



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
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# VECTORS FOR CHANGE?

The role of civil society in curbing corruption in a post-socialist and post-conflict setting –The case of Kosovo

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## Abstract

This thesis analyses the role of civil society in attempting to curb corruption in a post-socialist and post-conflict setting. The aforementioned settings have previously been studied separately, leaving out the context of societies experiencing a double transition both from socialism and conflict. By conducting a field study in Kosovo, the double transition is studied by collecting primary data from 11 semi-structured interviews with members from both civil society and actors working with civil society.

The thesis is explorative and aims to contribute to theory development where Kosovo is considered a typical case. The theoretical framework is composed of previous studies' expectations and new insights from the material, shaping the analytical scheme. Five analytical themes are used to explore the mechanisms of civil society's work: understanding corruption, influence in curbing corruption, challenges when curbing corruption, cooperation, and influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting.

The findings demonstrate that civil society is quite free in its possibilities to curb corruption because the Kosovo government does not constrain them in this regard. Civil society can, however, be influenced by the agenda of international donors and is at risk of being politicized. Nevertheless, civil society faces its main challenges on the ground level, which can limit their role in conducting effective work against corruption. One of the most interesting findings demonstrates that civil society in Kosovo might be freer than in other countries in the Western Balkans.

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# 1. Introduction

Corruption's destructive effect on states and its population is well known. Consensus exists among researchers that corruption affects all levels of society ranging from creating distrust in democratic institutions to fueling economic inequality and poverty (Rose-Ackerman, 2016). The serious threat to prosperity, democracy, and human wellbeing that corruption causes has generated several suggested solutions from the academic community (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017). To combat corruption, researchers commonly suggest the need for increased accountability to treat corrupt practices. A typical example of accomplishing accountability is an image of citizens going to the voting booth. However, holding already established structures of society accountable can be made possible, as suggested by researchers, through the use of civil society as watchdogs.

The interest in including civil society is displayed in the creation of an 'anti-corruption industry,' where actors such as governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots movements come together to solve the issue of corruption (Sampson, 2010). This has been applied by international donors when granting funding to societies facing corruption in the belief that each actor cannot tackle the challenges alone. Theoretical assumptions from previous research suggest that the role of civil society should be to include awareness-raising, monitoring of the state, and partnership building in their work, while simultaneously adding pressure on the government to expose corruption (Ralchev, 2014). The level of engagement from civil society varies from one setting to another where some settings are considered more difficult to operate in than others. These more challenging settings are characterized by a history of mistrust between the state and citizens. It has been acknowledged that civil society in countries with a socialist and conflict past face challenges when trying to curb corruption, due to the environment in which they are operating (Belloni, 2012; Johnston, 2005; Howard, 2011; Tisné & Smilov, 2004). To complicate matters, these settings have mainly been explored independently, overlooking the experience of a double transition from socialism and conflict (Belloni & Strazzari, 2014). Moreover, a lack of qualitative in-depth studies, which include first-hand experience from those operating in these fragile environments make it necessary to further explore the role of civil society in this context.

This study consists of primary data including informant interviews with members of civil society and actors working with this sector to exhibit civil society's role in curbing corruption within a post-socialist and post-conflict setting. The main findings of the study, with Kosovo as a case example of a double-transition country, demonstrate the need for collective action among several actors to curb corruption. Furthermore, the study indicates that Kosovo's civil society is viewed as relatively free in being a vector for change, despite requiring international donor funding and carrying the luggage of a socially divided society. Events of the past are made visible in the fight against corruption, but they do not hinder civil society's overall ability to carry out its responsibilities.

## 1.1 Aim and research question

This study aims to analyze the role civil society plays in the work against corruption in post-socialist and post-conflict settings. In doing this, I conducted informant interviews with actors holding expert knowledge in the field, including members of civil society and actors working with the sector. This study is explorative and aims to contribute to theory development where Kosovo is used as an example demonstrating civil society's role in settings that have experienced both socialism and conflict. By exploring this, the thesis will contribute to an understanding of how civil society views its own role as well as how other actors view civil society's role due to corruption being a problem affecting all sectors of society.

The main contribution of the thesis is to provide insight into how this role plays out in the context of experiencing a double transition from both socialism and conflict.

The issue will be addressed through the following research question:

*What is the role of civil society in curbing corruption in post-socialist and post-conflict settings?*

## 2. Previous research

With corruption being seen as a widespread problem across the globe, previous studies have taken a great interest in the subject and have suggested several different approaches to tackle the challenge of curbing it. Moreover, different societal contexts can play a part in understanding how to tackle corruption effectively. However, most studies only focus on separate parts of a society's history despite there being multiple changes to consider. In this section, I present previous studies on Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans in the field of post-conflict and post-socialist settings. This is followed by an explanation of what these studies lack when formulating the research gap. The terms socialism and communism are used interchangeably through the thesis as the interviewees expressed different terms when describing their past. Both terms can be applied to former Yugoslavia which Kosovo was part of (Jović, 2009).

The need for combining two research fields is emphasized by Schmidt (2007), who describes the difficulty in finding consensus among researchers on what works when it comes to CSOs' (civil society organizations) engagement in anti-corruption efforts in post-socialist states. Research on anti-corruption and post-socialist settings have for a long time been isolated from one other. Uhlin (2010) acknowledges that there is agreement among researchers studying civil society that those in post-communist settings are weaker than civil societies operating in Western European contexts. Hence, there is a need to study civil societies in post-communist settings. Uhlin's (2010) explorative study, containing original survey data from Latvia, demonstrates the weaknesses of civil societies in post-communist settings as consisting of a small member base where there exists a struggle to mobilize people for civil society activities. Furthermore, foreign donors' support of civil society in post-communist Latvia has professionalized the sector. An interesting finding from the case study is that the country's civil society in the early 2000s was non-political and did not act as a watchdog over the state's power; this slowly changed after joining the European Union (EU). However, the study did not include the subject of corruption but shows relevance to this thesis since it illustrates that by conducting an explorative study, new insights can be gained.

A researcher holding a different approach is Zakaria (2013), who through a cross-sectional study argues that the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe can no longer

be explained by their legacy of communism. By including countries in both Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, it is explained that new generations are leading these countries and that distrust in institutions that communism fostered is no longer persisting. Instead, corruption has replaced communism, which has generated a lack of trust in society and is in turn affecting civil society. The results show that civil society is affected by the perception of corruption, trust in others, and confidence in government. This serves as an alternative explanation to the one relating to their communist past, but I would argue that the latter two could also be a reflection of the past. Furthermore, Zakaria's (2013) study excluded the case of Kosovo, which demonstrates a research gap.

Additionally, Le Billon (2008) states the need to deepen research on post-conflict corruption as much of the work is produced by aid agencies or research institutes in the policy-oriented direction. The author conducts a quantitative preliminary analysis consisting of corruption perception indicators looking at the risks of corruption during transitions to peace. The findings suggest that e.g., a lack of transparency and accountability can be found among foreign donors during peacebuilding processes, which runs the risk of undermining the integrity of reconstruction initiatives. Despite this thesis not addressing peacebuilding directly, it is a part of several post-conflict countries' histories where it describes NGOs as being left with the majority of resources since donors did not want to support governments with funding. This demonstrates the importance of NGOs and explains the trust they still receive from the international community in post-conflict settings. Furthermore, corruption in post-conflict settings can be described according to their history of war breaking down governmental structures and going into a "survival mode" where misuse of power becomes acceptable. This can give an understanding of post-conflict corruption in general but there is a need for detailed studies of the specific context, the socioeconomic situation, and the power relations taking place in each case (Le Billion, 2008).

Van Leeuwen & Verkoren (2012) continue the discussion on post-conflict societies by channeling their experiences with organizations striving to strengthen civil society in post-conflict settings in a literature review. The authors highlight that state and civil societies are different from those who have not experienced a conflict and should be treated according to their own needs. Their key message is that studying and understanding the various meanings

and characteristics of civil societies in these types of settings are required in order to consider what works best for each society. The authors additionally acknowledge the need to further explore state-society relations on the local level to understand what type of trust, beliefs, and challenges local governments encounter from society.

Initiating this type of context-driven research is stressed by Belloni & Strazzari (2014) who put forward Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo as examples of experiencing a double transition from both conflict and socialism, which many international actors tend to forget. Through qualitatively examining the politics of transition in these countries and identifying corrupt behavior they argue that the international community has indirectly supported patronage. This was made when pushing for development within civil society by not taking these societal transitions into account. Requirements for funding during the transition period after war often involved establishing partnerships between CSOs and local authorities in order to push for sustainable domestic governance. However, this pressure instead covered up for the domestic authorities when allocating assets to their own clientele. Despite this, donors such as the EU still hold CSOs as an important vector for change. In the case of Kosovo's post-conflict development, the problems started to show as CSOs evolved into a more comprehensive and leading actor. This led to the cutting of clientelist relationships and the emergence of civil society taking on a watchdog role. Hence, the study puts forward that power relations between domestic (and international) actors disturb endurance for letting go of corrupt practices. Additionally, emphasis is placed on anti-corruption work more often answering to international requirements than local sensitivities and demands. Here, a deeper understanding of the relationships is required in order to not overshadow what is considered a deeply rooted domestic problem.

Mungiu-Pippidi's (2010) study demonstrates that anti-corruption projects with some impact in Central and Eastern Europe amounted to only one-third of the used database consisting of 417 projects in 16 countries. The successful projects shared the ingredients of civil society targeting corruption directly, working with cohesive and varied coalitions where media and individuals were a central part and their establishment started from the bottom-up where donors came in second to provide support. Indeed, donors' interests lay in contributing with support to fight corruption, especially in line with the EU's enlargement requirements.

Continuing the research on anti-corruption, Mungiu-Pippidi & Dusu (2011) analyze civil societies' role by looking at the impact of a coalition between CSO and education stakeholders. This is done by evaluating perceptions of corruption in Romania's higher public education system through a survey study. By evaluating the integrity and ability of universities to manage corruption, civil society filled the need of assessing the performance of its public institution, leading to a second round of surveys conducted following up on the results. Here, the universities could improve their results after receiving custom-made recommendations. Additionally, an Ombudsman of education was established with the support of a CSO, resulting in the resolution of several corruption cases without involving the judicial system.

When viewing the environment in which civil society operates, Grødeland & Aasland (2011) look at the ability of NGOs to hold a watchdog role while surrounded by a historical culture of informal practices relying on contacts. NGOs in post-communist states tend to be composed similarly to those operating in countries that have not experienced this kind of past when it comes to e.g. qualified staff with higher education. Nonetheless, this does not mean that they are exempt from taking part in informal behavior. The findings of the elite, in-depth interviews with NGO representatives from Eastern and Southern Europe and quota-based elite surveys show that a combination of reasons such as national culture and transitions from socialism play an essential part. The representatives from Bosnia and Serbia additionally brought up the consequences of war and conflict. Acting informally has become a habit when solving problems displaying that NGOs in post-communist settings are exposed to informal practices to the same extent as, for example, state institutions or local government. However, the results indicate that it is not a severe problem to the extent one might expect with more than half of the interviewees seldom or never using contacts either for private or professional gain. Furthermore, a watchdog role can be obtained as it is demonstrated that NGOs that are well established and known tend to stick with official procedures, especially if they receive support from donor funding when problems arise. Although Kosovo is not included, the study emphasizes what types of practices exist among NGOs in a post-communist environment, where informal practices can either be used in legitimate or illegitimate ways.

A study that focuses exclusively on Kosovo is Alidemaj and Haxhiu's (2021) research which looks at CSO involvement in decision-making processes at the municipal level. Civil society's

engagement is studied through their activity, and relationship with state power for mutual interaction. Through interviews with civil society representatives from different municipalities, findings show that the suggestions put forward to the municipalities tend to be ignored. This has resulted in civil society not being able to partner with municipalities despite the legal framework requiring public consultation in all decisions concerning the general interest. However, the findings likewise show that this varies depending on the municipality, with results from Pristina showing a stronger partnership concerning NGOs having closer relations to municipal institutions on developing the education system. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the partnerships that do occur between the municipal institutions and civil society often concern drafting public policy or agenda-setting, but seldom last through final decision-making processes. Hence, civil society tries to take an active role despite an unfavorable environment. Alidemaj and Haxhiu's (2021) study focuses on the perspective of civil society representatives, and it gives valuable insight into the situation of Kosovo's civil society. However, it neither takes into account the perspectives of actors working with civil society nor the corruption aspect.

## 2.1 Research gap

As can be seen above, the previous research has stressed the need for more context-driven studies on post-conflict and post-socialist civil societies as they encounter different challenges due to their complex past. Although there are studies regarding the challenges and limitations faced in these societies, few studies address them together despite several states and their civil societies being shaped by a double transition. Although studies have found consensus that civil societies operating with a past of socialism and conflict can create limitations in their possibility to fight corruption, there is still a lack of knowledge on what works concerning civil society's involvement in these kinds of settings. In addition, due to much knowledge being produced by international actors or mainly focusing on their role in these settings, there is a need for addressing it through a more local perspective where the actors closest to the research subject can give their perspective.

