Social Services, Social Innovation and Multi-Actor Collaboration: A Civil Society Organisation Perspective

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Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor (ph.d)

University of Agder

Faculty of Social Science

Department of Social Work and Sociology

2022

List of publications

Bozic, A. (accepted, forthcoming in 2022). Unpacking social innovation by nonstate service providers in the challenging social work practice. *Journal of Comparative Social Work.*

Bozic, A. (2020). Global trends in a fragile context: public–nonpublic collaboration, service delivery and social innovation. *Social Enterprise Journal, 17*(2), 260-279. https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2019-0100

Bozic, A. (2021) Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: examining external factors affecting social service NGOs. *Development Studies Research, 8*(1), 170-180. https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2021.1950020

Scientific environment

During the four-year PhD programme, which started in February 2018, I have been a PhD Research Fellow within the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway. I have been supervised by Tale Steen-Johnsen, Associate professor and Anne Marie Støkken, Professor emerita, both from the University of Agder.

During my PhD fellowship position, I presented the study, preliminary findings and linked articles at four international research conferences:

- *International Society for Third-Sector Research 2021* (online),
- *International Sociological Association IV ISA Forum*, *2021* (online),
- *International Social Innovation Research Conference 2019 in Glasgow, Great Britain,*
- *European Conference for Social Work Research 2019 in Leuven, Belgium.*

Furthermore, the PhD project has been presented at summer schools in which I participated, as well as in numerous PhD seminars that have been held within the department. During my teaching duties, I have also presented some aspects of my work to students.

In addition, during my fellowship, I participated in the research exchange and visited the Centre for Social Investments (CSI) at the Max-Weber Institute for Sociology of Heidelberg University in March 2020.

Acknowledgements

'If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together'
(African proverb).

In the past four years, many people have walked alongside me on the journey of my PhD, and I would like to express my gratitude for their support, encouragement and friendship. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my two dear supervisors – Tale Steen Johnsen and Anne Marie Støkken – for all support, collaboration, stimulating discussions, valuable feedbacks on drafts and believing in me and in my topic. It was such a pleasure to be guided by you two. Next, a special thanks goes to Randi Edland Kroken - collaboration with you was a real pleasure for me and I gained a lot from it.

The time I spent with my PhD fellows and the friendships I developed with some of them are particularly appreciated. First and foremost, a special thanks to Gloria Ziglioli (and her husband Andrea); my office mates Eric Kimathi, Roya Denise Haugen and Anette Ringen Rosenberg; Manisha Mishra, Alhassan Yakubu, Justyna Agnieszka Mroczkowska, Beate Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, Hanne Tharaldsen and others. My PhD journey would not have been so exciting and memorable without all of you.

I want to also thank Ann Christin Eklund Nilsen, Anne Ryen, Alexander Ruser and Cecilie Revheim who have been welcoming and friendly from the very first day. I would also like to thank to my other colleagues from the department, including Sivert Skålvoll Urstad, Morten Blekesaune, May-Linda Magnussen, Jorunn Gjedrem for either interesting collaborations or discussions. I also thank Cecilie Rygh Mawdsley, Hilde Terese Drivenes and Eirik Rustad for personal and administrative support. I would like to thank prof. emeritus Rolf Rønning from Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences for reading my dissertation draft and providing valuable feedback during the 90% seminar.

A very special thank goes to my dear friends outside the department: Aleksandra Rados, Sanja Smiljic, Markos Dallas, Aleksandar Avramovic – I am grateful that you have been part of my PhD and Kristiansand adventures. I also thank to practitioners from the civil society, public and international donors' sectors who opened their doors and participate in this research.

Finally, a special thanks to all my beloved family and home country friends for heartily support, being by my side and reminding me of life beyond academia. This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Nada Bozic.

Sammendrag

Et sentralt fokus i denne doktorgradsavhandlingen er å utvide forståelsen av hvordan sosial innovasjon genereres i sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner (SSOer) som yter sosiale tjenester til sårbare grupper gjennom arbeid med flere aktører i kontekster påvirket av krig. En «agency-structure»-orientert fremgangsmåte har blitt brukt som et overordnet teoretisk perspektiv gjennom hele avhandlingen. I tillegg perspektiver innen teorier som institusjonell teori (nyinstitusjonalisme og institusjonell nettverksbygging), ressursavhengighetsteori, samt begrepene sosial innovasjon, samarbeid, ikke-statlig tjenesteyting, NGOisation og den tredje sektor-offentlige tjenestetilbudeter presenterer det viktigste teoretiske rammeverket av denne avhandlingen. Ved å bruke Bosnia-Hercegovina som case, tar denne avhandlingen i bruk et utforskende sekvensielt forsknings design med blandede metoder, der den overordnede studien har bestått av tre konstituerende artikler. Datakilden for denne studien består av 15 semi-strukturerte intervjuer med representanter fra lokale SSOer, internasjonale bistands og utviklingsgivere og institusjoner i offentlig sosial sektor, samt en undersøkelse av 120 SSOer representanter fra en rekke SSOer sosiale tjenester med erfaring med implementering av sosialt innovative tjenester, modeller og intervensjoner.

Artikkel 1 avslørte de primære mekanismene og prosessene som ligger til grunn for utviklingen av sosial innovasjon generert av ikke-statlige aktører (sivilsamfunnsleverandører). De identifiserte mekanismene for sosial innovasjon er a) transkopi, b) koaktiv nyhet og c) kunnskapskonstruksjon. Prosessene som ligger til grunn for disse tre mekanismene er utviklet av lokale SSOer gjennom nettverksbygging internasjonalt; kopiere og tilpasse tjenester/modeller/ intervensjoner utenfra og modifisere dem basert på den lokale konteksten; bygge relasjoner med ulike aktører som oppmuntre banebrytende nye løsninger, produsere og videreformidle kunnskap innen sosial sektor. *Artikkel 2* viste at samarbeid og sosial innovasjon i tilbudet av sosiale tjenester i Bosnia opererer innenfor den tredoble konteksten av komplekse relasjoner som eksisterer mellom offentlige organisasjoner, sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner og internasjonale giverorganisasjoner. Ulike mimetiske, normative og tvangsmessige press ble identifisert som i betydelig grad påvirker sivile organisasjoners funksjon og oppførsel i sosial velferdssektoren, deres samarbeid med givere og offentlige organisasjoner og utviklingen av sosial innovasjon. Funnene i *Artikkel 3* identifiserte flere eksterne kontekstuelle faktorer sameksisterende innenfor de

økonomiske, politiske og administrative dimensjonene til organisasjoners ressursmiljøer, og den kombinerte effekten av disse faktorene påvirker SSOers integrering av sosialt innovative tilnærminger til tjenesteytelse. Eksterne faktorer, inkludert tilgang til sikret finansiering, tjenestebrukernes vilje til å delta i innovasjon, og bærekraften til de implementerte tjenestene oppfattes av SSOer som svært viktige for sosial innovasjon. Faktorer knyttet til de politiske og juridiske aspektene ved sosialtjenestesystemet ble bare tildelt moderat betydning av SSOer. SSOer la mindre vekt på miljøfaktorer knyttet til overholdelse og regulering, inkludert lisens- og akkrediteringskrav for innovative prosjekter og tjenester, kvalitetsstandarder i tjenestelevering og skattelettelser.

Funnene i alle tre artiklene tyder på at sosial innovasjon i sosiale tjenester i en skjør kontekst med en arv fra krig ikke er et offentlig sektorfenomen, men snarere kommer fra ikke-statlige tjenesteleverandører (lokale SSOer) med finansiering primært fra flere internasjonale bistands og utviklingsgivere. Sosiale innovasjoner i en slik sammenheng oppstår imidlertid vanligvis i den tredoble rammen av samarbeid mellom sivilsamfunner, internasjonale givere og offentlige organisasjoner. Posisjonering av lokale samfunnsorganisasjoner som tilbydere av nye forebyggende tjenester og koblinger med internasjonale givere, deres fond og nettverk, så vel som offentlig sektor, førte til et samarbeid som resulterte i mobilisering av felles ressurser, et tverrsektorielt samarbeid og samarbeid om produksjon av sosialt innovative løsninger innenfor sosialpolitikk og praksis. Funnene avslørte imidlertid også at samarbeidsaspekter ved sosial innovasjon i denne settingen ikke er lett å implementere. Lokale samfunnsorganisasjoner i sammenheng med komplekse flersidige nettverk og flerlagsaktører står overfor mange utfordringer. De er maktubalanser, spenninger, lav tillit blant involverte aktører og sterkt hierarki mellom ulike institusjoner, normer og regler som samtidig reduserer synligheten av SSOers samarbeidende og innovative innsats i sosialtjenestefeltet. Disse utfordringer forsterkes også av fraværet av strukturelle mekanismer som støtter sosial innovasjon; fragmenterte og uresponsive offentlige institusjoner som ikke klarer å anerkjenne de innovative evnene til lokale samfunnsorganisasjoner innen sosiale tjenester, samt høy avhengighet av lokale SSOer på midlertidige, foranderlige og kortsiktige internasjonale givere finansieringsstøtte. På grunn av dette kan sosial innovasjon i sosiale tjenester produsert av sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner bli ukjent og uholdbar.

Abstract

A central focus of this PhD dissertation is to advance an understanding of how social innovation is generated through the perspective of civil society organisations (CSOs) that provide social services to vulnerable groups through collaboration with multiple actors in the fragile context, with a legacy of war. An "agency-structure" approach has been applied as an overarching perspective throughout this dissertation. Theories such as institutional theory (new institutionalism and institutional networking), resource-dependency theory as well as the concepts of social innovation, collaboration, non-state service provision, NGO-isation and the third sector-public services provision present the main theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Using Bosnia and Herzegovina as a case, this dissertation adopts an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design, in which the overarching study has consisted of three constituent articles. The data source for this study consists of 15 semi-structured interviews with representatives from local CSOs, international aid/development donors and the public social sector institutions, as well as a survey of 120 CSO representatives from a variety of social service CSOs with the experience of the implementation of socially innovative services, models and interventions.

Article 1 revealed the primary mechanisms and processes underlying the development of social innovation generated by non-state civil society providers. The identified mechanisms of social innovation are a) transcopy, b) coactive novelty and c) knowledge construction. The processes underlying these three mechanisms are developed by local CSOs through networking internationally; copying and adapting services/ models/ interventions from outside and modifying them based on the local context; building relationships with different actors and stakeholders which induces pioneering of novel solutions, producing and further disseminating certain knowledge in the social sector field.

Article 2 showed that collaboration and social innovation in the provision of social services in Bosnia operate within the triple context of complex relationships existing between public organisations, civil society organisations and international donor organisations. Various mimetic, normative and coercive pressures were identified that significantly influence civil organisations' functioning and behaviour in the social sector, their cooperation with donors and public organisations and the development of social innovation.

The findings of *Article 3 identified* multiple external contextual factors coexist within the financial, policy-legal and administrative dimensions of organisations' resource environments, and the combined effect of these factors influences CSOs' integration of socially innovative approaches to service provision. External factors including access to secured funding, the willingness of service users to participate in innovation and the sustainability of the implemented services are perceived by CSOs as very important to social innovation. Factors related to the policy and legal aspects of the social services system were assigned only moderate importance by CSOs. CSOs placed less importance on environmental factors related to compliance and regulation, including licensing and accreditation requirements for innovative projects and services, quality standards in service delivery and tax relief.

The findings of all three articles suggest that social innovation in social services in the fragile context is not a public sector phenomenon, but rather emerges from non-state service providers (local CSOs) with funding primarily coming from multiple aid/development international donors; however, it usually operates within the triple framework of collaboration developed between civil society, international donors and public organisations. Positioning local CSOs as providers of novel preventive services and connecting them with international donors, their funds, and networks, as well as the public sector, led to a collaborative interaction that resulted in the mobilisation of joint resources, a cross-sector collaboration, co-financing and the co-production of socially innovative solutions within social services and social work practice.

However, the findings also revealed that collaborative aspects of social innovation in this setting does not implement easily. Local CSOs in the context of complex multifaced networks and multilayer actors face many challenges. This includes power imbalances, tensions, low trust among involved actors and strong hierarchy with different institutions, norms and rules that simultaneously decreases the visibility of CSOs collaborative and innovative efforts in the social service field. These challenges are also exacerbated by the absence of structural mechanisms that support social innovation; fragmented and unresponsive public institutions that fail to recognise CSO-led services and their innovative possibilities, as well as high reliance of local CSOs on temporary, changeable and short-term international donor funding support. Due to this, social innovation in social services produced by CSOs can go unrecognised and unsustainable.

Contents

List of abbreviations

BiH   Bosnia and Herzegovina

BRUSO   Brief, Relevant, Unambiguous, Specific and Objective

CSOs   Civil society organisations

ECSWR   European Conference for Social Work Research

FGC   Family Group Conference

EU   The European Union

IFSW   International Federation of Social Workers

NGOs   Non-governmental organisations

NPM   New Public Management

OECD   The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

P (1-15)   The interviewed participants

TSOs   Third sector organisations

UN   The United Nations

US   The United States

UNDP   The United Nations Development Programmes

UNICEF   The United Nations Children's Fund

USAID   The United States Agency for International Development

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Part one: The synopsis

1 Introduction

The increasing prominence of social innovation in academic discussions has seen notable growth over the last decade. The discussions were closely tied to welfare uncertainty, economic challenges, demographic shifts and inequality, as well as the long-standing issues with deterioration of social care services throughout Europe over the last two decades (Borzaga & Bodini, 2014; Grimm et al., 2013; Howaldt et al., 2016; Krlev et al., 2019). Especially in the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis, scholars, policymakers and practitioners have become increasingly aware of the opportunity for social innovation to better meet societal needs. This awareness resulted in the initiation of scholars' interest not just in theory and conceptualisation issues regarding social innovation, but also in various research projects, academic centres and in new public policies geared towards social innovation, with the European Commission playing an overarching role in spearheading and developing these initiatives (European Commission, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Howaldt et al., 2021; TEPSIE, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2017).

Internationally, social innovation can be induced in different contexts and countries and initiated at different micro-meso-macro levels by a number of organisations, ranging from government institutions (public institutions) to socially innovative networks and labs (Anheier et al., 2019; Mikhailovich et al., 2017; Moulaert et al., 2013; Mulgan, 2019). At the same time, the role of social innovation has recently started to be promoted as a necessary element of sustainable social development, particularly regarding reducing poverty and inequality and strengthening good governance in emerging and developing countries (Millard, 2021; Millard et al., 2016, 2017). Social innovation was identified by the United Nations (UN) regarding coordinating activities for global development titled Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 within The Global Goals, which was adopted by all UN member states in 2015 (Liangrong, 2020; Millard, 2021; UNRISD, 2016). Under this agenda, apart from implementing policy innovations for transformative change, the UN also calls on the community of organisations to seek alternative locally sustainable solutions and working models that will apply a social innovation approach to the development process (Liangrong, 2020; Millard, 2021; Millard et al., 2016). To achieve such goals, the 2030 Agenda has greatly promoted, among other things, local and global decision making, cross-sector collaboration and networking between civic, public, corporative and international actors (Millard, 2021; Liangrong, 2020).

The literature stream on social innovation recognises the role of non-state actors (e.g. civil society organisations (CSOs), non-profits, third sector organisations, social enterprise organisations and citizens' engagement) in finding socially innovative solutions to tackle pressing social problems demonstrates a valuable perspective (Anheier et al., 2014; Baglioni & Sinclair, 2018; Krlev et al., 2019; Moulaert et al., 2013; Oosterlynck et al., 2020; Shier & Handy, 2014). Scholars in recent years have also identified social innovation as an approach implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or grassroots activities to advance social or economic development, for example, in Africa (Chomane & Biljohn, 2021), Iran (Moeenian et al., 2022) and India (Banerjee & Shaban, 2021). It has become widely assumed that civic engagement in the public sphere can lead to greater social cohesion and generate positive outcomes and innovative responses that benefit disadvantaged groups, which

Davies and Simon (2012) further argued in their work, noting that 'the process is likely to be far more complex than has been identified' (p. 31). Moreover, there is a growing belief that complex social problems can hardly be tackled solely by a single government, sector or organisation and that traditional funding sources are no longer adequate for addressing such problems effectively (Davies & Simon, 2012).

As social innovations are based on numerous presuppositions and require appropriate infrastructures, organisations, actors and resources (Domanski et al., 2020), they most likely occur when public, private and civil society work together in collaboration by sharing resources and co-creating solutions to social problems (Krlev et al., 2019). CSOs usually operate in various contexts and directly interact with different actors, which may cause them to confront contextual and institutional constraints, tensions and expectations (AbouAssi, 2014, 2015, 2016; Acheson, 2014; Fagan et al., 2012; Meyer et al., 2020).

Recently, calls for research have highlighted the necessity of exploring collaborative aspects of social innovation and involved actors/environments (Steiner et al., 2021), particularly from the perspective of low- and middleincome countries (Haar & Ernst, 2016; Kolk & Lenfant 2015). Weak institutions are characteristic of these countries with scarce resources and unstable institutional alignments, while the alliance of different actors from diverse backgrounds is crucial since no single organisation (actor) can fill all the institutional gaps (Espiau 2016; Kolk and Lenfant 2015; Morrar & Baba, 2022). These weaknesses are particularly evident in so-called fragile countries with a legacy of conflict,

poor government performance and other socio-political challenges (Espiau 2016; Kolk & Lenfant 2015, p. 288). Therefore, this dissertation analyses social service CSOs and their role in developing social innovation within the social sector in such a context. This study also explores how CSOs interactions and collaborative approach within the multi-actor setting in the field of social care service provision affect social innovation processes, mechanisms and the development of new practices. The discussions I conduct are based on data from a mixed-method study that focuses on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The discussions I draw in this dissertation come from a transdisciplinary viewpoint, since I draw on theoretical and conceptual perspectives from sociology, social work and sustainable social development.

1.1 Research gaps

Besides the role of public and private sectors in service delivery, CSOs also play an increasingly important role in the provision of social services (Akesson, 2016; Carson et al., 2015; Pestoff, 2012; Wollmann, 2018). They have an especially vital role in challenging contexts of social work in low- or middle income countries characterised by political and economic instability, declining public funding for social programmes and a lack of institutional support for vulnerable citizens due to state failure to respond adequately (Akesson, 2016; Chowdhury et al., 2018; Bozic, 2010). In such settings, various organisations and actors occupy different roles and exert different influences when it comes to the provision of social services (Waddington et al., 2019; Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, 2015). The blurring between sectors in social work practice and service delivery (state, private, civil society) has also become more apparent in recent years, which can be seen, on one hand, as a source of innovation for new services, but on the other, as a source of conflicting and contradictory social work principles (Schröer, 2021). Despite increasing scholarly attention on social innovation in the last few years from different disciplines, research on social innovation and social work has been quite limited despite the obvious connection between the two fields (Flynn, 2017; Parpan-Blaser & Hüttemann, 2018). The problem is that social work policy and practice might have difficulty conceptualising, operationalising and implementing social innovations in social care services (Winter et al., 2021). Another problem is a lack of common understanding of social innovation processes in social service provision from the

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perspective of civic actors, especially in a challenging institutional context, which, according to Morais-da-Silva et al. (2021), is characterised by a strong relationship among political, institutional and foreign donor actors. Therefore, the first gap this dissertation attempts to fill is the lack of understanding of the mechanisms and processes of social innovation generated by CSOs in the challenge social work and social service fields. Article 1 of this dissertation addresses this gap.

The collaborative aspects of various partners in relation to social innovation over the years have increased the attention of scholars in the social innovation literature stream (Davis & Gibbons, 2017; Rey-García et al., 2016; Ziegler, 2017). Several scholars (Domanski & Koletka, 2018; Oosterlynck et al., 2020; Steiner et al., 2021; Ziegler, 2017) have discussed new actors, networks and their drivers towards social innovation. The relationship between public and civic actors presents crucial conditions in which to facilitate participation, cocreation, co-production and social entrepreneurship, which are considered the core components of the social economy model to encourage social solidarity and social innovation through the involvement of citizens and third sectors in services and products (Hulgård & Andersen, 2019; Matei & Dorobantu, 2015; Pestoff, 2012; Pestoff et al., 2013). Despite the importance of the collaborative aspects of social innovation, relationships among different actors can sometimes struggle and face challenges of collaboration due to different levels of power, conflict or influence among the actors (Teasdale et al., 2021).

However, some scholars (Ayob et al., 2016; Steiner et al., 2021) agree that social innovations and their potential and challenging aspects of collaboration are still highly theorised and empirically explored from a proWestern approach. The collaborative aspects of social innovation have been predominantly analysed from the public sector-led perspective of high-income democratic countries as an implication of neoliberal doctrine towards enhancing public administration innovation or new public governance principles towards implementing collaborative and participatory governance models (Ansell & Torfing, 2014; Bason, 2018; Osborne, 2006; Osborne & Brown, 2011; Pestoff, 2012; Pestoff et al., 2013). Such approaches are characterised by liberal, marketoriented or social democratic welfare values and lack empirical studies from challenging social welfare systems where special forms of relations exist between public, civil or private actors (Ayob et al., 2016; Steiner et al., 2021). The need to understand social innovation

collaborative elements outside Western Europe was further identified during the International Conference on Social Innovation Research[1], held in Glasgow in 2019 (Steiner et al., 2021). It resulted in a call for more knowledge, evidence and theoretical insights into interaction and collaboration between policy actors, communities and the environment for producing social innovation in low- and middle-income countries (Steiner et al., 2021). Thus, it is necessary to explore the collaborative perspective and social innovation in a socio-politically fragile context (Morrar & Baba, 2022). In such settings, institutional arrangements differ from the norms of good governance of public administration in Western Europe (e.g. participation, transparency, openness to change and innovation), where strong but temporary foreign donor funding influences the lack of public resources, regulatory structures and systems solutions for neglected social needs (Morrar & Baba, 2022). This suggests that we need to better understand what opportunities and challenges underline the collaboration of CSOs with other powerful actors in the provision of social services and how, in such a context, a collaborative perspective may enable or restrict social innovation. Further addressing the above calls for more research, this dissertation seeks to address the following second gap: the lack of understanding of how public and non-public actors collaborate in delivering social services and how their collaboration facilitates or constrains social innovation in a fragile context, with an emphasis on CSOs. Article 2 of this dissertation addresses this gap.

