

# RESEARCH REPORT

## The Landscape of Cross-Community Initiatives in Kosovo and South Serbia

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GONGO	Governmentally Organized Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PONGO	Party Organized Non-Governmental Organization
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The research has examined the state of civil society, the place of informal civic activism, and patterns and prospects of cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and South Serbia.
- Applying a qualitative research methodology (desk research, interviews and focus group discussions) and focusing on five municipalities in Kosovo and three municipalities in South Serbia, the study has mapped out actors, issues and civic initiatives that gather citizens together across communities to address local needs, forging collaborations and expanding constituencies with diverse target groups, both locally and beyond.
- Embedded in the local contexts, the study highlights specificities and commonalities revealed by the research data concerning shared structural constraints, enabling factors, and prospects of cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and South Serbia. The study has indicated that cross-community initiatives have an important role in the areas of democratization and human rights, civic engagement, and ensuring the government's accountability.
- The study finds that cross-community relations and initiatives are not only affected by the demographic, political, economic, and cultural situation of the municipalities where the research participants live, but also by the interactions across municipal borders. The research has indicated that although the civil society sphere in Kosovo and South Serbia is small, it is, at least in Kosovo, forward-looking and re-worked through intra- and inter-community collaborations at the local and regional levels and beyond. The situation is different in the municipalities of South Serbia, where citizens lack hope and motivation for activism, and CSOs recognize that there is an acute need for expertise and resources. However, there are a few emerging youth organizations in South Serbia that demonstrate solidarity and creativity, giving hope that revival of grassroots activism is possible.
- The main sectors of CSO engagement in both countries are human rights and democratization, gender equality and women's rights, minority rights, social inclusion of marginalized groups, and environmental issues. Moreover, the research has indicated that CSOs strategically turn towards issues that are deemed less political and contested, such as youth activism, environment and income-generating projects. While in Kosovo, CSO actors perceive the function of civil society and the roles that CSOs have as being aimed toward serving as a link between citizens and institutions, in South Serbia, the study finds that the polarization between the state and civil society is more

pronounced than ever before as a consequence of the increasingly authoritarian government, which does not tolerate critical voices.

- The environment is challenging for CSOs, as the problems are structural, with high unemployment, low levels of trust in institutions, as well as social and political polarization being just a few of the predominant issues. CSO activists attribute the low level of citizen engagement to unfavourable social environments in their respective municipalities.
- The research indicates that cross-community initiatives stand between the politics of Kosovo-Serbia relations and problems in everyday life that citizens are faced by at the local level, with the limited cross-community initiatives that do exist being constrained by politics. While in Kosovo participants perceive inter-ethnic relations in a positive light, in South Serbia, the frozen conflict between Kosovo and Serbia is seen as responsible for inter-ethnic division, which participants believe is being strategically and systematically increased through separate schools, public discourse from state officials, discrimination against Albanians in public employment and non-recognition of diplomas from Kosovo. While cooperation among CSOs is well developed, the participants recognize that, despite the situation being peaceful and stable, in everyday life communities rarely interact beyond ethnic boundaries.
- The role of the international community as donor(s) is perceived as crucial for a sustainable civil society landscape more broadly, and for cross-community initiatives in particular. CSOs rely on foreign funds, and, as a result, tend to follow a top-down agenda rather than a bottom-up approach to civic engagement at the local and regional levels. The imbalance of resources and donor support between capital-based CSOs and local CSOs and the 'one size to fit the entire region' approach not only fail to reap the desired results but also deepen power asymmetries among civil society actors and reify local communities. Municipal governments and ministries are the major source of funding for CSOs in South Serbia, but this financial support lacks transparency and is largely an expression of political clientelism.
- The research shows that participatory democracy, along with rule-of-law, is crucial for civil society to thrive. The research has found several fields for cross-community initiatives that have included advocacy on local community issues and social service provision, environmental issues, income-generating projects, and culture. The study has indicated that, for cross-community initiatives to be successful, CSOs should address the everyday life problems that communities face at the local level.

## INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the research project was to examine patterns and prospects of cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and South Serbia. In an attempt to understand the structure of civic life, the research has paid attention to the key challenges and opportunities of civic engagement across communities at the local level, as well as the means by which civic initiatives contribute to citizens' empowerment and advocacy on issues of public interest. More specifically, the research aimed to seek answers to the following questions:

1) What is the standing of civil society organizations (CSOs) amongst the very constituencies and communities that they claim to represent?

2) What new issues have mobilized citizens who had not previously been civically engaged, and why have such mobilizations been successful?

The research focused on five municipalities in Kosovo (Gjilan/Gnjilane, Peja/Peć, Mitrovica e Veriut/Severna Mitrovica, Graçanicë/Gračanica and Shtërpce/Štrpce), and three in South Serbia (Preshevë/Preševo, Bujanoc/Bujanovac, and Vranjë/Vranje).<sup>1</sup> The research sought to build an understanding of the situatedness of civic engagement and the role that civic engagement has played, especially through cross-community initiatives, in addressing issues faced by citizens in their everyday lives. Adopting a bottom-up approach, and premised on the experiences of civically active actors at the community level, the research offers recommendations for citizens' empowerment and the enhancement of civic activism in Kosovo and South Serbia.

The selection of the municipalities in the research intentionally focused on smaller locations. Much of the research on civil society is predominantly capital-city-based, rendering invisible cross-community initiatives in the peripheries. Moreover, the selected locations are important locations through which to understand policy and practices of accommodation and management of difference, majority-minority relations, and civil society initiatives towards social cohesion.

Referred to as 'the third sector', civil society is fundamental for democratic consolidation, citizen participation, and decision-making, enhancing accountability through advocacy for citizens' concerns. The research is broadly situated within the scholarship on civil society in the Balkans, as a structure raised in response to – and evolved through – multiple transitions: economic and political, post-war and post-war reconstruction,

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<sup>1</sup> In the text, we use the Albanian and Serbian names of the municipalities in both Kosovo and South Serbia.

and peace-building and state-building, and in relationship to a set of diverse actors, both local and transnational, as well as global networks and movements. Hence, the study has embraced the definition of civil society as a medium of delineation and limitation of state power shaped by the forces of multiple trajectories (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013) that have accompanied post-Yugoslav states, including Kosovo and Serbia.

A study on civil society in Kosovo and South Serbia, and more broadly research on the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia, presents a challenging yet compelling case for peace-building and democratization processes. While the attention in scholarship and policy research is directed at the macro level, especially within the framework of the EU-mediated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia (European Parliament 2021), this research adopts a micro-level perspective, shifting focus from elites to grassroots civil society actors who engage across identity boundaries while addressing the needs of citizens in the local communities. Cognisant of the limitations of the category of identity, the research has embraced the terms 'community' and 'cross-community', to allow for identification of patterns and prospects of/for civic initiatives at the local level, foremost as an expression of citizenship rights and a pursuit of equality cultures and intersections across the social structure.

While maintaining an awareness of how identity, politics and economy are entangled in national loyalties and belonging, the concept of cross-community initiatives deployed in the research is envisaged to be multifaceted through associational and non-associational forms of civic engagement between diverse social groups that, again, while aware of the salience of ethnic identity and identification, subscribe to citizenship and civic activism, and thus help define in civic terms the present and the future of the local communities. Thus, positing citizenship as the epistemic cornerstone enables an understanding of citizens' longing for well-being and civic activism on shared issues by which they are faced in everyday life. The research sheds some light on how civic engagement impacts political structures and processes, but also how it contributes to a sense of connectedness between citizens at the community level and acts as a 'litmus test of the political transition' (Šokolić, Kostovicova and Fagan 2020).

While research on civil society in Kosovo and Serbia has been framed by nationwide case analyses and more widely the context of Southeast Europe (Fagan 2013; Musliu 2013; Spasojević 2013), this study takes a view of civil society at the local community level, in anticipation of an ability to capture the actual dynamics and spaces of potentiality for cross-community civic engagement that transcend symbolic, imaginary, and material borders.



## METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The research relied on the collection of original data and a review of existing literature and secondary data. More specifically the research consisted of three distinct components:

1. Desk-based research;
2. Focus group discussions (FGDs); and
3. Interviews.

The purpose of the desk research was to explore the current situation of CSOs in Kosovo and South Serbia, the dynamics of civic activism, and citizens' cross-community interactions at the community level. Four broad topics were identified, encompassing:

- 1) mapping of civil society;
- 2) CSOs' capacities and relationships with citizens and stakeholders;
- 3) patterns of cross-community initiatives; and
- 4) prospects for civic engagement across communities.

Building on this, a methodology workshop (see *Annex 1*) for the research team members from Kosovo and Serbia was used to articulate the research standpoints and ethical issues, as well as interview questions and the FGD guide, along with the criteria for selection of research participants, an introduction to the research locations, and a set of ethical protocols (see *Annex 2 Interview questionnaire; Annex 3 FGD guide; Annex 4 Interview informed consent; Annex 5 FGDs' informed consent form, and Annex 6 Demography questionnaire for FGD participants*). While research instruments and ethical protocols were initially written in the English language, Albanian and Serbian translations followed.

The selection of CSOs and activists for interviews was on the basis of desk reviews, and participants included both active organizations and individual civic activists. The focus group discussion adopted a sample of convenience, including 6-12 respondents per focus group, out of which 3-6 were active in civil society initiatives and cross-community initiatives (with at least one man and one woman), and 3-6 non-active, with equal gender representation and at least one participant representing the youth.

To ensure that there was overall consistency across participants and locations, the questionnaire for individual interviews and the FGD discussion guide were based on the same set of themes and sub-themes. The field-based research took place in five municipalities in Kosovo (Gjilan/Gnjilane, Peja/Peć, Mitrovica e Veriut/Severna Mitrovica, Graçanicë/Gračanica and Shtërpce/Štrpce), and three in South Serbia (Preshevë/Preševo, Bujanoc/Bujanovac, and Vranjë/Vranje). These areas were selected to allow

representation of the diverse community composition and on the basis of the level of civic engagement on local community issues.

A total of 16 individuals in each of Kosovo and South Serbia, composed of CSO representatives and civil society activists, were interviewed as part of the research. In total, 50 participants (25 women and 25 men) took part in 5 FGDs in Kosovo, and 23 participants (12 women and 11 men) in 3 FGDs in South Serbia. FGDs in Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica and Shtërpçë/Štrpce were composed of Albanian and Serb respondents, Graçanicë/Gračanica exclusively of Serb respondents, and FGDs in Pejë/Peč and Gjilan/Gnjilane exclusively of Albanian respondents, with the exception of a sole Roma participant in both (Table 1). In South Serbia, the focus group in Vranje/Vranjë was predominantly composed of Serb participants, and Preševë/Preševo of Albanian respondents, while the focus group in Bujanovac/Bujanoc was mixed.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) participants in Kosovo and South Serbia** (by gender, ethnicity, and location)

Municipality	Gender		Ethnicity			
	F	M	Albanian	Serb	Roma	Other
Pejë/Peč	5	3	7		1	
Gjilan/Gnjilane	9	3	11		1	
Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica	4	6	3	7		
Graçanicë/Gračanica	3	5		8		
Shtërpçë/Štrpce	4	8	3	9		
Preševë/Preševo	2	4	6			
Bujanovac/ Bujanoc	5	2	3	2	2	
Vranje/ Vranjë	5	5		8	1	1
Total	37	36	33	34	5	1

Following the fieldwork and data collection, an in-person validation workshop (see Annex 7) took place in Belgrade in July 2021. The workshop gathered the Prishtina/Priština- and Belgrade-based research teams and civil society stakeholders with the following main aims: to report on the data collection process, to reflect on the preliminary findings, and to engage in co-creation of knowledge on the questions raised in the research. Moreover, the validation workshop revisited ethical questions and research limitations. In addition, the workshop reflected on modalities of ‘giving back’ to the local

<sup>2</sup> Data collection took place in May-June 2021 and was conducted by the research team consisting of Uresa Ahmeti, Ognjen Gogić, Miloš Hrnjaz, Shemi Krasniqi, Dušan Spasojević, Vjollca Krasniqi and Jelena Lončar. The research framework has benefited from the guidance of Orli Fridman, Faculty of Media and Communications, School for International Training, and Ian Bancroft from the Peaceful Change initiative.

communities through evidence-based research for public policy development and bottom-up knowledge production.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, personally identifiable information such as name, age, and CSO affiliation were removed from the interview transcripts to ensure that the participants in the research remained anonymous. The data analysis draws on the interconnections between local geographies not only defined in administrative and bureaucratic terms (i.e. as municipalities) but more widely as social geographies: physical and imagined and as 'communities of sentiments' to use the term coined by Arjun Appadurai to describe communities as defined by identification and emotions across distances (Appadurai 1996). Therefore, the analysis presented here was neither set to measure nor scale, but rather to map and understand the dynamics of community initiatives across diverse geographies that are local, cross-border, regional, and transitional. The analysis is thus embedded in the local contexts, and it highlights specificities and commonalities as revealed by the research data concerning shared structural constraints, enabling factors, and spaces for future cross-community engagement in Kosovo and South Serbia.