This contribution of an explorative study offers a comprehensive analysis of the role of civil society in the context of experiencing both socialism and conflict. This is done by understanding

the mechanisms and the challenges of civil society's role when attempting to curb corruption. Additionally, adding to theory development can generate knowledge of new mechanisms occurring in societies experiencing a double transition. The quantitative cross-case studies leave out the in-depth knowledge to find out what these mechanisms are and have therefore missed an opportunity to gain insights for theory development. Moreover, several studies are not based on primary data from the cases studied. Consequently, I take the possibility to conduct informant interviews by carrying out original fieldwork, trying to understand civil society's reality through the perspective of five analytical themes: understanding corruption, influence in curbing corruption, challenges when curbing corruption, cooperation, and influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting.

Despite this thesis not being comparative in its approach, it gives an analytical framework that can be applied to comparative studies relating to the findings of Kosovo as a case experiencing both socialism and conflict. Emphasis should also be placed on the missing literature on Kosovo, where previous studies do not address civil society's impact and experiences with corruption in the case of Kosovo. The studies above demonstrate that new insights can be gained for each case explored in the post-socialist and post-conflict settings.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The following chapter begins by defining the key concepts of the thesis. This is followed by three theoretical segments which are recurring in the research on civil society and corruption. These parts include discussions and expectations shaping the theoretical framework according to civil societies' role in curbing corruption, the implications of a communist and conflict past as well as the need for cooperation among actors.

#### 3.1 Defining key concepts

##### 3.1.2 Corruption

Corruption can be described as a complex concept to define since there is not one definition that manages to catch all nuances of each corruption case. One popular definition among international actors is from Transparency International (TI), which today holds the position of the largest non-governmental anti-corruption organization. They define corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (TI, n.d). This can catch a more extensive scope of practices that are considered corrupt but can be argued to neglect that each case requires its own response. Difficulties defining the concepts are further deepened by identifying it as a social concept where different social norms and cultural contexts take place (Cheng & Zaum, 2012). Sandholtz and Koetzle (2000) highlight that practices that can be considered harmful in one society are viewed as necessary or even correct in another context. To distinguish common aspects of corruption in different settings, three main elements are acknowledged: 1) Distinguishing between the public and the private sphere where the duties of the public obligations diverge to benefit one's private circle, 2) a transaction where one offers an inducement to a public official to gain something favorable and 3) a behavior departing from the everyday norm viewing corruption as incorrect.

It is not only the problems of identifying the concept that becomes important to highlight since a way of understanding its complexity can be made by placing it through different forms. One of the most frequently used forms of corruption is the categorization of grand and petty corruption. Petty corruption is visible where the “seller” and “buyer” are present to each other through, e.g., bribes between civil servants and individuals. On the other hand, grand corruption is hidden in institutionalized corruption, where figures such as politicians and elites use their

position to achieve power and capital. Abstaining from corrupt behavior becomes less appealing when needed to last in their powerful place (Mashali, 2012). Uslander (2008) portrays grand corruption as stirring up more distress among people than petty corruption since it is viewed as being linked to inequality. Those taking part in grand corruption are usually few. In contrast, petty corruption occurs among several rooting it as part of a system making it acceptable even if it is considered wrong.

Corruption will, through the study, be undertaken as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (Transparency International, n.d). However, in order not to ignore factors outside of this scope, this will be combined with both grand and petty corruption, whereas Belloni (2012) acknowledges that post-conflict societies hold both types. Moreover, the focus of the study is directed toward civil society’s role in curbing corruption, where their working areas may stretch over both forms of corruption. The broad term is applicable to avoid missing vital aspects where each participant can understand the concept differently.

### 3.1.3 Civil society

There are different understandings of how to define civil society. A widely adopted definition that will be applied through the study is: “the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values’ (Spurk 2010: 3). Relevant to the aim of this study is to catch the role civil society holds where Schmidt (2007: 211) summarizes the commonly ascribed role by stating:

”It is supposed to build partnerships, provide links between public actors and the business community and between international actors and domestic contexts through information, mediation, and education. At the same time, civil society should put pressure on the government and expose corruption”.

Ralchev (2004) exemplifies its working areas by publishing Corruption Perception Indexes, raising awareness about anti-corruption campaigns, conducting educational material, and acting as an advisory actor. Furthermore, it is emphasized that NGOs and media can be used simultaneously with the term civil society (Schmidt, 2007). The government of Kosovo,

through years of drafting an anti-corruption strategy, has positioned NGOs under the headline of civil society, which makes it appropriate to undertake a broader definition of civil society, including relevant actors that are considered to be a part of the term (Republic of Kosovo, 2017)

### 3.2 Civil society's role in curbing corruption

Although involving civil society is viewed as a tempting instrument among researchers and international donor agencies, civil society is constructed differently and, in turn, holds different levels of strength and impact. Civil society's role as a key actor is steered by the context they operate in, where Grimes (2013) finds three necessary conditions to be in place for civil society's possibility to enhance societal accountability; free media, government transparency, and political competition. Regardless of civil societies' density, civil society alone can not be considered as effectively monitoring and keeping a watchdog role if these conditions are not in place. Accordingly, if political competition is present, civil society representatives are, to a greater extent, expected to align with the opposition to detect corrupt behavior among those in power. Transparency eases the space for civil society to pick up on grievances and hence start investigations on the matter. Here, free media is essential to provide and spread information and acknowledge violations. Moreover, civil societies allow the public to organize and demand transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights (Tusalem, 2007).

Furthermore, civil society's engagement can be divided into acting according to two types of collective action: one being a reaction in the form of protest after, e.g., a corruption scandal, and the other working in a proactive form regardless of unforeseen conditions through monitoring and controlling corruption. The latter might not draw the public's eye but conducts equally crucial practices "to change systems of favoritism, clientelism, and corruption" (Grimes, 2013: 6). Additionally, it has proven to improve institutional performance, especially in those cases where civil societies can still be considered as undergoing development (Mungiu-Pippidi & Dusu, 2011). Therefore, this study derives from analyzing civil society's role through the proactive form of collective action. The expected responsibilities can be viewed as the mechanisms that civil society uses to curb corruption. The examples of holding a watchdog role, giving advice, monitoring governments, and providing educational information are all included when evaluating civil society's influence in curbing corruption in this study.

On the other side of the positive impacts, civil society is believed to have a limited role and could, in some cases, generate corruption instead of preventing it. Gibelman and Gelman (2004) acknowledge that organizations tend to take advantage of the many times valued position they hold by society, getting away with misconduct. Among the recurring wrongdoings are, e.g., mismanagement of resources or supporting activities outside the organization's purpose. These can continue due to the lack of a system of accountability through checks and balances and a lack of internal controls going through vital components of the NGOs such as staff, clients, and programs.

Sustaining accountability in civil society is argued to be related to the consequences of external funding (Townsend & Townsend, 2004). NGOs tend to be financed by donors, making them accountable to the donor community while leaving out the accountability towards their actual users. Additionally, the internal strength of the working team can vary depending on their motivation. The set of employees might be motivated due to their strong engagement to change but might as well view it as just a career path. The dependent factor of financing becomes evident in the cases where even the most dedicated NGO directors have to accept a project to generate resources for the organization to keep its staff while making sure it fulfills the purpose of the NGO. Greenlee, Fischer, Gordon, and Keating (2007) add to this theoretical assumption by arguing that there is no guarantee that NGOs have the needed staff to handle finances correctly, making them prone to occupational fraud. This occurs in the belief of the organizations being trustworthy and thus avoiding inspection.

As demonstrated, civil society has a contested role. Still, there are reasons to believe civil society does have an impact, where specific mechanisms must be in place to label them as effective (Grimes, 2013). The purpose of the thesis is not to evaluate civil society according to these mechanisms but rather derive from the point of view that civil society does have an impact in curbing corruption, where it may differ depending on the society it is studied in. The position civil society holds might also allow them to escape falling into being considered corrupt. However, the risks of civil society generating corruption should not be ignored. As the thesis's interest is to examine the role of civil society, it is most fitting to combine both perspectives, as it can offer a more distinct analysis of the role without assuming it to have a positive or negative impact beforehand.

### 3.3 Civil society in post-conflict and post-socialist states

Post-conflict and post-socialist states share common attributes as both have undergone, or are still undergoing transitions to democracies. Additionally, this includes a common set of important challenges to consider studying a ‘fragile environment’.

In the case of post-conflict states such as Kosovo, the donor community and policymakers have turned to civil society to be a part of solving the corruption and mismanagement spurred after periods of war (Paffenholz, 2010). However, the role of civil society in these settings is contested and often described as having a dual role (Belloni, 2012). On one side, civil society fulfills the donor's expectations of acting close to the people where its efforts include training, monitoring, and implementing policies. On the other side, due to experiences of conflict implications such as abuse, damaged trust, and social divides could all reflect on the organizations. In turn, consequences such as clientelism and corruption are at risk of taking root *within* these organizations. Since the thesis aims to analyze the role of civil society today when curbing corruption where it carries the luggage of a complex past, an inherent need to understand how to approach this environment becomes essential. Therefore, the dual role is applied thought the thesis to explain how the past can have implications on civil society's current work. It combines the general responsibilities of acting as watchdogs to detect corrupt activities while simultaneously monitoring cooperation with the central and local government without failing to acknowledge possible misconduct by themselves (Belloni, 2012).

Difficulties are profound in post-conflict societies, such as obstacles to finding qualified staff, which can slow down the process of effective work. Other challenges, such as current staff not wanting to cooperate with civil servants, could further weaken civil society (Johnston, 2005). Additionally, the staff composition can differentiate compared to countries that lack this type of historical past, as in the case of post-socialist states, highly qualified individuals are desired. Furthermore, this gives reason to view it more as a full-time job since organizations operating in these societies do not depend on voluntarism and instead provide salaries. This is interesting as it is widespread in the Western Balkans and might differ from traditional NGO values in societies without a socialist past which often builds on voluntarism (Grødeland & Aasland, 2011). I apply the composition of staff as part of the theoretical framework to identify if this

can be concluded for the case of Kosovo. Moreover, this could provide examples of what kind of values members of civil society have and if these differ due to their working being set in a post-conflict and post-socialist society. I apply this to the analytical scheme as the members' motivations to be a part of civil society can be argued to affect the influence they hold when trying to curb corruption.

Both post-socialist and post-conflict societies are affected by a past where trust towards strangers or organizations is not guaranteed. Today, this is visible in the CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) by civil society being weaker than many expected after the communist fall. During the communist era, civic engagement was required out of obligation, which created a low willingness for actual contribution. Furthermore, the importance of relationship-building during the states' control made people turn to family and friends to be able to freely express themselves on matters characterized by politics in the public sphere or earn goods and services that were otherwise unavailable in a society running on shortages. The disappointing performance of the political and economic development after the era of communism adds another layer to the skeptical view on organizations (Howard, 2011).

Similarly, in post-conflict societies, a lack of trust can spur if civil society acts too close to the government, where clientelist networks can form (Tisné & Smilov, 2004). Furthermore, this creates limitations on how civil society can execute its power because fear of retaliation or being accused of cooperating with the government can lead to self-censorship. In contrast, according to their watchdog role, it should be the opposite. However, the limitation has made civil societies appeal to international standards and norms when taking a position against the governments and thus challenging misconduct (Belloni, 2012). Due to Kosovo receiving significant support from the international community, it will be considered in the analysis. In contrast, one can expect civil society to hold these international norms in the fight against corruption.

Uslaner (2008) demonstrates that states holding low levels of trust also have a high level of corruption. Belloni (2012) adds that allegations of corrupt behavior among civil society in this type of setting are damaging the reputation and trust of these organizations. Moreover, the

reputation of the organizations is affected when they by foreign assistance enter professionalism where detachment from original purpose and roots can take place.

The challenges mentioned above set the background for addressing civil society's role in the analysis and can give new insights into how these problems are suggested to be solved. The notion of possible distrust against civil society is included, mainly due to the following theoretical section where cooperation between actors is crucial.

### 3.4 Facilitating cooperation for anti-corruption

The need for cooperation among actors from different sectors has been emphasized by scholars and donors, arguing that civil society can not tackle the challenges of corruption alone. Sampson (2010) phrased this as 'anti-corruptionism' where knowledge, people, and funds operate together. The growing interest in the question of anti-corruption has initiated training to improve governance, identify bribes, and monitor exercises. Hence, becoming its own 'industry' where it can be considered a booming industry if maintaining a problem on the policy agenda, captivating more attention, and generating resources.

