

A Wounded Soldier Fighting on two Fronts: Civil Society Organizations Initiatives Struggling to Overcome the Pandemic Crisis by Practical Protective Means, Volunteerism, Reporting and Awareness Campaigns

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Abstract. Given the fact that the covid-19 pandemic virus has had a pervasive impact on almost every sphere of life globally, it is noteworthy to highlight the role and position of the civil society sector, and this paper intends to do so by striking at one matter. Initially, by highlighting broadly Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) sector in Kosovo, to then explore their response to the crisis, through new multifarious initiatives/activities. The analysis was developed by using, essentially, unobtrusive data and direct non-participatory observations of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Kosovo that have had initiatives against covid-19. Although CSOs were badly affected by the pandemic as such, and the consequences it brought, whether, through measures and/or neglect from the central level, they still found the resources and willingness to launch initiatives to combat the pandemic in one form or different. At different points in time, appeared organizations which among their activities found a place for awareness campaigns, material and financial assistance to citizens in need, production of masks, face shields, and other protective equipment for citizens or health institutions, and providing voluntary assistance as health staff. To link practice with theory, there are presented cases of NGOs that reflect scholarship ideas such as the need to have a classification of CSOs based on activities, the importance of their IT repertoires, coproduction, and especially the response to the crisis. The importance of this study grounds on the benefit it brings to understanding the role and contribution of CSOs in exceptional times of crisis, especially for a society that underestimates and neglects this sector.

Keywords: CSOs, pandemic, initiatives, protective measures, volunteerism, reporting, campaigns

Introduction

A wounded soldier fighting on two fronts is a metaphor, symbolic meaning of which is the work and struggle of civil society organizations and groups, to help the fight against the pandemic, even though in a country and society like Kosovo, they are already struggling to survive and sustain themselves.

Since the first case of the novel COVID-19, occurred in December 2019 until now, authorities in 219 countries have reported over 109.6 million cases of infection and 2.4 million deaths, which continue to rise [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a pervasive impact on almost every sphere of life, globally.

Societies with different economies, with consolidated institutions, and especially with preliminary policies for prevention or dealing with crises, will come out with less damage [2]. But developing countries face such challenges with more difficulties and with larger damages, mainly because they find them strategically unprepared, in the sense of anticipating crises and precede them with reserve resources. As in many countries of the world, in Kosovo it has brought a paralysis of civic life in a given time. Although with great confusion, mostly caused by the political developments and changes in government that took place, the authorities had ordered the closure of public institutions at some points in time, and the cessation of activities of many business sector actors. In this closure, civil society organizations were no exception. In general, new rules have been introduced in order to avoid as much physical contact as possible between people, especially gatherings, but to the organizations whose crucial act is association and engagement, this manifests as a blow in being, as they are essentially limited. In general, CSOs are known for, and are highly dependent on the engagement, involvement or association of citizens towards a common goal, for the purpose of communication, organization and operation towards the achievement of that goal. In addition to their progressive role, they are known for filling small gaps which are neglected by the general social and chiefly governmental attention, such as marginalized and minority groups that are easily vulnerable.

On the other hand, research and documentation of the civil society sector in Kosovo almost always has been poor. Even now, when public attention is overshadowed by the actions the government is taking to deal with the pandemic, and what it is expected to do for the economic recovery as a result of the pandemic, the role of NGOs in this context receives little attention. Nevertheless, CSOs have undoubtedly taken a role by appearing on the front lines against the spread of the virus and the consequences it has brought. In their programs, these organizations have introduced new activities and initiatives, which are diverse but not well known yet, thus they need to be further explored to make a distinction. Its importance lies in the fact that the literature on the status and role or position of CSOs in times of crisis, especially a pandemic, is not sufficiently met, and in this context, a research gap is evident. Except in Kosovo where there are not enough studies for this sector, internationally there are not enough studies for the diversity of CSO activities in times of crisis such as the pandemic. Therefore, this paper will be developed on the basis of a key research question.

RQ1. What are the activities through which CSOs in Kosovo contribute to improving the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic?

The paper will be developed in a structure of four parts, limited within the margins of introduction and conclusions. Initially, theories and previous research are reminded. A brief description of the conception of the CSOs sector will follow, necessary for a better understanding of the landscape of this sector in Kosovo. Second, the research design and the rationale of the methodology used. Third, by classifying and systematizing them by their nature, some of the most significant findings are presented. And fourth, in the discussions, the findings are reasoned by the connection and relevance with the theories taken.

