capacities while creating cycles of failed reform that generate demand for more expert analysis.

This dissertation, therefore, aims to answer the following overarching research question:

- How do mechanisms of supervised sovereignty operating through discourse legitimization, coordination architecture, and expert intermediation enable international actors to shape labor market outcomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Understanding these mechanisms is important for several reasons. First, it challenges dominant narratives that attribute reform failures to insufficient political will or administrative incapacity, revealing instead how structural design flaws reproduce the problems they claim to address. Second, it demonstrates how international development practice has evolved beyond overt conditionality toward more sophisticated forms of epistemic control that maintain hierarchical relationships while preserving the appearance of partnership. Third, it provides analytical tools for identifying and potentially disrupting these patterns in other contexts where international actors maintain significant influence over domestic policy processes.

Conceptual Framework

This dissertation employs decoloniality theory as its primary analytical framework to examine how contemporary international governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates through sophisticated mechanisms that reproduce what I think amounts to colonial relations of knowledge and power. Decoloniality theory, developed by scholars of the modernity/coloniality research program including Anibal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, and Catherine Walsh, provided me with up-to-date tools for understanding how colonial patterns of domination persist through seemingly neutral technical interventions and expert knowledge systems. Anibal Quijano's foundational concept of the "coloniality of power" reveals how colonial domination extends beyond formal political control to encompass the systematic organization of social relations, knowledge production, and different ways in which different people(s) exist in the world.²³ Quijano demonstrates that colonialism established not merely economic extraction but a "colonial matrix of power" that continues to structure global relationships through four interconnected arenas: the control of economy, authority, gender/sexuality, and knowledge/subjectivity. This framework is relevant to Bosnia's post-conflict context, where

²³ Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533-580.

international actors maintain structural authority over domestic policy processes in what I perceive as all four of these domains while positioning their interventions as temporary technical assistance rather than forms of ongoing control. However, this dissertation explicitly focuses on three of the four, namely economy, authority, and knowledge/subjectivity.

Starting with knowledge, the concept of "coloniality of knowledge" is central to understanding how Bosnia's labor market policies were reformed within what Quijano terms the "geopolitics of knowledge."²⁴ This refers to how certain ways of knowing, namely European/North American epistemologies, are positioned as universal, scientific, and objective, while other knowledge systems are moved into less "serious" realms such as culture, tradition, or local context, and thereby deemed irrelevant for policy development.²⁵ In Bosnia's case, this manifests through the systematic privileging of international development frameworks, economic models tested in other, most often Western contexts, and analytical methodologies developed in Brussels, Washington, or Geneva, while local knowledge about economic survival strategies, informal networks, and post-conflict social dynamics is dismissed as anecdotal or unscientific.

While Quijano focuses on the "what", Walter Dignolo's discusses the "how" of decoloniality using a concept of "epistemic disobedience" provides analytical tools for understanding how colonial knowledge systems are maintained and potentially challenged.²⁶ Dignolo argues that decolonization requires political and economic transformation and "epistemic delinking", or the conscious rejection of the assumption that European forms of knowledge represent universal rationality.²⁷ His work reveals how knowledge production is always geopolitically located, despite claims to universality, and how the colonial difference continues to structure which knowledge counts as legitimate in contemporary global governance. This framework

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 168-178.

²⁶ Walter D. Dignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7-8 (2009): 159-181.

²⁷ Ibid.

helps us understand how Bosnia's Reform Agenda operated through what Mignolo calls "the rhetoric of modernity", which presents international interventions as bringing progress, efficiency, and modernization to "backward" or "transitional" societies, while the logic of coloniality ensures that this modernization occurs according to templates developed elsewhere, and not domestically. This helps maintain and perpetuate vertically hierarchical relationships between knowledge producers and recipients. Similarly answering the question of "how", Grosfoguel demonstrates that while formal colonialism has ended, colonial relations persist through new institutional arrangements that maintain the same hierarchical structures between the "Global North" and "Global South."²⁸ His concept of "coloniality without colonialism" captures how international organizations, conditional aid, and technical assistance reproduce colonial relationships through seemingly consensual processes.²⁹ Bosnia's institutional architecture, established through the Dayton Agreement and maintained through ongoing international oversight, fuelled by years and years of technical assistance and international aid efforts, represents what Grosfoguel would recognize as today's manifestation of the colonial matrix. The Office of the High Representative's "Bonn powers," EU conditionality mechanisms, and IMF structural adjustment requirements create a system where the final word and the last-instance authority over crucial policy decisions remains with external actors, regardless of democratic preferences expressed through domestic institutions. While in reality the Bonn powers have been evoked a handful of times, the mere presence of such systems affects how the state is perceived, the psyche of its people and their representatives, and institutional practices.

One way in which decoloniality as a project or a program, as its founders often refer to it, differs from traditional postcolonial theories is that it does not limit itself to structural constraints that have long been proven to exist as a result of colonization. They also focus on the subject, showing how it is often the subject's willing participation which makes these processes more likely to succeed. Catherine Walsh's

²⁸ Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 211-223.

²⁹ Ibid.

work on decolonial pedagogies and praxis provides frameworks for understanding how colonial knowledge systems are not simply imposed from above but become internalized through educational and professional formation processes.³⁰ This connects to Maria Lugones's decolonial feminist analysis of how colonial power operates through the formation of racialized and gendered subjects who internalize hierarchical ways of understanding social relations.³¹ Her analysis of how subjects learn to think within colonial categories while unlearning alternative ways of knowing can help us better understand the processes through which Bosnia's people and their representatives, including experts and politicians alike, start to identify with international development frameworks even when these contradict their experiential knowledge. While Bosnia's context differs from Latin American where much decolonial theory developed, these insights about how colonial subjects develop a somewhat "double consciousness" where they simultaneously understand their reality through lived experience, but learn to see themselves through colonial categories help understand and explain how Bosnia's experts navigate the contradictions between local knowledge and donor requirements.

Decoloniality theory provides the most appropriate analytical framework for this dissertation for several reasons. First, it offers tools for understanding how hierarchical relationships persist through seemingly technical and consensual processes. Unlike dependency theory or world-systems analysis, which focus primarily on economic relationships, decoloniality theory examines how power operates through, *inter alia*, knowledge systems, professional formation, and epistemic hierarchies precisely the mechanisms this dissertation identifies as central to supervised sovereignty. Second, the corpus of the decoloniality theory shows how universal claims about development, modernization, and efficiency always operate from particular geopolitical locations while denying their one-sidedness. The Reform Agenda's technical requirements systematically privileged analytical frameworks developed in Western contexts while either ignoring or positioning alternative

³⁰ Catherine Walsh, "Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge: Decolonial Thought and Cultural Studies 'Others' in the Andes," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 224-239.

³¹ Maria Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 742-759.

approaches as illegitimate or irrelevant. Third, the decolonial emphasis on epistemic justice provides an anchor for critiquing current arrangements while making it possible to imagine alternatives where different scenarios of governance would take place. Rather than simply documenting how international interventions fail to achieve stated objectives, decoloniality theory reveals how these interventions succeed in reproducing hierarchical relationships that maintain certain groups' authority over knowledge production and policy development.

Positionality

My relationship to this research is shaped by my position as both a Bosnian citizen and an international development practitioner. Born in Bosnia, I left at age 18 to pursue education and career opportunities abroad, returning after more than a decade with extensive experience in international organizations, consulting firms, and development projects. This trajectory from local to global and back to local profoundly influences how I approach questions of expertise, knowledge production, and policy implementation in my home country.

My professional background spans multiple contexts that inform this analysis. I have worked extensively on labor market interventions in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Germany, including large-scale programs targeting low-skilled workers and evaluations of job creation initiatives. I was also part of evaluation teams assessing labor-based development projects in Bosnia itself, providing firsthand experience in how international interventions are designed, implemented, and evaluated. My internship experience in Turkey's highly centralized legislative system likely affects how I perceive Bosnia's fragmented governance structures, perhaps making me more attuned to coordination failures that might seem normal to those working exclusively within Bosnia's multi-level system.

This professional experience creates both advantages and complications for the research. My fluency in the technical language of development practice and institutional culture of international organizations enabled access to expert networks that might be closed to purely academic researchers. I speak the local language natively and possess cultural familiarity that facilitated nuanced conversations about

sensitive topics. However, my status shifted from colleague to researcher throughout the research, potentially affecting participants' candor and my analytical objectivity. The most challenging aspect of this positionality involves recognizing my own complicity in the systems I critique. As someone who has participated in designing, implementing, and evaluating the types of interventions analyzed in this dissertation, I am implicated in the epistemic hierarchies I examine. At several points during the research, I confronted uncomfortable similarities between my own professional practices and the expert intermediation patterns I was analyzing. This recognition forced ongoing reflection about my motivations, assumptions, and the extent to which my critique might represent self-justification or, at times, self-flagellation rather than genuine analytical insight.

My insider-outsider status evolved throughout the research process. Initially positioned as an outsider to Bosnia's expert communities due to my extended absence from the country, I gradually gained insider status through professional networks and project involvement. This transition allowed me to observe how epistemic communities form and reproduce themselves, but also meant that my analytical distance decreased over time. The challenge became maintaining a critical perspective while deepening professional integration.

These positioning dynamics likely influenced both my access to information and my interpretation of findings. My international experience may have sensitized me to power dynamics between local and international actors that purely domestic researchers might normalize. Conversely, my investment in development practice may have created blind spots about alternatives to current approaches. The qualitative nature of my findings, particularly regarding expert psychology and institutional dynamics, undoubtedly reflects these experiences.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation submits three chapters that examine different dimensions of how international actors exercise influence over Bosnia and Herzegovina's labor market policy while maintaining the facade of consensual reform. The introduction posits the central argument of the dissertation and establishes supervised sovereignty as the analytical lens through which to understand these dynamics. Each chapter

contributes a distinct analytical perspective while collectively revealing the sophisticated mechanisms through which supervised sovereignty operates in practice.

Chapter 2: "Varieties of Legitimation: Institutional Discourse and the Architecture of Bosnia's 2015-2018 Reform Agenda" examines the discursive dimension of supervised sovereignty through content analysis of 84 documents produced by the EU, IMF, World Bank, and FBiH government. This chapter reveals how different institutional actors constructed complementary legitimation strategies, namely technical authority, political direction, legal inevitability, and collaborative partnership, that created an echo chamber effect where reforms appeared simultaneously scientifically necessary, politically inevitable, and democratically legitimate. The analysis demonstrates how discourse operates as a mechanism of power, systematically excluding worker agency and democratic participation while presenting externally-driven reforms as domestic choices.

Chapter 3: "Fragmented Networks, Failed Reforms? Social Network Analysis of Coordination Mechanisms in Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2015-2018 Reform Agenda" analyzes the structural dimension through social network analysis of the Reform Agenda's action plans. This chapter develops a diagnostic framework for assessing coordination viability during policy design, revealing how the Agenda's coordination architecture systematically marginalized actors who actually carry the responsibility for the implementation of the reform and constitutional governance levels while creating structural bottlenecks that exceeded system capacity. The analysis introduces network analysis as a predictive tool for identifying coordination failures before implementation begins, challenging conventional attribution of reform failures to insufficient political will or administrative capacity.

Chapter 4: "Epistemic Intermediaries: The Political Economy of Expert Compliance in Bosnia and Herzegovina" explores the psychological dimension through interviews with 20 labor market experts, examining how professional identities become institutionally constituted through relationships with international development frameworks. Drawing on decolonial theory and Sara Ahmed's analysis of subject formation, this chapter reveals how experts develop genuine emotional investment in systems that marginalize their own analytical capacities, creating

cycles where structural alienation generates deeper attachment to exclusionary institutions rather than resistance.

Together, these chapters demonstrate that supervised sovereignty operates not through direct coercion but through the systematic structuring of possibilities for local agency within internationally defined parameters. The dissertation contributes to critical scholarship on contemporary international governance by revealing how post-conflict interventions have evolved beyond overt colonial administration toward more sophisticated forms of epistemic and structural control that maintain hierarchical relationships while preserving the appearance of partnership and technical neutrality.

CHAPTER 2

VARIETIES OF LEGITIMATION: INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF BOSNIA'S 2015-2018 REFORM AGENDA

Introduction

In late 2024, the BiH government declared that the net minimum wage would rise from 613 BAM (approximately €307) to 1,000 BAM (€511), effective January 2025. While workers rejoiced at the decision due to post-COVID inflation eroding their previously very modest wages, economic experts as well as business owners feverously opposed it, saying that the increase in the real wage, combined with high tax contributions, would cause damage to small and medium-sized enterprises, and might heighten inflation further.³² However, one of the most contested issues was the government's *motivation* for the sudden reform. Albeit led by the left-leaning Social Democratic Party (hereinafter SDP), neither the current governing coalition of left, center and center-right parties, nor the SDP on its own are famous for designing worker-friendly policies. While the smaller two (Nasa Stranka - NS and People and Justice - NIP) are new players in the political scene on entity and state level, they made it clear from their initial party manifestos that worker's rights are simply not in their focus.³³ The Croatian Democratic Union, one of the oldest political parties in Bosnia, is traditionally center-right to right-leaning, and their party manifesto gives

³² "Employers Don't Have Good News: A Surge in Prices to Follow Due to the Minimum Wage Increase," Sarajevo Times, January 7, 2025, <https://sarajevotimes.com/employers-dont-have-good-news-a-surge-in-prices-to-follow-due-to-the-minimum-wage-increase/> Accessed on January 15, 2025.

³³ "Naša Stranka Manifest," *Naša stranka*, June 10, 2023, <https://www.nasastranka.ba/> and Narod i Pravda, "O Nama," *Narod i Pravda*, March 2018, <https://www.narodipravda.ba/ko-smo-mi/o-nama> Accessed on January 15, 2025.

little mention of worker's rights, and focuses on development and growth instead.³⁴ SDP, on the other hand, has an impressive program in their manifesto, covering topics from employment, social entrepreneurship, and youth education and training.³⁵ However, SDP's last government mandate was marked by an unprecedented stand-by arrangement with the International Monetary Fund which brought about a large amount of neoliberal conditionality, more about which will be discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation.³⁶ In this context, business owners, opposition figures and employer associations approached the policy change suspiciously.

While motives mean very little in terms of policy outcomes, sustainability of policies largely depends on what pushed decision makers to formulate them.³⁷ Some speculated the unannounced change has to do with a budget deficit that came about due to new social assistance benefits, a claim largely debunked by analysts and institutions alike.³⁸ Another possible motive came from the Employers' Association of BiH accusing the government of populism.³⁹ However, largest criticism came from a place of excludedness: while the increase in minimum wage might have been long time coming, particularly in post-COVID context of high inflation, the policy was enacted without a written proposal or prior consultation with stakeholders. This, I doubt, is what pushed for so much criticism. However, with the exception of the

³⁴ "HDZ Statut i Program". *HDZ BiH*. 6 May, 2023, <https://www.hdzbih.org/sites/default/files/dokumenti/HDZ%20BiH%20-%20XIV.%20Sabor%20-%20Statut%20%26%20Program.pdf>. Accessed on January 15, 2025.

³⁵ Socijaldemokratska Partija BiH, "SDP Manifesto," *SDP Manifest*, http://www.sdp.ba/upload/documents/dokumenti/PROGRAM_SDP_BiH.pdf. Accessed on January 15, 2025.

³⁶ IMF, "Press Release: IMF Executive Board Approves €405.3 Million Stand-by Arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina," International Monetary Fund, September 26, 2012, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr12366>.

³⁷ Alt, Marius, Hendrik Bruns, Nives DellaValle, and Ingrida Murauskaite-Bull. "Synergies of interventions to promote pro-environmental behaviors—A meta-analysis of experimental studies." *Global Environmental Change* 84 (2024): 102776.

³⁸ "Employers Don't Have Good News: A Surge in Prices to Follow Due to the Minimum Wage Increase," *Sarajevo Times*, January 7, 2025, <https://sarajevotimes.com/employers-dont-have-good-news-a-surge-in-prices-to-follow-due-to-the-minimum-wage-increase/>. Accessed on January 05, 2024.

³⁹ "Employers Warn of Mass Layoffs Due to FBiH Govt Decision on Minimum Wage," N1 info, January 2, 2025, <https://n1info.ba/english/news/employers-warn-of-mass-layoffs-due-to-fbih-govt-decision-on-minimum-wage>. Accessed on January 05, 2024.

lack of consultations with non-government stakeholders, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) prime minister, Nermin Niksic, was simply doing what one would expect a social-democratic party does based on its ideological foundations: bringing about policies that are expected to raise the standard of living for minimum-wage workers, whom are widely considered as the backbone of BiH economy, and lower income inequality.

Be that as it may, 2024 drew to a close with the usual chorus of discordant voices echoing across the minimum wage debate—a familiar soundscape where economists and political economists continue their decades-long tradition of not agreeing on much of anything. The effects of the latest hike in Bosnia and Herzegovina are too fresh to be meaningfully dissected in this dissertation (though that hasn't stopped anyone else from trying). Only six months after the enactment of the law, the discussion seems to have washed out - the weary cynicism of political commentators, the economists' ritualistic arm-waving over labor market elasticity, the conspicuous absence of worker voices—unless one counts a few exhausted quotes in union press releases—and, inevitably, the hollow calls for “systematic reform,” a phrase now so overused it may as well be a national slogan.

Calls for a more systematic approach to labor policymaking inevitably led me to reflect on the last time a significant labor reform was attempted in BiH, specifically in one of its entities (FBiH) during the 2015 Reform Agenda. The Reform Agenda was a set of laws and regulations, a major policy reform covering, among other things, labor and social policy, started by SDP's Nermin Niksic, but promoted and embraced by the center-right Party of Democratic Action (SDA) under Prime Minister Fadil Novalić. Indeed, the need for a coherent labor policy framework in BiH is undeniable and adherence to democratic procedures such as holding public consultations and stakeholder deliberation is, at least nominally, a bare minimum without which we might not even be able to speak about policy processes on entity or state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But this raises another question: how is labor policy actually conceived in the mind of the policymaker in BiH? What does “labor” mean in this context? How are labor policies designed by politicians across the spectrum, if not through public deliberation or meaningful stakeholder

consultation? Are these policies driven by budgetary constraints from the outset, or are they ideologically framed first, with financial justifications following later? Is there any ground for our expectations of democratic procedures in labor policy, considering how little reform there was in Bosnia post Dayton? Could this all be just a continuation of socialist decision-making by a paternalistic, technocratic government, or is there a real democratic push for more pluralist decision-making? Questions such as these urged me to address them through a comprehensive exploration of the Reform Agenda as a whole. I call the Reform Agenda policy architecture because it includes policy frameworks, strategies and visions that came into play when it was being formulated, its institutions including agencies and organizations responsible for different aspects of its design and implementation, the legal instruments involved, the processes that made the policy enactment happen, and stakeholders that participated in the formulation.⁴⁰

The Reform Agenda is the latest successfully implemented attempt at structural reform of a major policy area in BiH. It was driven by external conditionality, pushed by the EU and the IMF as part of Bosnia's EU integration process, which also means it is well documented - which is not the case of many other domestic policy processes. Labor reform under the Agenda was presented as technical and inevitable, yet it sparked intense political resistance and public discontent, especially over issues like wage suppression and job insecurity. An analysis of the highly structured Reform Agenda might also give a sense of contrast compared to the fuzzy reform happening right now, including but not limited to the aforementioned minimum wage law, as last year's push for minimum wage increases and state-led redistribution can be considered a reaction to the austerity-friendly, neoliberal orientation of the Reform Agenda.

As current PM Niksic (SDP) prepares to retire at the end of this election cycle, perhaps still haunted by his fall from grace among SDP's left-leaning base for backing IMF loans during his previous premiership (2010–2014), the sudden surge in government spending has at times looked like an attempt to atone for what many saw

⁴⁰ Pechmann, Philipp. "Architectural policy design: How policy makers try to shape policy feedback effects when designing policies." *Annual Review of Policy Design* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1-20.

as a betrayal of the traditional left-statist creed of redistribution and social welfare. And with little chance of still being at the helm when, and if, the bill for these policies comes due, he appears largely unconcerned about their long-term economic fallout.

Following the 2022 election BiH's ruling coalition headed by Mr. Niksic has implemented a number of welfare policies at both entity and cantonal levels since taking power in 2023, the most dramatic of which was the 61% increase in the minimum wage in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The other entity of BiH, Republika Srpska, closely followed suit by a reform where a three-tiered minimum wage system was introduced for workers in different industries.⁴¹ However, these reforms unfolded amid fiscal strains, with the IMF observing that both entities pursued an "expansionary fiscal policy," marked by repeated permanent hikes in public sector wages and social benefits. This shift contributed to moving from a fiscal surplus of 0.9% of GDP in 2022 to a deficit of 1.7% in 2023.⁴² The reforms also include automatic pension increases based on inflation and GDP growth formulas in the Federation and inflation and wage growth formulas in Republika Srpska, alongside broader social benefit adjustments linked to economic indicators.⁴³ Critics and employers have warned that these rapid wage increases without accompanying tax reforms risk creating inflationary pressures and potential job losses, with some cities already experiencing significant price increases in basic goods and services.⁴⁴

These recent welfare reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina present a particularly compelling case for understanding contemporary labor market governance in post-conflict, transitional economies. The dramatic nature of these policy changes

⁴¹ Šurlan, Svjetlana. "Minimum Wage in RS to Reach 1,300 KM, Higher Salaries for Budget Employees from April," *Bloomberg Adria*, January 23, 2025.

⁴² International Monetary Fund, "IMF Executive Board Concludes 2024 Article IV Consultation with Bosnia and Herzegovina," Press Release No. 24/225, June 18, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/06/18/pr24225-bosnia-herzegovina-imf-exec-board-concludes-2024-art-iv-consult>. Accessed on April 29, 2025.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "Bosnia Wage Hike Risks Boomerang Effect in Price Rises, Job Losses," *Balkan Insight*, February 4, 2025, <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/02/04/bosnia-wage-hike-risks-boomerang-effect-in-price-rises-job-losses/>.

implemented against a backdrop of fiscal constraints and economic uncertainty raises questions about the underlying logic and political economy driving labor market interventions in complex institutional settings. What makes this case especially intriguing is the apparent contradiction between expansionary welfare policies and deteriorating fiscal conditions, suggesting that traditional economic rationality alone cannot explain policy choices. The warnings from critics about potential negative consequences, combined with the multi-tiered governance structure spanning entities and cantons, illuminate the complex interplay between political imperatives, institutional constraints, and competing visions of labor market regulation. This context provides an ideal lens through which to examine how different actors conceptualize labor market challenges and negotiate competing priorities within BiH's fragmented institutional architecture.

This dissertation, and this chapter specifically, examines how modern labor market reforms in Bosnia were legitimized through a sophisticated division of institutional labor, where different actors assumed complementary roles in building consensus around the 2015-2018 Reform Agenda. Rather than competing for influence, international and domestic institutions orchestrated distinct but mutually reinforcing legitimization strategies, with some providing technical authority, others offering political direction, and still others translating external pressures into domestic necessity. By analyzing this coordinated legitimization process, I aim to understand how externally-driven reforms achieve consent in complex governance architectures, and what this reveals about the constraints on democratic participation in post-conflict contexts where multiple overlapping authorities shape policy choices.

This chapter will thus answer the following research questions:

- How do different institutional actors create legitimization strategies to build domestic consensus around externally-driven labor market reforms?
- What does this division of legitimization labor reveal about power relations and democratic participation in post-conflict, multi-level governance contexts?

Examining Bosnia's reform agenda as it was originally conceived not only informs the reader of practices of policy design, but it also offers critical perspectives into the mechanics of contemporary international governance and its relationship to historical

patterns of external control. Such analysis reveals how international actors construct and impose particular visions of statehood, economic organization, and social order through seemingly technical policy frameworks, effectively functioning as a laboratory for post-Cold War liberal interventionism.⁴⁵ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international community's sustained involvement since Dayton has created a unique form of "supervised sovereignty" that operates through seemingly consensual policy reform rather than direct colonial administration. By tracing how labor market reforms were initially framed, justified, and embedded within broader governance frameworks, we can better understand how latest forms of international tutelage as seen in Bosnia and Kosovo both reproduce and diverge from historical imperial practices: maintaining hierarchical relationships through technocratic expertise and conditional aid rather than military occupation, yet still restructuring societies according to their own priorities through acts of exploitation, but also policy principles, through acts of benevolent assistance. This research approach thereby contributes to critical scholarship on the continuities between colonial governance and contemporary international interventions, revealing how power operates through the supposedly neutral language of policy reform and institutional capacity building. The following chapter is organized as follows. After a brief introduction followed by a methodological section where I outline the particular analysis methods that I will employ to answer the research questions above, I present case selection rationale and a brief overview of the Reform Agenda. Further, I present a review of the literature which shows the state of the art on policy design and architecture, multi-level governance, policy transfer and diffusion, and finally critical policy studies to consider competing narratives around the Reform. In doing so, it aims to position this study and answer how others have conceptualized and contested the problem I am investigating? What assumptions, power relations and knowledge forms underpin those approaches? Further, I present a review of literature on analyzing labor policy architecture. Afterwards, I analyze the content of key documents of the Reform Agenda by using quantitative and latent content analysis. Finally, I reflect upon findings of the content analyses in a findings and conclusions section.

⁴⁵ 2 David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-building* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

Case Selection Rationale: Why the Reform Agenda?

This chapter analyzes the 2015–2018 Reform Agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as a critical case to explore how externally driven reform packages are designed, imagined, and institutionally embedded in post-conflict, multi-level governance contexts. The choice of this case is informed by both its empirical relevance and its analytical potential to shed light broader questions of policy design and institutional coordination in fragmented political systems. The following section outlines the case selection strategies I employed in this study, addressing the question: *what is this a case of?*

The Reform Agenda represents a policy moment of unusual coherence and ambition in BiH's recent history, both in terms of the comprehensiveness of its stated goals and the scope of the coordination it required across multiple levels of governance—state, entity, cantonal—and a wide array of international actors. This makes it an analytically rich site for examining how policy design is structured under conditions of formal decentralization and overlapping authority. As Hancké (2009) emphasizes, case studies are deliberately selected based on their theoretical relevance, allowing researchers to test and refine existing theories by focusing on cases that are particularly illustrative or critical. The Reform Agenda thus provides a compelling opportunity to study such dynamics in a non-OECD, post-conflict context.

This case constitutes what Mahoney and Goertz (2006) term a “paradigmatic case”—a case that exemplifies a broader theoretical concern, in this instance the interplay between international intervention and domestic institutional architecture in state-building and reform processes.⁴⁶ It might also function as what George and Bennett (2005) describe as a “most likely case” for evaluating the institutional and political limits of coordinated governance in post-conflict contexts: if such coordination is possible in BiH, a state with highly decentralized and often contentious governance arrangements, it may offer broader insights into the feasibility of complex policy architectures elsewhere.⁴⁷ If it did not succeed, despite all the effort, will and money

⁴⁶ James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 227–249

⁴⁷ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

that was poured into it, it might again be a lesson for the wider context. Finally, there's the secret third outcome, one that policy specialists rarely factor in when reading evaluations: the reform failed exactly as expected, but everyone was, at least for a while, doing an excellent job pretending it was a smashing success. In that case, there's even more to unravel.

Methodology

In this chapter, I aim to shed light on these topics by relying on secondary data sources, and employing two separate methods. First, I will analyze formal documents, press releases and speeches produced by the EU, the main sponsor of the Reform Agenda, the IMF, the WB, and the Government of FBiH as the main implementer spanning 2014 to 2018 by utilizing latent and quantitative content analysis. This analysis aims to provide us with clusters of concepts and imagery around which the Agenda is designed. This section answers the question of how the reform was imagined by its designers, creators and implementers. Integrating latent text analysis with conventional policy analysis offers an innovative methodological approach that reveals both the explicit content and underlying discursive structures of Bosnia's reform agenda. While traditional policy analysis focuses on stated objectives, institutional frameworks, and implementation mechanisms, latent text analysis uncovers the implicit assumptions, conceptual hierarchies, and ideological orientations embedded within policy documents.⁴⁸ This dual approach is particularly useful because policy language operates on multiple levels simultaneously. It carves out the manifest content communicates official intentions, while latent discursive patterns reveal deeper epistemological frameworks about how problems are conceptualized, solutions are prioritized, and political relationships are understood. For example, Schmidt distinguishes between "coordinative discourse" (among policy actors) and "communicative discourse" (between political actors and the public).⁴⁹ In this part of the chapter, I identify how these different discursive levels operate within Bosnia's reform documents - revealing not just what policymakers say publicly, but

⁴⁸ Justin Grimmer and Brandon M. Stewart, "Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts," *Political Analysis* 21, no. 3 (2013): 267-297.

⁴⁹ Vivien A. Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 303-326

the underlying logic that structures how problems and solutions are conceptualized among relevant international and domestic actors.