Establishing coalitions between actors such as government agencies, grassroots movements, and NGOs has been considered contested coming from the background of the Balkans and Eastern Europe (Sampson, 2010). The history of mistrust between state and citizens and a transformation from state-managed economies to democracies makes these regions figurative of the origin of the anti-corruption industry. However, forming a collaboration between the different actors can create constraints in executing their work if, e.g., a grassroots actor aims to oppose state actors. Despite this, instead of viewing each other as counterparts, the anti-corruption industry has resulted in movements turning into lasting professional activities, meaning a shared table with governments, civil society, and the private sector. However, it is acknowledged that 'anti-corruptionism' should not be viewed as a definite successful recipe as the industry coexists with the corruption it is combating, risking being present among all actors involved (Sampson, 2010). As described above, trust in civil society can impact its status and work. Still, according to 'anti-corruptionism,' this applies to all actors involved and will hence be treated accordingly as part of the analysis.

For a 'shared table' to take place, where the need for this to exist will be the deriving point thought the analysis, political will is argued to be a key factor, considering both national and local government. Post, Raile & Raile (2010: 659) defines political will as a "common understanding of a particular problem on the formal agenda." This can be combined with the concept of public will, where Raile, Raile, Salmon, and Post (2014) states the need for a shared understanding of a specific problem and resolves to tackle the problem through continued collective action. Accordingly, discourse fosters possibilities for adjustments as stakeholders involved in policy change receive a chance to establish what type of similarities and differences they hold, facilitating mutual accountability (Raile, Raile & Post, 2021). Brown (2007) argues that anti-corruption engagements will be dependent on the response to the question "is leadership provided from the highest levels of government?" where the perspective of political and public will agree, acknowledging that social change issued by citizens and nongovernmental bodies will flounder if governments resist supporting the change (Raile et al., 2021). Even if the authors do not address political and public will to curb corruption, it contributes to this thesis through its line of argument about social change and how this can be achieved. I argue this to be notably suitable in the case region as Southeastern Europe's civil society has benefited from engaging in dialogue with diverse actors. Moreover, the concept of political will recur with governments initiating contact to gain competencies in anti-corruption work from the NGOs (Ralchev, 2004). The notion of mutual understanding of the problem is addressed by examining if civil society and the actors they interact with view the problems of corruption similarly.

The need for political will from the highest level of governance does not always constitute the decisive measure for change. Cooperation with civil society on the local level can depend on a few politicians ready to meet for a discussion. In this exchange, civil society gains access to crucial information needed to take preventive measures or promote anti-corruption policies in the local governance (Huss, Bader, Meleshevysh, & Nesterenko, 2020). Offering and sustaining dialogue instead of confrontational methods when executing advocacy is shown to have greater effects when communicating with government actors. Hence, if civil society portrays itself as experts, it can engage authorities through constructive proposals. However, in the cases of low political will, civil society has no choice but to execute pressure through confrontation (Huss et al., 2020; Harasymiw, 2019). This gives reason to believe that civil society does want to build

relationships with state actors. It occurs primarily because it is the best alternative for change, where cooperation is viewed as more effective than confrontation. Since the role of civil society is being analyzed according to the approach of facilitating collaboration, political will is addressed as equally important regardless if it is coming from the central or the local government. This enables a deeper understanding of civil society's role in curbing corruption. Additionally, the above mentioning of political will has demonstrated that when taking welcoming actions at the lower levels of government the involvement of civil society can give sufficient results.

To summarize, the framework for this thesis relies on previous research's findings of what can be considered when studying civil society. Each case should be treated differently but has common attributes where the theoretical framework highlights; 1) that civil society can have an impact, 2) that the post-socialist and post-conflict environment can play a part in the execution of their role in curbing corruption, and 3) that civil society cannot fight corruption alone. Based on what the theoretical expectations have already demonstrated, I summarize these in an analytical framework that is operationalized further ahead. The analysis is conducted according to five themes: understanding corruption, influence in curbing corruption, challenges when curbing corruption, cooperation, and influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting.

Given that the theoretical framework consists of chosen perspectives from previous research, there is a risk that other perspectives that could be useful for the study were neglected. Using certain concepts and assumptions from different theories is to investigate the problem in a more precise way that is suitable to answer the research question (Rienecker, Hedelund, Stray Jørgensen, & Lagerhammar, 2014). As mentioned, the purpose of the study is not to evaluate what mechanisms are in place for civil society to have an influential role but rather descriptive in the sense of contributing to the puzzle of civil society's position with a dimension of how the past plays a role today in curbing corruption. Scholars have highlighted the limitations of civil society's role with an additional lens to post-socialist and post-conflict environments (e.g., Gibelman & Gelman, 2004; Belloni, 2012). This thesis combines both the opportunities and obstacles for civil society. However, a combination of the theoretical perspectives where it does not take pre-departure in the positive or negative effects it could have when fighting corruption

allows analysis in the light of both spectrums. This results in providing the most justifiable picture of civil society's actual role.

## 4. Method and material

The following section reflects upon the chosen research design and an explanation of the decision regarding the selection of interviewees, case selection, and the operationalization of the theoretical framework resulting in an analytical scheme.

### 4.1 Research design

Due to the aim of the study being to examine the role of civil society in curbing corruption with the example of Kosovo, the ambition was to gain in-depth knowledge from actors with first-hand experience in this type of setting. Therefore, I conducted semi-structured informant interviews with civil society members and actors working with civil society. The method aims to obtain specialized knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable or difficult to access (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns, & Wängnerud, 2017). Hence, collecting primary data through informant interviews became especially suitable due to the exploratory aim of the thesis.

In informant interviews, the participants are considered to carry a truthfulness as they convey their expertise on the topic the researcher aims to answer. These types of interviews are not required to answer the same questions due to the possibility of different perspectives on the same matter. The choice of exploring the role played by civil society in curbing corruption through informant interviews has been made considering objectiveness as different individuals working in civil society or having been in contact with them are included. If the interviewees' information is considered as holding truthfulness, a greater level of reliability could be achieved. Moreover, various people were included as it generated a possibility for me to confirm if the given information corresponds among several actors.

Additionally, the interviewees acted as primary sources. This means that they were close to the actual research object, where each individual held informed perspectives and experiences on the work undertaken by civil society. Therefore, it was deemed as having higher-level trustworthiness than if actors who only would retell the information constituted the selection (Esaiasson et al., 2017). By applying a qualitative method through interviews, detailed knowledge of how a conflict and socialist past might affect Kosovo's civil society today can be

gained, whereas this can not be showcased in written documents. Here, the thesis validity or the method examining what it intends to study can be met (Kvale, 2007).

The semi-structured character of the interviews was relevant to let the interviewees expand beyond the definite questions asked and be able to include unprepared questions arising during the interview. The need to answer all interview guide questions is, however, of the same importance as if the interviews were to be fully structured. Still, in the delivery of one answer, the respondent can conclude several questions creating a more flexible environment driven by the participant (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Furthermore, deriving from open-ended questions suits the chosen methodological approach of conducting interviews with informants as it allows them to exemplify their answers by drawing from their expertise (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Due to the purpose of the thesis being to gain information and insights into civil society's role in the post-conflict and post-socialist setting they operate in, it is necessary to acknowledge the value of not only referring to their substantial expertise as informants. The interviewees carry a valuable understanding of the setting, which refers to their *own* experiences combined with their expert point of view. This combination was made visible in the analysis.

## 4.2 Case selection – Kosovo

The main interest of the thesis was to catch civil society's role in post-socialist and post-conflict societies and be able to draw conclusions based on these settings. The geographical area of the Western Balkans was of interest where the majority of countries have experienced a double transition where Kosovo was chosen with the background of being a typical case. It serves as an *example* representing the studied phenomenon, namely civil society's role in curbing corruption in these settings. Many societies have endured events positioning them in similar post-periods with common theoretical expectations, such as the case of Kosovo. Hence, the case study showcases details from a typical case to identify findings and broader implications that are useful for theory development generalizing beyond the single case (George & Bennett, 2005).

Even if Kosovo shares common characteristics with the rest of the region, a background of the setting of Kosovo is provided to understand the choice of study object and how it can generate generalizability.

Kosovo holds an interesting history of a robust civil society during the pre-war period and the fall of Yugoslavia. It was a part of establishing a parallel system opposing the Serbian government. In 1989 the Albanians, the majority population in the area, were excluded socially, economically, and politically from society by Serbian rule, which formed the parallel and clandestine socio-economic system (Rrahmani, 2018). This has created the foundation of today's society. While Kosovo still deals with not being fully recognized as a sovereign state since it proclaimed its independence on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, internal problems such as corruption prevail.

However, an improvement was reported in Transparency International's *2021 Corruption Perception Index*, where Kosovo ranks 87<sup>th</sup> in the world with a 39 on a scale from 0 (very high corruption) to 100 (very free from corruption). This can be considered a positive development compared to 2020, when Kosovo scored 36 points (Transparency International, n.d). Despite this, in October 2021, the European Commission recognized in its annual country progress report of potential candidates for EU accession that Kosovo still faces difficulties adopting a strategic framework for anti-corruption. Hence, the European Commission stresses the need for political will to tackle the challenges (European Commission, 2021).

Change in political will might be ongoing since Kosovo in February 2021 entered a particular year, seeming to have elected its first 'stable' government consisting of a coalition of the former opposition parties, *Vetëvendosje!* and *Democratic League of Kosovo* (FHI 360, 2020). The coalition government was elected with strong rhetoric of tackling corruption (Wintour, 2021). It is yet too early to evaluate if the government will have the lasting result of being considered stable but due to political deadlock and snap elections leading up to the current government, the work on corruption took hold. This can be exemplified through the National Anti-corruption Strategy 2018 - 2023 not yet been adopted (OHCHR, 2021). Kosovo serves as an excellent

example to undertake the aim of the study because the strategy includes various civil society actors, whereas NGOs fall under the same category showing incentive from the government wanting to have civil society in the process of curbing corruption

In the thesis's initial phase, the object of study was to be narrowed down to only examining civil society's role in relation to the local government. The focus was directed towards the relationship with the municipality of Pristina due to the availability of the civil societies having their offices in the capital. After thoughtful consideration, it became evident that civil society interacts with actors on all levels in such a small country like Kosovo, which redirected the focus to derive from mainly civil society's role and perspective. Due to the central level of government showing initiative to cooperate, it constituted an essential part of the study. Still, since previous research has emphasized the need for further studies of the relationship with the local government, it was also included. Additionally, one of the objectives for local government in the next mid-term period is "Strengthen partnerships between local government, civil society and businesses to create active, comprehensive and cohesive citizens" (Republic of Kosovo, 2021). This demonstrates that cooperation with civil society is welcomed. It becomes essential to investigate if the government's strong rhetoric in the fight against corruption trickles down to the local level.

The Public Registry of NGOs announced that Kosovo has 10,759 organizations as of December 2020 (OHCHR, 2021). Even if all of these do not work with issues regarding corruption, it demonstrates that this sector is not silent. After the war, the international donor community supported Kosovo's transition to a democratic system, where civil society initiatives still receive significant support. However, this support demonstrates that civil society is still under development, as it has been reported that only a part of the registered organizations operates (Vllasaj, 2020). As this brief background of the case presents, Kosovo can be described as a typical case for civil society in post-conflict and post-socialist settings according to three conditions: 1) it is still developing with the help of the international community, 2) it engages in cooperation with actors they should also keep a watchdog role over, and 3) they are partly dependent on political will to execute their work.

Even if civil societies' role was discussed from an overarching geographical perspective in Kosovo, the field study took place in the capital due to the accessibility of interviewees being located in the city. Pristina can be considered a most likely case, meaning that if the theoretical ideas are not supported in this case, they most likely will not get support anywhere else (Esaïsson et al., 2017). Since the central- and local government and the organizations are all located in Pristina, it became an appropriate choice for collecting the empirical material. Additionally, as different partnerships and conferences where several actors meet are held in the capital, one could argue that the interactions begin there (OSCE, 2019).

The exclusive focus on Kosovo as a case study does create limitations for the possibility of generalizing the result to other cases since a comparative approach between countries is not included. However, as previous research has mentioned, the field of both corruption and civil society often differs depending on the context, which enables a possibility to explore several perspectives that could be lost in a cross-case study (Gerring, 2007). Additionally, with Kosovo as a typical case with a combination of the research question being rather general and the composition of the population being homogenous enough to other issues, comprehensive insights can be gained through a single-case study (Esaïsson et al., 2017).

### 4.3 Participants selection

To practically get a hold of potential participants, it is recommended to research the setting of the study by advising people familiar with it (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Therefore, a researcher familiar with the environment and the Swedish Embassy in Pristina was contacted, where I got valuable advice on how to contact the participants. By request, contact information for potential interviewees was provided. Before requesting their contacts, independent browsing on what actors are active today was done. The draft for The Kosovo Anti-Corruption Strategy 2018-2022 provided names of organizations under the category of 'civil societies' being a part of a working group drafting the strategy. The same strategy for the years 2021 – 2023 can be found but this only state that civil society is a part of developing the strategy without mentioning the organizations/platforms' names. The content of the two strategies is in several sections identical and has been developed over the years by the Anti-Corruption

Agency. To fulfill the purpose of the thesis, these documents are not further discussed. Due to the aim of the study focusing on civil society's role, the document from 2018-2022 was appropriate to identify what actors have expertise on the subject of corruption. The strategy was used as inspiration for finding relevant actors where some were selected, followed by snowball sampling. Appendix 1 includes a short description of each civil society organization or civil society platform interviewed.