1. CSOs and crisis response, previous research

The civil society sector, although characterized by the heterogeneity of entities, the first step they take in their operational life, is to take the initiative to start something, in most cases from scratch. Similarly

to natural crisis, even public health crisis, which are carried also in other dimensions such as social and economic, bring damage to civil society organizations. It has been noted that in times of economic crisis, the deterioration of the financial situation of CSOs occurs because grants from existing sources such as individual contributors, private foundations, international institutions, or governments decline, and this happens at a time when the need for social services increases [3]. In the case of pandemics, the damage is concerned with the cancellation of projects, the reduction of staff, the inability to physically go to work, but also the endangerment of the health while working.

Nevertheless the crisis sometimes can cause unexpected effects. Despite the damage and difficulties that crises bring, one cannot fail to mention the unexpected effects, which should not be viewed only from a negative perspective. Paradoxically, after the onset of the economic crisis in Greece, Simiti [4] confirms that although it has hit CSOs' financial viability, the solidarity network has grown significantly mainly because organizations have enlarged their scope of activities. Undoubtedly, in case of crises, extra conditions are created for undertaking new activities due to the need, but also because CSOs can adapt to new situations. The response of civil society to crises caused by natural disasters has been documented by various studies. Furthermore, numerous studies suggest positive effects such as the re-consolidation of sustainable civil society from the aftermath of the disaster, such as the Kobe earthquake experience [5]. There is no doubt that the importance of studying and identifying CSOs before and during crises is critical. For this reason, authors such as Towe et al. [6] take the opportunity to identify ways of classifying NGOs and their services, either core or adaptive, as this can contribute to optimizing disaster planning. Furthermore, having in mind the influenza virus subtype (H5N1), Mahmood [7] emphasizes the crucial role of NGOs that can bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, in similar future crises, in pandemic preparedness.

Another important element in this paper is the internet and online platforms. Nowadays, internet access is on a global scale, making it one of the crucial tools for pandemic communication regarding protection equipment, rules, and other information. Even in previous crises, for example, with the spread of the A (H1N1) virus of 2009, Jones and Salathe [8] found that the most common source of information for respondents was the web. For a greater inclusion of online communication modes, this paper is based more on the concept of the Online Repertoires of NGOs that, however, suggests that their participation in the web is generally large, although NGOs with a higher organizational capacity are more distinct [9]. The limitation of face-to-face forms of communication has undoubtedly made communication concentrated by means through InfoTech that operate through the internet. This is all-encompassing, as it includes online channels such as microblogging, social networking sites, or video platforms, but also all other channels that they employ for its online communication [9].

Even during current pandemic, CSOs' researchers found the space to enrich the literature with research related in one form or another to the pandemic. In complex and sensitive situations such as the pandemic, more than initiatives, cooperation between different actors is most important, especially the one with the central system. Similarly but with another term, Ostrom [10] refers to this phenomenon as coproduction, which defines it as a process in which individuals who are not in the same organization use their inputs to contribute to a good or service. On this formulation, Miao et al. [11], presenting a collaboration between civil society and regional development in China during the COVID-19 pandemic, show that the importance of a state-led coproduction is essential for the best management of

volunteerism. And lastly, Jiang [12] at the hand of a case study, examines a small Canadian NGO which makes fabric scrub caps for healthcare workers.

2. CSO conceptualization and perceptions on Kosovo civil society

Regarding the terminology used to describe civil society organizations, in theory, and practice we encounter different terms and acronyms, which sometimes differentiate and sometimes are used as synonyms for each other. The most common are Civil Society Organizations (CSO) which is used to include a wider range of their entire spectrum, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which is used mostly in the sense of distancing itself from government institutions, Nonprofit Organization (NPO) is commonly used to distinguish it from business sector organizations whose primary purpose is profit maximization, or even voluntary organizations highlighting a fundamental and very pronounced feature of these organizations. In the International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO), Salamon and Anheier [13] present five basic features that these organizations share. They have to be: organized, private, self-governing, non-profit distributing and voluntary. Regarding the roles these organizations usually have, Lewis [14] summarizes the work of NGOs in three main sets of activities and roles: implementation, partnership, and catalyst. An organization can have each of the activities or roles, as it can have all three of them, and change it depending on the need and situation.

In this paper, the terms to be used will be CSO and NGO because the first includes all organizations such as informal or unregistered ones, and the second is used because, according to the department of public administration of the Ministry of Interior, every civil society organization in Kosovo is officially registered as an NGO. Nevertheless, being non-profit is also a defining part of the law which regulates these organizations in Kosovo.

