



**CHANGING
THE STORY**

**PHASE 1
CRITICAL REVIEW**

KOSOVO

ACT: Arts, Critical Thinking and Active Citizenship

“We are all drop-outs” Creating informal spaces
of engagement in Kosovo.

Critical Reflection and Review



Written by Lura Pollozhani and Hajrulla Çeku

Co-Investigators: Nita Luci and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers

Image: Creating the Boom Zine animation.

Credit: Lura Pollozhani



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1. Introduction

The study of youth and active citizenship in post-conflict societies is an under-researched topic. While the topic of transitional justice and participation in post-conflict states have received attention in research, the intersection of how youth practice and enact their citizenship in the context of a divided society has been left by the sidelines. This research focuses on how young people, bearing diverse group identifications - be it ethnic, gender or religious - become engaged in their societies. Particularly we are interested in which independent, arts-focused CSOs and state-sponsored, institutional youth centers reach out to non-cosmopolitan youth and negotiate contextual challenges. Core questions include, how do state vs. international funding streams and, at times, conflicting political demands influence the methods and outcomes of civic education? How do state and independent educational sites conceptualize and negotiate civic education, e.g. in relation to the post-war, national 'master narratives'? Who uses the services provided? Who does not? How and why are CSOs and youth centers succeeding or failing in promoting social justice, civic integration and education for local youth? These, and other questions, will require reflection upon the ways historical contingencies have shaped underpinning practices, concepts, and politics of such work. The research will also account for the intersection of socio-cultural, and other, identifications, experiences and relations (based on gender, ethnicity, class, race) within the relevant educational or social justice programs.

While the research aims to touch upon all these issues and is informed by the overarching context of a post-conflict society, it will focus on answering two research questions and thematic areas:

- How does formal and informal civic education affect youth engagement and active citizenship in Kosovo?
- Does art activism among youth present a case which promotes higher and more critical levels of engagement?

The research will be focused on young people in four municipalities: Peja, Prishtina, Mitrovica and North Mitrovica. These questions will therefore be answered in a comparative manner between these cities in order to see the difference between core and peripheral initiatives to youth engagement. At the same time, the research will also include a Kosovo-wide image of the organizations and initiatives which operate and engage youth in diverse ways.



Image 1. Anibar Animation Poster 50/50 in Peja. Photos by researcher.

Youth in Kosovo

Youth engagement and participation in their society and state is a crucial component of any well-functioning democracy. However, youth also find themselves in a precarious position, as Staeheli notes “the very status of youth as political subjects and as citizens is questioned on the grounds of youths’ autonomy, or perhaps as their lack of autonomy” (Staeheli 2013, 90). This places them in a context where they are not able to negotiate their position and are therefore marginalized. Yet, in many engagement initiatives there exists “a vision of youth as knowledgeable, practical and engaged in making their communities, cities and countries better. It is an appealing view of youth and their potential as citizens” (Staeheli 2013, 93). Due to the marginalization of youth however, their potential as citizens is limited if not stifled completely. Engagement is an important component of practicing and enacting citizenship.

As Kymlicka and Norman note, “one of the first obligations of citizenship is to participate in civil society” (1994: 363) and in the stages of state-building, this is of particular importance as the limits or freedoms in the practice of citizenship determines the real level of inclusiveness of any given society.

As Greenberg notes, *“the link between participation and democracy [has] come to include implicit arguments about political practice and cultural competencies. Although it began as a critical perspective challenging authoritarian forms of governance, participatory “culture” has become a means of transforming undemocratic societies into moral democratic polities oriented toward a common good”* (Greenberg 2010, 62).

The aspect of practice in the sense of engagement and participation is important as *“many groups’ such as ethnic and religious minorities, women ‘feel excluded from the “common culture,” despite possessing the common rights of citizenship”* (Kymlicka and Norman 1994: 370). In this study we treat youth as marginalized in its practice of citizenship as recent studies show that youth in the region of Southeast Europe are a group of people *“not properly integrated in the social and political systems”* (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 15).

In addition, we look at young people from the majority ethnic community, Kosovo Albanians, and the largest non-majority community, Kosovo Serbs, thus looking at the intersection of youth and ethnicity. Considering the intersectionality of youth and ethnicity in a post-conflict setting such as Kosovo is important in terms of determining the level of inequality, exclusion and the practice of citizenship. As research has shown in Kosovo there is a deep social distance between the two ethnic groups as data shows that *“both young Kosovar Albanians and Serbs are reluctant to have each other as neighbors- only 36 percent of Albanians and 26 percent of Serbs would accept this”* (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 35).

At the same time, young people of both ethnic groups are faced with a very similar predicament where they are victims to a poor socio-economic situation and where identities and ethnicity is constantly instrumentalized by political elites (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 42). Thus, there is no space for solidarity in engagement among youth of different ethnic groups as they are deeply divided. As a regional study found *“the educational systems and the media, being in the service of ethnocentric agendas, are some of the notable agents of deepening interethnic divisions”* (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 42).

This creates a context where often ethnic divisions, the instrumentalization of ethnicity, and high politics gain priority, while the needs of young people are marginalized entirely in the interest of the “survival of the nation.” As Krasniqi (2013) notes Kosovo has developed a differentiated citizenship due to its multi-ethnic character. While the formula of differentiated citizenship is oftentimes preferred in the context of post-conflict societies, in the case of Kosovo, Krasniqi argues it has led to the hierarchization of citizenship.

While Krasniqi’s article mostly focuses on the ethnic hierarchization, also noting gender, it can be argued that there is also a generational hierarchization where youth often feel powerless (Mandić 2018). Within this conundrum of state-building, citizenship and inclusion, Kosovo, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, also has a strong international presence which permeates politics and civil society (through the distribution of grants) which have had a large influence over the state-building and citizenship regimes (Krasniqi 2010). Youth is also considered to be influenced by the international community, as Mandić notes. They are often studied as “*passive recipients of the international communities’ benevolent yearning to include them in the political sphere*” (Mandić, 2018, p. 207).

The marginalization and powerlessness of youth in Kosovo is evident in that they face “*unemployment, poverty, and distrust of the democratic system, which result in feelings of existential uncertainty and a lack of long-term planning*” (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 15). According to studies, 68 percent of young people are unemployed in Kosovo (Pasha et al. 2012; Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 15). In this context, youth become apathetic and passive, as the regional research shows “*[youth] generally demonstrate low levels of civic activism- for instance, less than 10 percent of the young are politically active*” (Branković, Turjačanin, Maloku 2017, 15). Indeed, as we will show with our analysis, politics is considered a dirty word that the youth in Kosovo shy away from and choose not to engage with consciously (even though through their participation they are political). Thus, it is important “*to ask what people, and young people in particular, are opting out of when they do not participate in politics*”, what they seek when they do choose to participate, and what the methods they choose to do so are (Greenberg 2010, 63).

White (1989, as quoted in Ginwright and Cammarota, 2002, 87) explains that 'young people are "subjected to wider relations of social division and social control, and agency is really about how young people negotiate, contest, and challenge the institutionalised processes of social division within which they are situated." Agency is the most effective manner through which youth can affect change as well as deal with the injustices of the society they inhabit. It is also a showcasing that citizens can be creators of power and not just their products (Olson 2008, 43). Whereas, if they are 'subjugates of oppressive social, economic and cultural forces [they] are denied any real sense of agency and lack of capacity to act on and change their world' (McInerney, 2009, 28). However, participation is not perceived as being the only way through which youth can show their disapproval of the social and political reality that surrounds them. According to Greenberg who studied youth participation in Serbia "[apathy] can also be a citizens response to the ways that international policy-makers and democratization experts deploy normative models of democratic success and failure in newly emerging democracies" (2010, 41). This aspect highlights the nuance of perceived apathy, namely that youth might not be apathetic but rather a engaging with the state. Mandić notes that another "poignant dimension of youth-specific powerlessness [is a] sense of forced acceptance of responsibility for conditions that the young are not responsible for creating" (Mandić, 2018, p.213). Indeed, due to the corruption and lack of transparency of political elites, "Kosovar youth are in effect penalized for their tender age by the 'horizontal inequalities' of their society" (Stewart 2012). "With pervasive corruption and criminal patrimonialism, young adults are increasingly at the mercy of an economy significantly reliant on diaspora remittances" (Mandić, 2018, p. 206) The position of young people in Kosovo, thus, paints a very bleak picture.

In this context, discussing the engagement of youth as active citizens becomes very important as it addresses their involvement in society and the formation of their position within it as citizens. As Staeheli notes "'engagement' is a non-threatening word for what is really a hard-edged politics about citizenship formation" (Staeheli 2013, 102). An active citizen is "someone who has a sense of civic duty, feeling of social connection to their community, confidence in their abilities to effect change, as well as someone who engages in civic behaviors" (Zaff et al. 2010, 737)

However youth in Kosovo in recent years has shown an engagement which pushes the boundaries of engagement into areas which continually challenge the status quo. Art collectives such as Haveit, through their performances have sought to push the boundaries of citizenship. Indeed, the use of art as a method of engagement and contention in Kosovo necessitated the search for other concepts which expand beyond active citizenship. Art activism, as argued by Groys makes (Groys, 2014, p. 14). Groups such as Haveit have done precisely this, pointing out the “errors” in the system (Pollozhani 2019). Within this framework the concept of activist citizen becomes a useful analytical tool. The difference between active and activist citizenship (Isin 2009), is “Faranak Miraftab’s distinction between invited and invented spaces of citizenship” (Zaharijević, 2013, p. 20). Namely, *“active citizenship has a goal of getting things done. It is being enacted in ‘invited’ spaces, legitimized by donors and government interventions, with the view to provide ‘coping mechanisms and strategies to survive the adverse effects of the existing social and political hierarchies’”* (Miraftab 2004, 3 as quoted in (Zaharijević, 2013, p. 20). On the other hand *“activist citizenship [wants] to challenge and transform the status quo, and is enacted in the ‘invented’ spaces of practice, often practices of resistance to the dominant systems of exploitation and oppression”* (ibid.). As Staeheli succinctly puts it *“[i]f active citizenship is deployed to address social issues without fundamentally challenging their causes, activist citizenship has a goal of challenging and perhaps transforming the status quo”* (Staeheli 2013, 93). Acts of citizenship according to Isin *“produce subjects as citizens”* and through them *“claims are articulated and claimants are produced create new sites of contestation, belonging, identification and struggle”* (Isin 2009, 371).