Snowball sampling is described by Bryman (2004:101) as “the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others.” It is common for the interviewer to end an interview by asking if there are other suitable candidates to interview (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). To contact other potential interviewees, I asked if they could give suggestions of people from civil society and actors working with civil society. In this way, the provider of contacts had understood the aim of the study and could accordingly give recommendations for further contacts. With this type of sampling method, it is unlikely to have a full generalized representation and external validity. This argument is commonly addressed by not being as central in qualitative research as in quantitative analysis. Furthermore, several limitations that snowball sampling holds include the risk of being advised on participants that are not relevant for the study, not being able to receive information about new potential participants, or that all recommendations through their everyday interaction with one another, can hold similar values (Bryman, 2004; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

Bearing this in mind, it is formulated as a request and not a demand when asking about additional participants. Several interviewees gave names and professional titles of people working for known organizations acquired during the independent search for organizations. When asking people at the governmental and municipal level to get their perspective on civil society, it was essential to highlight that the purpose is not to get their view on the specific civil society organizations. Hence, no “control” of how effective the particular organization was to be carried out. This can be considered a limitation of the sampling method. It creates the risk of people only giving names of individuals with a known positive experience with civil society or their organization. As described more in detail below, this was addressed by asking open-ended questions not directed towards a particular organization or initiative.

Additionally, the researcher contacted in the initial phase of the study could provide examples of contacts without including civil society's suggestions.

#### 4.4 Interview structure and interview guide

The interview guide was structured based on central concepts from the theoretical framework. Some aimed to catch factual answers, and others gave room to their insights and thoughts on the post-socialist and post-conflict environment. The questions were then categorized according to the five themes in the analytical framework, which I present further below.

At the beginning of the interview, I clearly stated to the interviewees that both experiences and their thoughts were of interest. By doing this, they were not only viewed as primarily giving the needed facts, which could remove any feeling of providing a "wrong" answer. When conducting respondent interviews, a greater achievement of validity can be ensured rather than the use of informant interviews since the study object's perceptions and views generally cannot be considered wrong (Esaïsson et al., 2017). Accordingly, the interview guide consisted of questions catching both the interviewees' expertise and thoughts, which opened up for more in-depth knowledge as described above.

The majority of the interviewees spoke English very well, but the language varied between Serbian and English in one interview. In another interview, a translator was present, translating from Albanian to Serbian. As the author is fluent in Bosnian, almost identical to Serbian, this alternative was provided. However, problems that can arise when translating an interview should not go unnoticed. It can bring difficulties in formulating the question with the intended precision or losing valuable information. The advantage is that one's mother tongue can enrich the answers since the language is often more developed than their first language (Cortazzi, Pilcher & Jin, 2011). Therefore, this was taken into account, but due to the considerable knowledge of the Serbian language, there was a small risk of misinterpretation affecting the result.

The interviews started with an informational part explaining the structure of the interview and the purpose of the study (see appendix 2). Each interview lasted approximately 20 – 60 minutes. Initially, the aim was to have 12 interviewees consisting of six organizations, three civil servants on the central level, and three on the local level. After reaching out to 21 potential interviewees through the snowball sample method; nine did not respond. One civil servant on the local level of government could not go through with the interview, although they initially agreed to it. A chance to interview a Member of Parliament was made possible and regarded as enriching the study with an additional perspective.

Among them who did not respond were civil servants from other regions than the capital who had been interacting with some of the organizations interviewed. These were contacted since the civil servants that interacted with civil society in their work were not merely based in Pristina. Since the main focus was directed toward civil societies' experiences, and the interview guide included their work on both the central and local levels of government, the number of participants was regarded as sufficient. Moreover, no further interviewees were approached to respect the thesis's time scope and conduct a detailed analysis.

The names of the interviewees for members of civil society are confidential. Although some allowed permission to use their names and position, it was considered an advantage to let the participants voice their opinion freely without the risk of it affecting their work. The subject of corruption should be treated carefully due to the topic's sensitivity, but considering that the study aims to research the role of fighting it, participants' individual experiences with corruption were not discussed. Therefore, it was deemed only to include the organizations' names since this was a common point of agreement of citing among the interviewees. By doing this, the thesis can highlight what organizations are working on the matter and the challenges they face. The actors working *with* civil society included in the study gave their permission to cite their full position except for one (see civil servant 1). The member of parliament asked to be anonymous. The other civil servants allowed both names and position where I chose only to write out the position for a consistence referencing through the analysis. This demonstrates the wide range of participants, which is beneficial not to present a one-sided perspective.

In the analysis, the members of civil society are referred to as MCS 1-6, the Member of Parliament as MP, the civil servants on the central level of government as CSC 1, 3, and 4, and the local level of government as CSL. The participants are stated in the order as the interviewees were conducted.

**Table 1. Civil society members**

<i>Name of civil society group</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Length of interview</i>
1. Democracy Plus	Member of civil society	51 minutes
2. GAP Institute	Member of civil society	54 minutes
3. Kallxo	Member of civil society	46 minutes
4. Kosovo Democratic Institute	Member of civil society	1 hour and 5 minutes
5. Lëvizja FOL	Member of civil society	56 minutes
6. Platforma CiviKos	Member of civil society	45 minutes

**Table 2. Actors working with civil society**

<i>Positions of actors working with civil society</i>	<i>Length of interview</i>
1. Civil servant <i>central government</i>  Previous member of civil society	45 minutes
2. Member of Parliament	28 minutes
3. Civil servant <i>central government</i>  Director of the Anti-corruption Agency	39 minutes
4. Civil servant <i>central government</i>  Director of the Department for Preventing of Corruption	32 minutes

<p>5. Civil servant <i>local government</i></p> <p>Deputy mayor for the municipality of Pristina</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>
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#### 4.5 Operationalization of the theoretical framework

The study is composed of a deductive and inductive approach. For the deductive method, I took the point of departure in previous studies' theoretical expectations, which drove the collection of the material and analysis. This was followed by an inductive approach as new perspectives were detected during the collection of the material and were added to the analytical framework (Bryman, 2016). The interview guide was created deductively based on the theoretical framework, and the analytical scheme was inspired by it before I added the new insights from the inductive approach. Both methods are appropriate when aiming to conduct theory development (Esaiasson et al., 2017). The concepts guide the first four themes from the theoretical framework. The last theme is driven by the new information adding to the puzzle about civil society's role in curbing corruption with a past of a double transition.

##### ***Understanding corruption***

The first theme's purpose is to position the informant's understanding of corruption. Since the concept has been undertaken as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" thought the thesis, this theme demonstrates understandings in line with the broad definition. It could be exemplified through the forms of either grand or petty corruption. This theme is essential to capture the core study objective, which lays the ground for the rest of the themes, primarily how to curb the described concept. Therefore, this part is more of a descriptive theme of the scheme.

##### ***Influence in curbing corruption***

The second theme is operationalized through the information on how civil society works when curbing corruption. This theme was added to analyze their working tasks and opportunities to contribute to the fight against corruption. It is examined by highlighting the motivations of the

civil society members and what type of initiatives are undertaken, and how or if they are conducting watchdog activities. Additionally, with the background of Kosovo's civil society being supported by the donor community, the relationship with donors is included in describing civil society. In this theme, a description by the civil servants interviewed of civil society's attributes in curbing corruption was involved.

### ***Challenges in curbing corruption***

The third theme deals with the possible predetermined challenges of civil society in a post-socialist and post-conflict setting suggested by the theoretical framework. Therefore, it is primarily deductive by bringing up challenges such as questions of self-censorship and issues with trust. However, it was also operationalized with an inductive approach to intercept and compare the remarks on perceived challenges and how they can be solved based on the given answers by the interviewees.

### ***Cooperation***

The fourth theme looks at the climate for cooperation with both central and local government. It is operationalized in parallel both with civil society's perspective and the civil servants' perspective on the description of what type of cooperation is undertaken, how the different actors interact with each other, and the importance of political will. Conditions related to how the interviewees view their cooperation or lack of cooperation are captured.

### ***Influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting***

The fifth theme presents the effects of working in a post-socialist and post-conflict environment related to curbing corruption. This theme is taken into account through every theme, but due to the aim of contributing to theory development, findings especially relevant to underline under this theme is the experienced influence of their own setting. This has an inductive approach and is used to catch both the civil society members' and civil servants' reflections.

**Table 3. Analytical scheme**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>How to identify it</i>
<b>1. Understanding corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Defining</li><li>- Own understanding</li></ul>
<b>2. Influence in curbing corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Personal motivation for participating</li><li>- Type of initiatives</li><li>- Watchdog role</li><li>- Opportunities</li><li>- Donor involvement</li></ul>
<b>3. Challenges in curbing corruption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Self-censorship</li><li>- Trust</li><li>- Perceived challenges</li><li>- Suggested solutions</li></ul>
<b>4. Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Type of cooperation</li><li>- Interactions</li><li>- Political will</li></ul>
<b>5. Influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Experienced influence</li></ul>

#### 4.6 Process of analysis

The interviews were transcribed in accordance with the recordings, followed by selecting material for each theme in the analytical scheme. The audio recordings were listened to while reading the transcribed material to avoid misinterpretation. Moreover, the empirical material was analyzed several times not to miss vital information and generate reliable and satisfactory results. Hence, the possibility of returning to the material improved the reliability of the thesis (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Some of the material could fit under multiple themes as the questions

were open-ended, and each answer included several aspects. Here, the material was analyzed under the theme that complied with the majority of the empirical findings.

#### 4.7 Considerations

Returning to objectivity, the impact of potential tendency was considered as each interviewee cannot go entirely without tendency. This is especially difficult to detect in informant interviews as the researcher needs the knowledge provided by the informant while simultaneously having to keep in mind that potential devotion to the function asked about can impact the answers. To detect tendencies, it is essential to be well-read on the study phenomenon (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Applying this to the aim of the thesis, many organizations in Kosovo are receiving funding from international actors where reasoning was made asking whether it consisted a potential risk of the informants wanting to please or not upset the donors. While considering this, those holding tendencies tend to be interested in deliberately telling a misleading story for their own gain. Considering that the interviewees consisted of different actors, the probability of a result filled with tendency was deemed low. However, it was taken into account that an independent answer free from tendency can have attributes of unintentional influences (ibid). Acknowledging donors' potential impact in the interview guide gave the informant a chance to reflect upon how much donors impact mattered as part of a post-socialist and post-conflict setting. The risk of bias was not only treated in relation to donors but also if the civil society members would like to embellish their role due to a potential strong belief in their capacities to do 'good.' Thus, this was a reason to not only have one side of the story told in the interviewee's selection. Potential bias could exist among the civil servants interviewed as they work in line with the politics in place. However, since civil society is working with several types of actors, both non-political and political, it was not considered a problem for the aim of the thesis. On the contrary, it gave room for enriching the analysis with more perspectives.

Moreover, it should be acknowledged that due to Kosovo's ongoing development of progress in anti-corruption, the reliability could be viewed as insufficient as the same results at other times reproduced by other researchers might generate different results (Kvale, 2007). However, since the aim is not to specifically contribute to Kosovo's case but instead to theory

development concerning civil society's role in post-socialist and post-convict settings when curbing corruption, an interview guide designed with theoretical assumptions based on this setting has addressed this risk. This can be considered useful if the study were to be reproduced as it acts as a tool that enables researchers to explore if similar findings can be concluded in a setting with shared attributes.

## 5. Results

Revisiting the research question, what is the role of civil society in curbing corruption in post-socialist and post-conflict settings? This part will showcase the main results from the interviews as they constitute the primary empirical material. The results section is structured according to the themes in the analytical scheme (Table 3), where different perspectives from the material will be contrasted with the theoretical framework. The conclusion will summarize the findings, and the research question will be answered.

### 5.1 Understanding corruption

The theoretical discussion on corruption and what meaning the term holds has been demonstrated as contested. Likewise, this is shown among the interviewees. It is commonly ascribed as a wide-ranging concept including petty and grand corruption, where the discussion on clientelism and nepotism reoccurs (MCS 1, 3, 5; CSC 3). The problems are often showcased in the public sector. Examples of the lack of meritocracy and problems with tenders, where promises on public procurement are broken for private gain, are brought up (MCS 1; CSC 3). Furthermore, the contrast between ‘actual’ corruption and perceived corruption is highlighted when one of the informants described it as “corruption cannot be estimated... because it's a hidden thing. How do you estimate a hidden thing?” (CSL). Setting the scene regarding corruption in Kosovo, this hidden practice can further continue to be hidden as it is declared that it is not a part of the culture, especially in relation to other parts of the Western Balkan region:

I think that corruption is not a culture here, but the state loves it. So we'll say that in Albania or Serbia there is a culture of corruption and bribery. Here we have a society that is resistant to corruption and is not corrupted. People don't want to pay money to the institutions for fixing things. But we still lack the capacity in institutions that will fight corruption and take care of the people (MCS 3).