Apart from the terminology, before reaching what it is today, Kosovo civil society has gone through various stages. It is important to note that the history of civil society in Kosovo has almost always been characterized by a consistent link with nationalism. Having only a handful of CSOs before the 1999 liberation from Serbia (Ex-Yugoslavia), civil society has been the embodiment of nationalism and the demand for independence from Serbia. Although to a smaller extent, this enthusiasm pervaded civil society even after the war, first with the two largest parties of that time, LDK and PDK, and then with the "VETËVENDOSJE!" (Self-determination) movement [15] which in 2010 ran in the elections and today is the dominant subject running the government of Kosovo. That is to say, the last decade has been quite decisive for the consolidation of civil society in the sense of social-economic development.

CSOs in the sense of NGOs in Kosovo began to appear larger only after the 1999 war, with the advent of international missions. After the 98-99 conflict, it was necessary to redefine the CSOs, because, as Strazzari and Selenica [16] put it, the West was not willing to support someone resting on 'ethno-territorial rights', where there was a risk of instability and ethnic cleansing, therefore the focus had to change, towards the human rights, humanitarian issues, and democracy. In this case, the terminology also changed, where CSOs became NGOs. As Bella-Murati [17] said, many NGOs in Kosovo have been established by foreign donor organizations, which even today remain their main funders. From 65 NGOs operating in Kosovo during the years 1989-1998, of which only five were foreign, by 2004 were registered about 2300 NGOs [16]. As we speak, there are over 10,000 domestic NGOs registered [18],

although a source suggests that only about 1000 of them are active [19]. However, it seems that now is the time when civil society in Kosovo, under the name of NGOs, is gradually consolidating but with a new spirit that aims at democratization, state-building, development and equality, and is more clearly separated from politics.

According to a report that classified NGOs in Kosovo by field of activity [20], most of them belonged to the social fields (democracy, justice, integration of minority ethnicities and gender equality), sports, culture (music, art, languages, and traditions), education, youth, agriculture, etc. It is also evidenced by foreign reports that, in terms of the sustainability of CSOs, there are improvements in every context that concerns this topic. According to the sustainability index of civil society organizations for 2019, measured by USAID [21], Kosovo is considered to be somewhere in the middle of the road to achieving enhanced sustainability, with an overall index of 3.6. This is achieved by marking improvements in the legal environment, organizational capacity, advocacy, service provision, sectorial infrastructure, and public image. Financial viability remains a bit weaker, but compared to previous years, even in this dimension, there have been improvements. Nonetheless, CSOs in Kosovo face numerous challenges, including a lack of access to funds, which places them in an insecure financial position, numerous cultural issues and public mistrust, and legal status and environment that leave much to be desired.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on a secondary sources analysis and the development of patterns from a diversity of examples, namely multiple cases. The study is qualitative since its primary purpose is to explore phenomena instead of seeking to quantify from a population and represent an environment. In the manual for research through library and internet materials, Abbot [22] explains the use of "found materials" as primary and secondary data. This paper developed in this practice, where data is taken from secondary sources such as websites and other online platforms, and various documents on CSO sector reporting during the pandemic. Other authors in the social study argue the presence of a renewal of the traditional methodology of data collection towards substitutive methods, repertoires in digital forms [23]. But in 2021, when plentiful and acceptable data is available through online repertoires, and in the other hand, the impossible work situations, meetings, and physical contacts in general due to the pandemic, have further imposed that this space is filled even more regularly with data. Unobtrusive methods are qualified as qualitative, exploratory and inductive, very suitable for social research in the age of information technology and scientific communication through digital forms [24], such as blogs, websites, forums, and online discussion groups which are widely used as sources of unobtrusive data [25]. That said, unobtrusive methods are not only a supplement to traditional methods of data collection, but also alone are sufficient to build a study in social sciences. A supplement to unobtrusive means would be, what Lee [25] calls, direct non-participatory observation.

The nature of the study is exploratory which includes mostly desk research and aims to understand certain activity which are new voluntary activity initiatives against the pandemic. Although combined and not purely, the design of this research falls more into what Jensen and Rodgers [26] call Pre-post case studies, where case research is done at two different points in time separated by a critical event, which in our case is the pandemic COVID-19. An analysis that aims to understand a certain issue or some of them by looking closely at the details of each, Babbie [27] defines it as case-oriented analysis. Since

this paper is more intended to elaborate on the variety of activities rather than their entirety, the multi-case approach is regarded as more appropriate for two reasons. The activity variation will be thoroughly explored, and the lack of official governmental reporting and information for NGOs in Kosovo imposes such an approach.