Scholars have shown the importance of intra-organisational conditions on social innovation (Jaskyte & Dressler, 2005; Shier & Handy, 2016), but external contextual factors can have even more significant influence on CSOs in the process of diffusing innovation (European Commission, 2011a; Mulgan, 2019; TEPSIE, 2014). Social policy and welfare regimes contrast across different countries and regions; such a situation can also affect the development of social innovation (Baglioni & Sinclair, 2018; Eschweiler et al., 2018; Mulgan, 2019).

According to Dobele (2015) and Živojinović et al. (2019), countries with emerging and transitional economies usually face more deficient institutional resources, and social innovation is neither recognised nor defined as a priority within the national public policy discourse. Consequently, in such circumstances, institutionalised mechanisms, regulations,

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[1] The International Conference on Social Innovation Research is a world-renowned conference that brings together researchers and scholars active in the field of social innovation coming from different disciplines and perspectives.

structural funds and research to support innovation may be absent (Dobele, 2015; Živojinović et al., 2019). A lack of institutional response to social innovation is particularly evident in the case of highly politicised and unstable environments that resist changes within social policy institutions and attempt to keep things in a status quo position, while the development and handling of social problems is largely driven by foreign aid donors and their funding streams (Morrar & Arman, 2020; Morrar & Baba, 2022; UNRISD, 2016). Accordingly, the external factors that influence social innovation through the interplay between CSOs and other institutional players may differ in countries experiencing economic and social hardships from countries with high incomes (Millard et al., 2016). Since the operational success of CSOs is typically dependent on how they use the resources and interact with stakeholders and their environments, which can provide potential but also present obstacles to social innovation diffusion (Domanski & Koletka, 2018; Holtgrewe & Millard, 2018), the dissertation addresses the third gap, referring to the need to understand which types of external factors CSOs consider important when it comes to integrating social innovation into the services they provide. Article 3 of this dissertation addresses this gap.

1.2 Situating the study – background and context

Although social innovation can be seen as a global phenomenon, it is not completely universal and is closely embedded in the socio-political and cultural circumstances of the given context (Grimm et al. 2013; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019). As this work aspires to provide a contextualised study of social innovation, insight into the study's context is crucial. The case examined in this dissertation is Bosnia and Herzegovina (officially abbreviated as BiH, but often commonly referred to just as Bosnia, which I have applied throughout the dissertation), a successor state of the former Yugoslavia. As a young independent country located in Southeastern Europe (outside of the Europe Union) and part of the so-called Western Balkan[2] countries region, the country experienced a highly turbulent period over the past three decades and faced specific

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[2] The term 'Western Balkans' has been widely used in European Union administration and institutions since 2003. It has a political and geographical meaning. It has been used to describe countries in Southeast Europe that suffered from military ethnic conflicts or instability during the 1990s and which are not members of the European Union but have candidate status such as Albania, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, or potential candidate status such as Bosnia and Kosovo. All of these countries (except Albania) were once part of Yugoslavia, but gained independence after the breakup of Yugoslavia due to political crises and unresolved issues that escalated into interethnic wars and conflicts in the 1990s. See European Commission web site: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-andregions/regions/western-balkans/

sociopolitical and economic upheavals. As a result of the collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe, Yugoslavia was broken up and former republics of Yugoslavia, including Bosnia, sought independence. Due to Bosnia's multiethnicity, unresolved political tensions towards independence and increased ethnic division led to the devastating ethnic war. As previously explained in the articles, the so-called Bosnian War, which took place between 1992 and 1995, established the country's complicated constitution and multilayer governmental system that largely followed ethnic lines of three major ethnic conflicting sides and produced a serious fragmentation of public institutions and policies (Keil & Perry, 2015; Sberg, 2008; Kartsonaki, 2016).

World Governance Indicators for 2019 showed that the Bosnia's government ranked in the 29th percentile for its effectiveness and it had been relatively low for a whole decade with just some slight improvements (The World Bank, 2020). Compared to other countries, Bosnia ranks just above the 30th percentile in terms of political stability, absence of violence and corruption (The World Bank, 2020). Although it belongs to a middle-income country, with its limited economic resources, unfavourable business climate and weak attraction of foreign direct investment, Bosnia ranked 92nd on the Global Competitive Index in 2019, placing its innovation capabilities 117th among 140 countries (Schwab, 2019). Because of failed international-led reconciliation efforts (McMahon, 2015), strong nationalism, political crises with war narratives and the domination of the foreign community in internal political decisions, Bosnia remains an ethnically divided country with a fragile stability located on the periphery of the European Union (Kazansky et al., 2020; Gromes, 2019).

1.3 The structure and characteristics of the civil society sector in Bosnia

While Yugoslavia and its socialistic form of society completely overtook responsibility for the economic, political, social and private lives of its citizens (Milosavljević & Vidanović, 1999), solidarity and volunteerism were part of the cultural tradition of the former Yugoslavian nation, and certain social grassroots movements and civil initiatives developed in the last decade of the country's existence (Križan, 1989). However, a Western organisational form of civil society that dominates today in many countries, particularly in the form of NGOs, began to be established in Bosnia and other former Yugoslavia countries only after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the aftermath of the war (Milan, 2017). CSOs started mushrooming not only in Bosnia but also in the whole Western Balkan region, parallel with the civil wars and ethnic conflicts in the nineties due to the influence of Western countries and foreign interventions (McMahon, 2015; Milan 2017). As all three articles explain, the civil society developed in the nineties that continues even now has been highly donor driven and financially supported by multilayer international organisations that determined the role, domains, priorities, orientations and organisational forms of the local civil society sector in Bosnia (Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al., 2013; Deacon & Stubbs, 1998; Gijo
& Tufo, 2020; Papić et.al 2013; Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2009).

Because of their historical development connected with the funding and influences of various international agencies, local CSOs in Bosnia have evolved in a variety of sizes and scopes of work. They are officially registered as 'Citizens Associations' under the Law on associations and foundations; however, donors, public institutions and organisations have embraced the terms CSOs or NGOs for citizen associations as part of their legitimacy and use both terms interchangeably in policy and practice, without considering organisational differences (Spahić Šiljak, 2017). This use of both terms interchangeably without a distinct difference also explains why the terms have been applied in the same manner in all three papers of this dissertation, a subject that I will return to later in the section explaining the concept of CSOs and NGOs. Local CSOs can be registered within all four administrative levels (local, cantonal, entity and national). Even though there are almost no public statistical records concerning the size, function, funding resources and impact of the local civil society in Bosnia, and due to the lack of

synergy of public data and statistics between all four levels of the government system, the Ministry of Justice and some international donor organisations just recently attempted to compile data of registered CSOs (Ministarstvo pravde BiH, 2019). The register showed that there were approximately 27,000 CSOs in Bosnia, although the data remain incomplete (Ministarstvo pravde BiH, 2019).

According to some authors (Spahić Šiljak, 2017; Žeravčić, 2016), CSOs' scope of work can be divided into three general groups: advocacy/political issue-based organisations (dealing with issues such as human rights, democratisation, peacebuilding, stability, corruption, legislation, policy and ecology), professional-based CSOs (e.g. professional associations, trade unions, sport, cultural, veteran and religious associations) and social service or community-based service organisations. However, in practice, CSOs combine advocacy and service-based approaches in their work, although there is a lack of statistical data on their inclusion in the provision of services, volunteering or regarding the distribution of foreign and state funds for non-state service provision (BosilkovaAntovska, 2021, p. 14). Over the years, social service-oriented CSOs have gained direct access to various vulnerable groups and have obtained significant insights into their demands and unmet needs, which allows them to implement both emergency and long-term responses (Bozic, 2010; Papić et al., 2013; Žeravčić, 2016). As they are supported by the presence of a large number of international donors and widely available foreign funding, considering that they usually subcontract local CSOs to implement in partnership donors' programmatic objectives – particularly in the field of social policy and services – CSOs have become the main partners of international donor organisations (Puljek-Shank, 2019; Spahić Šiljak, 2017).

On the other hand, the heavy domination of foreign institutions has meant that international aid and development donors have become the most influential institutional actors in Bosnia and the whole Western Balkan region, while both the civil and public sectors have become strongly tied to foreign funding (Meyer et al., 2020; Vandor, 2017). Such immense reliance on foreign grants, funds, project schemes and aid assistance is marked by a problematic relationship that has developed between government officials and CSOs representatives in the country. A considerable amount of foreign aid was channelled entirely through CSOs during the first couple of years after the war, as international donors were reluctant to distribute their funds through weak public

governmental and state institutions, which were observed as inefficient and corrupt (Rasidagic, 2013; Sampson, 2012). The situation changed later and foreign aid funding was also allocated to rebuilding the public administration sector. Donors also induced mechanisms and regulations for cooperation between public (government) institutions and CSOs (Milasinovic & Janca, 2015), but they have not been satisfactorily implemented in practice (Bosilkova-Antovska, 2021). Cooperation issues between the public and CSO sectors seem to stem from the early stage of CSO development. As Sampson (2012) explained, early CSOs' activities in social policy developed in parallel but were disconnected from the public sector as a result of following international donors' interests, and there was suspicion and jealousy on the part of government authorities, which led to a distrust of CSOs as they saw them as anti-government organisations with immense funding potential.

Further, international donors' interventions in Bosnia generated general criticisms related to the coordination and monitoring of funded interventions for weak donors. Despite their desire to work independently, numerous small and large humanitarian, aid and development organisations have not synchronously worked with the main United Nations and Europe Union agencies. As a result, the duplication and overlapping of initiatives implemented by donors and local CSOs has become a serious issue (Deacon, & Stubbs, 1998; Deacon et al., 2007; Fagan, 2006). In addition, criticism of international interventions is followed by weak short-term social change, lack of proper coordination and measured effects of the donors' work and distributed funds, while a dominance of donor-driven support has led to weak institutional welfare reforms and public sector responsibility in social policy implementation (Sampson, 2012; Žeravčić, 2016; Maglajlic & Stubbs, 2017).

New challenges but potential opportunities for civil society organisations and the social sector in Bosnia, along with other Western Balkan countries, are closely tied to potential European integration and eventual EU accession[3] of the region, even though it remains an uncertain and complicated prospect (Matković,

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[3] Bosnia – along with other Western Balkans countries – was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership (European Commission, 2018). The number of agreements between the EU and Bosnia has entered into force (European Commission, 2018). However, when it comes to supporting social sector reform in the whole region, the EU has made a minimal effort, while at the same time imposing obligations for the candidate and potential countries to adopt relevant social sector strategies and standards compatible with the EU welfare state principles (Matković, 2017).

2017). Recent initiatives in the region concerning reconfiguring the future welfare model that will also support the European Integration of the Western Balkans' development of preventive social policy measures and innovative services, instruments and models through active collaboration between publiccivil-private actors have been identified as important steps to develop a sufficient welfare state model (Matković, 2017; Stubbs, 2020). Although social innovation can play an important role in directing these expectations towards generating a potentially new welfare system, this topic has not been studied so far in the context of Bosnia, either from a top-down or bottom-up perspective. Further, the local perspective of community-based or civil society-based social innovation in the field of social services for the most vulnerable citizens and service users remains generally under-researched. Scholars focusing on Bosnia have mostly skewed their research towards well-researched critical perspectives on international donors and civil society roles post-conflict (Campbell et al., 2019; Deacon & Stubbs, 1998; Maglajlic & Stubbs, 2017; McMahon, 2015; Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2009) but have completely neglected the role of CSOs in social change and transformation. Thus, this dissertation aims to address this gap in the research. Furthermore, there is a lack of research that has examined social innovation and collaboration within the wider Western Balkan region, which has similar civil society development trajectories.

1.4 Is it a post-conflict or fragile context?

In the articles presented herein, I argue that Bosnia is a specifically fragile and post-conflict context. In fact, I posit that the fragility and post-conflictual nature of the context impacts how the CSOs I have researched see their possibilities to innovate. In the following paragraphs, I explain what I base my argument of fragility upon. Because of its recent turbulent history, with a conflict in the nineties and post-conflict and post-socialist transition, and with the ongoing unstable social-political situation, Bosnia has constantly been labelled by scholars from different disciplines as either a post-conflict or fragile country. The following paragraphs explain the meaning of both terms and the way they are framed and operationalised within this dissertation in general.

The notion of 'post-conflict society' in the literature shows defining challenges. Although it could be understood as a time when the peace agreement is signed and the conflict ends, the reality is more complex (Soleil Frère & Wilen, 2015). Brown et al.

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(2011, p. 3) saw the post-conflict phase as 'multiple transition processes'. The focus is not only on the transition from war to peace but also on the different stages of various transitional development processes, such as democratisation, transitional justice, state-building or market liberalisation (Brown et al., 2011). However, these are highly complex processes that often take decades to develop. As Brown et al. (2011) further explained, a country's recovery in this fragile phase often faces political disintegration, weak economic or institutional development, and strong nationalistic and war legacy narratives, which may affect the state of security of the country to be threatened and challenged with certain pressures and risks of regression into violence. Very often, crises of potential instability or lower-intensity conflict may occur in the post-conflict phase (Soleil Frère & Wilen, 2015). A high engagement of the international community and aid development organisations also marks this phase regarding the country's rebuilding and establishing democratic processes, but whose premature withdrawal from the country may produce negative consequences (Soleil Frère & Wilen, 2015). Although 25 years have passed since the four-year conflict ended in Bosnia, the country remains in the so-called effect of a 'frozen conflict' (United Nations, 2021) due to strong wartime political narratives and goals, with serious restraints considering democratisation, transitional justice, peacebuilding or state-building processes and standstills in its overall development (Kartsonaki, 2016). Therefore, the post-conflict term is still prevalent in international researchers' works about Bosnia (Ciardha & Vojvoda, 2016; Maglajlic & Stubbs, 2017; True et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the concept of fragile states or fragility has attracted attention in the development discourse field, but it is highly contested – there is no internationally accepted definition, although many international agencies and researchers attempt to provide their understanding of this term and to operationalise it for the development practice (Mcloughlin & Idris, 2016). However, a literature review on fragile states terminology conducted by Mcloughlin and Idris (2016) showed that countries or regions defined as fragile states or in the state of fragility have common attributes: they are unable to maintain basic security, maintain rule of law, secure justice, provide basic services or make economic opportunities available to their citizens. These countries usually also have experience of violence or a legacy of ethnic, religious or military conflicts, ineffective government, lack of democratic principles, and weak capacities to face socioeconomic shocks (Mcloughlin & Idris, 2016). The existing literature stipulates several categories

that explain the causes and characteristics of fragility, including political, social, economic, demographic and environmental indicators (Mcloughlin & Idris, 2016; Whyte et al., 2014). These categories are also part of the Fragile State Index introduced by the organisation Fund for Peace, which is based on 12 indicators that cover several characteristics of state failure, including highly corrupt and criminal activities, institutional discrimination, economic hardship or demographic pressures (The Fund for Peace, 2021). According to this index, Bosnia ranked 77th out of 179 countries in 2021. There are several categories of fragility associated with Bosnia, such as heavy international intervention, refugees, brain drain and in particular 'factionalised elites', which means that because of ethnic fragmentation with a strong nationalistic political rhetoric, the country faces severe ethnic division and obstruction from the ruling elites, threatening national stability (The Fund for Peace, 2021). Further, according to Kartsonaki (2016) and Šabanović (2018), a system of privileges for the political class in the country has resulted in high levels of corruption and organised crime, accompanied by a grey economy, poverty and unemployment. In addition, the Freedom House categorises Bosnia as having a 'transitional or hybrid regime', which is associated with flawed democracy, political crises, a weak rule of law, prevalent corruption and undue political influence on the media and judiciary (Brezar, 2019).

Following the abovementioned terminology qualifications and taking into account the specific context of Bosnia, it could be said that both terms – postconflict and fragility – are easily applicable to the current state of affairs of the country. However, it is important to emphasise that this dissertation does not intend to contribute per se to the research field of war, peace or political postconflict development that one may expect after finding post-conflict or fragility concepts in the title or within the articles. Instead, this dissertation emphasises the post-conflict and fragility components because they describe how sociopolitical conditions have changed in a selected case following the destruction of long-established public institutions and the re-establishment of those institutions with a foreign intervention, particularly within the social sector, in an ethnically fragmented state-building undertaking. As there were no local roots which reflected the Western organisational structure of CSOs until Yugoslavia broke up (Meyer et al., 2017, pp. 17–18; Milan, 2017), those components even more importantly provide background information and describe the development of the civil society sector in the country. This development is closely related to the effects of war-torn historical shifts as well as the

influence of multilayer international actors (foreign small and middle charities and foundations, bigger international NGOs, multilateral and bilateral donors' organisations, international monetary and the UN or EU agencies). As social innovation is 'a territorial phenomenon shaped by the history of the place' (Montgomery & Mazzei, 2021, p. 6), it was necessary to provide contextual background information of Bosnia from the aspect of shading light on post-conflict and fragility components applied in the articles of this dissertation, but also highlighting factors that may potentially enable or limit multi-actor collaborative relationships and the development of social innovation.

1.5 Positionality statement and the motivation for this research

The subject matter of this study has particular importance to me. I was at the age of 11 when the war broke out in former Yugoslavia, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As my family was not as lucky as other families to leave the country and escape the horrors of war by finding security in another country through refugee programmes, we spent the entire war and post-war period in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During wartime, I had witnessed how international humanitarian organisations, such as International Red Cross or the United Nations, had massive importance for the whole country. In addition to providing food assistance to citizens, they also provided various vital humanitarian supports to citizens, internally displaced civilians, refugees or victims across all three ethnically conflicting and alienated sides.

When the war ended in 1995, CSOs gradually came into my life. In my late teenage period and early 20s, by living in a worn-torn country I became a volunteer and a member of two local youth-related organisations that were established by international development organisations with the mission to support youth inclusion in the peacebuilding process. Participation in those organisations had an important effect on my personal development in such a challenging context, but also in mitigating the negative consequences of war. Later, through my professional work in the social work practice, I collaborated directly or indirectly with many CSOs and international donors. Over the years, I have detected different events that impacted local civil society actors within the country and situations such as political pressures, restrictive institutional response, financial constraints, donor renewal, organisational struggles for resources, just to name a few. However, at the same time, I have noticed enormous efforts of local CSOs to adjust

to these challenges and changes, to adapt, organise differently their organisations and programmes or restructure their approaches in order to meet the needs of vulnerable social groups. Even though CSOs could be acknowledged as the actors that may play essential transformative roles in such a transitional and challenging context, this has never happened in reality. The reason could be partially due to the fact that the complicated socioeconomic and political climate in a worn-torn country is not committed to aiding the country in the overcoming of such shadows, instead favouring status-quo solutions and the constant blockage of the development of new trends and ideas. At the same time, international scholars attracted their interests to the Bosnian case to analyse various research topics related to war, foreign intervention, peacebuilding, state-building, post-war governance system, human rights and democratisation. Such studies were often largely framed within a predominant critical perspective which often portrayed CSOs from a typical NGO-isation view and negative international donor impact, lacking theoretical and empirical attention to their transformative potentials in the transitional post-conflict perspective.

Therefore, the above-mentioned facts informed my personal and professional objectives with this study. Although taking everything said could have produced some biases when I was selecting the sample, conducting the interviews or analysing the data, I was very aware of this possibility during working on this dissertation. However, I believe those potential biases were minimal and did not cause a serious problem. It is important to realise that I have actively reflected and addressed those potential issues through the communication with my supervisors, as well as, through my self-reflection process. At the same time, this has been thoroughly discussed with other scholars to whom I had the opportunity to present my research, fieldwork or manuscript drafts during departmental research meetings, at international conferences and doctoral summer schools I attended, or simply through the journals' extensive peer-reviewing processes.

1.6 Aim and research question

Using Bosnia as a case, this dissertation contributes to the existing knowledge on the role of CSOs (in the form of NGOs) in generating social innovation in the social sector through a collaborative approach composed of multiple actors. This dissertation attempts to answer the following research question:

RQ: How do CSOs contribute to social innovation by addressing service needs and collaborating with multi-actors in the social sector, and what opportunities and challenges do they encounter?

Several sub-questions form the basis of three individual research papers related to this main research question. The following subsection presents a brief summary of articles and sub-questions, while a broader overview of all three articles (methods, results, contributions and interconnections) is presented in the chapter 5. Table 1 presents more detailed information in graphical form.

Article I

Unpacking social innovation by non-state service providers in the challenging social work practice. *Comparative Social Work Journal* (accepted).

- RQ1: How does social innovation generate by nonstate service providers (local NGOs) in the Bosnian social work practice?
- RQ2: What types of mechanisms and processes of social innovation arise from the non-state providers involved in service provision and how do they manifest in practice?

Article 1 is guided by the sociological perspective of social innovation and the concept of public-non-public service and by applying 15 semi-structured interviews. The paper explored the role of local CSOs in the social work field to address the service needs of various vulnerable service users' groups and traced the mechanisms and processes of social innovation initiated by CSOs. Since the collaborative and network dimensions of CSOs with other actors (primarily with a variety of international donor organisations and then with the public sector) are identified as an especially important segment that can enable but also challenge social innovation in Bosnia, those dimensions are further analysed in Articles 2 and 3.

Article II

Global trends in a fragile context: Public-non-public collaboration, service delivery and social innovation. *Social Enterprise Journal, 17*(2), pp. 260-279.
https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2019-0100

- RQ1: How do representatives of civil society, foreign donors and the public sector experience public-non-public collaboration in the provision of social services in Bosnia?
- RQ2: What are the main demands and pressures that occur in this type of collaboration and how do they enable or restrict social innovation in a transitional post-conflict context?