As the research will show, youth in Kosovo act within invited and invented spaces as active citizens and activist citizens. Certain forms of engagement, such as engagement through art activism, show that the activists or artists are more prone towards inventing spaces, whereas more conventional or formal forms of engagement build active citizens.

While these are both positive developments it is important to distinguish the two as they have separate implications in terms of the level of engagement and the methods used. While activist citizenship is inclined towards fundamental societal changes, active citizenship can operate within the system. This research offers new avenues of inquiry which link particular methods to particular forms of engagement and citizenship practice in the context of post-conflict societies. The research will help to understand the effects that youth can have on society and the effect that particular interventions, whether formal or informal, can have on youth.

Civic Education in Kosovo

Civic education scholarship in post-conflict societies is under-researched which marks a “[notable omission] because post-conflict situations offer distinct challenges to instilling both democratic norms and a sense of social cohesion to ensure democracy and social justice in the future” (Quaynor 2011, 33). The potential of education in overcoming social inequality and instilling democratic values is considerable. Freire, one of the leading advocates of critical pedagogy “[attached] enormous weight to the possibilities of education for transforming unjust social relations” (McInerney 2009, 26). However, in post-conflict societies this potential can also be used to perpetuate divisions and social injustice.

As Quaynor notes in her literature review of articles written on civic education in post-conflict societies, in such countries education is used to embed and reinforce ideas of “*nationhood and violence*” (Quaynor 2011, 34). She points to a research conducted in Afghanistan “*in which students completed mathematics problems regarding the speed of bullets as they fly towards Russian soldiers*” (Quaynor 2011, 34). However, even in a post-conflict context, citizenship education particularly is seen as aiming “*to develop ‘knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable [young people] to participate in the communities of which they are a part*” (Arthur et al., 2008:5 as quoted in Quaynor 2011, 34). Yet, even this particular aim of citizenship education cannot be taken separately from the way that education is performed by teachers and administrators and from the overall curriculum of teaching.

While civic education is included in school curricula of many states, including Kosovo, it is not useful if it is only taken as a straightforward education without the critical thinking that should accompany it. Kosovo can be said to have a “*banking concept*’ of schooling [...]” (McInerney 2009, 27). Within this context, McInerney explains, the relationship of teacher and student is clearly defined, teachers teach while students listen and learn. (ibid.) He notes that “[s]uch a model of teaching and learning mirrors oppressive relations in society insofar as it denies student subjectivity and is more intent on preserving the status quo than in challenging unjust social relations” (McInerney 2009, 27). This in turn can contribute towards “*alienation, especially for the most marginalized students*” (McInerney 2009, 28). As the analysis will show, this is the case in Kosovo in primary and secondary education, across the target municipalities and in both communities for Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs.

Kosovo’s education system has been subject to many changes which have in many ways inhibited the construction of a programme that promotes civic education. Luzha’s (2015) research on the development of education, particularly in regards to the curricula in teaching art, throughout three important historical stages show that education, and art, have been used as an instrument of nation-building and to suit the ideologies of the time. She showcases how during the Yugoslav period, the first stage she studies, there were two different ideological pulls, on one side the Yugoslav ideology which sought to suppress national identity and belonging, and the Kosovar elite which tried to oppose such tendencies. (Luzha 2015, 19). In the parallel system of education, the second stage, when Kosovo’s education institutions worked ‘underground,’ Luzha finds that art within the educational curricula “*mainly played the role of the cultivation of a national feeling as antagonistic to the oppression it suffered from the regime at the time*” (Luzha 2015, 20). This period is also marked by the unique phenomenon of “house schools” [shtëpitë shkolla] which were the informal places of learning at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of education. This phenomenon is important for this research as it showcases the way that activists and political elites have created and used alternative spaces in the past, showing a certain continuity with the alternative spaces which are being formed now by young activists across Kosovo.

In the third stage of analysis of the education cycle, that of post-war Kosovo, Luzha finds that art education particularly has expanded to include not only music and figurative art but also drama and dance (Luzha 2015, 26). However, it has not stopped having an ideological role in imparting certain ideas of the state and of the nation through history and other subjects (Quaynor 2011, 34). Indeed, Quaynor (2011) finds a few patterns in Kosovo and the region which point towards very strong ideological leanings in education. She points out that the common findings of “many studies on citizenship education in post-conflict countries include the avoidance of controversial issues, the unique role of ethnicity, a lack of trust in political parties and authoritarianism” (Quaynor 2011, 33). The most concerning finding that Quaynor makes on Kosovo, in terms of democracy and participation, relates to the support of authoritarian values by both teachers and students (2011, 46). The findings show that both “*teachers and students [showed] authoritarian tendencies and a skepticism about democracy*” (Quaynor 2011, 45). The support for such values shows a complicity with a system which neither students nor teachers trust, however they seem to value the very principle that maintains phenomena such as corruption and lack of transparency. In this context, even “*curricula written by an intergovernmental organization or local agency that focuses on active citizenship education may not be implemented*” because the attitude and the methods of teaching civic education is lacking (Quaynor 2011, 45). Indeed, as will be discussed in the analysis, a majority of the activists who participated in the focus group discussions perceived schools as a “prison.” (Peja 2019).

The avoidance of controversial issues also presents a problem, which is evident also in the way that young people and citizens from different ethnic groups interact with one another. This avoidance partly stems from a fear among teachers, parents and administrators that violence among previously warring groups would reappear (Quaynor 2011, 43). However, another reason why important topics are not addressed is also the attempt to build loyal citizens towards one’s ethnic group which is prioritized above peace education, as findings from Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia show (Quaynor 2011, 44, 45).

Important for our research is also the fact that controversial issues that are avoided are not only the causes of the conflict but also include “inequality and discrimination based on gender, race or disability status” (Quaynor 2011, 45) These findings show a high unused potential in education in promoting civic engagement among youth. As research has shown in Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Africa, “a democratic classroom climate and the use of participatory methods increased students’ civic engagement, participatory skills and knowledge about democracy” (Quaynor 2011, 46). As a formal avenue towards building active and engaged citizens, education in Kosovo seems to be failing in its mission, and this is also supported by our research, which shows that instead of encouraging participation and active citizenship many schools aim to suppress it.

Remarkably, universities, which are expected to offer a more critical and engaged worldview to students have also faced backlash in Kosovo. As Staeheli notes, “*universities have rarely been neutral sites of learning and scholarship. Indeed, the expectation that an institution could impart values of rationality and train the future leaders of society implies a particular political vision of the relationship between the university and the places in which they are situated*” (Staeheli 2013, 91). In Kosovo, this vision is highly influenced by the political parties and ideology, limiting both professors and students. Indeed, this is evident in how Student Parliaments are run. Both in Prishtina and Mitrovica North, based on our research, these student representative bodies are not at all representative of the interests of students, or only partially so. This can be explained in a larger framework of ‘controlling engagement’. Namely, as Staeheli points out “*public funding agencies, political pressure groups, governments, community members, universities and youth themselves all exert influences on the ways that young people navigate the paradox of autonomy [m]any of these efforts implicitly promote a form of citizenship described as ‘active’, in which youth engage in their communities to learn citizenship skills and to address social problems*” (Staeheli 2013, 92). These programmes can be part of “*a broad set of efforts to ‘responsibilize’ citizens such that they regulate their own behavior and reduce the need for state intervention in communities*” (Staeheli 2013, 93).

In line with Staeheli's (2013) argument that educational institutions seek to streamline engagement into acceptable forms, the research shows that when formal institutions do encourage engagement it is in the use of certain accepted methods such as science or volunteering fairs, school concerts, cultural and artistic events that enable to a degree the development of active citizenship which is largely supported by the civil society. Whereas activist citizenship, or a more engaged and daring form of citizenship which seeks to break boundaries, is developed precisely in opposition to or despite formal institutions, as our analysis will show.

Methodology

The analysis is based on empirical data extracted through different research methods in order to get a closer and more direct view on youth engagement in Kosovo. The research was conducted by two researchers, one looking into the literature review of youth engagement and civic education, conducting four focus group discussions (FGD) in the target municipalities, interviewing partner organizations, and participating in different events. The second researcher worked on analyzing the education system in depth and conducting interviews with the relevant institutions, teachers and experts.

To assess youth engagement in the target municipalities, the researcher conducted 4 focus group discussions with young people in the target municipalities of Prishtina, Peja, Mitrovica and Mitrovica North. The focus group discussions were organized by the partner organizations following instructions from the researcher. The participants of the FGDs were people ranging from 14 to 45 years old^[1] and they included activists and artists. The focus groups in Peja and in Mitrovica included mostly high school seniors or university freshmen who are engaged in activities and volunteer on a regular basis.

[1] The organizations were instructed to invite participants who were 18-30, however in the discussions there were some younger activists. It was decided that these participants could participate, but ethical instructions were given to them.

The focus groups in Prishtina included mostly young artists and activists, while the FGD in Mitrovica North included activists of the civil society sector and university students (see Table 1). Attention was paid to having a balanced gender representation and this was attained in most of the FGDs. Namely, in Prishtina there were 6 male and 5 female participants, in Peja there were 6 female and 2 male participants, in Mitrovica there were 5 female and 6 male participants and in Mitrovica North there were 3 female and 4 male participants. The focus groups were held in the Albanian language in Peja, Mitrovica, and Prishtina and in the Serbian language in Mitrovica North. Each participant signed a consent form of participation in the FGD which emphasized the rights of the participants, and the contact details of the researcher and of the supervisor in case the participants had any complaints. They were additionally instructed by the researcher on the background of the research and how it would be used. The FGDs were recorded on a voice recorder and the recordings were safely stored by the researcher.