## THE CONTEXT: MUNICIPALITIES AT A GLANCE

Having focused on a set of municipalities in Kosovo and South Serbia, the research has aimed to widen the lens of cross-community initiative research and to form an understanding of the broader context of both associational and non-associational forms of civic engagement. Geographical and social space intertwine with identity and belonging that are dynamic and shifting, offering the potential for alternative social structuring. Against this backdrop, the following section provides a brief overview of the municipalities the research has covered, blending the key geographical characteristics, demographic data, most relevant markers of municipal identity, and civic life in general.

Our research shows that identification with a place is fundamental to identity and an image of the municipality that is socially constructed and about cross-community interactions.

### PEJË/PEĆ

Located in Western Kosovo, Pejë/Peć municipality is comprised of the city of Pejë/Peć and 78 other villages, with a total population of 96,450. According to the 2011 Kosovo census, the ethnic composition is 87,975 Albanians, 3,786 Bosniaks, 2,700 Egyptians, 993 Roma, 332 Serbs, 189 Gorani, 143 Ashkali, 59 Turks, 132 Other, and 142 citizens who chose not to identify with any of the identity categories. The Serb community lives in

Goraždevac/Gorazhdevc (OSCE 2018). Pejë/Peć is geographically situated on the footsteps of the Bjeshkët e Nemuna/Prokletije mountain range, which stretches across to Albania and Montenegro, and on the river Lumbardhi/Bistrica that runs through the middle of the city. It is renowned for its beautiful landscape and superb agricultural land, which, along with its wealth of cultural heritage sites, give the municipality a high potential for economic development, especially for agriculture and environmental and cultural tourism.

The three main economic sectors of Pejë/Peć are agriculture, services, and trade. The public university 'Haxhi Zeka' offers bachelor- and master-level studies, and its Faculty of Business Administration offers bachelor and master studies in Albanian and Bosnian languages (OSCE 2018). In the wider landscape of Kosovo civil society, Pejë/Peć is ranked third in terms of the total number of CSOs, after Prishtina/Priština and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, comprising 5.79 percent of the total number of such organizations in Kosovo (KCSF 2018:12): these organizations address a wide range of issues on human rights and democratization, gender equality and gender-based violence, environment, culture, and local community development. These are the main markers of Pejë/Peć, but it is the picturesque landscape that its citizens take the greatest pride in. As expressed by a focus group participant:

"Peja is a beautiful city. With lots of greenery and beautiful mountains. It has plenty of green areas where citizens can spend their free time. Tourism and new diverse spaces for spending the free time are developing, and different attractions are on offer."

*Peja/Peć #1 female FGD participant*

Pejë/Peć is a municipality that is perceived to be socially diverse and in constant flux despite the pressing societal issues, such as youth unemployment, that also pertain to Kosovo in general, with the youth unemployment rate in Kosovo standing at 52.7 percent (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2018: 10). Moreover, 31.2 percent of youth in Kosovo are not engaged in employment, education, or training (World Bank 2018:4). However, it is the potential that Pejë/Peć municipality carries in terms of geography: physical, human, and cultural, that participants in the research mostly have related to.

"The very social basis of Peja is its social diversity and beautiful nature. Peja is the most beautiful city in Kosovo. These are not simply just words; it is a fact."

*Peja/Peć #1 male CSO leader*

Located in the eastern part of Kosovo, Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality borders with the regional municipalities of Preshevë/Preševo and Bujanoc/Bujanovac in Serbia, and Kumanovë/Kumanovo in North Macedonia. It consists of the city of Gjilan/Gnjilane itself, as well as 42 villages, with a total population of 90,178. The ethnic composition of Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality is 87,814 Albanians, 978 Turks, 624 Serbs, 361 Roma, 121 Bosnian, 69 Gorani, 15 Ashkali, 1 Egyptian, 95 Other, and 100 not specified, according to Kosovo's 2011 census. The economy of Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality is based on small enterprises (OSCE 2018).

Overall, participants in the research perceive Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality as being defined by an entrepreneurial spirit, a favourable cross-border location in the Kosovo-Serbia-North Macedonia triangle, diaspora connections, and values of tolerance for difference and diversity. As participants in the FGDs expressed:

“Gjilan/Gnjilane is a peaceful municipality. Life is quiet here. There is no crime. No violence. Overall, people here are tolerant. There has always been cooperation among communities.”

*Gjilan/Gnjilane #9 female FGD participant*

“Despite what happened in the past, in the post-war transition we have not differentiated between the communities. All communities living here are Kosovo citizens, and they ought to enjoy equal rights and lead a peaceful life.”

*Gjilan/Gnjilane #5 female FGD participant*

“All communities are fully accommodated in the municipality life. The Serb community is part of the Gjilan municipality and the circumstances today.”

*Gjilan/Gnjilane #1 male participant CSO leader*

The prevailing opinion that peace and tolerance are the cornerstones of the municipal identity of Gjilan/Gnjilane is important for the CSOs' engagement across communities.

## MITROVICA VERIORE/SEVERNA MITROVICA

Part of northern Kosovo, Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica municipality has 29,640 citizens. It is a predominantly Serb-inhabited municipality with 22,530 Serbs and other ethnic communities, 4,900 Albanians, 1,000 Bosniaks, 580 Gorani, 210 Turks, 200 Roma, and 40 Ashkali. The economy of Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica predominantly relies on publicly owned enterprises, local administration, assistance from the Serbian government, and EU donations. There are also a few hundred small businesses providing goods and services (OSCE 2018).

As a consequence of the 1998-1999 conflict, Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica epitomizes the definition of a 'divided city', with the Ibër/Ibar river spatially and politically dividing Serbs and Albanians. Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica speaks to the major demographic shifts as a consequence of conflict and dissensus over political legitimacy. One participant in the FGD remarked:

*"In Mitrovica, we classify people into those who lived here before the war and those who came to live after 1999. Thus, there are two categories: old and new Mitrovčani - Mitrovica people."*

*Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica #1 male FGD participant*

Research participants perceive Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica as an important space for the Serb community living in Kosovo. However, there is an acknowledgment of the differences and diversity that also define the city, especially of the two mixed neighbourhoods, Mahalla e Boshjankëve/Bošnjčka Mahala and Suhodoll/Suvido parts of the municipal topography, hence painting the municipality panorama in inclusive terms. This is important, as it indicates an acceptance of the Other as a precondition for peaceful co-existence between the communities living in Mitrovica Veriore/Severna Mitrovica.

## SHTËRPCË/ŠTRPCE

Located in the south-eastern part of Kosovo, Shtërpçë/Štrpce is a small municipality with 6,949 citizens living in the town itself and 16 villages that compose the municipality. The ethnic composition of Shtërpçë/Štrpce is 3,757 Albanians, 3,148 Serbs, 24 Roma, 1 Ashkali, 7 Other, and 10 who did not declare their ethnic identity in the 2011 Kosovo census. Agriculture, especially raspberry production, tourism and small businesses are the backbone of the economy, along with 167 registered enterprises (OSCE 2018). As the research data has indicated, it is small-scale agricultural economic activity of

raspberry production and tourism relating to the Sharr/Šar mountains that define the identity of Shtërpçë/Štrpce municipality.

“Here, the majority of citizens work on the cultivation of raspberries. We produce raspberries.”

*Shtërpçë/Štrpce #2 male FGD participant*

“The ski centre during the wintertime, even though it is beautiful during summer as well in the Sharr/Šar mountains.”

*Shtërpçë/Štrpce #1 female FGD participant*

Home to environmental activism, the citizens of Shtërpçë/Štrpce, or more specifically Bitia e Poshtëme/Donja Bitina, have protested against the construction of hydropower plants in the Lepenc river (Murtezaj 2019). As a form of civic engagement, protests against hydropower plants mobilized citizens across communities who jointly search for a solution to this issue that jeopardizes the resources necessary for their daily livelihood. Civic engagement on environmental issues in Bitia e Poshtëme/Donja Bitina has not only gained media support, but the support of citizens from other parts of Kosovo. This is an example of non-associational civic engagement environmental activism that has evolved into meaningful cross-community initiatives, despite a meagre presence of formal/registered CSOs in Shtërpçë/Štrpce municipality.

## GRAQANICË/GRAČANICA

Graqanicë/Gračanica is a small municipality in central Kosovo, consisting of 10,675 citizens living in Graqanicë/Gračanica town and its 16 villages. The ethnic composition of Graqanicë/Gračanica municipality is 7,209 Serbs, 2,474 Albanians, 104 Ashkali, 22 Gorani, 15 Turks, 15 Bosniaks, 3 Egyptians, 45 Other, and 43 citizens with an unspecified ethnic identity. Agriculture and small trade are the main economic sectors in Graqanicë/Gračanica municipality, with around 500 registered private enterprises.

The municipality of Graqanicë/Gračanica also contains the Ulpiana Archaeological Park, an ancient Roman city, and the historic 13<sup>th</sup>-century Orthodox Monastery of Gračanica, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2006, which enjoys the status of a Special Protective Zone (OSCE 2018). The research data has indicated that the citizens of Graqanicë/Gračanica define the identity of the municipality by the Badovc Lake – built in 1963-1966 to supply the city of Prishtina/Priština with water – and cultural and sports events. However, Graqanicë/Gračanica municipality is also perceived to be a dynamic location of people on move, as one FGD participant described,

of 'torbari' (read: migrant workers) between Graçanicë/Gračanica and Belgrade and other cities in Serbia.

Freedom of movement for the purpose of work is important for people living in areas where jobs are scarce such as Graçanicë/Gračanica. Yet not all ideas brought back may favour cross-community initiatives. Graçanicë/Gračanica municipality has long been the host of the most CSOs in Kosovo with the Serb community as their primary target group (Maksimović et al. 2013:10), having actively engaged across different civil society sectors such as human rights, social inclusion, gender equality, democratization, media, and culture.

## VRANJE/VRANJË

Vranje is the centre of the Pčinja District, in the far south of Serbia, close to the border with North Macedonia. The majority of its 83,524 residents are Serbs (91.67%), but it is also populated by Roma (5.6%), Bulgarian (0.7%) and Macedonian (0.3%) minorities. There is also a very small Albanian minority presence (0.02%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2012). As the economic and administrative centre of the district, Vranje is also important for Albanians from the neighbouring municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo, who go to Vranje for the healthcare, judicial, and other administrative services. Its industry is based on machinery and equipment, wood processing, textiles, and the production of tobacco products. Its level of economic development is close to the national average.

According to available classifications, it belongs to the second group of cities/municipalities, i.e., municipalities with the development level rated 80-100% of the state average level. However, economic wellbeing is also affected by the economic situation of the entire region. Namely, the entire Pčinja district is characterized as under-developed, as most of its municipalities belong to the group of municipalities classified as having an economic development below 60% of the national average. Participants in our focus group also stressed economic issues as being the most pertinent:

"The main problem is that there is no employment, I mean, there is no progress here."

*Vranje/Vranjë #1 male FGD participant*

"Sports betting and cafes are open here, companies work only a bit, very poorly. I would not say life is good here."

*Vranje/Vranjë #2 male FGD participant*



Yet, surrounded by mountains with several rivers crossing the city, Vranje is a nice city in which to live. Most of our research participants emphasized friendships, mutual support, and care as the main values in the community:

“It is a small place, it’s kind of nice, everyone hangs out together, there are a lot of people out in the evening... it’s intimate in a way.”

*Vranje/Vranjë #1 male FGD participant*

“Vranje is a small city and people have time, even those few who work, who have permanent employment, even they have a lot of time for socialization after work. Because it is such a small city, everyone knows each other.”