Article 2 is built primarily on the interviews and findings from Article 1, which created a foundation for developing the survey instrument applied in Article 2. Guided by institutional theory (new institutionalism and networking) and the concept of social innovation, Article 2 combined the qualitative and quantitative data (15 interviews and 120 survey participants) to determine the collaborative opportunities and challenges of CSOs with international donors and the public sector towards social innovation in Bosnian social policy and practice. As this collaboration relies heavily on the actors' institutional arrangements and environments, I explored the role of external factors of multi-actor environments on local CSOs for integrating social innovation in the social services they deliver.

Article III

Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: Examining external factors affecting social service NGOs. *Development Studies Research*, *8*(1), pp. 170-180.
https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2021.1950020

- RQ: What types of external environmental factors do NGOs in Bosnia consider important for integrating a social innovation approach into the social services they deliver?

Article 3 is built on the findings of Articles 1 and 2, which presented the foundation for the survey item applied in the article and for further analysis of external factors which presented the multi-actor environment settings (international donors and public sector organisations). Guided by resource dependence theory and the concept of social innovation, the survey (N = 120) analysed identified environmental factors of great importance for CSOs when integrating a socially innovative approach into their social services.

Table 1

Overview of the Articles

Dissertation Purpose	**To advance an understanding of how social innovation is generated through the perspective of CSOs that provide social services for vulnerable groups through collaboration with multiple actors in the fragile context.**		
Main research question	**How do CSOs contribute to social innovation by addressing the services needs and collaborating with multi-actors in the social sector, and what opportunities and challenges do they encounter?**		
Articles	**Article I** **Unpacking social innovation by nonstate service providers in challenging social work practice**	**Article II** **Global trends in a fragile context: Public-non-public collaboration, service delivery and social innovation**	**Article III** **Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: Examining external factors affecting social service NGOs**
Journals	Comparative Social Work Journal	Social Enterprise Journal	Development Studies Research
Articles status	(accepted)	(published) https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2019-0100	(published) https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2021.1950020
Articles address research gaps identified in the literature	The lack of understanding of mechanisms and processes of social innovation that are induced by CSOs' work in the challenging social work practice.	The lack of understanding of how public and non-public actors collaborate in delivering social services and how their collaboration facilitates or constrains social innovation in a fragile context, with an emphasis on civil society organisations (CSOs).	Lack of understanding of external factors that CSOs may consider relevant for integrating social innovation into their services in the context of high reliance on funding from international aid donors, and limited institutional receptivity to innovation.
Aims of the articles	To identify the driving mechanisms and processes underpinning social innovation by civil society organisations (or NGOs) as non-state service providers in the field of social work in Bosnia.	To enhance the understanding of the nature of collaboration between public and non-public actors in delivering social services and achieving social innovation in a fragile context, with an emphasis on the role of CSOs.	To investigate the types of external environmental factors that civic actors consider important in providing social services to vulnerable people, in particular, the extent to which such factors contribute to their ability to integrate social innovation into their services.
Research questions framed the articles	**RQ1:** How does social innovation generate by non-state service providers (local NGOs) in Bosnian social work practice? **RQ2**: What types of mechanisms and processes of social innovation arise from the involvement of NGOs in the provision of services and how do they manifest in practice?	**RQ1:** How do representatives of civil society, foreign donors and the public sector experience public-non-public collaboration in the provision of social services in Bosnia? **RQ2:** What are the main demands and pressures that occur in this type of collaboration and how do they enable or restrict social innovation in a transitional post-conflict context?	**RQ1:** What types of external environmental factors do NGOs in Bosnia consider important for integrating a social innovation approach into the social services they deliver?
Theories/ concepts	The theoretical concept of social innovation The concept of collaboration	Institutional theory (new institutionalism and institutional networking) The concepts of collaboration and partnership The theoretical concept of social innovation	Resource dependency theory The concept of social innovation
Methods	Qualitative component	Merge and triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings	Quantitative component
Data	15 semi-structured interviews with the representatives from: 10 CSOs 3 international aid donor organisations 2 municipality welfare institutions	15 semi-structured interviews Online survey with 120 staff members of CSOs	Online survey of 120 staff members of CSOs

Instrument	14 face-to-face and 1 online interview	Interviews and survey questionnaire with different survey response options	5-point rating scale
Analysis	Qualitative thematic analyses	Qualitative thematic analyses Descriptive statistics (percentages)	Factor analysis and descriptive statistics (measures of frequency and measures of central tendency)
Central findings	• In Bosnia, the publicly governed social work sector is fragmented, underfunded, understaffed, outdated and complicated to manage. It also has a limited capacity to meet the needs of users with adequate services and is marginalised by politicians. • With funding from international aid donors and by participating in transnational networks, discourses and practices, local NGOs have delivered much-needed new preventative services in Bosnian social work practice and have driven social innovation. • Social innovation generated by NGOs in service provision occurs • through three interrelated mechanisms: a) transcopy, b) coactive novelty and c) knowledge construction. • The processes underpinning *transcopy* include networking internationally, borrowing and adapting services/models/interventions from outside and modifying them based on the local context. • The processes underpinning *coactive novelty* includes building relationships with different actors and stakeholders that induce the pioneering of novel service solutions. • The processes underpinning *knowledge construction are based on* producing and further disseminating certain knowledge and research evidence towards public sector employees and in the local social work field. • NGOs' efforts in the social sector field and in diffusing social innovation may be hindered due to the presence of multilayer actors; a strong reliance of NGOs on changeable, temporary and shortterm international donor funding and fragmented public sector institutional setting that is unresponsive towards the NGOs' work. Those aspects impeding the efforts of NGOs can affect the sustainability and broader recognition of social innovation	• CSOs entered into a range of collaborative and network opportunities with public organisations and international donors to address the service needs of vulnerable social groups. Role of CSOs in the delivery of services and collaborative opportunities occurred due to several factors: fragmented social sector context, demands for novel services provision, donor driven funding and resource exchange opportunities, and agendas and pressures set by foreign donors. • Interaction, networking, dependencies and exchange resources between public and non-public actors led to new collaborative dynamics in the Bosnian social sector and opportunities for local CSOs to implement socially innovative services solutions. • Collaboration opportunities expose CSOs to institutional demands and pressures from public and donor organisations that guide the development of social innovation. Constraints CSOs face can be translated into mimetic, normative and coercive isomorphisms. • Mimetic isomorphism can be found in the CSOs' practice of copying approaches borrowed from foreign donors and adapting them to the local social sector, which shapes their behaviour as social innovators. • Normative isomorphism is recognised in two ways: the increased professionalisation of CSOs in the social sector through their cooperation with public actors and various accountability demands imposed by the public sector to strengthen the CSOs' legitimacy within the highly institutionalised welfare norms. • Coercive isomorphism is derived from either the public sector mandate or foreign donors' demands. Public sector expectations that CSOs will adopt public sector procedures, contracts and reporting systems to be seen as potential partners and to obtain public funding support. From foreign donors, coercive isomorphism occurs as pressure for	• Environmental (contextual) factors grouped in the form of finance, policy, legislation, and administration are identified in the literature of social innovation as important external factors for NGOs and their innovative efforts. • The nine contextual factors were identified in the Bosnian social service context through interviews conducted in the first phase. They are related to the finance, policy-legal and administrative dimensions of public and foreign donor organisations. These factors are secured funding, tax relief, legislation adjustment, public strategies, licensing and accreditation, quality standards, openness of public institutions, service user participation and sustainability of implemented innovative services. • The nine factors are integrated in a scale designed to test and measure the level of importance of external factors on NGOs' social innovation. • The analysis showed that all nine factors have a certain level of importance for NGOs in Bosnia, but some factors are more dominant than others. • Three environmental factors are of great importance for NGOs when integrating a socially innovative approach: secured financing, the willingness of service users to participate in innovative services and the sustainability of the implemented services. • Factors related to the policy and legal aspects of the social services system were assigned only moderate importance by NGOs. • NGOs placed less importance on environmental factors related to compliance and regulation, including licensing and accreditation requirements for innovative projects and services,

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	implemented by non-state service providers. • The social innovation processes in Bosnia's social work sector revealed the external collaborative pattern of NGOs and other actors. This pattern is explored in more depth in Articles 2 and 3. • The above findings also form the basis for the design of a quantitative (survey) instrument applied in Articles 2 and 3	CSOs to follow their policies and agendas and to enter into more productive collaborations with public organisations to achieve the greater sustainability of foreign-funded projects and services. • Although the interactions between organisations and environmental pressures can be challenging, they also raised the ability for local CSOs to modify their behaviours, integrate institutional demands and impact institutional practices, which serve as CSO's sources for generating collaboration and social innovation in the fragmented and multi-actor Bosnian social service context. • The findings of this article lay the foundation for testing the external environmental factors that are a part of the institutional dimensions of public and international actors, as outlined in Article 3	quality standards in service delivery and tax relief.

1.7 Overall research design

During my review of literature on social innovation, I identified there is a lack of mixed method studies to analyse the role of CSOs and collaboration in generating social innovation in the social sector. Therefore, this dissertation followed an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design, in which the overarching study has consisted of three constituent articles. As this research design involves combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in phases – qualitative phase followed by or directed quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), this also reflected the way how the dissertation has been structured as well as how its related articles are organised in this dissertation. Each article has theoretical, empirical, and methodological component that contribute to the main research questions in this dissertation, which is more detail explained in the chapter 5. Article 1 applied qualitative data - this phase provided an important base for developing research questions, questionnaire and the survey design applied in the quantitative phase (in Articles 2 and 3). Article 2 combined qualitative followed by quantitative data (combine data from the interviews and a survey). Article 3 was quantitative research (the scale applied in the article is based on the previous qualitative phase, presented in Articles 1 and 2). Three articles further build on each other to deepen the researched topic and seek the answer to the overall research questions.

As part of the ontological-epidemiological perspective of the dissertation I applied Giddens structuration theory (structure and agency) and it can be observed as an overarching ontological perspective of the whole dissertation that provides a framework to understands various organisations and actors involvement in creation of institutions and social practices, the process of interaction and organisational change. In terms of the theories applied in articles, the dissertation focuses on meso level-sociological theories including institutional theory (new institutionalism and networking) used in Article 2, resource-dependence theory applied in Article 3, while sociology discussion within social innovation and nonstate service provision can be found in all three articles. In addition, since institutional theory in particular lacks perspectives about roles actors in creation new practices and institutional changes (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014, p. 46), this synopsis is further expended by adding the concepts of NGO-isation of civil society, perspective and the third

sector-public services provision. These theories and concepts are further analysed in the separate sections entitled "theoretical and conceptual framework chapter".

1.8 Outline of dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction and contextualisation of the study and research topic, positional statement and motivations for the study and outline research aim, main and sub-research questions, overall research design. Chapter 2 provides the list of terms and their clarification and definitions used throughout this dissertation. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and conceptual framework applied in this dissertation. It presents ontological, epistemological and theoretical assumptions that this dissertation is based on and further provides a more detailed overview of the main theories and concepts applied in the dissertation. Chapter 4 focuses on the methodological elements of this dissertation. It includes an overview of research strategy and applied mixed methods research, sampling of participants, the data collection procedure, and reflections on relevant ethical considerations. Chapter 5 presents results in form of a summary of each of three articles. This chapter elaborates the research findings and further reflects on the methodological, theoretical, and practical implications of the articles regarding answering the research questions. Chapter 6 consists of a discussion and elaborates the findings of this dissertation in terms of their theoretical, empirical and methodological contribution and implications. In addition, the dissertation contains additional information included in appendices as follows: *Appendix A* – participation invitation letter; *Appendix B* – consent form; *Appendix C* and *Appendix D* – interview guides, *Appendix E* – NSD evaluation; *Appendix F* – survey instrument and *Appendix G* – three PhD's related articles.

2 Clarification of key terms

This dissertation employs several important terms and concepts. To improve understanding, the following sections operationalise and specify some of the most important elements that will be used in the rest of the dissertation, including terms such as CSOs, NGOs, international aid donors, collaboration and publicnon-public partnership. The more crucial concepts, such as social innovation, will be elaborated on separately in the theoretical and conceptual framework chapter.

2.1 Civil society organisations (CSOs)

The concept of civil society and CSOs gained prominence during the eighties and nineties in the political and economic discourse to explain non-state actions against authoritarian regimes and support the socioeconomic, democratic and political transition from communism to social-democratic regimes that took place in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Latin America (Burnell & Calvert, 2004; Gaberman et al., 2019; May, 2007; Meyer et al., 2020; Salamon et al., 1999). The involvement of CSOs in the sustainable development field started to become widely promoted during the 1990s' globalisation, when neo-liberal economic policies and 'good governance' principles become a core element in the aid development field (Santiso, 2001). Good governance focuses on making a closer connection between the state, economy and citizens' engagement through civil society, not only in sustainable development, but also in community building, services provision and empowerment strategies (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015). Their relevance has continued with the global development agenda – the UN Millennium Development Goals and nationalbased actions to strengthen sustainable development (Kumar et al., 2016; UNRISD, 2016).

The role of CSOs over the years has been recognised in so-called highincome and low- and middle-income countries. Although there is historically a long tradition of civil society's role in the provision of services in many European countries, CSOs have gained prominence in the last two decades in social care and health policy and practice due to trends in social welfare to diversify service providers, initiate cross-sector partnerships, and increase civic engagement and innovation to reduce the state for social issues (Rees & Mullins,

2017; Martinelli, 2017; Rey-García et al., 2016). In low- and middle-income countries, CSOs are more deliberate substitutions for governments, as the public sector fails to provide sufficient social assistance in times of crisis and unexpected events (Anheier, 2005, p. 10; The World Bank, 2007). At the local, national or international levels, they become central in addressing socio-political-democratic agendas, public policies, welfare reforms and international systems of governance (Anheier, 2005; Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al., 2013; Gaberman et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2020).

A key point that is important for this dissertation is that civil society development in Central and Eastern European countries, which had no local embeddedness for Western-style project-oriented CSOs before communism collapse, differs from Western societies and their prevalent view of civil society based primarily on social origin theory (Meyer et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2020). In fact, with a legacy of totalitarian regimes and turbulent historical political and socioeconomic transitions, civil society and CSOs in Central and Eastern Europe established new democratic values supported by international aid/development agencies and foreign donors that became important institutional actors, especially in the Western Balkans region (Deacon et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2020).

CSOs can be seen as a growing phenomenon that can be analysed from different levels. For this dissertation, the concept of CSOs follows Salamon and Anheier's (1998, p. 216) definition, which refers to CSOs as private, not-forprofit, self-governing, institutionalised organisations with voluntary participation. In other words, CSOs exist in 'the wide array of nongovernmental and not-for-profit organisations (community groups, NGOs, labour unions, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations and foundations) that have a presence in public life and express the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations' (The World Bank, 2007, p. 1).

The concept of civil society has a much more complex meaning and can be defined as 'the sum of institutions, organisations, and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests' (Anheier, 2005, p. 9). This definition places civil society as the self-organising capacity of society with a wide range of interests and not-for-profit intentions distinct from the state, the family and the market (private business sector), even though these boundaries are often blurred

since they are increasingly involved in social welfare, healthcare, community development, education, international relations and the environment (Anheier, 2005, pp. 8–9).

2.2 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

The term CSO is often used interchangeably in the existing literature with NGOs (Lewis, 2010; Salamon et al., 1999). However, NGOs are contested terms; in many countries, NGOs refer to themselves as CSOs because they are an integral part of the wider civil society. They have common goals, missions or organisational forms, but are more closely associated with achieving donors' agendas, created by a variety of multilateral and bilateral donor interventions (Banks et al., 2015; Mohanty, 2002; Willetts, 2006). As Salamon et al. (1999) explained, these variations in terms are the result of not only the different focuses of the same social reality, but also the cultural and historical backgrounds of those organisations, as well as with their scope, structure and role they play in different countries. Fowler and Biekart (2013) explained these overlapping understandings of CSOs and NGOs further. Accordingly, civil society as a concept has not gained much traction in Western Europe and the US, where the terminology of 'nonprofits', volunteerism and a 'Third Sector' continues to dominate, while civil society tends to relate more to NGOs, typically associated with aid and foreign development donors' related agendas in less developed or transitional countries (Fowler & Biekart, 2013). Although NGOs come from different backgrounds and historical circumstances, they may be registered as organisations nationally and active in the country as a substitute for democracy, but also active at an international stage as international NGOs committed to humanitarian or development aid (Holmén & Jirström, 2009, p. 432). Their organisational model is recognised by the UN as their active role in international processes and formalised through Article 71 of the UN Charter (Lewis, 2010, p. 1059; Willetts, 2006). NGOs can range from small to large, formal to informal, use either professional employees or volunteers, and there are a variety of activities they pursue, such as democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights advocacy, environmental activism, policy analysis and research (Lewis, 2010, pp. 1057–1058). In this dissertation, NGOs refer to local civil society non-profit types of organisations with social missions that are Western in origin and managed by

local professionals financed from various donors and multilateral agencies, although they might receive funding from the government sector (Holmén & Jirström, 2009, p. 432; Lewis, 2010, pp. 1057–1058). However, in three articles in this dissertation, both the terms CSOs and NGOs have been used interchangeably to describe the same types of organisations. The reason is twofold: First, scholars and practitioners have used both terms synonymously to describe the same types of organisations in Bosnia. Second, part of the publishing strategy of PhD-related articles was to follow the term that was more prevalent in the target journals, based on their scope, geographical coverage and readership.

2.3 International/foreign aid donors

The international donors and their funding have an important part in this dissertation as well as in all three articles. Therefore, it is necessary to provide some further clarification on their definition and position in the general development practice. International or foreign donor organisations in this dissertation refer to various foreign aid international organisations. There are, for example, multilateral development organisations funded by several governments (e.g. the UN, UNICEF, the EU) as well as bilateral development organisations funded by home governments (e.g. Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation or United States Agency for International Development). These organisations work as an agency or a non-profit to address issues and implement policies or programmes in low- and middle-income countries (OECD, 2015). Further, international donors consist of foundations (corporate, religious, or nonprofit) or international non-governmental organisations (e.g. Save the Children) that obtain funding through their home governments or other means, such as philanthropy, crowdfunding, grant-making, or businesses, to implement their programs in low- and middle-income countries. According to AbouAssi (2014), by defining funding priorities, international aid donors help recipient countries shape national policies and impose donor agendas, but they also play a crucial role in establishing a civil society sector which become their strategic partners for policy implementation and program development.

In addition to implement programmes, saving lives and providing resources to those in need of them, various political and economic goals drive donor governments to be active in the field of aid giving. Political aims,

stimulation of exports, the promotion of national security and geopolitical interests may have significant implications for the redistribution of foreign funding and humanitarian aid, although this is not always obvious (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012; Hammond, 2017; Seo, 2017; Volberg, 2006). However, it is important to note that there exists a serious critical discourse towards the role of international donors, especially their engagement in the field of international development. The main weaknesses can be seen in short-term funding projects, so-called projectisation, planned on an ad-hoc basis without meeting the real needs of society, but the focus is more on achieving donor objectives, while the longer-term impact on meso and macro levels remains questionable (de Zeeuw, 2005). Furthermore, some criticisms have related to donor-led approaches marked by unrealistic programme expectations which are generally based on principles of the Western governance model and are often unsuitable for fragile and unstable environments (AbouAssi, 2010; Deacon & Stubbs, 1998). Often foreign operation in a context affected by war, climate changes or natural disasters produces weak coordination, especially amongst bigger and smaller aid and development organisations, which results in overlapping or duplication (OECD, 2012; Rasidagic, 2013; Winters & Martinez, 2015). Further, foreign donors often impose a so-called "patron-client relationship" in the development settings (Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2009), by creating an unfavourable environment in which local CSOs benefit from donor support but are disembedded from the local context, which can further harm CSO cooperation with government actors who may negatively view the relationship between local CSOs and international donors.

2.4 Collaboration

The term collaboration represents an important aspect of this dissertation, and it has been discussed in particular in Articles 1 and 2. Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate further on this concept. Collaboration in international development has been specifically promoted by the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals and international development interventions over the past decade; collaboration with public, private and civil society actors has been perceived as a way to increase the effectiveness of aid and deliver better

interventions for lower- and middle-income countries' citizens (Kumar et al., 2016; United Nations, 2015).

Accordingly, collaboration in the context of international development takes many forms and involves many levels. Some modalities include *donor-civil society-government partnerships* (AbouAssi et al., 2016; Banks et al., 2015; O'Brien & Evans, 2017); *collaborative networks,* which develop between multiple actors or individual types of organisations (Han & Kang, 2021); and *complementary collaborations,* which occur when northern CSOs provide funding, knowledge and build capacities of southern CSOs (van Wessel et al., 2021). Other forms that have been also promoted include *multi-stakeholder collaboration* – a network of stakeholders from business, civil society, government or supernational institutions state formed to address problems that affect everyone and are too complex for them to tackle individually (Roloff, 2007, p. 3) – and *cross-sector collaboration* in which organisations across public, state, third or industry sectors work jointly towards a mutual benefit while forming a cross-sector partnership (Selsky & Parker, 2010; Yan et al., 2018). In international development, international donors play an important role in inducing and supporting various forms of collaboration and partnerships between involved local actors and stakeholders in aid-receiving countries to increase the efficiency and sustainability of aid-funded interventions (AbouAssi & Bowman, 2018).

In all of these types of collaborations, collaborative partners focus on sharing financial, organisational or technical resources, exchanging expertise and knowledge and developing trusting relationships regarding implementing work upon jointly agreed objectives (Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Roloff, 2007; van Wessel et al., 2021). There is a widely accepted notion that working together creates the best solutions and resolves many social problems; therefore, organisations can choose to voluntarily engage in these collaborative relationships or they can be pressured by others to do so (AbouAssi, 2014; Islam, 2016). Although many definitions have been used in the existing literature to describe the term collaboration, this dissertation uses the definition from Yan et al. (2018), who described collaboration as the process of pooling or transferring resources, information, skills, knowledge or values between multiple organisations (participants) by strengthening their partnerships, cooperation and alliances.