Table 1. Age and Profile of Participants in FGDs per city

| City | Age Range | Profile |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>Prishtina</u> | 19-38 | Artists, Designers and Students |
| <u>Peja</u> | 16-21 | Students and Civil Society Activists |
| <u>Mitrovica</u> | 14-32 | Students and Civil Society Activists |
| <u>Mitrovica North</u> | 21-45 | Students and Civil Society Activists |

The participant observation of various activities, events and spaces in the target municipalities was conducted in order to get a better sense of how youth interacted with these activities and spaces. During these observations the researcher participated as an observer like any young person would, had conversations with young people at the events, and on one occasion participated in a 'World Café' activity sharing information on the research and engaging with the participants. The activities and spaces were chosen randomly through seeing postings on Facebook events, as it was important that these events be public and the information be accessible. The spaces were visited based on recommendations from activists

A limitation to the attendance to events and the visiting of spaces was based on the availability of the researcher and funding.



Photo x. Posters of the Anibar Animation Festival in Peja.
Photo by researcher.

Activities attended:

- Anibar Festival- Peja
- Sabota Platypus Reading
- Group- Prishtina
- Motrat Exhibition-
- Prishtinë- Sytë
- Termokiss
- Krejt ka pak III: Pernjoni-tjetrin
Arsimi joformal (14-16 Dec 18)
- Artpolis
- Artivism 10 December 2018
- Gender, marriage, the
objectification of women
VentureUP
- Kino Armata events and
movie showings.

Spaces Visited:

- Museum of Mitrovica,
- Mitrovica
- Bes(i)misao, Mitrovica
- North
- Aquarius Gallery,
- Mitrovica North
- Termokiss, Prishtina
- Kino Armata, Prishtina
- Jusuf Gervalla Cinema,
- Peja

In addition, the researchers conducted a mapping of the different initiatives, spaces, organizations and institutions that work with young people and art more broadly. After the mapping, the researcher used a Google form and Facebook outreach to share the mapping with organizations and activists, in order for them to fill in additional initiatives, particularly informal ones, that the researcher might have missed, which led to several additions. Data was gathered through desk research, interviews and conversations with activists and through the focus group discussions with young people. In total, 55 initiatives, institutions, spaces and organizations were identified in the mapping exercise.



Photo x. Aquarius Gallery artwork (photo by Researcher)

However, for the purposes of this research we have chosen to include only a select few spaces and organizations, including our partner organizations (Stacion, Anibar, 7Arte, Aktiv), as a space we focus on Termokiss and Bes(i)misao, and as an initiative we focus on Haveit.

To get the perspectives of organizations working with youth and the arts, the researcher interviewed the representatives of the partner organizations through semi-structured interviews. HAJRULLA's part continues from here if he does interviews as well.

Mapping of Organizations working with youth, arts and civic education

| Name of organization/initiative | Location | Type | Area of work | Website |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| Stacion- Center for Contemporary Art | Prishtina | Organization/Space | Providing space for artists and promoting artistic engagement and production. | http://www.stacion.org |
| Varg e vi | Gjilan | Organization | Promotes activism through theatre | |
| Anibar | Pejë | Organization/Space | Works on animation, teaches youth how to create animations, manages local cinema | http://anibar.org |
| Aktiv | North Mitrovica | Organization/Space | Promotes activism, organizes a public space and tv shows to highlight diverse opinions in NM | www.ngoaktiv.org |
| 7Arte | | Organization/Space | Works with youth and organizes initiatives for the environment and cultural events. Provides space for young people | http://www.7-arte.org |
| S'bunker/TruAktiv | Prishtina, Gjakove, Ferizaj, Pejë, Gjilan | Organization/Initiative | Works with youth on activism | https://sbunker.net |
| FemArt/ Artpolis | Prishtinë/North Mitrovica | Initiative/Organization | Festival that seeks to empower women activists and artists/ organization dealing with art and gender | http://www.femart-ks.com/en/ http://www.artpolis-ks.com |

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|------------------------------|-----------|--------------|---|---|
| Oda Theatre | Prishtine | Organization | Promotion of contemporary art development, especially theatre. | http://www.teatrioda.com |
| Kosovo 2.0 | Kosovo | Organization | News magazine which also engages directly with its audience and reaches out to young people | http://kosovotwopointzero.com |
| Alter Habitus | Prishtinë | Organization | Research organization | |
| YIHR | Kosovo | Organization | Organization that works with youth and shed light on human rights and abuses | http://yih-ks.org/en/ |
| Forumi Kulturor | Kosovo | Initiative | A forum consisting of organizations and initiatives working on art and culture in Kosovo. Produced research and debates | http://www.forumikulturor.net |
| Culturist | | Organization | | http://www.culturist-ks.org |
| DAM – Qendra e Artit Muzikor | Prishtina | Organization | Works with your own music and arts | http://www.damfest.com |
| Dokufest | Prizren | Organization | Film festival and engagement with artists | www.dokufest.com |
| Ec ma ndryshe | Prizren | Organization | Promotion of civic education and activism for the protection of cultural heritage | https://www.ecmandryshe.org |
| Fryma e re | Prishtine | Organization | Organizes cultural events with youth on raising awareness of human rights, | |

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|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--|---|
| | | | focusing on marginalized groups | |
| Into the park | Peja | Organization | Organizes music concerts, promotes protection of environment | |
| Kori i grave "LIRIA" | Prishtina | Organization | Choir which aims to promote and empower women and their position in society through art | |
| LUMBRADHI | Prizren | Organization/Cinema | Organization of movie showings and youth engagement | |
| MUS-E | Prishtina | Organization network | Network of organizations in Europe which uses art to initiate intercultural dialogue among youth Through 'Youth in Action' organizes cultural exchanges across Europe | |
| Ngom Fest | Prizren | Festival/Organization | Yearly music festival | http://www.ngomfest.com |
| Orin | Gjilan | Organisation | Organizes cultural events and debates on social issues. | |
| Youth Voice | Novobrdó | Organisation | Promotion of multicultural culture | |

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|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|
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| Motrat | Prishtinë | Space/Initiative | Artistic Space encouraging shows of young artists | http://www.motrat.org |
| Trembelat | Prishtinë | Business | Encourages young artists and activist (Motrat)you | https://www.trembelat.com |
| EU Information and Cultural Centre | Prishtinë/North Mitrovica | Institution/Organization | Open space for citizens | http://euicc-ks.com/about/ |
| Sabota | | Initiative/Space | Open space for citizens | |
| TermoKiss | | Initiative/Space/Organization | Open space that organizes and supports events for and by youth artists and activists | http://termokiss.space |
| Travelling Theater for Children and Youth | Kosovo | Initiative | Travelling theatre throughout Kosovo for young people | https://www.facebook.com/Travelling-Theater-for-Children-and-Youth-704545026590462/ |
| Çlirim poetic/ Poetic Release (Termokiss) | Prishtinë | Initiative | Slam poetry, young people | |
| Simetria | Prishtine | Initiative | Puppet theatre and animation | |
| Aquarius | North Mitrovica | Business/Space | Private business, provides space for local and international artists and provides art classes | https://galerijaaquarius.wordpress.com |
| Bes(i)misao | North Mitrovica | Informal initiative | Open space for youth and activists organizing debates and cultural events | |
| Ministry of Education, Science and Technology | Kosovo | Institution | | www.masht.gov.ks |
| Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports | Kosovo | Institution | | |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| University of Prishtina/ Venture UP | Prishtina | Institution | | |
| University of Prishtina/Programme for Gender Studies and Research | Prishtina | Institution | Organizes summer schools on gender, activism targeted to youth | |
| Sinergija | North Mitrovica | Organization | Works with youth in battling prejudice and holds different trainings useful to them. | http://oek-sinergija.org/tag/kosovska-mitrovica/ |
| Girls Coding Kosovo | Prishtina | Initiative | Works with young women on coding | |
| Forumi për Iniciativa Qytetare | Kosovo | Initiative | Network of organizations and initiatives in Kosovo | https://www.fig-fci.org/?fbclid=IwAR0EO8PiSefhOKGB2csX2Dt-Yg7ieiGqR2nz9cbWUHrndYOHJyv1NIKJAI |
| Peer Education Network Kosovo | Prishtina | Organization | Organization that works on issues concerning youth and social justice | https://www.facebook.com/PeerEducatorsNetwork/ |
| PEN Woman | Prishtina | Initiative | A PEN initiative focusing particularly on gender issues | |
| Youth Speak/Question time (Kino Armata) | Prishtina | Initiative | Open debates and events in Kino Armata with youth | |
| Volume UP (Kosovo 2.0) | Prishtina/Kosovo | Initiative | Initiative by Kosovo 2.0 on youth engagement and debate | |
| Shtatëmbëdhjetë | Prishtina | Foundation | A foundation that aims to foster cultural activism for social development | www.foundation17.org |
| Project Space | Prishtina | Coworking space | Established by Shtatëmbëdhjetë, this is a | www.foundation17.org |

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| | | | coworking space that provides space to individuals, non-formal groups, organizations, artists where different art, culture and social events take place. | |
| Fondacioni për Trashëgiminë Kulturore Legatum | Kosovo | Organization | Organization working on promotion of culture and safe-guarding of heritage | http://www.heritage-ks.org |
| Forumi i Trashëgimisë Kulturore të Prizrenit | Prizren | Organization | Organization working on promotion of cultural heritage in Prizren | http://www.rrok-pz.net/?page=1,3,7 |
| Leo's Art Organisation | Prizren | Organization | Organizes cultural events, promotes and encourages art and artists | http://www.rrok-pz.net/?page=1,3,9 |
| SIT - Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research | Prishtina | Organization | Provides professional counseling services to individuals/groups in need of preventing violence, researches in various fields and activities aiming to prevent negative phenomena. | http://www.sit-ks.org/ https://www.facebook.com/SITccsr/ |
| Youth Educational Club Sinergija | Mitrovica North | Organization | Works with youth and helps them through educational programs, research and engaging them to be active. | https://www.facebook.com/mladinskiedukativniklub/ |
| Forum ZFD | Kosovo | Organization | Works on dealing with the past, but focuses on memory, and has done | https://www.facebook.com/forumZFDKosovo/ |

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| | | | projects on art and dealing with the past with young artists. | |
| Hap | Prishtina | Initiative | Artistic collective who make art installations as criticism to artistic and political developments in Kosovo | |
| Mitrovica Rock School | Mitrovica | Organization | | http://www.mitrovicarockschool.org |
| Qite hapin! | Mitrovica | Initiative | Initiative by students to engage young people to volunteer | |

Formal Opportunities of Engagement for Kosovo Youth

Literature Review

Wolfgang Beutel, in his chapter on developing civic education in schools purports that “civic education is and will be a necessary charge in schools” (Beutel, 2012, 7). As per Beutel this stands not only for developed countries but also for developing ones. Beutel considers the notions of community, “*open-minded society*”, and equity, as prerequisites of democracies. Global challenges are deemed in need of local approaches but also perceived as unable to be solved through “*national politics*” solely (Higgs, 2012, p. 7). Beutel argues global challenges affect locally both children and adolescents, and also poses the idea that “traditional schools” do not meet those needs. Beutel (2007, p.8) states that “*we have to develop a new form of education which enables children as well as adolescents to cope with these problems, i.e. an education relevant to civic society and to the question of working and living together on our planet.*” Based on examples taken from German elementary schools, Beutel and Fauser show that elementary schools are a prime time to introducing civic related education (2007).