This methodological combination allows us to understand not just what reforms were envisioned, but how they were intellectually constructed and linguistically framed. Latent text analysis can identify recurring semantic clusters, conceptual associations, and discursive patterns that may not be immediately apparent to human readers but which structure the entire reform narrative. For instance, it might reveal how concepts like "modernization," "efficiency," and "European integration" are systematically linked to specific policy instruments, or how certain actors (citizens, institutions, international bodies) are consistently positioned within particular semantic fields that reflect underlying power relationships. This approach is rooted in a tradition of discourse and content analysis that treats language not just as descriptive, but as performative and constitutive of social reality⁵⁰. I will rely on a computer-assisted, quantitative content analysis method, where I will process through software to detect frequencies and co-occurrences of key terms and themes. This will be combined with a latent, interpretive analysis to understand which issues are discursively prioritized, what implicit assumptions or silences exist, and how overarching narratives—such as modernization, integration, or crisis response—are mobilized.

During the preliminary analysis phase, an unexpected pattern emerged that required theoretical refinement of the analytical approach. Rather than revealing competing institutional logics, the frequency analysis and thematic coding revealed what I term varieties of legitimation strategy, distinct but complementary approaches through which different institutional actors build consensus around reform packages. I developed an analytical framework that identifies four ideal-typical legitimation strategies: *Technical Authority* (deriving legitimacy from expertise and scientific knowledge), *Political Direction* (using hierarchical conditionality and membership incentives), *Legal Inevitability* (presenting reforms as non-negotiable requirements),

⁵⁰ Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman and
Lewis, Seth C., Rodrigo Zamith, and Alfred Hermida. 2013. "Content Analysis in an Era of Big Data: A Hybrid Approach to Computational and Manual Methods." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 57, no. 1 (2013): 34–52. doi:10.1080/08838151.2012.761702.

and *Collaborative Partnership* (maintaining appearance of domestic ownership while providing external guidance). This framework allows analysis of how different institutions assume specialized roles in a broader legitimization ecosystem, rather than competing for dominance.

The data collection strategy employed a comprehensive approach to gather all publicly available documents that explicitly referenced the Reform Agenda produced by the key institutional actors responsible for its design and implementation between 2014 and 2018. I collected a total of 84 documents and publications, including press releases, official announcements, speeches, policy briefs, and institutional reports from four primary sources: the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) as the main domestic implementer, the European Union as the principal external sponsor, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as the key international financial institutions providing technical and financial support. The collection process involved systematic searches of official websites, institutional archives, and public databases to ensure comprehensive coverage of all formal communications that mentioned the Reform Agenda explicitly during the four-year implementation period. This corpus represents the complete universe of official discourse surrounding the Reform Agenda from its initial design phase in 2014 through its conclusion in 2018. This approach, I hope, will help me capture both the coordinative discourse among policy actors and the communicative discourse directed toward the public across multiple institutional perspectives and governance levels.

Reliability is ensured through systematic application of the coding framework across all documents using MAXQDA's consistency checking functions and detailed documentation of coding decisions in a coding manual. The quantitative analysis employs software-generated frequency counts and co-occurrence measures to minimize subjective interpretation bias in identifying patterns. For the qualitative analysis, validity is enhanced through triangulation across multiple document sources and institutional perspectives, allowing for comparison of how different actors frame similar issues. The comprehensive nature of the document corpus - including all relevant publications from key actors during the reform period - strengthens external

validity by ensuring no major institutional voices are excluded from the analysis. Internal validity is supported by grounding the analytical framework in established theoretical traditions from critical policy studies and discourse analysis.

The analysis will proceed in two phases, beginning with a preliminary exploratory analysis to identify emergent themes and patterns within the corpus. Using MAXQDA software, I will conduct a comprehensive frequency analysis of key terms and concepts across all 84 documents, generating descriptive statistics on word frequencies, co-occurrences, and thematic clusters. This initial phase will include the creation of word clouds to visualize dominant discursive elements and identify the most salient concepts within each institutional actor's communications about the Reform Agenda. The preliminary analysis will also examine the distribution of themes across different document types, time periods, and institutional sources to map the overall discursive landscape. Based on these findings, I will identify the most significant thematic patterns and conceptual frameworks that emerge from the data, which will then inform the development of specific analytical categories for deeper qualitative analysis. This inductive approach ensures that the subsequent detailed analysis is grounded in the actual content and priorities reflected in the documents themselves, rather than imposing predetermined theoretical categories that may not capture the ways different actors construct and legitimize the Agenda's interventions within Bosnia's complex governance architecture.

The findings from this content analysis will be interpreted to directly address how different institutional actors discursively construct labor market problems and legitimize their proposed solutions. By examining which concepts are most frequently invoked, which actors are cited as authoritative sources, and how problems and solutions are discursively linked, this analysis will reveal whether the Reform Agenda reflects competing institutional logics—such as neoliberal efficiency versus social democratic protection—or represents a hegemonic consensus around particular visions of labor market governance. These insights will illuminate how discourse operates as a mechanism of power in externally-driven reform processes. This analysis has several limitations. The focus on formal documents means informal negotiations and behind-the-scenes discussions are not captured. The 2014-2015

timeframe covers the reform design period but misses later implementation effects. The emphasis on institutional actors means civil society and trade union voices are underrepresented unless they appear in official documents. Document analysis cannot reveal the gap between stated policy intentions and actual outcomes. These limitations mean the findings reflect official policy discourse rather than the complete reform process.

Theoretical approach

This chapter's analytical approach draws on multiple theoretical traditions to understand how labor policy is conceptualized, designed, and embedded within complex governance architectures in post-conflict settings. The theoretical framework integrates lessons from critical policy studies, multi-level governance theory, and policy transfer and diffusion literature.

As mentioned in the sections above, I treat the Reform Agenda through the framework of policy architecture which includes institutional structures, actor networks, discursive elements, and implementation mechanisms which structure policy processes. Unlike traditional approaches that focus on individual policies or programs, analyzing policy architecture requires examining the interconnected systems through which problems are defined, solutions are formulated, and implementation pathways are constructed.⁵¹ Peters et al. distinguish between policy design as a deliberate activity and policy architecture as the broader structural context within which design occurs.⁵² In the context of the Reform Agenda, this distinction is useful because it allows us to examine both the intentional choices made by policymakers and the structural constraints and opportunities embedded in Bosnia's fragmented governance system.

The concept of policy architecture is particularly useful for understanding externally-driven reform processes. As Stone argues, international policy transfer often involves the construction of new institutional architectures that can accommodate external

⁵¹ Michael Howlett and Jeremy Rayner, "Design Principles for Policy Mixes: Cohesion and Coherence in 'New Governance Arrangements,'" *Policy and Society* 26, no. 4 (2007): 1-18.

⁵² B. Guy Peters, Gerry Stoker, and Jon Pierre, eds., *The Relevance of Political Science* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

blueprints while managing domestic resistance and implementation challenges.⁵³ In Bosnia's case, the Reform Agenda represents an attempt to create a coherent policy architecture across multiple levels of governance and diverse actor networks. Hooghe and Marks conceptualize multi-level governance as a system where authority is dispersed across multiple territorial levels and functional domains, creating interdependencies that require coordination mechanisms beyond traditional state control, and, I would argue, oftentimes beyond anyone's capacities.⁵⁴ In their work on multi-level governance and European integration, they offer two archetypes of governance: Type I and Type II. Type I multi-level governance systems authority is dispersed across different levels of government with stable jurisdictional boundaries. In Type II governance, authority is dispersed across task-specific, overlapping and competing jurisdictions that are often incongruent with territorial boundaries.⁵⁵ In this context, Bosnia seems to better fit under Type II governance. The theoretical challenge in Bosnia's case lies in understanding how these governance types interact and sometimes conflict. Bache and Flinders argue that multi-level governance can produce both coordination benefits and democratic deficits, particularly when accountability mechanisms become unclear across multiple levels.⁵⁶ This tension is evident in the Reform Agenda, where international actors, domestic governments, and implementing agencies operate across different jurisdictions and timelines. In this case, what happened in Bosnia, and arguably in many different places throughout recent and not-so-recent history, is that the asymmetric power relations between international oversight bodies, such as the PIC mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation or the OHR, results in semi-coercive policy transfer.

The literature on policy transfer is rich and diverse, but mainly distinguishes between two different modes of policy transfer: some form of voluntary, consensual transfer

⁵³ Diane Stone, "Transfer and Translation of Policy," *Policy Studies* 33, no. 4 (2012): 483-499.

⁵⁴ Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 233-243.

⁵⁶ Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders, eds., *Multi-level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

and some form of coercive, "forced" transfer.⁵⁷ Proponents of conditionality mechanisms argue that external pressure can overcome domestic resistance to necessary but politically costly reforms. Börzel and Risse contend that EU conditionality has been effective in promoting institutional change in candidate countries by providing both incentives for compliance and credible commitments to reward reform efforts.⁵⁸ They argue that conditionality works best when domestic costs of adaptation are low and when EU rewards are significant and credible. Similarly, critics of conditionality raise serious concerns about its democratic implications and long-term sustainability, so for example Schimmelfennig argues that externally-imposed reforms often lack domestic ownership and may undermine democratic deliberation by presenting policy choices as technical requirements rather than political decisions subject to public debate.⁵⁹ This "democratic deficit" of conditionality becomes particularly problematic when reforms affect core areas of social and economic policy that traditionally fall within the domain of democratic choice.

Another stream of literature focuses on the how of policy transfer, identifies particular mechanisms through which this transfer occurs, thus naming transfer through conditionality, lesson drawing, and policy entrepreneurship.⁶⁰ Bosnia's Reform Agenda, I would argue, represents a form of coerced transfer, a "hard transfer" where policy change in the receiving country is urged by financial incentives or institutional pressure. In Bosnia's context, while the institutions involved in making the agenda, such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the EU, were always quite amicable toward Bosnia, it much resembles a friendly intervention staged by friends to change the behavior of another problematic friend. While the

⁵⁷ David P. Dolowitz and David Marsh, "Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making," *Governance* 13, no. 1 (2000): 5-23

⁵⁸ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, ed. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 57-80.

⁵⁹ Frank Schimmelfennig, "EU Political Conditionality," in *Handbook of European Union Politics*, ed. Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack, and Ben Rosamond (London: Sage, 2007), 401-418.

⁶⁰ Mark Evans and Jonathan Davies, "Understanding Policy Transfer: A Multi-Level, Multi-Disciplinary Perspective," *Public Administration* 77, no. 2 (1999): 361-385.

intentions behind the intervention might be good, the receiving party might feel "ganged up on", thereby creating friction. These changes involve higher-level policy change, what Hall would famously call a "paradigmatic shift" or what Graziano would call a change in policy objectives and principles.⁶¹ These changes, in the case of Bosnia, included extensive changes to welfare policy and labor policy, in the direction of liberalization and deregulation of the prior policies which were to a large extent inherited from socialist Yugoslavia. Exploring Europeanization efforts in potential member states, Radelli has famously identified that these kinds of policy changes can alter domestic policy capacities and democratic processes.⁶²

Critical scholarship on policy transfer submits that these transfer processes include knowledge transfers and embed power relations. Critical scholars like Peck and Theodore have argued that policy transfer processes are inherently political, involving the privileging of certain ideas and paradigms while marginalizing others, particularly local or domestic alternatives.⁶³ In Bosnia's context, this raises questions about whose expertise counted in designing the Reform Agenda and whose knowledge was excluded from consideration. However, Bosnia's complex governance system as well as the sheer number of actors involved in the design of the Reform Agenda complicates the matter, forming what Borzel and Risse would call "competitive conditionality", where different actors act simultaneously with similar, but not identical agendas.⁶⁴ However, most these actors carry the badge of neutrality on their sleeve, insisting that these processes are not political but technical, and that ideological motivations do not lead them. Critical policy students would not agree.

⁶¹ Peter A. Hall, "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 3 (1993): 275–96. and Paolo Graziano, "Europeanization and Domestic Employment Policy Change: Conceptual and Methodological Background," *Governance* 24, no. 3 (July 2011): 583–605.

⁶² Claudio M. Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy," in *The Politics of Europeanization*, eds. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27–56.

⁶³ Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore, *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

⁶⁴ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "From Europeanisation to Diffusion: Introduction," *West European Politics* 35, no. 1 (2012): 1–19.

The critical policy literature questions the apparent neutrality of all actors involved into top-down policymaking, and examine how power dynamics operate looking through seemingly technical policy interventions. This tradition draws on post-structuralist and neo-Marxist approaches to reveal these power dynamics, and decide how they affect the societies involved. Fischer and Foster famously argued that policy analysis must not examine simply what policies do for the particular policy sector, but also how they create subjects and objects of governance.⁶⁵ In the context of labor policy, this would mean examining how different labor policy interventions create, construct and deconstruct particular understanding of workers, employers and the state, and how these products inhibit or catalyze different forms of political action.

Critical policy studies offer us three strands of literature which provide complementary yet distinct analytical tools for exploring policy processes. The first stream, represented by Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" approach, shifts attention from policy solutions to the construction of policy problems themselves, arguing that problems only exist if identify them as problems, and that this identification process is what ultimately matters when dissecting any policy.⁶⁶ This approach is quite reminiscent of Suleyman Demirel's famous saying "If you don't make an issue out of it, there won't be an issue."⁶⁷ Rather than treating problems as objective and given, Bacchi challenges the underlying assumptions, silences, and political effects embedded in specific problem representations. This framework is a good fit to this study's research question because it shifts analytical attention from evaluating policy solutions to examining how the very definition of problems shapes the range of possible interventions. In the context of the Reform Agenda, this approach enables us to investigate not whether labor market reforms were "successful," but rather how labor market challenges were constructed as

⁶⁵ Frank Fischer and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

⁶⁶ Carol Bacchi, *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?* (Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia, 2009).

⁶⁷ Acar, Muhittin. "Bir Kısa Portre Denemesi: Süleyman Demirel," in *Süleyman Demirel Anısına Özel Bölüm*, SDÜ İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi 21, no. 3 (2016): 1095.

particular kinds of problems requiring particular kinds of solutions. For instance, if unemployment is framed as a "skills mismatch" problem, this representation makes training programs and labor market flexibility appear as logical solutions while rendering alternative explanations invisible or illegitimate.

The discourse analysis framework I employed here might suggest competing visions of state-market-society relations by treating policy language as constitutive rather than merely descriptive of social reality. Different actors' discursive choices about problem definition and solution justification reflect underlying assumptions about the proper role of markets in allocating labor, the state's responsibility for social protection, and citizens' rights and obligations in economic life. For example, discourses emphasizing "labor market flexibility" and "competitiveness" typically embed assumptions about market efficiency and individual responsibility, while discourses focusing on "worker protection" and "social dialogue" reflect different assumptions about collective rights and state responsibility. By mapping these discursive patterns across the Reform Agenda documents, we can identify whether different institutional actors operate from shared or competing paradigms about labor market governance, and how these paradigmatic differences or convergences shape the possibilities for democratic deliberation about economic policy in post-conflict contexts where external actors wield large influence over domestic policy choices. Another stream emerges from discourse analysis traditions, which focus on how policy texts create meaning and legitimate interventions. Fairclough's framework distinguishes descriptive, interpretive, and critical levels of analysis, with the critical dimension explicitly connecting discursive practices to broader power structures and processes of social change.⁶⁸ Schmidt's discursive institutionalism extends this lens to the institutional arena, offering a dual perspective on policy discourse: coordinative, among policy actors who negotiate ideas, and communicative, between elites and the public.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁹ Schmidt, Vivien A., "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 303-326.

Finally, the critical discourse analysis tradition, particularly as advanced by van Dijk, focuses on the reproduction and contestation of power relations through discursive choices in texts.⁷⁰ Here, the analytical focus expands beyond what policies explicitly state to include the taken-for-granted assumptions, silences, and positioning of actors within policy narratives. This stream directly links textual analysis to questions of social dominance and resistance. However, most these works are focused on domestic policymaking, where domestic actors partake in power sharing and compete in the institutional arenas where policy is designed. Thus, we need to draw on the literature on international intervention and state-building to better understand how things function where there is an additional level of policy owners included. One stream in critical international intervention literature focuses on how international policy interventions often reproduce colonial relationships through seemingly consensual technical assistance and capacity-building programs.⁷¹ A group of authors argues that international state-building efforts often prioritise institutional form over democratic substance, creating governance architectures that combine formal democratic institutions with limited popular participation.⁷² The Reform Agenda, as seen later in the text, established elaborate consultation mechanisms while inherently laying power in hands of international and domestic elites. Finally, the “good governance” literature, as critics like Ferguson show, reveals that terms such as “efficiency,” “transparency,” and “accountability” are not just technical goals but political tools that change how states and societies interact.⁷³ In this sense, the Reform Agenda’s focus on “modern,” “efficient,” and “transparent” governance is less about neutral administrative fixes and more about structuring political power in ways that benefit some actors while sidelining others.

The literature on legitimation strategies shows how institutional actors construct and deploy different forms of authority to build consensus around contested policy

⁷⁰ Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁷¹ David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-building* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

⁷² Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁷³ Ferguson, James, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

interventions. Building on Weber's classical typology of authority, contemporary scholars have identified how modern governance operates through multiple legitimization mechanisms that complement rather than compete with each other. Beetham's influential framework demonstrates that legitimacy requires not only legal validity and normative justification but also evidence of consent from those subject to power, creating what he terms the "three-dimensional" nature of legitimate authority.⁷⁴ Van den Broek's analysis of legitimization in multi-level governance contexts shows how different institutional actors can assume specialized legitimization roles, with some providing technical authority while others offer political direction or legal inevitability, creating what he terms "legitimation ecosystems" where apparent consensus emerges through coordinated but distinct authority claims.⁷⁵ In the context of international governance, legitimization becomes particularly complex as external actors must construct authority across different political communities with varying normative frameworks. This division of legitimization labor enables what appears to be agreement around policy frameworks, while obscuring the coordinated nature of authority construction. Recent scholarship on "output legitimacy" in European governance shows how technocratic claims about policy effectiveness can substitute for traditional democratic accountability, creating systems where legitimacy derives from promised results rather than participatory processes.⁷⁶ However, this technical legitimization strategy becomes problematic when policy outcomes fail to match the initial imaginaries, making therefore a vicious circle where even more legitimization is required to explain failures while preserving institutional authority.

Context and rationale of the Reform Agenda

The 2015-2018 Reform Agenda (henceforth the Agenda) is an initiative started by federal and local (cantonal) levels of government in BiH. The policy package aimed to foster sustainable, efficient, socially just and steady economic growth, create new jobs, increase and more-appropriately target social assistance, and create a favorable

⁷⁴ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

⁷⁵ Tijs A. van den Broek, "Legitimation Ecosystems in Multi-Level Governance: How Institutional Actors Coordinate Authority Claims," *Journal of European Public Policy* 28, no. 4 (2021): 512-531.

⁷⁶ Fritz W. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

and just social environment for conducting business. Official documents cite the BiH government as the main initiators behind the agenda. The text of the Agenda was published by the council of ministers and other involved stakeholders in 2014.⁷⁷ The following section will briefly explain what the policy package initially included. Primarily, the Agenda brought a big surprise: an unprecedented and highly ambitious level of vertical and horizontal integration and coordination required across state, entity and cantonal levels of government *and* select EU institutions *and* international financial institutions *and* a number of other international donors, primarily development agencies, which were interested in contributing to any particular point in the Agenda. In short, this policy package was the most comprehensive policy initiative since BiH's independence in 1992. Second, the Agenda's main aim was to set forth a set of mid-term priorities which were translated into actionable steps with all involved institutions in the state and entity Action Plans.⁷⁸ Considering the vastness of BiH's state apparatus, as well as the strong presence of international actors interested in working on the Agenda, achieving this level of coordination represented a significant undertaking. Third, the Agenda was largely aimed at ensuring BiH's compliance with the EU's *acquis communautaire*, the entire body of rights, obligations, and legal norms that are binding on all EU member states, including treaties, regulations, directives and decisions adopted by EU institutions. The policy package, as comprehensive as it was, aimed at aligning BiH's public finance, taxation, fiscal policy, business climate and competitiveness, labor market, social protection and pensions, and rule of law and public governance and public administration to EU standards - or at least to what the EU wishes it was. In terms of specific policy areas, the Agenda's primary focus was on working with the IMF to ensure more sustainable budgeting aimed at decreasing public debt, increase room for maneuver to increase public investment, and at the same time decrease the rate of participation of the state in the economy, with a particular

⁷⁷ Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Reformska agenda za Bosnu i Hercegovinu za period 2015–2018. godina*, https://vijeceministara.gov.ba/home_right_docs/default.aspx?id=20728&langTag=hr-HR. Accessed April 12, 2025

⁷⁸ Ibid.

emphasis on decreasing public expenditure.⁷⁹ At the same time, levels of social contributions would be decreased, but not followed by an increase in wages. This package also includes significant reform of the health sector which includes paying off health sector debt, introducing treasury management into health institutions, and defining alternative sources of funding apart from contributions.⁸⁰

Second policy area covered by the Agenda is business climate and competitiveness of the market in BiH, where the accent is on attracting investment through eliminating obstacles to investment, improving tender procedures, eliminating hidden subsidies and other forms of support to large companies, and getting rid of high administrative barriers to forming, registering and leading a business. All this was planned to be done by entity and cantonal government with significant support by the IMF and the World Bank (hereinafter WB) through, *inter alia*, new laws on companies and foreign direct investment, automation of the business registration procedures, speeding up of construction permit acquisition, new laws on protecting investors, and finally and less surprisingly, restructuring of public companies through privatization and liquidation programs.

The third policy area addressed in the Reform Agenda is the labor market—also the central focus of this dissertation. While all reform measures are cross-cutting and affect various aspects of people's lives, few have as direct and widespread an impact as those targeting the labor market. Similarly, although all interventions presented in the text of the Agenda seem like ultra-capitalism, the labor market reforms take it to a whole new level. The problem framing begins with how underutilized BiH's labor force potential is, followed by citations of the low labor force participation rate (percentage of the working-age population that is actively engaged in the labor market), and high unemployment, particularly due to mismatched labor supply and demand for qualified workers.⁸¹ The text of the Agenda also assessed that the culture of collective bargaining and social dialogue is underdeveloped, quite strangely for a state with a 50-year-long socialist tradition of unionization and organized labor. This

⁷⁹ Council of Ministers of BiH, *Reformska agenda*, 2015–2018.

⁸⁰ Council of Ministers of BiH, *Reformska agenda*, 2015–2018.

⁸¹ Council of Ministers of BiH, *Reformska agenda*, 2015–2018, p.4.

is, the drafters of the Agenda submit, due to unrealistic demands from social partners (and definitely has nothing to do with private sector actors, or corrupt governments that co-opt organized labor, as is the case in many other former socialist states)⁸². Finally, the Agenda explains, current labor laws no longer adequately reflect contemporary social and economic realities, and in some cases, they are contradictory, unclear, or overly rigid.

The fourth policy arena is social protection and pension funds, defined as the area that will enable BiH to become a "modern and caring society which cares for those that can't care for themselves", but never under the cost of economic incentive and fiscal sustainability.⁸³ These interventions are aimed at making the social system in BiH more efficient, effective and equitable through ensuring social protection reaches those that really need it, or that pay for it. Finally, the text of the reform unironically notices, the pension system should be on stable financial foundations, granted that BiH wants to "solve the problem of piled worker's rights".⁸⁴ Social protection systems in BiH, the Reform text claims, will undergo reforms—guided by the World Bank and IMF—including better targeting of non-contributory benefits, establishing a centralized database of beneficiaries, and encouraging economic participation while protecting the most vulnerable. Pension systems in both entities and cantons will be placed on firmer financial footing through measures such as limiting privileged pensions, adjusting retirement incentives, accelerating beneficiary audits, addressing unpaid contributions, and developing voluntary pension schemes. The fifth policy sector the Agenda addressed was rule of law and good governance. These areas need to be built on concrete progress in the fight against organized crime, terrorism and corruption. Finally, this policy area would also address issues of low citizen trust into institutions through supporting reform of the judiciary and the police.

⁸² Paul Kubicek, "Organized Labor in Postcommunist States: Will the Western Sun Set on It, Too?" *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 1 (1999): 83–102.

⁸³ Council of Ministers of BiH, *Reformska agenda*, 2015–2018, p.5.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Finally, the last area covered by the Agenda is reform of public administration targeting support to fiscal sustainability and increasing the quality of services given to citizens. The text of the Agenda underlines the necessity for a "more modern, competent, transparent, efficient and frugal public administration" in order to improve how public service is provided.⁸⁵ This includes a freeze on all new employment in public administration, as well as freezing the wage fund for public sector workers until a new system of merit-based payments is drafted.

The Reform Agenda, as the previous section shows, can be characterized as neoliberal structural reform designed with neoliberal rationality in mind. Fiscal discipline, reduction of state involvement, labor market flexibility, privatization and conditionality in social protection all show strong initiatives of stepping away from BiH's socialist and statist legacy. Most initiatives outlined in the text of the Agenda focus on reducing public expenditure, increasing efficiency, and meeting numerical targets, with no mention of social costs. Considering these policies are convergence reforms aimed at facilitating BiH's EU integration, they can be read as externally-driven policy conditionality, reflecting BiH's ever-lasting dependence on external governance and soft coercion through membership incentives. In a way, I would submit that the Agenda reads as an initiative of depoliticization which transforms political and social problems in BiH into technical problems with technical solutions. For example, structural poverty in BiH and limited access to resources by certain groups was presented as an issue of targeting in social assistance, labor inflexibility an issue of misalignment between the supply and demand of the labor market, and inefficient public administration an issue of an inaptitude of bureaucrats, and not of long-term structural problems stemming from the inefficient and overly complicated Dayton Agreement mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. In effect, this reflects a highly selective approach to policy framing and participation, where both problems and solutions are defined "from above". Voices from below—especially those of workers and grassroots actors—would likely articulate a very different understanding of the causes and consequences of the challenges facing the country, particularly in the labor market.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.7.

The following analysis examines how different institutional actors discursively constructed and legitimized the 2015-2018 Reform Agenda through their official communications. Drawing on 84 documents produced by the European Union, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina between 2014 and 2018, this section explores the language, concepts, and narratives that shaped how labor market problems and solutions were understood and presented to various audiences. The analysis proceeds in two phases: first, a preliminary exploration of key themes and patterns across the entire document corpus, as well as by different actors using frequency analysis and visualization techniques, followed by a deeper qualitative examination of how different actors framed labor market challenges and justified their proposed interventions. This approach reveals not only what reforms were envisioned but also how they were intellectually constructed and politically legitimized within Bosnia's complex governance architecture.



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I start the analysis by zooming in on FBiH data sources. Below you can see in Figure 1 a word cloud with the most frequent terms extracted from the corpus of documents by FBiH.

The word cloud includes top 20 terms mentioned in documents published by the FBiH government in the period from 2014 to 2018, spanning the design and implementation of the Reform Agenda. Below in Table 1 I present a table with the terms and its relative frequencies in the text.

Table 1: Word frequencies extracted from the corpus of FBiH

Word	Frequency
Law	61
EU	42
social	41
measures	37
administration	35
prime minister	34
public	33
reform	33
employment	33
policies	32
employers	31
reform	31
meeting	30
Republika Srpska	28
government	28
minister	25
contributions	24
business	24

Word	Frequency
rights	24

At a glance, the word frequencies reveal a highly legalistic and institutional language in the document, with "Law" being by far the most frequent term. Zooming in on the instances where law was mentioned in the corpus, we come across an interesting finding. The law, in this case, refers to the Labor law that came into procedures as part of the reform package. Prime Minister Novalic said that he was surprised by the backlash the law received, despite the fact it was "literally copied from the EU, with adjustments to BiH".⁸⁶ The law indeed was problematic, primarily because social partners, namely syndicates and other employee associations, protested the EU law, citing bad worker protection. While no mass protests occurred, PM Novalic, at one occasion stated that the law was so worker-friendly, that he does not expect workers on potential protests, but employers, citing his origins in the private sector are responsible for his understanding of how markets function and who stands to win from this law.

Truth be told, PM Novalic has, on multiple occasions, promised the law would deliver a reasonable level of social protection. Novalic has also, at one instance, said the law would go into parliamentary procedure no matter what, because it "has no alternative", but that he guarantees "maximum understanding of the wishes of social partners, all while following World Bank recommendations".⁸⁷ This discursive element of "there being no alternative" is very reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's "TINA - There Is No Alternative" economic and political philosophy during her time as the British PM. Thatcher used TINA to legitimize her neoliberal economic policies which include privatization, deregulation, reduced government spending as the only viable path for a state that wishes to develop in the 21st century. TINA further

⁸⁶ "Novalić - Wigemark: Novi zakon o radu bolji je od aktuelnog," Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/novalic-wigemark-novi-zakon-o-radu-bolji-je-od-aktuelnog>. Accessed January 31, 2025.