On the contrary, inter-sectoral or interorganisational collaboration can lead to challenges due to organisational and environmental level factors of dependent partners (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). Some of those challenges include different organisational practices, management styles, diverse mandates and goals, financial powers and political intentions of collaborative partners, lack of trust or often funding and programme shifts, which are attributed to the international development field (AbouAssi et al., 2016; Babiak & Thibault, 2009l; O'Brien & Evans, 2017; Osborne et al., 2020). Among its possible negative effects are the loss of organisational autonomy, the asymmetry of power relationships, the consumption of time and efforts, the increase of transaction costs and the increase of conflicts and frustration among partners, which can lead to the failure of collaborative interactions among partners (AbouAssi et al., 2020; AbouAssi & Bowman, 2018; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; O'Brien & Evans, 2017).

2.5 The partnership between international donors- CSOs/NGOs-state

As the literature above has already shown, partnership as a form of collaboration between various actors has an important aspect in the field of international development. As partnership presents an important position in this dissertation, it is necessary to further explain it. The concept of partnership started to evolve in international development during the 1990s with the increase of globalisation and good governance that become core elements in the aid development field (Santiso, 2001) and they were further supported by various international policy agendas[4]. In fact, donors have a vital position in the recipient country. Since they bring funding resources, they usually achieve intensive and significant collaboration with the government as well as local CSOs, helping them to shape national policies and impose donor agendas by defining the funding priorities (AbouAssi, 2014).

A partnership has been highlighted through the combined efforts and participation of all actors, including international donor organisations, governments, civil society organisations and businesses, in support of the implementation of United Nations Millennium Development Goals and United

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[4] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action present important events in the field of international development since they were an attempt to address crucial aspects of relations between donors and recipients in the development process. This includes, among other things, ownership for achieving development goals, the local needs of the recipient, establishing better monitoring of the donor system, more extensive participation and inclusive partnerships and greater responsibility in the development process (OECD, 2008).

Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). Substantial progress has been achieved by mobilising resources and through the inclusion of various actors to work together on addressing a range of global issues and common goals, ranging from a reduction in extreme poverty to the provision of universal primary education (Kumar et al., 2016). International donors develop a collaborative partnership with governments to pursue necessary institutional reforms or rebuild the public administration, but also with local CSOs/NGOs, as their strategic programmes are often implemented through non-governmental organisations. According to AbouAssi (2014), local CSOs/NGOs that have formed a close bond with the international donors are in a situation to be more actively engaged in the public policy process and developing partnerships with government authorities. Crosssector partnership between state and civil society spurred by international donors may also increases the democratisation process, where CSOs may play an important role in underpinning the stability of the democratic system (Burnell & Calvert, 2004), as well as advances the efficiency and sustainability of international funded projects and interventions (AbouAssi & Bowman, 2018).

Partnership demands from partner actors not only openness for the collaboration but also specific organisational capacities and to meet the structural features. CSOs/NGOs that have generated more awareness towards the importance of their human resources, leadership, organisational and technology capabilities tend to develop more broad partnerships with international aid organisations and actively implement projects that have a particular focus on collaboration with other organisations (AbouAssi, Makhlouf, & Whalen, 2016; Islam, 2016). In practice, international donors have predefined objectives and expectations for the funding support project and programmes to ensure that funds will be adequately directed and produce predetermined values and benefits for the programmatic area. Local CSOs/NGOs that are sub-contractors to international donors should prove to have human, administrative and technical capacities to implement projects and programmes effectively and achieve predefined objectives (Sampson, 2012).

Important to realise that CSOs/NGOs are part of a larger institutional context, and a recent study (AbouAssi et al., 2020) found that sometimes organisations do not necessarily pursue partnerships as a strategic move. Rather, they align with their institutional legitimacy and form partnerships with each other based on complementary issues, ages and scope, especially in unstable

contexts (AbouAssi et al., 2020). Furthermore, since a variety of donors in the international development have different interests, goals, expectations, style of work, and since local CSOs/NGOs predominately rely on foreign aid, such a situation can impose various power disbalance, a strong financial dependency or constraints in the partnership (Islam, 2016). NGOs may often make a significant compromise by adjusting their missions and field of work through the donor funding policies and their expectations. As a result, CSOs/NGOs become active in different, often unconnected fields, which, in the long term, may cause domestic actors to start to raise questions and dilemmas regarding CSOs/NGOs' accountability, the acceptance of government actors and particularly the sustainability of the projects they implement (Eade, 2007; Islam, 2016; Sampson, 2012).

3 A theoretical and conceptual framework of the dissertation

The following chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual perspectives that are relevant to and applied in this doctoral dissertation. The theoretical concept of social innovation from a sociological perspective and non-state service provision, applied across all three articles to understand the drivers, mechanisms, processes and challenges of CSOs' involvement in the development of social innovation, have evolved in the field of social services in Bosnia. Furthermore, considering the research question and the research gaps identified in the section 1, where the central focus is on understanding the collaborative perspective and identifying how multiple actor's environment affect local CSOs in generating social innovation, I applied two meso-level perspectives: institutional theory (new institutionalism and institutional networking) presented in Article 2 and resource dependency theory presented in Article 3. New institutionalism and institutional networking are part of organisational theory and explain organisations' processes and behaviours by looking at how they conform to institutional pressures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), while resource-dependence theory describes how organisations interact with their environments and how these environments influence their behaviour (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These theories in the dissertation framed the understanding of how the relationships and interaction between CSOs and other actors and their structural factors enable and limit their ability to engage in social innovation and social service provision within the Bosnian social sector. However, institutional theory and resource dependency theory do not capture well enough aspects of CSOs' service provision role in a fragile social sector and their position in creating new practices and institutional change with the dominance of multiple actors. Therefore, I found it necessary to extend the existing theoretical frameworks mentioned above and, in this synopsis, apply two additional concepts. These are concepts of NGO-isation and third sector-public services provision. I combined these theoretical and analytical concepts in this dissertation due to the specific given context and complexity of the collaborative aspect of social innovation. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical and conceptual framework applied in the dissertation.

Figure 1

An Overview of Applied Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives in the
Dissertation
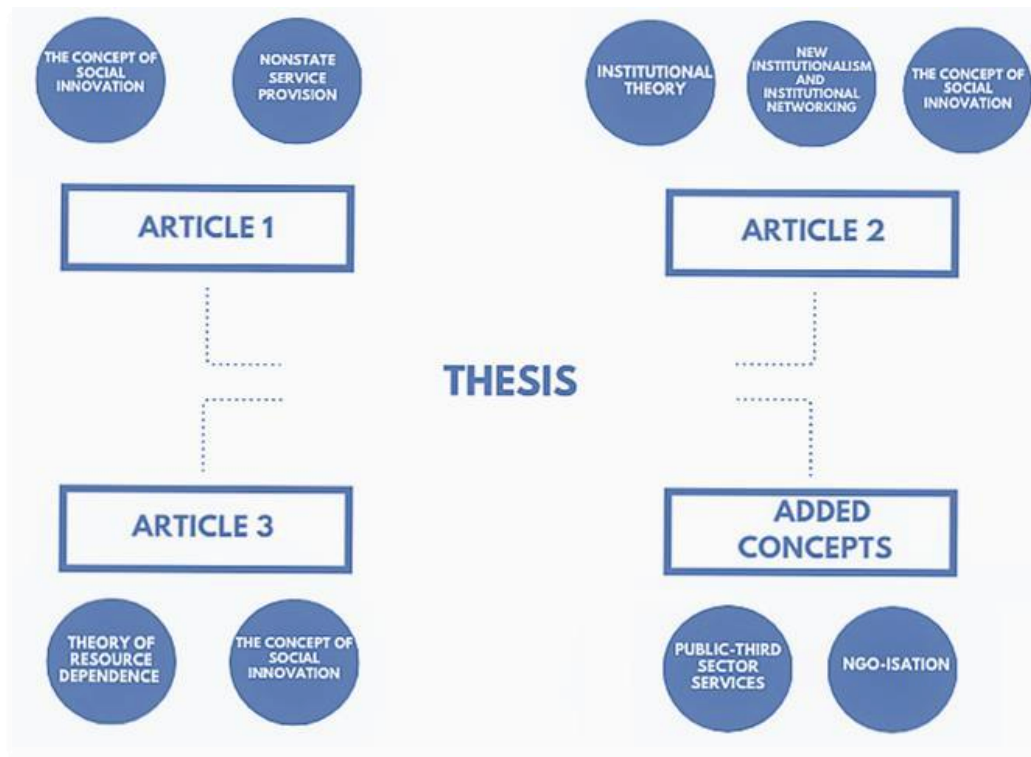
3.1 Social innovation

It is vital to describe the development of the concept and phenomenon of social innovation in the literature before examining operationalising social innovation from a collaborative perspective that forms the theoretical foundation of this dissertation, which is outlined in the subordinate subsection.

3.1.1 The origin of social innovation in the literature

Social innovation is a multidisciplinary concept that produces interpretive challenges and a long-standing debate among scholars about its definition, conceptualisation and theoretical understanding (Ayob et al., 2016; Baglioni & Sinclair, 2018; Howaldt et al., 2021). Therefore, I briefly review a few conceptual explanations and the way social innovation has been interpreted in the literature prior to providing a definition that is more in line with this dissertation in the

subordinate subsection that deals with collaboration. To do so, it is necessary to start by explaining the terms 'innovation' and 'social'.

Despite innovation's long-standing history of development as a concept (Godin & Schubert, 2021), the modern day definition derives from the work of economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) which provides the foundation for developing the concept of innovation (Sobel & Clemens, 2020). In particular, Schumpeter saw the role of entrepreneurs as disruptive innovators who transform production and increase economic development in the capitalist economy by taking advantage of an invention and utilising a source of supply in a new way to disrupt traditional actions (cited in Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010, p. 9). Over the years, different types of innovation have evolved in the literature, mostly concerning technology or market innovation, with two prevalent ways of understanding it (Fuglsang, 2010; Rønning & Knutagård, 2015). The first way refers to radical or disruptive innovation, which describes coming up with a new process, product, service, model or policy intentionally, or by chance, that brings significant changes and transformations to the market or industry (Fuglsang, 2010; Rønning & Knutagård, 2015). The second approach supports more incremental innovation, which can be seen as small-step innovation or the continuous improvement of existing services or products, which provides more value and gradually leads to incremental change or innovation (Fuglsang, 2010; Fuglsang & Sörensen, 2011; Rønning & Knutagård, 2015).

The term 'social' in social innovation has explanative difficulties. Some sociological perspectives suggest that social refers to the fact that all new services, processes and products influence people's lives, produce social effects by meeting social needs (e.g. social care, health, education and housing) or increase social participation by creating new relations (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). According to Mulgan (2019), *social* refers to organisations that develop and diffuse social innovation whose main determination of work is socially oriented. Baglioni and Sinclair (2018) provided a broader explanation, describing it as a social orientation with a primary motivation to deal with social issues, rather than profit or market; as a response to chronically neglected needs in society that are filed to be met by a government or a market; and as novel or borrowed solutions that are adapted to existing problems that change traditional social relations by creating new collaborative relationships.

Ayob et al. (2016) claimed that the social innovation concept can be traced back to Gabriel Tarde's work relating to the social process leading to innovation and that the first article to mention social innovation was written by Hoggan in 1909. Though social innovation first emerged as a conceptual term in social science in the twentieth century (Godin & Schubert, 2021, p. 27), bibliometric analysis conducted by Ayob et al. (2016) revealed that early signs of contestation of this concept in the literature appeared in the early eighties and has developed to the present. However, the most significant increase in the usage of this concept in the literature started after 2008 when economic crises occurred globally and increased the need to improve social services and find new approaches by government, business, civic and the philanthropic sector to address growing societal issues (Ayob et al., 2016).

The difficulty conceptualising social innovation stems from the fact that it has been studied by scholars from various disciplines using cases with varying welfare backgrounds, but also because of differences between included actors, governance infrastructures and types of drivers for social innovation (Howaldt et al., 2021, p. 5). However, over the years, the literature has framed two general ways of understanding social innovation (Montgomery & Mazzei, 2021). The first relates to the process and product of innovation, with the entrepreneur's potential for addressing social issues with a strong market-economic oriented dimension (The Young Foundation, 2012; Mulgan, 2019; Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). The second focuses more on social change and transformation, with locally contextual collective empowerment potentials and a transformative approach in reaction to reducing social exclusion, which is more in light of this dissertation (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019; Moulaert et al., 2013; Howaldt et al., 2016; Montgomery & Mazzei, 2021). Nevertheless, some scholars agree that in recent years, these divided aspects of understanding social innovation have become relatively blurred (Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2017; Holtgrewe & Millard, 2018).

Despite the multiple interpretations of social innovation, several common features of social innovation have emerged in the literature: its social nature (i.e. the innovation meets the needs of disadvantaged groups more effectively than existing solutions); its novelty (e.g. services, models, products or processes); and the adaptation, diffusion and transformation of social relations in the form of new principles of collective action, governance and participation (Anheier et al., 2014; Caulier-Grice et al., 2010; Moulaert et al., 2013; Mulgan, 2019; Oosterlynck et al., 2020). According to Krlev et al. (2019), social innovation is usually the result of a

collaboration between diverse actors from civil society, the market and the government; it is mostly triggered by external factors of the engaged actors, created often in small steps and developed over time, making it hard to predict and control (Krlev et al., 2019; Krlev et al., 2020). As a result of social innovation, we can advance the social purpose by changing social practices and shifting the way we think about and act upon various social problems (Krlev et al., 2020).

Moulaert et al. (2013) showed that social innovation can emerge in different geographical and contextual settings. They described it as a process of joint action between the local grassroots organisation and various community actors to identify problems and develop co-creative solutions based on three dimensions: satisfaction of basic needs, creating new forms of social relations and empowerment of communities through collective actions and political mobilisations (Montgomery & Mazzei, 2021, p. 6; Moulaert et al., 2013). A key element in this understanding of social innovation is that it cannot be separated from the socio-cultural and socio-political context in which it emerges, where the role of various actors and stakeholders at the same time requires collective engagement to improve human conditions (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 17).

3.1.2 Collaboration as a framework for social innovation

In light of the research question, it is useful to consider social innovation from a collaborative perspective and clarify the definition used. This dissertation draws on the definition given by Moulaert and Maccallum (2019) that social innovation 'requires attention to changing social relations through creating new forms of collaboration and reconfiguring the institutional forms that have (at best) neglected and (at worst) directly created or exacerbated the needs and problems' (p. 31). Accordingly, social innovation is defined by three interrelated principles:

> 'it meets genuine needs neglected or exacerbated by the state/market apparatus; it creates new forms of eco-social/institutional relations and polities; and it collectively empowers people (especially marginalised people) to act – not only within the existent systems and modes of governance, but also towards transforming them' (Moulaert & Maccallum, 2019, p. 4).

In addition, as this dissertation focuses on the civil society perspective of developing social innovation in the social service field, it is also rooted in Oosterlynck et al.'s (2020) understanding of social innovation. Accordingly, social innovations:

> 'add new actors (for example grassroots initiatives and social entrepreneurs) or redefine the role of existing actors (civil society organisations or local governments), introduce new instruments (for example based on the participation of clients or empowering of citizens) and put forward new goals (such as recognising diversity in social service provision)' (Oosrelynck et al., 2020, p. 8).

The engagement of various actors to alleviate the social problems promoted within social innovation leads to aspects of collaboration and partnership. Drawing on the research of scholars such as Steiner et al. (2021) and Ziegler (2017), the collaborative concept framework seems to be an important element of social innovation because finding solutions that meet social needs is a social process that requires interplay (communication, cooperation, interaction) between different stakeholders and actors. Collaborative efforts provide an opportunity to combine resources and expertise, improve interactions between actors and disciplines and 'strengthen the cooperative potential of a practice already in evidence in many places' (Ziegler, 2017, p. 401).

In this collaborative framework for social innovation, which is centred on New Public Governance principles (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Osborne et al., 2013; Osborne & Brown, 2011; Pestoff, 2012), citizens, civic organisations and public sector organisations collaborate and partner to provide goods and services, thus creating a multiplicity of cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership opportunities. As a result, the collaborative framework emphasises the configuration and development of new practices in the social sector, especially through state-civil society collaboration, by promoting welfare provisional models for co-production, co-creation, public-non-public partnership and greater involvement and participation of service users (Hunter & Ritchie, 2007; Pestoff, 2012; Pestoff et al., 2013; Voorberg et al., 2015). This can be achieved by modifying social relations and blurring the boundaries across two or more sectors (e.g. between state and civil society), resulting in changing their roles and confronting widespread power distribution and traditional institutional

arrangements, which increases the potential for creative and innovative ideas to solve identified problems (Moulaert et al., 2013; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012; Novy et al., 2020). Intersections between actors and sectors also produce the phenomenon known as 'hybridisation', which occurs when organisations in the third sector or civil society, adopt and incorporate arrangements, organisational forms and logic from the state or business sectors to provide products and services (e.g. social enterprise organisations) (Evers, 2020). A variety of social, economic and political dimensions exist that can stimulate hybridity, especially in relation to social enterprises (Pestoff & Hulgård, 2016), although the most common are produced by external resources or as a result of inter-sectoral partnership and networking (Evers, 2020).

3.1.3 Third sector organisations and bottom-up social innovation

In addition to the public and private sectors, researchers have shown that third sector organisations (TSOs) [5] in the form of civil society, not-for-profit, nongovernment and volunteer organisations are the main agents and drivers of social innovation (Anheier et al., 2017; Chew & Lyon, 2012; Rey-García et al., 2016). The third sector involvement in the development of social innovation is in light of the above explanation of the implications of new actors and new forms of social relations in social innovation. Since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, decisionmakers across Europe have advocated for the greater involvement of civic actors as co-producers of social innovation in the social services sector, which has been supported by various social innovation funding schemes, research and policies (European Commission, 2011a; Sabato et al., 2015). Scoppetta et al. (2014) emphasised that this type of organisation and social innovation are interconnected, since 'this is the field where social innovations have their roots, where social innovations develop and, finally, where social innovation can result in social change' (p. 84). Although third sector organisations in the form of social enterprises are strongly connected with social innovation, this dissertation primarily focuses on traditional types of CSOs that, according to Moulton and Eckerd (2012) – with their service provision roles, advocacy, partnerships

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[5] 'Third sector organisations' is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of civic organisations in the form of voluntary and community organisations. They can be registered associations, charities, CSOs, social enterprises or cooperatives, or informal self-help groups and community groups. They are independent from the government or private sectors and have different structures and purposes but are predominately interested in reaching social goals related to public welfare improvement and meeting the needs and improving the wellbeing of vulnerable citizens (Corry, 2010).

intentions – are seen as well-suited actors to provide innovative solutions because they 'place high importance on innovation, even if the innovation construct is difficult to measure' (p. 662).

The traditional view of social innovation is often seen through the macro level (changes in institutional and regulatory reforms) and the meso level (new business models, services, management practices) with top-down patterns, which help to achieve impact, scaling up and replication (Mulgan, 2019; Schröer, 2021). However, social innovation discussion in the literature has also increased the bottom-up perspective that includes service users' or civic actors' participation or development of new professional practice, for example in the social sector, where the bottom-up process is highly promoted (Anheier et al., 2014; Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; Krlev, Anheier & Mildenberger, 2019; Oosterlynck et al., 2020). The bottom-up process in social innovation can be understood as the result of less powerful actors (marginalised citizens, civil society, NGOs, cooperatives, networks of CSOs) taking the lead in identifying local social problems and initiating innovative small-scale ideas, approaches and services to address the issues in a more efficient way than existing solutions (Anheier et al., 2017; Banerjee & Shaban, 2021; Krlev et al., 2019). Their participation and interaction with important stakeholders and their power hierarchies and networks drive potential change at the local, policy and practice levels (Anheier et al., 2017; Banerjee & Shaban, 2021; Krlev et al., 2019; Oosterlynck et al., 2020). However, as confirmed by a group of scholars (Millard et al., 2017), the reality is that interactions between bottom-up and top-down approaches in the development of social innovation occur regularly in practice, which leads to mixed development paths and mechanisms of social innovation, resulting in the transfer, scaling, implementation or integration opportunities of social innovations at both micro and micro levels. As such, it has been important in this dissertation to understand the mechanisms and processes that likely generate social innovation from CSOs through their interactions with top actors in the highly institutionalised but fragmented Bosnian social sector.

3.1.4 Social innovation and collaborative perspective challenges

Despite a generally positive discourse on social innovation, the existing literature has also presented challenges and sceptical views towards social innovation. As all three articles herein discuss potential challenges regarding the collaboration of different partners and actors involved in social innovation, here I mention just a few. Collaborations between civic and public organisations to deliver innovative services can lead to challenges in service innovation due to constraints placed on different partners by organisational structures, policies, legislation and/or power relations (Osborne & Brown, 2013). In addition, the scarcity of leveraging mechanisms for collaborative social innovation and the absence of legal and cultural recognition and institutional or agency obstructions are just some of the potential barriers to social innovation that have been identified in the literature (Mendes et al., 2012). For example, numerous environmental contextual factors, including the uncertainty of funding and a non-existent policy framework, can seriously inhibit social innovation and unrecognised collaborative solutions and efforts (Krlev et al., 2019; Mulgan, 2019; Reynolds et al., 2017). Other factors, such as fixed and temporary funding by external donors, a lack of institutional mechanisms and strategies to support social innovation and weak financial sustainability of initiatives, may also create a situation where organisations become competitors and the tensions among involved actors increase during the implementation of socially innovative projects (Shier & Handy, 2015). Interdependent actors from public and non-public sectors that form a social innovation ecosystem may have different power positions in society, which may affect their relationship, disempower the position of the other partner actor and potentially lead to conflict in the social innovation space (Teasdale et al., 2021). Dowling (2021) further explained that social innovation in the social sector may be perceived as desirable because it favours the development of new tools or models of social protection resulting from collaboration – for example, a mixed welfare, public-private partnership and social impact bonds. As Dowling (2021) explained, the reality is that such approaches are the result of capitalism, which has produced acute care crises and increased inequality in service delivery, leading to negative effects on people's lives.