Kelly Siegel-Stechler, in her research on high school civics education, argues for voter turnout as a relatively good measure of civic engagement, given that it represents an “*easily recognizable form of political engagement*” (2019, p. 242). Siegel-Stechler points out that civic education plays a vital role in “[*shaping*] the intent of children to vote” (2019, p. 242).

Beyond formal schooling, Siegel-Stechler argues for the necessity of extracurricular civic education, which she considers additional ways for students to better understand civic education (Siegel-Stechler, 2019, 243). She lists volunteerism, extracurricular group activities and the democratic practices of schools as practices that contribute to carving active citizenship. In addition, Carmine Maiello, Fritz Oser, and Horst Biederman, argue that “*civic skills and civic knowledge are key components of the political information perception process...*” (2003, p. 384).

Michael Lenzi, et. al., define civic engagement as “*...involvement in community life...*” (Lenzi 2014). They argue that for such involvement is animated and “influenced by reciprocal relationships between individuals and contexts and is a key factor that contributes to positive youth development.” Their study places schools at the center as institutions not only vital but also with an “*explicit mandate*” to cultivate civic values in younger generations. Further, in reference to Flanagan et al (2007) they state that “*the transmission of civic values at school is provided not only by civic education, but also by giving the younger generation the opportunity to feel part of society*” (Lenzi et al. 2014).

In an encompassing study with 4,057 students from 52 high schools in Chicago, Joseph Kahne, and Susan Spote, analyzed civic engagement methods that were able to nurture more effectively student’s civic activism (Kahne and Spote, 2008). The study took into account several factors including “*demographic factors, preexisting civic commitments, and academic test scores*” (Kahne and Spote, 2008, 25). These variables allowed the authors to better understand how school curricula affected the civic engagement of students. They note that whilst pre-existing studies have often been narrowed down to analyzing specific standalone curricula, this study encompasses a wider scale thus allowing for the results, on average, to better explain the general situation. The results presented in this study confirm that school activities, beyond the formal curricula, play a substantial role on student’s civic engagement.

Most importantly, the results show that *“experiences that focus directly on civic and political issues and ways to act (e.g., undertaking service learning projects, following current events, discussing problems in the community and ways to respond, providing students with a classroom in which open dialogue about controversial issues is common and where students study topics that matter to them, and exposure to civic role models) are highly efficacious means of fostering commitments to civic participation”* (Kahne and Sporte, 2008, p. 754). Experiences as the ones described above are not set formally in curricula per se and therefore provide a glance on the impact of individual classroom settings and predominantly affected by teacher choice and decisions.

Schmitt and Miller (2015) in their book on *Charter Schools* focus on how educational policies that have primarily focused on reading and math for student evaluations have made school backslide their primary mission, especially in terms of creating members of the society who can be deemed active. In the US, it is stated that *“only 13 states require students to demonstrate proficiency on a social studies exam to graduate high school, with only seven requiring civics-specific proficiency”* (Schmitt and Miller, 2015). Such an approach leaves most of the high schools to treat civic education as supplementary rather than of any relevant significance. On the other hand, when looking at schools that have a special focus on citizenship, Schmitt and Miller note that their focus is heavily related to what they coin as *“transactional citizenship”*. *Transactional citizenship, as they state “[focuses] on the skills and dispositions students need to go to college, advance in careers, and succeed in the real world, things like working hard, following rules, and punctuality”*. In addition, when they asked the parents to provide input on what they would deem necessary for schools to teach regarding citizenship, around 63 percent stated that *“instilling good working habits”* ought to be among the two top priorities. Their work provides insight as to how civic education would need to go beyond the transactional aspects of citizenship. In a survey conducted with the teachers *“only 17 percent said teaching key facts and dates was one of their top two priorities...67 percent said instilling good work habits and 63 percent said internalizing core values take a greater priority”* (Schmitt & Miller, 2015).

Can/ Should schools teach active citizenship?

Bachner (2011, p.1) in her dissertation on the effects of high school education on political participation, states that *“good citizenship is a cultivated rather than innate habit.”* She goes on to assert that *“high school civic education is a crucial means by which young citizens accrue politically-relevant skills and develop a sense of civic responsibility”*, as she also acknowledges that there are alternative ways when and where civic education takes place. She evaluates civic engagement by analyzing its correlation with voter turnout in the US. Albeit, this can be a controversial issue in terms of discussing whether voting represents civic engagement, it is still considered as one of the measurable ways of measuring civic engagement by a considerate number of researchers (Siegel-Stechler, 2019; Kahne J. E., Spote S.E., 2008, Sondheimer, Green, 2010). Sondheimer and Green (2010, p.174) state that *“the relationship between education and voter turnout ranks among the most extensively documented correlations in American survey research.”* This goes on to confirm that the research provided gives ground for establishing correlation between these two variables. Bachner(2011, p.7) reconfirms this as she states *“Observational and experimental studies alike, from at least the past 50 years, confirm the power of education in predicting voter turnout, as well as many other modes of political participation, including communication with elected officials, involvement in campaign activities and membership in political groups.”* Empirically, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) used the National Election Study and their results show that there is a positive correlation between voter turnout and civic education as it is stated *“[that] possessing a high school degree, compared to having less than five years of education, is associated with a 21-22 percentage point increase in the probability of voting”* (as quoted in Barchner, 2011, p. 8). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) identified that *“those with the highest amount of education are 12 percent more likely to write to a member of Congress and 12.5 percent more likely to attend a political meeting (compared to those with the least amount of education”* (Rosenstone and Hansen in Barchner, 2011, p.8).

These studies are not conclusive in terms of identifying civic education as the only variable affecting voter turnout. However, as portrayed in the examples civic education has a significant role as a variable.

Civic activism also embodies democratic innovation. Higgs, Lange, and Murray (2012) purport the idea that civic activism is particularly important at the earliest stages of education. They propose situations where school settings provide for circumstances which allow for civic activism to develop and therefore also contribute to democratic innovations. One example that stands out is that of “heterogeneity.” Higgs, Lange and Murray (2012, p.10) state that “heterogeneity turns into a challenge since it can be more easily conceived and practiced at schools than in society as whole.” In addition, Banks (as quoted in Higgs, Lange, and Murray, 2012, p. 10) states that *“on the basis of mutual appreciation and tolerance, and an active and enriching manner of dealing with one another, heterogeneous learning premises and, moreover, cultural diversity with respect to the learners’ biographies and origins have to be integrated.”* . This situation described by the authors provide example of how school circumstances allow for interventions that would otherwise not occur in general society. These circumstances need to be utilized, and therefore civic education is important to be introduced in schools.

Kahne, Sporte, and Susan (2008) state that *“recent studies that testify to schools’ potential to advance civic and political development along with indications that schools are not doing all that they can to promote the democratic purposes of education have furthered interest in civic education.”* They go on to mention studies produced by Niemi and Junn’s (1998) where data showed that *“educational practices can increase students’ civic and political knowledge”* (as quoted in Kahne, Sporte, and Susan, 2008). The increased knowledge on civic and politics is linked then also with *“the quantity and quality of civic participation”*. In their survey conducted with 4,057 students in high schools in Chicago they have resulted that classrooms play a significant role in shaping the student’s commitment to civic engagement (Niemi and Junn, 1998).

In particular when looking at classroom civic learning opportunities Nieme and Junn (1998) state that *“the impact of civic learning opportunities and of experiencing service learning was both sizable and substantially larger than any other measure in our study including students' prior commitments to civic participation”* (Kahne, Sporte, Susan, 2008). The important thing to dissect from this is that prior experience does not have a higher significance than classroom activities and as such the latter can surpass the former in their impact in shaping civic activism.

These supporting arguments infer that classroom activities have a pivotal and positive role in impacting civic engagement. Research suggests that the higher the concentration of civic education in schools the larger the voter turnout which is one of the methods of measuring civic activities. In addition, looking at other substantial forms of civic activism we notice that the same argument persists; whether it is looking at the accountability required from politicians, or whether it is the values perceived as more important in civic matters.

A Critical Overview: Kosovo's Curricula

To get a better understanding of Kosovo's current situation in the context of what the youth are exposed to from an early education level, we will study the Kosovo curriculum in its current form regarding civic education, art, history and the various extra-curricular activities. According to MASHT, in their broad strategic plan for 2017-2021 there are seven primary strategic objectives that they want to tackle, but two of them stand out in our context (MASHT 2016, 6), namely:

1. Strategic Objective / SO1
– Increase of inclusivity and equal opportunities for development, education and learning for every individual in the pre-tertiary education.

2. Strategic Objective / SO3
– Development of a functional system that enforces and maintains high quality standards in compliance with international ones.

These two strategic directives are fueling a strong commitment from the Kosovo government to better improve and provide a foundation of good education for youth and prepare them for an active life. Interestingly however, there are many challenges associated with these two objectives. Whereas MASHT states that according to their data, numbers show that there is good inclusivity in the early education levels (school, middle-school); there is a bigger difference when it comes to pre-school education, namely the numbers show that the 0-3 range is very far from European Standards, and to put even more concrete measurements, the pre-school registrations for the 0-5 level were at a low of 15.7% during the 2014-2015 year (MASHT, 2016, 22). MASHT cite some other challenges in relation to Strategic Objective / SO1 as well, namely the issue of special-needs education, where in 2013 data shows that only 6093 pupils attended regular school system. This has now been targeted as an issue in the 2016-2020 plan (MASHT, 2016, 22).