⁸⁷ "Ministar Mandilović primio delegaciju MMF-a," Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, June 11, 2015, <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/ministar-mandilovic-primio-delegaciju-mmf-a>. Accessed on June 13, 2025.

became associated with the broader "Washington Consensus" of the 1980s and 1990s.⁸⁸ This discursive element is quite effective as it frames the neoliberal economic path not as a political or ideological choice, but as an empirical necessity. From a Foucauldian perspective, the transformation of neoliberal economics from one school of thought among many into seemingly the only choice represents a fascinating case study in how knowledge becomes power and how discourse shapes reality.

This transformation occurred through what Michel Foucault would recognize as the establishment of a new "regime of truth", a system that determines what counts as legitimate knowledge within a given historical moment.⁸⁹ The neoliberal discourse achieved this omnipresence not simply through ideological persuasion, but by restructuring the field of economics under which knowledge could be (re)produced and validated. Academic economics increasingly used positivist formalization over empirical complexity, creating what appeared to be scientific objectivity while actually using extreme theoretical assumptions about rationality efficiency.⁹⁰ By the 1980s, this methodological orthodoxy had become so entrenched that alternative approaches were dismissed not through intellectual debate, but through exclusion or unorthodox scholars and practitioners from research platforms, a process that Pierre Bourdieu would term the exercise of "symbolic violence" within academic fields.⁹¹ The result was a self-reinforcing cycle where each new generation of economists was trained exclusively within neoliberal frameworks, making alternatives literally unthinkable. After a point, apart from this neoliberal thinking, there really was little else. This represented the successful transformation of a particular economic theory into what appeared to be some sort of ultimate truth, similar to what Antonio

⁸⁸ John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?*, ed. John Williamson (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990).

⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 191-192.

⁹⁰ Philip Mirowski, *Machine Dreams: Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 487-522.

⁹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 11-45.

Gramsci called "hegemony," where power operates not through coercion but through the production of consent and common sense.⁹² This is not to say that I think PM Novalić is a discursive mercenary of neoliberalism, but rather to show that his statements express a deeply internalized logic of capitalism, which might be resulting from education, as he's an economist by training, or from his long tenure as an entrepreneur in the private sector. Third, it might be exacerbated by external pressures, something I would be very interested in asking him in person, if I could. Neoliberal discourse often brings about mentions of modernization. In 2015, Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, the chief of EU delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated in a meeting with PM Novalić that "the system in BiH is a relic of Tito's system... we need to ask ourselves whether we want to return to the past, or we want something more modern."⁹³ Similarly, in one instance, FBiH government published that EU delegation president Wigemark was thrilled to notice there is no increase in users of the federal budget for the first time in BiH history, noting he hopes the reform will bring about "a more modern, competent, transparent, efficient, flexible and responsible public administration."⁹⁴ PM Novalić had also, at different occasions proclaimed different benefits of the new labor law. His rationale was that "if the old law was working, there would be more employed people", and that the new law would attract investment, help BiH approach the EU, and encourage employers to employ more new workers.⁹⁵ However, later in the same press conference, Novalić stated "we need these reforms for ourselves, not for EU or our international partners".⁹⁶ The new labor law, Novalić insisted, actually expanded labor rights, and

⁹² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 210-276.

⁹³ "Novalić - Wigemark: Novi zakon o radu bolji je od aktuelnog," Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/novalic-wigemark-novi-zakon-o-radu-bolji-je-od-aktuelnog>. Accessed on January 14, 2025.

⁹⁴ "Novalić i Wigemark: Reforme napreduju," Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/hr/novalic-i-wigemark-reforme-napreduju>. Accessed on January 14, 2025.

⁹⁵ "Predstavnički dom Parlamenta Federacije BiH usvojio Zakon o radu," *Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine*, 31. juli 2015., <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/predstavnicki-dom-parlamenta-federacije-bih-usvojio-zakon-o-radu>. Accessed January 31, 2025.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

that the EU is "simply assisting us in doing what we were supposed to do anyway".⁹⁷ The labor law came into effect in late 2015, and mentions of law after this date are little, and limited to laws on contributions and civil service.

Mentions of the EU similarly point to sections of the corpus where either EU representatives or Novalic speak about the benefits of the labor law to FBiH. Chief of EU delegation has in multiple instances pointed out the EU understood the importance of supporting small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the aftermath of floods that hit Bosnia in 2014.⁹⁸ The exact correlation between flood recovery and SMEs is not clear, but what is clear is that supporting SMEs is the backbone of a very neoliberal understanding of economic growth, traditionally supported by conservative international financial institutions.

"Administration" although high on the list of most frequent concepts, carries little analytical weight as it is mostly mentioned in the context of public administration. However, few instances refer to the public administration reform under the Agenda, a process that never gained traction and continues until this day. Among measures that are mentioned and implemented is a moratorium on the employment of new civil servants which took place in 2016. One insight I have is that the high frequency of institutional terms ("administration" 35, "prime minister" 34, "government" 28, "minister" 25, "meeting" 30) reveals a technocratic governance discourse where reform legitimacy derives from proper institutional procedures rather than democratic participation.

The term "syndicates" appears in the frequency table, albeit at the very bottom. As mentioned earlier, the government was trying very hard to reassure representatives of workers that the Agenda was going to expand on their rights. However, in other instances, PM Novalic insisted that the new labor law will be enacted because this reform has no alternative, and that syndicates do have a say and do represent their rights, but that there are also competing groups with their own rights, such as the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Početak EU programa za lokalni razvoj i zapošljavanje," *Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine*, 17. Mart 2016., Accessed January 31, 2025.

unemployed.⁹⁹ In doing so, the PM used discourse to juxtapose syndicates on one side and the unemployed on the other, creating a situation of perceived conflict of interest where there is truly none. The conclusion from this statement is that one can either support organized labor and hear their grievances, or create new jobs. Needless to say, no catastrophic scenario occurred for anyone in this dialogue: data shows that unemployment rates decreased in Bosnia after the Agenda,¹⁰⁰ and syndicates also got their say in the text of the law and ultimately a consensus took place, and the law passed.¹⁰¹

The terms "workers" is conspicuously absent from the top frequencies entirely. This pattern might suggest that while the reforms included syndicates in negotiation processes, the public discourse by the FBiH government did not focus on the worker, but rather on pacifying the groups that represent workers' rights to ensure the passing of a law. In the entire corpus, I found two instances where government representatives mention worker's rights explicitly. Why this came about has to do, I suspect, with the technocratic nature of the Agenda, with the government's ideological alignment as center-right, and with the discourse superimposed by international partners that partook in the design and implementation of the law. The following sections will analyze their discursive elements.

Figure 2 shows a word cloud generated from the EU corpus.

⁹⁹ "Novalić - Wigemark: Novi zakon o radu bolji je od aktuelnog," Vlada Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/bs/novalic-wigemark-novi-zakon-o-radu-bolji-je-od-aktuelnog>. Accessed on February 03, 2025.

¹⁰⁰ "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Unemployment rate from 2004 to 2023," World Bank, October 24, 2024, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/453933/unemployment-rate-in-bosnia-herzegovina/>. Accessed on April 26, 2025.

¹⁰¹ "Dom naroda usvojio Prijedlog zakona o radu, protest završen," Al Jazeera Balkans, July 30, 2015, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2015/7/30/dom-naroda-usvojio-prijedlog-zakona-o-radu-protest-završen>. Accessed on June 14, 2025.

Table 2 below shows top 20 words used by EU in official documents, statements, public announcements related to the Reform Agenda in the period between 2014 and 2018.

Table 2 Word frequencies extracted from the EU corpus

Word	Frequency
BiH	101
EU	63
country	43
European	33
political	33
authority	30
public	23
reform	22
adoption	20
implementation	20
urge	20
case	19
stress	19
issue	18
right	18
SAA	18
election	17
improve	17
order	17

The EU's frequency patterns reveal a distinctly different discursive construction compared to the FBiH government, emphasizing external oversight and conditional membership. The frequent use of "European" (33, order number 2) and the sheer

need to be adopted in order to satisfy EU accession criteria and align with the *acquis*, is often used by BiH politicians today in an effort to legitimize laws that would otherwise probably not be prioritized. This approach extends beyond EU-related legislation to include a wide range of domestic laws, from technical regulations in sectors like wine production, where harmonization with EU standards becomes a compelling argument for otherwise mundane agricultural legislation.¹⁰³ The invocation of European necessity thereby allows politicians to bypass traditional domestic political debates in key legislation, and obfuscate passing less important and relevant laws under the guise of a very important European Law Package, thereby making it seem like their achievements are larger than they actually are. Interestingly, the EU opts to use the term "authority" over "government" when speaking of elected governments in BiH in a ratio of 3:1. The use of the word "authority" in international law and diplomatic lingo generally refers to international oversight bodies, and using it to describe governments in independent, sovereign states is rare. However, the EU does so when referring to different levels of government in BiH, including federal, cantonal, and local/municipal governments. This discursive choice, I believe, indicates a reluctance to recognize the legitimacy of elected officials in BiH, showing reservations toward the sovereignty of the state. So, for example, we often hear talk about the "Palestinian Authority", "Myanmar authority" after the military junta overthrew the elected government, or "Belarusian Authorities" after the 2020 contested election in Belarus. Interestingly, the term "authorities" has deep colonial roots, which came about when the British established "Native Authorities" as intermediary institutions that acted as a buffer between imperial administrators and colonized populations. These "authorities" were granted limited administrative power, but remained subordinate to colonial oversight, which in effect meant they could implement policy, but not create it. The linguistic choice, I argue, even after overt colonialism is gone, still subtly reinforces that policy originates externally while execution remains a local responsibility.

¹⁰³ "Šta donosi novi zakon o vinu u BiH?," Agrokлуб.ba, November 5, 2022, <https://www.agroklub.ba/vinogradarstvo/sta-donosi-novi-zakon-o-vinu-u-bih/81657/>. Accessed on August 14, 2025.

Figure 3 below shows the word cloud extracted from the corpus of the World Bank.

Table 3 below shows top 20 most frequent words mentioned in the corpus of the World Bank.

Table 3 20 most frequent terms from the World Bank corpus

Word	Frequency
growth	458
public	377
reform	366
sector	362
GDP	352
Bank	349
support	342
country	339
BiH	332
investment	309
high	298
improve	288
Western	286
service	281
project	266
social	243
finance	233
increase	233
rate	230
market	229

The frequency analysis of the World Bank Group documents shows little surprises. The most striking feature of the word cloud is the overwhelming number of mentions of "growth". However, it is not unexpected of a financial institution whose mandate revolves primarily around providing financial instruments and technical expertise to



Figure 3: Word Cloud extracted from the World Bank Group corpus

consider economic growth as the supreme goal. However, this is not to say that the World Bank Group completely sidelines social issues. However, they believe social inclusion is best achieved "by strengthening the targeting and fiscal sustainability of social benefits and improving delivery of basic public services".¹⁰⁴ This chapter has established earlier that the TINA philosophy was widely used in the discourse around the Reform Agenda. This instance of economizing social inclusion is another manifestation of the same. Again, while this approach is exactly what one would expect from a financial institution, framing social inclusion as mainly depending on targeting and fiscal sustainability of social benefits is a logical long reach that would hurt even the longest of necks, particularly in a country that recognizes virtually zero political rights to minorities and has deep ethnic divisions in education and media, for example. These issues have little to do with fiscal sustainability, and a lot to do with politics perpetrated by the same actors that were deeply involved with the

¹⁰⁴ World Bank, "Country Partnership Strategy Progress Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period FY12–FY15," Report No. 87928-BA (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, International Finance Corporation, n.d.).

Agenda, but no international organization ever missed an opportunity to be able to, at the end of a project cycle, claim they improved the social fabric of the recipient country.

What becomes apparent through the corpus analysis is how the World Bank's discourse transforms political questions about distribution, power, and social organization into technical problems of efficiency and fiscal management. The dominance of terms like "reform" (366 mentions) and "improve" (288 mentions) creates what Ernesto Laclau would call an empty signifier, or words that appear neutral and beneficial but actually carry specific ideological content.¹⁰⁵ When social inclusion becomes a matter of "targeting" and "fiscal sustainability," alternative approaches to addressing inequality become literally unthinkable within the discourse. This is not to say that I expect a set of economic reform such as the Reform Agenda to include issues of social inclusion, but to say that coupling social inclusion with improvements in targeting forms a weak logical connection and should not be done. This is particularly true if we consider that "targeting" is often dogwhistle for welfare retrenchment without political backlash, as Paul Pierson argues in his seminal work "Dismantling the Welfare State".¹⁰⁶ The irony in this case is that while the Reform Agenda's discourse is consistently marked by efforts to depoliticize by reframing political challenges as technical processes stretched to their limits, the rare moment when it does gesture toward a political concern, such as social inclusion, the solution to the issue is absolutely illogical.

A closer look at how macroeconomic challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina are framed in the World Bank corpus reveals a recurring pattern where World Bank data and diagnostics are used to define the problems, and World Bank prescriptions are then invoked to resolve them. This circular legitimacy resembles the EU accession process, where country reports both diagnose deficiencies and offer EU support to remedy them. This is an arrangement that makes sense insofar as it is tied to the tangible reward of membership in a defined political community. By contrast, the

¹⁰⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 131-145.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?: Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17-18.

Table 4 below shows the top 20 word frequencies in the corpus of the IMF.

Table 4 Top 20 word frequencies in the IMF corpus.

Word	Frequency
government	513
bank	417
sector	413
public	349
authority	344
IMF	344
GDP	335
BiH	332
finance	286
financial	275
growth	270
reform	252
improve	239
staff	227
debt	224
investment	222
asset	211
FBiH	209
revenue	203
new	201

Caption

Similarly to the World Bank Group, the corpus of the IMF shows few surprises. It offers a distinct financial-technocratic discourse that frames the Reform Agenda as a

matter of solely fiscal discipline and economic state management. To an extent even larger than the World Bank, the IMF financializes the discourse around the Agenda through an extended use of terms such as "bank", "finance", "debt", "revenue", and "assets". This constructs all reform areas, including social measures, through a lens of budgetary efficiency, something that was long established in the just transition literature.¹⁰⁹ Similarly to the World Bank's use of "growth", the extended word list shows the IMF often speaks of "progress", "improvements", a showcase of a certain mentality of constant growth this financial institution promotes. While economic growth is wanted and needed, the overwhelming presence of this growth mentality, only seven years later, looks outdated and forced considering even the IMF has lately been preoccupied with "de-growth".¹¹⁰ World's leading intergovernmental institutions, as well as financial institutions started embracing de-growth and turned their backs to "our obsession with growth"¹¹¹, citing that this is a fairly new phenomenon, and that no leading economists before the 1950s would embrace the concept of the growing state. De-growth is reserved for states that grow fast, and primarily came about as a reaction to the environmental toll that economic growth takes, and Bosnia is certainly not one of the states that are expected to slow down production or work on shrinking their economy. However, the discursive tone used in this corpus is very different from what we read in IMF reports now. Had the Agenda been implemented today, I argue, we would not be reading reports and communications written in this language, but a very different one.

Interestingly, and similarly to the EU, the IMF also uses the term "authority" in lieu of "government". However, it does so to a very small extent, with the word "government" dominating the entire corpus to a large extent, so much that I doubt the word "authorities" was used simply as a stylistic choice to avoid redundancy of constant mentions of "government". No other instances in IMF publications imply

¹⁰⁹ Luca Cigna, Torben Fischer, Emina Hasanagic, Elke Heins, and Philip Rathgeb, "Varieties of just transition? Eco-social policy approaches at the international level," *Social Policy and Society* 22, no. 4 (2023): 730-746.

¹¹⁰ Daniel Susskind, "We Must Change the Nature of Growth," *Finance & Development*, September 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2024/09/we-must-change-the-nature-of-growth-daniel-susskind>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

there could be any contestation of BiH's sovereignty in their discourse. Another explanation could be the IMF's and EU's shared regulatory and surveillance roles, which might influence their discursive choices.

Synthesis and Analytical Conclusions

The following section will present a synthesis of the findings of the analysis section in order to showcase the varieties of imaginaries around the Reform Agenda as offered by its designers and implementers, namely the FBiH, the EU, the WBG, and the IMF. Table 5 below shows what I found to be the most striking features and characteristics of each "imaginary".

Table 5 Main identified legitimization strategies by actor

Institution	Legitimation Strategy	Primary Function	Key Mechanism	Legitimacy Source
FBiH Government	Legal inevitability	Translate external pressure into domestic acceptance	"TINA" discourse - reforms as legal/technical necessities, not political choices	EU compliance and legal procedure
EU	Political direction	Exercise supervisory authority over "subordinate authorities"	Directive language ("urge," "stress," "order") combined with conditional rewards	European standards as civilizational benchmark
World Bank	Technical authority	Provide scientific legitimacy through growth discourse	Transform social/political problems into technical efficiency questions	Expert knowledge and development experience
IMF	Financial surveillance	Ensure fiscal discipline and macroeconomic compliance	Financialization of all policy areas through budgetary metrics	Technical expertise in macroeconomic management

Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of how four key institutional actors constructed and legitimized the 2015-2018 Reform Agenda through distinct but complementary discursive strategies. The analysis reveals a systematic division of legitimation labor where each institution assumed a specific role in building consensus around the reform package while targeting different audiences and drawing on different sources of authority.

The FBiH Government positioned itself as the domestic translator, converting external pressures into narratives of legal and technical inevitability for local consumption. Rather than engaging in political persuasion, the government's strategy centered on presenting reforms as non-negotiable requirements, effectively depoliticizing what were essentially political choices about economic and social policy. However, on the other hand, the FBiH government also had to speak to domestic actors, which meant they also had to frame the Agenda as ultimately good for the society. This was done through PM Novalic, who, on multiple occasions, cited his own personality and experience in different arenas (such as the private sector) to help persuade domestic interest groups to give a green light to the implementation of the Agenda. It does, therefore, not come as a surprise that the Reform Agenda was later called "Fadil's reform" by the wider public and the media. The European Union operated through a hierarchical conditionality framework, employing directive language that positioned BiH as subordinate to European standards and oversight. The EU's discourse combined carrots and sticks, conditional membership rewards paired with explicit demands for compliance, while targeting both international observers and domestic elites invested in the European integration project.

The World Bank provided scientific legitimacy through development discourse, systematically transforming questions of power, distribution, and social organization into technical problems of efficiency and growth optimization. This technocratic framing targeted policy professionals and the broader international development community by presenting reforms as evidence-based solutions to objectively defined problems. However, the World Bank Group has shown interest in political questions

too, such as social inclusion, setting it apart from the EU and the IMF. Even though their strategy to tackle social inclusion is rather unfortunate, the fact that it was included shows that the WBG at least has political issues on its radar.

The IMF, on the other hand, operated through financial surveillance logic, rendering all policy areas legible through fiscal and macroeconomic metrics. This financialization strategy addressed financial markets and fiscal policymakers by presenting reforms as necessary for macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability.

The most striking divergence between the corpuses emerges in how institutions position themselves relative to BiH's sovereignty. The EU and IMF both employ supervisory discourse - the EU through explicit conditionality language and hierarchical positioning, the IMF through ongoing surveillance and compliance monitoring. Both institutions construct themselves as legitimate overseers with the authority to direct domestic policy choices. In contrast, the World Bank and FBiH Government adopt collaborative discourse, with the World Bank positioning itself as a technical partner providing expertise, while the FBiH Government presents itself as an autonomous decision-maker implementing necessary reforms with a little help from its friends. This reveals a two-tier system where some institutions explicitly claim supervisory authority while others maintain the air of partnership and domestic ownership.

A clear technical-political divide separates the international financial institutions from the political actors. The World Bank and IMF derive legitimacy from technical expertise - the World Bank through development knowledge and growth theory, the IMF through macroeconomic management and fiscal analysis. Both present their interventions as scientifically grounded solutions to objectively defined problems. Conversely, the EU and FBiH Government rely on political authority - the EU through European integration as a civilizational project and membership conditionality, the FBiH Government through legal procedure and EU compliance requirements.

The institutions demonstrate sophisticated audience differentiation that reveals the complexity of multi-level governance legitimation. The FBiH Government and EU target domestic audiences but through opposing strategies - the government seeking

to pacify domestic resistance while the EU mobilizes domestic elites invested in European integration. Meanwhile, the World Bank and IMF primarily address international professional communities - development practitioners and financial policymakers respectively.

The analysis reveals convergence in problem definition despite surface differences in approach. All four institutions exclude worker agency, democratic participation, and distributional concerns from their discourse. The World Bank and IMF achieve this through economistic reduction, transforming social questions into efficiency problems, although the World bank does so to a much lesser extent. The EU and FBiH Government accomplish the same exclusion through procedural focus, emphasizing compliance and legal requirements over substantive democratic deliberation. While institutions may differ in their legitimation strategies, they operate from shared assumptions about what constitutes legitimate policy knowledge and whose voices matter in reform processes.

This chapter has shown how each institution mandated with assisting FBiH in designing and the Reform Agenda assumes a different legitimation role. When combined, these strategies created an echo chamber effect where reforms appeared simultaneously scientifically sound (WB), (geo)politically necessary (EU), legally inevitable (FBiH), and fiscally responsible (IMF). This chapter asked the following research questions:

- How do different institutional actors create legitimation strategies to build consensus around externally-driven labor market reforms?
- What does this division of legitimation labor reveal about power relations and democratic participation in post-conflict, multi-level governance contexts?

Briefly, this study found that the four actors assumed complementary, and not competing legitimation strategies which creates legitimacy from their own mandates. The institutions thus built upon each other's narratives: EU political imperatives supported by WB technical analysis, reinforced by IMF fiscal arguments, implemented through FBiH legal procedures. Despite different approaches, all four institutions converged on excluding worker agency, democratic participation, and distributional concerns from their discourse. In the case of this reform package in

BiH, power was exercised through claims of expertise and technical necessity, be it from the particular specialization of the institutions involved, or through persons such as PM Novalic. Finally, the chapter found that discourse by the EU and the IMF positioned BiH as an area of contested sovereignty, albeit the IMF much less so, while the World Bank Group members and the FBiH government framed this reform package as a partnership and a friendly relationship.

In terms of contributions, this chapter created a matrix of varieties of legitimation strategies used by international and domestic actors when trying to ensure popular support for unpopular policies. While policy transfer literature offers a voluntary/coercive binary to explain whether states who receive international development assistance or technical assistance, this chapter shows that, at times, this binary does not explain the situation on the ground. In the case of BiH, different legitimation strategies were employed that got diffused into the public discourse in BiH through a key domestic actor, PM Novalic, which showcased a high degree of ownership for the reform package. He, then, framed the reform package as both necessary and desirable, shifting between echoes of the international actor's legitimation strategies and his own input. This shifting of discourse between coercive (these reforms have no alternative) and voluntary (we would have done this anyway) shows how policy transfer is discursively rarely presented as only the one or the other even in areas with strong international presence in governance such as BiH. While the EU discursively questions BiH's sovereignty, domestic actors cannot tell their domestic audiences that FBiH as a state entity is implementing a policy because somebody is making them do so. Similarly, the policies come with luggage in the form of conditionality, so domestic actors also cannot pretend like their international partners gave them a blank cheque. As a result, the domestic actors shift their positionality in the discourse based on what suits them best at that given time.

Another strategy employed by all actors, whether domestic or international, was to depoliticize questions that are very political by nature. The Reform Agenda redefined social contributions, healthcare spending, pensions and many other measures which have political consequences, particularly if we understand the Agenda sought to decrease government spending partially through welfare state retrenchment. This

depoliticization was done through the usage of "project language", and through presenting inherently political problems as technical issues with technical solutions. As a result, a comprehensive reform package was adopted that has no social dimensions and includes no social actors.

This analysis of Bosnia's Reform Agenda illuminates how contemporary supervised sovereignty operates through sophisticated legitimization mechanisms that maintain hierarchical control while preserving the appearance of consensual reform. The division of legitimization labor identified in this study where international and domestic actors assume complementary roles in constructing technical necessity, political inevitability, and legal compliance demonstrates how externally-driven policy architectures can systematically constrain democratic participation while maintaining legitimacy through claims to expertise and procedural correctness. This finding contributes to broader theoretical understanding of how post-conflict governance has evolved beyond overt international administration toward more nuanced forms of external control that operate through seemingly neutral policy frameworks, with significant implications for analyzing contemporary intervention strategies in other transitional and post-conflict contexts.

In terms of implications for future research, the legitimization framework developed in this study could deepen our understanding of how externally-driven reforms achieve consent in complex governance contexts. Comparative applications would test the transferability of the "varieties of legitimization strategy" framework across different post-conflict and transition economies, particularly examining whether similar divisions of legitimization labor emerge in cases like Kosovo's state-building process, Ukraine's post-2014 reform agenda, or other contexts where multiple international actors coordinate interventions. Implementation analysis is a gap that this document-based study did not address, focusing on how legitimization strategies evolve when reforms move from design to practice and encounter practical resistance from affected populations, bureaucratic inertia, or unforeseen implementation challenges. Anthropological studies would examine the other side of the legitimization process by analyzing how systematically excluded actors, particularly labor unions, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements constructed alternative narratives that

challenged the technical inevitability of externally-driven reforms. Finally, research could be done to compare legitimation strategies across different policy domains within the same intervention context, examining whether the institutional specialization identified in labor market reform operates similarly in sectors like healthcare, education, or security reform, or whether different policy areas generate distinct legitimation patterns and actor configurations.

CHAPTER 3

FRAGMENTED NETWORKS, FAILED REFORMS? SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS OF COORDINATION MECHANISMS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA'S 2015-2018 REFORM AGENDA

Introduction

The Reform Agenda (the Agenda) was adopted in July 2015 by all three levels of government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and represented "the culmination of a year-long effort to agree on a set of priority measures to boost the economy and to create more and better jobs for everyone".¹¹² The European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development endorsed the agenda. However, despite all the international talent, financial resources, and capacities that went into creating the policy package, it had limited success.

The Agenda marked moderate success in labor policy improvements, with most of the achievements revolving around the adoption of laws. This came as no surprise considering that the incumbent government in BiH at the time, led by a right-of-center PM Fadil Novalic, favored the changes due to their economic alignment, which promotes market liberalization and decreased government spending. Securing enough hands in the parliament for the laws to pass was not a significant issue - ensuring the proper coordination for implementing the laws was problematic, and this was precisely where the Reform Agenda failed. Evaluations by international bodies that designed the policy show that structural challenges remained despite the new Labor Law. These challenges, the evaluations submit, were more of what was

¹¹² The Reform Agenda: Bosnia and Herzegovina's best chance," European Western Balkans, August 5, 2015.

already seen in FBiH: laws are outdated, and we need more reform because the current labor environment in FBiH is not "conducive to job creation".¹¹³

Regarding particular employment figures and evaluation conclusions, the situation was not much better. A report by the IMF from 2018 shows that unemployment is still high, with youth unemployment as high as 62% immediately after the Reform was implemented in 2016.¹¹⁴ By 2017, the IMF noted that job creation had remained limited, youth unemployment levels persisted at elevated rates, and income convergence with the European Union had come to a standstill.¹¹⁵ Speaking of the public administration reform part of the Agenda, the European Parliament (EP) noted in 2018 that the policymaking process in BiH is fragmented and politicised, which dampens the policy implementation process, and is often not in line with human rights and freedoms.¹¹⁶ The EP called for prompt constitutional reform to address these issues which, to reflect on remarks from the introduction of this dissertation, calls for a complete overhaul of the Dayton Agreement. Interestingly, the EP and other core EU institutions do not call for constitutional changes that would bring the constitution more in line with human rights and freedoms - in the past couple of years, probably succumbing to pressure groups, only the Council of Europe calls for more than surface-level changes in Bosnia. For some reason, the EU seems to have abandoned the human rights dimension of the constitution in BiH. In 2024, the European Commission (EC) noted that implementation of the PAR reform had not even commenced, and that there was no knowledge of whether the funds required for it had been secured, and no monitoring tools in place to track its progress.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the same report notes there was no body or structure in place that would

¹¹³ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Selected Issues," IMF Staff Country Reports, October 28, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Turning the Economy Around," IMF, September 6, 2016.

¹¹⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2017 Article IV Consultation," IMF, February 13, 2018.

¹¹⁶ Report on the 2018 Commission Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina," European Parliament, A8-0467/2018.

¹¹⁷ Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report," European Commission, SWD(2022) 336 final.

steer the reform process, and finally, that there is no domestic financial sustainability for the reform, as most of it is expected to be funded by international donors.¹¹⁸

Overall, whole-of-reform evaluations note that failures are primarily due to Bosnia's complex institutional structures¹¹⁹, of which the IMF was very well aware when its experts drafted the reform. The EC, in 2018, conducted an evaluation and found that reforms were yet to be implemented in the areas of the rule of law, basic rights, public administration, and economic development.¹²⁰ I find these evaluations curious, as the international organizations and bodies that were involved in the drafting of the Agenda were thus cognizant of the institutional complexity of the FBiH and the broader challenges of multi-level governance, as well as of peculiar power-sharing conflicts that arise with each law that needs to be passed in FBiH. What is striking, however, is that subsequent debates and evaluations consider implementation difficulties arising from domestic political actors and entrenched institutional structures. Rarely, if ever, is there an acknowledgment that shortcomings might also reflect design flaws introduced during the drafting stage.