3.2 Institutional theory – New institutionalism and networking perspective

Article 2 attempts to answer the following questions: how do representatives of civil society, foreign donors and public sector experience public-nonpublic collaboration in the provision of social services in Bosnia and Herzegovina? What are the main demands and pressures that occur in this type of collaboration and how they enable or restrict social innovation in a transitional post-conflict context? Therefore, institutional theory, in particular new institutionalism and networking, provides an insightful theoretical framework for Article 2 regarding understanding the structure and institutional system of fragmented Bosnian social sector field and elements such as environment, legitimacy, and actor's blurring processes across sectors that affect CSOs organisational behaviour towards entering into service provision and social innovation (Bromley & Meyer, 2014; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). New institutionalism or neo-institutionalism is an approach to the study of institutions and organisational behaviour established by sociologist John Meyer (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Meyer and Rowan (1977) elaborated on the rise of institutionalised myths in environmental domains in the form of institutional rules, practices and routines that organisations absorb in order to achieve increased legitimacy, resources, and stability and to boost their survival prospects. At the same time, new-institutionalism concentrates more on a macro-unit analysis within the environmental perspective and as Scott's (2014) concluded, the most significant change that is noticeable in institutional theory over the past decades has to do with the shift in focus from the structure to actors and action. As new perspectives of new institutionalisms emerge over time, it appears that organisations and agencies are more receptive to institutional demands and exert more influence on institutional practices to gain legitimacy and credibility for their work (Baum & Oliver, 1991; Karlsson, 2008), which was also confirmed in the result of this dissertation.

Two important dimensions can be found in the early work of newinstitutional scholars DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (2008): *institutional isomorphisms* (coercive, memetic, and normative isomorphism) and *dimensions of networking*. These two dimensions present the main theoretical framework within Article 2 of this dissertation and are used to explain the

institutional factors that shape CSOs' behaviour and operation in the context in which they work. They are further applied in order to explore delivering social services through the triad relationship between local CSOs, international donors and governments and to analyse the aspect of collaborative opportunities and challenges to develop social innovation in such complex institutional settings (explored in Article 2). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), coercive isomorphism includes formal and informal pressures imposed on organisations externally by other organisations that they depend on and by cultural expectations to promote certain behaviour in the society in which they function. Mimetic isomorphism refers to the tendency of an organisation to copy an action or activity undertaken by another organisation within the same field. Normative isomorphism means that organisations need to act like others in the field because of social and cultural pressure, and professionalisation is seen as a key element. In terms of dimension of networking, an inter-organisational connection with other organisations can contribute to the development of local, national, or international forms of networking that facilitate the transfer of new ideas, practices and influence institutional dynamics (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008; Scott, 2014). There will be a detailed discussion of these theoretical perspectives in the chapter of the dissertation related to Article 2 findings and in the discussion part that is framed more around addressing the research gaps outlined in the introduction section and producing theoretical contribution.

3.3 Resource dependence theory

The resource-dependence theory provides explanations for how organisations interact with other actors by attracting resources and how actors' environments influence their behavior (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), which is used in Article 3 to identify what types of external environment factors do Bosnian CSOs/NGOs consider important to integrate social innovation into the social services they provide. I will therefore briefly describe this theory and its connection with the topic of this dissertation. Resource dependence theory primarily focuses on the influence of external resources on organisations behaviour and further increased the understanding of the relationships between actors in a resource-constrained environment (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Accordingly, an environment consists of an interconnected system of actors, organisations, and institutions, which may result in specific types of factors within the environment affecting organisations

work and operation (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 62–63). Further, although external factors affect organisations, this theory at the same time provides insights for organisations to reduce those external pressures and constraints as a result of dependency position (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). These points lead to possible vital elements of this, which will be briefly discussed below.

As already explained, social innovation is an interdisciplinary phenomenon that often includes the combination of resources, actors, practices (Mulgan, 2019). Interorganisational relations that encourage the mobilisation and integration of social innovations can harness the influence of various environmental factors (Domanski & Christoph, 2018). In the case of civil society organisations, they often rely on other organisations resources (financial and technical) and they enter mutually dependent relationship structures and processes with various donors, institutions, or stakeholders (AbouAssi, 2015). Through interconnection with civil society organisations and sharing their resources, various donor institutions may produce influence and power over CSOs and put them in a vulnerable position (AbouAssi, 2015; Islam, 2016). This also may affect the way how local CSOs structure their operation and work. CSOs' dependencies in not restricted only to international donors and their funding, but also, they become gradually reliant upon resources maid by the public budgets which may affect the level of inclusion of local CSOs in the public policy processes (AbouAssi, 2014). This becomes more apparent when international aid and funding begin to decline or when international donors decide to leave the country (Appe and Pallas, 2018).

Through this dissertation and in all three articles, it has been argued that civil society organisations in Bosnia are particularly vulnerable to donor dependence in service provision. At the same time, various environmental factors of international and domestic actors affect the way how social innovation has been developed in this context, but also in terms of institutionalising CSOs' roles as service providers and patterns of their behaviour regarding innovation.

3.4 The NGO-isation of civil society

Articles, especially Article 2, describe the increasing pressures from local public and international actors on local CSOs to become more professional, bureaucratic, and institutionalised, as well as their role in the transformation process, suggesting that the NGO-isation as a concept needs to be further explored in this dissertation. NGO-isation is the contested concept that has been used in different ways to explain a process of the pressure imposed either by the government on civil society for growing professionalisation, bureaucratisation and institutionalisation or tensions and challenges induced by foreign donor agencies and Western governments towards local CSOs to adapt and implement neoliberal ideas and models in their work (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013). It is a critical approach towards CSOs and refers to their dependence on the state, donors, external actors, society and market, mostly as a result of neoliberal globalisation, but also as a consequence of foreign policy interventions of Western high income countries towards troubled settings (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013). The changes that happened globally in terms of transformations of states, reduction of welfare and economic turbulence, have increased the CSOs' position in the societies to be favoured institutional actors that can deal with every social problem. At the same time, local CSOs are highly dependent on donors and donations, whether from government or other international aid donors. Particularly in low- and middle-income countries, with a post-conflict legacy, they highly rely on the funding of the international aid development, bilateral or multilateral organisations practices (AbouAssi, 2014). Accordingly, critical viewpoints from some scholars see CSOs disconnected from the local context due to their relationship with the international donors, while their high reliance on external funding results in a weak capacity to reshape the public sphere and, apart from implementing neoliberal policies, they produce few tangible effects in the society they operate (Arda & Banerjee, 2019; Yacobi, 2007).

NGO-isation does not occur only as a result of donors' pressures and requirements, but also through regular CSOs interaction and collaboration with public sector professionals, academics, various experts and CSOs involved in various public policy making processes (Ungsuchaval, 2016). As already

explained, the collapse of communism in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe influenced the huge inflow of American and European foundations and foreign donor organisations to these regions during the 1990s to support the spread of liberal democracy in response to post-communist state power through the development of CSOs and civil society sectors (Gaberman et al., 2019). Accordingly, the development of CSOs in such settings differs from the Western high income countries, although there was tendency and expectations from the donors that they should follow the same patterns and operate in the same way as in Western countries as a result of transiting from communism and supporting economic liberalisation (Meyer et al., 2020). Therefore, the multi-factional role of civil society has been particularly highlighted in transitional settings across post-communist states (Meyer et al., 2020). It seemed that civil society in this context emerged with intentions to deal with building state, democratisation, peacebuilding, human rights, corruption reduction and filling the services gap as a result of transnational progressive globalisation ideas, while they 'have been intertwined in multidimensional partnerships, including international organisations, international NGOs, international financial institutions, foreign governments as well as national and multilateral development agencies' (BojicicDzelilovic et al., 2013, p. 1). It consequently also influenced the way how NGOisation has been evolved in such settings. A common tendency to critically view CSOs in such contexts has been primarily shaped by a dominant NGO-isation perspective, by seeing them as non-participatory weak organisations, highly reliant on Western donors' funding that produces projectisation of their interventions, self-determined to meet and satisfy only the needs of the donors and losing of the sight the needs of society and vulnerable groups (Campbell et al., 2019; Deacon & Stubbs, 1998; Fagan et al., 2012).

On the other hand, over the years, some authors have sought to move beyond the dominant-negative orientation of NGO-isation as an unfavourable process and question whether such picture reflects fairly the real civil society significance and engagement in the post-communist countries. By exploring several case studies of social movements and civil activism in Central and Eastern Europe, Jacobsson and Saxonberg (2013) showed that local CSOs, by adapting to the neoliberal discourse, significantly mobilised various resources and implemented different strategies in less structured forms and, through networking, successfully addressed various social problems in the complex

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political systems, by not being only oriented to satisfy foreign donors' needs and expectations. A positive example of civic actions being taken from involvement to influence can be seen in the case of women's organisations, which have worked hard in recent years to raise public awareness about the issue of domestic violence, implementing steering actions to bring about public discourse on the matter, rather than allowing it to remain in the private sphere (Srivastava & Austin, 2016). They have undertaken numerous activities, movements, education and media campaigns to achieve the successful inclusion of the issue of domestic violence in the broader public sphere, which shows the possibility of local CSOs becoming recognised within public discourse through the application of various forms of interaction, cross-public dialogue and communication (Srivastava & Austin, 2016). This example also demonstrates the possibility of CSOs to influence the public sphere, which also increases the need to explore the transformative capacities of CSOs, beyond the highly critical NGO-isation process.

3.5 The third sector-public services provision

In the following paragraphs, I present the concept of social services provided by third sector organisations through interactions with the public sector that is used in all three articles. This dissertation adopts the definition of social services as a set of services provided to support 'the care, protection and inclusion of children, and minors, older people, people with mental of physical disabilities, substance abusers, and other vulnerable groups (minorities, immigrants, etc.)' (Martinelli, 2017, p. 13). According to the European Commission (2006, p. 4), social services may be seen in a broader way and often entail two additional components: social protection schemes that cover the main social risks (e.g. health and unemployment) and personal social services that assist individuals in times of difficulty and crisis, which have a more preventive and social inclusion assistance role. Although social services have a predominant *public character* (Martinelli, 2017, p. 13), they can be provided by public, private or third sector organisations (civic, volunteer, non-profit organisations), while most social care services are provided informally and unpaid by family, individuals and volunteers (European Commission, 2006; Martinelli, 2017).

In this project, the focus is on social service CSOs/NGOs and the idea that non-state actors are becoming involved in public social services as a result of weak institutions and foreign neoliberal interventions in social policy, but this perspective also arises in other Western and Eastern European countries due to changes in welfare states, economic models or political regimes and regulations. For example, the increased use of a contract between the government and nonprofit organisations in social services provision in the United Kingdom started under Margaret Thatcher's regime (Osborne & McLaughlin, 2004). At the same time, there has been a long history of religious-based volunteer sector provision in the form of subsidiaries of social services, as in Germany, which highlighted government–third sector partnership (Salamon & Anheier, 1998). By contrast, in Central and Eastern European countries, the collapse of communism and changes in political regimes and economic models after 1989 influenced the growth of civil society sectors, a contingent phenomenon (Anheier & Seibel, 1998). However, the government–third sector relationship in the delivery of social services in Europe has attracted more research interest since 2008, when a global crisis hit the public sector across Europe and resulted in the severe decline of public budgets for social welfare and human services, as was the case in Italy, Spain, Central and Eastern Europe countries, or in respect of austerity measures imposed in the United Kingdom (González-Portillo et al., 2015; Martinelli, 2012).

The relationship between the government and third sector in the social services field is also necessary to connect with historical trends of new public management (NPM) logic in public administration and the increasing of volunteer sector-related theories in the US in the late eighties and during the nineties due to the demand to improve governmental performances and budgetary constraints (Powell & Clemens, 1998; Salamon, 1997). The concept of 'third party government' was established in American welfare, where the government introduces new forms of grants (i.e. project grants) that become available to new actors (i.e. non-profit organisations) for carrying out public activities (Salamon, 1997, pp. 20–41). These changes, where three-sector society prevails (government, for-profit and non-profit), influenced scholars to develop three classical 'failures theories' of the non-profit sector and government-non-profit partnership relations in modern welfare states (Hansmann, 1987; Weisbrod, 1975, cited in Kingma, 2003; Salamon, 1997). These theories have become the

prevailing theories that explain the failure of the market and government sectors to provide necessary services and meet the citizens' and communities' demands, which created the opportunity for non-profit organisations to fill the gap by overtaking the provisional role, by which they become either an important substitute or a crucial partner actor in the provision of public services. The abovementioned processes of civic actors' engagement in the provision of social services and their interactions with the state have become a natural pathway for public management in Western societies. However, over the years, NPM principles and changes in the welfare system have also had a clear impact on low- and middle-income countries and have become the guiding lights for public management and the delivery of public policies and services in such countries (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2015; Elias, 2006). The way social services are planned, financed and delivered today has become strongly reshaped by the neoliberal approach, followed by forms of services privatisation, outsourcing to other actors (private or third sector), marketisation and the development of a mixwelfare model (Wollmann, 2018; Martinelli, 2017; Dowling, 2021).

4 Methodology

This chapter is divided into three sections: in the first part I described the ontological/epistemological and methodological starting point for this dissertation; the second part consists of methodological choses and reflections, and the third part explains ethical considerations. As mixed methods research design and methodology have been applied in dissertation, I will outline descriptions of applied mixed methods design, sampling framework, methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, survey instrument design and the integration process that were employed in this study. Additionally, ethical considerations will be discussed at the end of this section.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

A researcher when conducting research has specific concerns about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). Ontology is associated with a key concern of the nature of social reality, as the aspects of reality serve to attain the status of knowledge (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). Saberwal (1996) indicates that the nature of reality has numerous dimensions and can be constructed through physical reality, cultural reality, the scale and abstraction of reality. Even though any phenomenon that exists in the world can be highly subjectively perceived, researcher activities are more aimed at attempting to explore reality in an objective manner (Saberwal, 1996). Expressed in other words, subjective and objective systems of belief and the perception of social reality are essential ontological positions that have been developed through the history of philosophy of social science (Delanty & Strydom, 2003).

On the contrary, epistemology can be understood as a philosophical understanding of the concept of human knowledge. As indicated in the literature, the nature of knowledge is a fundamental component of epistemology and can be described as the theory of knowledge that seeks to question origin, types, limits, possibilities, structure and the truth of knowledge (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). In this dissertation, the underlying ontological and epistemological perspectives have been determined by pragmatism, by the third (mixed methods) paradigm and agency/structure debate emerged by Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, which I elaborate further below.

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition which began in the United States in the 1870s and was founded by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) (Weaver, 2018). The principal characteristic of pragmatism underlying Peirce's concept of the pragmatic "maxim" explains the need to connect thought and action through a practical consideration, as object or conception could be recognised through its practical consequences (Weaver, 2018). Historically, the development of pragmatism has included a variety of doctrines and perspectives, but, in general, it could be divided into the early years of its development, so-called "classical pragmatists and later development better known as "neopragmatism" (Legg & Hookway, 2021). John Dewey (1859–1952) was a classical pragmatist who further developed pragmatism and he instrumentalised pragmatism towards the social and political field (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). He adopted the standpoint that social inquiry is inherent with practice, which, in other words, means that social scientists, to discover the facts, need to embody themselves within the given context of a social situation that is researched (Delanty & Strydom, 2003, pp. 281–282). Since the 1970s, philosophers such as Richard Rorty (1931-2007) and Hilary Putnam (1926 - 2016) became engaged in the development of so-called neopragmatism and they grasped the meaning of language usage of and the notion of truth in a way that 'we should refrain from taking the term "true" to denote a successful correspondence between a proposition and a single, fixed, absolute reality' (Taylor, 2012, p. 3). Both philosophers were engaged in rethinking the notion of the truth and criticised previous philosophical attempts of explaining the way of discovering a singular truth (Taylor, 2012).

Pragmatism sees reality as an integral part of the agency acting within it (Legg & Hookway, 2021). It especially emphasises the development of knowledge and the notion of truth through abduction which develops in different forms and situations and in particular through 'the cooperative search for truth in the scientific community by means of processes of interpretation and discussion or argumentation, and more broadly through the creative collective overcoming of action problems' (Delanty & Strydom, 2003, p. 278). The pragmatists took a position by refusing the idea that the social world and search for the truth could be examined by only a single scientific method (Weaver, 2018). Pragmatism proposes researchers investigate the world beyond a strict limitation introduced by postpositivism and constructivism and not restrict themselves with a specific

method or technic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006). At the same time, as pragmatism understands reality as an integral part of the human agency acting within it and interacting with the social environment in multiple ways (Legg & Hookway, 2021), the insights from pragmatism and its view of the action and social structures can have implications for the discourse on agency and structure as an important component of structuration theory, which will be further discussed below as an additional important ontological and epistemological stance of this dissertation.

Today, pragmatism is considered the primary philosophy of mixed methods research due to the fact that there are multiple realities which knowledge can be understood only by integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Feilzer, 2010). The relevance of philosophical pragmatism to mixed methods research can be found also in definition of mixed methods presented by Johnson et al. (2007, p. 32) as an 'approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints, always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research/'. At the same time, Jennifer Greene (cited in Johnson et al., 2007, p. 32) argued that mixed methods investigates 'the social world that ideally involves more than one methodological tradition and thus more the one way of knowing, along with more than one kind of technique for gathering, analyzing, and representing human phenomena, all for the purpose of better understanding.' As Creswell and Plano Clark (2006) and Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) explained, mixed-method research can be seen as a third research paradigm that brings the most comprehensive research evidence. Under those circumstances, mixed methods research tackles qualitative and quantitative division and socalled "paradigm wars" between positivism and interpretivism (Feilzer, 2010).

Employing pragmatism as a research paradigm in this dissertation can be easily justified, through several features that can explain the close link between pragmatism and mixed-method research. Pragmatism, observed as an alternative paradigm, together with mixed-method research, is seen as a third paradigm that provides philosophical justification (pragmatic standards or values), logic (the combination of ideas and methods to answer a research question), a variety of theories that can be embedded by mixed-method researchers and validation of the integration and triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 44). Due to the complexity of the topic of social innovation and

collaborative perspective and the specificity of the research context (Bosnia), it seemed that one source of data may be insufficient to provide the contextual understanding and uncover the relationships and process of the researched phenomenon. Further rationale assumption for using pragmatism in this dissertation relies on the fact that employing both qualitative and quantitative methods can provide a more comprehensive overview of the research area, answer different research questions, improve the integrity of the findings and generate a diversity of views by combining the perspectives of the participants (Bryman, 2006). Moreover, combining the two approaches may benefit the instrument development for generating better questionnaires and survey items (Bryman, 2006). Simultaneously, pragmatism in this dissertation is also present in the application of a mixed methods research design, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis that considers the individual and collective construction of reality through semi-structured interviews and the survey. However, as different research methods are employed within the mixed research, it can potentially lead to "heterogeneous results" and it is necessary to be conducted and interpreted cautiously (Feilzer, 2010, p.13; Greene, 2007) by which such concerns and practical implications in relation to this dissertation are further discussed under the "mixed method research" subsection.

4.2 Structuration theory (Structure and Agency perspective)

The Structure and Agency perspective presents one of the key concepts in sociology introduced by Anthony Giddens and from an ontological and epistemological perspective, addresses important elements of the macro and micro levels of analysis through the notion of structure and action in framing human behaviour (Giddens, 1984; Lamsal, 2012; Stones, 2015). Because Giddens's work has been also applied in organisational research, it is important to realise that structuration theory is viewed through three perspectives: as a general framework of ontological and epistemological features that deals with organisational dynamics related to replication and change; as an analytical prism in studies of a specific organisational phenomenon or as an approach for organisational analysis (Albano et al., 2010). Accordingly, the intention here is not to operationalise Giddens' theory but use it as a part of the ontologicalepistemological perspective of this dissertation in order to understand

agencies' opportunities, challenges and enabling factors for relationship with structure by exploring a specific organisational phenomenon such as social innovation through a prism of agency-structure relationship.

Although the dimension of human agency has different conceptualise interpretations in social science, it has been usually addressed as individual and collective human behaviour and the way of acts (Stones, 2015). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 970) define agency as 'the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal relational context of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations' (p. 970). By contrast, structure characterises a set of rules (that limit) and resources (that induce) human actions (agents) and their decisions (Giddens, 1984, p. 25).

Structuration theory, understands action as 'a continuous process, a flow, in which the reflexive monitoring which the individual maintains is fundamental to the control of the body that actors ordinarily sustain throughout their day-today lives' (Giddens, 1984, p. 9). He further explains that action 'depends upon the capability of the individual to "make a difference" to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events' (Giddens, 1984, p.14). Giddens explicitly divided structures in a social system that induces actions into three specific elements: signification, domination and legitimation (Giddens, 1984). From this point of view, *signification* is connected with symbolic order and meaning, which refers to agents' interaction with each other by using interpretative schemes (semantic codes, interpretive schemes and discursive practices). *Domination* is related to enable actors (political and economic institutions) to apply power to influence and affect each other and the allocation of authoritative resources as structured properties of social systems. *Legitimation* relates to legal institutions that produce moral order through rooting societal norms, values and standards (Giddens, 1984, pp. 31–33; Jones, Edwards, & Beckinsale, 2000). Giddens' explanation of structuration offers a viewpoint that supports a strong interplay between structure and agency that are closely linked in what Giddens described as "duality of structure", which is different from the objectivist and subjectivist approaches (Jones et al., 2000; Lamsal, 2012).

In fact, Giddens provided an insight into human action that was contrary to the previous explanation that it can be largely limited by the influence of

dominant social structures (various institutions) and stressed the importance of reciprocal interaction, power and the dynamic relationship between agents and institutions (Gibbs, 2017). This interpretation provided by Giddens reconsiders the matter of structure in the way that it can be viewed both as the constraining and enabling factor for human action then can shape the relationship between agent and institutions (Lamsal, 2012). Giddens argues that the context of action is situated with the time-space mode, and to understand 'how the practices followed in a given range of contexts are embedded in wider reaches of time and space-in brief, we have to attempt to discover their relation to institutionalised practices' (Giddens, 1984, p. 298).