In Kosovo, there has always been a productive view in terms of primary education, attendance. For example, in primary education, Kosovo has a 98% attendance output, whereas in high-school it is around 84.5% (MASHT, 2016, 22). These numbers show good inclusivity in terms of primary school education, in complete agreement with European Standards. What does remain a very big issue however, seems to be the inclusivity of marginalized groups: the children of minorities, etc. MASHT does state distress when discussing the low participation rate in education among these groups (MASHT, 2016, 22). By relying on this foundation, we can see that in Kosovo we have a good average turnout in terms of primary education and high school students which technically allows us to focus good policy making on the early education phase and to attempt to incite active citizenship from an early age.

One of the big issues that has always plagued our system is the quality of education, namely around assuring the market and other upstream destinations that even with a large output of 98% of children finishing primary school, and ~85% finishing high school, our system is delivering both quantity and quality. Quality assurance is always a tough issue to manage, even in more developed countries.

Kosovo in accordance with Strategic Objective / SO3, has taken concrete steps towards developing a good quality assurance system. According to MASHT, Strategic Objective / SO3 has these four sub-objectives that are broad strokes in terms of ensuring quality:

1. Effective mechanism design for quality assurance
2. The advancement of development plans in both school and municipality level
3. Capacity-building for quality assurance among all levels
4. Awareness raising for all stakeholders in quality assurance

These four objectives are more general in nature, but MASHT states some more specific issues as well, namely one of the biggest issues is the credibility and reliability of national testing results (MASHT, 2016, 25). The issue of reliability of tests is well founded upon. One of the biggest questions, especially in standardized testing, is the issue of whether students would score vastly different results if they were allocated a different test date or even different test questions. Research has been conducted in this field and various indicators have been set forth. Research shows that while standardized tests are not perfectly reliable, they are definitely reliable enough to be used (Newton, 2009, p.6). With a good consistent, reliable testing it is fair to assume that we have a very good baseline in output quality measurement. One issue does however persist, one that MASHT has been trying to combat for a long time and that is the issue of cheating in testing – both in schools and in the standardized testing. Cheating can play a big role in the reliability of tests, and it is an issue ever-present in various education systems. To get a much better gauge for the quality of the education output for Kosovo, MASHT have employed external testing methods such as admittance to the PISA testing and grading. Kosovo was part of the PISA model in 2015 and continues to do so (MASHT, 2016, 25). Ultimately, challenges that plague the education system in Kosovo are being met and various plans have been enacted to handle them. As a baseline, the education system in Kosovo does produce a large quantity of students and quality is being measured for every year.

In terms of actual curriculum design, Kosovo does have some good plans set in place for civic education. Beginning with a mandatory course in primary school, appropriately named Civic Education, Kosovo has obligatory one hour per week of civic education, which translates to around 37 hours per year. In High School, Kosovo has Civic Education at two hours per week. Comparing Kosovo to the United States for example, where the No Child Left Behind Act promotes civic education – it is interesting that while all fifty states of the US do have social studies which include some form of civics and government, some eleven states do not require civic education as a mandatory course (Shapiro and Brown, 2018). In Germany, civic education resembles Kosovo more than the US. Firstly, it is arranged as a self-contained subject therefore it is allocated time individually per year. Germany does categorize civic education under cultural authority and therefore the intensity at which the students are exposed to this subject varies from state to state. While it is true that in Germany civic education is part of all institutions, most schools provide less than the ideal two hours per week of civic education (Lange, 2008, 3). Kosovo is among the few countries in Europe, alongside France, Estonia and Finland who have compulsory Civic Education alongside all general education. In these three countries, namely France, Estonia and Finland, civic education begins at the primary level just like in Kosovo's case (Eurydice, 2017).

In terms of actual content within the subject, in Kosovo, the primary goals for Civic Education are fitting the student with proper knowledge regarding civic activism, learn about their identity as an individual and also as part of a larger group that is society. Emphasis is also placed on topics such as multi-ethnicity, tolerance and learning to be part of a diverse culture. Various methods are employed and highly encouraged on the curriculum design document – methods such as meeting experts, outside consultants, interviewing social studies professors, etc. Using publications such as newspapers, cyclical and such to provide a general overview of the current socio-economic situation. Also simulating real events such as debates, role-playing and other associated game-like are encouraged (MASHT).

Students are also expected to have inter-subject cooperation, such as utilizing Arts for making posters, designs and artistic representation of various concepts. On some issues, students are encouraged to use mathematics and statistics to analyze data and interpretation of certain results from mathematical deduction.

Ultimately, other subjects such as Music are employed to make a richer experience. In the United States for example, the content of the subject varies from state to state. This is an interesting situation as it also mirrors that of Germany. The foundations of civic education are equivalent among the three countries, their differences are in nuances and emphasis. For example, in the United States we see heavy emphasis placed upon the concepts of citizen representation and participation (Rosseau and Warren, 2018). Results show that in the US only a third of the population can name all branches of government. Even more worrying are statistics like only 33% of all Americans born after 1980 consider democracy essential. These statistics are actual values within the current American system of education, so it goes without saying that a deeper analysis in Kosovo's plan for civic education is very much needed. For example, concepts of democracy and activism are very lightly treated at the primary level, whereas only a small part the high-school program is dedicated to civil activism.

In Kosovo, an entire section of the civic education program in the high-school level is dedicated to international organizations such as UN, UNESCO and other associated organizations such as Red Cross for example. This is done to educate the students for a more globalized future. This is highly contrasted to the United States where only minor parts of certain chapters are dedicated to a more international perspective (Rosseau and Warren, 2018). It is also useful to note that Kosovo's books and program has not been updated in keeping with the latest trends in technology and information. Considering that new social media tools such as messaging, trend analysis via hashtags, etc. are providing very interesting outlets for civic activism it would be more than appropriate to attempt to incorporate these new methods into the current curricula. As Bennet states, *"what may be most important for politicians, educators and young people themselves to learn is how to use the media that are now so richly developed for social and entertainment purposes to build civic and political communities"* (Bennet, 2008, p.9). The United States is slowly moving in this direction with other more developed countries. Interestingly however, there are also questions with regard to this method of communication, mainly due to concern of anonymity in online communities, therefore lack of respectful and constructive debate is highly probable.

To combat this issue, in the US for example, there has been a major push to adopt the Media Literacy Frameworks for Engaged Citizenship – a framework which prepares the modern youth for a more active and respectful citizenship in the digital age. In Kosovo there is no direct influence that would specifically target this group – that of the online communities and educating for a more fruitful debate. At least nothing like this exists formally. Also with a better education on how to be more mature, correct and tolerant, other results would follow, with better awareness on what sort of tools to use, how to use them and why.

Art as a subject in the Kosovo program, especially for primary schools, but also for high schools is a very hands-on experience in the sense that students are expected to do actual painting, drawing and engagement into artistic phenomena. In Kosovo, Arts is also subdivided into the visual arts in forms like painting and drawing, while music includes forms of listening to music, making music and musical theory. In the professional school, following an Applicative Art direction, there are more subdivisions naturally but they consist of only a small group from within the larger target group. Much research internationally consists of analyzing the effect of art and civic activism. Curriculum based civic activism in Kosovo is not highly emphasized, but also in other countries there is no direct correlation between curriculum and civic activism. There is a lot of cultural and artistic activism outside of the curriculum but this cannot be taken into account for our study of the curricula (Stern and Seifert, 2009). In Kosovo, music is already present in all primary school programs and in comparison, in the United States, music is offered to about 97% of all public schools which is in agreement. In Kosovo, visual arts is also present in all primary school programs, whereas in the United States, the percentage is about 70% (Carey et al., 1995).

In Kosovo, the curriculum foresees actual painting, sculpting, drawing and other visual analysis for the visual arts program which is a standard program in the primary school and high school levels. In the United States, there are some cases where specialized programs are offered as electives such as sculpting, etc. (Carey et al., 1995, p.5). In the United States there is also a good percentage – around 36% - of schools that offer some form of teaching dance, usually through a physical education program, but only taught through a physical education teacher (Carey et al., 1995).

About 3% of schools teach dance through an actual dance specialist, but as part of the physical education program, whereas a 4% subgroup teach dance as part of a specific program that only works with dance and is taught by a dance specialist (Carey et al., 1995, p.11).

Kosovo's art program does not offer direct dance lessons, and practically speaking in the physical education class the students (pupils) are distributed into athletic and sports rather than specialized dance classes. Contrasting the art programs again in the field of drama/theatre the United States have a number of schools that offer standalone specialized drama/theatre subjects while also supplementing them with clubs and extracurricular activities around these cultural areas. In the program in Kosovo, drama and theatre are only included in the general artistic subject and are discussed lightly by only engaging students in some debate regarding its historical significance and its development. Some form of drama and theatre are discussed in certain aspects in History and Humanities but in Kosovo there are no specialized drama classes that would engage the student to apply actual artistic or creative ability in their execution.

Focus Group Discussions

As discussed in the Methodology section, we have performed focus group discussions, with various stakeholders in Prishtina, Peja and Mitrovica.

Pristina

In Prishtina there were quite a few concerns and issues that were raised in the focus group discussions. One respondent indicated that while it is true that the new curriculum has been designed to encourage critical thinking and effective communication in an attempt to foster civic activism and participation, teachers are having difficulties executing the new curriculum ideas because of physical limitations in the concept of space. Citing that going outside of the classroom or the school grounds is not generally accepted practice, therefore rendering the new curricula theoretical only because the practical perspective is severely limited by these issues.

Another respondent, in this same context, raised the issue of the bureaucratic work of daily/weekly plans that have to be designed are inhibiting teachers from participating in extracurricular activity.