*Vranje/Vranjë #1 female FGD participant*

There are more than 300 registered NGOs and 3 foundations in Vranje, which focus on a range of issues, such as human and minority rights, and economic and social rights. The majority of these organizations are inactive and very close to the local government and ruling political parties (Građanske Inicijative 2020: 10). In spite of this, the dominant values in the community mentioned above represent a good foundation and hope that the development of authentic and rigorous civil society is possible.

## BUJANOVAC/BUJANOC

Located in South Serbia, Bujanovac/Bujanoc is a true multi-ethnic municipality. According to the last population census, there are 18,067 citizens in Bujanovac/Bujanoc. However, since Albanians boycotted the census, this data cannot be treated as accurate. More recent estimates suggest that there are around 38,300 residents in Bujanovac/Bujanoc, among which there are around 34% Serbs, 55% Albanians, and 11% Roma (Kamberi 2016: 12). Residents describe inter-ethnic relations as peaceful, although interaction across ethnic groups is very low. It is one of the most economically underdeveloped municipalities in Serbia. Its economy is primarily based on agriculture, although it also has potential for the development of tourism, as our research participants also noted:

“Bujanovac is a small town, we all know each other. We live very harmoniously and peacefully and as every small town, [Bujanovac/Bujanoc] has its advantages and disadvantages, but in general I would recommend everyone to come and visit Bujanovac, there are natural beauties to see and many other things.”

*Bujanovac/Bujanoc #1 male FGD participant*

Citizens of Bujanovac/Bujanoc also consider the support from the relatives abroad (either permanently emigrated or on temporary work abroad) to be very important. Emigration and the lack of both economic and cultural opportunities are perceived as the most pervasive features of the municipality:

“I have a family and a house here, but I think I will have a better life there [in Germany].”

*Bujanovac/Bujanoc #2 male FGD participant*

“I think that this is going to be a town of retirees in twenty years.”

*Bujanovac/Bujanoc #2 female FGD participant*

“In addition to unemployment, which I believe is the number one problem in Bujanovac, but not only in Bujanovac, but everywhere, as we all know, I would mention another reason, another flaw or shortcoming of Bujanovac: a lack of cultural content [...] Brain drain in Bujanovac has nothing to do with ethnic groups, Albanians and Roma and Serbs go abroad equally, and, for example, my whole generation from primary school, I know some Roma who are in Sweden, some of them are in Norway. I also know some Albanians, because I know that Albanians are mostly in Switzerland, at least the ones I know. And I also know a lot of Serbs, slowly my friends are going to Germany.”

*Bujanovac/Bujanoc #1 male FGD participant*

The department of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Novi Sad, opened in Bujanovac/Bujanoc in 2011, is keeping some of the university-age youth in Bujanovac/Bujanoc, but the majority leave the town after high school without any intention to return. It is of little surprise, therefore, that most of its numerous civil society organizations (officially 149 registered NGOs) target young people (Građanske inicijative 2020: 7).

## PREŠEVO/ PRESHEVË

Located close to the border with Montenegro, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, Preševo/Preshevë has an important geostrategic position. An international corridor that connects Belgrade, Skopje, Thessaloniki, and Athens passes through its territory. The majority of its estimated 29,989

residents are Albanians (90%). The share of Serbs is 7.5% of the total municipality population, while the Roma minority makes up around 0.9% of the population. Economically, Preševo/Preshevë is among the group of the most under-developed municipalities in Serbia. Since Preševo/Preshevë is surrounded by beautiful nature, tourist potential is seen as one of the ways out of economic hardship. Poverty and a lack of employment are forcing the municipality's citizens to search for a better life abroad:

“Preševo/Preshevë, as a small and isolated place, probably doesn't have a great deal of space for young people. It is no coincidence that people leave Preševo/Preshevë every day. Maybe [another reason] is a lack of professional space in a professional sense for young people.”

*Preševo/Preshevë #2 male FGD participant*

“Usually when we talk to our fellow citizens, you know, they can be from that part of society which is completely disappointed with the reality in Preševo/Preshevë, but there are also those who live with the hope of going abroad. So, one of the hopes of the citizens of Preševo/Preshevë is to go abroad. How do they go abroad? For example, to work, not in their profession, but, yes, as a slave on the construction sites in Germany or France.”

*Preševo/Preshevë #1 male FGD participant*

Despite a lack of economic opportunities, our research participants stress cultural activities that bring citizens together as one of the positive sides of living in Preševo/Preshevë:

“Fortunately, Preševo/Preshevë is kept alive by activities, especially the Days of Albanian Comedy, for which I would say the most important thing is that it has survived, despite the difficulties, and has been fought for tooth and nail, so to speak. The only event we can be proud of as Preševo/Preshevë, because all parts where Albanians live gather once a year, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, and during one week there are activities that happen in Preševo/Preshevë.”

*Preševo/Preshevë #2 male FGD participant*

There is a widespread perception that more investment in education, and civic education in particular, is crucial for things to change for the better in the municipality.

## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES

Cross-community relations and initiatives are not only affected by the demographic, political, economic, and cultural situations of the municipalities where our participants live, but also by interactions across municipal borders. The participants in our research emphasized the interconnectedness of the municipalities included in the research:

“There is no nightclub in Preshevë. There is in Vranje, but in Vranje you have that folk music, and it's a very small group that likes it. And then they mostly go to Prishtina/Priština or Skopje, they always have someone in Prishtina/Priština, that's why that's the easiest for them, [in terms of] a place to sleep. And if they go to Skopje, they come back because it's close. Skopje is probably closer than Vranje.”

*CSO leader #5 Preševo/Preshevë*

“When we sit and talk, the life of ordinary people is life, it is not conditioned by politics in the sense of ‘I hate you, you hate me’, although there are some limits, related to those cold-hearted politicians who have their own views. In general, cooperation, life, people, Albanians who do business... Here in Vranje, if you want a builder or a construction team to fix your house, you go to Preševo and make a deal. They are efficient, maybe a bit more expensive, but they keep their word: [they say they would] do a facade in 5 days, and they finish in 5 days.

When we find builders here, they finish it in a month. Here is an example: in Preševo they make those wrought iron fences, they have exceptional tiles, I mean we all go to Preševo for that, and their workers come to Serb houses in the city of Vranje.”

*CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë*

Being so close to each other geographically, citizens of the selected municipalities are interconnected on an everyday level. However, these ties are much more professional and administrative than private. Yet, the development of these connections is crucial for building mutual trust and creating critical potential for cross-community initiatives on local issues.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MUNICIPALITIES IN KOSOVO AND SOUTH SERBIA

The majority of studies on civil society in Kosovo and Serbia point to its weaknesses, sustainability issues and donor dependence. However, improvements in overall CSO sustainability are visible in Kosovo (USAID 2020:6). This positive development relates to the adoption of the new Law on Freedom of Association in NGOs on 15 April 2020, leading to an improvement of the legal environment for CSOs (ibid.:8). The law is in line with the best international standards and practices, allowing foreign citizens to become founders, introducing a new legal form, shortening the period of time for registration, and extending the list of public benefit activities (European Centre for Non-for-Profit Law 2019).

On the other hand, the sustainability of CSOs in Serbia has deteriorated, mainly due to the hostile environment in which CSOs operate (USAID 2020:196). The increased formation of GONGOs and PONGOs since 2014 has been accompanied by more frequent attacks by the direct ruling political party on CSOs and social movements dealing with democratization, advocacy, and human rights. Since 2012, the situation has changed dramatically for the worse (Popović et al. 2020). CIVICUS, a global alliance of CSOs, gave the civic space in Serbia a rating of 'Obstructed' in 2019, due to increased restrictions on civic freedoms (CIVICUS 2019). The return to power of the political actors that were in power during the 1990s and the growing distance from democratic rule and democratic values, with more restrictive laws in the field of media freedom and justice and a high level of corruption, have led to a shrinking of the space for free and independent action in Serbia. Pressures and attacks by state officials and ruling political parties on critical and state-independent sections of civil society are becoming more frequent and direct (Lončar 2021).

The existing research studies have described civil society in Serbia and Kosovo as small, yet the approaches taken primarily focused on formal associational organizations, to the exclusion of non-associational ones. Our research data confirms that the civil society sphere in Kosovo is small, yet forward-looking and re-worked through intra- and inter-community collaborations at the local level, regionally, and beyond. On the other hand, citizens of municipalities in South Serbia lack hope and motivation for activism, and CSOs recognize the lack of expertise, resources, and visions of the future. A small number of emerging youth organizations, however, demonstrate solidarity, creativity, and care, giving hope that a revival of grassroots activism is possible.

The main sectors of CSOs' engagements in both countries are human rights and democratization, gender equality and women's rights,

peacebuilding and dealing with the past, minority rights, social inclusion of marginalized groups, and environmental issues. Kosovo-based participants in the research view the function of civil society and the roles that CSOs have played in terms of the linkages they have forged between citizens and institutions. In Serbia, the overall perception is that a strong, intense polarization exists between the state and civil society, as state institutions often frame CSOs, particularly those in the fields of democratization and human rights, as enemies.

## **MOTIVATIONS**

Our research data indicates that civil society has evolved in response to the greater citizen needs at the community level, namely those related to post-war reconstruction and peace-building processes. Moreover, as CSO activists in Kosovo have expressed, civil society has deep roots in post-war reconstruction and peace-building processes and projects in Kosovo. Discussing the motivations for engagement in civic activism, a participant describes the main motivations as follows:

“Back in 2002, a colleague and I happened to take part in a ten-day training on conflict transformation. Back then, I was working for the OSCE. The training focused on peace education. Training participants came from all parts of the former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia. I was taken by the training’s philosophy on conflict transformation. I saw a need for peace education in Kosovo. One month after the training, I established a CSO with the main goal of contributing to peace-building through peace education.”

*CSO leader #1 Gjilan/Gnjilane*

Similarly, in South Serbia, many people who now run NGOs became motivated for civil society activism as young participants in a range of peace and reconciliation projects implemented by either international or Belgrade-based NGOs, which came to this region after the 2000-2001 conflict:

“The idea was here, even back then, after the conflicts here, a lot of NGOs came to work on improving multi-ethnic relations in Bujanovac, and then we as high school students – some were a little more interested in participating in it – some spoke Serbian better, that was the reason. Primarily schools sent us to participate in various organizations, and then we made our own links, our friends, our NGOs that invited us to various projects. There were of

course, more trips then, because there were a lot more funds and resources and whatever, and then it all became interesting.”

*Former CSO activist #4 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

The presence of numerous NGOs in the municipalities of South Serbia inspired grassroots activism as a form of hidden resistance to outsiders' peace-building approaches, and a fight for the space where they could themselves voice their concerns and act upon them:

“There were always people from different organizations coming here to do some activities with our high school students, not every day, but on Sunday's people were coming, and I was sitting there and thinking “why don't we do something ourselves, then we could work for other organizations”. Since I cooperate well with kids and have a good relationship with them, I thought that I could do something, because I like to work and do these activities.”

*CSO leader #2 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

Such claims make a powerful statement that citizens do not accept being treated as objects, but instead fight for the recognition of their agency.

Thus, to understand civil society activists' motivations, one has to look at issues CSOs engage with, what CSOs believe the purpose is, and how this is integrated into the mission and vision of the CSO. The research data has indicated that civil society activists in Kosovo aim to make the CSOs the pivot of citizens' engagement and address local community needs. Moreover, they aim to establish sustainable links between citizens for access and representation on issues of concern for citizens at the local level. Another important objective of the Kosovo CSOs is the promotion of citizen participation in building cultures of equality, human rights and social development, as well as to inspire transformational leadership and serve as role models by working in a transparent and accountable manner. Moreover, the research confirms the relevance of civil society in general, and CSOs in particular, as spaces to build trust, tolerance, and cooperation across communities.

The main issues Kosovo CSOs engage with concern human rights and democratization, gender equality, citizen participation, and advocacy on pressing needs of citizens at the local level. The following excerpts from interviews paint a picture of CSOs' work on the main issues.

“Having witnessed the post-war situation and the needs of women and children, firstly to distribute humanitarian aid, and, later on, addressing women’s rights. Through this work, I have realized the need for a women’s shelter and support for women and children victims of domestic and gender-based violence. I saw it and still consider it as very important to work on gender awareness-raising and gender equality issues. Gender equality and women’s rights are crucial for social justice. It is justice that has been the main motivation for my engagement in civil society.”