I don't think that every police officer here, as it happens in other countries that stops you due to speeding, may take a bribe in order to release you. That happens in all countries around Kosovo (CSC 3).

The hidden part of corrupt practices is also acknowledged in the light of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting where people did not understand that it could be considered corrupt due to it being part of the norm, especially after the war. However, this norm has stayed in the past as corruption has developed into being considered less prone and less accepted.

After the war, especially between 2000 to 2010, corruption has been widespread socially. So even if you went to the doctor, it would be okay for citizens to kind of, I'm going to pay just a small, you know, bribe so that I can get things done. That has changed tremendously over the past 10 years now, we kind of, as a society, we kind of know the responsibilities and the rights of individuals (MCS 5).

These views give a brief description that a mutual understanding of the corruption in Kosovo is more tied to grand corruption than petty corruption. However, as it is considered a contested problem, the occurrence of, e.g., nepotism might be viewed as petty corruption in one society where this is part of the common practice, while it is looked upon as grand corruption in other contexts (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000; Belloni, 2012). As mentioned in the theoretical discussion, these are equally crucial in describing what a post-socialist and post-conflict society such as Kosovo endures. This part has given a brief picture of the situation in Kosovo. It is followed by the rest of the themes in the analytical framework, which carries most of the material and application of the theoretical framework.

## 5.2 Influence in curbing corruption

In societies considering belonging to the West without a socialist past, the will to engage in civil society is often rooted in voluntarism (Grødeland & Aasland, 2011). This makes it relevant to understand if similar motivations exist in countries that have experienced a different outgrowth of civil society. Most of the organizations expressed that the only forms of voluntary work they engage in are providing internships; therefore, the motivations highlighted below are from their compositions of staff. The motivations are demonstrated as a combination of naming it as 'a normal job' to a 'mission'.

It's a mission. I think that we need to follow up on what our parents did. My parents

we're doing this before the war, during the war, they were trying to build a state here in our country. I want to finish their job, rebuild the state, take care of the state so it will be sustainable, then we'll have a good country, we need to follow their labor mindset and work on different issues, that we will become one non-corrupted state, with full capacity of institutions with. So this is part of the reason why I'm working here (MCS 3).

Here, the past finds its way into the motivation of members of civil society, indicating a reality where the effects of conflict are present, and the will to restore the country is included in the choice of career path. The interviewee is making a personal remark about their parents trying to build a state, emphasizing their participation of being a part of establishing the parallel system opposing the Serbian government. Regardless of how the interviewees view their role as members of civil society, they all share the element of wanting to impact the society where being a part of civil society is the closest one can get to being involved and seeing the *real* impact. One interviewee expressed it as personally fulfilling “where you can see the impact of what you're doing pretty soon, like, if you report somebody on a corruption case, and in two to three to four months, you will see the results of your work, because people will be indicted and sent to jail” (MCS 3). Following this line of reasoning, civil society is considered freer than being ‘stuck’ in bureaucracy (MCS 1) as the staff of civil society gets to connect and communicate with a range variety of people from different sectors, highlighting that “civil society is all about really meeting people lobbying, you know, advocating” (MCS 4).

The personal motivations for engaging with civil society might not differ to a great extent compared to those societies without this kind of past. Although, the role of salary seems to play a greater role in a post-socialist and post-conflict society where a torn economy of war still can be considered as a remaining concern when choosing a professional direction which is exemplified with the following:

If you look at the, you know, economic situation here, the public sector is the biggest employer and the salaries are high. But then in civil society, we tend to pay higher wages just because of this. So we can remain, we can retain people who have good backgrounds and abundance with integrity (MCS 2).

Indeed, the notion of civil society having trouble obtaining qualified staff applies (Johnston 2005). Although, this has been addressed as treating it as a profession with a higher salary to

gather the most qualified candidates who share a common attribute of having a background in political science, journalism, law, or economics (MSC 1-6). However, this type of salary initiative is expressed as a concern by one civil servant from the central government with a background of being a previous member of civil society by stating:

Some people create organizations, and then they receive these funds from abroad. And they just make some activities, and they become very well off. So my issue with civil society in Kosovo is how are some of the executive directors of civil society organizations that are nonprofit, very wealthy? So to me, it's very hard to justify this. Like, how are you a nonprofit, and you have become wealthy by being in a nonprofit? (CSC 1)

Following the line of reasoning by Townsend & Townsend (2004), the members of civil society themselves argue that their engagement is the will to be a part of change, while the view of the civil servant represents problems arising due to external funding. The picture of *new* civil society organizations being established for personal economic gain is shared by two civil servants, both from the central and local levels of government (MP, author's translation; CSL). Moreover, when asked about the relationship with donors, the question of funding is an essential factor to consider in keeping its staff and being able to execute their work. Despite this, all members of civil society pointed out that they are allowed to remain independent and free to choose how and in what areas they work. Support has to be gained somehow. If public funds were to be involved, civil society would be held accountable to the government instead of allowing criticism and pressure (MCS 1, 6). One of the informants even described rejecting projects initiated by donors to secure their independence:

For the past few years, we've been refusing a lot of different partnerships because they said: we're going to give you the money if you do this, and our response was, that's not how we do it. Because our strategy does not include that. And we cannot compromise the overall functioning of our organization because we get money from you (MSC 5).

This can imply that in the dual role described by Belloni (2012) that civil society is expected to have, they are rarely chasing after the fulfillment of the donor's expectations but instead looking to find mutual grounds where the expectations align. Although, the expectations from donors for civil society to work closely with people in their own community apply since it is

acknowledged that foreign donors lack the accessibility to the ‘ground.’ Therefore, the form of mutual respect and trust has been established where both parts are of use to each other while simultaneously understanding that they have separate working areas and expertise (MCS 3; 6). The impact of donor involvement will be discussed further in the analysis.

Looking at the initiatives that civil society undertakes to curb corruption it is shown to include the typical responsibilities such as acting as a watchdog, raising awareness, monitoring public institutions, and providing education (Schmidt, 2007; Ralchev, 2004). Every formation of civil society that participated in the study holds a range of different areas, not only on the issue of corruption. However, since they are known for dealing with the area, one civil servant mentions that several organizations/platforms have been acknowledged as specialized in anti-corruption and have therefore created an image of contributing majorly to the subject (CSC 3). Likewise, some organizations involve the public directly by creating ground for reporting mismanagement, abuse of power, nepotism, or problems with public service and public delivery. In one of the organizations, this is followed by investigations made by a team of researchers and journalists to verify if the reported incidents are actual. Through verification, it can result in publishing the case, which is later forwarded to public institutions, such as e.g., the Anti Corruption Agency, municipalities, ministries, or prosecutors (MCS 3).

Other organizations turn directly towards supporting the central and local government, where their cooperation will be analyzed more in detail under the theme ‘cooperation’. The organizations develop digital platforms that allow transparency towards the public and the media as they can check every contract that the government signs (MCS 5). Several organizations communicate to avoid overlapping and even provide training among each other for knowledge exchange (MCS 6). Due to the problems of public procurement being a frequent understanding of corruption in Kosovo, the work on creating open information is in progress among diverse organizations. Although some organizations might not appear as directly being a watchdog, the results of their works show differently. This is evident in a case where an example of a project on public procurement procedures revealed potential misconduct by still using exempted practices used during the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. During the pandemic, the negotiations for buying protective gear such as, e.g., masks were handed over from the public institutions to three economic operators. This practice was recently found to still be used when the municipality of Pristina signed a contract with an economic operator to

buy anti-gen tests to be distributed in schools. The interviewee explained that the tender lies on their working table currently under investigation but could declare that the tenders price per unit amounted to three euros and 60 cents. The market price from the pharmacies was less than two euros. Although not dealing directly with the judiciary, these findings are visualized and distributed to public institutions to put forward the need to address and adjust these issues (MCS 1).

As a common approach of civil society is to create accessible content to increase public officials' transparency and accountability, digital platforms are described as an effective way of informing the public about the officials' yearly spending. The monitoring of the expenditure includes such as official lunches and fuel, naming every civil servant's expenses with their name next to it. Different media has picked up on the material, and an opportunity for insight by the public has been created, which is expressed to show among the citizens' attitudes:

No, it's not government's money, it's our money. So we have to made them accountable on how they spend the money. So with time you see, there is a change on even, like citizens mentality and them being more aware of their rights and asking for more work on that, especially at the local level (MCS 2).

For civil society to get closer to the citizens, their responsibilities reach even the youngest where they visit schools and partake in education. The interviewee MSC 3 acknowledges that the next generation receives knowledge to continue the fight against corruption to contribute to Kosovo's future. Additionally, providing advisory services to the judicial system is a central aspect where the use of media is applied to send televised episodes of the court rulings. This results in building a role model for future sessions and an opportunity to increase the trust of the institutions to come forward and report corruption. The work conducted shows to be known, as one of the civil servants believes that the TV shows produced by civil society on corruption impact citizens' views and keep them informed on their work (CSC 3). This initiative can be viewed according to being in line with whom the interviewees considered the most important actors in fighting corruption in Kosovo. The judiciary was placed the highest among all participants, followed by the government and civil society. Despite civil society being recognized as the least important actor among those mentioned, it was acknowledged that

without civil society, the pressure for the other two would not be reached where the power of media was considered essential (Grimes, 2013).

Working with the judiciary includes promoting laws that ensure that corruption cases become visible such as, e.g. laws regarding the protection of whistleblowers and laws on access to open data. Several informants participating in this study acknowledged that the judicial process of conviction in corruption cases is relatively slow. In addition to that, all final verdicts have not continuously been published publicly. Once again, the initiatives of civil society lie within generating openness, and one member of the organization highlights that the transparency is developing in a positive direction. When the organization's work started three years ago, there were only around 500 final verdicts per year published online, which is currently estimated at 3000 a month. This progress can be found in the organization's promotion of the law stating a timeline of publishing the verdicts within 45 to 60 days, which is currently occurring within 55 to 60 days (MCS 5). Despite this progress not only includes the finalization of verdicts against corruption, it is also of value to mention since it increases the transparency where even something such 'hidden' as corruption can be found openly.

Mungiu-Pippidi & Dusu's (2011) perspective of civil society being effective as a changemaker through proactive forms is demonstrated to improve institutional performance and the citizens' participation. A remark on civil society's overall impact on the anti-corruption work was raised by a civil servant who stated that their work does not only relate to improving the system of institutions but also more civic engagement, educating citizens who have their local problems:

They provide help to people who already know. People know what is wrong that was being, but they just don't have all the knowledge about going to the court, doing media, realizing it, and writing about it. So in that sense, they can help a lot, not only with institutions but also force you to monitor tenders and everything and also with people and movements who are trying to protect their own backyard (CSC 1).

The impact of civil society on anti-corruption work is visible in different areas. In contrast, some organizations can be argued to hold a more 'direct' approach towards the ongoing corruption by working with reported cases and the judiciary. However, the proactive forms are the most present where long-term relationships with donors make them possible.

Townsend & Townsend (2004) acknowledged that civil society is accountable to the donor community. When asked about civil society's internal procedures on corruption, several interviewees refer to their need to act transparently as they are providing auditing reports to their donors (MSC 2; MSC 3). In line with this, all organizations do not have staff who regulates their finances (Greenlee et al. 2007). The interviewees address this by hiring external auditors and could therefore be viewed as removing their closeness to the funding to a secondary part. As the theoretical framework puts forward, a lack of a direct accountability system can be agreed to not be in place for citizens. Still, the information can be accessed since these reports are being published on the organization's websites (MSC 2).

### 5.3 Challenges in curbing corruption

As civil society does not have the political or judicial power to change a system of corrupt practices, they are met with limitations in their work. Two civil society members expressed that they can only act in the background of the decision-makers through their used methods such as raising awareness towards the citizens, organizing public campaigns, or conducting different evaluations. They added that the rest of the time consists of hoping that the decision-makers follow up on their efforts (MCS 2; 4).

One of the main challenges that were emphasized was the issue of funding. Since the participating members of civil society expressed their wish to be free from political affiliation and therefore not receive public funding, the resources could risk running short:

It's pretty difficult, because the more success you have, the more reports you get from people, meaning you need more funds to have more staff to investigate those cases. And you know, this is the case, because we work with limited resources (MCS 3).