This chapter explores the design stage of the Agenda, specifically to see whether there were key shortcomings in the design stage that dampened the potential implementation success of the Agenda. Not to say that FBiH does not have a challenge with power-sharing and a complex institutional structure with entrenched bottlenecks. However, my hunch as somebody that worked on evaluation in Bosnia for the past few years is that the policy was not set up for success, and that these domestic peculiarities were not considered when the Agenda was being drafted. This represents yet another manifestation of the international community's persistent "hotplate approach" to policy design in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This top-down methodology treats complex local governance structures as secondary considerations rather than foundational design parameters. The Reform Agenda's architects appear to have operated under the flawed assumption that technical soundness and international endorsement could compensate for inadequate attention to Bosnia's

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Turning the Economy Around," IMF, September 6, 2016.

¹²⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2018 country report," European Parliament Think Tank, 2019.

intricate web of institutional relationships and political dynamics. This approach failed to meaningfully engage stakeholders who possessed intimate knowledge of implementation bottlenecks and misallocated responsibilities across domestic institutions without proper consideration of existing capacity constraints, jurisdictional overlaps, and entrenched veto points within the multi-layered governance system. The result was a reform framework that, despite its technical merits and ambitious scope, was structurally predisposed to encounter the coordination failures and implementation gaps that ultimately characterized its limited success.

The Reform Agenda thus embodies a profound irony well-documented in the policy integration literature: a policy designed to enhance institutional coordination and integration failed precisely because it demanded levels of inter-institutional cooperation that exceeded the system's existing coordination capacity. This phenomenon aligns with what Bouckaert, Peters, and Verhoest identify as the "coordination paradox," where policies aimed at improving coordination often require more coordination to implement than the system can sustain, creating a self-defeating cycle.¹²¹ In Bosnia's case, the Reform Agenda essentially asked a coordination-deficient system to coordinate its way out of coordination deficiency—a circular requirement that Peters characterizes as endemic to multi-level governance reform efforts.¹²² The agenda's failure thus reflects not merely poor design, but rather the deeper structural challenge identified by Tosun, Wetzel, and Zapryanova that policy integration initiatives frequently underestimate the transaction costs of coordination, particularly in systems where institutional fragmentation is not only administrative but politically entrenched.¹²³

This chapter investigates the structural design flaws that undermined the Reform Agenda's implementation success, particularly on developing and validating a novel

¹²¹ Geert Bouckaert, B. Guy Peters, and Koen Verhoest, *The Coordination of Public Sector Organizations: Shifting Patterns of Public Management* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹²² B. Guy Peters, "The Challenge of Policy Coordination," *Policy Design and Practice* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1-11.

¹²³ Jale Tosun, Anne Wetzel, and Galina Zapryanova, "The EU in Crisis: Advancing the Debate," *Journal of European Integration* 36, no. 3 (2014): 195-211.

diagnostic framework for assessing policy integration potential during the design phase. Moving beyond conventional post-implementation evaluations focusing on political will and institutional capacity, this analysis examines whether the coordination architecture embedded within the Agenda's action plans was structurally sufficient to support successful implementation in Bosnia's complex multi-level governance environment. The chapter contributes to policy design literature by introducing social network analysis as a predictive diagnostic tool that can identify coordination vulnerabilities before implementation begins. Beyond illuminating the Reform Agenda's failures, this analysis develops a diagnostic framework that enables systematic assessment of coordination viability in other complex governance contexts. This approach represents a methodological innovation that shifts analytical focus from retrospective blame attribution to prospective design optimization, offering policymakers and international organizations a systematic means of stress-testing coordination frameworks against the structural realities of complex governance systems.

This chapter aims to answer the following cascading research questions:

- Why did the Reform Agenda's action plans fail to generate sufficient inter-institutional coordination to ensure successful implementation, despite extensive international technical expertise and domestic political alignment?
 - To what extent do the Reform Agenda's action plans exhibit the network characteristics of successful policy integration in complex multi-level governance systems?
 - What network-based design principles emerge from this analysis that could inform the development of more structurally sound coordination architectures for future reform initiatives?
 - What diagnostic principles emerge from this analysis that can assess coordination viability in other complex governance contexts?

This chapter launches the application of social network analysis as a pre-implementation diagnostic instrument for assessing the coordination viability of policy action plans. Unlike traditional approaches that evaluate coordination failures retrospectively and then supposedly use them for learning - which rarely happens in

reality - this methodology enables policymakers to identify and address structural weaknesses in coordination architecture before implementation begins. Rather than waiting for implementation failures to reveal coordination problems, network analysis can identify structural vulnerabilities during the design phase when modifications are still feasible and cost-effective.

Literature Review

This literature review establishes the theoretical foundation for employing social network analysis as a predictive diagnostic tool for assessing policy integration potential during the design phase of complex reform initiatives. The review synthesizes three interconnected streams of scholarship that shed light on why traditional approaches to policy coordination have proven inadequate in multi-level governance contexts, particularly in post-conflict settings characterized by institutional fragmentation, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. First, I examine the policy integration and coordination literature, focusing on the inherent tensions between coordination necessity and coordination capacity that create what scholars term the "coordination paradox"—where policies designed to improve coordination often demand more coordination than existing systems can sustain.¹²⁴ Second, I explore the design-implementation gap literature to demonstrate how implementation failures frequently reflect structural design inadequacies rather than insufficient political will or administrative capacity, with particular attention to how international reform interventions in complex governance systems often don't consider local institutional realities. Third, I review network approaches to policy analysis, tracing how social network analysis has evolved from a descriptive tool for mapping policy relationships to a potential diagnostic instrument capable of identifying coordination vulnerabilities before implementation begins. Through this synthesis, the review establishes that while existing scholarship has effectively diagnosed coordination failures retrospectively, there remains a critical gap in predictive frameworks that can assess the structural viability of coordination architectures during the design phase.

¹²⁴ Geert Bouckaert, B. Guy Peters, and Koen Verhoest, *The Coordination of Public Sector Organizations: Shifting Patterns of Public Management* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

This chapter addresses that gap through the application of network analysis to the Reform Agenda's action plans.

Policy integration has emerged as a new paradigm in contemporary policymaking, particularly within the European Union (EU).¹²⁵ This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of various policy domains and the need for effective coordinated and cohesive strategies to address complex societal challenges. While policy integration holds promise as a novel approach, its effectiveness in terms of achieving desired policy outcomes remains uncertain. This section aims to explore the literature on policy integration and its implications for policy success in the context of the 2015 Reform Agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which was driven by the recognition that increased coordination and cooperation are essential for successful reform implementation in a fragmented context. However, this section argues that attributing policy failure to domestic institutions of the reform-receiving country does not make a lot of sense, as complex reform packages need high degrees of coordination and integration to implement the policies in the first place. In this sense, apart from process integration, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs, sequencing and realistic time allocations, as well as a proper division of labor among domestic institutions need to be applied too.

With the 1980s, new ideas of public management, coined as New Public Management (hereinafter NPM), began to circulate in scholarly and policy circles.¹²⁶ These ideas on the general setup of the government largely revolved around fragmentation, decentralization, and specialization.¹²⁷ Led by the idea of "management mathematics", proponents of NPM advocated a disaggregated approach to public sector management where administrative units were broken up

¹²⁵ Trein, P., & Maggetti, M. "Patterns of policy integration and administrative coordination reforms: A comparative empirical analysis." *Public Administration Review*, 80(2), 198-208. and Domorenok, E., Graziano, P., & Polverari, L. "Introduction: Policy integration and institutional capacity: Theoretical, conceptual and empirical challenges." *Policy and Society*, 40(1), 1-18.

¹²⁶ Peter Aucoin, "Administrative Reform in Public Management: Paradigms, Principles, Paradoxes and Pendulums," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 3, no. 2 (1990): 115-137 and Christopher Hood, "A Public Management for All Seasons?" *Public Administration* 69, no. 1 (1991): 3-19.

¹²⁷ Guillermo M. Cejudo and Cynthia L. Michel, "Addressing Fragmented Government Action: Coordination, Coherence, and Integration," *Policy Sciences* 50 (2017): 745-767.

into separate, self-sufficient entities.¹²⁸ The overall aim of NPM was, *inter alia*, to increase the efficiency of the policy process while decreasing costs: public institutions would be broken into small, specialized nodes, and bureaucrats would be experts in their narrow field. This would in turn increase efficiency, bureaucrats-experts would be more focused, policies would be better, and the actors working on policy implementation would also be more autonomous from their political "masters", or policymakers at the top, as well as their *brothers in arms* from other units at the same or similar level.¹²⁹ Things don't seem to have played out that way, however. The unintended consequences of this approach were excessive fragmentation and specialization of agencies involved in the policy process. Initially designed to ensure vertical and horizontal communication between agencies *at an arm's length*, it resulted in what we could call barely any structured communication at all. We saw, paradoxically, decreased efficiency and effectiveness in all of these reforms.

In response to these dysfunctions, there have been recent calls in academia and policy circles to integrate policies. Policy integration was presented as an effort to ensure coordination and communication between these highly fragmented and specialized agencies and their policy principles and objectives. This ensures there are minimal negative interactions between different policies, as well as minimal conflict between policymakers at the top and policy implementers at the bottom.¹³⁰ This approach sounds like a solution to Bosnia and Herzegovina's high decentralization and fragmentation resulting from the Dayton Agreement outlined in the introduction of this protocol. Recent analyses and suggestions by European think-tanks citing whispers in EU institution corridors propose policy integration as a possible new

¹²⁸ Dennis Parker and John Handmer, *Hazard Management and Emergency Planning: Perspectives in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹²⁹ Morten Egeberg and Jarle Trondal, "National Agencies in the European Administrative Space: Government Driven, Commission Driven or Networked?" *Public Administration* 87, no. 4 (2009): 674.

¹³⁰ Christoph Knill, Carina Steinbacher, and Yves Steinebach, "Balancing Trade-offs between Policy Responsiveness and Effectiveness: The Impact of Vertical Policy-Process Integration on Policy Accumulation," *Public Administration Review* 81, no. 1 (2021): 157-160.

strategy for accelerating Bosnia's accession procedures.¹³¹ Policy integration was not such a large buzzword in 2015 when the Reform Agenda was implemented, and even less so in the years prior when it was designed. However, the thinking behind what will become policy integration was definitely present at the time, and the paradigm that policy reform success is available only through increased cooperation and coordination between government bodies was leading the design process.¹³²

Policy coordination literature has increasingly recognized that coordination failures in complex governance systems are systemic rather than political phenomena. In a way of existence of its own, this implied structural inadequacies in institutional design rather than deficits in political will or administrative competence are to blame for Bosnia's failures.¹³³ Bouckaert, Peters, and Verhoest identify the "coordination paradox," where policies designed to enhance coordination often demand more coordination capacity than existing systems possess, creating a self-defeating cycle where coordination-deficient systems are asked to coordinate their way out of coordination deficiency.¹³⁴ This paradox is particularly acute in multi-level governance contexts, where transaction costs of coordination increase exponentially with institutional complexity.¹³⁵ Traditional approaches that focus on strengthening political leadership, improving administrative capacity, or creating coordinating committees often fail because they impose additional coordination burdens on systems already operating at capacity.¹³⁶ The literature thus suggests that sustainable coordination requires attention to the structural architecture of coordination, the

¹³¹ Emerson, M. and Blockmans, S. (2023). Sectoral policy integration in advance of accession. Centre for European Policy Studies. Available at <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/sectoral-policy-integration-in-advance-of-accession/> Accessed on January 14, 2025.

¹³² Key findings of the European Commission 2015 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2015). Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_15_6034. Accessed on February 15, 2025.

¹³³ B. Guy Peters, "Managing Horizontal Government: The Politics of Co-Ordination," *Public Administration* 76, no. 2 (1998): 295-311.

¹³⁴ Geert Bouckaert, B. Guy Peters, and Koen Verhoest, *The Coordination of Public Sector Organizations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 34-56.

¹³⁵ Jale Tosun, Anne Wetzel, and Galina Zapryanova, "The EU in Crisis: Advancing the Debate," *Journal of European Integration* 36, no. 3 (2014): 195-211.

¹³⁶ Peters, "Managing Horizontal Government," 302-305.

patterns of institutional relationships, information flows, and decision-making dependencies that either enable or constrain integrated policy implementation. The policy integration literature is essential for understanding the Reform Agenda's coordination failures because it provides the theoretical framework to distinguish between coordination as an activity and integration as a structural outcome, a distinction that reframes the research question from "why didn't actors coordinate?" to "why couldn't the system integrate?" This theoretical lens reveals that the Agenda's failures cannot be adequately explained by insufficient political will or limited administrative capacity, as extensive international technical expertise and domestic political alignment were present during the reform process. Instead, integration theory illuminates how technical expertise in sectoral areas does not automatically translate into expertise in designing the institutional architectures necessary for multi-level policy integration. By focusing on the structural prerequisites for integration, such as information-sharing mechanisms, joint decision-making protocols, and resource pooling arrangements, this literature provides measurable criteria for assessing whether a policy design possesses the coordination capacity it demands. The integration perspective thus shifts analytical attention from implementation deficiencies to design inadequacies, enabling a systematic examination of whether the Reform Agenda's action plans contained the structural features necessary to support integrated governance across Bosnia's complex multi-level institutional landscape.

The reflex of blaming policy failure on implementation errors is not peculiar to BiH; it is part of a more exhaustive research and evaluation practice. It is not very difficult to understand how it came to be, looking at design flaws, and accepting them requires a high degree of introspection and self-critique rarely found in halls of international organizations and development agencies that designed the interventions. These same agencies are burdened with securing internal and external evaluations of the interventions, which brings us to a situation reminiscent of a Bosnian proverb, "the qadi both prosecutes me and judges me".¹³⁷ While external evaluators, such as

¹³⁷ "Qadi" Turkish for judge. The proverb is used to describe situations where one authority holds all power with no checks and balances, so the process is unfair by design.

myself, vow to discretion and objectivity, it is rarely the case that consultants indeed stay objective when their payroll depends on the very institutions they may critique. In practice, from my personal experience, this leads to two types of evaluations. First, the evaluator might submit a watered-down evaluation that seeks irregularities in unfixable structural issues, such as "political will" or "institutional complexity". Recommendations produced by these types of assessments are rarely actionable and implementable in the future, rendering the whole intervention effort futile, because if the intervention did not succeed and no learning took place at the end, what was the point? Second, evaluators might seek blame in a select few civil servants or politicians who participated in the implementation. These scapegoats are more often than not essentially called out because someone needs to take the bullet. Not only is the critique inconsequential for the scapegoats, but it is also inconsequential for the process.

A considerable literature on similar issues critiques approaches to implementation failures, which focus on human error or other missteps in implementation, but overlook design flaws. For example, David Chandler's seminal work on democratisation in post-war Bosnia critiques democratisation approaches, stating that the language of democratisation seems universal, but in reality, obfuscates justifications for a large extent of Western intervention in Bosnia.¹³⁸ Chandler argues that this has caused an "informal trusteeship" relationship, which has confused the expectations of accountability and authority between domestic and international actors. As a result, Chandler submits that international actors without accountability to Bosnian citizens have shaped their country in the post-war transition.

While there is limited work on policy transplant in labor policy in Bosnia (probably due to the fact that there were few labor policy interventions), there exists a wider literature on participatory policy design. One remedy for issues presented in the paragraphs above is offered by what the literature calls participatory evaluation (PE). Participatory evaluation (PE) is a loosely defined and inconsistently applied approach that, compared to more traditional methods, has sparked considerable debate in the fields of education and social and human services evaluation. Although

¹³⁸ David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* (London: Pluto Press, 1999)

the term encompasses a broad range of evaluation activities, scholars and practitioners often use it with minimal clarification of their own interpretation. As a result, there is significant ambiguity in the literature regarding the definition, nature, and structure of PE, as well as the conditions under which it is most effective and the outcomes it can achieve.¹³⁹ Despite this lack of clarity, interest in collaborative, empowerment-oriented, and participatory evaluation approaches has grown rapidly over the past decade, reflected in an expanding body of literature. This growing interest highlights the potential of such methods to improve evaluation utilization and foster planned, sustainable change.

Most participatory approaches relate to citizen participation, a stream of literature that, in principle, addresses the same grievances as this chapter, but offers different remedies. While local stakeholder participation is important and would bring better policy outcomes, this chapter addresses the lack of contextual consideration as a necessary first step to ensure the policy reaches a stage where stakeholder participation might be helpful. However, this literature has lessons to be drawn, as it addresses a universal problem: the inherent shortsightedness of policy decision-makers. Frank Fischer, a pioneer in discursive public policy, starts their analysis by saying that citizen participation is "advanced mainly by democratic and postpositivist theorists" and that it, until recently, operated "in the domain of utopian speculation".¹⁴⁰ His findings indicate that citizen participation can positively affect policy outcomes based on an exploration of two local policies in Canada, but that "academics should as well play a role in helping to develop and refine the techniques of the method" of citizen participation.¹⁴¹ Skeptics are not skeptical of the possible benefits of citizen participation, but are more concerned with whether overcoming the obstacles to effective citizen participation will yield results that justify the effort required. Some of these obstacles include the absence of structured leadership, the

¹³⁹ Bradley Cousins, J. (2003). Utilization effects of participatory evaluation. In *International handbook of educational evaluation* (pp. 245-265). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

¹⁴⁰ Fischer, F. (1993). Citizen participation and the democratization of policy expertise: From theoretical inquiry to practical cases. *Policy sciences*, 26(3), 165-187.

¹⁴¹ Fischer, F. (1993).

absence of consensus among the populace or elites regarding the role of direct citizen participation, and the restricted reach and authority of participatory initiatives.¹⁴² However, I argue that consulting local stakeholders is even easier than consulting local political and cultural context - in the end, one would use a well-established qualitative method. Considering local context, however, requires including experts with enough local knowledge to offer insights into the complex policy landscape, and with enough stamina to be able to advocate for them in halls of organizations where the policy implementation plans are being designed. A potential remedy to tackling complex environments comes from the use of complexity science in evaluation, which has received growing attention over the last 20 years. One group of authors presents a novel complexity-appropriate method – Participatory Systems Mapping – in two real-world evaluation contexts and considers how this method can be applied more widely in evaluation. Participatory Systems Mapping involves the production of a causal map of a system by a diverse set of stakeholders. Once refined and validated, the map can be analyzed and used in various ways in an evaluation or in evaluation planning. The analysis approach combines network analysis with subjective information from stakeholders. I believe Participatory Systems Mapping shows great potential to offer value to evaluators due to the unique insights it offers, the relative ease of its use, and its complementarity with existing evaluation approaches and methods. However, its use is limited to the design stage of the policy process, while action plans are developed in the formulation stage or between the formulation and implementation stages. While one could argue that good input from local stakeholders would ensure the action plan includes, by design, necessary requirements for proper implementation, I do not believe so. Local stakeholder consultations in the design stage reflect substantial issues, and they are necessary, but issues with action plans are very technical and need to be addressed with technical solutions informed by a whole-system approach. In essence, I believe we need both - for policymakers to be informed of the issues policy recipients face, but also of structural local peculiarities.

¹⁴² Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public administration review*, 75(4), 513-522.

So how can SNA help us understand at least one part of this black box of local knowledge? The emergence of network approaches to policy analysis represents a shift from hierarchical governance models toward recognition that policy processes occur within complex webs of interdependent actors operating across organizational boundaries.¹⁴³ This theoretical evolution has profound implications for understanding coordination challenges in multi-level governance systems, as it reveals that successful policy implementation depends not merely on formal institutional arrangements but on the quality and structure of relationships between diverse stakeholders. The network perspective provides analytical tools for mapping these relationships and theoretical frameworks for understanding why specific configurations enable effective coordination while others produce fragmentation and implementation failure. Rhodes' seminal concept of "governing without government" demonstrated how traditional models of state-centered policy implementation had given way to more complex arrangements where "policies emerge from the bargaining between networks' members," including governmental and non-governmental actors structured around shared interests in policy areas.¹⁴⁴ The methodological application of social network analysis to policy research has evolved from primarily descriptive exercises toward more sophisticated analytical tools capable of predicting policy outcomes and identifying structural vulnerabilities.¹⁴⁵ Early applications focused on mapping existing relationships between policy actors, documenting patterns of interaction, and describing network characteristics such as density, centrality, and clustering.¹⁴⁶ However, recent developments have demonstrated the potential for SNA to serve as a diagnostic tool that can identify coordination problems before implementation begins. Research in fields ranging from public health interventions to urban planning has shown that network structure

¹⁴³ R.A.W. Rhodes, *"Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability"* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 8-15.

¹⁴⁴ R.A.W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing without Government," *Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (1996): 652-653.

¹⁴⁵ David Knoke, "Policy Networks," in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis*, eds. John Scott and Peter J. Carrington (London: SAGE Publications, 2014), 210-222.

¹⁴⁶ James A. Moody and Douglas R. White, "Structural Cohesion and Embeddedness: A Hierarchical Concept of Social Groups," *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 1 (2003): 103-127.

significantly influences the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives, with specific structural features—such as the presence of bridging actors, balanced centrality distributions, and appropriate levels of network density—consistently associated with successful coordination outcomes.¹⁴⁷ These studies demonstrate that SNA can move beyond post-hoc descriptions of "what happened" to provide predictive insights about "what is likely to happen" based on the structural characteristics of policy networks embedded within implementation plans.

Recent research has established clear linkages between specific network structural features and coordination capacity. Studies of multi-actor collaboration have identified that networks with extremely high density can suffer from information overload and decision-making paralysis, while networks with very low density lack sufficient connectivity for effective coordination.¹⁴⁸

However, the relationship between policy integration theory and network governance approaches is not without tension. While integration theorists focus on formal coordination mechanisms and structural prerequisites, network scholars emphasize the informal, emergent properties of governance relationships. Jordan and Lenschow argue that integration often implies hierarchical coordination from above, whereas network governance assumes heterarchical coordination among equals.¹⁴⁹ This tension raises important questions: Can formal integration requirements actually undermine the trust-based relationships that network theory identifies as essential for coordination? Moreover, integration theory's emphasis on measurable structural features potentially conflicts with network governance's recognition that effective coordination often emerges through informal processes that resist formal specification.

¹⁴⁷ Rebecca C. Shelton et al., "Use of Social Network Analysis in the Development, Dissemination, Implementation, and Sustainability of Health Behavior Interventions for Adults: A Systematic Review," *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 7 (2019): e0220024.

¹⁴⁸ Daniela M. Alarcón, Isabel M. Alarcón, and Luis F. Alarcón, "Social Network Analysis: A Diagnostic Tool for Information Flow in the AEC Industry," *Procedia Engineering* 64 (2013): 1100-1109.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Jordan and Andrea Lenschow, "Innovation in Environmental Policy? Integrating the Environment for Sustainability," *Journal of European Public Policy* 7, no. 2 (2000): 175-193.

These tensions are particularly acute in post-conflict contexts like Bosnia, where formal integration requirements imposed by international actors may clash with locally embedded network relationships developed through years of informal adaptation to institutional complexity. The challenge lies in designing coordination architectures that satisfy integration theory's structural requirements while preserving the flexibility and trust relationships that network theory identifies as crucial for sustainable coordination.

The network approach reveals why top-down policy designs are particularly problematic in Bosnia's complex institutional architecture. Multi-level governance systems inherently require what scholars term "vertical coordination" across different levels of government and "horizontal coordination" within each level.¹⁵⁰ In Bosnia's case, successful policy implementation must navigate coordination between the state level, entity governments (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), ten cantonal governments in the Federation, and numerous municipal authorities, plus the autonomous Brčko District. Network theory demonstrates that coordination complexity increases exponentially rather than linearly with each additional governance level, meaning that Bosnia's system faces coordination challenges that are mathematically more severe than those in simpler federal arrangements.¹⁵¹ The Reform Agenda's top-down design approach contradicted network governance principles by assuming that coordination could be imposed through hierarchical mandates rather than cultivated through relationship-building and trust development. Research on policy networks shows that effective coordination in complex systems requires what Klijn and Koppenjan term "network activation" - the deliberate cultivation of relationships between actors who must collaborate for implementation success.¹⁵² This chapter argues that from a network

¹⁵⁰ Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 233-243.

¹⁵¹ Fritz W. Scharpf, "The Joint-Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration," *Public Administration* 66, no. 3 (1988): 239-278.

¹⁵² Erik-Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan, "Network Management in Public Governance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*, ed. David Levi-Faur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 199-214.

perspective, the Reform Agenda was structurally predisposed to coordination failure because its design created what network analysts call "structural holes", or gaps between groups that should be connected for effective policy implementation.¹⁵³ Bosnia's experience shows the aforementioned coordination paradox in its most acute form: international designers created a policy framework that demanded unprecedented levels of inter-institutional coordination in a system whose coordination capacity had been deliberately fragmented by the Dayton Agreement's institutional design.

Despite its analytical promise, network-based approaches to policy analysis face significant limitations that must be acknowledged. Critics argue that SNA's focus on structural relationships may oversimplify the complex political dynamics that actually drive coordination decisions. Marsh and Smith contend that network analysis tends toward "structural determinism," underestimating actors' capacity to transform network constraints through strategic action.¹⁵⁴ This criticism is particularly relevant in post-conflict contexts where formal institutional relationships may mask deeper ethnic or political divisions that network measures cannot capture. Furthermore, the predictive claims of network analysis rest on assumptions about rational coordination behavior that may not hold in highly politicized environments. As McPherson and Smith-Lovin demonstrate, homophily in network formation, which is basically actors' tendency to connect with similar others, can reinforce existing divisions rather than bridge them, potentially making network-dense systems less rather than more capable of innovative coordination.¹⁵⁵ In Bosnia's context, this might suggest that even well-connected networks might reproduce ethnic or entity-based divisions rather than transcend them.

Finally, the temporal dimension poses challenges for network-based prediction.

Burt's research on structural holes reveals that network configurations are inherently

¹⁵³ James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S95-S120.

¹⁵⁴ David Marsh and Martin J. Smith, "Understanding Policy Networks: Towards a Dialectical Approach," *Political Studies* 48, no. 1 (2000): 4-21.

¹⁵⁵ Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 415-444.

unstable, with bridging relationships requiring constant maintenance and renewal.¹⁵⁶ This raises questions about whether network structures identified in policy action plans can persist through the extended timeframes typically required for complex reform implementation. Despite these limitations, network analysis offers valuable insights that enables one to do its best, as opposed to blindly creating unachievable action plans which are most likely to fail.

This literature review synthesis reveals that the Reform Agenda's coordination failures cannot be adequately understood through traditional analytical lenses that focus on political will, administrative capacity, or implementation deficiencies. Instead, the convergence of policy integration theory, design-implementation gap analysis, and network governance scholarship points toward a more basic explanation: the structural inadequacy of coordination architectures embedded within the reform's action plans. The coordination paradox literature demonstrates that Bosnia's multi-level governance system was asked to coordinate its way out of coordination deficiency—a circular requirement that violated basic principles of network activation and relationship-building essential for successful policy integration. The network governance perspective reveals that the Reform Agenda's top-down design approach created structural holes precisely where bridging connections were most needed, while failing to account for the exponential coordination complexity inherent in Bosnia's fragmented institutional landscape. This review establishes that social network analysis offers a methodological pathway for moving beyond retrospective blame attribution toward prospective design optimization. By examining the network characteristics embedded within the Reform Agenda's action plans—including patterns of actor inclusion, coordination mechanisms, and structural connectivity—this analysis can systematically assess whether the reform possessed the coordination architecture necessary for successful implementation in Bosnia's complex governance environment. This approach enables the identification of specific network-based design principles that could inform more structurally sound coordination frameworks for future reform initiatives, shifting

¹⁵⁶ Ronald S. Burt, *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

focus from post-implementation evaluation toward pre-implementation diagnosis when structural modifications remain feasible and cost-effective.

Methodology

To empirically assess the degree of policy integration embedded within the Reform Agenda's implementation framework, this study employs social network analysis (SNA) as a methodological tool to map and quantify the intended coordination mechanisms between institutional actors. Social network analysis provides a systematic approach to examine the structural properties of inter-institutional relationships, allowing for the measurement of network density, centrality patterns, and clustering coefficients that reveal the extent to which the Agenda's design anticipated integrated policy implementation. By constructing networks based on formal coordination requirements, information-sharing protocols, and decision-making dependencies outlined in the Agenda documentation, more specifically in the action plans, this analysis can identify whether the policy framework exhibited characteristics associated with successful policy integration—such as balanced centrality distributions, sufficient network density to facilitate information flow, and strategic positioning of coordinating bodies as network brokers.