*CSO leader #1 Pejë/Peć*

“The river runs through the village. Nature was being degraded and now the river is destroyed. This was a huge problem for us. We need water for irrigation and different needs. We are a mixed village. Two communities live here: Serb and Albanian. We organized together and protested together against the hydro-power plants.”

*Shtërpce/Štrpce #1 civil society activist*

“My main motivation is to address institutional gaps. It is the institutions that are not reaching out to the citizens in a transparent manner. It is an independent engagement to support the implementation of laws, policies, to address gaps, and also advocate on institutional efficiency. These are some of the main motives. Of course, there is the humanitarian aspect too. And the development aspect, the political aspect. There are different aspects related to motivations. Networking, mediation, etc. These are the main motivations. All this I have mentioned is nowhere to be found within the institutions. There is no transparency. There is no rule of law. There are no programmes. There is no development.”

*CSO leader #3 Graçanicë/Gračanica*

The spectrum of social groups that CSOs target in Kosovo is wide, and includes youth, women, and girls’ rights; Roma rights, the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons with disabilities. In South Serbia, the situation is similar, but our participants claim that NGO activities are predominantly directed at youths, as there are limited opportunities for this specific group. In addition, the data indicate that CSOs in both Kosovo and



South Serbia also strategically turn towards issues such as youth activism and environment because these issues are deemed less political.

“During my high school days, I was really close to the youth office, which was probably one of the only things you could do in Preševo/Preshevë to get yourself active. I've been around people who were close to this, starting with my sisters; they were also activists back in their youth. As a hyperactive kid, I was always scouting these activities to spend my time during high school in Preševo/Preshevë, where you don't do anything interesting, just spending your time, you try to find some more time to meet new people or get involved in something. That was one of my first motivations.... You could literally see the youth being so inactive in Preševo/Preshevë, and you try to do something which will get them involved, or at least to do something to understand what the youth in Preševo/Preshevë is all about.”

*CSO leader #6 Preševo/Preshevë*

While young people seem to be target groups for most of the NGOs in South Serbia, the issues they address mostly follow the priorities of the donors:

“To survive, to have some honorariums, to keep the team together, we sometimes work on a topic, which is not in our strategic plan at all.”

*CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë*

“I think that the main and primary problem is that... the civil sector of Bujanovac/Bujanoc and Preševo/Preshevë seems to be made up of NGOs that act seasonally in terms of what the prevailing topic is. For example, for a while it was topical to deal with Serbian as a non-mother tongue in an informal way, so all NGOs applied for Serbian as a non-mother tongue. While we were dealing with Serbian as a non-mother tongue, a migrant crisis occurred, and everyone shifted to the issue of migrants. Now there is more talk about environment – everyone wants to deal with the environment. So, we do not have an organized civil society, i.e. a program-oriented civil society.”

*Former CSO activist #4 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which the CSOs work is challenging, as the problems are structural, with high unemployment, low levels of trust in institutions, and also politicization that has led to a broader feeling of *anomie* for many, especially young people who are in pursuit of exit strategies through migration from Kosovo and South Serbia. CSO activists attribute the low level of citizen engagement in their respective communities to this environment. As one of the participants in the research has remarked:

“Everyday life problems are numerous. Local government approaches the citizens at the election time promising development of the area similar to Canada or the USA, but without any consideration of any formal rules of the environment. This is an example of our interventions to make the institutions accountable to citizens and resort to formal democratic processes and decision-making with citizen participation.”

*CSO leader #3 Peja/Peć*

“It would probably be economy-related. Just economics. Economics is the main problem, with subtopics such as the youth not coming back or being so conservative or isolated, etc., etc. A lot of different problems that might arise will be based on economic status. The minority problems that we have.”

*CSO leader #6 Preševo/Preshevë*

## RESULTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES

Looking both *inside out* and *outside in* at opportunities and perspectives, the CSO representatives describe the civil society landscape as small and ethnically segmented. However, our research indicates – and the quotes below illustrate – that the CSOs in Kosovo have a clearer vision of the impact and results of their activities than the CSOs in South Serbia. The impact in Kosovo is primarily described in terms of acting as role models for demanding transparency and accountability, inter-ethnic relations, good relationships with institutions, enhanced youth activism, CSO organizational development, and awareness-raising on gender equality:

“I am confident enough to say that the results of our work are excellent, measurable, verifiable, credible, archived, and open to any person wishing to know more about our work and its impact on society.”

*CSO leader #1 Pejë/Peć*

“Taking into account our capacity, I think we did well. But we should have done more, and we should do more, especially in Shtërpçë/Štrpce and the national park. I’m pretty concerned about the situation, about the national park, but those people living around. Taking into account the conflict...Yes, I think it’s... it’s good, but it could be better.”

*CSO activist #2 Shtërpçë/Štrpce*

“I do work more on organizational foundations, on capacity building, and on internal rules and procedures. I am proud of all that we have. We have something that other organizations established before us do not have. All this is thanks to our experiences. A blend of my local experience and the international experience of my colleague.”

*CSO leader #4 Graçanicë/Gračanica*

“Violence against women and domestic violence is no longer a private affair. There is a law against domestic violence. [There is] increased awareness that domestic violence is a public policy and human rights issue and is punishable by law. It is a huge impact through advocacy on women’s rights.”

*CSO leader #2 Gjiļan/Gnjilane*

“I usually say that results speak. We have good cooperation with institutions. Our organization has a clear profile. We work on issues that no other organization is dealing with. Taking risks by working on difficult themes. To open doors. That’s why I think we are successful. We want to be transparent, to publish everything in three languages. I think that has a great impact. That we don’t hide what we are working on.”

*CSO leader #1 Mitrovica Veriore /Severna Mitrovica*

While CSO leaders in Kosovo speak convincingly about the impact of their work, very few of our participants in Serbia could assess their results or the effects of their projects (particularly long-term effects). The impact they perceived as most relevant and appreciated was related to economic support provided to their beneficiaries, such as support for starting a business

or financial support for the services or work done during the project's duration (CSO leader #3 Bujanovac/Bujanoc, CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë). Only a limited number of participants attempted to assess their broader impact, albeit certainly with less confidence than our participants in Kosovo:

"I think that civil society organizations have the greatest impact on people who are active, and not on those who come and participate in projects. At some point, we had a lot of active volunteers, and it seems to me that this period was spent in Vranje in socializing, maybe it sounds so big now, but it seems to me that the lives of each of the people who participated in all this have changed, because we have raised awareness in this whole story because you see things simply from a different perspective, you have some opportunities, and you become aware of some things that you were not aware of before you were part of something like that.

I don't know, for example, if you don't include North Macedonia or similar [nearby] locations, I travelled abroad for the first time through civil society organizations, and I wouldn't have had that opportunity if I hadn't been part of the centre. Well, that's the most obvious example, and I have a thousand of them, a thousand more things. I also have acquaintances and connections."

*FGD participant Vranje/Vranjë*

"Although we did not do any serious research on how much of an effect our activities had, considering the support we provide to our target groups through our activities, we saw that we had some influence in increasing reading culture, professionalization of certain segments through activities we organized in our association. The impact is noticeable, I cannot say it is not noticed."

*CSO leader #4 Preševo/Preshevë*

"We have worked on educating about dealing with the past enough. I mean it's never enough, but one could argue that we contributed so that people still know that there are people... There are now people in Preševo/Preshevë who think that one raped Bosnian or a Serb woman is the

same as a raped Albanian woman, you know, that's a sufficient result for me, if you have two persons that's okay because it's going to spread now, in that sense and I think we've contributed a little bit to those skills."

*CSO leader #5 Preševo/Preshevë*

The results and impact, however, depend a lot on the capacities of NGOs. In Serbia, most of the NGOs are GONGOs, fictive organizations founded merely for the exploitation of public resources and to give support to the government's decisions. On the other hand, those NGOs that are active and independent from political parties and the government lack a professional working space, and more importantly expertise:

"First, I do not know how to write a project, how do I write a project then? All of that was unknown to me, and I asked them to write a project for me... "Can you write a project for me?" It is a big project; I do not even speak English. She said, "I'll write a project for you, it is not a problem, you just tell me your idea", and I explained it to her."

*CSO leader #3 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

Similarly, CSOs lack the expertise necessary for reporting about project results and use external help not only for proposal writing but also for reporting. Sustainability is another issue that CSOs in Serbia struggle with:

"Sustainability, yes, when the project finishes, everything stops, and the story is over. It goes the same way, because you do not have an organization that has a 10-year project, or 5 or 4, you have a project that should be over in 6 months, or in 8, and the story is over."

*CSO leader #5 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

## **VOLUNTEERING**

As part of CSO strategies and increasing civic participation, our research finds that CSOs give weight to volunteering. In fact, all CSOs in Kosovo claim to engage volunteers in their work. As illustrated below, CSO leaders believe civic engagement and volunteering to be intertwined, and complementary to citizen-engagement-related work.

"CSO work in general, and ours in particular, is unimaginable without volunteers."

*CSO leader #2 Peja/Peć*

*“Volunteers are the backbone of civic life.”*

*CSO leader #3 Gjilan/Gnjilane*

*“Most of the work we do is done on a voluntary basis. The Ministry of Welfare and the municipality cover the expenses for services, and international donors have supported all the awareness-raising campaigns.”*

*CSO leader #1 Peja/Peć*

This data confirms that it is the CSOs that have continued to play a significant role in promoting and spearheading volunteering in Kosovo, even though volunteering is faced with barriers and challenges (Krasniqi 2018: 9). Volunteers also have an important role in the NGOs in South Serbia, due to the shortage of staff. Emigration is very high in these municipalities, and hence the capacity to attract new volunteers is essential for the survival of the organization:

*“One cannot count on having staff in the long run, having people, because, in the main, students who come back after their studies stay here for 2 years, try to find themselves somehow, and then they snap and leave.”*

*CSO leader #5 Preševo/Preshevë*

The CSOs that have participated in this research work towards building effective public communication through visibility activities aimed at informing their constituencies and the broader public on issues of concern and activities, as well as raising awareness of the role of civil society in social integration, human rights, and broader social development issues. CSOs emphasise visibility and public communication through the utilization of a wide range of internet-based channels, in particular through new media, websites and social media. An attempt to utilize a multi-lingual perspective in all public communication is evident among CSOs. The research data suggest that CSOs make use of diverse internet and social media platforms throughout their interactions with citizens, institutions, media, and donors. CSO representatives perceive this to be important for outreach and to communicate the vision and the mission of the organizations and the importance of civic engagement in Kosovo and South Serbia. CSOs in Kosovo maintain close contacts and are visible in the media, which is not the case in Serbia, since independent media channels are limited.

## CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS ON CIVIC CULTURE, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH DONORS

Civic participation implies the interaction of structural and cultural factors through participation in civic duties that are territorially boundless. Active community involvement is associated with attitudes towards CSOs and citizenship. CSOs play an important role in the community through cooperation with different actors and citizens. The relationship of CSOs with citizens is crucial, as the CSOs are an essential block of social cohesion and often create alternative institutions by which public needs can be served. Communication between CSOs and citizens is essential for building trust in institutions and civil society. The research indicates that civic consciousness is alive and well in Kosovo and South Serbia, but the environment is politically charged, impacting civic engagement in general.

Fear is also associated with activism in South Serbia. It relates, on the one hand, to the political polarization and increased authoritarianism of the government and, on the other, a deep structural exclusion of minorities:

“First of all, you need to have courage, because in order to take such an activity for what you mentioned, you need to organize a protest.”

*FGD participant Preševo/Preshevë*

“The degree of intolerance of most people, the degree to which one person can accept the humiliation of today’s politicians, the ruling SNS and Socialists, their political followers, it is for me – I don’t know – humanly unacceptable that people, most people, are silent, suffer, they say “we suffer, we are afraid, I will lose my job”; well, we lost our jobs then, so we found something to do and survived. Today’s mechanism suffocates everything and the civil sector.”

*CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë*

“If you look for a job, they can tell you ‘You did this and that, which disagrees with our party or our policies’, and you lose the opportunity.”

*FGD participant Preševo/Preshevë*

CSO representatives also expressed concerns primarily related to the issue of trust. As illustrated in the quote below, which expresses a view shared widely among the CSO participants, the low level of trust in CSOs largely

stems from political leadership and the creation of new CSOs that seems to follow in the wake of their taking office after elections.