These shortages are today solved by donor funding but one member of civil society has a critical point of view on this approach as it is acknowledged that civil society needs to find a new 'business model'. This model needs to be moved from full-time jobs to civic engagement in terms of volunteering which could solve parts of the challenges with finding funding (MCS 4).

Another challenge that the theoretical framework puts forward is the potential fear of government retaliation or the use of self-censorship. The results challenge these theoretical perceptions as it is acknowledged that Kosovo's civil society is not experiencing this since socialist times (MCS 4; MCS 5). This could be argued as being a result of the international community's work where one member of civil society states the following:

I could not describe civil society in Kosovo as someone who fears the central or local government, you know, it's mostly very dependent, and maybe it's because they are also supported by foreign donors (MCS 6).

Additionally, a civil servant on the local level highlights:

The case of Kosovo is actually, quite a special case because the post-conflict, period of time was highly influenced by international partners. And in that regard, international partners invested a lot in civil society. So I really do think that in the region, we have quite a strong civil society that raises their voices. So there are no issues of, let's say, political parties, or the government's trying to suppress civil society in our country (CSL).

Furthermore, this is supported by a civil servant from the central level acknowledging that in Kosovo these problems are not apparent and civil society is ahead in advancing its role in comparison to other countries in the region (CSC 4, authors translation). The reason for this can be viewed as a result from the freedom civil society experiences as a member of civil society highlights the struggles of other countries in the Western Balkan region.

I know, colleagues from Serbia and Macedonia that have a much much harder time operating there. And in Kosovo, you know, it is more open and people will, like more freely talk about corruption or about like anything with no response or action taken from the government (MCS 2).

The lack of fear from the government could be argued to be one of the reasons why civil society has received more trust than the theoretical perceptions suggest. Whether that is due to the international presence or civil society's own resilience can be discussed but it is clear that it

does not apply to the assumptions made by Tisné & Smilov (2004), that self-censorship prohibits them from pursuing their watchdog role.

The participating informants from civil society highlight that they are glad to be entrusted to act as a 'bridge' between civil society and the public institutions (MSC 3). While some suggest that they are viewed as unbiased (MSC 5), others describe that the general society does not know their name. Although the name behind the initiatives is sometimes unknown there are acknowledgments in different forms e.g through reading a report where citizens can have the reaction of "really, you did that?". This is considered as building trust with citizens where the showing of the name of the organization becomes less important (MSC 2). However, this could not be said in all cases as one of the informants from the central level of government means that the credibility and the reputation of civil society depend on the setup of the organization; who is in charge, and what kind of issues are being dealt with. According to the theoretical assumptions of civil society's role, they are expected to side with the opposition to be able to critically view them and detect corrupt activities (Grimes, 2013). However, this can be turned to a disadvantage for the organizations themselves as the resistance from the opposition can affect their credibility and create confusion among the citizens on whom to believe. The problems that can occur is if civil society is identified as being pro or against a certain government is brought up with an example from a few years ago when the civil servant was a part of civil society:

My organization was always against, it was sort of an opposition to the mayor. And we had another organization here that was always defending the mayor. And when the mayor was changed, they were criticizing that mayor a lot. The other mayor who was voted out was going to the media saying; "oh, this organization is doing a bad job, because it was being paid to protect one and to attack us". So if you keep being labeled like that, then also your importance as an organization loses (CSC 1).

In this regard, Tisné & Smilov's (2004) assumptions about the risk of clientelist networks forming could be applicable but since this example, the interviewee acknowledges that progress has been made where there are a majority of organizations that are operating unbiased. However, it should not be considered as given (CSC 1). The predominant view is that civil society is looked upon as free from government retaliation. Therefore, these views give support

to Belloni's (2012) theory about civil society appealing to international norms and continuing to identify misconduct which is indicated to be the case even if the government executed pressure according to the interviewee's description above. Additionally, a civil servant adds that the government would not be able to cause harm to civil society due to the pressure and observance that the country is experiencing from the international community, where the ambitions to join the European Union could be ruined (CSC 3). This indicates that the norms of the international community are not only to be observed and followed by civil society but also the government.

## 5.4 Cooperation

We are primarily a watchdog organization with a very niche aspect of supporting public institutions and delivering that and then being the watchdog, whether they're doing wrong. So we kind of play *cat and mouse* in that sense. Whenever we need to intervene and kind of just speak up about their misuse, we still do that. But then the next day, we still go and work with them and say, how do we improve this? (MSC 5)

This example demonstrates the dual role that civil society holds, which has also proven to be the case in Kosovo. Contrasting to the view of new civil society organizations, there exists a positive picture of the well-established organizations where respect and the will to cooperate are expressed. One of the interviewees said that "when there is some willingness to cooperate, then there is usually some willingness to make some changes as well" (MSC 3). In line with this, the will to find common ways of change has become more evident during the last few years, and civil society noticed this since they no longer have to chase civil servants for information. Instead, they acknowledge that the workload is eased when civil servants from different institutions contact them themselves and report the misuse of public funds. However, this has been made possible through the trust after projects where civil society has held working activities on corruption (MSC 5). Therefore, one can argue that the 'anti-corruptionism' industry comes alive through projects rather than individually initiated contact with civil servants (Sampson, 2010).

Furthermore, civil society's activities create motivation for change where interviewee MSC 2 acknowledges that monitoring mayors' promises during their four-year mandate and ranking each municipality according to the fulfillment of these promises means greater transparency is achieved. By holding them accountable and making sure they know that the organization is monitoring them, preventions against corruption are taken as public spending can be placed rightfully. The municipalities are ranked in relation to size and population to secure an even ranking of the result. The ranking has shown to be an effective tool as daily emails are received where the civil servants want to present the work; they have archived to be ranked higher. Here, this exemplifies the will and actions taken to cooperate with civil society where the civil servant on the local level affirms that civil society is invited to oversee their processes of decision making and gather needed material for their observations (CSL).

The view of cooperating with civil society is portrayed as relatively positive and welcoming by the civil servants participating in the study, where one civil servant states that "if they have good ideas, doors are open" (CSC 3). However, the members of civil society put forward some concerns considering their cooperation. Common issues surround providing required documents where delays can hinder civil society's work.

Because much of the research and data that we have in our reports come from the public institutions. So without that cooperation, I don't think that we will be able to do what we do today (MSC 1).

Contrasting to this view is described in terms of civil society being in a rush to collect the information they require as misunderstandings occur where one civil servant states the following:

Sometimes they misunderstand us, once we start an investigation of our own, you cannot share information until the investigation is finished. Sometimes they are stressed because we don't share information for two months until we finalized our work (CSC 3).

This indicates that communication can be lost when the actors work separately on the parts that later merge. However, since the cooperation exists despite this, the agenda of anti-corruptionism could be understood as prevailing (Sampson, 2010). Additionally, as being a

member of civil society was described as a 'normal' job, misunderstandings are deemed to happen even if the problem they are trying to solve is understood similarly.

Following this, sharing a common understanding of the problem is the essence of the role of political will. This thesis has been connected to the concept of public will, where the common understanding is addressed through collective action (Post et al., 2010; Raile et al., 2014). This is demonstrated to be present as one civil servant expressed, "I'm not so strong as a single citizen, but we are together" (MP, author's translation). The newly elected government's top priority in fighting corruption recurred on the topic of political will, where both civil society and civil servants share the view that the central government has so far proven to be trustworthy in this concern, and the zero-tolerance against corruption makes the government popular among citizens (MSC 4; CSC 1; MP). Additionally, one could view it as a common understanding between civil society and the highest level of government which was argued to be the most important measure according to Brown (2007).

Although the recent change in government seems to hold political will, an organization that has built a reputation of being trustworthy has an easier time cooperating with civil servants despite political changes. They are known for their methods of monitoring. Therefore, they are often invited to share the table with both central and local government, where one member of civil society emphasizes that "they know that we can do, we have the expertise, and we can really do a good job" (MSC 2). By portraying themselves as experts, civil society is not viewed as opponents but instead securing a seat at the table with the government (Huss et al., 2020). Furthermore, this is supported as the same member of civil society expresses that in their rankings of the municipalities concerning the mayors' promises, there are cases of reluctance to cooperate when the municipality received a lower ranking (MSC 2).

The view on needed cooperation is further elaborated on in the light of the institutions' capacities, where there is a belief that governmental institutions supposed to specialize in corruption issues "seem to bark, but it doesn't bite" (MSC 4). Therefore, the need for cooperation for civil society is expressed to be beneficial for not only the institutions' purpose but also civil society's as it allows closer access to change things in practice. This can generate

mutual accountability since both actors share different capacities that can be exchanged (Raile et al., 2021).

Whether the importance of political will is as critical on the local level is divided into two teams. Those who believe that it all depends on the mayor's prospects for the will to cooperate, and those who believe that even small efforts for cooperation from civil servants can be helpful in the fight against corruption. The different 38 municipalities in Kosovo receive funds from the central government but are still independent, and therefore their objectives can differ from the central government (CSC 1; CSC 3; MSC 6). Hence, political will plays a great deal in the level of engagement regarding the anti-corruption work:

Time to time you also don't have any political will to cooperate with NGOs, because they are kind of, how to say, independent from central institutions. So it always depends on the will of the mayor and his team, to cooperate (MSC 6).

The other team of interviewees also demonstrate that political will is crucial but that they have experienced cases where individual civil servants want to provide material to civil society but cannot go through with their will:

Just recently we had this case in a specific municipality in which we send a request, but the individual said: look, I actually want to give you this information. I don't have an issue with that, nor does the mayor or anyone here. My primary problem is I don't know how to. (MSC 5).

These problems lie in the limited capacities for digitalization within the municipalities. Additionally, the requirements from civil society can vary tremendously, and there is not always enough staff within the municipalities to cover all areas that are being requested (MSC 5; MSC 2). The potential of the civil servants is not doubted, but their lack of expertise is addressed by civil society through training and support in digitalization (MSC 5). This can be viewed as not only being necessary to ease the work of civil society, but through this method, the civil servants become accessible, and transparency in their work is becoming the norm as more official documents are visible to every citizen. Consequently, access to this information can provide the specialized needs for anti-corruption work on the local level (Huss et al., 2020).

## 5.5 Influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict setting

When asking about how the past might affect civil society's work today, it is evident that the shape of civil society has changed and that this plays a role in their work fighting corruption. One of the interviewees highlights that the concept of civil society is new as the need for it did not exist in Kosovo during the socialist times, emphasizing that it was a conflict-free time by stating: "we didn't need an opinion of somebody who's was outside of the institutions, or the communist party" (MCS 4). Therefore, volunteerism was never a common practice. The interviewee views the meaning of civil society as means of organizing around a particular issue and being able to solve it jointly. When there was no space to mobilize these issues, there was no need for a civil society. This history is viewed as not only concerning former Yugoslavia but connects the whole former Eastern Bloc (MSC 4). Additionally, the lack of options and active citizenship during the socialist times are brought up in terms of shaping the picture of how citizens view civil society today where one interviewee expresses:

You have a lot of people who were born and raised during socialism. And the way they see things is totally different. They also perceive democracy differently. They think that when you proceed to vote, you have done your job while democracy is much more. This is being a part of civil society and being a more active citizen rather than just voting because they think of past times when you didn't have more options than one (CSC 3).

This exemplifies that civil society does not include the active citizenship that one could contrast to those civil societies, often having voluntarism (Grødeland & Aasland, 2011). Kosovo's civil society is not positioned to share a history of common attributes of obligated civic engagement such as other countries of the Eastern Bloc. However, similarities can be found concerning turning to friends and family to secure needs (Howard, 2011). Kosovo's civil society is described as first emerging during the oppression by the Serbian government in 1989, where civic engagement among the whole Albanian population was the only option to organize around the interests of the majority population (MCS 4 & CSC 4). Despite this, this type of grassroots level civil society did not last as it has been modified into a different form today.

To understand what kind of civil society is a part of curbing corruption today, the notion of donor involvement cannot be ignored as their role is recurring in every interview. The mentioning of the donor community's involvement comprises divided perspectives where the

interviewee who expressed civil society as a new concept highlight that there is a lack of a ‘real’ civil society (MSC 4).

But I think that after the war, what happened is this NGO-ization of civil society in Kosovo, a lot of foreign donors came with huge amounts of money, and they were just throwing money around. People started to join civil society, not because they believed in their mission, unfortunately, but because of the salaries I know this is a very strong statement that I'm making, but unfortunately, this process of NGO-ization has happened (MSC 4).

Accordingly, it is emphasized that the history of conflict has created the role of civil society in several countries of the Western Balkans today as its structure and build-up were shaped by the donor community.

And we have another history of how civil society developed in Kosovo, after the war, it was like all these international organizations who trained them in the way to be like this, if you compare it with Albania, or Serbia, that they have their own model of development of history, we took all these models of international institutions that they trained, and now they are following this model (MSC 6).