This methodological approach enables a quantitative assessment of the gap between the Agenda's integration aspirations and its actual design, providing empirical evidence for the hypothesis that inadequate attention to coordination architecture during the design phase contributed to subsequent implementation failures. The SNA findings will thus illuminate whether the Reform Agenda's limited success stemmed from inherently weak integration mechanisms or from the failure to activate adequately designed coordination structures.

Based on early works of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Helen Jennings and John Arundel Barnes, social network analysis¹⁵⁷ has been widely used to explore social networks and to uncover structural patterns of social relations in diverse literatures on sociology, anthropology, communication studies, geography, and

¹⁵⁷ Albeit the name "social network analysis" might be indicative of social networks in 2022, the "social" in this name refers to the type of analysis, not the kind of network. Networks studied in social network analysis can include both human and non-human actors.

political science.¹⁵⁸ Contrary to the rationalistic approaches focused on actors and structuralist approaches focused on structures, in this type of analysis it is the nature and quality of the relationships between human and non-human actors in a networked structure of interactions between them. A network is comprised on nodes (actors) and links (edges, links) between them that form a specific pattern. The method relies on a data matrix which represents interactions between actors and/or things. This dissertation will generate this matrix from data based on action plans of the Agenda.

The analytical process involves several systematic steps to transform policy documents into quantifiable network data. First, I conduct a comprehensive content analysis of the Reform Agenda's action plans to identify all institutional actors mentioned as responsible for specific tasks, ranging from state-level ministries to entity governments, cantonal authorities, and civil society organizations. Second, I map all specified coordination requirements, information-sharing protocols, and decision-making dependencies between these actors, creating a detailed inventory of intended relationships. Third, I code these relationships into a structured dataset where each row represents an institutional actor and each column represents another actor, with cell values indicating the presence, frequency, and type of coordination requirements between them. This process transforms qualitative policy documents into a quantitative adjacency matrix—essentially a spreadsheet where 1s and 0s indicate whether institutions are expected to coordinate with each other according to the action plans. Finally, I import this matrix into specialized network analysis software to calculate the structural measures that reveal coordination capacity, producing visualizations and metrics that make visible the otherwise hidden coordination architecture embedded within the Reform Agenda's design.

Action plans serve as the operational blueprint that translates high-level policy objectives into concrete institutional responsibilities, making them the most reliable documentary source for reconstructing the intended coordination architecture of the Agenda. Unlike policy frameworks or strategic documents that often remain at the

¹⁵⁸ Hagen, L., Keller, T., Neely, S., DePaula, N., & Robert-Cooperman, C. (2018). Crisis communications in the age of social media: A network analysis of Zika-related tweets. *Social science computer review*, 36(5), 523-541.

level of broad principles, action plans explicitly describe which institutions are responsible for specific tasks, which actors must collaborate to achieve particular outcomes, and what information flows are required between different levels of government.¹⁵⁹ This granular level of detail allows for the systematic identification of network nodes (institutional actors) and edges (coordination relationships) that form the backbone of policy integration efforts. Furthermore, action plans represent the closest approximation to policymakers' actual expectations about how coordination should function in practice, as they are typically developed through consultative processes that involve the very institutions expected to implement the reforms. By analyzing the distribution of tasks, the sequencing of activities, and the specified inter-institutional dependencies within these action plans, SNA can reveal whether the Agenda's design exhibited the structural characteristics necessary for effective policy integration—such as balanced workload distribution, strategic positioning of coordinating bodies, and sufficient redundancy to prevent single points of failure. While reform documents may rhetorically emphasize "stakeholder participation" and "multi-actor governance," SNA can reveal whether implementation networks concentrate power among international actors and domestic elites or genuinely distribute influence.¹⁶⁰

By asking questions about cooperation, coordination, communication, and cross-cutting policy issues, it will generate a network that will draw out a unique depiction of the policy process based on the actors that were involved, as well as the strength of connection between them. This will allow for a clear image of the degree of cooperation and coordination between domestic institutions to assess the degree of policy integration, as well as the extent of involvement of social partners.

For this analysis, coordination relationships are operationalized based on explicit references in action plans to institutional dependencies, joint activities, information sharing requirements, and collaborative decision-making processes. A "coordination tie" exists between two institutions when action plans specify that they must: (1)

¹⁵⁹ Laurence J. O'Toole Jr., "The Theory-Practice Issue in Policy Implementation Research," *Public Administration* 82, no. 2 (2004): 309-329.

¹⁶⁰ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Governance without a State: Can It Work?" *Regulation & Governance* 4, no. 2 (2010): 113-134.

share information or data, (2) jointly implement activities, (3) consult before making decisions that affect the other, or (4) report to each other on progress or outcomes. The strength of ties is measured by the frequency and intensity of required interactions, with stronger ties indicating more intensive coordination requirements. This operationalization captures the intended coordination as revealed through policy designers' explicit specification of institutional relationships, enabling systematic assessment of whether the Reform Agenda's action plans contained the structural prerequisites for successful coordination.

In terms of metrics, this chapter will rely on a set of key measurements which correspond to degrees of policy integration in network analysis: centrality, density, distance, structural holes, strength of ties, homophily. Centrality refers to a value which measures the importance of a specific node.¹⁶¹ This is a useful metric to determine key nodes in a network which are crucial for maintaining communication between otherwise separate components. Density is a measure of how closely knit together a certain network is. It shows the extent of overall integration of the environment. Distance shows the minimum number of ties necessary to connect any two nodes in the network. It can be useful to identify the minimum amount of links needed for a network to be integrated. Structural holes are parts of the network which are not connected. Identifying these can tell us more about where we need to look to find an explanation for less integration, or where cooperation should be ensured in order to maximize policy performance outcomes.¹⁶² Strength of ties refers to a combination of factors such as emotional ties and reciprocity between nodes. Homophily tells us about the extent to which actors connect to actors similar to them more than others. Higher homophily would thus indicate less integration and less involvement of social actors.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Hanneman, R. A., & Riddle, M. (2011). *Concepts and measures for basic network analysis*. The SAGE handbook of social network analysis, 340-369.

¹⁶² Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(2), 349-399.

¹⁶³ McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 415-444.

In terms of what my expectations are, I submit five theory-guided expectations:

Expectation 1: Multi-level governance systems exhibit coordination paradoxes when reform designs concentrate coordination responsibilities in the very institutions that lack the structural capacity to manage complex inter-institutional relationships.

Expectation 2: Policy integration fails when networks systematically exclude implementation actors from coordination architectures, creating structural gaps between policy design and service delivery.

Expectation 3: International policy design creates predictable structural vulnerabilities by imposing coordination demands that exceed existing cross-sectoral integration capacity in fragmented governance systems.

Expectation 4: Top-down reform designs systematically marginalize constitutionally mandated governance levels when international actors lack intimate knowledge of multi-level institutional arrangements.

Expectation 5: Policy coordination fails when network architectures cannot bridge the exponential complexity increases inherent in multi-level governance systems, creating persistent structural holes across governmental levels.

Each of these expectations refers to a guiding theory presented in the literature review. The reason why I call them expectations, and not hypotheses, is based on literature led by Gerring's work on single case studies.¹⁶⁴ These expectations anticipate observable patterns in the Reform Agenda network—such as centralization, peripheralization of subnational actors, or sectoral clustering—that can be assessed against the empirical network. This approach is consistent with case-oriented applications of social network analysis, which use structural features to probe theoretical claims rather than to establish law-like generalizations.

Relying on what we know about network properties and about policy coordination, I developed a table that integrates my expectations with the existing literature. This provides us with a simple diagnostic tool that can be used to evaluate other policy action plans before implementation.

¹⁶⁴ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Table 6 Core "traffic light" assessment

Status	Network Pattern	Coordination Implication
RED	High centralization + Implementation actors peripheral	Coordination paradox: bottlenecks where integration needed
RED	Structural holes between governance levels	Multi-level coordination failure
YELLOW	Sectoral clustering + Few cross-sector bridges	Policy integration at risk
YELLOW	Federal over-centralization + Cantonal marginalization	Constitutional bypass threatens legitimacy
GREEN	Balanced centralization + Implementation integration	Viable coordination architecture

Table 6.1 Decision matrix

Pattern Combination	Overall Assessment	Action Required
Multiple Red Patterns	Coordination architecture structurally unsound	Fundamental redesign required
Mixed Red/ Yellow Patterns	Critical vulnerabilities present	Selective redesign needed - address critical issues
Primarily Yellow Patterns	Coordination risks manageable	Targeted modifications sufficient
Green Patterns Dominant	Coordination architecture viable	Proceed with monitoring
Contradictory Patterns	Standard diagnostics insufficient	Context-specific analysis required

As this is a single-case study, the only comparability in this chapter is against theory. For this tool to be more developed and easier to use, a modified large-N study is needed that would help cluster successful, moderately successful, and unsuccessful policies. That could provide us with particular value thresholds that could be more reliable. However, this particular framework can be used specifically in countries with international oversight bodies. Currently, the applicability of this particular analytical framework is limited to Bosnia and Kosovo. The Bosnia case serves as a

crucial case for developing this diagnostic framework.¹⁶⁵ The structural characteristics revealed through this analysis form the basis for a traffic light diagnostic system that practitioners can apply during policy design to assess coordination viability before implementation begins. This methodological contribution addresses a gap in policy design practice: while extensive literature documents coordination failures retrospectively, few tools exist for predicting and preventing such failures during the design phase.

Analysis

This analysis transforms the Reform Agenda's action plans from policy documents into quantifiable network data to systematically assess the coordination architecture embedded within Bosnia's Reform Agenda 2015-2018 reform framework. Through social network analysis of the 43 activities spanning six policy sectors, this section examines whether the Agenda's design exhibited the structural characteristics necessary for successful policy integration in Bosnia's complex multi-level governance environment. The network constructed from these action plans reveals the intended coordination relationships between 15 institutional actors, ranging from federal ministries to cantonal governments, providing empirical evidence to test the theoretical expectations outlined earlier and validate the diagnostic framework developed for assessing coordination viability in complex governance systems.

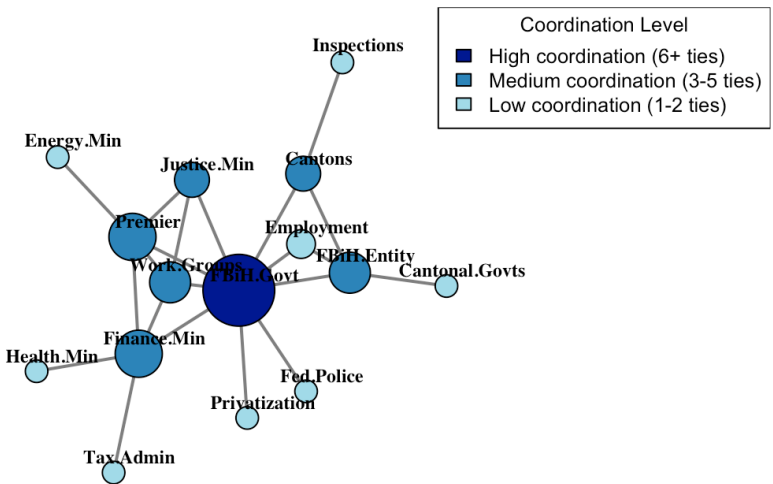


Figure 5: Basic coordination level network

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

This coordination network shown in Figure 5 above shows the intended coordination architecture embedded within the Reform Agenda's action plans. Essentially, it is the formal blueprint for how institutional actors were supposed to work together to implement Bosnia's 2015 reforms. In this section, first I will describe the network using network metrics. Then, informed by that information, I will interpret the network visualisations.

The Reform Agenda's coordination network showcases several structural characteristics that help explain its implementation failures (Appendix 4). With 15 institutional actors connected through 21 coordination ties, the network demonstrates a low density of 0.2, meaning only 20% of possible coordination relationships were specified in the action plans. This sparse connectivity, combined with an average degree of 2.8, indicates that most actors have fewer than three coordination partners, which to me sound insufficient for the complex multi-sectoral coordination the reforms required.

The network's diameter of 4, meaning information must pass through at least 4 institutions between most distant actors in the network, and average path length of 2.229 mean that information and coordination signals must travel through multiple intermediaries to reach all actors, which may create potential delays in communication flows. While the network maintains basic connectivity and there are no "islands" where an institution is completely on its own, the low clustering coefficient of 0.36, which measures whether actors who coordinate with the same institutions also coordinate with each other, suggests the system is vulnerable to disruption if key actors fail to perform their coordination roles.

The most problematic characteristics are in the centralization measures. Degree centralization, which measures how unevenly coordination ties are distributed across actors, is 0.4429. This shows a moderate concentration of coordination ties around a few actors. However, betweenness centralization, which measures who controls the flow of information between other actors is higher at 0.6287. This shows a high concentration of brokerage power in central actors, namely government of FBiH (FBiH.Govt in Figure 1) and Ministry of Finance (Finance.Min). This creates the structural bottlenecks that coordination theory warns against.

The modularity score of 0.3163 may indicate that the network exhibits moderate sectoral clustering. This fragmentation is problematic for reforms requiring coordinated action across policy domains. Combined with the network efficiency of 0.5333, which means that information flows through the network at roughly half the theoretical maximum efficiency, I interpret these results as showing a moderately siloized environment where institutions are far away from one another, often in silos which makes them less likely to communicate, and when they do this communication is inefficient. These metrics together paint a picture of a coordination system that faced significant structural challenges. The combination of sparse connections (low density), heavy reliance on a few key actors (high centralization), and tendency toward sectoral groupings might suggest a network that may have struggled to support the complex coordination the reforms needed.

In terms of the network itself, looking at this coordination network in Figure 1 above, several patterns emerge that provide empirical support for the theoretical expectations outlined earlier. The network visualization also reveals a coordination architecture which shows multiple structural characteristics associated with coordination failure in complex multi-level governance systems. The most striking feature of the network is the pronounced centralization around the FBiH Government, which appears as the largest and most connected node with nine coordination ties. This central positioning creates a classic hub-and-spoke configuration where the vast majority of inter-institutional coordination flows through a single federal body.

The marginalization of cantonal actors is immediately apparent from their peripheral positioning and limited connectivity. Despite constitutional requirements that assign significant implementation responsibilities to cantonal governments, both "Cantons" and "Cantonal.Govts" are peripheral with relatively few coordination ties. A clear implementation gap is also visible in the distribution of coordination roles across different actor types. The network systematically positions implementation agencies, including Tax Administration, Employment Service, Inspection Services, and the Privatization Agency, in peripheral positions with minimal coordination ties, while concentrating coordination responsibilities among policy design actors such as the

Premier, Working Groups, and federal ministries. The network also shows sectoral fragmentation in the clustering patterns, where related institutions form loosely connected sub-networks rather than exhibiting the cross-sectoral integration necessary for comprehensive policy implementation. The Finance Ministry and Tax Administration form one cluster, while justice-related institutions cluster separately, suggesting limited coordination mechanisms across policy domains despite the Reform Agenda's emphasis on integrated governance.

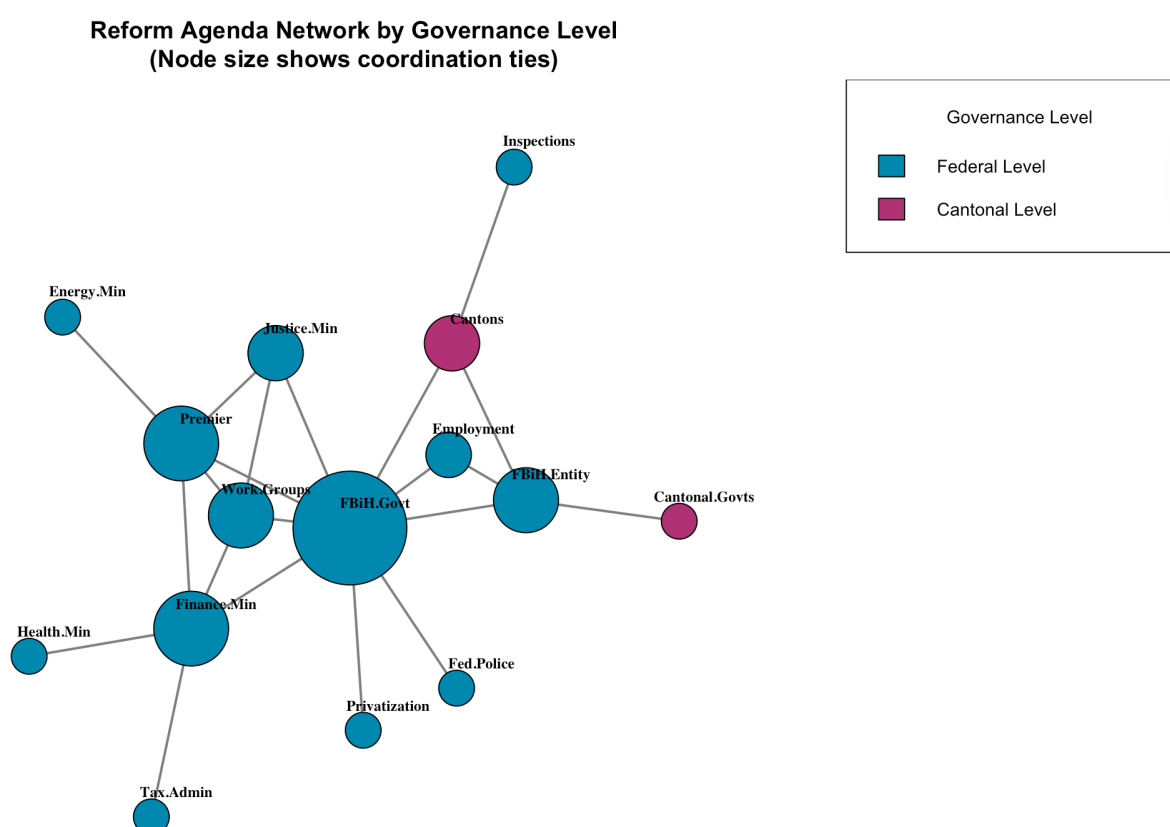


Figure 6: Network visualisation by level of governance

The governance level network shown in Figure 6 above provides, at a glance, evidence of multi-level governance failure embedded within the Reform Agenda's coordination architecture. The network shows in Figure 6 asks the question whether the right governance levels are involved in coordination. The network is overwhelmingly dominated by federal-level actors, represented by the blue nodes that occupy all central positions and control the vast majority of coordination relationships. The FBiH Government appears as the largest central hub, while other

highly connected actors—including the Premier, Finance Ministry, Working Groups, and Justice Ministry—are all federal institutions. This pattern reveals a coordination design that concentrates responsibilities at the federal level rather than distributing them across FBiH's constitutionally mandated multi-level governance structure. For example, local municipal employment bureaus were not in charge, consulted or included in any part of the implementation. In the middle level of government, cantonal actors are systematically marginalized despite their crucial constitutional role in policy implementation. FBiH's constitution mandates cantons with the most crucial role in the implementation of policies in the domains of healthcare, education, labor markets, and social protection and pension reforms.¹⁶⁶ Only two cantonal nodes appear in the network—"Cantons" and "Cantonal.Govts"—and both occupy peripheral positions with limited coordination ties. The "Cantonal.Govts" node is particularly isolated, connected only to the FBiH Entity, while the "Cantons" node, though moderately connected, remains secondary to federal coordination hubs. This marginalization is especially problematic as it indicates a wider problem of democratic deficiency which comes from overly high centralization. This pattern thereby validates Expectation 4 from the methods section of this chapter, which states that top-down networks designs systematically marginalize constitutionally mandated governance levels when international actors lack knowledge of multi-level institutional arrangements.

Figure 7 below presents visual evidence of the implementation-design gap. The network in Figure 3 asks the question are the right functional roles involved in coordination? This network reveals a design flaw where the institutions responsible for delivering services to citizens, like employment services, tax administration, inspection services, police, and cantonal governments, have minimal coordination ties and occupy marginal network positions. In contrast, coordination power is concentrated among federal coordination bodies and policy design institutions that lack direct implementation capacity. There's a clear visual separation between the central coordination hubs (who design policy) and the peripheral implementation

¹⁶⁶ Ustav Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine" [Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina], Parlament Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, accessed 20 August 2025, https://parlamentfbih.gov.ba/dom_naroda/bos/parlament/o_parlamentu/ustavfbih.html

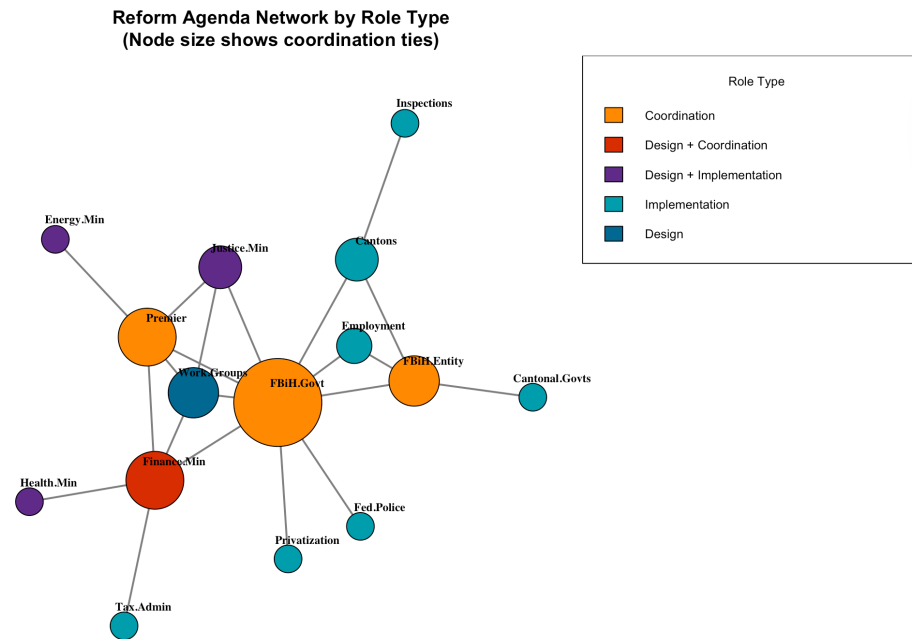


Figure 7: Reform Agenda Network by Role Type

agencies (who deliver services to citizens). This structural disconnect between who coordinates and who implements represents precisely the type of design inadequacy that network governance theory suggests will lead to coordination failure, as the actors with the most knowledge about implementation challenges and citizen-facing service delivery are excluded from the coordination design that determines how reforms are supposed to work in practice. This validates Expectation 2 from the methods section, which states that policy integration fails when networks systematically exclude implementation actors from coordination structures.

The network presented in Figure 8 on the next page asks "Which types of institutions dominate coordination roles?". It reveals a clear institutional hierarchy where government bodies (orange nodes like FBiH.Govt) and the executive (yellow Premier) occupy the largest, most central positions. In contrast, agencies (dark blue nodes) are systematically relegated to small, peripheral roles despite being responsible for direct service delivery and citizen interaction. The visual pattern shows that the Reform Agenda privileged high-level political institutions over operational agencies, with ministries (red) falling somewhere in between but still more central than the agencies that actually implement policies. This pattern speaks directly to public administration theory about institutional hierarchy and

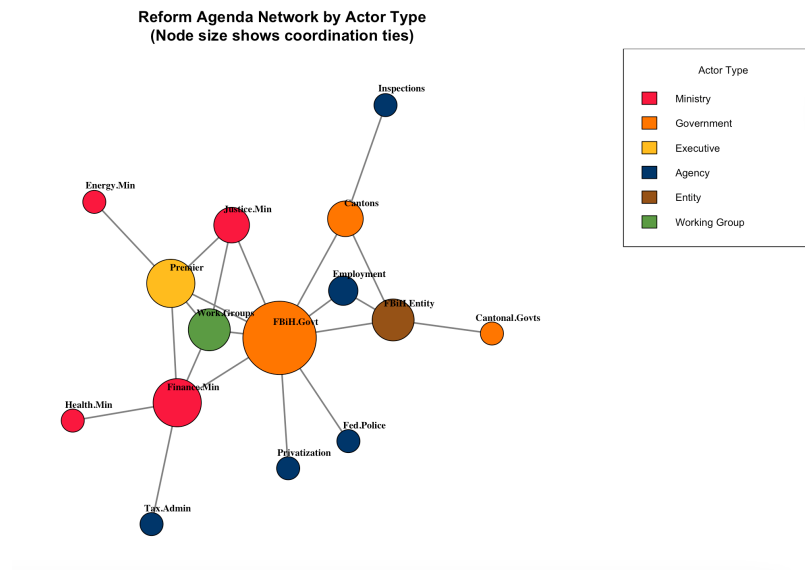


Figure 8: Network by actor type

coordination, demonstrating that the reform architects designed a coordination structure that followed formal bureaucratic hierarchy rather than implementation logic, concentrating coordination power among political leadership while marginalizing the technical agencies that possess the expertise and citizen-facing capacity necessary for successful policy implementation.

The network presented in Figure 9 asks "Who controls the flow of coordination and information between other actors?" by measuring betweenness centrality, a measure

Reform Agenda Network by Betweenness Centrality (Node size and color show brokerage power)

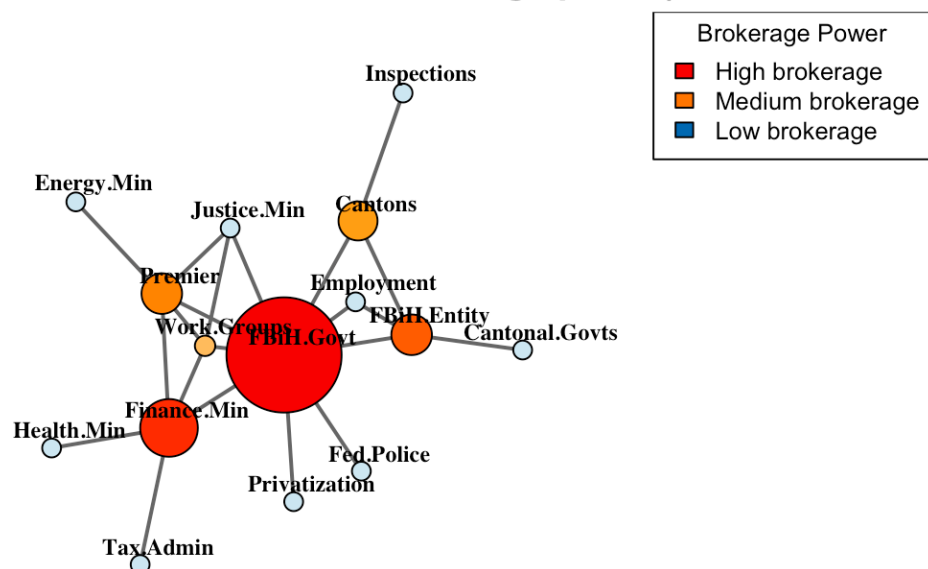


Figure 9: Network by Betweenness Centrality

identifying actors that sit "between" many pairs of other actors and serve as bridges or brokers in the coordination network. Betweenness centrality is a measure between 0 and 1, with the result indicating how many coordination pathways (out of 1, which is 100 per cent) one institution controls. The analysis reveals coordination bottlenecks, with the government of F BiH (FBiH.Govt) showing high brokerage power (0.68) controlling over two-thirds of all coordination pathways, while Finance.Min emerges as a significant secondary broker (0.27). This creates a dual bottleneck structure where these two actors together control the vast majority of information flow and coordination pathways in the network. This validates Expectation 3 about structural vulnerabilities created by international policy design. This dual bottleneck structure means that the overload or failure of either institution, and especially the federal government, could severely disrupt coordination flows, creating precisely the type of structural vulnerability that exceeds the system's implementation capacity.