Research on the activity of CSOs with anti-pandemic initiatives was initially incited by a virtual meeting of CSOs held in June 2020. It was noted there, although a survey with a large number of organizations was conducted, it was very simple, thus deeper and more detailed research was demanded. After downloading the official list of NGOs registered in the Kosovo Department of Public Administration, filtering of them was done based on the list of organizations from the GRAS website (www.grasks.com), which enabled us to some extent to identify active organizations. This was necessary as the official list contains all the organizations registered since 1999, but does not indicate which of them are active, an issue for which a study assumes to be only about 10% of them. They were also hinted in consultation with an organization that monitored the work of CSOs, after confirming that they belonged to the list of registered NGOs. The third step was to search organizations in research engines, identify their websites, and information on organizations' pandemic-related initiatives.

The figure below shows how this study was framed in terms of its conceptual and methodological aspects.

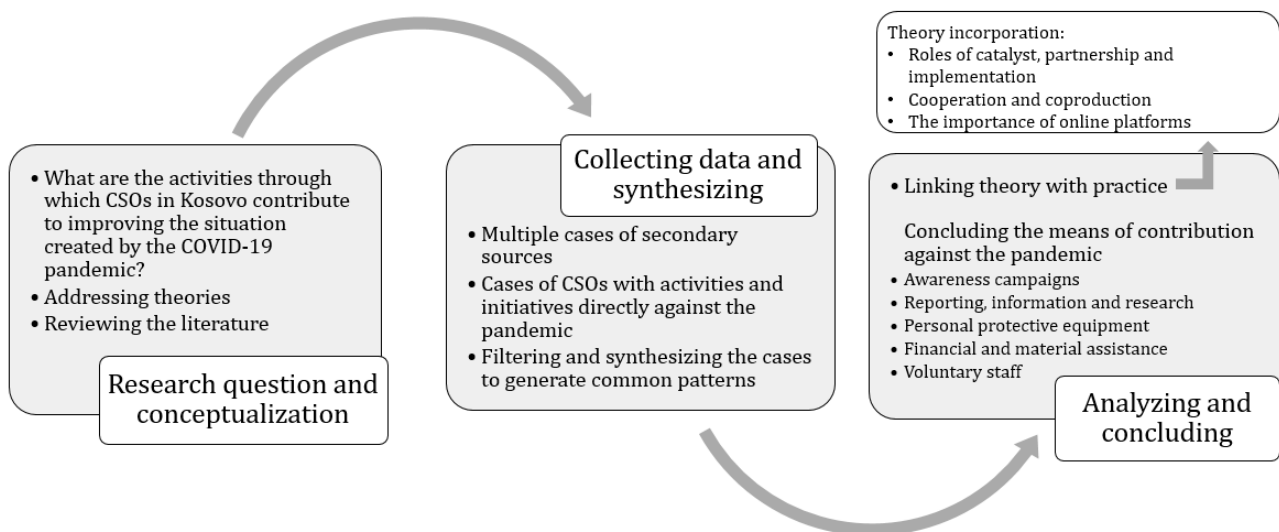


Figure 1. The research framework of the study

Source: Formulated by the author (2021)

4. COVID-19 pandemic impact in Kosovo CSO sector

In Kosovo, as in other Balkan countries, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the work of the entire CSO sector. With financial difficulties to cover salaries and regular administrative costs, putting in danger the continuity of the organizations' work and existence, their sustainability has been radically compromised, despite their tendency to continue activities with the public and communication with partners through online platforms [28]. According to a preliminary survey conducted in the spring of 2020 by Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, the majority of CSOs worked remotely (60%), and 20% of

them closed down their offices [29]. In terms of financial support for CSOs and government involvement in policy-making, the case of Kosovo is characterized by disinterest and neglect. Generally, due mainly to a culture that does not appreciate and perhaps does not sufficiently understand the weight and potential of civil society, and that governments' focus is usually on other topics, mainly politics.

That even the time of the pandemic makes no exception, is thoroughly understood with a sentence from the executive director of one of the oldest and largest NGO, KCSF, in a meeting of many NGOs, who said: "as usual, the government has forgotten us" [30]. He reasons with the arguments that access to information has declined significantly, there has been no support for civil society, for some minor interventions they had to contact the responsible ministry, and above all, they have not been involved in any dialogue or drafting measures to prevent the pandemic. The support from the government towards civil society from the beginning has been very minimal. To put a lid on, was the law aimed at Kosovo's economic recovery after the negative impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, voted after many failed attempts, in early December 2020 [31], where NGOs were not included in any way.