One respondent, a high school student, states that generally for clubs and extra-curricular activity, the entire load falls on the students (pupils) to manage and execute activities. The respondent cites that most teachers will not accept answers or discussion outside of the theoretical framework as described in books. The respondent does state that students are sometimes penalized for participation in extracurricular activities. Another respondent, a high school student as well, does agree that the curriculum is good, but is not pleased with the fact that teachers are not going outside the curriculum guidelines. She states that teachers need to provide something more unique and personal while following the curriculum. One of the more problematic aspects according to her is the fact that teachers are at an extended age which statistically renders them less informed with more modern trends and therefore students are not getting up to date information. Another problem that is described by the respondent is the issue of having around 30-40 students (pupils) in one classroom which poses a serious issue around whether the teacher can handle and appropriately interact with all of them.

One student also indicated that soft skills are not taught at schools, therefore students are forced to take extra-curricular classes to teach them even the minimum of skills required for a proper career afterwards. The respondent also voices concerns regarding research skills in the internet. One of the bigger issues that was generally voiced by both students and teachers alike is the fact that they are not allowed to leave school grounds during the lessons, therefore activities that could be more efficient outside of the classroom and the school grounds are rendered ineffective if attempted to be done inside. The only time activities such as this are performed are if the students and teachers plan ahead for a weekend trip/activity. This ultimately renders the frequency of these activities as very low because both the teachers and students (pupils) have low motivation to use weekend or days off for engaging in activities that appear to be part of the school system.

The arts teacher voices even more concerns regarding proper tooling for executing good artistic activity. Small spaces and large number of students - sometimes as large as fifty students in one classroom - are causing massive drops in efficiency when it comes to artistic work. The same respondent believes that a visit to the museum is highly important for the students but it is only possible if this is done at the sixth period – which is the last period – because only after that are the students free to go home and therefore will no longer need to report back to school grounds.

In the area of the technical schools, students generally had a very big concern with old material with one respondent citing that “books that we use are over 20 years old”, and the second biggest concern was very little – to no – practical schooling is done. Most of the education is highly theoretical and students are left with no practical skills even though it is highly expected that these schools have a more hands-on approach to problem solving. There was general consensus among teachers, students and all participants alike that one of the biggest problems is a very stiff system, with almost no tolerance for organizing extra-curricular activities. One respondent mentions a simulated earthquake activity, but cites the fact that it was ad-hoc and most probably will not be repeated. Another extra-curricular activity within the civic education subject was the fact that they visited the Constitutional Court in Prishtina but the same logic applies to this as well, it was ad-hoc and will most likely be never repeated. Participants citing the fact that teachers are not properly incentivizing participation in extracurricular activities. Participants raise issues in regard to history as well, where they believe that not enough lessons focus on cultural heritage, and that history is mostly loaded with dates and names which are highly unattractive for the student (pupil) therefore rendering teaching of this subject to a more mechanical way.

Peja

In Peja respondents were primarily concerned with the curriculum and how there is intercooperation between the schools and various NGOs. One respondent in Peja voices the concern that most of the issues have roots in the textbooks, which are not updated and offer information that can be constituted as inaccurate or old.

The respondent worries that students are limited to this information and therefore they will be taught things that maybe inaccurate long term. The respondent cites the fact that even teachers sometimes are trapped in this cycle where they read from old material and they follow this information transmitting it to the students who in turn are victims of wrong information. According to the respondent, most of the youth get information from NGOs rather than schools when it comes to accuracy. In the Dardania school in Peja, projects are generally executed at the request of the administration, but there are cases when NGOs also work together with the school. For example the NGO "Syri i Vizionit" and the summer camp "Let's do it Peja" are two NGOs that perform and incite extracurricular activities within schools in Peja. The school however does state clearly that even though these extra-curricular activities are allowed proper checks are in place to ensure correct delivery of the official plans as directed by MASHT.

According to a respondent in Peja there is low incentives from teachers and the general administration of the municipality as well to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities and general activism. For example, Anibar has attempted to cooperate with various schools in order to organize student trips to the cinema for film studies and debate incentivization. There were rare cases when schools have cooperated but according to the respondent there is lack of repetition of these activities and lack of incentives.

A respondent that is an alumni of the high school cited that while in primary school there were plenty of activities with different perspectives, such as awareness raising, artistic, etc. These were not repeated in high school, up to the point where blatant refusal to certain external requests have been done, mostly refused requests from NGOs and other external agents. One of the issues that is highly voiced as well is the lack of cooperation between various bodies of the local government, school boards and various stakeholders. This lack of cooperation between these bodies does lead to lack of efficiency in executing activities and ultimately the victims are the students and schools.

While the respondents do mention that there are open guidelines in the directives from MASHT that encourage cooperation with external agents such as non-governmental organizations, professionals and even suppliers of audio-visual technologies, lack of incentives and an ever increasing average age among the teachers leads to a more passive teacher-student relationship. The general consensus among the focus group participants was that in Peja there is a decent trend of participating in extracurricular activities, even though the numbers are low, it is generally not frowned upon.

Mitrovica

In Mitrovica the respondents generally discuss issues regarding NGOs and cooperation between schools and the former. One respondent cites that it is very rare for teachers to take self-initiative in organizing a trip or an extra-curricular activity. The respondent mentions one case where a teacher – the teacher of the philosophy subject - had organized a movie screening that would later incite debate and discussions among students (pupils). Concepts of the state, individual and other political ideas have been treated as per the official directives while going outside the norm is generally not the case. The visual arts teacher has a special room for art with proper tooling, and sometimes students do draw there, as reported by the respondent. The respondent cites another trip to Prekaz to pay respects to the deceased family there but nothing more than that.

One respondent cites the fact that most information is gathered by NGOs mostly due to the fact that they can bring various personalities that have up-to-date information and are more credible in their respective fields. The respondent mentions Green Fest as a concert that was interesting at the time. Various activities such as film screenings and debates are held in accordance with NGOs and other external agents.

One of the respondent reminisces that in the 90s one of the schools, namely Nonda Bulku, there were many activities, both extracurricular and many clubs. There were plenty of student competitions which only incentivized both teachers and students to partake in various activities.

Other respondents also joined to discuss the fact that in the old times there were many technical activities as well such as designing radios and model rockets. In physics they made measurement devices for electricity houses, etc.

One respondent cited a visit to the crystals museum by the history teacher, which constituted a good extra-curricular activity but the respondent states that this was an one-off activity and will most likely not be repeated. The same pattern has been shown here in Mitrovica focus group as the one in the Peja focus group. Both parties show the same logic, one-off activities with low chance of repetition.

One respondent, in almost complete agreement with respondents from Prishtina, cites the fact that there is no proper teaching of cultural heritage in the history subject. The same respondent also cited the fact that not only do the students (pupils) not get a cultural heritage background, they also do not receive any sort of visits to various locations that are considered historical or culturally significant.

One respondent does speak highly of a private school named Kosovo Leadership Academy, which the respondent considers as a role model since they do extra-curricular activities, travels, competition and various artistic undertakings such as concerts, etc. Even drama and theatre classes are common in this school, and they organize shows, etc.

The youth generally agreed that mostly through activities with NGOs they get to express their individual self that they do not express while at school. For example, one respondent states that only after he got into contact with NGOs and started participating in various activities as organized by those non-governmental organizations, did he recognise his talent and foresee his active path in life. He states that school was harsh in judgement, and did not value artistic talent but would rather emphasize the more technical skills such as mathematics, etc. Therefore from a school's perspective, this individual was categorized as a below average student which ultimately did influence this persons esteem.

Various inter-ethnic communication issues are discussed and generally agreed upon by all parties in the focus groups that activities, especially those in the NGO communities, are helping mend relations and increasing the communications.

Various organizations do provide bridges between the communities. Flea markets that organize on both parts of Mitrovica, be that the North or the South are open to all ethnicities and citizens agree that they are seen communicating and working together. Projects such as UN Habitat and other urbanization projects are also becoming good communication channels between inter-ethnic cooperation.

One respondent cites that organizations such as Rock School are a good model of cooperation through art. Another one states that CDO does have a Memorandum of Understanding between the School Boards and themselves for projects, organizing Karl Popper debates and discussing various career paths and soft skill training.

Generally the entire focus group agrees that the younger the teachers are the more active they are, in agreement with other focus groups in Peja and Prishtina as well. While they agree that teachers are a very strong foundation to provide external activities, they also cite the fact that organizations such as NGOs and other external agents play a huge role when it comes to organizing activities for students, especially the youth. Cultural NGOs and those that target the youth especially are also acting as good sources for interethnic communication and cooperation.

The informal spaces and methods of engagement of the Kosovo youth

The analysis will be separated into the main findings that originated from our discussions, with the aim of answering our research questions. At first we will assess the roles that public spaces play in engaging young people. Then we will proceed to look at different initiatives in Kosovo with a focus on our target municipalities and assess the difference between formal and informal initiatives.



Photo x. Entrance to Bes(i)misao in Mitrovica North.
Photograph by researcher.

We will also try to distinguish the types of initiatives that engage young people in different contexts and whether there is a difference between the core and the periphery. Lastly, we will aim to draw conclusions on the methods of active citizenship in Kosovo.

Schools as "Prisons"

Based on our FGDs, youth in Kosovo do not find their environment encourages engagement, in fact it mainly stifles it. The words used to describe public education institutions were generally negative in all municipalities. In Peja, high school was largely seen in a negative light for two reasons: one was its association with the hierarchization of young people, and second, because it is seen as restrictive in terms of student engagement and also teaching. Since the students participating were all from different high schools, meaning the technical high school, art high school, medical high school and the general high school, they noted that depending on which high school you attend, you are ranked based on that.

This would mean that a student going to a general high school would be seen in a more positive light and as brighter and more intelligent than students attending the technical or art school. This was seen as one way to limit solidarity among youth and also of instilling a hierarchization which continues to develop even after high school.