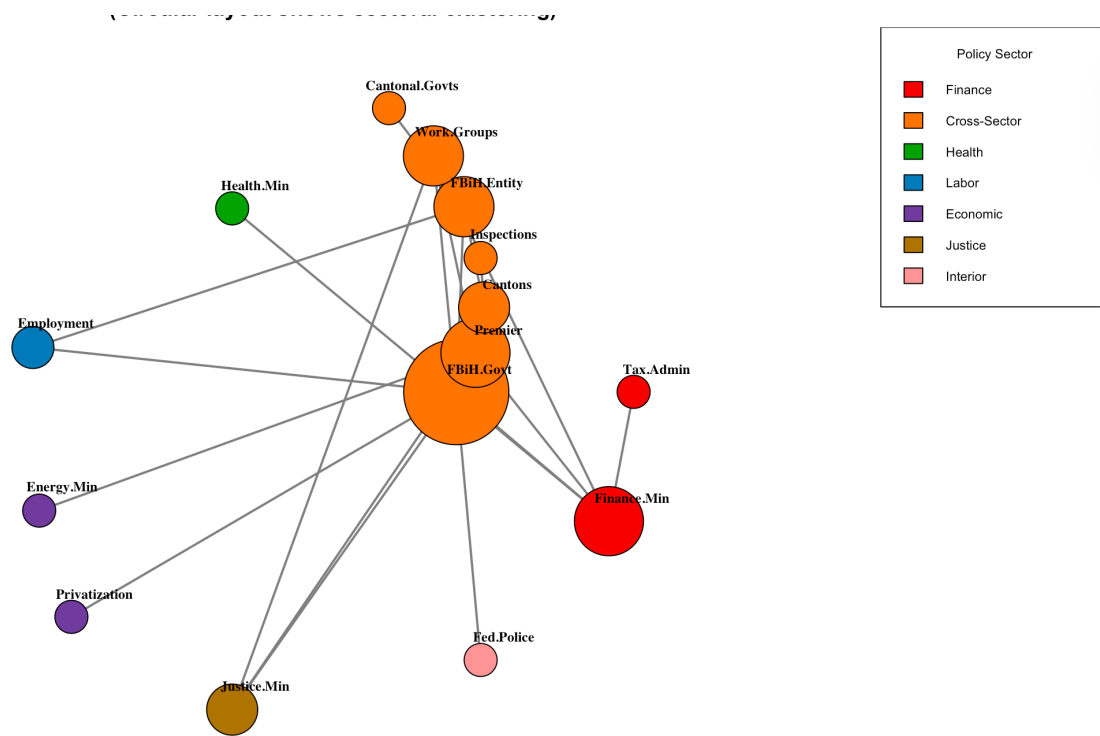


Figure 10: Reform Agenda Network by Policy Sector

The Federation government (FBiH.Govt) serves as the dominant central hub in this policy network, coordinating with key bridge actors like the Finance Ministry, Premier, and various work groups to connect different sectors. All five bridge actors are high-level federal coordination bodies rather than sectoral implementation experts, meaning once again that cross-sector coordination flows through political and administrative hubs that lack deep expertise in the specific policy areas they're supposed to integrate. None of the bridge actors are implementation agencies or service delivery institutions. While high-level coordination may cross sectors, the actors who actually deliver reforms to citizens remain trapped in sectoral silos without direct cross-sector coordination capacity. This pattern validates Expectation 3 (Policy Integration Deficit) by showing that apparent cross-sector coordination represents vertical coordination concentration rather than horizontal policy integration.

In terms of Expectation 5, collectively, these network patterns validate Expectation 5 regarding the failure to bridge exponential complexity in multi-level governance. The persistent structural holes between governance levels, combined with sectoral fragmentation and implementation gaps, demonstrate that the Reform Agenda's coordination architecture was inadequate for managing the coordination complexity inherent in FBiH constitutional structure. The Reform Agenda's network exhibits multiple types of structural holes that validate Expectation 5 about the failure to bridge exponential complexity in multi-level governance. Figure 2 reveals vertical structural holes between federal and cantonal governance levels, with minimal cross-level coordination ties despite constitutional requirements for multi-level implementation. Figure 1 demonstrates sectoral structural holes where policy domains remain disconnected—the Finance cluster operates independently from the Justice cluster, while implementation agencies like Employment and Tax Administration lack coordination ties despite their interdependence in labor market reforms. Figure 4 shows functional structural holes between different institution types, where agencies responsible for service delivery remain disconnected from the government bodies and ministries that coordinate policy. These persistent structural holes create the fragmentation that network theory predicts will prevent effective

coordination in complex governance systems, as information and coordination cannot flow across the institutional boundaries necessary for successful policy implementation.

Throughout this research, while thinking what I could use in my own work, I developed a simple diagnostic tool that can predict whether government reforms will fail before they're even implemented. Just like a traffic light system, it uses RED, YELLOW, and GREEN signals to show whether a policy's coordination structure is likely to work. The tool analyzes who is supposed to work with whom in reform plans, then checks if the right people are connected in the right ways. In Bosnia's 2015 Reform Agenda case, the diagnostic shows multiple RED signals - too much power concentrated in a few institutions, implementation agencies left out of coordination, and constitutional government levels ignored in the design. The framework translates network theory into practical diagnostic criteria, providing international organizations and policymakers with a systematic means of stress-testing coordination architectures against the structural realities of complex governance systems.

Table 7 Traffic light assessment applied on the Reform Agenda action plan

Status	Network Pattern	Coordination Implication	Evidence from Analysis
RED	High centralization + Implementation actors peripheral	Coordination paradox: bottlenecks where integration needed	Betweenness centrality: 0.6287- FBiH Govt controls 68% of coordination pathways- Implementation agencies marginalized
RED	Structural holes between governance levels	Multi-level coordination failure	- Cantonal actors systematically peripheral- "Cantonal.Govts" isolated with minimal ties- Federal dominance contradicts constitutional requirements

Status	Network Pattern	Coordination Implication	Evidence from Analysis
YELLOW	Sectoral clustering + Few cross-sector bridges	Policy integration at risk	Modularity: 0.3163 indicates sectoral fragmentation- Finance-Tax cluster separate from Justice cluster- Cross-sector bridges concentrated at federal level
RED	Federal over-centralization + Cantonal marginalization	Constitutional bypass threatens legitimacy	All major coordination hubs are federal institutions- Cantonal constitutional roles ignored in coordination design- Democratic deficit through excessive centralization

Now let's apply these findings in the decision matrix:

Table 7.1: Decision matrix-1

Pattern Combination	Overall Assessment	Action Required
Multiple Red Patterns	Coordination architecture structurally unsound	Fundamental redesign required
Mixed Red/ Yellow Patterns	Critical vulnerabilities present	Selective redesign needed - address critical issues
Primarily Yellow Patterns	Coordination risks manageable	Targeted modifications sufficient
Green Patterns Dominant	Coordination architecture viable	Proceed with monitoring
Contradictory Patterns	Standard diagnostics insufficient	Context-specific analysis required

According to the diagnostic framework, this coordination architecture exhibits structural characteristics consistently associated with implementation failure in complex governance systems. The combination of multiple red indicators suggests that coordination problems are not just possible but highly probable, regardless of political will or administrative capacity.

This analytical tool applies social network analysis to policy action plans to identify structural vulnerabilities that may predict coordination failure based on what we know about governance, policy integration and policy success in complex, multi-level government environments. In the Bosnia Reform Agenda case, evaluated against theory, the diagnostic framework correctly identified multiple high-risk patterns including excessive centralization, marginalization of implementation actors, and structural gaps between governance levels. The analytical contribution lies in shifting policy evaluation from retrospective analysis toward prospective diagnosis, enabling structural modifications during the design phase when corrections remain feasible and cost-effective. Currently, international development organizations typically discover coordination problems only after implementation failures occur, leading to repeated design mistakes across similar reform initiatives. This diagnostic framework addresses that gap by providing systematic criteria for assessing whether coordination architectures possess the structural characteristics necessary for successful policy integration.

Conclusion

This analysis of Bosnia's 2015-2018 Reform Agenda's action plan demonstrates that there is a chance that implementation failures of the Reform Agenda stemmed from structural design flaws rather than solely from implementation deficiencies or insufficient political will. Through social network analysis of the Agenda's action plans, this chapter reveals a coordination architecture misaligned with Bosnia's multi-level governance requirements. The empirical findings reveal predictable structural vulnerabilities that might have undermined reform success despite extensive international technical expertise and domestic political alignment.

This chapter advances policy integration theory by demonstrating a gap between integration aspirations and the realities of the local context. While policy integration

emerged as a promising response to New Public Management's fragmentation problems, this analysis reveals that integration success depends on coordination capacity that recipient states often lack. As policy integration is often treated as a method of policy design and a policy outcome, this chapter critiques it by pointing at structural capacities that implementation plans need to have to fully treat policy integration as a method. Rather than a method, a high degree of policy integration is thus a structural prerequisite that must be diagnosed, cultivated, and maintained.

The analysis validates network governance theory's emphasis on structural prerequisites for effective coordination while revealing how formal institutional hierarchies can contradict coordination logic. The systematic marginalization of implementation actors and cantonal governments demonstrates that successful coordination requires attention to who actually delivers services to citizens, not just who holds formal authority. The persistent structural holes between governance levels, policy sectors, and functional roles created precisely the type of fragmentation that network theory predicts will prevent successful policy integration. These findings contribute to network governance scholarship by providing empirical evidence that coordination capacity cannot be assumed but must be systematically assessed and deliberately cultivated through appropriate network design.

The network analysis validated all five theoretical expectations through specific structural patterns. Expectation 1 regarding coordination paradoxes was confirmed by the excessive centralization measures, with betweenness centralization of 0.63 which indicates that coordination responsibilities were concentrated in federal institutions already operating at capacity limits. Expectation 2 about excluding implementation actors was validated by the peripheral positioning of agencies responsible for service delivery, such as the Tax Administration, Employment Service, and Inspection Services, despite their crucial role in citizen-facing implementation. Expectation 3 concerning structural vulnerabilities created by international design was evidenced by the dual bottleneck structure where FBiH Government and Finance Ministry controlled the vast majority of coordination pathways, creating precisely the type of overload that exceeds system capacity. The systematic peripheralization of cantonal actors confirmed Expectation 4 about

marginalizing constitutionally mandated governance levels. Expectation 5 regarding failure to bridge exponential complexity is validated by persistent structural holes across governance levels, with minimal cross-level coordination ties despite constitutional requirements for multi-level implementation.

This chapter also introduces social network analysis as a predictive diagnostic tool that can identify coordination vulnerabilities before implementation begins, representing a methodological shift from retrospective blame attribution to prospective design optimization. The traffic light diagnostic framework provides practitioners with systematic criteria for assessing coordination viability during policy design when structural modifications remain feasible and cost-effective. This approach addresses a gap in development practice: while extensive literature documents coordination failures retrospectively, few tools exist for predicting and preventing such failures during the design phase.

The diagnostic framework emerged from my experience working with a major international development agency, where I recognized the need for systematic tools to assess whether proposed coordination architectures could function in complex governance environments. More useful than discovering coordination problems after implementation failures occur, which leads to repeated design mistakes across similar interventions, this framework enables structural assessment when corrections can still be made. The analytical contribution lies in making implementation and coordination architecture visible and measurable, transforming abstract coordination requirements into structural concrete features.

In terms of limitations, this framework in its current form is specifically designed for multi-level governance systems with a high degree of international oversight and, given the particular institutional complexities analyzed, is directly applicable primarily to Bosnia and potentially Kosovo. As per the usual with this kind of research, these findings are true for Bosnia in the time when the Reform Agenda was happening. So, again, as per this kind of research, the single-case analysis limits broader generalizability. Finally, document-based network construction may not capture informal coordination relationships that emerge during implementation, and static network analysis cannot account for how relationships evolve over

implementation timeframes. For this reason, when used as a retroactive descriptive diagnostic tool to answer the question of "what went wrong", this kind of research is best supplemented with qualitative interview data.

However, the limited immediate applicability does not diminish the necessity for this kind of research. I want to argue that the low appeal of doing single case studies on distinct cases such as Bosnia is what brought us here in the first place. Just because the findings will not be directly applicable on other states and generalizable does not mean there is not a concrete need for Bosnia-based research which will be operationalized in Bosnia. I argue that, although it goes well beyond what traditional policy studies believe and practice, fragmented governance systems require specialized analytical tools that account for their unique institutional realities rather than applying frameworks designed for consolidated democratic systems.

In case this method and diagnostic tool is to be made generalizable, a large-N comparative analysis could establish quantitative thresholds for coordination viability across different multi-level governance contexts and other contexts with some adjustment. Longitudinal network analysis could examine how coordination relationships evolve during reform implementation, while validation studies could compare document-based networks against actual coordination patterns through process tracing or interview-based network reconstruction.

CHAPTER 4

EPISTEMIC INTERMEDIARIES: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EXPERT COMPLIANCE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Introduction

The year 2025 marks exactly a decade since the beginning of the implementation of the Reform Agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a comprehensive socio-economic reform package that was launched in 2015 with ambitious promises to transform the country's economy and create better employment opportunities for its citizens.¹⁶⁷

However, ten years later, the labor market continues to suffer from many of the same structural maladies that the Reform Agenda was originally designed to address, alongside challenges that were not included in the original framework. While there have been subsequent reform initiatives following 2015, the political landscape driving these efforts has changed, with reduced international involvement and a marked shift in both the nature and intensity of external support. Once deeply embedded in Bosnia's reform processes, international financial institutions and organizations now maintain a more distant presence, reflecting broader geopolitical shifts and changing priorities.

The European Union's approach to enlargement has also evolved considerably, with critics arguing that Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted EU candidate status in December 2022 not as recognition of genuine reform progress, but rather as a political decision that "didn't deserve it at all" according to EU officials, representing

¹⁶⁷ Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, "The Reform Agenda: Bosnia and Herzegovina's best chance," *European Western Balkans*, August 5, 2015, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2015/08/05/the-reform-agenda-bosnia-and-herzegovinas-best-chance/>.

what many viewed as an undue reward rather than merit-based recognition.¹⁶⁸ This assessment is reinforced by EU High Representative Josep Borrell's acknowledgment that "the highest EU officials did not hide that the decision to grant candidate status was political", suggesting that Bosnia's advancement came through political grace rather than substantive achievement.¹⁶⁹ The war in Ukraine has further reshaped the enlargement landscape, with Bosnia becoming "a beneficiary of the geopolitical reshuffle" following Russia's invasion, admitted alongside Ukraine as part of a broader strategic response rather than individual merit.¹⁷⁰ Domestically, the political leadership undergoes its own transformation: Fadil Novalić, who served as Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2015 to 2023 and was known for his support of neoliberal reforms, was sentenced to four years in prison for corruption and began serving his sentence in March 2024.¹⁷¹

The current FBiH government represents a complex mix of ideologies, none of which demonstrates the same degree of compliance toward international reform prescriptions that characterized Novalić's tenure. The governing coalition, known as the "Troika," consists of three Sarajevo-based parties: People and Justice (NiP), Our Party (NS), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP BiH), each bringing distinct ideological orientations that complicate unified reform implementation.¹⁷² NiP, led by Foreign Minister Elmedin Konaković, is described as being "composed mostly of former SDA members" and "doesn't differ greatly from the traditional and conservative SDA when it comes to its foundational ideological values," suggesting

¹⁶⁸ Rikard Jozwiak, "Wider Europe Briefing: What The EU's Enlargement Report Means For Bosnia, Georgia, Moldova, And Ukraine," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 13, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-enlargement-report-ukraine-moldova-georgia/32682472.html>.

¹⁶⁹ "EU candidate status of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Undue reward or a boost for the reform process?" European Western Balkans, February 18, 2023, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2023/02/18/eu-candidate-status-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina-undue-reward-or-a-boost-for-the-reform-process/>.

¹⁷⁰ Stefan Lehne, "Polarization Threatens to Derail Bosnia's EU Ambitions," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2024/04/polarization-threatens-to-derail-bosnias-eu-ambitions?lang=en>.

¹⁷¹ "Ex-Prime Minister Of Bosniak-Croat Federation Begins Jail Term," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 22, 2024, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-novalic-corruption-prison-novalic/32350526.html>.

¹⁷² "Bosnia-Herzegovina political briefing: Political Summary 2023," China-CEE Institute, January 9, 2024, <https://china-cee.eu/2024/01/09/bosnia-herzegovina-political-briefing-political-summary-2023/>.

their pro-European stance is more tactical than transformative.¹⁷³ Our Party (NS), while officially supporting neoliberal ideas represents a social-liberal position that emphasizes multi-ethnic governance over purely economic reform. Their mandate at the Sarajevo Canton, for example, is marked by an astonishing increase in government spending by introducing a set of welfare reforms unprecedented in post-war BiH. The SDP BiH, despite its pro-EU orientation, maintains a center-left social democratic platform that "articulates and politically supports the interests of those who financially support themselves primarily by working," opposing the kind of market-oriented labor reforms that Novalić had supported.¹⁷⁴ Adding to this ideological complexity, the coalition governs alongside the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ BiH), which, while supporting "foreign investment, supports new SMEs, privatization" and "Euro-Atlantic integration," primarily prioritizes ethnic Croat interests and has been resistant to broader structural reforms that might dilute Croatian political representation.¹⁷⁵ This coalition arrangement, where parties with different reform priorities must reach consensus, creates a governance structure seemingly far less amenable to the comprehensive neoliberal reform agenda that international organizations had come to expect during the Novalić era. However, they are not any less amenable, quite the contrary, they are even more welcoming of foreign intervention in all walks of life in BiH. This raises a question: if political and ideological preference of parties in government which are left, right, and center makes no difference in whether there is extensive conformity to international tutelage, then what does? If very different actors unexpectedly behave in the same way toward international intervention, what explains their attitudes?

I believe the answer lies in the way knowledge of politics, policy and politicking is reproduced in post-War BiH. In the past decade, there has been a hemorrhaging of human capital through what has become one of the world's most severe brain drain

¹⁷³ Franjo Šarčević, "Could change in Bosnia and Herzegovina be possible?" Kosovo 2.0, December 2, 2020, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/could-change-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-be-possible/>.

¹⁷⁴ "About SDP," Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, February 16, 2018, <https://www.sdp.ba/about-sdp/>.

¹⁷⁵ "Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH)," European Party Monitor, accessed August 22, 2025, https://soc.kuleuven.be/io/english/european-party-monitor/bosnia-and-herzegovina/copy_of_bih_party_3.

crises in BiH. While there is no methodological possibility to obtain raw data on emigration for a variety of reasons, estimates show that Bosnia and Herzegovina has lost 24 per cent of its population over the last three decades due to massive emigration, with approximately 150,000 young people leaving the country since the war ended in 1995.¹⁷⁶ At one point in 2018, another source estimated that around 10,000 people between ages 25 and 35 leave Bosnia annually¹⁷⁷, creating what experts describe as a demographic catastrophe.

This represents not merely economic migration but a form of epistemic exodus, a systematic loss of local knowledge, cultural understanding, and indigenous problem-solving capacity. The most educated, energized and fresh segments of society, those who might otherwise challenge imposed development paradigms or propose locally-grounded alternatives, are precisely those most likely to leave. Research shows that only 6 per cent of those that leave Bosnia and Herzegovina are highly educated.¹⁷⁸ This pattern suggests that Bosnia's brain drain, while extensive, may disproportionately affect those with mid-level education and skills, potentially leaving behind both the least educated and an elite of highly educated professionals who have found ways to benefit from the current system. It is this class of small elites "left behind" that are the topic of this chapter. The systematic departure or sidelining of those most capable of challenging dominant development paradigms leaves behind an intellectual landscape increasingly dependent on external validation and international frameworks. The remaining expert community, facing economic precarity and professional isolation, becomes structurally incentivized to align with international donors not just for financial reasons, but as the primary pathway to professional legitimacy and intellectual engagement. Coupled with international actors that, despite their attempts at localization, primarily operate on post-Cold War patterns of providing international aid and assistance, the result is a class of local

¹⁷⁶ German Marshall Fund of the United States, "Toward a New Youth Brain-drain Paradigm in the Western Balkans," accessed January 2025, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/toward-new-youth-brain-drain-paradigm-western-balkans>.

¹⁷⁷ Balkan Insight, "Youth Emigration Causing Balkan 'Brain Drain'," May 28, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2013/08/01/young-people-leave-serbia-bosnia-the-most/>.

¹⁷⁸ German Marshall Fund of the United States, "Toward a New Youth Brain-drain Paradigm in the Western Balkans".

expert-intermediaries who are implementers and legitimizers, but provide little input of their own.

But why are these experts so important anyway? In Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizen participation in policymaking is regulated by the Rules on Consultations in Policy Making, updated in 2017 which stipulate the minimum level of consultations required between government bodies and the public, legal entities, and citizen groups not part of the government structure.¹⁷⁹ Minimum consultation standards include publishing draft regulations on the institution's website, allowing interested parties to provide comments online, and seeking input from individuals listed for consultation by the relevant institution. While the latest iteration of the Rulebook invites institutions to ask for input from other entities apart from their regular shortlisted consultants, it is this particular provision which positions experts as intermediaries in the deliberation stage of the policymaking process and creates cliques of experts that provide advice to policymakers. Inviting experts the institution already worked with saves time and the hassle of dealing with the wider public or other civil actors, making it a first and sometimes only instance of consultations.

This demographic and epistemic context provides the foundation for understanding how labor market expertise in contemporary Bosnia functions within what Aníbal Quijano termed the "coloniality of knowledge", where Western development frameworks are not simply imposed from above, but become internalized as the only legitimate means of understanding and addressing economic challenges.¹⁸⁰ The experts who remain, working within this tense intellectual environment, become unwitting participants in reproducing the very knowledge systems that have consistently failed to address some of Bosnia's labor market realities.

Drawing on decolonial theory, this chapter reveals how Bosnia's labor market expert community functions as intermediaries in reproducing colonial knowledge systems that privilege international over local ways of understanding economic development. Building on Aníbal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of knowledge and Walter

¹⁷⁹ Pravila za konsultacije u izradi pravnih propisa" [Rules for Consultations in the Drafting of Legal Provisions], *Službeni glasnik BiH* [Official Gazette of BiH], no. 5/17 (January 20, 2017).

¹⁸⁰ Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 168-178.

Mignolo's work on "epistemic disobedience,"¹⁸¹ the analysis reveals how externally-led labor market interventions devalue local knowledge while positioning Western development frameworks as universally valid. The decoloniality lens reframes expert compliance not merely as economic dependency, but as a system where European/North American ways of knowing are imposed as the only legitimate forms of expertise, while local knowledge is relegated to the realm of "culture" or "context" rather than recognized as valid analytical frameworks.¹⁸²

Another theoretical lens this chapter employs is the "how" of this process, particularly in terms of subject formation. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's phenomenological analysis of subject formation, this chapter examines how Bosnia's labor market experts become institutionally formed subjects whose professional identities are constituted through repeated practices and orientations within international development frameworks.¹⁸³ Ahmed's concept of "institutional investment" reveals that subjects develop genuine attachments to organizational relationships that provide meaning, professional recognition, and career opportunities, rather than simply complying under external coercion.¹⁸⁴ Her analysis of how subjects become oriented "toward and away from things" submits that expert complacency with donor frameworks reflects not conscious strategic choice but rather the accumulated effects of professional formation within environments that systematically privilege certain forms of knowledge over others.¹⁸⁵ This theoretical approach avoids reducing expert behavior to either manipulation or false consciousness, instead revealing how professional subjectivity is constituted through relationships that may at the same time enable individual advancement while

¹⁸¹ Mignolo, Walter D. "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7-8 (2009): 159-181.

¹⁸² Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 211-223.

¹⁸³ Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 15-17.

¹⁸⁴ Sara Ahmed, "The Politics of Good Feeling," *Australasian Journal of Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 1-18.

¹⁸⁵ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 12-13; see also Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 15-16.

reproducing broader patterns of epistemic hierarchy that marginalize other locally-grounded analytical frameworks.

So what is this "local knowledge" in the labor economics? I define local knowledge in Bosnia's labor market context as encompassing the accumulated knowledge of navigating economic activity within the country's specific post-conflict, post-socialist reality, knowledge that international development frameworks exclude or dismiss as irrelevant "context." This includes, but is not limited to things that people do or go through in the context of labor, work, workplace dynamics in Bosnia which would not be the case in the contexts where mainstream policies were tested and successful. For example, the institutional memory of Yugoslav self-management systems that might have created alternative models of workplace organization and collective decision-making, which results in workers still wanting to be part of the decision-making in their companies, a sentiment oftentimes not welcomed by employers and politicians. Second, traditional craft apprenticeship networks that transfer skills outside formal educational systems. Further, survival strategies developed during wartime that demonstrate how communities maintain economic activity under extreme constraints. Similarly, the complex understanding of how ethnic fragmentation shapes economic opportunities, particularly for internally displaced persons who must navigate discriminatory hiring practices, rebuild professional networks across ethnic lines, and operate businesses in environments where they may face hostility from potential customers or business partners.

This local knowledge represents a sea of analytical concepts for understanding how identity, geography, social trust, and institutional fragmentation function in relation to economic opportunity and opportunism in BiH. How, for example, entrepreneurship needs to be supported in difficult contexts, or how can hiring practices be regulated by law that would prevent discrimination in hiring. This relationship cannot be captured by neoliberal models that assume unified markets, rational actors, and neutral market environments. When international experts dismiss these understandings as "cultural factors" or "implementation challenges" rather than

recognizing them as legitimate analytical lenses, they become part of the systematic devaluation of non-Western ways of knowing economic reality.¹⁸⁶

Finally, in my work as an international development expert working particularly in labor market interventions, I identified another reason for the sidelining of local knowledge, or failure to incorporate it into development projects or other interventions: the cost of it. Implementers of large-scale international projects funded by international organizations and development agencies have their staff which is trained in particular areas. Any step outside of that tightly-drawn circle costs money. Additional methodologies, new kinds of interventions, qualitative data collection, and any kind of innovation present an additional cost in funds and time, the two things donors are not very forgiving about. Things as simple as conducting an extensive needs assessment through qualitative method gets rejected by donors as being costly. In one instance in my own experience, my team and I were allowed to conduct in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with workers for an evaluation of a secondary-sector related development intervention, but only if I conduct the interviews online. As a result, the only people that responded to my invitations were office workers whose insights were not unexpected and whose needs were atypical for the average worker in the sector. I don't think I will ever forget one particular phone call to a lumberjack and his resignation at my mention that the focus group discussion needs to be conducted online, at 10AM on a Monday. "Miss, I am a lumberjack," he said. "I do not work from home, I work from the woods". These experiences of methodological constraints that exclude local voices reflect broader patterns of epistemic hierarchy that require theoretical examination.

The chapter examines how international labor market interventions reproduce colonial relations through knowledge production, where donor-led frameworks are positioned as universal and scientific, objective and neutral, which implies they must be effective. On the other hand, local knowledge is dismissed as particular, unscientific, ungeneralizable, and anecdotal, rendering it useless in the development

¹⁸⁶ I use the term "Western" here with great caution. Bosnia and Herzegovina, like Turkey and other countries of the Balkans, has often been characterized as a country "between East and West." Calling a particular way of thinking non-Western in this context does not mean that there are no elements of what we largely accept as mainstream economic thought; it means that there are other ways of thinking, cultural institutions, and processes at play in this particular context.

context. Local collaborators or experts, such as myself, serve as intermediaries and, this chapter reveals, internalize and legitimize external knowledge systems. As a result, the political economy of this relationship operates through concrete mechanisms: research funding tied to donor priorities, career advancement requiring international validation, and professional networks that exclude those who challenge dominant paradigms. Experts become trapped in what amounts to cognitive imperialism, where their analytical capacity is systematically redirected away from developing locally-grounded solutions toward legitimizing predetermined interventions designed in Washington, Brussels, or Geneva. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where each round of failed reforms generates demand for more expert analysis that again is conducted by the same people, and thereby avoids examining the inadequacy of the former analytical frameworks.

This chapter, therefore, aims to answer the following research questions:

- How do Bosnia's labor market experts become institutionally formed subjects whose professional identities require the performance of compliance with international development frameworks?
- How do institutional relationships between international donors and Bosnia's labor market experts systematically reproduce epistemic hierarchies that marginalize locally-grounded analytical frameworks?

This chapter is organized as follows: Following this introduction, a literature review presents the theoretical foundations for understanding labor markets, development and expert compliance, establishing how epistemic hierarchies operate in development contexts and how professional identities become institutionally constituted. The methods section details the interview-based research design, including participant recruitment, data collection procedures, and the manual coding approach used to analyze expert narratives. The analysis section presents key insights from the interview data organized around emerging thematic areas. The synthesis section creates a cohesive narrative from these analytical themes, demonstrating how individual expert experiences reflect broader patterns of epistemic colonialism in Bosnia's labor market policy domain. The conclusion considers the implications of these findings for understanding how international development perpetuates

knowledge hierarchies and explores potential pathways toward more equitable forms of expertise and collaboration.

Literature review

The following literature review engages with the literature on decoloniality, subject formation, development studies, and expert studies to establish a foundation for further analysis. As mentioned in the section above, the main lens I use in this study is a lens of decoloniality theory. These theoretical frameworks cited above, namely decolonial critiques of knowledge production, phenomenological approaches to subject formation, and analyses of expert intermediation in development contexts, meet at one point to reveal how epistemic hierarchies are reproduced through seemingly voluntary professional relationships. While this integrated theoretical approach has not been systematically applied to Bosnia's post-conflict context, several scholars and researchers have begun to identify colonial patterns in the country's international relations and the marginalization of local epistemologies.

A stream in literature reads BiH's current governance structure as colonial. Authors addressing decolonization argue that BiH's colonial past and postsocialist struggles reflect ongoing neocolonial influences.¹⁸⁷ They highlight the tensions between socialist modernity and colonialism, emphasizing the need for resistance against global capitalism and coloniality. The focus is on disrupting the continuity of BiH's colonial legacy through anti-colonial and anti-capitalist coalitions. Similarly, an exploration of the role of the international community in police and intelligence reform found that, in order to optimize reform, the approach to it should not have been top-down, but rather inclusive and promoting of local ownership.¹⁸⁸

Following a similar logic, another stream in the literature looks at localization efforts by international donors through the lens of imperialism and/or coloniality.