In addition to the many negative impacts, some NGO executives also appreciate the positive effects. Albeit not all were ready for an organization to receive services online, whether due to lack of knowledge or technology needed, NGOs identified new followers who benefited from their services. Another aspect where the way the process has been online, has been the public application for funds. Large organizations such as KCSF which distributes funds for projects to smaller organizations has broadcast the application process of each of the organizations, on Facebook. It took place in a form which subsidizes to a higher level of transparency, in addition to being easier in terms of public access.

5. CSOs response through initiatives

This chapter is the main part of this paper because by presenting the main types of CSO activities towards improving the situation with the covid-19 pandemic in Kosovo, is attempted to answer the research question. There is no doubt that the initiatives of CSOs during the pandemic are characterized by the diversity of their forms. They saw that in addition to direct intervention, where there is a lack of human resources with volunteers, material and financial resources with protective equipment, groceries, and other items, it was also necessary to do more in raising citizens' awareness of compliance with the COVID-19 rules. Mainly because political instability during this time was manifested by a questioning of the legitimacy of the new government, it made government-citizen communication much more difficult. For this reason, switching to discursive initiatives was a necessary addition and online awareness campaigns were the right way to go. An important point that needs to be mentioned is that the high enthusiasm of local NGOs to deal with the problems brought by the pandemic, through more activities, noted at the beginning of the first cases (first wave), did not continue in "the second wave" although the country remained much worse at that stage.

The figure below attempts to present a broad overview by categorizing the groups from civil society which have contributed, the forms or categories of the main activities through which was carried out, and the entities which have benefited from these activities. The thickness of the arrows corresponds to the connection density of the activity with the actors involved.

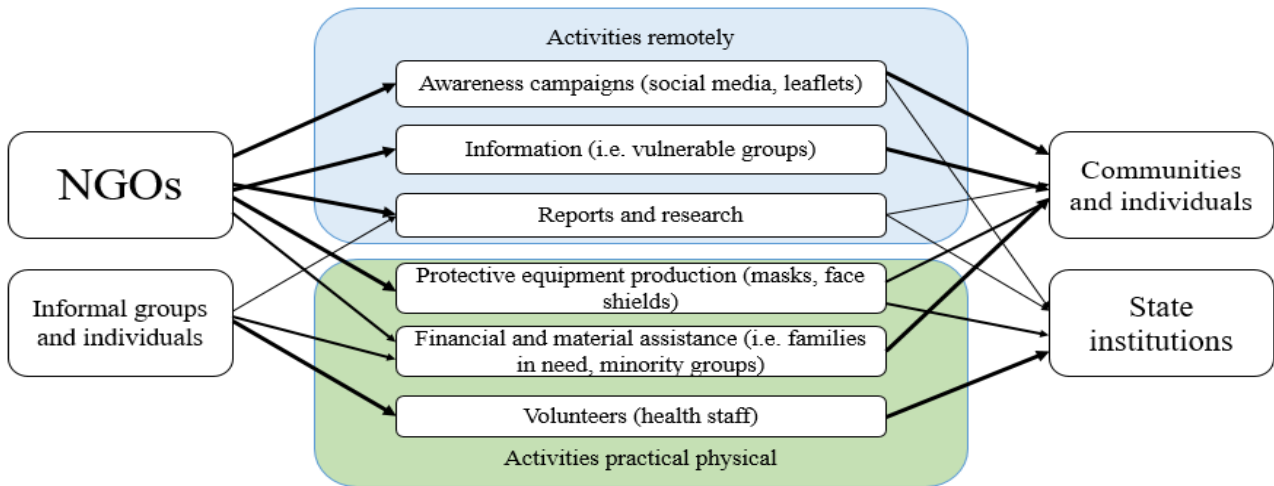


Figure 2. The means by which the initiators aim to tackle the pandemic

Source: Formulated by the author (2021)

The following subchapters will address these means one by one, using concrete examples of cases drawn from secondary sources.

5.1. Initiatives with personal protective equipment (masks, face shields)

First of all, as expected, NGOs in the field of innovation are those that offer practical solutions according to their usual ways of working, although NGOs in general, greatest contribution has been in the form of donations. When it comes to the assistance of health institutions, a considerable number of local and foreign organizations have made donations of this kind. For example, in early June, "help-Kosovo" donated 50,000 surgical masks for the Kosovo University Hospital and Clinical Service, distributed as needed in the wards where patients with covid-19 were treated [32]. In mid-September 2020, the BONEVET organization, from the field of innovation and technology, through the campaign "Bashkojuni luftës" (join the war), manages to fulfill its aim to produce and donate more than 17,000 face shields, which primarily was 15,000. These shields produced by this company were intended mainly for health workers but also public workers of institutions such as customs, police, and other Kosovo authorities.