Further, so-called "Giddensian" organisational scholars interpret structuration theory often through two main aspects: 1) as informal constraints and informal structures that present a framework of organisations and the process of interaction; 2) as organisational change that is unpredictably affected by exogenous factors and the influence of individual strategies or as intentional actions of key actors to change organisations (Albano et al., 2010, pp. 7–14). From this point of view, Giddens' perspectives may also provide a useful framework for this dissertation when it comes to the topic of researching social innovation. According to Cajaiba-Santana (2014), the social innovation process produces new practices established around institutional frameworks and various actors' involvement, which also affects the way how these new practices are institutionalised. With this in mind, the agency/structure debate in this dissertation, as the ontological-epistemological perspective, enables to place the focus on the social innovation phenomenon by understanding the actions of agents within the structural elements of society and how the interactions between the action of the agent and dominant institutions limit and enable the development of social innovation in Bosnian context. Equally important, it also identifies how new practices developed by non-state providers (CSO/NGOs) are institutionalised within a specific framework of actors and institutions in the challenging Bosnian social sector field.

4.3 Mixed methods research

This study is based on a mixed methods methodology to answer the research questions. In addition to the epistemological stance presented earlier, the justification for applying the mixed methods approach in this dissertation could be seen through the prism of several explanations. As Creswell and Plano Clark explain (2011, p. 66), both methods, qualitative and quantitative, have some weaknesses and strengths. Mixed methods research allows a researcher to overcome that weakness and draw on the strengths of both methods. In mixed methods research, the usage of different research techniques within a single project can produce interchangeable benefits about design, data collection and analyses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). It also means that by applying mixed methods is possible to answer different research questions while employing both methods enhances the integrity of findings and increases the generalisability of the results (Heyvaert, Maes, & Onghena, 2013). Another reason in favour of the mixed methods approach is it can contribute 'multiple ways of seeing, hearing, and making sense of the social world' (Greene, 2007, p. 20). The advantage can be noted in the possibility to provide not just a broader explanation of the phenomenon that is being studied, but also to offer diverse perspectives.

Apart from its many strengths, I want to address that using mixed methods research can be difficult, and researchers should also be aware of the potential weaknesses of this methodology. Bryman (2007) explained the inherent challenges of mixed methods research could be not only a time-consuming and expensive process but also it can be complicated to create a mixed research design correctly as researchers are usually familiar with either qualitative or quantitative methods. For this reason, it was necessary for me as a researcher to invest significant time in conducting the interviews, survey, designing the instruments, analysing the data. Additional efforts were invested to issues of *bridging ontological divides* (Bryman, 2007). This refers to the situation when I attempt to bring together two types of data (qual. and quant.) from this study in the form of three articles, in the way to try to reflect the selected sequential mixed method, but to avoid potential so-called salami slicing publication which could be perceive by the journal editors and reviewers. Further practical difficulties of mixed methods research related to this study will be discussed later in the subsection related to sampling and data integration.

4.4 Mixed methods design applied in the dissertation

Since the mixed methods approach can be designed variously, it is important to realise that this study is based on the mixed methods sequential exploratory design. Such applied design uses two consecutive phases in a single study, where the qualitative phase is followed by the quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This design prioritises the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the first phase, and, building from the qualitative exploratory data, the second quantitative phase is conducted to test or generalise the initial findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 71). What can be expected is that, when mixing in these two sets of data and they are 'put side by side, interesting but unanticipated insights may be thrown up' (Bryman, 2008a, p. 163). In this study, the qualitative portion (applied in Article 1 and partly in Article 2) serves as the dominant phase, which, according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), can be seen as a sequential dominant status design.

The reason why I select such a design reflects Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011, p. 104) explanation that the qualitative data in this design will provide a more thorough understanding of the research problem or concepts through interviews which help to identify specific themes and views of the participants, whereas the quantitative data will (applied in Articles 2 and 3) refine and further explain those results obtained from the participants' views. Following this explanation and based on the fact that social innovation from the role of CSOs and collaborative approach is under-researched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, sequential exploratory design seemed more than applicable. The qualitative component allowed me to first investigate through interviews the role of CSOs in service provision, social innovation mechanism and process as well as the role of international donors, public actors and local CSOs in the Bosnian social sector. This gave me a more in-depth understanding of the topics surrounding the role of local CSOs in service provision and social innovation, but also the importance of the institutional arrangements in the country and various external factors that may affect local CSOs social innovative efforts. I found it very useful, especially regarding determining which variables should be measured in the second, quantitative phase.

Furthermore, this design provided me a significant help for developing the questionnaire and conducting the survey that was implemented in second part of

the study, as according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the themes and process identified in the qualitative phase can help to further develop the survey instruments, questionnaires and accompanied variables. Due to a dearth of applicable questionnaires for the challenging and transitional post-conflict context, in the sub-section about the instrument design, I will further discuss how a sequential mixed methods approach was used for the creation of the survey questionnaire. In this study, exploratory sequential mixed methods started with collecting qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews, and, after the interviews were conducted, coded and analysed, it was followed by the questionnaire design and conducting the survey. The overall procedure of applying exploratory mixed methods design for this study is illustrated in Figure 2. A more detailed explanation of the information presented in Figure 2 will be further explained in the following text within sub-sections that cover the topics including sampling, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, instrument design and integration strategies.

Figure 2

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design of the Dissertation
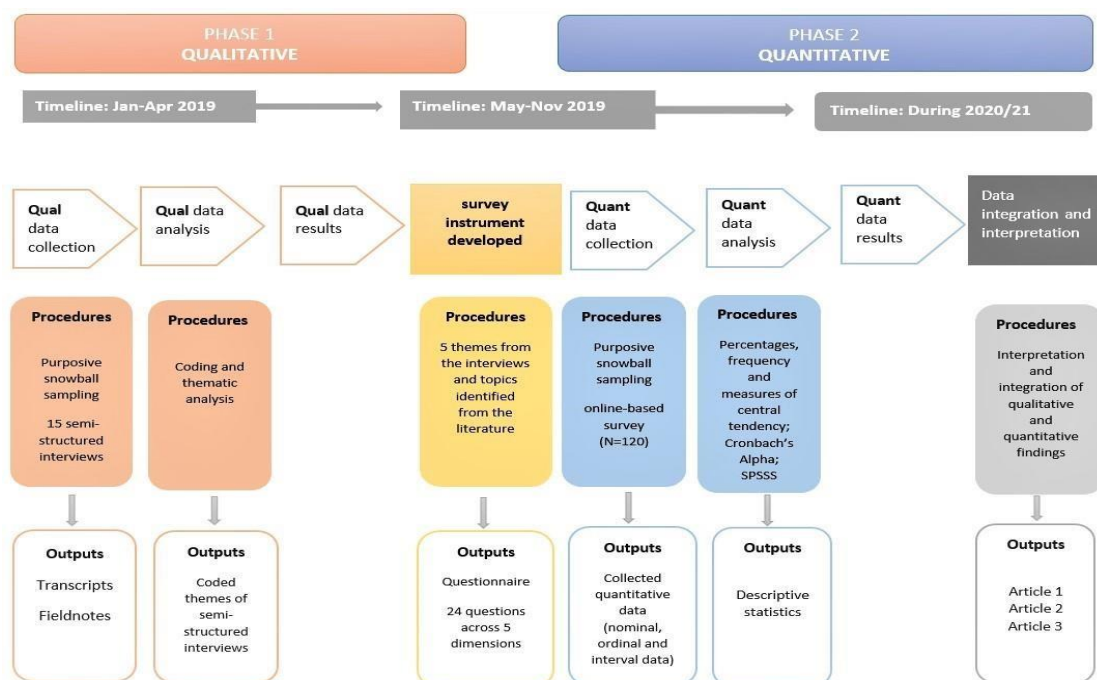
Adapted from Berman, 2017.

4.5 Sampling framework

Identifying the research population and selection of respondents – a potentially representative subset of the population – and sampling methods represent a crucial step for either quantitative or qualitative studies. For the mixed methods study it possesses even more importance due to the sampling schemes that need to be designed for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, which usually introduce their own problems of representation, legitimation, integration and politics (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). In the following subsection I will discuss the sampling strategy and elaborate the chosen sampling framework selected for this dissertation.

4.5.1 The sampling strategy

As discussion of the sampling scheme in the literature is usually divided into two parts in which a random sampling scheme is predominately considered in quantitative studies, whereas non-random sampling is associated mainly with qualitative studies, here I would like to further elaborate this matter from the literature perspective and connect it with this study.

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), although strongly followed in the research and academia, the above-mentioned division of sampling based on the types of research is an incorrect assumption, as both samplings can undoubtedly be used in qualitative or quantitative studies. Furthermore, sampling size tends to be incorrectly dichotomised in the research. It is commonly observed that a small sample is used in qualitative studies, whereas a more significant sample is predominately linked with quantitative studies (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). As noted by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007, p. 282), 'this representation is too simplistic and thereby misleading. Indeed, there are times when it is appropriate to use small samples in quantitative research, while there are occasions when it is justified to use large samples in qualitative research.' Furthermore, according to Gobo (2008, p. 195), probability sample and statistical inferences should not be perceived as the only standard way to the generalisation of findings, as it is not possible to research all sociological phenomena with 'rigorous application of the principles of sampling theory'. He argues that widely recognised sociological theories are mostly based on case studies and

nonprobability sampling and that it is possible to make generalisations even with only a few cases without employing probability criteria (Gobo, 2008). Furthermore, particularly regarding qualitative research, Williams (2000) finds that nearly every study consists of some generalisation of conclusions.

In light of the above-mentioned points, to develop the sampling frame for these mixed methods doctoral research project, it was necessary first to link the purpose of the survey with the availability of the population. The population of interest for this study is civil society organisations that deliver social services for vulnerable groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and integrate a socially innovative approach in their work. Due to the country's fragmented and highly decentralised governance system, CSOs can be registered at the local, cantonal, entity or state level; however, because of the complex administrative and political structure, there is no centralised list of all CSOs. In the meantime, some initial efforts have been made by the Ministry of Justice Bosnia and Herzegovina to systemises the information of registered CSOs in the country. The Ministry updated a database identifying a list of 27.000 civil society organisations with diverse missions, types of organisations, the scope of work, targeted groups as the various social, humanitarian, sport, professional, cultural and veteran organisations may be all registered under the same designation of "citizens association" (Ministarstvo pravde BiH, 2019). However, this database is still lacking detailed and accurate information about the active CSOs, while many of them might be inactive because they do not withdraw their registration if they are no longer operating (Brezar, 2019; Žeravčić, 2016). Another problem is that CSOs are not registered based on the organisation's mission or targeted group of work, so it is hard to assess how many social service provisions and socially innovative CSOs exist in the country. In addition, CSOs often mix or change their targeted groups based on donors' expectations or available funding. Because of all previously mentioned issues, it is almost impossible to determine a sample frame that could be sufficiently representative of the population due to the nonexistence of comprehensive information regarding socially oriented registered CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus, it would be impractical to apply a probability sample for this study. Furthermore, during this study I became more aware of potential limitations for the application of probability sample, but I also realised that the goal of this study was not to make a generalisation of the findings, but to

explore the group and phenomenon that have not been researched in the given context.

Therefore, for both phases of the study – qualitative and quantitative – a nonprobability sampling method was selected. As Onwuegbuzie and Collins explain, it is 'by far the most common combination of sampling schemes in the mixed methods used, regardless of the mixed methods research goal' (2007, p. 210). Moreover, purposive snowball sampling – a non-probability sampling technique – was selected for this study. Purposive snowball sampling (also known as network chain referral or reputational sampling) is a method of sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network of a targeted population and the main approach 'begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases' (Neuman, 2006, p. 223).

4.5.2 The sampling framework in relation to the dissertation

Purposive snowball sampling is favourable when a sampling frame does not exist, and an additional advantage of applying this method is the possibility of including members of unlisted groups (Handcock & Gile, 2011). According to Bagheri and Saadati (2015, p. 3), this method is 'more directed and purposeful than most other non-random sampling techniques, such as convenience sampling that focuses only on the most easily identified and reachable members of a population. When carefully conducted, snowball sampling can provide very useful characterisations of unknown populations.' In addition, Noy (2008) argues that snowball sampling should be seen in light of its potential to develop a rare type of social knowledge regarding social dynamics and social networks. It is also based on the purposive element, which means that a sound criterion was involved in selecting the group of individuals related to the study's aims and objectives. Therefore, sampling focuses on the following criteria for inclusion in the study stated as fellows:

• Civil society organisations (employees of targeted CSOs) that have between 10- and 20-years' experience in civil society social services provision and further:

- active in the provision of social services to various vulnerable groups (predominantly children, young people and high-risk individuals and families);
- experienced in cooperation between CSOs, different levels of government and international donors in social services and the social service sector;
- recognised by other organisations, donors and institutional actors as organisations that implement innovative approaches in social services they deliver and provide novel services that have not been provided by the stateowned social sector.

Choosing CSOs based on the number of criterions above was important because I was looking for organisations that had good experience in the social sector, testing and implementing various services, building relationships with public and government actors, and collaborating across multiple actors and networks, so that they could reflect on topics related to social innovation in service delivery. Here, it is important also to reflect on how my professional background and contacts have implications for my access to the field and the sampling process. Because of being aware of unharmonised national data of local CSOs, I knew that I have to start first with the international donor organisations which had contacts with relevant organisations that funded their projects in the field of service provision and social innovation. Also, I already had some knowledge from the field about which international donors from so many activities in the country might focus their programmes and provide granting schemes for local CSOs in the fields of social services and social innovation.

Starting the interviews first with the representatives of the two biggest international donor organisations in the country, and at the later stage with one more, helped me to create a sample framework as those organisations collaborated with numerous CSOs and provided financial and technical support for innovating in service provision. The representatives of international organisations also identified some targeted CSOs and suggested potential participants for the interviews from other international donors and stakeholders that might be interested in the research. Therefore, this referral process provided linkages to some CSOs that later suggested their local partners - CSOs that could be of interest in the study. Applying snowball sampling in this way helped to 'get cases using referrals from one or a few cases, and then referrals from those cases,

and so forth' (Neuman, 2006). Furthermore, I gained twofold benefit from the fact that some of the selected donors knew me from my previous jobs. First, I was able to cross over the gatekeeper challenges that researchers may encounter - in my case, identifying local CSOs relevant to my project. Second, to obtain a database of active local CSOs funded for the implementation of socially innovative services that these donor organisations possessed, which was essential for this study's pre-sectional and the quantitative phases. This interconnected network of organisations and significant help in providing a database (list) of targeted CSOs with email addresses that contacted international donors who have collaborated with or supported them over the years created the core sample for the quantitative phase - an online survey.

Apart from suggesting the most suitable CSOs for the study, this way of designing sample for both phases of this study included also "expert viewpoints" that can help in reducing sample bias issues of the applied non-probability sample. Furthermore, CSOs that are identified in this way are from a different part of the Bosnia, as the involved international donors' organisations support many CSOs all over the country. In addition, the preselection interviews with the representatives of the international donors' organisations provided important donors insights into the topic of my research. In this way, by utilising a purposive snowball sample, the qualitative phase of the study included 15 representatives from ten service provision CSOs, three leading international donor organisations and two local municipality departments for social work and welfare who collaborate with local CSOs on co-production and co-financing of various social services. For the quantitative phase, over 130 CSOs/NGOs and 293 staff working in those organisations were collected and contacted for the survey.

However, it is necessary to point out that non-probability sampling has certain limitations when it comes to a broader applicability and generalisability which may have affected the way the findings of this study are analysed and further discussed. Therefore, these limitations have been addressed in all three articles in the segments related to the articles methodological limitations and will be also additionally elaborated in the discussion section of this dissertation.

4.6 Method of data collection and analysis in the dissertation

4.6.1 Qualitative data collection and analysis

The data collected in this doctoral project are divided into two phases: qualitative and quantitative. For the qualitative part of the study, presented in Article 1 and partly in Article 2, semi-structured interviews were selected as a method of data collection. The reason for such a preferred approach is that it allows new ideas to be brought up during the interview. 'The researcher has a list of questions, or fairly specific topics to be covered often refer to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to replay' (Bryman, 2008b, p. 438). Another point in favour of semi-structured interviews relates to the process where 'researchers orient themselves according to an interview guide, but one that gives plenty of freedom of movement in the formulation of questions, follow-up strategies and sequences' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 204). The interview guide of the applied questions for the qualitative part of this study is attached to this dissertation and it can be found in the appendix section.

4.6.2 Interviews

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), it is necessary to respect some preparatory steps before and after interviewing in order to increase the credibility of research outcomes. According to this point, at the first stage, the researcher should attempt to be well-informed about the research subject by completing a literature review (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The extended knowledge was generated in the first year of the PhD study by undertaking different PhD-related courses, which has provided a valuable opportunity to explore the topic of the researched phenomenon in a more in-depth way.

The interview questionnaire addressed several topics in relation to civil society service provision, social innovation and collaboration within the social sector field. Since it was expected that informants would have different perceptions of social innovation, I would ask them what they think it is, then I would explain how it has been understood in this study, and what elements I am particularly interested in hearing their opinions on. 13 interviews are conducted

in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian languages[6] and two in the English language. This brought to light a possible problem about obtaining accurate translation from native languages into the English language, which could have inaccurately conveyed responses and results. With regards to cross-language research, one possible method to overcome this problem, which was used in this study, is to have the bi-lingual researcher also participate actively in the translation process and be an active researcher themselves (Temple, 2002).

The interview process was conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina during January and February 2019. Fifteen interviewees were conducted. Fourteen interviews were conducted in each of the interviewee's offices; only one interview was held over Skype, as the interviewee was located in the Netherlands. Before each interview began, the participants read and signed the consent form and all respondents agreed to have the interview recorded. The interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to two hours. Although the interview questions were open-ended, the follow-up questions were guided, to a certain extent, by existing theoretical concepts around social innovation to gain a more profound understanding of this issue. During the interviews, both note-taking and audio recording were utilised. The recorded interviews were transcribed in native languages, but when it comes to quoting directly from the interview transcripts from Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian languages, it was translated into English. The transcripts provide 102 pages of original material, and they provide an insight into understanding patterns, trends and complexity of the role of civil society organisations in service provision, multi-actor partnership and social innovation. Table 2 presents the list of 15 included participants in the interviews, based on their field work, targeted service users' groups with their social service interventions and the type of socially innovative services they implement.

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[6] Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian languages are the three official native languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, formerly known as Serbo-Croatian language, that was dropped out of official use after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (Browne, 2020).

Table 2

A List of Participants, Based on Type of Organisation, Fieldwork, Targeted Service Users' Groups and Social Services

The Participant role	Code	Type of organisations	Field of Work/ Targeted Service Users' Group	Social Service Activities
Director	P1	CSO	Adults with severe mental health conditions	Integrative community-based mental health service (day centre, psychosocial personalised and group counselling and therapy, stigma reduction and social inclusion activities, counselling for family members, employment support, promotion of mental health in the community)
Programme manager- psychologist	P2	CSO (Foundation)	Women and children's victims of domestic violence	Specialised preventive & support services for women and children's survivors of domestic violence (emergency shelter, mobile and online reporting of violence; psychosocial support for victims of domestic violence; protection and support for children in contact with las as witnesses of domestic violence); Strengthening multisectoral cooperation at local levels in the protection of women and children from gender-based violence
Director - psychologist	P3	CSO (Foundation)	Marginalised children and youth/child protection	Specialised services to prevent violence among children and youth coming from multiproblem families (new day centre methodology for children and adolescents, family group conference)
Director	P4	CSO	Primary school-aged children and family's preventive activities	Preventive community-based service activities to reduce gender-based violence and bullying among children and youth; Supporting young people in rural communities with the skills and resources needed to identify problems in local communities and design solutions for them
Project officer- social worker	P5	CSO	Violence against children and youth	Specialised psycho-social service organised to address challenging behaviour within the youth group
Director	P6	CSO	Social enterprise & community-based services for children and youth at risk	Clubs and methodology for male teenagers to reduce risk-taking behaviour, gender-based violence and gender inequality through peer education, campaign and various community-based activities; Development of youth entrepreneurship with youngsters from a vulnerable population
Director	P7	CSO	Youth and adults with a learning disability	Integrative day centre for youth and adults with learning disabilities; Community case service to support independent living and work inclusion of youth and adults with a learning disability
Programme officer - social worker	P8	CSO	Community-based services for adults with physical disabilities and their families	New practice to support people with physical disabilities to intractable poverty, exclusion and promote independent living and inclusion in the labour market; Designing and implementing policy frameworks in the field of physical disability
Programme officer-social worker	P9	CSO	Social inclusion of vulnerable children, youth and adults	Zero tolerance to violence in the lives of children in rural areas with different socio economic, developmental and health backgrounds
Project officer	P10	CSO (Foundation)	Building the capacity of various service users group associations in social inclusion	Development of an inclusive culture in the community for the three most vulnerable group of beneficiaries (co-production services for people with disabilities, Roma minority, youth and adults with mental health problems, elderly and people in poverty)

Programme director	P11	International donor organisation	Children, youth and families-rights prevention	The provision of funding and grants in building capacities of CSOs for delivering socially innovative interventions for children, youth and families at risk
Programme officer	P12	International donor organisation	Children, youth and families at risk	The provision of funding and grants for local CSOs for delivering socially innovative interventions to children, youth and families with different socioeconomic, developmental and health backgrounds
Project manager	P13	International donor organisation	Variety support of socially oriented CSOs and service users' groups	Funding and grant provision for developing partnership and joint innovative solutions between local actors, CSOs and service users in the social sector field
Coordinator for cooperation	P14	Public institution centre for social work	Variety of service beneficiaries' children, youth and adults at risk	Public social work organisations that collaborate and partner with local CSOs and foreign donors in the joint implementation of community-based social services for various service users groups (co-production and co-creation)
Expert officer for cooperation with CSOs	P15	Municipality administration	Variety of civil society and social service beneficiaries	Municipality office for partnership with local CSOs and providing grants for community-based social services

4.6.3 Data analysis

The data were analysed using qualitative thematic analyses (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). Apart from the researcher's engagement in a detailed rereading of interview transcripts and coding manually, the collected data were also analysed thematically using NVivo software by coding the data material. First, the data set was categorised into themes. This is an active process that requires 'moving forwards (and sometimes backwards) through data familiarisation, coding, theme development, revision, naming, and writing up' (Braun et al., 2016, p. 197). Next, theming data coding was applied to analyse the interviews by highlighting specific phrases or sentences representing the meaning of an aspect of the data that appeared relevant to the research questions. The codes were then transferred into pattern codes (Saldana, 2013). After the first cycle of coding, the codes were sorted into three categories and three subthemes, which were generated based on the underlying meanings across codes in relation to the overall research topic.