“When there is a large number of NGOs that are an extension of political parties and their interests, it is normal that citizens have no trust in CSOs. And that is the biggest problem. That is why there is lack of trust in NGOs due to the manipulation of those organizations with close links to political parties.”

*CSO leader #4 Graçanicë/Gračanica*

“There are GONGOs, it is a very horrible, terribly dangerous thing; we have been talking about it since 2017. We keep seeing GONGOs around us, this is insulting, just insulting. A political party forming its own NGO for money laundering, that used to happen even during Democrats and Socialists, and it will happen again in the future of course, but this, this is insulting, just insulting how they form them, how many there are, how openly they work. They no longer hide documents or public calls; they are so comfortable in their positions that there is no need to hide it at all.”

*CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë*

Thus, CSOs have to deal with the distrust of citizens toward civil society as an independent sector that aims to represent their concerns. The main elements of distrust usually point to the perceived links between members of civil society and politics. Respondents in the FGDs have shown a dose of ambivalence about CSOs, which is grounded in two main reasons. The first of these is the 'cross-overs' of CSO activists into the political parties, and thus blurring of lines between civil society and formal politics and political representation. The second relates to the perceptions of CSOs as entities acting for themselves, in order to generate income and employment for a small number of people. The independence of CSOs from political parties is crucial, the research indicates, as is the clear delineation between civic activism and formal politics and political actors. In the current situation, respondents perceive CSOs to be commonly co-opted by political actors, thus effectively widening the gap between civil society and citizens, resulting in a low level of civic engagement.

“Some CSO activists jump to political positions. In Kosovo the law does not allow activism in a CSO and political parties simultaneously.”

*FGD participant Gjilan/Gnjilane*



“There are CSOs that are connected with specific political parties. When a certain political party wins elections, you know exactly who will receive financing from the municipality.”

*FGD participant Mitrovica e Veriut/  
Severna Mitrovica*

“This whole situation delegitimized civil society... Organizations that are only trying to make money... and in essence it is a paradox, because none of the organizations has money.”

*CSO leader #1 Preševo/Preshevë*

Such a perception of CSOs as money-laundering organizations is not only related to the expansion of GONGOs. In Serbia, this narrative was sponsored by the government during the 1990s and directed particularly at human rights- and democratization-related CSOs. Such organizations were framed as foreign mercenaries and traitors. The same narrative continues to shape public opinion, with the increasingly authoritarian government in Serbia once again applying this rhetoric (Spasojević 2019).

“There is, and it's not just here, there's a strong opinion when the non-governmental sector is mentioned that they are thieves, you know they launder money, take money, steal, and so on. When you tell an ordinary person 'NGO', for them that's a synonym for something dishonourable, in fact, and for some anti-state action, for money laundering, for such dishonourable and dishonest things.”

*CSO leader #6 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

Communication between CSOs and the municipal governance and institutions is perceived by research participants as being of equal importance to such negative rhetoric. CSO leaders in Kosovo express the need for collaborations and partnerships with municipalities to overcome perceived 'rivalries'. Oftentimes, participants remarked that institutions view CSOs as competition rather than as partners. Thus, the research indicates the need for meaningful dialogue between local authorities, CSOs and citizens. On the other hand, research participants in Serbia do not see potential for collaboration and partnerships, as any form of collaboration is conditioned by political support:

“Does it mean I have to be a fan of yours if you finance me? No, it doesn't mean that. So, that

was the first and the last time... Yes, they expected us to be behind them like 'yaaaay let's go mayor, you're the strongest'. We aren't doing that... When we applied for the second project, they put the big X mark against that. This doesn't pass. The people that were inside knew that we were doing something, and were like 'why not them'. Well, 'they didn't show us result' were the words."

*CSO leader #6 Preševó/Preshevë*

At the same time, CSOs complain that a lack of cooperation with the local governments puts them in a disadvantaged position, because cooperation between CSOs and local governments is a requirement for many international donors.

The research data indicates that CSOs, while situated and acting at the local level, are regional and international in nature, due to their membership in different networks and continuous pursuit of collaborations beyond local and regional ones. According to the research participants, networking enables CSOs to share experiences and communicate their vision to a wider audience, and to bring home ideas on advocacy on human rights, democratization, and social cohesion from different international contexts:

"As a network we are more visible. No one wants to talk to an individual, it is different like this [in a network], we are more visible, and we help each other. For example, if I have a problem, I can call my colleague, and she, as someone with more experience, tells me how things should be done. They are all strong, experienced women there, they have worked for years [in the non-profit sector], and then, when we need something, we contact them and receive advice. It is easier for us to work as part of the network."

*CSO leader #3 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

The research has also shown that some of the larger CSOs' work is directed towards capacity-building of grassroots initiatives at the local community level, as was noted by the participants:

"It is in our mission to support community-based projects to increase citizen engagement. We aim to work with small grassroots organizations, sometimes through small grants. We seek to empower local community-based organizations."

*CSO leader #3 Pejë/Peć*

“Consultancy support means to me, in that sense, for example, creating visibility [is important to an organization], some good branding of [an organization’s] people, so that they are perceived as serious, to encourage cooperation. You need them to create a serious image of you, an image that you are active.”

*CSO leader #5 Preševo/Preshevë*

While coalitions matter, and research participants expressed gratitude to more experienced CSOs for cooperation and providing the opportunity to learn from them, at the same time they made critical reflections about the capital-based NGOs. Grounded at the local level, the majority of participants in the research think that local activism is not exclusively advantageous for CSOs, but that it also has drawbacks, namely due to the asymmetrical positions of the central and peripheral dynamics of larger civil society. The CSOs based in the capital are perceived to have weak constituencies at the local level, and when engaging at the local level they commonly side-line the local CSOs. NGOs from the capital are perceived as being the ones to get all the grants aimed to benefitting the region.

The research finds that this has an impact on both citizen engagement and the CSOs’ organizational capacity. It also raises questions of empowerment of local CSOs. There is a feeling that citizens of smaller municipalities are treated as mere objects, and that their authentic voice is being silenced. Hence, there is space for consideration of a more just approach to the regions, and inclusion of local actors on a more equal basis, as participants in the research expressed:

“Funds and big projects are based in Prishtina, in the capital. CSOs at the local level have smaller chances to be selected, and it is the Prishtina/Priština-based CSOs working at the local level. This is a general problem. Why not empower CSOs at the local community and municipal levels?”

*CSO leader #3 Gjilan/Gnjilane*

“There are much larger organizations that come from the capital and that wish – due to the current situation in Preševo/Preshevë – to organize their activities, and all of this doesn’t look nice to me. It would be good if large organizations, which come

here to implement their projects, included some of the local organizations as partners.”

*CSO leader #3 Preševo/Preshevë*

“Maybe we should criticize these donors, because every time an organization comes and implements a project in Bujanovac, where we are, we could do it, we don't need someone from Belgrade or Novi Sad or Novi Pazar to come, take pictures for 2-3 days, and then leave; we need something more serious. We are not so incapable of implementing projects, you know, but they are strong, they are bigger than us, stronger than us, because they come from a big environment, from a big city, they have connections there, they win in the calls more easily, but the essence is that I don't think they leave any trace here.”

*CSO leader #1 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

“[Larger CSOs] implemented projects to strengthen civil society here, and that turned out very, very badly, because they implemented the projects in the following way: they hire you as a coordinator and then pay for everything that needs to be paid; when a round table is organized, they pick up and leave, they don't have a real insight; the coordinator does not feel that this is their organization, that they are employed in that organization, and whatever criticisms or ideas for other initiatives they might have, they will not mention them, because they are afraid for their job.

This is my perception, which proved to be correct on the ground. All those who gave, who received the funds for South Serbia and then gave out mini grants, did not want to give them to us who already have a good reputation, but rather pulled out organizations that had nothing, and of course those organizations would implement the project and be done with it, or even they wouldn't implement it at all.”

*CSO activist #3 Vranje/Vranjë*

The widespread perception is that the beneficiary communities are not included, but rather treated only as target groups merely to serve the financial interests of larger CSOs. The claims, such as the one above (*CSO activist #3 Vranje/Vranjë*), indicate that some of the local civil society

organizations do not see any complementarity between the strengths of big-city organizations (knowing how to write a project; good reporting) and those of themselves (closeness to the community).

The role of the international community as donors is perceived as crucial for a sustained civil society scene more broadly, and for cross-community initiatives in particular. It is recognized that international organizations are often the only ones that provide support, as relations with municipal authorities and ministries are fragile. The bulk of the projects in which the CSOs engage are supported by international donor organizations. However, the participants in the research have remarked that the CSOs follow donor programmes that have clear-cut strategies designed without any input from the CSOs on the ground. This means that the CSOs that rely on foreign funds follow a top-down agenda rather than a bottom-up approach to civic engagement at the local and regional level. The research confirms the reliance of CSOs on financial support from foreign donors.

“For example, if someone comes and says, ‘We would support multi-ethnic projects’ then we write a multi-ethnic project; ‘We would support multi-ethnic media’, then we write a project for multi-ethnic media; ‘We would support cleaning the city’, then an environmental project is written.”

*CSO activist #3 Vranje/Vranjë*

While donor presence in Kosovo has been continuous and strong since the war, there is a widespread perception in South Serbia that donors at some point left the region due to a perceived consolidation of democracy in Serbia. Yet, it seems that increased authoritarianism in recent years, combined with a reactivation of Kosovo-Serbia peace negotiations, is attracting international donors once more:

“You can take all the international foundations’ data: if money was given to civil society in the last few years, then that was very little, very, very little. And plus, what is more important, there has been less for issues that are more important. [The money is given] more for [projects that aim to show] that Svetlana and Hasan are friends and that is it. I trivialize a lot, but [...].”

*CSO leader #1 Preševo/Preshevë*

“There was no chance to get any fund for Preševo/Preshevë and Bujanovac/Bujanoc in 2014-2015, somehow it was completely out of focus, but

now, since last year, somehow it has all started again.”

*CSO leader #5 Preševo/Preshevë*

“The NGO sector completely died out, so absolutely nothing was happening. And now, in the last 6 months roughly, something has started to move, obviously important donors are present.”

*CSO leader #6 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

## **PATTERNS OF CROSS-COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN KOSOVO AND SOUTH SERBIA**

The history of conflict has left a difficult legacy in Kosovo and Serbia (Baćević et al., 2011). This legacy has accompanied the dynamics of civil society, with CSOs having sought to restore trust and promote tolerance and cooperation between communities. As the research indicates, participants contend that civil society is a landscape within which civic values can be cultivated, and thus cross-community initiatives fostered. Interethnic relations are a measure of civil society’s presence and strength. True, the research on the divide between the communities is still ongoing, but, at least in Kosovo, the perceptions of interethnic relations are viewed in a positive light. The research finds that CSOs embrace the idea of civic engagement that cross-cuts different communities living in Kosovo and Serbia. They show commitment to citizenship ideals of equality, human rights and integration. Our research also finds that CSOs emphasize diversity and inclusion, in order to enhance the level of civic-mindedness and positive attitudes shown towards people beyond family, friends, and those of the same ethnic group.

However, the sense of identity and belonging is marked with divisive notions of political community that have an impact on social cohesion more broadly, and on the CSOs’ work in particular. Hence, cross-community CSO-led activities are encouraged by the CSOs that have participated in the research, and are perceived as an important goal in the scope of social integration. Cross-community initiatives are valued and perceived to be relevant for social cohesion, local community development and peace-building. Moreover, cross-community initiatives are perceived to be fundamental to the creation and fostering of trust, tolerance, and cooperation. This can be discerned in the following quotes of the interviewees.

“We have always aimed towards cross-community projects. We do cooperate with women in Gorazhdevc/Goraždevac. Any time we embark

on a project, we reach out to the women of Gorazhdevc/Goraždevac.”

*CSO leader #3 Peja/Peć*

“Cross-community initiatives have been part of the project application criteria in most of the international donor schemes for civil society. One of the main criteria of the grant schemes was projects that lead towards peace-building, trust-building and inter-ethnic cooperation, and freedom of movement. It has often been the case that, to develop projects according to this criterion, an inter-ethnic staff was required, too. Thus, all our work has been cross-community with Albanian and Serbian staff and in all the work in the community as well.”