Once again, the importance of external support in the form of donations, organizations, and foreign missions, is emphasized and put even more attention when the need for them increases. The International Committee of the Red Cross - Mission in Kosovo changed the course of their activity program, towards helping the most affected communities [33]. In addition to the families of missing persons assisted with cash support, their targets were also the Institute of Forensic Medicine, Kosovo Correctional Service, and the Asylum Center. They received Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as face shields, surgical caps, disposable isolation gowns, gloves, masks, and hygienic items, such as hand disinfectants, hand soap, and liquid soap. Regarding other health professional kits such as tests, in mid-October, when the second wave of the new cases of infections expected to begin, OSF of George Soros, through Kosovo Foundation for Open Society network, donated 100,000 RT PCR tests to the Kosovo government, valued at \$ 1.5 million [34]. In similar forms, there have been many individual cases that have designed and produced masks improvising at home, which have been donated to family members, colleagues, or various association groups in the communities, albeit in quantities smaller. Thus, the

provision of personal protective equipment has been one of the most pronounced ways of CSO activities against the pandemic.

5.2. Voluntary staff

Although in a state of a pandemic, when the presence and physical work of volunteers is viewed with skepticism due to the high level of care and caution required, one of the ways of contributing against the pandemic has been volunteering. In terms of volunteer work, the response of NGOs and civil society groups has been immediate. Since the beginning of the pandemic, volunteer groups, mostly informal, have appeared ready to assist the public sector, mainly health institutions. Nevertheless, there were also cases like the "Grupi i Vullnetarëve Kundër Coronavirusit" (Volunteer Group against Coronavirus) which was initiated by a registered and quite large environmental NGO, "Let's do it Kosova". Through this initiative, it has managed to gather close to 6000 members, ready to assist Kosovo institutions in various forms, at least in contribution to awareness campaigns, and over 160 doctors and nurses and over 100 other volunteers who are ready to go out on the fieldwork [35].

Volunteering has been very important for state institutions, and essential especially for the improvised and temporary ones such as the Quarantine Center where the persons who had returned from abroad stayed, the Call Center for Covid-19 which served for information and consultations for the citizens with signs or symptoms of the virus and the Psychological Helpline which served to help citizens cope with the time of isolation and psychological consequences [36]. All three centers were staffed by volunteers. Undoubtedly, the students of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Prishtina were the most distinguished. At the beginning of April, a number greater than 300 volunteers participated in all these centers where there was a need, except the academic staff of Faculty that are also health workers [37]. As a result, physical voluntary work, most frequently as staff, has been unprecedented assistance in their duty, filling the gaps where have appeared.

5.3. Reporting and information

Another aspect where the activity of CSOs has been regular is reporting, evaluating, and providing alternatives for possible solutions to specific or overall problems. Initially, for the role of the CSO sector itself, with a sample of 152 organizations participating in the study, KCSF [29] immediately made a basic assessment of the impact of the pandemic on their work. It is important to have an overview of how such a blow affected their work at the very moment when it took place in the form that the government decided to ban almost any activity, except those for basic needs. Another initiative related to reporting during the pandemic was made by a network that includes four other NGOs, which presented the way in which Kosovo municipalities have dealt with the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic [38]. In addition to presenting the main problems and challenges of each municipality, the research also provides recommendations on how and where action should be taken. It also offers the willingness of NGOs for assistance and cooperation, in areas where they have the opportunity.

Except what is mentioned above, the experience with organizations in the field of innovation in Kosovo during this time highlights the role of CSOs as a catalyst, through which is achieved the interconnection of different sectors in the form of cooperation, for a specific social purpose. A concrete example is a

cooperation between two startup businesses and the ICT community, which donated to the Kosovo government "Kosova.Health" platform, which contains the main data on the COVID-19 virus situation in Kosovo and the connection with WHO [39]. The importance of this case is big because it was a very quick response from the initiators, and knowing the importance of accurate and complete information, especially at such times, this platform became a state official. It brought not only statistics but also other sections such as Self-evaluation, Covid-19 symptoms, Preventive Measures, and Sign-up as a volunteer. Another case where the direct support of CSOs to state institutions occurred was online learning. When the government decided to close schools and continue teaching online, BIRN Kosovo and Internews Kosova organized this process by directly assisting the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, by developing infrastructural capacities with adequate platforms and professional expertise [40].