It may be said that this study employed both deductive and inductive methods of qualitative analysis. Namely, in order to conduct the interviews, I needed to familiarise myself with the topic of social innovation, collaboration and the role of CSOs (concept, theory) before I set up the interview questions. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews allowed me to unearth the meaning of the researched topics. Using similar approaches in the analysis of the data, I created some categories based on theory and developed some themes based on what I found in the data.

Therefore, as presented in Article 1, the theming data coding processes generated subthemes (transnational networking; borrowing and adapting; contextual modification; relationship building; pioneering novel solutions; knowledge affirmation and knowledge production and transfer) and themes (transcopy, coactive novelty, knowledge construction). As presented in Article 2 the theming data coding processes generated subthemes (copying and adopting; professionalisation and accountability; external interdependency pressures and barriers) and themes (memetic isomorphism; normative isomorphism and coercive isomorphism).

4.7 Quantitative data collection and analysis

4.7.1 Instrument design

Before conducting the second quantitative phase of the project, presented in Article 2 and Article 3, it was necessary to explore a potential survey instrument to measure civil society and social innovation in the social sector that could be used or adopted in this study. After online reviewing of existing metrics in the literature, the process resulted in collecting metrics that mostly deal with the innovation framework. For this purpose, several measure instruments were reviewed, including assessing innovation capacity among non-profits in the US (Sahni et al., 2017), the innovation evaluation initiative in Spain (Resindex Euskadi, 2013) and innovation of firms and companies and their economic impact explored by Oslo manual guidelines (OECD/Eurostat, 2018). Those analysed matrices provided an overview of understanding innovation and measuring it, which explains its complex nature, and shows that a significant difference exists between social, technological or business innovations, which have already been confirmed in the literature. However, it also identified another issue. Despite that scholar have increased their efforts to measure general innovations in the fields of business, technology or social enterprise, there is still a noticeable lack of measuring quantitatively social innovation in both types, for-profit or non-profit organisations (Kleverbeck et al., 2019; Krasnopolskaya & Korneeva, 2020). The essential problem is that the concept of social innovation is based on multiple various definitions and accordingly covers different elements, which affect the difficulties to measure quantitatively social innovation. Another reason is that 'social innovation requires a separate methodology and research design approach, a need to purposefully collect data, unlike most of the general innovation studies using secondary data' (Krasnopolskaya & Korneeva, 2020, p. 568).

Besides the above-identified issues, the terminology used in those overviewed instruments deals with innovation that has mostly been designed and specified for Western high income countries. Thus, the terminology employed might not always characterise language differences or socioeconomic aspects in post-conflict or low- and middle-income countries, which would be hard to adopt

them fully to researched population or culture. Above all, Bosnia's civil society and social services sector have historically developed based on war, post-war transition, instability, underdevelopment, fragmented institutions and high dependence on international aid funding. The abovementioned facts remain the key reasons why it was important to attempt to construct a new questionnaire that will be more contextually embedded to measure the opinions and attitudes of CSOs employees regarding the research topic. Important to realise that developing a new questionnaire was not designed to measure social innovation, but rather to identify different aspects of CSO's work in the field of social services that could be considered components of social innovation, according to the literature on the subject. This includes, for example, developing, adapting, or delivering novel services to vulnerable/marginalised groups, creating social relations with public sector actors or international donors, initiating new processes through civil-state-donor collaboration, or availability of funding or mechanisms for CSOs' socially innovative projects. Therefore, a survey questionnaire was constructed after reviewing the literature by conceptually drawing on topics related to civil society organisation, collaboration and social innovation and conducting the first phase (interviews), which was important step regarding achieving construct validity of the questionnaire.

The qualitative part helped me to gain a better understanding of how the representatives from local CSOs as well as international donors and the public sector in Bosnia frame the civil society sector involvement in the provision of social services, partnership and collaboration, intra- and inter- organisational factors inducive for social innovation. It also helped me to shed light on how much of their perspectives are in connection with current social innovation stream literature. After coding and analysing the interviews, I approached the questionnaire development. Forming the questions for the questionnaire, I extracted codes, themes and quotations generated from the interviews that used to form the variables in the quantitative part, where "the codes become variables, themes become scales, and the quotations become survey items" (SAGE, 2019, p. 2). Furthermore, it is decided that the question that covers funding sources of CSOs to be extracted from the survey conducted earlier by other scholars (Vandor et al., 2017). It is integrated in the dissertation-related questionnaire as the question number 19. The reason is it provides a broad cover of donors and was

already tested and implemented in analysis of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe (Vandor et al., 2017).

In the early stages of questionnaire development, it was critical to realise several important aspects. First, the relevance and comprehension of questions to respondents, then their ordering in the instrument, also how long it takes to read and provide answers, and whether the questions measure only one underlying dimension. Furthermore, as the plan was to conduct an online survey as a wide broadband speed internet is widely used and available in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was important to invest the time to develop an online questionnaire. Evidence showed that the visual appearance of questions and the layouts of responses can affect responses in the online-based surveys (Christian et al., 2009; Fielding et al., 2016). Therefore, certain attention was devoted to the creation of the structured and designed appearance of the questionnaire. The questionnaire's interface had to be user-friendly for respondents to easily access it from different devices, including desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones, and tablets. For that reason, a paid version of SurveyMonkey – a cloud-based software that helps to create and implement online surveys, was purchased. The software does not collect identifying information such as names, email addresses, or IP addresses and its usage in this study was approved by Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

The survey layout created within this software automatically adapts to the various devices. However, as Fielding et al. (2016) pointed out, designing an online questionnaire requires researchers to pay special attention to different design choices for questions and response formats as the constructed questionnaire may look different to respondents due to the usage of various browsers, operating systems, or screen configurations. Due to that reason, a significant amount of time was spent on creating the questionnaire and making a decision regarding organising the questions, orders, answer categories, word fonts and colours.

The first page of the questionnaire consisted of information about the purpose of the research, privacy and confidentiality matters, and the estimated time to complete the survey. Further definitions of social innovation were also presented on the first page. On the bottom of the page, two checkbox options were provided to respondents as a form of electronic consent they needed to select before starting with the survey. In that way, respondents gave consent that their

personal data be stored after the end of the project and agreement to take part in the study. In the questionnaire, different formats have been utilised for creating the questions and responses categories. The questionnaire involved various types of questions: close-ended, multiple choice, rating scale questions (three-point and five-point scales) with a set of response option. For the creation of questionnaire items, BRUSO model was followed to ensure that they were brief, avoided technical jargon, relevant to the research questions, specific, and objective in order to not impact participant responses (Peterson, 2000). In order to enhance contrast and visibility, the questions appeared in dark green on a white background, with grey colour for responses. The font size and style were automatically adjusted, which increased its adaptability to different devices and screen resolutions. A sample questionnaire is attached in the appendix to this dissertation that provides an overview of questions used in the instrument; however, it is a Word version document, which barely can reflect the full design of the online questionnaire and its adaptability that has been created with the SurveyMonkey programme.

Considering all the above-mentioned elements necessary for the instrument design, particularly concerning the online-based survey, Fielding et al. (2016) argue that it is highly advisable to conduct a pilot test. The first version of the questionnaire consisted of 29 questions, and it was tested with nine persons from the Bosnian CSOs sector to better understand how they think about the visual design, the questions, and to identify potential issues with the instrument. After receiving the feedback from the testing phase, some questions were deleted or modified their order in the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 24 questions split into five sections, including *demographic information* (questions 1-8), new/transferred services, projects, processes (questions 10-13); *internal and external organisational factors* (questions 14 and 15); *partnership with governments and international donors* and *funding opportunities* (questions 12, 16-20); *service programme and evaluation* (21 – 24). Overall, the participants spent on average nine minutes completing the survey.

As I attempted to integrate the questions that represent several aspects of CSOs role in service provision and social innovation that are multidimensional, as previously identified in this dissertation, it resulted in the complexity of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is based on numerous categorial variables measured on different measurement scales and two groups of questions measured

by the Likert scale (a question assessing the importance of internal organisational factors for CSOs social innovation and a question assessing the importance of external environmental factors to CSOs social innovation presented in Article 3). Due to the questionnaire complexity, it was possible to conduct a separate factor analysis to check the construct validity (whether a particular group of questions measures a particular construct) and the reliability of only two Likert scales applied to analyse questions 14 and 15. Article 3 presented the analysed validity and reliability of the scale examined to question 15. Contrary, using descriptive statistics (percentages) in Article 2, I attempted to describe and summarise the results of the questions pertaining to CSOs aspects related to developing, adapting, or delivering novel services to vulnerable/marginalized groups, funding sources for CSOs projects and services and their partnership with the public actors in the decision-making process. In addition, descriptive data in the same article was used to confirm and refine the results generated from the first phase (interviews).

4.7.2 Online data collection

Over the years, online surveys have become frequently used by researchers and they have significantly developed due to the emerging of new technologies, methodologies and techniques (Evans & Mathur, 2018). The major strengths of online surveys are related to the possibility of reaching a wider population, flexibility, speed, convenience of collecting complex data, question diversity and technology device improvements, while the major weaknesses are seen in sampling, privacy issues, lower response rates and potential mistrusting (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Although online surveys can be distributed in a different mode through the SurveyMonkey software, it was decided for this study to create an electronic link directly connected to the online survey questionnaire. The link was enclosed in the email with additional information about the survey aims and research which were distributed to civil society organisations from the collected databases.

Representatives of CSOs from the collected databases were contacted by emails, most often directors or programmes officers, and they were asked to also invite other employees in their organisations to participate in the survey by

forwarding them the email and the link of the questionnaire. Even though it is still a popular strategy in organisational research to rely on a single key informant per organisation in surveys, according to Balloun et al. (2011), such an approach can cause systematic biases and random errors, and it is preferable to rely on multiple data sources from each organisation to improve the validity of the data and decrease potential systematic biases and random errors. Therefore, requests to participate in this study were sent to 293 staff working in the list of over 130 CSOs/NGOs from all over the country, registered under the relevant law concerning associations and foundations that are active in social services provision and have received earlier fundings from international donors in developing innovative services and projects. The online survey was conducted between May and July 2019 by sending emails and the electronic link for the survey from the collected databases. The used software also provided an opportunity for tracking email metrics and gaining some overview of the number of invitations sent and responses received from the organisations that were directly contacted from the list. Throughout the three-month period, two reminder emails about the survey were sent to the participants who had not yet completed the survey. During this process, in total, 120 CSOs employees participated in the survey. Accordingly, the return rate was 41%, and the dropout rate was 59%. The number of participants who fully completed the survey was 89% (CR = 106/120).

4.7.3 Data analysis

After the conducted survey, collected data from all participants were downloaded from the Survey Monkey software in a form of a spreadsheet and the raw data then exported to SPSS 25 software for further analysis. The results of the survey were summarised in the published articles (Article 2 and Article 3) through descriptive statistics (percentages, measures of frequency and measures of central tendency) to identify the patterns and trends evident in them, and further represented graphically in the articles using bar graphs.

4.8 Strategies of integration

The integration of two forms of data is an important aspect in an exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Fetters et al., 2013). In this dissertation, the first phase of the integration occurred when I analysed and used qualitative results that helped me to identify core issues around CSOs service provision, social innovation, collaboration that were further assessed in the quantitative part, which were then assessed quantitatively, but also used to inform the design of the survey instrument and related items. In this way, data integration occurred when the collection and analyses of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews informed the collection of the quantitative type of data through the survey (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2010). This process produced several advantages and overcome two significant problems. For example, first, a problem of the limited transferability of the results from a small qualitative sample, and also a problem of a lack of deeper understanding of sociocultural aspects that usually occurs in quantitative studies (Kelle, 2006, p. 307). Furthermore, the qualitative findings can increase the validity of quantitative findings, they can also generate variables or hypotheses that can be tested in the quantitative part or inform of the quantitative instrument's design (Fetters et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, pp. 2140–2142) and Fetters et al. (2013) explained that the integration process in an exploratory sequential design can also appear at the method level by *connecting* - when one type of data is linked to another dataset through the sampling frame; *building* - when one dataset is built on another previously collected dataset, and through *merging* – when two datasets are brought together for analysis or comparison. In terms of interpretation and reporting level, integration may also occur through narrative (a single or series of reports), data transformation and joint displays (Creswell & Plano Clark et al., 2011, pp. 2140–2142; Fetters et al., 2013).

Following the above-mentioned explanation of the dataset integration, it can be said that in this dissertation the integration process at the design level occurred through collecting and analysing first the qualitative data, which helped to understand the research context and based on that, built unknown variables tested in the questionnaire designed in the quantitative phase. In addition, results from the quantitative phase helped to further explain the statistical findings

obtained through the survey. At the method level, integration occurs mostly through connecting, building and merging datasets. At the interpretation and reporting level, integration in this study appeared through narrative, which applied two approaches – the weaving and the staged approaches - presented by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 2142) and Fetters et al. (2013). The first, *the weaving approach*, means that qualitative and quantitative findings are presented together on the same topic in a single publication. This was achieved in Article 2 of this dissertation where the qualitative and quantitative findings are used together to answer the research questions. The second refers to *the staged approach*, where the results of each step are analysed and published separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 2142). This is largely visible in three articles of this dissertation. Article 1 is dominantly based on qualitative data, Article 2 emerged qualitative and quantitative data, whilst Article 3 is primarily based on quantitative data, but largely informed from the previous qualitative phase - the interviews helped me to identify external environment factors that affect CSOs social innovation implemented by local which I measure quantiatively. In addition, the knowledge gaps presented in chapter 1 also displayed the aims of the articles that explained how each addressed the gaps.

4.9 Ethical considerations

In regard to ethical considerations, it is an important part of this doctoral project, particularly because it 'is often observed that virtually all research involves elements that are at least ethically questionable' (Bryman, 2008b, p. 116). The ethical considerations in this project can be divided into two groups: the first includes issues related to the ethics towards professional standards and reporting, and the second is related to the issues concerning online-based research.

4.9.1 Ethics concerns regarding applying professional standards

This study followed the official criteria and guidelines provided in two documents of The Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities, including Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, humanities, law and theology (2019) and a Guide to Internet Research Ethics (2019). These include general demands regarding privacy, confidentiality, duty to inform, storage of personal data, and research integrity

that especially apply to internet research. Before the data collection, the study also obtained the assessment of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) that the project is in line with "personvernregler" - ethical standards for the protection of personal data.

The essential criterion that was stated in the above-mentioned guidelines and NSD's requirements is linked to obtaining free and fully informed written consent from the respondents when participating in the research. Special attention was directed to obtaining informed consent from the respondents who participated in the interviews as well as in the survey. For the qualitative phase, each of the contacted participants was informed about the purpose of the study, my role as researcher, institutional affiliation and contact information and voluntary participation in the study. The informative letter in the form of a consent form was delivered to the targeted respondents by email in the first online communication. Afterward, this information was further explained explicitly in person. Each of the included respondents agreed to participate in the research and signed the consent form. A copy of the signed consent form was provided to the participants for their records. During the data analysis and writing the articles, it was necessary to maximises the principles of anonymity and confidentiality to all participants. This was done by using pseudonyms in transcripts and beyond, while, to make a participant identifiable in the articles it was managed by applying the letter P and number for the participants (P1-P15).

For the quantitative phase, the first page of the survey questionnaire provided all relevant information about the study, anonymity guarantee by applying SurveyMonkey (not collecting IP addresses), confidentiality by not identifying personal information and my personal contact information. Further, the first page of the survey questionnaire also included two options in the form of electronic consent and respondents needed to click on them before starting with the survey. In that way, they indicated that they gave their approval to participate in the survey and permission to use and store data based on the information provided in the questionnaire.

4.9.2 Ethics concerning online-based research

Given that this study involves an internet-based survey, it is necessary to further address issues regarding ethics and internet-based research. Concerns over the ethical aspects of technology, as a subdiscipline of philosophy, did not emerge until the twentieth century. This emergent field of philosophy is concerned with the conceptualisation of technology, and, over the decades, a number of different perspectives of technology have arisen. This raises some ethical concerns and questions concerning technology. The idea that technology can be seen as a tool that can produce either positive or negative things for a society, or that technology has the potential to develop beyond the control of society (Kaplan, 2009). Another perspective with regard to technology can be found in the work of Martin Heidegger, who is perhaps one of the most influential philosophers to have assessed the role of technology beyond simply machines and manufacturers and to have explored our relationship with technology (Wheeler, 2018). As noted by Heidegger, it can be very problematic how technology acknowledges things and that it should not be seen as a neutral tool that values a society. According to Heidegger, it is an important point 'to neither reject nor accept the technological thinking without criticism, but to take a new, artful attitude toward it that affirms a broader, more inclusive understanding of reality' (Kaplan, 2009, p. 3).

The internet provides researchers with the opportunity to develop new and more diverse research "products and services" (Ackland, 2013); now, the data collection process is faster and has no geographical restrictions. However, reasoning about the fundamental philosophical and methodological novelty of online research in the social sciences is often based on explicit or implicit opposition of a network survey, survey or online experiment as techniques possessing obvious advantages regarding cost-effectiveness, breadth of coverage of people, places and time intervals. Using the internet is more interactive, communicatively transparent, decentralised (at least, from the user's point of view) and, in these circumstances, assuming a radical rethinking of the usual relations of researchers and respondents (Ackland, 2013).

The most significant ethical aspects of online research include three groups of questions related to the definition of the following areas: subjects of research; boundaries of private and public; people/data relationships (Sugiura et al., 2017; Woodfield, 2017). Preserving the anonymity of the respondent was one

of the important aspects that constituted the ethical side of this study. The provision on the anonymity of the participant's identity was also confirmed in the consent form that was provided to the participants before the interviews, but before conducting the online survey.

The answer to the question "Who is to be considered a subject?" in the context of internet-based research is related to such characteristics of internet communication as anonymity/openness, game/seriousness, design/simulation/ authenticity, and is determined by the way how the "subjects" themselves build relationships between the online communication and real life (Sugiura et al., 2017). In every act of internet communication, there are real people, but their attitude to their own internet presence (openness of personal information on various web pages and social networks, the degree of "intimacy" of data opened for public viewing, the degree of "authenticity" or "fictitiousness" of the blog or a virtual diary, the attitude to own avatar characters in online games, etc.) and, accordingly, the degree of vulnerability differ significantly.

In addition, an important question is who possesses the collected data. Researchers can use different types of online tools to create and distribute questionnaires and generate survey data. In that sense, what is the role of the company that created the online software regarding the protection or possible misuse of the collected data? As Harriman and Patel (2014) point out, this can be a significant issue from the perspective of participants, particularly when researchers are dealing with a sensitive category of participants (e.g. children or vulnerable categories) who can easily post their information online but do not understand the possible consequences and significance of participatory privacy on the internet-based setting. Although the targeted survey participants in this study do not belong to the sensitive groups, it was essential to inform them that their responses will remain anonymous and it will be impossible to identify their participation in the study as the Survey Monkey which was used to create and implement the survey does not collect identifying information such as name, email address, or IP address. Data privacy and handling data securely were also an important aspect of this study - prior to the survey it was checked and proved that the used software for data collection (SurveyMonkey) complies with the European Union data processing agreements, storage, and transfer and, therefore, NSD approved its usage for this study.

The last point is necessary to be considered when planning research projects with the participation of participants or researchers from different regions through online participation (Warrell & Jacobsen, 2014). It should be noted that that research ethics is a regulating mechanism of research somewhere, but somewhere else is not, and can be neglected in some contexts. This happens in the case of this project, as Bosnia and Herzegovina does not possess any official guidelines nor regulatory institutions that arrange the issues of general research principles. Although in a similar situation the implementation of professional standards of research ethics will be expected from the researchers, a potential issue for this study was overcome by applying to the NSD ethical and data process assessment, which confirmed that this study complies with the international norms and regulations on general research ethics.

5 Summary of the articles, results and their main contribution

I have attempted to answer the main research question: *How do CSOs contribute to social innovation by addressing service needs and collaborating with multiactors in the social sector, and what opportunities and challenges do they encounter?* The dissertation is structured into three articles. This chapter summarises these three articles by addressing the main aim, results and contributions of each article, and the last subsection shows the interconnection between all three articles.

5.1 Article I

Bozic, A. (accepted, expected to be published in 2022). Unpacking social innovation by non-state service providers in challenging social work practice. *Journal of Comparative Social Work*

Focus. The first article focused on two research sub-questions: *How is social innovation generated by non-state service providers (local NGOs) in Bosnian social work practice? What types of mechanisms and processes of social innovation arise from the involvement of NGOs in the provision of services and how do they manifest in practice?* The purpose of this article was to identify how social innovation generated by non-state providers (the term NGOs is used in the article) manifests in challenging social work contexts with weak resources, fragmented institutions and diverse actors by understanding the primary mechanisms and processes underlying its development.

The first article applied a qualitative part of sequential mixed method research to obtain qualitative data from a small 'expert' rich sample and thus administers semi-structured interviews to 15 participants, as described in Chapter 4. A qualitative analysis was conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the various mechanisms and processes of social innovation that emerged from the role of NGOs as non-state service providers in meeting the social service needs of underserved, vulnerable service users in Bosnia. Throughout the analysis, the article was theoretically framed within the concept of social innovation generated from the current literature. Further, the analysis and discussion implicitly reflect upon the interplay relationship of NGOs with other actors, such as international

aid donors and public stakeholders, regarding developing or integrating socially innovative models, services and practices in the social work context of Bosnia.