*CSO leader #3 Gjilan/Gnjilane*

“We have partnerships. Currently, we are implementing a project in partnership with an organization whose founders and members are Albanian. There are cross-community initiatives especially around environmental endeavours, especially cleaning of the lake and the river bank. We have excellent cooperation.”

*CSO leader #1 Mirovicë e Veriut/  
Severna Mitrovica*

“It is indeed excellent cooperation. We do have quite a few joint projects. We cooperate with many organizations through projects and activities. We support each other. I can say that the cooperation is excellent. Currently, we are working jointly on a big project with an organization from Prishtina/Priština on youth and women’s issues. We also did work together on transparency-related projects. We work on issues of rule of law, free legal aid, anti-corruption [...] we have cooperation with around ten CSOs south of the river Ibër/Ibar, if not more. Yes, south of the river Ibër/Ibar, as in the four northern municipalities; there are no Albanian CSOs.”

*CSO leader #3 Mirovicë e Veriut/  
Severna Mitrovica*

“The Serbian schools always participate in the activities. So far, it has been great, all the children want to do everything, everyone wants to participate in those activities. It’s not that because I’m an Albanian something is not allowed.”

*CSO leader #2 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

“We have had exceptional cooperation with Albanian women for years... [from] Bujanovac/Bujanoc, Preševo... when the donor comes and sets out a condition of strengthening cooperation, at least that’s our experience.”

*CSO leader #4 Vranje/Vranjë*

Most of the cross-community projects in South Serbia are either regional or focused on Bujanovac/Bujanoc, because of its ethnically mixed population structure. As our research participants explain, there are not many cross-community initiatives in Vranje/Vranjë, where Serbs make up the vast majority (91.67 percent) of the population, or in Preševo/Preshevë where 90 percent of residents are Albanians:

“There is generally no great hatred among citizens, because citizens living in Preševo/Preshevë tend to mutually cooperate and mostly have good relations. But unfortunately, as an organization, we cooperate with other ethnic groups only in Bujanovac/Bujanoc. There is no organization in Preševo/Preshevë that is composed of and led by the representatives of other communities. In the future, why not, they should also seek and strive for something better for the society and the environment in which they live.”

*CSO leader #3 Preševo/Preshevë*

“Very little. Unfortunately, very little. The small number of Serbs in Preševo/Preshevë is the main reason, and the division and lack of mutual trust persist.”

*CSO leader #4 Preševo/Preshevë*

“The only problem with ethnicity in Preševo/Preshevë is that in our sector it is hard to find Serbs or Roma to involve them in the NGOs. That might be the only problem of the ethnicity in Preševo/Preshevë. Nothing else. We don’t see it as a problem that we’re Albanians in Serbia, because this



sector obviously accepts minorities. It's our own field, we belong here."

*CSO leader #6 Preševo/Preshevë*

The research has found that the patterns of cross-community initiatives have related to four areas:

1. Environmental issues;
2. Rule of law and human rights;
3. Inter-ethnic relations;
4. Income-generating projects.

The following examples, based on the research findings, illustrate shared citizen action across communities.

### **Initiative #1 Women's Work in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Women tailors from Istog/Istok, Deçan/Dečan and Gorazhdevc/Goraždevac have joined together under the auspices of the Women's Centre in Peja/Peč in a project responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for non-medical protection masks. This is the second consecutive project in which women across different communities have worked together united by the COVID-19 pandemic, putting into practice their sewing skills, and addressing the need for COVID-19 protection measures, as well as generating income for themselves and their families. This is an ongoing project, financially supported by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo - UNMIK.

## Initiative #2 'Water is Life': Citizens Protecting River Lepenc

Bitia e Poshtëme/Donja Bitina is an ethnically mixed village of Albanians and Serbs. The village became threatened by the construction of the hydro-plants upon the Lepenc/Lepenac river running through the village. The hydro-power plant would dry the village, Albanians, and Serbs of Bitia e Poshtëme/Donja Bitina have claimed. They joined in protests with the slogans 'Lepenc is our water and our food' and 'Water is life'. Both communities have united, as they perceived an immense threat to the livelihoods of their families and the wider community of the Bitia e Poshtëme/Donja Bitina village. Both men and women participated in the protests, and despite the regular use of pepper spray by police in order to subdue them, the protesters were not deterred. As a civil society activist from Shtërpce/Štrpce recounted, more than 200 protests have been held to date. While residents of the village protested, they were also joined by citizens of Shtërpce/Štrpce town: ***"We put aside hatred. We left behind a difficult history. We have to live together, and the safety of our lives here has united us. We protested together against the hydro-power plants from the outset, and will continue to do so, to protect water, life, and our livelihood"***.

## Initiative #3 Together We Are Strong

Thirty women from Roma, Albanian and Serb communities in Bujanovac/Bujanoc participate together in a project that aims to provide them with career guidance, teach them how to create a business plan, and how to write a CV. In addition to these workshops, the project includes panel discussions on violence against women. ***"When the project is over, they will work with other women in their communities. For example, [one participant may] gather 5-6 women and tell them what happened at those workshops and panel discussions, and they will receive a small payment for that... They are very happy, because we have a multiethnic group now because this is the first time [...] When the women arrived, they introduced themselves so nicely on the first day. They were so glad that they will spend time together for the next six months, and they hope that they will continue their cooperation even after the end of the project"*** (CSO leader #3 Bujanovac/Bujanoc).

## CHALLENGES TO CROSS-COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and South Serbia remain constrained by larger social and political challenges, however. Hence the backdrop of cross-community initiatives is politically charged and burdened by the past. The quotes below express how the legacy of the past is troubling today, and especially for younger generations:

“When we talk about the past, yes, there are, there are many pasts, there are different versions of the past. I often feel like we carry the burden of the past in which we were not involved. And I find this unfair, especially for young generations. How far are we going to go with the past? In a not-so-nice past, and the conflicts, there were also people there, and people who could be considered ‘normal people’ were not, I think, directly asked [...] and lots of evil happened. I don’t neglect that, but behind these ethnic labels, some people did horrible things. I think sometimes it’s too much on the past or that this is too much on our back.”

CSOs activist #2 Shtërpçë/Štrpce

“Every problem we have comes from the relations between Serbia and Kosovo – the diplomas and the non-integration of Albanians and the non-recognition of diplomas and the passivation of the addresses and all that – it all comes from Belgrade and Prishtina/Priština. Not to repeat, I am sure that we are hostages of that relationship, which has lasted more than 20 years already; we live badly.”

CSO leader #1 Bujanovac/Bujanoc

However, the research finds that inter-relations in Kosovo are perceived in a positive light among all the participants. Moreover, research participants have expressed that inter-ethnic relations have improved in Kosovo despite the overall social climate being politically charged and ethnically segmented. The research indicates that the Kosovo-Serbia relations, and the dialogue processes in particular, have impacted the dynamics of cross-community initiatives in Kosovo. Hence, cross-community initiatives stand between the politics of Kosovo-Serbia relations and everyday life problems at the local level. The study has indicated that the limited cross-community initiatives are contingent on political issues and the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

In South Serbia, on the other hand, the improvement of inter-ethnic relations is not as visible, as the authorities fuel grievances and citizens feel

stuck on 'a Route 66, a forgotten place that no one thinks of' (CSO leader #6 Preševo/Preshevë) waiting for the final Kosovo-Serbia solution and hoping that such a solution will finally make things better for the municipalities of South Serbia. While the participants describe the situation as stable, one can feel the tensions buried beneath the surface:

"We are all here in a vicious circle, it is very difficult to see a way out. The situation is good in the whole of Serbia, but down here interethnic tensions are artificially created from Prishtina/Priština and Belgrade, and [through the] actions of Prishtina/Priština and Belgrade."

*CSO leader #6 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

"This society is so politicized that [cross-community] cooperation and those who come to cooperate somehow have prejudices. What this side says, what that side will say, there is so much prejudice, we even have divided bars in the city, imagine. Imagine. So, if you look at the essence, the problem is in politics, and I don't think it's a problem in local politics as much as the problem is global politics between Albanians and Serbs. As you can see, the government of Serbia looks equally at an Albanian from Kosovo and an Albanian from the Preševo/Preshevë Valley, although we are theirs. As if we were... second-class citizens."

*CSO leader #1 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

"We live more in a peace [defined] as a 'lack of war'. There is no peace here, so it's state propaganda here, that stability. I think that the situation can change here in a week, and that's why I say that civil society could somehow push for proper peace, peace which doesn't exist, because we only live next to each other, there is no trust in state institutions, there is segregation, you have... when you have a minister of internal affairs who calls you 'Šiptar', you understand. So, we are [...] I'd say we are small Serbian pawns or Serbian Algerians from the French times."

*CSO leader #1 Preševo/Preshevë*

A complaint that agency is being denied to communities permeates the data. The prevalence of this narrative at least partially explains a lack of

activism, and cross-community initiatives in particular, in South Serbia. There are very few CSOs in South Serbia that are trying to overcome this narrative and take an active role and responsibility for the change in their municipalities.

In South Serbia, Albanian activists see the government as responsible for inter-ethnic division, which they believe is strategically and systematically being increased through separate schools, public discourses by state officials, discrimination against Albanians in public employment, non-recognition of diplomas, etc. It does not come as a surprise then that most of our research participants in South Serbia used distance and lack of mutual trust to describe inter-ethnic relations. The architecture and linguistic landscape show no physical markers of ethnic boundaries, yet everyone clearly knows which spaces belong to which ethnic group. While cooperation among CSOs is well-developed, and the situation is described as stable and peaceful, the participants recognize that the communities rarely interact beyond ethnic boundaries:

“Well, it's not that you are not allowed to go, that parents say, ‘You cannot go to a Serbian café’, it is not about that. Whenever I am with Serbs, they come to our cafe and we go to theirs, and so, but only when we have a meeting, that is, an activity or something. Otherwise, we do not go out to the cafes of others, only when we have something to do.”

*CSO leader #2 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

“Serbs and Albanians live together only in professional spaces. Not to mention the private space, but even in public they are simply not together. Now you can see some friendships, but, for example, they are more together in professional life. Of course, you don't have... you can't see Serb-Albanian marriages. So, we live more next to each other than together, I think that's normal.”

*CSO leader #1 Preševo/Preshevë*

“Well, we should focus on interethnic communication, although the relations are not bad, but as I mentioned, I do not trust people from other communities to bring them home, in a way. That is private. As friends, I mean, I do not trust them. Or even when an MTS [telephone company] worker comes to fix the internet at home, I stand over his head. I do not trust them.”

*FGD participant Preševo/Preshevë*

“We have the Trnovac river, if someone comes to build a small hydropower plant, that may be blocked by the inhabitants of Trnovac, but I guarantee you that I would not be able to find four Serbs who would gather and who would stand in defence of the Trnovac river because here the rule is: ‘the Trnovac river, Trnovac – Albanians live there, let them do whatever they want there. Serbs live in Rakovac, as far as I am concerned, and whether or not a sewage spill occurs at the Bujanovac spa, that would be their problem.”

Former CSO activist #4 Bujanovac/Bujanoc

Among the challenges to cross-community initiatives, as the CSOs are seeking common ground and shared civic values, is the language barrier. Our research data finds that the language barrier poses challenges for cross-community initiatives and that English is the *lingua franca*, especially as the language of communication among young people, as can be seen from the quotes below.

“I think the language depends on generations. The older ones are more adjusted to the context. Many Albanians speak Serbian, and many older Serbs speak Albanian. Younger generations communicate in English. Young Serbs speak the Serbian language only, and that’s a huge obstacle in getting to know each other on the human level. And then this is where the division is present. Language plays a huge role. But this can also be overcome. It could be seen also as an advantage.

Sometimes in events, when you have the translation, you have time to think about what you’re going to ask or answer, and you can also hear three languages, two languages. Sometimes it’s nice to hear different languages, but on an individual or person-to-person level, it can be a lifelong obstacle if you don’t get out of your language and comfort zone. [You’re] probably never going to have a chance to meet a young Albanian or a Turk from Prizren, then talk directly and get to know them on a personal level. I see this as a big obstacle. It’s good that there are initiatives for

online language learning. I know some young Serbs that learn Albanian, and I like seeing that.”

*CSOs activist #2 Shtërpçë/Štrpce*

“Younger generations do not learn the language of the neighbour, and because of this they are not able to communicate with each other.”