The expression of ‘throwing money around’ is supported by a member of civil society when discussing the matter of funding where this has acted as incentives for new organizations to appear by expressing “this funding that has been going through all these years to these organizations, it has been millions. There are organizations that I have never heard of”. (MSC 2). The notion of the donor community not keeping track of the organizations in the rebuilding of Kosovo after the war is shared but does not compromise the role organizations have today. As mentioned above, an accountability procedure exists where auditing is presented to the donors to track where the funding is going (MSC 2). However, this highlights that there was no existing grassroots movement coming from the bottom-up level which gives an explanation for why civil society turned to professionalism that can be observed in their work against corruption (Sampson, 2010).

Furthermore, while rebuilding Kosovo after the war, negative assumptions about civil society existed. One example is when a director working for the government expressed “I will not be criticized by people who have built their careers grazing like the cow, grazing international

funds” (CSC 1). However, this is acknowledged to be a stereotype as the same civil servant highlights the following:

I know a lot of civil society organizations that do a great job to create projects, but the stereotype that is used against them is that they just raise funds. I've looked into other countries like Jordan, and it's similar. It's always a similar discourse. Like, they don't represent the people, they just represent their donors (CSC 1).

Here, the anti-corruption industry can be argued to be manifested as professional activities are taking form through different projects (Sampson, 2010). Nevertheless, this is met with the assumption of civil society only operating to gain from it personally through high salaries, which aligns with the theoretical expectations of organizations attracting professional staff by providing good wages.

The interviewees put forward the pressure felt by the international community when executing their work. This pressure is described as not only being limited to civil society as the government is experiencing similar pressure with expectations to reach up to:

For Kosovo, especially, the international community has played a significant role. Because we still are very much, you know, cautious about what they say and what they think. So you can see this, you know, from the government as well, because they want to see what the opinion of international communities is so they want to react to something. And yeah, they have this pressure from two sides (MSC 2).

This pressure also comes with discontent, especially in the light of EU accession. Regarding the efforts to improve the problems with corruption as a closer step to becoming a member of the European Union, an interviewee highlights the common concern of not doing enough by comparing the Western Balkans with Bulgaria and Romania:

The people here say okay, Bulgaria, Romania, they're also just as corrupt as we are, how come they are members of the EU and we are not? This is a public discourse that is dominating the Balkan scene. I'm hearing this from my colleagues in Belgrade, Sarajevo,

wherever I go, they say look at Bulgaria and Romania. Come on, they are not better off than us (MSC 4).

This is pointed out in a combination of stating that when the pressure is too high, and the efforts are not giving any results, the incentives to improve are low (MSC 4). Therefore, this indicates that civil society's role in curbing corruption is met with limitations as the motivation can be steered by the eyes of the international community. Accordingly, this finding demonstrates the challenge of being the 'chosen' actors by the donor community (Paffenholz, 2010).

Hence, fulfilling international expectations is not only acknowledged in terms of improving the anti-corruption work but also following their overarching agenda. The international community's agenda can be argued to be overarching even if independence for civil society to execute their work exists. This can be found in the different projects that the donors are driving, where there are open calls for civil society to apply for funds on different matters, one of them being corruption (CSC 1; MCS 2; MSC 6). Although civil society also approaches the donors with ideas and requests for funding, many projects follow donors' ideas of development. This is demonstrated by a civil servant with previous experience working for civil society by acknowledging issues that seem to have been left in the shadow of donors.

One of the biggest issues in Kosovo is the rights of workers. People work 12 hours, they have only one day off. One of the biggest issues for society is that you don't have any civil society organization dealing with that. Maybe we have organizations dealing with LGBTQ rights, which is okay, I mean, we need them but there is more of a Western agenda to the projects of this society and in the eyes of the public (CSC 1).

Due to the emergence of civil society, one could view these projects as implemented by donors but since civil society has been trained by the international community, they have adopted the subjects and norms from the start (Belloni, 2012). Therefore, the agenda of those not experiencing a history of conflict, can be viewed as being the obvious choice. Although, the donor's involvement has come to affect how the public can view the organizations as they are here portrayed as being detached from their roots (ibid). However, one could argue that the subject of corruption is in line with the needs of Kosovo since it is considered to be a problem by the individual citizen as well, as acknowledged by several interviewees (MSC 3; MSC 5).

Additionally, it is emphasized that “corruption is becoming a more and more attractive subject for civil society where several projects can be financed” (CSC 4, authors translation).

The donor community plays a vital role in civil society’s role and the possibility to execute their work, which comes with a worry where one civil servant states that “Kosovo may lose this vibrant civil society very soon if the funds are not there” (CSC 3). This reveals that civil society is being described as vibrant in relation to funding which gives additional support to the discussion on civil society not being able to last without it described above in the theme ‘Influence in curbing corruption’.

An additional interesting finding when considering the post-conflict past is the divided context in which civil society must operate (Belloni, 2012). Within the fight against corruption, there are many actors to reach. Still, in a society torn up by conflict, the past seems to impact the possibility of reaching out to all groups affected by corruption. In the case of Kosovo, these problems occur due to ethnic divisions since it is expressed to be difficult working as an Albanian organization trying to provide support to municipalities that are run according to Serbian rule. These divisions can be found in other post-conflict countries in the Western Balkan region, e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina. The divisions are less noticeable when civil society engages in areas such as youth engagement, where all communities participate in activities. However, involvement in the Serbian communities governing is not welcomed and is expressed accordingly:

If you're an Albanian organization that works with the government, for us it's kind of an anti-narrative that they're trying to create. So they don't participate. Like at all even in discussions, we invite citizens, and they just total blocage in a way of even assisting them in addressing the needs of the Serbian communities. Even though we continuously, in every single project, invite even organizations that are part of civil society. But when it comes to politics and comes to anti-corruption, they're not interested (MCS 5).

These types of social divides described by Belloni (2012) are related to the past and follow civil society’s current role as they are limited in executing their responsibilities. It is expressed that these issues are not changing and that it seems impossible to act as a vector for change in these communities (MCS 5).

## 6. Conclusion

The following section answers the research question: what role does civil society play in post-socialist and post-conflict societies when curbing corruption?

When curbing corruption, civil society has mainly taken the role of executing its power in a proactive form, including the typical areas ascribed to civil society. These include monitoring, educating, raising awareness, and executing a watchdog role. The working areas of civil society are not different from societies without a socialist and conflict past. However, the challenges experienced in their role are different as the findings show 1) lack of volunteerism and an entry to professionalism, 2) stress-related to funding, and 3) pressure from the international donor community.

Civil society in a post-socialist and post-conflict setting can be considered operating in a fragile environment where a strong presence of the anti-corruption industry has made them resilient to the mission of curbing corruption. The findings demonstrate that during the fall of socialism, civic engagement, including voluntarism, was present. At the same time, after the period of war turned into a professional mission initiated by the international community. Corruption is only one of the issues that civil society is ascribed to deal with. Hence, civil society's role has changed as it is now established for long-lasting professional activities providing salaries.

This thesis confirms that the theoretical perceptions from previous research stating that there is a risk of civil society not wanting to cooperate with civil servants due to their past of mistrust does not apply in Kosovo's case. The anti-corruption industry has tied civil society together with diverse actors where they are proven to have an essential role both for central and local government. The view of civil society's role as a vector for change is shared both by themselves and among the actors whom they are interacting with.

All actors participating in the thesis acknowledged that civil society's strength lies in the pressure they can execute and the accountability it can generate despite lacking direct power. They can only push for change where political will must follow. Additionally, a common understanding of the donor's involvement in civil society's role as the funder is present, but their view of steering the agenda is diverse. The majority of CSOs express that they are free to

execute their work without donors' involvement independently. At the same time, the civil servants see themselves acting under pressure from their funders and running the risk of being politicized. This has resulted in assumptions of civil society only chasing after the wealth that can be gained. Although civil society demonstrates concrete results that have contributed to the fight against corruption, these efforts are known by the actors interacting with them. Another point that several participants agreed on was that civil society in Kosovo might be freer than in other countries in the Western Balkans as government retaliation is not occurring. Furthermore, it became evident that the need for collective action is acknowledged among all participants, indicating that the majority are ready to work towards a society free from corruption despite the persisting challenges that exist due to their past.

By applying a theoretical framework combining different theoretical perspectives related to the fight against corruption and civil society's role in a post-socialist and post-conflict setting, this thesis contributes to new insights from an environment experiencing a double transition. The study confirms the dual role civil society holds while also acknowledging insights into the challenges affecting the execution of their role. The case of Kosovo acted as a theoretically representative case which enables possibilities for further research to explore if these findings apply in other contexts experiencing a double transition.

## 7. Discussion and further research

The findings show that the anti-corruption industry in Kosovo is highly present as all actors involved in this study find themselves in the same industry. Therefore, it is evident that civil society will practice its role according to the concept of the industry, where cooperation is the key object. One can relate this to civil society being built up by the international community where the norms may live on. Accordingly, facilitating cooperation becomes the ‘only’ option. Nevertheless, since the international community observes all actors, this industry can be maintained where finding a ‘new business model’ as one participant expressed seems far from currently achievable. Here, one could question the role of overall autonomy as there are two perspectives from the material; 1) civil society is free to work in the areas they prefer and are not controlled by donors, and 2) donors set the agenda by letting the donors apply for specific grants. Future studies might therefore include donors where one can make assumptions about a line of reasoning similar to the anti-corruption industry. Additionally, further knowledge can be gained by examining how the EU supports civil society in the fight against corruption. The value of pleasing the EU was described among civil servants. Due to this study's scope and time frame, it was more valued only to include perspectives from local actors.

One should acknowledge that the findings concerning the case of Kosovo may only be relevant for a short period since civil society is still developing, where examples from the interviews show that positive progress has been made through their experience of working with anti-corruption. Still, Kosovo served as a typical case for exploring the role of civil society in post-socialist and post-conflict societies where the application of the theoretical framework, e.g., demonstrated that it is not given that these types of settings are experiencing government retaliation or running the risk of facilitating corruption within their role.

According to the theoretical expectations, there would be a reason to believe that corruption can be found in civil society. Still, the results demonstrate that the established civil society organizations interviewed present and publish their spending for both donors and citizens. Therefore, it can be considered a measure that works as a guarantee that these organizations are not engaging in corruption. However, the results collected might not have given the same results if new and less known organizations were interviewed since both civil society members, and

the civil servants acknowledge these as a source of corruption within CSOs. This is an interesting finding to be observed when engaging with civil society since it can be connected to one of the interviewees expressing that anti-corruption is becoming an attractive area for civil society to work with *and* receive funds for. Although, the use of well-established organizations and platforms generated insights into the organizations that have tangible impacts.

Furthermore, observing the role of political will for civil society's possibility to execute their role was proven important. The importance was explained in terms of everyday cooperation between CSO and central and local institutions and a requirement for political will for long-lasting changes. The theoretical approach that describes possible change even from a few politicians was acknowledged when exploring civil society's role, especially on the local level. Since only one participant from the local level was included, it can be regarded as an overgeneralization. Members of civil society confirmed that the will among individual local civil servants to provide support exists. Still, due to the small sample of this thesis, this would need to be explored further.

Although Kosovo here being used as a theoretically representative case, previous research has demonstrated that each context is different, which is also evident in the findings as other countries in the Western Balkans are described as having a more challenging climate for their CSOs. In this regard, Kosovo might be less of a typical case that could be explored in future studies. As discussed in the analysis, the reason for a freer civil society can be argued to take place due to the heavy donor involvement. This could also be explored further since the Western Balkans countries, compared to Kosovo, have a different relationship and history with donors. Similar in-depth studies or cross-country comparisons could generate more nuances and develop knowledge on the topic of civil society's role in double-transition societies. Moreover, a comparison between different communities in Kosovo could be further explored as one interviewee mentioned the difficulties of working across societal divisions where the role of ethnicity still plays a part in post-conflict societies.

The results showed that civil society works in wide-ranging areas. Therefore, further research can remove the subject of corruption and explore other areas, such as e.g., women's rights, to see if the past affects civil society's work on different issues.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1.