International actors, such as donors, have recently adopted localization as a means to promote local ownership. However, a postgraduate thesis focusing on Congo and Bosnia and Herzegovina implies that localization often covers more than it reveals,

¹⁸⁷ Danijela Majstorović, "Decolonizing a Future in a European Periphery Between Socialist Interruptions and the Postcolonial Present," in *Discourse and Affect in Postsocialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peripheral Selves* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 33-70.

¹⁸⁸ Corinna Metz, *The Role of the International Community in the Police Reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2004-2008* (National Defense Academy, 2010).

acting contrary to its intended goals by fostering further dependency rather than reducing it.¹⁸⁹ Donor states use aid and grants to advance their own interests, leading to paternalistic localization strategies that reduce local agency, particularly in conflict zones like BiH. The thesis highlights that these strategies, driven by geographic, geopolitical, and geoeconomic factors, continue to undermine effective humanitarian interventions, perpetuating dependency and conflict rather than fostering sustainable solutions.

In terms of the literature on subject formation, Sara Ahmed develops her theory on subject formation outside of traditional agency versus structure debates. In crux, her theory revolves around a few key concepts: orientation, investment, emotional work, and wilfulness. Orientation refers to the action of subjects getting accustomed to turning toward some things and away from others, to the point where it becomes muscle memory. In terms of why, Ahmed turns away from classic works that aimed to explain similar reflexes, such as Foucault's subject formation through discipline and punishment. With Ahmed, there is no disciplining the subjects into compliance and docility, but rather subjects develop a genuine, sincere emotional attachment to an institution that they derive meaning from.¹⁹⁰ She shows this process using the example of diversity work in universities, where subjects are attracted to the promise of a change in the institution, a promise that is never realized. However, as time goes by and the subjects are faced with failure and resurrection of the promises of success, they develop deep attachments to the institution. It is this emotional work of managing expectations, enthusiasm and disappointment when failures re-occur that makes subjects more invested into their institution and their work. This, I argue, resonates with one's life as an expert in Bosnia. Starting from myself and my own experience, as well as the experience of my colleagues, none of us enter a new project or a new intervention "just to get the job done". Development work is difficult and requires so much effort and dedication that doing it without investment is simply not worth it. However, failures occur and outcomes come slowly. This

¹⁸⁹ SJude Aondowase Shagba, *"Localization as a New Form of Paternalism: Differentiated Donor Aid Approaches Based on Geopolitical Criteria: A Comparative Study of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH)"* (Master's thesis, Uppsala University, 2023).

¹⁹⁰ Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

process of reconciliation of our expectations at the beginning of a project with the modest results makes us even more invested through a rationalization of "we only missed this one bit". With each new project cycle, we are sure we will get it right this time - a wonderful good intention that results in going in circles for a very long time. Critics of development are not rare. Arturo Escobar argued in mid-1990s that international development discourse created categories such as the "third world" and "underdeveloped" in a case of neocolonial control, often worsening conditions it aimed to improve.¹⁹¹ However, critics of Escobar's work claim he overemphasizes and overestimates international aid organizations showing them as omnipotent in discourse creation, while realities are much different.¹⁹² For the purpose of this study, I would like to argue that international aid organizations and foreign governments are indeed omnipotent because Bosnia's unique governance structure defined them as such through creating a structural dependency between them and the state. The Dayton Agreement's complex power-sharing mechanisms create institutional deadlock that can only be resolved through external arbitration, effectively making international actors the final decision-makers in many policy areas, including very core questions of governance such as constitutional change and minority rights. Ultimately, the Office of the High Representative can pass any law by using a similar mechanism to the power of decree, known as the Bonn powers.

The role of local experts as brokers of knowledge and processes has also been extensively researched, albeit not on Bosnia. For example, Li examines how development experts systematically transform structural political problems into technical management issues through a process she calls "rendering technical," where they define problems in ways that exclude the social relations causing poverty and focus instead on the behavior of poor people themselves.¹⁹³ This approach shifts responsibility onto individuals while making systemic causes invisible. It effectively

¹⁹¹ Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁹² J. Salvador Peralta, review of *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, by Arturo Escobar, *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 35, no. 3 (2013): 466-470.

¹⁹³ Tania Murray Li and David Mosse, "Rendering Society Technical," in *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, ed. David Mosse (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

depoliticizes development interventions and confirms that the poor should solve their problems through individual initiative rather than addressing underlying power structures in a mechanism similar to the one I identify in this chapter.

Mosse argues that international development expertise is social rather than technical, despite professional claims to the contrary.¹⁹⁴ Development professionals face an inherent contradiction: they must navigate complex, relationship-dependent practical work while simultaneously maintaining their legitimacy as bearers of universal, context-free knowledge.¹⁹⁵ This creates a system where policy models persist not because they work empirically, but because they serve crucial social functions in mediating professional relationships, preserving institutional power, and sustaining expert identities.¹⁹⁶ The apparent "failures" of development interventions are thus not bugs but features of a system designed to maintain the illusion of rational, technical control while obscuring the messy social realities that actually drive outcomes.

Methodology

In this study I employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured elite interviews to examine how Bosnia's labor market experts navigate institutional relationships with international development organizations. The methodological approach was designed to capture the subjective experiences and professional orientations of experts working at the intersection of local knowledge and international development frameworks.

The study utilized snowball sampling to identify and recruit labor market experts across multiple sectors and institutional affiliations. Initial contacts were established through professional networks in international development organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in labor market policy design, implementation, or evaluation,

¹⁹⁴ David Mosse, "Notes on the ethnography of expertise and professionals in international development," *Ethnografeast III: 'Ethnography and the Public Sphere'* (Lisbon, June 20-23, 2007), 2-7.

¹⁹⁵ David Mosse, "Notes on the ethnography of expertise and professionals in international development," *Ethnografeast III: 'Ethnography and the Public Sphere'* (Lisbon, June 20-23, 2007), 2-7.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

with emphasis on capturing diverse perspectives across international organizations, domestic institutions, academia, and civil society.

Contact was initiated with 34 potential participants, of whom 20 agreed to participate in the study. A significant challenge emerged during recruitment: 14 potential participants declined to be interviewed or never responded. The final sample of 20 participants included: 5 international experts working on labor interventions across various organizations; 4 heads of research departments and program coordinators from employment agencies and think tanks; 4 university professors specializing in economics; 2 parliamentary representatives with expertise in economic policy; 2 civil society leaders (employer associations, green economy); 1 media/analysis expert; and 1 regional policy coordinator. This distribution provided representation across the key institutional categories involved in Bosnia's labor market policy ecosystem. I conducted the semi-structured interviews from June 2024 to January 2025 using an interview guide designed to explore two primary themes: perceptions of the effectiveness and limitations of current approaches to labor market reform in Bosnia, and assessments of what may be wrong or improved in the current context. All interviews were conducted in the local language (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) to ensure participants could express complex ideas and nuanced perspectives without linguistic constraints. Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim in the original language to preserve linguistic nuances and cultural specificities that might be lost in translation. The analysis process was conducted manually without computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, a deliberate methodological choice made to maintain close engagement with the textual data and preserve interpretive depth that automated processes might compromise.

The analytical process followed several stages: First, initial open coding involved reading through transcripts to identify recurring themes, concepts, and patterns in participant responses. Second, focused coding grouped related codes into thematic categories aligned with the theoretical framework, particularly examining instances of institutional investment, epistemic hierarchy, and local knowledge marginalization. Third, axial coding explored relationships between thematic

categories to understand how different aspects of expert experience interconnected. Finally, narrative construction involved developing coherent accounts around code clusters that illustrated broader patterns of subject formation and knowledge reproduction. The coding process utilized the thematic framework developed in the literature review, with particular attention to moments where participants expressed tensions between experiential knowledge and professional requirements, instances of alignment with or resistance to international frameworks, and descriptions of how local contexts were incorporated or excluded from policy interventions.

A limitation of this study comes from the peculiarity of the interviewees.

Ethnographic research on expert communities encounters unique obstacles because professionals actively resist being studied in ways that reveal the social construction of their supposedly objective knowledge.¹⁹⁷ Mosse describes how his development professional colleagues objected to ethnographic accounts that mentioned relationships, informal processes, self-interest, or contextual factors, arguing these descriptions "questioned their professionalism" and threatened their reputations.¹⁹⁸ Experts refuse to be "objectified" or "localized" since their professional identity depends on cosmopolitan, universal claims.¹⁹⁹ When ethnographers attempt collaborative approaches drawing on professionals' own critical insights, they may face institutional complaints, and efforts to re-embed their analysis back into square one. To address these limitations, I practiced reflexive positioning of myself as an international expert through acknowledging my positionality and complicity within expert systems. Further, I tried to participate self-reflection about the extent to which I was the researcher and a participant, trying not to conflate the two identities to an extent that would cloud my analysis. Further, in order to address anxieties about potential institutional complaints, I promised to interviewees that the final draft of this chapter will use extensive anonymization techniques including removal of institutional affiliation and role, as some subjects work in very small departments and

¹⁹⁷ David Mosse, "Notes on the ethnography of expertise and professionals in international development," *Ethnografeast III: 'Ethnography and the Public Sphere'* (Lisbon, June 20-23, 2007), 2-7.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

would otherwise be identifiable. Finally, the study is concerned with the past more so than with the present, and most examples I included in the analysis refer to completed interventions where stakes are lower for participants.

I will engage with critical discourse analysis of interview transcripts focusing on how experts frame responsibility for reform failure, language choices that reproduce or challenge donor frameworks, moments of contradiction between expertise and compliance, and silences and deflections when discussing donor accountability. The findings from the discourse analysis will be substantiated with institutional analysis examining the funding structures that create expert dependency, career pathways that reward international alignment, professional networks that exclude critical perspectives, and knowledge production systems that privilege donor methodologies.

Analysis

This section presents findings from twenty elite interviews with labor market experts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, interpreted through the lens of decolonial theory and subject formation. The analysis is organized around four research questions, tracing how experts articulate their relationship to international frameworks, how epistemic hierarchies are reproduced through institutional arrangements, how compliance with donor expectations displaces locally grounded alternatives, and how expert discourse deflects attention away from design flaws in donor-led reforms. By focusing on the language, narratives, and silences in expert accounts, the analysis focuses on the everyday mechanisms through which compliance is performed and international tutelage is reproduced in Bosnia's labor market policy domain.

Interviews reveal that experts often define their professional orientation in relation to donor frameworks, even when the rules of engagement are unknown. An interesting example is reflected in the discussion with interviewees on the current Growth Plan for BiH which would give BiH access to some EU funds. None of the experts, including those that implement complex multi-million euro projects financed by the EU, as well as members of subnational parliaments sitting on the Economy Committee could answer whether a state-level employment strategy was a pre-condition for the Growth Plan and, analogously, access to EU funding of other state projects. All these people will be part of the implementation of the Growth Plan. As

one participant put it, *"I think that might be the condition... but in essence I know as much as you do. Nobody really tells us anything"* (Interview 8). Similarly, another respondent remarked, *"[Only] They [the donors] know everything, what is actually conditioned by what. We are looking at a theater play right now, but there are other, invisible processes going on in the background."* (Interview 5). Yet another interviewee told me they received a call by somebody from the Ministry of Civil Affairs (state level), and that she got the information the Employment Strategy indeed was a pre-condition for the approval of the Growth Plan. However, the interviewee was puzzled because he had met the EU delegation a day earlier, and they told him otherwise (Interview 8). This interviewee told us his contact from the Ministry said *"I don't know what they put in them [the conditionality requirements], but I know it sucks."* (Interview 8) The disconnect that the power disparity and lack of transparency makes, I argue, must lead to a certain alienation between the expert and its work, or at least a sense of a sense of estrangement from the meaningful content and outcomes of their professional practice. This alienation manifests not only in the separation between experts and the decision-making processes that govern their work, but also in their inability to fully comprehend or influence the conditions under which their expertise is going to be deployed. Through this power disparity and approach, local actors are relegated to speculation while the EU in this case controls both the monetary resources as well as the knowledge about important policies that will be implemented in BiH.

This resembles Marx's analysis of alienated labor, but not in the industrial but in the technocratic sphere.²⁰⁰ Just as Marx described how workers become alienated from the products of their labor when they lose control over the production process, these experts experience a form of alienation that makes them disconnected from both the strategic rationale behind their work and its ultimate political effects. Marx identified four types of alienation: from the product of labor, from the labor process itself, from human essence, and from fellow workers.²⁰¹ In these cases, experts become alienated

²⁰⁰ Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), 67-84.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

from the *product* of their expertise when policy outcomes remain opaque and disconnected from their professional input. They experience alienation from the *process* when conditionalities and frameworks are imposed without meaningful consultation or transparency. The alienation from their *human essence* as knowledge-producers manifests when their role reduces to technical implementation rather than substantive policy development. Finally, alienation from *fellow practitioners* occurs when the competitive, project-based funding structure pits experts against one another rather than fostering collaborative knowledge creation. Yet this structural alienation does not produce the resistance Marx anticipated. Instead, as revealed through expert accounts of donor coordination failures and contradictory conditionalities, alienation becomes the foundation for a different psychological response, one that Ahmed's framework helps explain.

Ahmed's theory of institutional investment does not directly correspond to Marx's theory of alienation and estrangement, but I argue that connecting these frameworks offers explanatory power for understanding contemporary expert subjectivity. While Marx's theory operates primarily at the structural level and Ahmed's work bridges structural and cultural explanations, these approaches can be understood as addressing different but consecutive processes which occur in the the psyche of the expert. Marx's alienation explains the structural conditions that create the possibility for Ahmed's institutional investment. The structural separation of experts from decision-making processes and the opacity of conditionality frameworks creates what I recognize as Marx's alienation. However, rather than producing class consciousness or resistance as Marx expects, this alienation becomes the precondition for Ahmed's affective investment.

This theoretical "update" comes due to historical and professional transformations since Marx's analysis of industrial capitalism. Contemporary knowledge work demands not just physical labor but emotional and intellectual investment, something Ahmed terms "willful" participation in institutional life. Unlike factory workers who could maintain some psychological distance from their alienated labor, today's experts are interpellated as subjects who should find meaning, identity, and

professional fulfillment through institutional participation.²⁰² This reflects a broader cultural shift where professional legitimacy increasingly depends on demonstrating authentic investment, personal fulfillment, and affective commitment to one's work. The neoliberal discourse of "following your passion," "finding purpose," and "loving what you do" creates an expectation that workers should experience their employment as a source of identity and meaning rather than merely economic survival. In the BiH context, experts cannot access the decision-making processes that shape their work (Marxian alienation), yet they respond by intensifying their professional identification with donor frameworks rather than questioning this exclusion (Ahmedian investment). This might suggest that structural alienation, rather than producing resistance, can generate compensatory forms of attachment that ultimately reinforce exclusion conditions. This theoretical framework is expressed in how experts navigate the contradictions of international development work. The interviews reveal multiple manifestations of this alienation-investment dynamic, beginning with how experts orient themselves toward donor frameworks despite uncertainties about their logic.

According to the interviews, international involvement and aid by international organizations in Bosnia is characterized by donor coordination failures (Interview 1), institutional bypass mechanisms (Interview 1), international partnership integration (Interview 6), conditionality and reform linkages (Interview 8), and ignorance of domestic institutions that offer good solutions (Interview 14). For example, many donors implement projects that directly contradict one another, such as initiatives cited in Interview 1 where the two countries' development agencies implemented separate dual education programs that addressed entirely different labor market needs. However, another interview revealed that this lack of coordination is not accidental but strategic. Donor countries use their development agencies to provide vocational training for workers in professions where their own countries face labor shortages. Training workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina costs significantly less than equivalent programs in Switzerland or Germany. Given emigration patterns from

²⁰² Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

Bosnia and the presence of private recruitment agencies facilitating employment in these donor countries, the states financing vocational training ultimately benefit by acquiring skilled workers for their own labor markets. In effect, Bosnia becomes a subsidized training ground where donor countries invest in human capital development that they later extract through migration, creating a system where the country providing the training reaps the economic benefits of the skilled workforce. I read this as another instance where subjects are required to invest emotional labor to believe in the benevolence of the organizations implementing these interventions. I argue that, despite evidence of the training-to-migration pipeline, and despite commonsensical observation that this is the extractive mechanism through which many labor market interventions work, experts continue to participate in and validate these programs because accepting they are not benevolent would show us as complicit in extraction of our country's human resources. Similarly to how Ahmed shows diversity programs obscure rather than address systemic problems, I think this rhetoric of skills development is a case of whitewashing what essentially is a labor recruitment program.

Another interview in a high research role with a state-level employment bureau speaks about conditionality set by the World Bank, and how it is not aligned with what he observes are the needs on the ground, but how it is also contradictory at times with the ideological positioning of the institution that sets the conditions. While the World Bank insisted the law on income tax and minimum wage law are changed, the interviewee thought it was a much larger priority to re-install an Economic Social Committee and work on social dialogue between social partners and the government:

"These are all different things. For instance, many countries don't have a Minimum Wage Law at all. I think even the World Bank doesn't support that. They are for total liberalism. I know many of them there from Washington and from Sarajevo, but here there was conditioning - let's pass the Law on Income Tax and Social Contributions, but let's also pass the Minimum Wage Law at the same time. However, I don't think that's as much of a priority as activating the Economic and Social Council and

social dialogue, because that regulation already exists now - the government adopts it every year regarding the minimum hourly wage, and now it has increased by five-six marks, from 619 to 623."

- Interview 8

This apparent discrepancy between what is allowed elsewhere as opposed to what is desirable in Bosnia causes a certain confusion, where this expert in particular, despite his high role domestically, had to navigate his cognitive processes to accept that the World Bank in Bosnia pushes for a policy that is very contradictory to what one would expect from the World Bank. Second, this quote showed they had to accept that their focus, despite being against their regular ideological standing, still is not adequate for the local context which, he claims, needs more social dialogue and less technical solutions. This institutional multiplicity is another instance where experts are required to invest Ahmed's emotional labor into reconciling what their expertise tells them is not reconcilable.

The interview data reveals several distinct patterns in how experts across different institutional categories identify labor market problems and deflect responsibility from policy design failures. International organization representatives consistently frame labor market challenges through demographic and statistical lenses, identifying "economic inactivity" (Interviews 1 and 6), "inactivity and informal work" (Interview 6), and skills mismatches as primary concerns. They tend to present these as technical problems requiring better data collection and targeted interventions. Government officials, by contrast, emphasize structural and systemic issues including ethnic fragmentation effects on employment (Interview 8), institutional marginalization of social dialogue mechanisms like the Economic Social Council (Interview 8), and employer dependencies on shadow economy practices (Interview 7). Notably, the labor union representative (Interview 13) demonstrates the most pragmatic acceptance of informal economy realities, stating matter-of-factly: *"If I were to lose my job today, I have absolutely no concerns for myself. I know how to do ten low-skilled jobs. I'll be in the grey economy by the morning, fixing people's water heaters."*

In terms of causes for these issues, a deflection pattern emerges from international organization experts who systematically attribute labor market dysfunction to worker attitudes and choices rather than policy design inadequacies. Interview 6 exemplifies this by characterizing unemployment as voluntary. They believe particularly younger populations have a mindset where they do not want to work because they do not have to, dismissing educated workers' employment preferences as unrealistic: *"I didn't study to be a waiter, I'll rather be an unemployed lawyer than work tables."* This framing repositions structural problems as individual failings while absolving international interventions - or, for that matter, domestic policy choices - of responsibility for persistent labor market dysfunction. Government officials demonstrate a different deflection pattern, focusing blame on domestic employers' unwillingness to pay for worker's contributions (Interview 7) and institutional gaming of unemployment statistics (Interview 5, 8, 9), thereby deflecting attention from their own policy implementation failures while simultaneously critiquing the very system they participate in managing.

Interview data also reveals a spectrum of expert attitudes toward international engagement that reflects different strategies for mental managing of Bosnia's position within the donor-recipient relationship, each representing distinct forms of what Ahmed would recognize as institutional investment. One expert thinks BiH should engage in strategic submission, advocating that Bosnia must *"know how to position oneself in this wider context"* when EU negotiations open. They also recognize the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act as potentially "gamechanging" for Bosnia, yet framing these opportunities entirely in terms of becoming part of someone else's frameworks rather than pursuing autonomous development strategies (Interview 3). Another interviewee's account of EU disappointment with tourism progress demonstrates how expert discourse deflects structural problems onto domestic implementation failures: *"And they [a development agency] were quite disappointed, at least regarding tourism, with the progress that wasn't actually achieved - they invested a lot in various national strategies that were even written but didn't pass."* (Interview 5), absolving donor-designed frameworks of responsibility while positioning Bosnia as the failing party. Finally, a business organization

representative's emphasis on the absence of an institution that would represent worker's and organized labor's concerns points to the systematic marginalization of participatory governance mechanisms that might enable locally-grounded policy development (Interview 14). Collectively, these attitudes reveal how experts navigate their contradictory position as both implementers of external frameworks and witnesses to their inadequacy, employing various emotional and cognitive strategies which preserve professional legitimacy while avoiding crucial questions about the donor-recipient relationship itself.

These deflection strategies operate alongside more systematic mechanisms of epistemic control. While experts develop various ways of mentally managing responsibility for policy failures, international organizations simultaneously maintain authority through technical requirements that fragment local analytical capacity. International organizations requirements fragment knowledge production through frequent methodological changes that render comparative analysis impossible. A domestic expert notes how *"In 2020, the Labor Force Survey methodology was changed in a very strange way, which means that 2018 and 2024 data is not comparable"* (Interview 4). By this testimony, Brussel repeatedly demands from their project to restart, rewrite, scrape their reports *"starting from the formatting, to the substance, to the way we frame and present things"* (Interview 4), these practices systematically undermine domestic analytical capacity by forcing experts to constantly adapt to shifting external standards rather than developing coherent indigenous frameworks. The fragmentation of local knowledge through methodological impositions creates the conditions for a particular form of expert intermediation. When domestic analytical frameworks are systematically undermined, experts become dependent on their role as brokers between international donors and local contexts, even as this brokerage obscures their own exclusion from meaningful policy development.

Expert accounts reveal how international organizations sclerotic and would not adapt to local realities. In a show of resignation, one interviewee said a certain UN agency positions themselves as holders of universal knowledge while dismissing local expertise as particularistic.

"... I think the International Labour Organization messed this up, because they were writing the strategy for the Federation and simply they act like they have a global mandate that only they know everything about employment, and they didn't want to adapt that strategy in any way to local legislation or to any general state objective." (Interview 4)

When asked about this particular phenomenon, a representative of a foreign development agency states they do cooperate with some employment organizations and economic chambers to create programs. However, they do mention how it is very difficult to implement employment programs according to local needs, citing the complexity of the system of government:

"Absolutely, and that's something we do and will continue doing. Through [agency] activities we have clear connections between educational programs that are needed in the market. When you look at the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, you're literally working with 12 systems. You have 10 cantons, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District. They're not all at the same level. We work quite a bit with chambers of commerce that are active in certain cantons and in RS. In some cantons you don't have chambers of commerce at all." (Interview 17)

This framing is indicative of how project managers retroactively justify past failures. While it is challenging to implement a program in three subnational units with varying labor needs, labor market needs vary geographically in every country of the world. This framing shows that the complexity of the local system is treated as a technical challenge, which has a dampening effect on the progress and success of interventions, as opposed to be considered a feature of the system around which the interventions need to be designed.

Perhaps most importantly, the interviews show how international projects systematically exclude practitioners with direct experience. The labor union representative's frustration - *"We represent 23000 companies and artisans... Nobody ever contacted us to work together"* (Interview 14) - demonstrates how technical

validation requirements privilege credentialed experts over those with experiential knowledge. This exclusion ensures that policy development remains within circles that have already internalized international frameworks, preventing challenges to dominant assumptions.

"I went twice to [organization] office on these two issues and said we needed support and help. I was completely ignored. I got no response whatsoever... We [his organization] also have some dignity and limits. I worked in the public sector for a long time in my career. I went and respected and praised everywhere what [the international organization] did in terms of digitalization in certain municipalities in the public sector... but we didn't receive the same treatment." (Interview 14)

Interview data shows how labor market experts serve as intermediaries, simultaneously exposing institutional deficits while obscuring the systems that create them. Rather than building sustainable local capabilities, the expert intermediation system creates a self-perpetuating cycle where international organizations provide temporary solutions to structural problems while rationalizing their continued presence through discourses of capacity building that never result in genuine institutional autonomy.

International organization experts consistently frame their role through narratives of domestic incapacity that justify ongoing intervention. One domestic expert's assessment that *"There is no capacity in public employment services to conduct an evaluation of these measures"* positions international expertise as filling an essential void (Interview 4). This framing becomes circular as international experts identify capacity deficits, provide solutions that by design they were not part of prevent sustainable capacity development, then cite persistent deficits as evidence for continued intervention. The expert's observation that *"...you cannot put the Employment Bureau in the driver's seat and expect it to manage the implementation of something it is not even capable of drafting"* reveals how this logic operates: domestic institutions are deemed incapable of leading processes they have been systematically excluded from developing (Interview 6). However, the experts seem incognizant of the fact that they, also, are expected to implement measures they

might have the capacity to draft, but do not draft them in a very similar cycle of exclusion.

The interviews reveal how experts develop strategic approaches to knowledge brokerage that maintain their intermediary position. One expert's description of their role as an "instant water heater, basically" for various organizations demonstrates how individual experts become nodes in networks that facilitate interventions, but not create or implement them (Interview 9). Another expert, talking about how a large-scale project never came to be, cites them and a few of their colleagues were offered jobs as implementers, but "*...we did not want to lead those processes, but rather be advisers... I think that's how it's supposed to be.*"

The interviews included questions about general attitudes toward different sources of international development intervention. The data reveals how Bosnia's expert community has internalized hierarchical assumptions about knowledge systems that position Western methodologies, institutions, and analytical frameworks as inherently superior to alternatives not necessarily for technical reasons, but for the political repercussions that standing away from the West may bring. This operates through funding mechanisms that impose analytical methodologies regardless of their local relevance or effectiveness. The domestic IO expert's account of World Bank methodology requirements illustrates this process: "*The World Bank kept pushing [evaluations through] score matching, which is a very complicated method that ultimately does not provide any results that you can actually use to improve a measure. But again, the one who finances is the one who determines how it will be evaluated.*" (Interview 4). This reveals the contradiction of development expertise where methodologies are imposed based on funding power rather than analytical merit. Yet, local experts must perform compliance with these methods while acknowledging their inadequacy.

The empirical findings reveal how expert intermediation in Bosnia's labor market operates through a systematic cycle where structural exclusion generates deeper professional attachment to the very frameworks that marginalize local knowledge. The alienation process begins with structural separation from decision-making processes, as demonstrated by experts' confusion about Growth Plan conditionalities

and their relegation to "speculation" while donors control both resources and policy knowledge. This mirrors Marx's analysis of workers losing control over production processes, but in the technocratic sphere, experts become disconnected from the strategic rationale behind their work and its ultimate political effects. The expert who noted *"nobody really tells us anything"* exemplifies this separation from the product of their expertise, while the constant methodological changes imposed by Brussels illustrate alienation from the analytical process itself. As demonstrated through the theoretical framework, this structural alienation becomes the precondition for Ahmed's institutional investment.

This investment process reproduces hierarchies through concrete mechanisms revealed in the interviews. Experts become dependent on international validation for career advancement, as shown by their orientation toward donor frameworks even when the rules remain opaque. The systematic exclusion of practitioners with experiential knowledge, such as the labor union representative ignored by international organizations, ensures that policy development remains within circles already oriented toward their own analytical frameworks. Meanwhile, frequent methodological impositions fragment domestic knowledge production, preventing the development of coherent indigenous alternatives.

The system's self-perpetuating nature emerges through the expert intermediation function itself. International organizations frame their continued presence through narratives of domestic incapacity, while experts validate these narratives by positioning themselves as essential brokers filling institutional voids. The circular logic becomes clear: experts identify capacity deficits, provide temporary solutions that prevent sustainable capacity development, then cite persistent deficits as evidence for continued intervention. Each cycle of failed reforms generates demand for more expert analysis conducted by the same intermediaries, systematically avoiding examination of the analytical frameworks' inadequacies. The emotional labor required to maintain belief in this system's benevolence, despite evidence of extraction and marginalization, represents the ultimate expression of Ahmed's institutional investment - where subjects become more deeply attached to institutions through the very process of managing disappointment with their outcomes.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Bosnia and Herzegovina's labor market experts function as intermediaries in reproducing colonial knowledge systems through their institutional relationships with international development organizations. Drawing on decolonial theory and Sara Ahmed's analysis of subject formation, the research reveals how expert compliance operates not only through external coercion but through deep psychological investment in frameworks that systematically marginalize local knowledge while perpetuating dependency on external validation. The findings demonstrate that expert intermediation in Bosnia operates through a particular form of alienation where professionals become structurally separated from decision-making processes while simultaneously developing emotional attachments to the institutions that exclude them. This dynamic represents an evolution of Marx's analysis adapted to contemporary knowledge work through Ahmed's framework of institutional investment.