CSOs play a crucial role also in the sense of filling the gaps left by the government at all times, not to mention in times of crisis. Given that in addition to Albanians, there are other minority ethnic groups that live in Kosovo, and that Kosovo is known for governments that leave many gaps, including the latter, it is the CSOs who are often presented as alternatives being close to minority ethnic groups. Even during the pandemic, they faced various problems, ranging from the lack of information. This is mainly due to the low access to information technology, which is due to the poverty that characterizes these groups, but also the negligence that characterizes the approach of the government to them. Even now, about a year with the pandemic situation in Kosovo, the government generally provides information only in Albanian, and sometimes very rarely in Serbian, but not in other languages such as Roma. During the pandemic, there were concrete cases, such as KFOS [41] through an emergency project which aimed to ensure the well-being of members of these communities, to support them in the field of education, namely in the online learning process, the support of civil society and the media of these communities so that they can receive information in a language they can understand and support their community in this difficult time. As a response, reporting, research, and evaluation, as well as the dissemination of appropriate information, whether for the present situation or even guidelines and recommendations, have not been lacking and were frequently used, especially remotely.

5.4. Awareness campaigns

Virtual forms of work or remotely have taken up a lot of space in CSOs, especially when it comes to activities that have communication with the public as their basis. Nowadays, Facebook has become a platform to which a wider mass of the population has access, which enables the receipt of information in real-time. It was naturally understood by NGOs, which had encouraged to have initiated online campaigns. In mid-June 2020, a CSO network Platform CiviKos, in collaboration with several other networks and organizations launched an online awareness campaign "#VendoseMasken" (#putonthemask), voluntarily, which began with a symbolic action by distributing masks [42]. The organization also compiled digital information leaflets through online platforms with the basic rules of protection from the virus, such as wearing protective equipment and keeping distance. In addition to the hashtag campaign on social networks, this was accompanied by a symbolic act with photos, where people post a personal photo with the mask on. However, the receiving of the message, and even less, the influence to spread this discourse, was not at the highest consideration. Although the metaphorical form of the message and the image designs were creative, the message was not widely spread, mainly

because the online platforms of NGOs in Kosovo are not considered to have a large number of followers, based on authors' observations. Another organization, "TOKA", invites its followers to join online campaigns like #ConnectedbyAction, initiated by the British Council, telling their stories of how they are coping with the pandemic [43]. They also created a group on social media like Facebook, where members mainly exchanged ideas on virus protection, health care, creative ways to spend time in isolation, and more.

Even for the second wave period, respectively before the start of the large increase of cases for the second time, there were initiatives for awareness campaigns. In mid-September [44], "Me Dhe Për Shoqërinë" (with and for society) launches an awareness campaign aimed at informing citizens about this pandemic and at the same time advising them on the steps they need to take to protect themselves from infection. The main forms through which this was done, were social media. Through posts with texts and images promoting social distance, washing hands, receiving news only from official sources, they attempt to change habits through attractive expressions, such as "foot shake better than handshake". Similar forms, simple but creative, have been initiated through various online channels to shape a discourse that aims to raise awareness, provide proper information, develop new habits which prevent and protect against infection.

6. Discussions

The central theme in this study is the new initiatives as organizations or initiatives of organizations, groups, or individuals of the civil society corpus as activities. It is not just about new organizations created and formalized after the onset of the pandemic. It is also about any form of civil society organization as new activities, exclusively related to the covid-19 pandemic, within existing organizations in various fields, the adaptation of activities in a way that also contributes to protection against the virus in addition to the primary purpose of the activity, and the joint activities among CSOs or with individuals outside them. Such a circumstance brought a series of elements that served as a ground to give a new impetus and spirit to the work of NGOs. In this regard, the study also came to highlighting some roles and functions of NGOs in Kosovo that, until this point, were dormant. Towards the citizens directly and through or with government institutions, at least four roles and functions observed: initiator, assistant or collaborator, substitute, and observer or pressure force. Clearly, the roles mentioned by Lewis [14] are seen in each of the CSOs' activities in Kosovo, regardless of whether it is one of them or all three together.