*CSO leader #2 Mitrovicë e Veriut/  
Severna Mitrovica*

“[We communicate] mostly in Serbian, there are Roma who speak Albanian as well, and some of us [Albanians] speak Romani language, and that’s how we manage to understand each other with our hands and everything... Sometimes with fingers... With arms and legs, with everything.”

*FGD participants Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

Language barriers that exist even in multi-ethnic municipalities are partially explained by ethnic separation in the education system.

“Even during high school years, we’re separated. In my generation, there were seven or eight classes for Albanians, and only one of them was with Serbs. They would learn in our school with a different schedule, we were never in the same place. We didn’t grow up with any Serbs, we lacked contact, and we’re living in Serbia.”

*CSO leader #6 Preševo/Preshevë*

While cross-community initiatives are encouraged by the donors, donor priorities may also affect the motivation of local CSOs negatively: knowing that they have to include an ethnicity component in their project proposals, many of the CSOs do not even go beyond instrumentalist reasons.

“It is better when you do a multi-ethnic [project], when you do something that is always a plus for you, because [donors] always want Roma and Albanians and Serbs to participate.”

*CSO leader #2 Bujanovac/Bujanoc*

The role of donor priorities was particularly visible in Serbia, where cross-community activities are mainly proposed on the basis of donor requirements. While CSO activists are open towards cooperating across ethnic boundaries, and they have developed trust and good relationships with CSOs from other ethnic backgrounds, the motivation for proposing joint

projects does not necessarily come from below, from the needs and wishes of local communities.

## **LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE: PROSPECTS OF CROSS-COMMUNITY INITIATIVES**

Our research confirms that cross-community initiatives are relevant for the transformation of values permeating parallel narratives on the past and oppositional national identifications of 'Us' versus 'Other'. The research has revealed the persisting tension between society and state manifested in weak civic engagement and cross-community initiatives. However, the research has also indicated prospects for the rise of the public sphere through cross-community initiatives cultivating linkages via networks and relationships with citizens and institutions locally, regionally, and internationally. Participants in the research maintain that cross-community initiatives contribute towards a shared public sphere premised on civic values, tolerance, and respect for difference and diversity. In this regard, the CSOs are vessels that give direction and orientation for the future, in spite of the parallelism that persists in the everyday life of the communities.

The research finds that CSOs work towards strengthening the public space in order to sustain a dialogue and develop mechanisms for addressing community needs. Moreover, enhanced civic engagement would contribute to closing the gaps between institutions and citizens, especially by addressing the rights of the most vulnerable social groups. Advocacy, the research confirms, is needed to press government structures for change and ensure accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination. Our research confirms that participatory democracy, along with the rule of law, is crucial for civil society to thrive.

The research has found several fields of prospects for cross-community that have included the following:

1. Advocacy on local community issues and social service provision;
2. Environmental issues;
3. Income-generating projects; and
4. Culture.

Moreover, the research has indicated that for successful cross-community initiatives, CSOs should address the everyday life problems that concern the communities at the local level. As such, they have to resonate with the issues faced by citizens at the personal and community levels and be directed toward institutions, but also more broadly toward fellow citizens, with the aim of fostering acceptance of difference, equality and tolerance for diversity.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-community initiatives can be understood through the relationship of CSOs with constituencies, institutions, and a diverse range of actors. The research has indicated that local CSOs in Kosovo and South Serbia actively seek to reach citizens and cultivate strong constituencies that play an important role in democratization, human rights, and social inclusion.

Cross-community initiatives are critical for bridging the gap between citizens and institutions to ensure equal distribution of rights, promoting a culture of equality, trust, and tolerance. The research finds that there is much to be done to empower the local CSOs and enhance citizens' engagement in the context(s) of a highly politically charged terrain, conflict, ethnicized collective identification and segregation, as well as feelings of alienation due to the high unemployment rate, especially among young people. Altogether, these constraints offer an impetus for CSOs to organize in response.

While the respondents spoke about peace and stability in their municipalities, they were aware of how fragile this peace is, and that conflicts can easily escalate. Civil society could take a more active role in strengthening cross-community relations by deepening cooperation, increasing mutual communication, and making public statements not only in areas such as culture and youth, but more importantly in areas that are considered sensitive and challenging.

The research findings indicate that a great deal of emphasis is given to cross-community initiatives, as they provide an opportunity to re-orient the present for a sustainable and peaceful future. Overall, as the research finds, civil society mirrors the challenges of the processes of peace-building and state-building in Kosovo and South Serbia. Importantly, CSOs herald liberal democratic values of equality, tolerance, and human rights. Indeed, the research indicates that there is much need for CSOs to be fully accessible, participatory, and accountable to the public. Issues that have mobilized citizens relate to human rights and social inclusion, environment, income generation, culture, and sports.

The successful cross-community initiatives that the study has revealed relate to everyday life concerns (e.g., protecting rivers, cleaning of river banks), income-generating projects (e.g., raspberry production; sewing of non-medical anti-COVID-19 masks, training for social service providers), as well as social inclusion and human rights of vulnerable and minority groups (Roma rights, disability rights, reproductive health, gender-based violence) and culture (creative activities for the youth, visiting programs, and the creation of safe spaces for youth).

With the aim of enhancing civic engagement and cross-community initiatives, the following set of recommendations is put forward:

- CSOs need to strengthen cooperation and networking with citizens and encourage greater involvement of citizens in their work.
- CSOs' youth projects should have a regional dimension, a focus on networking and topics of interest (arts, culture, sports), which could then open up space for dialogue on sensitive and complex topics, such as ethnic relations and dealing with the past.
- Civil Society should continue to promote equality, solidarity, and reciprocity, and to counteract divisive and ethnicized narratives on identity and dealing with the past. CSOs should be encouraged to engage with difficult topics and issues that concern communities, and not only foster issues deemed less political in their cross-community initiatives.
- CSOs should invest in communication with the broader public, and actively build constituencies across communities and different social structures. Enhanced citizen participation would improve the public image of CSOs and help to restore public trust in civil society.
- CSOs and institutions should engage in a meaningful dialogue on issues of concern to citizens across communities, with the aim of fostering partnerships and reinforcing a culture of mutual respect, learning, and understanding.
- Institutions should secure a democratic and supportive environment in which civil society is free and independent from the state and any influence of political parties. Moreover, institutions should achieve and guarantee the transparent and accountable allocation of public funding for civil society activities and prevent any misuses thereof. Furthermore, institutions should cooperate with CSOs as partners to respond to community needs and enhance the effectiveness and accountability of public institutions. Implementing these recommendations is essential if institutions aspire to be democratic. More importantly, they arise from institutions' legal obligations, as laid out in the respective constitutions and legislation related to civil society organizing and freedom of assembly. By doing so, institutions would put into practice the content of the laws on freedom of association and assembly and strategies on civil society development. In addition, CSOs should continue to publicly advocate for the respect and implementation of relevant legislation and, through cross-community initiatives, publicly press their local and national governments to secure

a democratic and supportive environment for the activities and development of civil society organizations.

- The donor community should prioritize CSOs' initiatives that bring to the forefront the needs of citizens at the local level, in order to help local community development and social integration move forward for all citizens. Donors and CSOs from the outside (for example, from capital cities), when implementing projects at the local level, should be aware of power imbalances and address these by strengthening the agency of local communities. They should open themselves to communication on the ground, hearing the local voices and exposing themselves to criticism, in order to gain legitimacy. Capital-city-based CSOs should, when implementing projects in local communities, include local CSOs and/or activists on an equal basis throughout all stages of a project, including the conceptualization of project activities, implementation, decision-making, and monitoring and evaluation.

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## **Annex 1. Methodology Workshop Agenda**

### **Wednesday //28 April 2021**

11:00 – 11:30

Session #1 Opening and Introduction

- Opening
- Introduction of participants
- Peaceful Change initiative: Overview and Research Rationale

11:30 – 12:00

Session #2 Introduction to the research project

12:00-12:10

Break

12:10 – 13:15

Session #3 Ethics and positionality

13:15-13:30 Wrap up

### **Thursday 29 //April 2021**

16:00 – 17:00

Session #1 Qualitative Research Approaches on Cross-Community Initiatives

- Interviews and Interviewing
- Q&A

17:15 – 17:30

Break

17:30 – 18:30

Session #2 Focus groups: Philosophy, Criteria and Quotas

18:30 – 19:00

Session #4 Interview questions and focus groups guidelines

- Questionnaire for interviews and focus group discussion guide
- Summary and Closing

## Annex 2. Interview Questionnaire

### Mapping Civil Society

- Could you tell me something about your motivations for civil society engagement?
- What issues does your organisation/initiative mostly focus on?
- How did you choose the area of your work?
- Which groups do you address in your work? Who are your targeted constituencies/beneficiaries?
- What are the main problems in your community/municipality?
- More generally, to someone like me, who does not know the town much, how would you describe it?
  - o How would you describe the civil society scene in terms of numbers, civic engagement, areas of work...? What is the role of civil society in your municipality?
  - o What are the main incentives and obstacles for your work?
- What is the relationship between your organisation and other organisations in your municipality?
- Do you cooperate with CSOs from other towns/ areas/ countries? If yes, please elaborate. If not, why not?
- Are you part of any civil society networks / coalitions?
- Since your municipality is inter-ethnic, how much is ethnicity important in the civil society sector? Please, describe and give examples.
  - o How much do you cooperate and on what issues with NGOs run by members of other ethnic groups? Please, give example or explain why not.
    - What are the challenges/obstacles? What's missing...?
  - o Which issues would benefit from cross-community co-operation?
  - o What is the role of language in these situations?
  - o How would you describe inter/ethnic relations?
  - o How much would you say that the 1990s conflicts affect your work today? In what way the past shapes the present?

### Relationship with Citizens:

- Do you engage volunteers/activists in your work as an NGO?
- Do you and if so, how do you engage citizens in your activities/work?
  - o Can you give us an example?
  - o What groups usually participate in your activities (youth, women, people with disability...)?
- Are citizens/ your target groups/beneficiaries generally interested in your work and why yes/no?
  - o How do you communicate with citizens/ the general public?
  - o How do you communicate with your target groups?
  - o Which channels do you use for communication?
  - o Which language(s) do you communicate in? Please, explain.
  - o Do they ask for your support or report to you on the local issues? Do citizens contact you and why?



- The research studies on civil society in Serbia/Kosovo in general report on low trust in CSOs and weak civic engagement. Could you reflect on it from your experience?
- How would you describe a relationship with local media?
  - o National media?
  - o What are the visibility actions that you employ?
  - o How important is visibility for advocacy? Could you tell us more about your advocacy actions?

#### Local and International Stakeholders

- For civil society, funding is very important. How do you manage to secure funding for your projects?
- Who are your main funders and how would you describe your relationship with them?
- What is your relationship with decision-makers in your municipality?
  - o How much, if at all, would you say that they engage with or shape your work?
- As a citizen, do you feel represented in your municipality and in the country more broadly?
- What is your relationship with bigger international organisations working in the region?
- What is in general your impression on the role of international community for support to civic activism in your municipality and in the region?

#### Closing

Could you reflect on your own results in the field, how would you evaluate your results?

- Would you say that civil society in general has contributed to the local community?
- What are the fields/ issues in which you see a space for civil society and citizens to act? (e.g. environment, human rights, ethnic relations...)
- What do you think is needed for civil society to flourish and make deeper contribution to the issues you have just mentioned?
  - o What is necessary to improve civic engagement/activism?
  - o What would you need more specifically?
- How could citizens be more empowered to advocate for change?
- What can be done to ensure that decision-makers (on any of the levels) hear citizens' voices?
- What could be done to contribute to better inter/ethnic relations to mobilize citizens across ethnic lines?
  - o Would you say that is relevant for the community as a whole?

## Annex 3. FGD Guide

### Research on Cross-community Initiative in Kosovo and Serbia Focus Group Discussion Questions

#### I. Introduction

- Welcoming and introduction of the moderator.
- Presentation of the research topic and objectives.
- Informed consent
  - Data protection
  - Recording
- Presentation of participants

#### II. Relationship with Space and Belonging

- How would you describe life in your municipality?
- How do you think people at your community would describe their living environment? (municipality)
  - How do you feel about living in this municipality?
- What are your favourite spaces in your municipality?
- What are the main events that take place in your community/municipality?
  - Could you please describe the events and the social groups those events attract?
  - Do you participate in them? If yes, what are your motivations? If not, why not?
- When looking at the larger community, what are the most pressing issues citizens are faced with?
- What are the most important social identities in your community?
- How much do you identify with your municipality/locality?
- How would you describe daily life in your community, especially for young people?
- How would you describe inter-ethnic relations today? And what is necessary to do in order to improve the cooperation between communities?