One participant noted that *“high school is like a prison”* (Peja 2019), and all other students nodded. They all recounted stories of skipping school in order to attend extracurricular activities, because they would not be allowed to attend by their schools. In the event in Termokiss where during the World Cafe conversation, all participants stood in a circle to talk about the different topics we had discussed and one participant noted that *“schools are like a closed box”* (Termokiss ‘World Café’ 2019), meaning that it limited creativity and was constricting to students. This view is shared among students in different cities across Kosovo. However, some participants in Peja and Mitrovica did note the positive influence that some younger teachers have played in their development, however that sadly such teachers were not supported by the education system. Indeed, in Mitrovica they also noted several good examples of encouraging teachers. In one case one teacher who had wanted to take students to museums and extracurricular activities was peer-pressured into not doing so from other teachers as this would mean that all teachers would have to provide extracurricular activities without having any additional incentives.

Schools were also criticized in view of the curriculum that they teach and the manner of teaching. In Peja one participant stated *“teachers should follow us, and not us them”* referring to the changing times and to the fact that teachers continue to note Yugoslavia as the time when education was *“as it should be”*. McInerney notes this phenomenon and highlights that *“when students have little power over their learning, when learning has little relevance to their lives and aspirations, or when they are devalued or marginalized, they are likely to engage in acts of resistance or withdraw their assent altogether from schooling”* (McInerney 2009, 24).

This seemed to be very much the case in all municipalities, where education and the way of teaching, as well as the curriculum being taught were considered as constricting, limiting, and it was the impression of the researcher that the students also felt or had felt patronized by their teachers.

The situation does not seem to improve with university education. Namely, both in Prishtina and in Mitrovica North, which are both university centres for the Kosovar Albanian and the Kosovar Serb youth respectively, universities were seen as limiting and not using their full potential. In the FGD in Prishtina, one participant exclaimed “*we are all drop outs*” (Prishtina 2019) and this seemed to represent most of the participants as many of the artists had dropped university one year shy of graduating because they perceived it as limiting them creatively. One female participant noted one case where a professor had made a gender slur, stating that “*women could not paint as well as men*” (Prishtina 2019). In Mitrovica North the participants highlighted the fact that the University does not develop its facilities to encourage local art noting that there is no gallery and space to organize events for local artists. When it came to high school, the participants in these two cities also noted that it was limiting. In Prishtina, just as in Peja, they noted the popularity of skipping classes as a way of development. The participants in Prishtina recalled their high school days as skipping school to go to “Tingle Tangle,” a popular creative cafe, and noted that they had learnt more there from each other than they had from school (Prishtina 2019).

One reason as to the limits imposed by education throughout the four municipalities, but less in Prishtina, was the influence of political parties on the education system and on youth engagement generally. Prishtina in this case is different, because being the capital city, it offers more extracurricular events and opportunities for citizens generally, whereas in smaller cities the local actors are fewer and political party influence seems stronger. The influence of political parties was remarked as stifling because it encourages only party-approved activities and participation, in the case of Peja and Mitrovica, whereas in the case of Mitrovica North it seems to discourage political participation altogether.

The case of Mitrovica North stands out among the four target municipalities due to the political situation in the North of Kosovo whereby the four municipalities of Mitrovica North, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan function under a de facto parallel system, and there are two political pulls, of which the pull and pressure from the state of Serbia is stronger (Freedom House Report 2018). Indeed, during the focus group in Mitrovica North there was evidently a high level of reluctance from the participants to be critical of the system, due generally to fears about the repercussions of being critical. In this climate, it is not hard to see how participation and engagement among youth can be discouraged as it is not only looked at negatively, but it can carry serious ramifications, such as the loss of employment or increased pressure by political actors. In Peja and Mitrovica, schools were also seen as benefiting or being influenced by political parties in that the selection of the school principal is often on political membership and leaning. This had an influence on engagement meaning it would define whether schools would allow the participation of young people in extracurricular activities and determined which activities they could attend.

Another interesting finding, particularly in Peja and in Mitrovica, is the general reluctance that young people expressed in using their voice, or expressing their opinion. This is attributed to the style of teaching and also to the influence of authoritarian values that Quaynor (2011) highlights. Activists in both municipalities noted that generally they did not like to debate or discuss issues, and in the interviews with the local organizations it was also noted that young people do not like attending activities that involve discussion or debate. This is concerning considering that the use of voice is imperative to engagement and to critical expression and thinking. If educational institutions discourage the use of voice, or are not proactive in building it up, that has serious implications in terms of youth development and the creation of critical active citizens.

Centre vs. Periphery

There were clear distinctions noted between the periphery and the centre. It is important to note that while Prishtina served as the centre for Peja and for Mitrovica, for Mitrovica North, Belgrade or Nis in Serbia were noted as the educational and artistic centres of Kosovo Serbs.

For participants in Peja and Mitrovica, Prishtina was seen as a city with more opportunities that is more open and where engagement was easier.

The students from these two cities saw Prishtina as a place with more freedom. On several occasions, Prishtina was referred to as a place where the participants could be themselves and access more opportunities, citing examples of “*when I go to Prishtina*” or “*here it is not like Prishtina*” or “*Prishtina is different*” (Peja 2019; Mitrovica 2019). Participants in Mitrovica North also highlighted that organizations were not as “*active as in Prishtina*” (Mitrovica North 2019).

The participants in Prishtina however, did not have the same view of the city, although objectively they did have more opportunities for engagement, at least a broader variety of options. One participant noted a shrinking of space in Prishtina, even though there was no wide consensus on this, it was left to individual perspective. However, one key difference between Mitrovica and Peja, and Prishtina is the physical smallness of the cities. In Peja and Mitrovica, the closeness and collectiveness of the citizens presents a problem in terms of the peer pressure and prejudice which prevails. These are both relatively traditional cities which impart more traditional values, particularly Peja, as Mitrovica has a more open tradition of rock music and festivals since Yugoslavia.

In Peja, participants noted that they were often labelled as “*drug addicts*” only for attending cultural events such as the after parties organized by Anibar during the Animation Festival in the summer. The park of Peja is thus associated with drugs, and this association damages youth participation because many young people fear to attend as they do not want to be labelled as drug addicts. The activists that do attend face more backlash, perhaps, than their Prishtina counterparts, as was the perception of the participants in the focus group in Peja.

The case of Mitrovica and Mitrovica North represent a further conundrum of participation, where the periphery is internalized and split in two. Namely the bridge that divides the southern and northern part of the city seems to be active in the minds of young people.

However, it is most constraining on youth from Mitrovica North, as the limits are more physical in the sense that there is largely a fear of crossing the bridge either due to perceptions of lack of security once the bridge is crossed, or due to loyalty to one's group. As some participants noted in Mitrovica North, there used to be people who would watch who is crossing the bridge. In smaller communities, such as Mitrovica North, Mitrovica and Peja policing of behavior by the community imposes limitations on the movement of youth and their engagement. While Prishtina is not a very large capital, it is still a capital city with a mixed community, people coming from different cities, different world views, which provides the freedom of relative anonymity and individuality of youth. It was notable that neither the participants in Mitrovica or Mitrovica North expressed any prejudice towards each other, rather the tone was one of missed opportunities, meaning it was the impression of the researcher that they would be open to cooperation but that they all feel limited due to the environment they live in.

Spaces of Engagement

Prishtina does provide the most open and free spaces for participation. For instance, spaces such as Termokiss, Motrat, Kino Armata all enable artistic and other forms of engagement which are easily accessible and free of charge and have constant activities of a wide range. For instance, Termokiss hosts weekend bazaars, workshops, salsa dances, festivals, etc. and has many clubs that function within its framework, such as the poetry club, yoga and meditation club, the movie club, to name a few (Maxhuni 2018). Stacion- Centre for Contemporary Art and Motrat organizes exhibitions and encourages young artists in the center of Prishtina. Kino Armata has free movie showings of new and classic movies, organizes and hosts discussions, and is available for use by individuals and organizations.

There are also alternative cafes/spaces like Sabota started by individuals or groups of activists, where young people can go and participate in discussions, the only thing that is paid is the drinks.

Much like Sabota, in North Mitrovica, Bes(i)misao is a space which is open for anyone interested in discussions and debate. They also offer language courses in English, movie nights, historical evenings where they discuss historical events with a university professor, literature evenings and exhibitions. They do not have any budget or financing, and work only on in-kind donations by visitors.



Photo x. Bes(i)Misao interior made up of things brought by young people. Photo by researcher.

They do not have any budget or financing and work only on in-kind donations by visitors. Indeed, the space has chosen to not receive donations by institutions or donors because they want to stay away from perceptions of any form of political bias which is a common theme of spaces in North Mitrovica. The owners of Aquarius Gallery, a private institution but widely accessible to the citizens, also noted several times in my conversation with them that they are not supported by any political party or local institution.

What made these spaces most remarkable from my view as a researcher but also as a participant in events or as simply a visitor, was the inclusivity that these spaces have. I entered Bes(i)misao and I was very warmly greeted, Termokiss did feel like a neighborhood space where you could simply drop by, entering Sabota to participate in a debate gave the same impression of openness. The other participants were young, from different cities, either students of professionals and with different worldviews. I was never asked any inquisitive questions as to who I am or what I am doing in the space. I never felt as a guest but as though I was entering a space where I am a regular visitor. Indeed, the founders of Termokiss in a recent interview called their space as home for many people, especially for people from cities outside Prishtina (Maxhuni, 2018).

My impression from visiting these spaces and/or attending events was also a feeling of a community, whether the groups of individuals were regular activists or just young students attending a film showing for free, there was a strong sense of a collective.

This aspect is perhaps the single thing which distinguishes these spaces from more formal civil society organizations [2]. Namely, organizations such as 7arte, Anibar, and Aktiv also offer open spaces which are inclusive, however they are more structured in their approach precisely because of their formal and established status, as they are more established organization and most of the spaces analyzed here are more recent. They are also driven mostly by the organization, meaning the activities are set and organized by the organization employees, in consultation with youth, whereas in the more informal spaces, the organization of events seems to be more organic and sporadic. Formal organizations, also depend largely on donors and are donor driven, which in turn also means that they have the ability to mobilize wider. Another aspect which distinguishes the formal organizations from the more informal organizations is membership or participation. As noted in the focus groups both in Peja and in Mitrovica, often the beneficiaries of activities of organizations are “the same faces.” By this they meant that the same people are usually selected or invited to participate in events. This also shows another component, in the sense that some young people also do not seek out information, as many organizations now use Facebook for all their public events. It can also be explained though by civil society rationale of mobilizing people where it is easier to communicate with already identified young people instead of seeking out new ones. With the informal spaces the table is turned, namely, it is young people and citizens who show initiative to participate, while the space itself does not invest much in mobilization, rather in creating safe spaces and promoting interesting activities which are not donor driven but driven by innovative ideas.