The weight of initiatives in such cases is burdened mostly by volunteerism, especially in those activities not supported by external funding. For activities in the form of social media discourse or message delivery, there is not necessarily a need for material or financial resources, except for a computer connected to the Internet and the will for it. Similar to the definition of Nitschke and Donges [9], online platforms or repertoires have become a powerful weapon of distributing and imposing certain discourses. Various organizations have advocated and virtually called for respect of basic rules and care. But based on observation, such voices were difficult to be heard in a "choir" whose central theme was politics and maneuvers that occurred during 2020, which even for the standards of a politically unstable government like Kosovos', were quite surprising. However, the messages of NGOs through their platforms, whether websites or social networks such as Facebook, in addition to being timely and easily

accessible to citizens, have been creative and simple to understand. Sometimes even better reasoned than those coming from state institutions.

Reasonably the most important role played by civil society has been that of the government partner, as a collaborator or substitution. In another study this process is known as coproduction [10]. The need to intervene adequately at the right time and place, however, must be led by central institutions, to be kept manageable, contrarily, the possibility of harming by various activities, just for the sake of goodwill, would risk increasing. Last but not less important, their role as observers, pressure forces, or as Lewis [14] would call them, catalysts, is undoubtedly present against one or more governments that cannot be said to have everything under control. More than some basic rules or decisions for health protection, CSOs also take care of their democratic aspect based on fundamental freedoms and rights such as that of movement.

The failure of organizing and engaging NGOs happens because there is no classification of organizations that would divide them based on their activities, in which the government could plan and organize based on the needs coming from crises. Although there has been no coordinated planning and organization of the sector as a whole and the initiatives and activities have been mostly sporadic, they were scattered both in the geographical context and areas of action, even to the standard that most NGOs are concentrated in the capital.

Once again, this study confirms that, in addition to the negative effects brought by the pandemic, it cannot be ignored or left without mentioning the enthusiasm as a new spirit of CSOs as a counter effect, as a result of creating new conditions for coping. In some cases, this enthusiasm is seen as excessive or with poorly reasoned content, as it was at the beginning of the pandemic, for the very fact that it faded more and more during the rest of the sequel. Excessive enthusiasm is evident due to the pandemic situation perceived as a natural disaster, consequently, some of the "anti-covid" activities were in contradict precisely with the basic rules of protection against infection. It happened mostly when the purpose of the action was to intervene in secondary levels of damage such as the aggravated economic situation, and leave aside or forget something more primary like health.

7. Conclusion

Because crises affect the most sensitive points, in the case of CSOs, small, community-based organizations are the most crippled. Apparently, they are the ones most endangered, mainly due to access to a limited number of funding sources. In our case, it was clear that larger organizations and different networks of organizations are less affected by the crisis, mainly because they have access to a diversity of funding sources and have more sustainable donors. Consequently, in addition to directly supporting and serving citizens, the support of larger organizations and networking organizations towards small-scale and community-based organizations seems to be crucial to their continuity and survival in times of crisis. Having problems in many aspects of functioning and facing challenges in many areas of civil life, civil society in Kosovo did not stand idly by even to this challenge that came from a crisis like the pandemic.

Although at the economic level their contribution can be considered symbolic, it came in various forms and methods, offering and being offered, mainly to the targets where the need was big, and the ones

"forgotten" by the government. This speaks to the vigilance and creativity of civil organizations to discover the weakest points, where they could interfere with their activities. A considerable number of NGOs, taking into account reporting, proper information, and research, produced a whole of reports and other works, related to the pandemic impact in different areas and levels. Activities in the form of awareness of the basic rules of protection implemented mainly virtually have been a tool, difficult to notice but essential to give direction to the social discourse on protection from infection. In terms of human resources, NGOs and various civil society groups came forward and assisted state health institutions. In the supply of state institutions and communities with EPP, of great importance were also foreign organizations and missions or such donations that play an essential role in their functioning. Other activities include material assistance, financial assistance, and other forms. Despite the difficulties that Kosovar civil society is facing, on the one hand with the pandemic and on the other hand with the political instability which has interrupted the work of the two governing cabinets in a very short period and caused early elections, civil society still found ways to introduce new activities in their anti-pandemic programs, overall to a symbolic extent in proportion to the capacities of the sector.

Naturally, there are limitations to this study, commencing with the topic, which limits it in terms of particular initiatives and activities, and the location, which is focused on only one country with a highly distinct environment, society, and politics, Kosovo. Due to its nature, this paper generally does not claim to be fully representative of NGOs and the civil sector in Kosovo because it is limited in a few multiple cases with secondary data, mainly some prominent NGOs and CSO networks, which had anti-pandemic initiatives. As a result, future research into the impact of the pandemic on CSOs and the damage they inflict should be conducted in more depth. It should also be based on primary data and contain a representative number of civil society organizations.

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