#### III. Social Capital and Community Resources

- What values do you feel are important in your local community? (probe: family; social networks and cooperation; solidarity and reciprocity; equality and diversity, trust and safety, human rights, gender equality, volunteering, religion), and why?
- In terms of education, social services, health, infrastructure, culture, environment, etc., how would you evaluate the resources available in your local community (municipality)?
  - What is your opinion on citizens' access to the available resources?
- How would you perceive the link between citizens and municipal institutions?

- How do you think 'things get done' in your community? (e.g. travel form in and out of the municipality for the everyday needs)

#### **IV. Voice and Representation**

- How would you describe the existing space for citizens' needs in your local community? Do citizens have a voice on the main issues the community is faced with? If yes, please illustrate. If not, why not?
- What would you say are the main reasons for presence/lack of citizens' participation? Could you tell what are the root causes?
- How do you view the overall citizens' trust in public institutions?
- As a citizen of this municipality, do you feel represented in your municipality and in the country more broadly?

#### **V. Relationships with CSOs**

- Do you personally engage in civic initiatives?
  - If yes, what are the main motivations? If not, why not?
  - For those who have experience in civic activism, would you please share with us issues and forms of activism you have engaged on?
  - What are the issues you would be interested to further engage on?
- How do you perceive civil society organisations (CSOs) in your local community?
  - What is the role of civil society in your municipality?
  - Which groups do CSOs address in their work? What constituencies/beneficiaries CSOs target?
  - What needs of the local community CSOs address and how?
  - What has been the impact of CSOs work on the local community?
  - In your opinion, how important is to establish networks or coalitions with other CSOs, especially related to inter-ethnic relations?
  - Do you know any good example of this kind of cooperation? Would you tell a little bit more?
- What are your expectations from CSOs?
- What do you know about CSOs activities in general and cross-community initiatives in particular? What meanings do you attach to them?
- The research studies on civil society in Kosovo and Serbia in general report low trust in CSOs and weak civic engagement. Could you reflect on it from your perspective?
- What are your main channels of information about the work of CSOs in your municipality?
  - How do CSOs communicate with citizens/ the general public?
  - Which channels CSOs use for communication with their constituencies?
  - Which language(s) do you communicate in?

- Do they ask for your support or report to you on the local issues?  
Do they contact/consult the local communities on their actions?
- Do you feel CSOs address some of the issues that concern you personally?
- What do you think are the main reasons that prevent citizens' engagement in CSOs and more broadly civic activism in your municipality?
- What do you think is needed for civil society to flourish and make a meaningful contribution to the society?
  - What is necessary to improve civic engagement/activism?
  - How could citizens be more empowered to advocate for change?

#### **VI. Vision of the Future**

- What are the fields/ issues in which you see a space for civil society and citizens to act? (e.g., environment, human rights, ethnic relations, gender equality ...)
- What could be done to contribute to better inter-ethnic relations to mobilize citizens across ethnic lines?
- How do you envision the future of your local community?
- How do you see your personal role in respect to this vision?

**Thank you very much for your participation in the focus group!**

## Annex 4. Interview Informed Consent

### Pëlqim për pjesëmarrje në hulumtim

Me nënshkrim të këtij formulari të intervistuarit japin pëlqimin për pjesëmarrje në projektin hulumtues, të titulluar **Cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and Serbia**, në udhëheqje të dr Vjollca Krasniqi dhe dr Jelena Lončar, të realizuar nga Fakulteti Filozofik në Prishtinë dhe Fakulteti i Shkencave Politike në Beograd. Qëllimi i këtij projekti është të mbledhim të dhëna rreth gjendjes së shoqërisë civile dhe për bashkëpunimin ndër-etnik në komunat e Serbisë Jugore dhe në Kosovë.

I/e intervistuari/ja pajtohet që intervista të inqizohet dhe që informacionet e dhëna gjatë intervistës të përdoren për shkrim të artikujve hulumtues, teksteve akademike, raporteve, prezantimeve dhe publikimeve tjera të ekipit hulumtues.

Hulumtueset gjatë intervistës do të përgjigjen në të gjitha pyetjet shtesë nga pjesëmarrësit në hulumtim.

I/e intervistuari/ja në hulumtim mund të vendos të ndërpresë intervistën apo të mos përgjigjet në ndonjë nga pyetjet që parashtrohen.

Nëse respondent/ja dëshiron që biseda të jetë anonime, hulumtueset obligohen të mos përmendin emrin në asnjë nga raportet dhe publikimet që përdorin shënimet nga intervista dhe të garantojnë anonimitetin e pjesëmarrësve në këtë hulumtim.

I/e intervistuari/ja pajtohet që emri i tij/saj të përdoret në raport apo publikime në të cilat përdorën të dhënat nga intervista. Po      Jo

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nënshkrimi i i/e intervistuarit/es

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nënshkrimi i hulumtueses

\_\_\_\_\_  
Emri dhe Mbiemri

\_\_\_\_\_  
Emri dhe Mbiemri

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Data

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Data

## Formular pristanka

Potpisivanjem ovog formulara ispitanici daju dobrovoljnu suglasnost za učešće u istraživačkom projektu *Cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and Serbia* kojim rukovode dr Vjollca Krasniqi i dr Jelena Lončar, a sprovode ga Fakultet političkih nauka u Beogradu i Filozofski Fakultet u Prištini. Cilj ovog istraživanja je da se prikupe podaci o stanju u civilnom društvu i mogućnostima za među-etničku saradnju u opštinama na jugu Srbije i na Kosovu.

Ispitanici/ce su saglasni/e da se intervju snima i da se informacije date tokom intervjua koriste za izradu istraživačkih članaka, akademskih tekstova, izveštaja, prezentacija i ostalih publikacija članova istraživačkog tima.

Istraživači/ce će tokom intervjua odgovoriti ispitanicima/ama na sva dodatna pitanja o istraživanju ukoliko ih bude bilo.

U bilo kom trenutku tokom trajanja intervjua, ispitanik/ca može da prekine učešće u intervjuu ili da odbije odgovaranje na neko od postavljenih pitanja.

Ukoliko ispitanici/e žele da razgovor bude anoniman, istraživači/ce se obavezuju da neće pominjati njihovo ime u bilo kom izveštaju ili publikaciji koja koristi podatke iz ovog intervjua i da će anonimnost učesnika u ovoj studiji biti zagarantovana.

Ispitanik/ca se slaže da se njegovo/njeno ime koristi u  Da  Ne  
izveštajima ili publikacijama u kojima se koriste podaci sa  
ovog intervjua.

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Potpis intervjuisane osobe

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Potpis istraživača/ice

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Ime i prezime

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Ime i prezime

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Datum

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Datum

## Annex 5. FGDs Informed Consent Form

### Pëlqim për pjesëmarrje në hulumtim

Me nënshkrim të këtij formulari të intervistuarit japin pëlqimin për pjesëmarrje në projektin hulumtues, të titulluar **Cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and Serbia**, në udhëheqje të dr Vjollca Krasniqi dhe dr Jelena Lončar, të realizuar nga Fakulteti Filozofik në Prishtinë dhe Fakulteti i Shkencave Politike në Beograd. Qëllimi i këtij projekti është të mbledhim të dhëna rreth gjendjes së shoqërisë civile dhe për bashkëpunimin ndër-etnik në komunat e Serbisë Jugore dhe në Kosovë.

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Nëse respondentit/ja dëshiron që biseda të jetë anomine, hulumtueset obligohen të mos përmendin emrin në asnjë nga raportet dhe publikimet që përdorin shënimet nga intervista dhe të garantojnë anonimitetin e pjesëmarrësve në këtë hulumtim.

I/e intervistuari/ja pajtohet që emri i tij/saj të përdoret në raport apo publikime në të cilat përdoren të dhënat nga intervista. Po      Jo

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Nënshkrimi i i/e intervistuarit/es

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Nënshkrimi i hulumtueses

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Emri dhe Mbiemri

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## Formular pristanka

Potpisivanjem ovog formulara ispitanici/e daju dobrovoljnu suglasnost za učešće u istraživačkom projektu *Cross-community initiatives in Kosovo and Serbia* kojim rukovode dr Vjollca Krasniqi i dr Jelena Lončar, a sprovode ga Fakultet političkih nauka u Beogradu i Filozofski Fakultet u Prištini. Cilj ovog istraživanja je da se prikupe podaci o stanju u civilnom društvu i mogućnostima za među-etničku saradnju u opštinama na jugu Srbije i na Kosovu.

Ispitanici/e su saglasni/e da se fokus grupa snima i da se informacije date tokom fokus grupe koriste za izradu istraživačkih članaka, akademskih tekstova, izveštaja, prezentacija i ostalih publikacija članova istraživačkog tima.

Istraživači/ce će tokom intervjua odgovoriti ispitanicima/ama na sva dodatna pitanja o istraživanju ukoliko ih bude bilo.

U bilo kom trenutku tokom trajanja fokus grupe, ispitanik/ca može da prekine učešće u u fokus grupi ili da odbije odgovaranje na neko od postavljenih pitanja.

Ukoliko ispitanici/ce žele da razgovor bude anoniman, istraživači/ce se obavezuju da neće pominjati njihovo ime u bilo kom izveštaju ili publikaciji koja koristi podatke iz ove fokus grupe i da će anonimnost učesnika u ovoj studiji biti zagarantovana.

Ispitanik/ca se slaže da se njegovo/njeno ime koristi u  Da  Ne  
izveštajima ili publikacijama u kojima se koriste podaci sa  
ovog intervjua.

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Potpis intervjuisane osobe

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Potpis istraživača/ce

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ime i prezime

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ime i prezime

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum





Po Jo  
13. Në 12 muajt e fundit, sa herë keni nënshkruar ndonjë peticion?

14. Në 12 muajt e fundit, a keni marrë pjesë së paku në ndonjë aksion/  
aktivitet të shoqërisë civile?

Po Jo  
Nëse po, përmende për çfarë tipi të aktivitetit është fjala

### Opšti podaci o učesnicima fokus grupe

Popunjavanjem ankete ćete nam pomoći da bolje razumemo Vaša razmišljanja i iskustva. Anketa je anonimna. Molimo Vas da na pitanja odgovorite iskreno.

1. Pol: Ž M

2. Godine starosti:

Od 18-24

Od 24-30

Od 31-35

Od 35-40

Od 40-50

Od 50-60

Iznad 60

3. Mesto stanovanja:

Centar grada

Periferija grada

Selo

4. Stepën obrazovanja: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Zanimanje: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Status zaposlenosti:

Zaposlen/a

Nezaposlen/a

7. Kakvo je imovno stanje Vaše porodice:

1. Odlično

2. Dobro

3. Srednje

4. Loše

5. Izuzetno loše

8. Broj članova porodice koji žive sa Vama: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Bračni status: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Da li pratite rad organizacija civilnog društva u Vašem mestu?

Da

Ne

11. Kako biste uopšteno ocenili rad organizacija civilnog društva u Vašem mestu?

1. Odlično

- 2. Dobro
  - 3. Ni dobro ni loše
  - 4. Loše
  - 5. Izuzetno loše
12. Da li ste član/ica neke nevladine organizacije?  
Da                      Ne

13. Koliko ste puta u proteklih 12 meseci potpisali neku peticiju?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Da li ste u proteklih 12 meseci učestvovali u bar nekoj akciji/ aktivnosti civilnog društva?  
Da                      Ne

Ako jeste, navedite o kom tipu aktivnosti se radi. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annex 7. Validation Workshop Agenda**

### **Monday //05 July 2021**

18:00 - 19:00      Research team meeting

19:30                Dinner

### **Tuesday //06 July 2021**

9:30 - 10:00      Registration of participants

10:00 - 10:15      Opening

10:15 - 11:00      Impressions from fieldwork

11:00 - 11:30      Presentation of findings

11:30 - 12:00      Coffee break

12:00 - 13:00      Discussion

13:00 - 13:45      Formulating recommendations and future planning

13:45 - 14:00      Closing

14:00 - 15:00      Lunch