Name of civil society group	Description of organization/ platform
<p><b>1. Democracy Plus</b></p>	<p>Non-profit organization established in 2016. Structured around three programmes to increase citizens participation and accountability: 1) elections and political parties, 2) good governance dealing with e.g., public procurement, and 3) rule of law.</p> <p>Funded on grants from donors.</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from Democracy Plus</p>
<p><b>2. GAP Institute</b></p>	<p>Think tank established in 2007. Consists of professionals provide research for public policies and give recommendations and produce policy briefs. Focuses on economic issues and social issues e.g., questions regarding welfare.</p> <p>Independent from government funding and receives funding from donors.</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from Gap Institute</p>
<p><b>3. Kallxo</b></p>	<p>An online platform for reporting corruption established in 2012. The platform is a joint project by Internews Kosova, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and the Anti-Corruption Agency, financially supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).</p> <p>Citizens are enabled to report cases of corruption, including like mismanagement, abuse of power, nepotism, problems with public service, delivery</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from Kallxo</p>
<p><b>4. Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI)</b></p>	<p>NGO joining as a chapter for Transparency International since 2010 resulting in their focus on anti-corruption. focuses on increasing citizens participation and public accountability.</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from KDI</p>

<p><b>5. Lēvizja FOL</b></p>	<p>NGO established in 2009. Working on issues with corruption, promoting openness of government, investigating procurements and monitoring the judicial system.</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from Lēvizja FOL</p>
<p><b>6. Platforma CiviKos</b></p>	<p>A network for civil society organizations established in 2007. Acts as an umbrella organization bringing 300 member organizations under the same network. CiviKos facilitates cooperation between civil society and public authorities, works towards improving legislation and including civil society in governmental policy making.</p> <p>Source: Member of civil society from Platforma CiviKos</p>

## Appendix 2.

### Introduction checklist

- Thank you for wanting to participate.
- Give short background info of the purpose of the study: examine how civil society in a double-transitioned setting such as the one in Kosovo can curb corruption.
- Instructions of the interview: There are no right or wrong answers, feel free to ask questions, you are free to answer the questions you would like and end the interview whenever.
- Ask for permission to record the conversation: only to follow the conversation and not focus on taking notes, will be deleted after the thesis is finalized.

### Appendix 3.

#### Letter request for interviews

Dear NAME,

My name is Adelisa Beculic and I'm currently writing my master's thesis in European Studies at the University of Gothenburg, in Gothenburg Sweden. In my master thesis, I focus on how civil societies develops in countries that are post-socialist and post-conflict, like Kosovo. I am interested to understand the role of civil society in relation to corruption - the potential challenges and possibilities in its work to help combat it both on a national and local level. Not much attention has been given to Kosovo on this matter and therefore I have decided to study this topic. I have received a fieldwork grant to conduct interviews in Kosovo which allowed me to come here to Pristina and conduct interviews with members of civil society. The grant is provided by *ICLD - Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy* and you can find the motivation for the grant attached in the email.

I am writing to you since I would like to ask you whether I could interview you. I came across your work is related to Kosovo's civil society and its work on corruption. The interview will last between 20-45 mins. All the questions are open-ended, and I am flexible about time and place.

Due to me being here for a limited time I would be very grateful if you are interested in participating in an interview in the near time of this week or the following weeks.

Below you find the names and contact details of my supervisors. Feel free to contact them:

Adea Gafuri  
[adea.gafuri@gu.se](mailto:adea.gafuri@gu.se)

Anna Persson  
[anna.persson@pol.gu.se](mailto:anna.persson@pol.gu.se)

Thank you for reading this e-mail and for your contribution. Do not hesitate to write me an email should you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Adelisa

## Appendix 4.

### Interview guide for civil society members

#### Warm-up question:

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- Could you describe your organization?

**Theme 2: Influence in curbing corruption – Set up of staff:** Due to post-conflict and post-socialist civil society often being steered by professionalism and a lack of volunteering, these questions can give an understanding if this fits the case of Kosovo.

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- What kind of background does your staff have, working or voluntary experience and education?
- Are you welcoming volunteers to your organizations wanting to engage in your work?
- What motivates you personally in your work for (insert name of organization)?

**Theme 1: Understanding corruption - Corruption in Kosovo:** Each respondent's view of Kosovo's corruption can determine the answer to the following questions.

---

- How would you describe corruption in Kosovo?
- Would you say that there are some forms of corruption that are more prevalent in Kosovo than others?

**Theme 2: Influence in curbing corruption - Work:** To get an understanding of how they view their independent work on anti-corruption efforts and measures against corruption in their working scene. Previous research has acknowledged corruption among organizations in post-conflict and post-socialist settings.

---

- What kind of efforts or initiatives do you undertake to tackle corruption?
- What impact do you think your organization has on the anti-corruption work in Kosovo?
- Does your organization have a so-called watchdog role, and in that case, could you describe how you execute it?

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Political will:** Previous research has shown that even willingness from a few politicians/civil servants can have an impact on anti-corruption work. Contrasting to this, it is argued that it can only occur if the central state holds political will.

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- Where have you noticed the most motivation for engagement when it comes to curbing corruption, by central authorities or local institutions?
- Where is corruption the most prevalent, among local authorities or at the governmental level?
- How important is political will from the central authorities or local institutions in order for your organization to continue its work against corruption?

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Work on a local perspective:** To understand what type of trust, beliefs, and exemptions civil society encounters from the local government.

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- Do you work with local institutions or municipalities?

**If so:**

- Could you describe how you work together?
- Would you say that there are any challenges?
- Are there any strengths of working with them?
- Are there things you can do together that you would not be able to do alone?
- Considering that Kosovo has a new government with a goal of fighting corruption, have you seen any shift in motivation when it comes to the actors you are cooperating with? If so, do you see this development within local institutions/municipalities?

**If not:**

- Is there a reason why your organization is not working with local institutions or municipalities?
- What do you think needs to change for you to work and cooperate with them?

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Governmental involvement:** These questions further explore the relationship with state actors.

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- In post-conflict societies, there have been findings showing that organizations are often careful of expressing themselves because they fear government retaliation or because they want to avoid accusations of political partisanship.
  - What are your thoughts on this?
  - Are there moments where you have noticed that your organization engages in this type of self-censorship when it comes to the issue of corruption?

**Theme 3: Challenges in curbing corruption - Trust:** These questions are added to gain an understanding of how the actors believe society perceives them due to post-conflict and post-socialist societies sharing the common characteristic of possible distrust towards organizations. Additionally, to gain knowledge of their own working experience of corruption where the setting they operate in could generate corruption instead of preventing it.

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- Does your organization have any procedures if corruption is detected among your employees? If so, could you describe it?
- How do you believe society perceives you as an organization?
- Do you think people/the public are informed on your work with corruption?

- Many researchers would argue that post-conflict and post-socialist states share the common attribute of having high levels of distrust towards civil society organizations. In your view, does this apply to Kosovo? Why/ why not?

**Theme 2: Influence in curbing corruption - Donor involvement:** These questions are added since post-conflict societies have received a great amount of donor support. By including these questions insight to what extent this funding steers their interaction/ cooperation can be gained.

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- How would you describe your organization's relationship with donors?
- To what extent would you say that you are able to set your own agenda in terms of your work?
- Do you believe you would do the same things if donors were not involved?

**Theme 5: Influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict past:** This question can give answers relating to the main aim of the study.

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- Would you say civil society is affected by its post-socialist and post-conflict past? If so, please describe how.

**Ending:**

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- Who do you think are the most important actors in fighting corruption in Kosovo?
- Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to bring up?
- Is it all right for me to reach out to you again, should I have any additional questions?
- Can you recommend to me some more people that would be interesting for me to interview?
- How can I cite you?

## **Appendix 5.**

### Interview guide for actors working *with* civil society

#### **Warm-up question:**

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- Could you describe your current position and how you have been in contact with civil society?

**Theme 1: Understanding corruption - Corruption in Kosovo:** Each respondent's view of Kosovo's corruption can determine the answer to the following questions.

---

- How would you describe corruption in Kosovo?
- Would you say that there are some forms of corruption that are more prevalent in Kosovo than others?

**Theme 2: Influence in curbing corruption - Work:** To get an understanding of how civil societies anti-corruption efforts are viewed since research has acknowledged corruption among organizations in post-conflict and post-socialist settings.

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- What kind of efforts or initiatives have you noticed that civil society undertakes to tackle corruption?
- What impact do you think civil society has on the anti-corruption work in Kosovo?
- Do you believe they have a so-called watchdog role, and in that case, please elaborate on how they execute it?

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Political will:** Previous research has shown that even willingness from a few politicians/civil servants can have an impact on anti-corruption work. Contrasting to this, it is argued that it can only occur if the central state holds political will.

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- Where have you noticed the most motivation for engagement when it comes to curbing corruption, by central authorities or local institutions?
- Where is corruption the most prevalent, among local authorities or at the governmental level?
- How important do you think political will is from the central authorities or local institutions in order for civil society organizations to continue their work against corruption?

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Work on a local perspective:** To understand what type of trust, beliefs, and exemptions civil society encounters from the local government.

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- Is it easier for civil society to work with local institutions or municipalities than central authorities? please elaborate on why/ why not?

**If so:**

- what do you know about their work together?
- Would you say that there are any challenges?
- Are there any strengths of the two actors working together?
- Considering that Kosovo has a new government with a goal of fighting corruption, have you seen any shift in motivation when it comes to efforts to engage with civil society on this matter? If so, do you see this development within local institutions/municipalities?

**If not:**

- What do you think needs to change for closer cooperation with local institutions and civil society

**Theme 4: Cooperation - Governmental involvement:** The theme further explores the relationship with state actors.

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- In post-conflict societies, there have been findings showing that organizations are often careful of expressing themselves because they fear government retaliation or because they want to avoid accusations of political partisanship.
  - o What are your thoughts on this?
  - o Are there moments where you think organizations engage in this type of self-censorship when it comes to the issue of corruption?

**Theme 3: Challenges in curbing corruption - Trust:** This theme is added to gain an understanding of how the actors believe society perceives civil society due to post-conflict and post-socialist societies sharing the common characteristic of possible distrust towards organizations.

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- How do you believe society perceives civil society?
- Do you think people/the public are informed on civil society's work with corruption?
- Many researchers would argue that post-conflict and post-socialist states share the common attribute of having high levels of distrust towards civil society organizations. In your view, does this apply to Kosovo? Why/ why not?

**Theme 5: Influence of the post-socialist and post-conflict past:** This question can give answers relating to the main aim of the study.

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- Would you say civil society is affected by its post-socialist and post-conflict past? If so, please describe how.

**Ending:**

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- Who do you think are the most important actors in fighting corruption in Kosovo?
- Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to bring up?

- Is it all right for me to reach out to you again, should I have any additional questions?
- Can you recommend to me some more people that would be interesting for me to interview?
- How can I cite you?

## **Appendix 6.**

### **Interview guide for actors working with civil society in Serbian**

(adapted format with questions for a civil servant on the central government level)

#### **Pitanje za zagrevanje:**

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- Možete li opisati svoju trenutnu poziciju i kako ste bili u kontaktu sa civilnim društvom?

#### **Tema 1: Razumevanje korupcije - Korupcija na Kosovu:**

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- Kako biste opisali korupciju na Kosovu?

- Da li biste rekli da postoje neki oblici korupcije koji su na Kosovu rasprostranjeniji od drugih?

#### **Tema 2: Uticaj na suzbijanje korupcije - Rad:**

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- Koje napore ili inicijative ste primetili da civilno društvo preduzima u borbi protiv korupcije?
- Šta mislite, kakav uticaj ima civilno društvo na antikorupcijski rad na Kosovu?
- Da li verujete da imaju takozvanu ulogu čuvara, i u tom slučaju, objasnite kako je oni izvršavaju?

#### **Tema 4: Saradnja - politička volja:**

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- Gde ste primetili najveću motivaciju za angažovanje kada je u pitanju suzbijanje korupcije, kod centralnih vlasti ili lokalnih institucija?
- Gde je korupcija najzastupljenija, među lokalnim vlastima ili na nivou (glavni) vlasti?
- Koliko mislite da je važna politička volja centralnih vlasti ili lokalnih institucija kako bi organizacije civilnog društva nastavile sa radom protiv korupcije?

#### **Tema 4: Saradnja - učešće vlade:**

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U postkonfliktnim društvima postoje nalazi koji pokazuju da su organizacije često oprezne u izražavanju jer se plaše odmazde vlade ili zato što žele da izbegnu optužbe za političku partijsku pripadnost.

- Šta mislite o ovome?
- Da li postoje trenuci u kojima mislite da se organizacije bave ovom vrstom autocenzure kada je u pitanju korupcija?

### **Tema 3: Izazovi u suzbijanju korupcije - Poverenje:**

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- Šta mislite kako javnost doživljava civilno društvo?
- Da li mislite da su ljudi/javnost informisani o radu civilnog društva sa korupcijom?
- Mnogi istraživači bi tvrdili da postkonfliktne i postkomunističke države dele zajednički atribut visokog nivoa nepoverenja prema organizacijama civilnog društva. Po vašem mišljenju, da li se to odnosi na Kosovo? Zašto Zašto ne?

### **Tema 5: Uticaj postsocijalističke i postkonfliktne prošlosti**

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- Šta mislite kako na civilno društvo utiče njihova komunistička i konfliktna prošlost u svom radu protiv korupcije?

### **Kraj:**

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Ko su po vašem mišljenju najvažniji akteri u borbi protiv korupcije na Kosovu?

- Ima li nečega što nisam pitao, a što biste želeli da iznesete?
- Da li je u redu da vam se ponovo obratim, da li imam dodatnih pitanja?
- Možete li mi preporučiti još neke osobe koje bi mi bile interesantne za intervju?
- Kako da te citiram?