The research answers its central questions by revealing how expert subjectivity is constituted through repeated practices of compliance with donor frameworks, even when these frameworks contradict local expertise and produce consistent failures. International organizations maintain epistemic authority through technical requirements that fragment domestic analytical capacity, ensuring that locally-grounded alternatives cannot develop coherent institutional support. Experts develop various deflection strategies that preserve professional legitimacy while avoiding examination of design inadequacies in donor-led interventions, creating a circular system where each round of failed reforms generates demand for more analysis that avoids questioning their basic assumptions.

The implications extend beyond Bosnia's specific context to illuminate broader patterns in international development. The research reveals how the political economy of expertise operates through concrete mechanisms, namely funding structures tied to donor priorities, methodological approaches conditioned by the donor, and professional networks that exclude critical perspectives, that together constitute what amounts to a sort of cognitive limiting. Local knowledge and

expertise is systematically devalued not through direct suppression but through its repositioning as less sophisticated, and not a legitimate analytical framework.

The theoretical contribution lies in connecting Marx's structural analysis with Ahmed's phenomenological approach to reveal how contemporary forms of epistemic colonialism operate through seemingly voluntary professional relationships. This framework helps explain the persistence of development paradigms despite empirical evidence of their inadequacy, showing how expert intermediation functions not as bridge-building but as a mechanism for reproducing hierarchical knowledge systems.

This dissertation's limitations include its focus on a specific post-conflict context that may limit generalizability, though the theoretical framework suggests similar dynamics operate wherever structural dependency creates conditions for expert intermediation. The methodology's reliance on elite interviews may have captured professional discourse rather than deeper psychological processes, though the consistent patterns across different institutional categories suggest robust findings. Future research might examine whether similar patterns of alienation and investment characterize other post-conflict societies where international actors maintain structural authority. The framework could also be applied to analyze how epistemic hierarchies operate in other domains of international intervention, from environmental governance to public health, where local knowledge is systematically marginalized through technical validation requirements.

The research suggests that meaningful alternatives to current patterns require not just "localization" initiatives that operate within existing frameworks, but restructuring of how knowledge is validated and expertise is constituted in international development contexts. This would involve creating spaces for locally-grounded analytical frameworks to develop without requiring translation into donor-acceptable methodologies and language, supporting professional networks that do not depend on international validation, and recognizing that sustainable development requires epistemic as well as economic decolonization.

Ultimately, this analysis reveals that the persistence of failed development paradigms reflects not merely technical inadequacies or implementation challenges, but the

successful operation of systems designed to maintain certain forms of knowledge hierarchy while providing the appearance of collaborative expertise. Understanding these dynamics represents a necessary step toward more equitable forms of international cooperation that honor rather than marginalize indigenous ways of knowing economic and social reality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined how mechanisms of supervised sovereignty operating through discourse legitimation, coordination architecture, and expert intermediation enable international actors to shape labor market outcomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina while maintaining the appearance of consensual reform. Through three empirical chapters analyzing the 2015-2018 Reform Agenda, this research reveals how contemporary post-conflict governance has evolved beyond overt international administration toward sophisticated forms of external control that operate through seemingly neutral policy frameworks and technical expertise.

The analysis demonstrates that supervised sovereignty functions through a systematic division of legitimation labor where international and domestic actors assume complementary roles in constructing technical necessity, political inevitability, and legal compliance. Chapter 2 revealed how the European Union, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and FBiH government orchestrated distinct but mutually reinforcing legitimation strategies that created an echo chamber effect, making externally-driven reforms appear simultaneously scientifically sound, politically necessary, and democratically legitimate. This coordinated approach effectively depoliticized questions about economic and social policy while systematically excluding worker voices and democratic participation from reform processes.

Chapter 3's network analysis exposed design flaws in the Reform Agenda's coordination architecture that predetermined implementation failures. The social network analysis revealed excessive centralization around federal institutions already operating at capacity limits, systematic marginalization of implementation agencies and constitutionally mandated cantonal governments, and persistent structural holes

across governance levels that prevented effective policy integration. These findings challenge conventional explanations that attribute coordination failures to insufficient political will or administrative capacity, demonstrating instead how structural inadequacies in coordination design created the conditions for policy failure regardless of domestic political alignment.

Chapter 4's examination of expert intermediation revealed how Bosnia's labor market professionals become institutionally formed subjects whose identities require performance of compliance with international development frameworks. Through the concept of alienation-investment dynamics, the analysis showed how structural exclusion from decision-making processes generates deeper professional attachment to the very systems that marginalize local knowledge. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where expert intermediaries reproduce epistemic hierarchies while serving as legitimizers for interventions designed elsewhere, systematically preventing the development of locally-grounded analytical frameworks.

This dissertation makes several theoretical contributions to understanding contemporary forms of international governance. First, it demonstrates how supervised sovereignty operates through mechanisms that maintain hierarchical control while preserving the appearance of partnership and technical neutrality. Unlike traditional colonial administration, these mechanisms function through seemingly consensual processes that nevertheless systematically privilege international knowledge frameworks while marginalizing local epistemologies.

Second, the research introduces social network analysis as a predictive diagnostic tool for assessing coordination viability in complex governance systems. The traffic light diagnostic framework developed here enables systematic identification of structural vulnerabilities during policy design when modifications remain feasible, representing a methodological innovation that shifts analytical focus from retrospective blame attribution to prospective design optimization.

Third, the analysis advances understanding of expert intermediation in development contexts by connecting Marx's structural analysis of alienation with Sara Ahmed's phenomenological approach to subject formation. This integration reveals how contemporary forms of epistemic colonialism operate through professional

relationships that appear voluntary but systematically reproduce knowledge hierarchies that exclude locally-grounded alternatives.

The findings primarily have implications for international development practice. The research reveals that technical expertise in sectoral areas does not automatically translate into expertise in designing institutional architectures necessary for multi-level policy integration. International organizations routinely create coordination demands that exceed existing system capacity while attributing implementation failures to domestic political or administrative deficiencies rather than acknowledging design inadequacies.

The diagnostic framework developed here offers practitioners systematic criteria for stress-testing coordination architectures against the structural realities of complex governance systems. Rather than discovering coordination problems after implementation failures occur, this approach enables structural assessment when corrections can still be made, potentially preventing the repeated design mistakes that characterize international development interventions in fragmented institutional contexts.

For Bosnia specifically, the research suggests that meaningful reform requires attention to coordination architecture rather than additional rounds of sectoral interventions. The persistent structural holes identified across governance levels, combined with systematic marginalization of implementation actors, indicate that current approaches reproduce the fragmentation they claim to address.

The Bosnia case sheds light on broader patterns in post-conflict state-building where international actors construct particular visions of statehood and economic organization through seemingly technical policy frameworks. The gap between intended reforms and local realities reveals tensions inherent in externally-driven transformation projects, where international approaches encounter local political realities, institutional legacies, and resistance strategies.

The dissertation contributes to critical scholarship on continuities between colonial governance and contemporary international interventions by revealing how power operates through supposedly neutral language of policy reform and institutional capacity building. The supervised sovereignty identified here represents an evolution

of imperial practices that maintains hierarchical relationships through technocratic expertise and conditional aid rather than military occupation, yet still restructures societies according to external priorities.

Several limitations constrain the generalizability of these findings. The focus on Bosnia's specific post-conflict, multi-level governance context limits direct applicability to other settings, though the theoretical frameworks developed here suggest similar dynamics may operate wherever structural dependency creates conditions for expert intermediation. The document-based analysis in Chapter 2 captures official policy discourse but may miss informal negotiations and behind-the-scenes processes that shape actual outcomes. The network analysis in Chapter 3 examines intended coordination relationships rather than how these evolved during implementation, while the elite interviews in Chapter 4 may reflect professional discourse rather than deeper psychological processes.

Future research might examine whether similar patterns of supervised sovereignty operate in other post-conflict societies where international actors maintain structural authority. Comparative analysis could establish quantitative thresholds for coordination viability across different governance contexts, while longitudinal studies could examine how coordination relationships and expert orientations evolve over extended reform periods.

The framework could also be applied to analyze how epistemic hierarchies operate in other domains of international intervention, from environmental governance to public health, where local knowledge faces systematic marginalization through technical validation requirements. Ethnographic studies could provide deeper insights into the everyday practices through which expert compliance is produced and maintained.

This research reveals that the persistence of failed development paradigms in Bosnia reflects not merely technical inadequacies or implementation challenges, but the successful operation of systems designed to maintain knowledge hierarchies while providing the appearance of collaborative expertise. Understanding these dynamics represents a necessary step toward more equitable forms of international cooperation

that honor rather than marginalize local ways of knowing economic and social reality.

The implications extend beyond Bosnia to broader questions about the future of international development in an era where traditional donor-recipient relationships face increasing challenge. As geopolitical arrangements shift and new forms of South-South cooperation emerge, many of which follow patterns promoted by decoloniality scholars whose work inspired large sections of this dissertation, the mechanisms of supervised sovereignty identified here may evolve rather than disappear, requiring continued analytical attention to how power operates through seemingly neutral technical frameworks. Ultimately, this analysis suggests that sustainable development requires not just policy reform but epistemic decolonization by creating spaces for locally-grounded analytical frameworks to develop without requiring translation into donor-acceptable methodologies and language. This represents perhaps the largest challenge facing international development practice: how to support meaningful change while avoiding the reproduction of hierarchical knowledge systems that have consistently failed to address the realities they claim to transform.

The transformation of Bosnia's political economy cannot be achieved through additional rounds of externally-designed reforms implemented by the same coordination architectures and expert networks that have produced three decades of limited progress. Instead, it requires a restructuring of how knowledge is validated, expertise is constituted, and policy authority is distributed within Bosnia's complex institutional landscape. Whether such transformation remains possible within existing frameworks, or requires more radical departures from supervised sovereignty, represents a crucial question for Bosnia's future and for post-conflict governance more broadly.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF DOCUMENTS ANALYZED

World Bank

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Country partnership strategy progress report for the period FY12-FY15

World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework to Support Faster Implementation of Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Country partnership framework for the period FY2016-20

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Transforming the Economy to Achieve Sustainable Prosperity

Reform Momentum Needed - A Country Economic Update by the World Bank

Bosnia and Herzegovina: From Post-Conflict Reconstruction to EU Integration

IMF

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FBIH

Reformska agenda bila tema sastanka premijera Novalića i šefa Delegacije EU u BiH

Federalni premijer s Misijom MMF-a

Ministar Mandilović primio delegaciju MMF-a

Novalić s američkim predstavnicima: Reforme nemaju alternativu

Novalić: Odlučno u reforme

Premijer Novalić: Snažno u reforme

ESV: Nastavljeno razmatranje radnog teksta Zakona o radu

ESV: Dijalog partnera o radnom tekstu Nacrta zakona o radu

ESV: Nastavljeni pregovori o budućem zakonu o radu

Nastavljeni pregovori u Ekonomsko-socijalnom vijeću

Predstavnički dom Parlamenta Federacije BiH usvojio Zakon o radu

Harmonizacija entitetskih propisa radi jedinstvenog poslovnog ambijenta

Održana sjednica ESV-a: Sindikat i poslodavci sjedaju za pregovarački sto

Delegacija Međunarodnog monetarnog fonda u Vladi FBiH

Nastavljen pozitivan trend na tržištu rada

ESV: Rasprava o Prednacrtu zakona o uvezivanju staža

Drljača razgovarao s Asmussenom o reformi tržišta rada

Održana 32. sjednica Vlade FBiH

Hitna sjednica Vlade FBiH: Produžen moratorij na zapošljavanje

Zaključak Vlade Federacije BiH upućen kao odgovor Savezu samostalnih sindikata BiH

Nastavak reforme javne uprave

Novalić: Zakon važniji od kolektivnog ugovora

Od Federalnog zavoda PIO zatražen konkretan plan mjera i aktivnosti

Vlada FBiH pozdravila potpisivanje Općeg kolektivnog ugovora za FBiH

Federalno ministarstvo rada i socijalne politike jača suradnju sa organizacijama civilnog društva u procesu izrade novih javnih politika

Za sutra najava događaja u organizaciji Federalnog ministarstva rada i socijalne politike

ESV: Doraditi zakon o uvezivanju radnog staža

Novalić: Reformsku agendu približiti mladima jer njen uspjeh zavisi i od njih

Razgovor o reformi javne uprave

Početak EU programa za lokalni razvoj i zapošljavanje

Novalić govorio zeničkim studentima: Budite ambasadori promjena

Novalić mostarskim studentima: Riješiti problem nezaposlenosti mladih

Premijer Novalić sa Udruženjem poslodavaca FBiH

Reformska agenda neophodna za ekonomski oporavak

Novalić: Konačno u fokus možemo dovesti budućnost

Novalić: Reformska agenda vodi ka oporavku ekonomije

Premijer Novalić razgovarao sa Schausbergerom

Premijer Novalić primio ambasadora Roussona

Izrada registra državnih službenika FBiH obaveza iz Reformske agende

Novalić-Ferguson: Neophodno nastaviti provođenje Reformske agende

Održana 146. sjednica Vlade Federacije BiH
Premijer Novalić razgovarao s privrednicima u Živinicama
Milićević: Vidljivi rezultati iz Reformske agende
Održana zajednička sjednica entitetskih vlada
Reforme idu dobrim putem
Novalić: Vlade rade na poboljšanju životnih uvjeta građana oba entiteta
Susret Novalića i Ilahija: Štednja daje rezultate
Novalić s Wigemarkom: Odgovornost i rad su ključne riječi
Novalić: Odlučno u borbu protiv korupcije
Prijedlog zakona o PIO će brzo biti upućen Parlamentu FBiH
Novalić: Nepovratno se krenulo u reforme
Muent i Brown kod premijera Novalića
Maksimalan angažman za provedbu reformi
Novalić u Francuskoj: Pozdravljen napredak u provođenju Reformske agende
Novalić i Wigemark: Reforme napreduju
Novalić: Reformska agenda vodi ka oporavku ekonomije
Novalić i Cvijanović usaglasili akcioni plan reformske agende
Harmonizacija entitetskih propisa radi jedinstvenog poslovnog ambijenta

APPENDIX B

ACTIVITY MASTER DATA FILE EXTRACTED FROM THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM AGENDA 2015-2018

Activity_ID	Sector	Activity_Description	Primary_Actor	Secondary_Actors	Timeline	Coordination_Required
JF_01	Javne_finance	Zakon o porezu na dobit	FMF		2015_Q4	No
JF_02	Javne_finance	Izmjene Zakona o doprinosima	FMF		Completed	No
JF_03	Javne_finance	Izmjene zakona doprinosi (smanjenje)	FMF		2016_Q1	No
JF_04	Javne_finance	Registar parafiskalnih	FMF	Premijer	2015_Q4	Yes
JF_05	Javne_finance	Povećanje putarine gorivo	Vlada_F BiH		2015_Q3	No
JF_06	Javne_finance	Kontrola prijava dohotka	Inspeksijske_sluzbe	kantoni	Continuous	Yes
JF_07	Javne_finance	Izmjene poreza dohodak	FMF		2016_Q1	No
JF_08	Javne_finance	Moratorij zapošljavanja	Vlada_F BiH		2015_Q4	No
JF_10	Javne_finance	Zakon uvezivanje radnog	Radna_grupa	Vlada_F BiH	2016_Q1	Yes

Activity_ID	Sector	Activity_Description	Primary_Actor	Secondary_Actors	Timeline	Coordination_Required
JF_12	Javne_finance	Modeli finansiranja	Min_zdravstva	FMF	2016	Yes
JF_15	Javne_finance	Strategija upravljanje dugom	FMF		Completed	No
JF_17	Javne_finance	Razmjena podataka poreske uprave	FMF	Poreska_Uprava	2015_Q4	Yes
JF_18	Javne_finance	Analiza dugovanja zdravstvo	Min_zdravstva	FMF	2015_Q4	Yes
JF_19	Javne_finance	Trezorski sistem zdravstvo	FBiH	kantoni	Continuous	Yes
PK_01	Poslovna_klima	Program javnih investicija	Min_finance		Completed	No
PK_02	Poslovna_klima	Zakon unutrašnji platni	FMF		Completed	No
PK_05	Poslovna_klima	Zakon direktna strana ulaganja	Vlada_FBiH		Completed	No
PK_06	Poslovna_klima	Multilaterala kompenza	FMF		2016_Q2	No
PK_07	Poslovna_klima	Zakon javno-privatno	Vlada_FBiH		2016_Q1	No
PK_09	Poslovna_klima	Zakon o stečaju	Premijer	Min_pravde	2016_Q2	Yes
PK_10	Poslovna_klima	Zakon o šumama	Premijer	Min_poljoprivrede	2016_Q2	Yes
PK_15	Poslovna_klima	Program restrukturiranja	Premijer	FMERI	2016_Q1	Yes
PK_16	Poslovna_klima	Privatizacija privrednih	Agencija_privatizacija	Vlada_FBiH	2015_Q4	Yes

Activity_ID	Sector	Activity_Description	Primary_Actor	Secondary_Actors	Timeline	Coordination_Required
PK_17	Poslovna_klima	Osnivanje privrednih sudova	Min_pravde	Vlada_FBiH	2016-2017	Yes
PK_18	Poslovna_klima	Zakon o bankama	FMF		2015_Q4	No
PK_19	Poslovna_klima	Jačanje nadzora banaka	Agencija_bankarstvo		Continuous	No
PK_20	Poslovna_klima	Jačanje inspeksijskih službi	Vlada_FBiH		Continuous	No
TR_01	Tržište_rada	Zakon o radu	Premijer	Vlada_FBiH	Completed	Yes
TR_03	Tržište_rada	Razdvojiti zdravstveno od zapošljavanja	Vlada_FBiH	Fed_zavod_zapošljavanje	Continuous	Yes
TR_04	Tržište_rada	Reforma sistema obrazovanja	FBiH	kantoni	Continuous	Yes
TR_05	Tržište_rada	Reforma najniže	FBiH		2016_Q2	No
TR_06	Tržište_rada	Posredovanje PES optimizacij	FBiH	Fed_zavod_zapošljavanje	2016_Q2	Yes
TR_07	Tržište_rada	Analiza podataka firmi	Fed_zavod_zapošljavanje		2016_Q2	No
SZ_01	Socijalna_zaštita	Strategija reforma	Vlada_FBiH		2015_Q4	No
SZ_02	Socijalna_zaštita	Asimetrično plaćanje energije	FMERI		2015_Q4	No
SZ_03	Socijalna_zaštita	Poboljšano ciljanje socijalne zaštite	Vlada_FBiH		2016_Q1	No
VP_01	Vladavina_prava	Strategija borba korupcije	Vlada_FBiH		2016_Q1	No
VP_02	Vladavina_prava	Saradnja policije	FBiH	kantoni	Continuous	Yes

Activity_ID	Sector	Activity_Description	Primary_Actor	Secondary_Actors	Timeline	Coordination_Required
VP_22	Vladavina_prava	Agencija upravljanje	Vlada_FBiH	FMUP	2016_Q2	Yes
VP_26	Vladavina_prava	Izmjene Krivični zakon	Vlada_FBiH	Min_pravde	2016	Yes
VP_03	Vladavina_prava	Efikan sistem komunalne tužbe	FBiH	kantonalne vlade	2016_Q2	Yes
JU_01	Javna_uprava	Uredba državni kapital	Vlada_FBiH		Completed	No
JU_02	Javna_uprava	Izmjene Zakon državna služba	Radna_grupa	Premijer,Min_pravde	2015_Q4	Yes
JU_03	Javna_uprava	Moratorij povećanje plata	Vlada_FBiH	FMF	2015_Q4	Yes
JU_04	Javna_uprava	Reorganizacija državnih	Premijer	Min_pravde,Vlada_FBiH	2016_Q1	Yes

APPENDIX C

ACTOR LIST EXTRACTED FROM THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM AGENDA 2015-2018

Actor_ID	Actor_Full_Name	Actor_Type	Governance_Level	Primary_Sector	Role_Type
FMF	Federalno ministarstvo finansija	Ministry	Federal	Finance	Design_Coordination
Vlada_FBiH	Vlada Federacije BiH	Government	Federal	Cross_Sector	Coordination
Premijer	Premijer FBiH	Executive	Federal	Cross_Sector	Coordination
Min_zdravstva	Ministarstvo zdravlja	Ministry	Federal	Health	Design_Implementation
Min_pravde	Ministarstvo pravde	Ministry	Federal	Justice	Design_Implementation
FMERI	Federalno ministarstvo energije	Ministry	Federal	Economic	Design_Implementation
Min_finansija	Federalno ministarstvo finansija	Ministry	Federal	Finance	Design_Implementation
Min_poljoprivrede	Ministarstvo poljoprivrede	Ministry	Federal	Agriculture	Design_Implementation
Fed_zavod_zapošljavanje	Federalni zavod za zapošljavanje	Agency	Federal	Labor	Implementation
Inspekcijske_sluzbe	Inspekcijske službe	Agency	Federal	Cross_Sector	Implementation
Poreska_Uprava	Poreska Uprava FBiH	Agency	Federal	Finance	Implementation
Agencija_bankarstvo	Agencija za bankarstvo FBiH	Agency	Federal	Finance	Implementation

Actor_ID	Actor_Full_Name	Actor_Type	Governance_Level	Primary_Sector	Role_Type
Agencija_privatizacija	Agencija za privatizaciju	Agency	Federal	Economic	Implementation
kantoni	Kantoni	Government	Cantonal	Cross_Sector	Implementation
FBiH	Federacija BiH	Entity	Federal	Cross_Sector	Coordination
Radna_grupa	Radne grupe	Working_Group	Federal	Cross_Sector	Design
kantonalne_vlade	Kantonalne vlade	Government	Cantonal	Cross_Sector	Implementation
FMUP	Federalna uprava	Agency	Federal	Interior	Implementation

APPENDIX D

COLLABORATION MATRIX EXTRACTED FROM THE ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM AGENDA 2015-2018

	FM F	Vla da_ F Bi H	Pre mij er	Mi n_z dra vst va	Fe d_z av od	ka nto ni	FM ER I	Mi n_ pra vd e	Ins pe kci jsk e	FBi H	Ra dn a_ gru pa	Po res ka_ U pra va	Ag en cij a_ pri vat	ka nto nal ne_ vl ad	FM UP
FM F	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Vla da_ F Bi H	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
Pre mij er	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Mi n_z dra vst	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fe d_z av od	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
kan ton ni	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
FM ERI	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mi n_ pra vd e	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ins pe kci jsk e	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FBi H	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

	FM F	Vla da _F Bi H	Pre mij er	Mi n_z dra vst va	Fe d_z av od	ka nto ni	FM ER I	Mi n_ pra vd e	Ins pe kci jsk e	FBi H	Ra dn a_ gru pa	Po res ka_ U pra va	Ag enc ija_ pri vati	ka nto nal ne_ vl ad	FM UP
Ra dn a_g	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Por esk a_ Up	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ag enc ija_ pri vati	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
kan ton aln e_v	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
FM UP	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX E

LIST OF INTRVIEWEES

1. International expert for labor interventions
2. International expert for labor interventions
3. Head of domestic economic think tank
4. Economics professor at the University of Banja Luka
5. International expert for labor programs
6. International expert for labor in tourism
7. Head of the ILO office in Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. Employment Office Tuzla Canton - Head of research department
9. Federal Employment Service - Head of research department
10. Representative in the Parliament of FBiH and head of the Economic Committee
11. Economics professor at University of Tuzla
12. Economics professor at University of Tuzla
13. Representative at the Parliament of FBiH
14. Media/Analysis Expert Interview - Female expert discussing Russian and Chinese influence, geopolitics, and regional dynamics
15. President of the Association of Employers in FBiH
16. President of a think tank dealing with economy
17. USAID Contractor Representative
18. Head of programs at the Swiss Development Cooperation Interview
19. Head of programs at the GIZ
20. Regional coordinator at the IFC/WB

APPENDIX F

SNAPSHOT FROM THE CODING MATRIX

Theme	Code	Source	Subject domestic/ international	Institutional affiliation	Quote
Brain Drain and Epistemic					
	Diaspora as Lost Economic Resource	Interview 1	Domestic	IO	"Teško je to generalizovati. Tu se dosta promjena i dešava i prilično je i dinamično... Očigledan je pad potražnje za profilima u IT sektoru."
	Migration-Driven Labor Shortages	Interview 1	Domestic	IO	"U regionalnom smislu cijeli sjeverozapad Bosne i Hercegovine je imao taj problem u smislu ograničenosti radne snage,
	Systematic Population Outflow	Interview 1	Domestic	IO	"Većina će vam ljudi reći da su migracije najveći problem i da zbog toga imate problem radne snage."
	Labor Market Transformation Invisibility	Interview 4	Domestic	IO	"Ako imamo pad nezaposlenosti i mi se radujemo, trebao bi u istom broju taj pad nezaposlenosti da prati broj zaposlenosti. To
	Migration Data Suppression Recognition	Interview 4	Domestic	IO	"Najveći problem je ovdje u tom statističkom smislu što ove migracije koje se dešavaju nisu legalne. Ne kažem da su ilegalne... ne dešavaju se u okviru komunikacije između

Theme	Code	Source	Subject domestic/ international	Institutional affiliation	Quote
	Skills Acquisition for External Markets	Interview 5	Domestic	IO	"Puno njih ima interes da u suštini stekne neko iskustvo da bi bilo atraktivnije na nekom tržištu rada Slovenije, Hrvatske, komšiluka, Crne Gorne."
	Return Migration Recognition	Interview 5	Domestic	IO	"Ljudi odlaze, ljudi se i vraćaju zato što shvate da kad odu tamo, jest im plata duplo veća ali su im i troškovi života puno veći i uslovi života su im teži."
	Skills Certification for External Markets	Interview 7	Domestic	Govt	"Europsko tržište crpi jako zanimanja kao što su bravari, zavarivači. To su jako mladi ljudi koji završe atest i odlaze. I tako gotova osoba sa svim atestima umjesto da privređuje..."
	Professional Migration to Western Countries	Interview 9	DOMESTIC	GOVT	"Došli smo do momenta kad svako ko hoće da nađe posao u Bosni i Hercegovini može naći posao"
	Systemic Problem Recognition	Interview 10 and 11	DOMESTIC	Govt	"Ne odlaze oni što nemaju posla ili nemaju visoku platu... Oni odlaze iz drugih razloga"
Post-Cold War Aid					
	Donor Coordination Failures	Interview 1	Domestic	IO	"Donatori je već jako puno toga radi. Ponekad radi stvari koje su u direktnoj koliziji jedni s drugima. Trenutno imate inicijativu švicaraca vezano za ovo dualno obrazovanje, a uz to ide i neka GIZ inicijativa vezana..."

Theme	Code	Source	Subject domestic/ international	Institutional affiliation	Quote
	Institutional Bypass Mechanisms	Interview 1	Domestic	IO	"Institucije države jednostavno ne prate stvar. Nema ni neke koordinacije, tako da imate negdje bizarne situacije. Na primjer, jedan projekat se pređe na jedan način u Tuzli a
	Donor Coordination Failures	Interview 6	International	IO	"Program programskih ciklusa EU je sporost... U trenutku kada je narativ koji je opisan u programu prvi put stavljen na papir i ono što mi danas imamo na tržištu rada zahteva od vas korenitu promenu
	International Partnership Integration	Interview 7	Domestic	Govt	"Ne mogu da se sjetim kako se zove organizacija koja djeluje na području TK, ali bio sam prisutan. Mislim da i ona sarađuje sa USAID-om."
	Conditionality and Reform Linkages	Interview 8	Domestic	Govt	"bila su uvjetovanja hajde donijet ćemo Zakon o porezu na dohodak i socijalnim doprinosima ali hajde da donesemo istovremeno i
	USAID Disengagement from Private Sector	Interview 14	DOMESTIC	Labor union	"ja sam upravo na ova dva pitanja bio uredno dva puta u uredu USAID-a i rekao da bi nam trebala podrška i da bi nam trebala pomoć. Potpuno
Yugoslav Legacy Knowledge					
	Technology Infrastructure	Interview 2	Domestic	IO	"Sarajevo Gas... imali su staru metodologiju i tehnologiju... nas će spasiti ta priča."

Theme	Code	Source	Subject domestic/ international	Institutional affiliation	Quote
	Institutional Memory	Interview 2	Domestic	IO	"FBiH nema prostornog plana, koristi se još iz Jugoslavije."
	Institutional Memory of Self-Management	Interview 8	DOMESTIC	Govt	"Bili su studentski servisi. Pa moj otac je radio isto kroz studentski servis samo šta je poenta?"