[2] By formal civil society here we refer to organizations which are registered as such, have been operating with more staff (3 or more), for a longer time and with a stronger donor base. Whereas informal organizations involve organizations that are newer and might not necessarily have permanent staff or a strong donor base and are more grass root.

Politics is a Dirty Word

The last trend noticed in the focus group discussions is that politics and the political are seen negatively and there seems to be a reluctance to be associated or engaged with it. This is interesting considering that the activism of all the participants in the focus groups shows a close engagement with politics through art or civil society activism. This is significant for two reasons,; firstly it can lead to apathy. As research in Romania has shown that by *"[labelling politics 'corrupt,' 'dirty,' and 'putrid,' students used 'indifference and scorn- and sometimes humor and irony- [to] absolve themselves of complicity with the dirty business of politics"* (Greenberg 2010, 63). Which leads to the second reason why this finding is important, namely if even people who are engaged in activism do not want to engage with the political, that is damaging to democratic processes. The partner organizations in their interviews noted that it is hard to engage and mobilize young people in their cities and that the harsh political context in Kosovo has an influence on their work and activism. Indeed, formal organizations seem to be generally more adapt at addressing and engaging with politics and the political. The informal spaces, in their bid to be open and inclusive, may even choose to avoid such topics. In addition, some of the public spaces purposefully chose not to have formal donations, considering that if they were to be perceived as political or under someone's patronage, that would destroy their reputation as independent and open spaces and affect their mobilization. Indeed, the interviewed organizations noted that young people are apprehensive of attending activities and have a fear to participate and voice their opinions. Thus politics does influence participation and mobilization, either in inciting apathy and fear, or determining particular methods over others.

Methods of Engagement and their implications

The methods of youth engagement in the target municipalities are numerous, however activities involving art seem to be the most preferred and able to mobilize more young people. In Peja, participants noted trainings and workshops organized by NGOs, however the most prominent event was the Anibar Film Festival and the workshops that they develop.

Interestingly, when speaking of the local theatre, the young people of Peja said they do not attend as they think the plays chosen are old fashioned and “only the family of the actors” (Peja 2019) attend. Thus, Anibar holds more of an interest because it is innovative and targets topics youth are interested in. For instance, in 2019 the Festival’s theme was “50/50” highlighting gender equality, and the theme determined the movies shown but also encourage female animators by developing a workshops with a special focus on young females. Mitrovica also noted the activities by 7arte, particularly the movie nights that they organize in their rooftop open air cinema, as well as other festivals which they organize, including the Green Fest, Craft Fair. In addition, in the interview with 7arte, the Rock School was also highlighted as another activity which brings young people from different ethnic backgrounds together through music. Mitrovica North participants also noted many artistic events which engaged young people, including the Kids Music Festival, the Jazz and Blues Festival and the Night of the Museum organized by the Faculty of Arts. Aktiv also engages young people through their television show where they organize debates on current topics. The interviewed organizations in the different municipalities noted the good cooperation between organizations in their municipality and outside, and it was common that they would collaborate on activities. The same was true of the participants, the activists were likely to have attended or volunteered for several organizations, and several of them were also initiators of events or organizations in both Peja and Mitrovica.

Prishtina, as highlighted by the participants in all the focus groups outside Prishtina, has the most diverse forms of engagement, including the events organized at Termokiss, Kino Armata and other informal and formal organizations. During the research period I had trouble keeping up with activities as it often happened that three or four interesting events would be happening at the same time, organized by different organizations.



Photo x. Performance of Activism.
Photograph taken by researcher.

Prishtina also has many independent art groups such as Haveit and Hap, who perform interventions in response to political and social developments. These groups combine art with activism and directly engage with power. Artpolis also organizes art events and performances, including a performance attended by the researcher called “Artivism” which touched on the topics of gender, marriage and the objectification of women. Like the performances of Haveit and Hap, this performance was also held in a public space, the main hall of University Library. Teatri Oda is another initiative which has worked through art in Prishtina and other municipalities, however they work with younger groups (8-15) organizing workshops and presenting a show at the end of each season (Luzha 2015, 29).

When the participants in the focus group discussions were asked whether art could contribute towards changing society, particularly in a post- conflict setting, most participants were positive, except for the artists themselves. In Prishtina an interesting debate developed over the issue among the participants, with the overall conclusion by one participant that “art without activism doesn’t change anything” (Prishtina 2019) However, in the impression gained from the different group discussions, interviews and participant observation, art seems to present a chimera when it comes to youth engagement. Namely, young people feel free to engage with art because they perceive it as being less or not at all political, however, art activism is also one of the ways that many activists and artists use to engage or react to politics and political developments in the country. Particularly, art, when combined with activism (meaning not traditional art forms such as painting or music) is able to invent spaces, while other forms of engagements occur within invited spaces of civil society. One example would be one performance by Hap mentioned during the focus group in Prishtina. In order to protest the method of selection of works of art within the National Gallery of Kosovo, they constructed a work of art by the collective outside the entrance which caused strong reactions by the National Gallery, but at the same time openly mocked and subverted them as the installation was thought of as a part of the exhibition of the Gallery by many of the participants until it was made clear that it wasn’t (Prishtina 2019).

Haveit, too, invent spaces by battling gender and sexual norms in public space which have recurring influence. For instance, the performance “the Kiss” where the activists of Haveit, all female, kissed in the public square for Valentine’s Day in order to highlight that the LGBTQ community could not celebrate it openly, they drew reactions of support and hate, but they also invented a space of engagement and pushed the boundary of “acceptable behavior” in public spaces. Thus, engagement through art activism seems to encourage the formation of activist citizens. As Staeheli points out “youth [often] engage with their worlds in ways that might be described in terms of ‘activist citizenship’ (Isin, 2009) such that they challenge the status quo as part of a broader effort to undermine it.” (Staeheli 2013, 93) Spaces like Termokiss, which have a space but are also very engaged in community building and activism, operate somewhere in the middle. They physically invite and invent, whereas formal organizations are crucial in building active citizens, considerably more than formal and educational institutions.

Conclusion

Civil society, whether it be formal or informal, financed by international, local or no donors at all, is shown to be crucial in developing civic minded citizens and engaged youth in Kosovo. Their work has many limitations, including locality, politics, inclusiveness, funding and apathy, however their effect on engaging youth and creating critical citizens is stronger than that of formal education and institutions, which in turn seem to stifle it. Within this context, it is important to note a difference between the different methods of activism and what form of citizenship they help create. While this study sought to look at active citizenship only, the findings necessitated the inclusion of the term activist citizenship as well. This distinction is important because it can help us in building frameworks of engagement and citizenship. Namely what methods can organizations or institutions use in order to create active citizens and what methods are adept at inventing and creating new spaces and practices of citizenship, not only relevant in post-conflict societies but more broadly.

Based on this research, mobilization and engagement through more established civil society organizations constitutes robust civic education and builds active citizenship. Engagement through these methods such as workshops, fairs and other CSO activities, operates within the concept of invited spaces. As Staeheli highlights *“[i]n promoting active citizenship, optimism regarding youth is often coupled with an instrumental logic that imagines youth who can be moulded into agents capable of engaging with social problems without challenging the structures and relationships that underlie them”* (Staeheli 2013, 93). This is also the area encouraged by politicians and by donors, which, as pointed out in Staeheli’s (2013) analysis is used to empower but also control youth. On the other hand, engagement through art activism, particularly through performances opens new space, challenges the status quo and operates in invented spaces of action, which shows the formation of activist citizenship among young artists particularly. While the informal spaces such as Termokiss and Bes(i)misao lie somewhere in between, by providing spaces of engagement and of invention for young people.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

“Scholars and international organizations emphasize that schools in such contexts should encourage ‘social cohesion through quality and equity’ (Machel, 2007: 29). As noted by Weinstein et al. (2007) studies pursued in post-conflict contexts must take into consideration the location of research participants within regional, class and ethnic groups, especially salient in perceptions of citizenship education” (Quaynor 2011, 47).

“If stakeholders in post-conflict societies wish to promote democratic civic engagement, schools must be supported with teacher education programs and curricular materials that include democratic participation and the development of critical thinking” (Quaynor 2011, 48).

“It is notable that although active citizenship education is powerful in increasing students’ civic engagement, skills and knowledge, it is difficult to implement. Changing the nature and culture of citizenship education requires structural change in the ways schools function and that teachers are trained and supported in the classroom” (Quaynor 2011, 47).

“The challenge of practically implementing these alternative methods are the costs and absence of subsidies of the state for such activities, as well as lack of motivation provided to educators to cooperate on projects with various cultural actors in the private sector “ (Luzha 2015, 29).

- Use current communication tools (e.g. social media) to develop media literacy frameworks for engaged citizens. Up-to-date modern tools allow to reach a wider audience beyond the regular school civic education and is more relatable. These media literacy frameworks would allow the youth to be more active in a digital age.
- Update the high school programs in order for them to be more relatable to the current situations. Currently as most of the civic education is dedicated to international organizations it does not provide a know-how for students to engage locally. Equipping students with tools and roadmaps based on the context allows for them to grow and utilize these tools to become more active in the community.
- Update the current curricula of civic education through adding practical solutions that are based on the context of Kosovo.
- Increase opportunities for participating in extracurricular activities.
- Implement systematic data collection that allows for measuring and evaluating civic activism and more importantly establishing correlation between programs (either formal or informal) and civic activism.

- As the average age of the teachers grow in a certain school, most focus group respondents agreed that passivity was a consequence, therefore a recommendation is to attempt to balance the average ages in schools by either shuffling positions or hiring younger staff more aggressively.
- Incentivize schools and NGOs by mediating MoU agreement signings between stakeholders to formulate better growth for students and allow them to participate in various activities.
- Increase the sections in which historical teachings are done with respect to cultural heritage and also increase site visits to those monuments and tours.

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