Results. The analysis and subsequent discussion portrayed the capacities of local NGOs as social innovators in the social services field by identifying three interrelated mechanisms driven by NGOs that serve as a basis for developing social innovation in the analysed context: transcopy, coactive novelty and knowledge construction. These mechanisms are also associated with various underlying processes that emerged from NGOs' activities in the social service field and their engagement with various actors, including transnational networking, copying and adapting, contextual modification, relationshipbuilding, pioneering novel solutions, and knowledge production and transfer.

Contribution. This article captures much-needed empirical data to understand the role of NGOs as non-state service providers in challenging social work and to identify what mechanism and process of social innovation they are able to activate in such a setting. In a way, these results verify the existing understanding of the role of NGOs in social innovation from the bottom-up level and extend it from the perspective of the challenging social work context. Redefining their role in challenging social work context, NGOs were prompted to translate services, models and interventions from other contexts. Additionally, NGOs implemented an innovative service for different service users' groups that did not exist in the social work practice by increasing user participation, creating new forms of relations and networks, and producing knowledge, thus leading to the diffusion of social innovation. This article highlighted the role of NGOs as non-state service providers and showed that they possess transformative potential, which places them at the centre of enabling social innovation processes. NGOs' role in reshaping the challenges of the Bosnian social work context involves meeting the service needs that the public sector has neglected or lacks the resources to perform. However, identified mechanisms and processes have emerged via strong foreign donor-driven funding and the complexity of relationships between NGOs and donors and public sector actors. Such relationships may act as both stimulants for and challenges to social innovation driven by local NGOs, which can be further complicated by the domination of a variety of actors, changeable temporary donor-driven support and a highly fragmented social sector. Thus, the findings increased the need to further explore the collaborative perspective of local NGOs with various actors and their

environments and to identify how it affects the diffusion of social innovation (Articles 2 and 3). The findings from this first article provided a strong foundation for the instrument development and further quantitative analysis applied in Articles 2 and 3.

5.2 Article II

Bozic, A. (2020). Global trends in a fragile context: public–nonpublic collaboration, service delivery and social innovation. *Social Enterprise Journal. 17*(2). 260-279. https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2019-0100

Focus. The second article followed up on the demand to explore the interaction and collaboration of non-public and public actors (CSOs, public welfare institutions, international aid donors) and their effect on social innovation within the fragile context of Bosnia. This article addressed the following research questions: *How do representatives of civil society, foreign donors and the public sector experience public-non-public collaboration in the provision of social services in Bosnia? What are the main demands and pressures that occur in this type of collaboration and how do they enable or restrict social innovation in a transitional post-conflict context?*

Methodologically, the article applied a sequential mixed methods approach (a qualitative phase, followed by a quantitative phase) with a triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data. The sample for the qualitative phase was the same as that used in Article 1 and thus invited 15 representatives from civil society, foreign donor organisations and the social welfare sector to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored topics related to collaboration, service provision, service user inclusion and social innovation. The quantitative phase included 120 employees from various CSOs who participated in an online survey. For survey purposes, the online questionnaire was designed with 24 questions that covered demographic information, service and programme implementation, partnership with governments and international donors, social innovation and service programme evaluation. Qualitative thematic analyses and descriptive statistics (percentages) were used to summarise the qualitative and quantitative data. The article's argument was built on institutional theory, particularly new institutionalism, institutional networking and the concept of social innovation. As social innovation implicates institutional change and the interdependent actions of

multiple actors to find solutions for societal issues, conducting the analysis from the perspective of institutional isomorphism and institutional networking generated new insights into social innovation in a fragile welfare context.

Findings. The findings revealed that the collaboration and social innovation in the field of social services was initiated primarily by CSOs and developed within the triple context of relations between public, civil and foreign donors' organisations. The interaction of CSOs with international donors and the public sector arises from local unmet needs for different social services that led to joint resource mobilisation, new forms of collaboration and the development of bottom-up socially innovative solutions at both social policy and practice levels. This collaboration also brought an opportunity for CSOs to become more engaged within social service sector as partners of the public sector in the joint production or co-financing of social services due to weak state and public institution resources. The article also identified the complexity and challenges of collaboration in the multifaceted actors' setting, caused by pressures from the top-down structures of outdated social sectors without structural support for social innovation and the demands of powerful international donors, which led to certain tensions in the partnership with local CSOs. In such an environment, CSOs can be seen as important actors capable of developing social innovation in the social sector by facing various contextual threats. However, strong donordriven support that is changing, because of the reduction of funding schemes and lack of public sector support, puts external pressures on local CSOs' transformative role. In such a setting, various coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphisms are identified as a result of multi-actor collaboration that can be seen not only as leading drivers, but also as potential barriers of CSO-led social innovation within the Bosnian social sector.

Contribution. The article makes theoretical and practical contributions by offering an analysis of the fragile institutional context that has rarely been applied within the lens of institutional isomorphism and networking. The sociological strand views isomorphism as something that happens rather than something that actors can affect. Nevertheless, the study has shown that CSOs are skilled actors who are able to bring innovative elements into social services, initiate collaboration with the public sector as a result of the joint production of services, and effect changes in the public social sector that are supported by international funding. At the same time, CSOs understand legitimacy formation by facing and

integrating the demands and pressures of multifaceted networks and multiple actors and having a degree of impact on their own organisational behaviour.

Although the article applied Dimaggio and Powell's (1983) view of isomorphism, which is related to achieving organisational similarity by encountering isomorphisms, the findings depicted CSOs as strategic actors in the building of legitimacy, which goes beyond the sociological conception of isomorphism presented by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). In this case, isomorphisms identified in the article are more connected with the strategic strand of new institutionalism presented by Baum and Oliver (1991, 1992) and Suchman (1995), which affords agency to organisational actors. This paper also contributes to the social innovation literature in terms of understanding the potential challenges and tensions among relevant partners from different sectors. The findings may also contribute to the new public governance literature, as the findings revealed new insights into opportunities but also challenges for multiactor governance collaborations and their effects on the development of social innovation in service provision in the fragile setting – a viewpoint that had been misrepresented in the new public governance literature. Apart from bridging the gap between theory and practice, this article also provides practitioners (donors) with better insights into the opportunities and challenges for initiating a multisector approach to facilitate their funding decisions.

5.3 Article III

Bozic, A. (2021). Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: Examining external factors affecting social service NGOs. *Development Study Research, 8*(1), 170–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2021.1950020

Focus. The third article identified the external environmental factors affecting the development of social innovation by civil society service providers (NGOs) in a post-conflict development setting. The article sought to answer the following research question: *What types of external environment factors do NGOs in Bosnia consider important when it comes to integrating a social innovation approach into the social services they deliver?* Based on resource dependence theory, this article empirically analysed the influence of external environmental factors through a survey with 120 staff members of the social service NGOs from Bosnia, the same participants as those used in Article 2. For survey purposes, the

scale instrument was developed based on the findings of Articles 1 and 2, and designed to measure the level of importance of external environmental factors on NGOs' social innovation. Nine environmental external factors linked to institutional aspects of the public sector and international donors –secured funding, tax relief, legislation adjustment, public strategies, licensing and accreditation, quality standards, the openness of public institutions, service user participation, and the sustainability of implemented innovative services – were included in the fivepoint Likert scale and divided into three categories: financial, policy-legal and administrative. Descriptive statistics were used for the data analyses, including measures of frequency for the demographic data and measures of central tendency to assess the environmental factors.

Findings. The findings suggested that, based on means ranging from 3.74 to 4.59, there is substantial variation in how NGO employees perceive the importance of different institutional contextual factors when they are planning to integrate a socially innovative approach into their work. According to the findings, the three most dominant environmental factors for NGOs are secured financing, the willingness of service users to participate in innovative services and the sustainability of the implemented services. Policy and regulatory frameworks and the openness of public institutions are of moderate importance for NGO representatives. Factors such as licensing and accreditation, service quality standards and tax breaks are less important to NGOs when integrating social innovation in their social services.

Contribution. This paper contributes to the organisational and social innovation literature by providing an understanding of the importance of external factors linked to institutional aspects of the public sector and international donors and how they affect the organisational behaviour – i.e. the ability of local NGOs to integrate a socially innovative approach in their services. It also advances theoretical insights into inter-organisational aspects of social innovation by bringing empirical findings from a post-conflict context where there exists a strong interdependency among various partners from different sectors. In addition, the scale developed and applied in the article identified some key environmental factors of NGOs' dependence on donors and public sector actors that can be further tested. In addition, the findings can improve researchers' and practitioners' understanding of which environmental factors are important for

NGOs when developing and implementing socially innovative solutions, particularly in post-conflict areas.

5.4 Interconnection between articles

There is a coherent interconnection between the methods, theories and findings of individual papers that were presented in Section 1.6 (aim and research question) and in Table 1. In this section, I present the interconnection between the articles from an ontological-theoretical perspective.

All three articles highlighted the collaborative discourse on social innovation by recognising the role of local CSOs as crucial agents in influencing the change of practice within the Bosnian social sector and identifying the way in which they are affected by the external environment and other actors (agents). Based on Giddens' (1984) structuration perspective, which focuses on elements embedded in contexts, such as history, social processes, and place and time, all three articles built on the historical context of a strong interplay of actors and international funding as part of Bosnian post-conflict development. A situation like this not only has serious implications for how local CSOs operate as agents but also for the mobilisation and integration of social innovation within such a context. The findings of all three articles also showed that agents and structure – an important part of structuration theory – are important in explaining the Bosnian fragmented social sector context with multilayer actors as agents and their environments. According to the findings, such a structure with a variety of agents can be the catalyst for social innovation, while at the same time, a multiplicity of actors can constrain the development of social innovation presented in all three articles.

Each article elaborates on Gidden's duality as well as the interdependence between agents and structures (Giddens, 1984; Lamsal, 2012). The three articles showed that, as agents, CSOs operate within the fragmented institute system of Bosnia, and they are subject to the rules, procedures and resources imposed by public and international actors with various backgrounds. The articles also revealed that international donors present power agents who significantly influence the Bosnian context, with their funding support leveraging strong ties and being deeply interwoven with local CSOs and with the public social sector. Donors interventions and their relationship with local CSOs influenced the

structure by providing multiple opportunities for CSOs to network, partner, mobilise resources and coordinate projects and programmes with various organisations locally and internationally, thus opening the door for CSOs to become exposed to innovative ideas and intervene in Bosnian social work practice.

Since structuring theory lacks the means to examine the intended and unintended outcomes of agents (Steiner et al., 2021, p. 32), additional insights have been obtained by applying meso-level theories of institutional theory (Article 2) and resource-dependence theory (Article 3) to better understand circumstances connected with actors' collaboration and diffusion of social innovation. Article 2 showed that local CSOs have an opportunity to network by accepting neoliberal international donor funding and social policy discourses to develop alternative solutions in the Bosnian social sector. At the same time, it also shows the constraints they face resulting from unpredictability in funding and a temporary lack of foreign resources, pressure for a stronger connection between CSOs and the public sector, a higher need for delivery of a variety of services and exposure to demands for professionalisation and bureaucratisation by the public sector. In relation to the institutional framework of domestic and international actors, Article 3 discusses the interconnectedness of actors and the exposure of CSOs to environmental factors triggered by top-down structures of public and donor organisations that are considered crucial for integrating a bottom-up social innovation approach in social services.

Accordingly, even though the public Bosnian sector appears to be traditionally perceived as the main actor in delivering social services, all three articles showed a significant fragmentation of public governance and the social (work) sector, a lack of resources and structural mechanisms in the public social sector to respond innovatively to the increased needs of vulnerable service users, as well as a weaker openness and response towards CSOs' engagement in the social service provision and social innovation. Inadequate response from the public sector towards CSOs reflected in a lack of policy, structural mechanisms, and funding ensuring CSOs' role within the social sector, as well as historical tensions between CSOs and public stakeholders. Consequently, Article 2 identified potential collaboration tensions and challenges that CSOs face by operating in multifaced networks with multi-layer actors and implementing socially innovative services.

While CSOs' networking with other actors (agents) is shaped by isomorphisms, as shown in Article 2, a reliance on external factors and the questionable sustainability of implemented services, all three articles revealed that local CSOs attempt to mitigate external pressures and constraints to some extent. They do so by taking control and facilitating the social innovation process, by shifting structural constraints and predominant NGO-isation discourse, transforming themselves into key agents of attempting to develop new practice, by initiating cross-sectoral collaborations, addressing pressing social needs with new services and filling gaps in the social services, which are outlined in Articles 1 and 2. As a whole, the three articles noted the importance of a variety of actors, processes and external factors that affect the diffusion of social innovation and the challenging nature of collaborative efforts.

6 Discussion – The overall contribution of the dissertation

6.1 Empirical Findings and Implications for theoretical perspectives

The main research question was *How do CSOs contribute to social innovation by addressing services needs and collaborating with multi-actors in the social sector, and what opportunities and challenges do they encounter?* This study expands the knowledge and understanding of social innovation from the perspective of socially oriented CSOs and multi-stakeholder collaboration in the fragile context of institutional social care services. The study uses a theoretical framework comprising institutional theory, networking, resource dependency and agency-structure relationships and applies a mixed methods approach to identify mechanisms of, potentials for and barriers to social innovation.

Using Bosnia as a case, the discussion centres on the research gaps and literature review presented in the introduction. Three main aspects (gaps) identified in the introduction are (1) the mechanisms and processes of social innovation generated by non-state service providers in challenging social work practices, (2) the role of CSOs in delivering social services within a multi-actor setting and how this facilitates or challenges CSOs in the field of social innovation, and (3) determining the external environmental factors influencing the integration of social innovation by CSOs into their social services. The following paragraphs discuss how the three articles fill these gaps in the existing literature.

First, by identifying the mechanisms and processes of social innovation generated by CSOs as non-state social service providers in a challenging social work practice, this dissertation contributes to several debates around social innovation processes that have a central meaning in the social innovation literature (Howaldt et al., 2021; Moulaert et al., 2013; Moulaert & Maccallum, 2019; Mulgan, 2019; Oeij et al., 2019; Steiner et al., 2021). This dissertation also contributes to the debate about the role of non-state actors as part of the third sector organisations and social innovation mechanism and the process they generate (Anheier et al., 2017; Chew & Lyon, 2012; Eschweiler et al., 2018; Jaskyte & Dressler, 2005; Shier & Handy, 2015) as well as community-based social innovation in social work and the sustainable social development field (Brown, 2007; Flynn, 2017; Millard, 2021). The findings of this dissertation advance existing knowledge by highlighting the significant role that local CSOs play in

Bosnian post-conflict social work practice, primarily due to the public sector's failure to deliver the needed social services for marginalised and vulnerable social groups, but also due to broader donor-driven funding and interventions in social policy and practice. The findings of this dissertation also acknowledge that social innovation mechanisms and processes are manifested by CSOs' transnational networking opportunities by borrowing and adapting social work ideas, models and interventions or by completely pioneering novel solutions, but also via their knowledge production which they transfer to the public sector. Combining novel ideas, resources and new knowledge increased the capacities of CSO experts and informed the change process in the social sector by satisfying the unmet needs of vulnerable groups with needed preventive services and interventions at the policy level. Thus, the findings additionally contribute to a better understanding of the role of CSOs as actors in the social services field, their engagement in network opportunities and their exposure to various actors' influences and environments that can enable but also challenge their efforts in diffusing social innovation (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018; Schröer, 2021).

Second, following institutional theory, this dissertation acknowledges the multi-stakeholder collaborative interactions between CSOs and public and international development actors that may affect the diffusion of change and novelty in social services in the challenging social work context. Despite the increase in recent literature exploring the interplay between stakeholders as part of social innovation within public welfare management and service delivery in highincome countries such as Scandinavia (Husebø et al., 2021), little empirical research has examined the collaborative perspective within social innovation from the complex institutional setting of a low- and middle-income country with a legacy of war (Espiau, 2016; Morrar & Baba, 2022; Steiner et al., 2021). As a result, this dissertation contributes knowledge about social innovation from a civil society organisation's perspective by understanding how they initiate collaboration with other actors and how their collaborative interactions influence the diffusion of social innovation in the Bosnian social (work) service sector. This dissertation, therefore, contributes to the debate on the cross-sector collaboration perspective on social innovation among multi-actors (Anheier et al., 2017; Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Shier & Handy, 2015; Steiner et al., 2021; Ziegler, 2017; Eschweiler et al., 2018). As already confirmed in the literature, social innovation requires collaboration between various actors (Baron et al., 2018; Butzin & Terstriep, 2018;

Domanski & Koletka, 2018; Howaldt et al., 2021). The findings of this dissertation suggest that CSOs are a vital part of the social sector in Bosnia and they usually closely interact with various actors at micro, meso and macro levels to co-create and integrate resources for a solution and achieve transformative change in an attempt to establish new behaviour environment patterns. In fact, the mobilisation of local civic actors in delivering preventive social services enhanced the process of interaction with multilayer governments and multifaceted actors in a highly fragmented social sector. Such a situation affected the diffusion of novelty in social services in the challenging social work context, but it is also associated with various pressures that can be seen as the main driver of, but also the main challenge to, local CSOs developing social innovation. With the increased bureaucratisation of the highly fragmented public social sector, lower interinstitutional trust, combining different actors and multilevel administrative, policy, financial, resource demands and rules, local CSOs have shown the necessity but also the ability to navigate a multitude of layers of organisational and institutional borders and arrangements.

As these types of organisations through the almost three decades showed significant flexibility and adaptability to operate within the post-conflict and unstable transitional context, which is always in a state of socio-political uncertainty, the role of civil society actors and local communities can be seen as the main drivers of social innovation in such a context. Here, social innovation comes into force as a response to the collaboration initiated by local civil actors due to the need for new service solutions, but also because of the pressure of overseas agencies for funding received and due to the public sector's failure to reach particular deprived or vulnerable social service groups with more preventive services. The findings also suggest that Bosnia may represent a form of laboratory for testing innovative nonprofit-based approaches, especially for international donors; this enables CSOs to increase their organisational knowledge in a challenging multilayer actor setting.

By applying institutional theory, in particular concepts of isomorphisms and networking, the dissertation contributes to new institutionalism linked to Baum's and Oliver's (1991, 1992) and Karlsson's (2008) arguments, which is contrary to early scholars' perspectives that tend to argue that external institutional factors and isomorphisms influence and shape organisations' behaviour to act alike. The dissertation highlights opportunities for agencies and organisations to

be more receptive to institutional demands and produce a greater impact on institutional practice to pursue legitimacy and credibility. As social problems often involve interdependencies among multiple actors, institutions and systems, the findings revealed that social innovation in the Bosnian multi-actor context is in line with recent research from the institutional theory perspective by directing attention to the interaction of networked actors and promoting the idea of re-negotiating among institutions or developing new ones (van Wijk et al., 2019). Following van Wijk et al.'s (2019) explanation, this dissertation showed that CSOs in Bosnia might operate in complex institutional contexts, but they can generate negotiation alternatives with different actors and then implement them in the institutional context by making changes in the field of social service provision and inducing social innovation within the social sector.

Third, the results of this dissertation indicated that collaboration and network formation in the Bosnian social sector are facilitated by a tripartite partnership involving three different actors (CSOs, donors and the public sector), all with greatly varying backgrounds and structures. This finding contributes to a better understanding of the role of actors' environments and the way they affect social innovation in the social service field. The partnership literature predominantly focused on actors' relationships, social innovation and barriers in high-income countries (Baron et al., 2018; European Commission, 2011a; Mendes et al., 2012; Rey-García et al., 2016; Shier & Handy, 2016), while relatively few (Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Morrar & Baba, 2022) empirically explored the environmental factors of institutional settings in low- and middle-income countries, with the legacy of war, lower trust and weak government. The findings of Articles 1 and 2 revealed that the interplay of multiple actors was necessary to improve the structure and shape of the post-conflict social sector in a fragmented Bosnian setting, which gradually led to the implementation of new, preventive and innovative services to address unmet services needs of a broad range of vulnerable social groups. However, as the organisational structures of involved actors differ and they often characterise or reflect the institutional setting in which they operate, the findings of Article 3 contributed to the resource-dependence theory by advancing the knowledge of the importance of different actors' environments/institutional factors influence on local CSOs in the development of social innovations from the perspective of a post-conflict context.

An important contribution regarding multi-actor collaboration in social innovation has additionally been made by increasing the understanding of the challenges and limitations that CSOs encounter in such relations. The findings contribute to the discussion around power relationships and tensions resulting in interactions among involved public and non-public actors, a topic of importance that has already been highlighted by several other scholars (Osborne & Brown, 2013; Eschweiler et al., 2018; Espiau, 2016; Sinclair & Baglioni, 2014; Teasdale et al., 2021). The findings also extend research interests on barriers to social innovation (Baron et al., 2018; European Commission, 2011a; Mendes et al., 2012; Rey-García et al., 2016; Shier & Handy, 2016). These contributions show that cross-sector collaboration induced by local CSOs can produce challenges that, in a given context, can limit the provision of social services and at the same time develop, diffuse and sustain social innovation. International donors present power influencers with their development interests and funding resources that foster collaboration between local CSOs and the public social sector and they set out the rules for how transformation in post-conflict society should be operationalised. At the same time, changing or decreasing donor funding, which is more project-based, fixed and temporary, affects the sustainability of socially innovative services provided by CSOs. Furthermore, the high degree of interdependence affects the position of local CSOs and the unwillingness of the public sector to allocate funding or to do so in an untransparent manner, as well as accepting that CSOs relying heavily on donor funding are not always in a good position to advocate with governments at a higher level or gain support. It seems a challenging relationship between the public/government organisations and local CSOs as a result of high inflows of donor funding rooted in the past that still somehow reflects an element of distrust towards civic engagement and insufficient recognition of CSOs for their efforts within the social sector by public organisations. The Bosnian fragmented social sector is also characterised by a strong hierarchy of actors with different institutions, norms, values and rules that may limit the wider recognition of CSOs' socially innovative efforts. A lack of structural mechanisms, public policies and strategies to support social innovation also contributes to the challenges. However, although they encounter difficulties during interactions with involved actors, the findings of the articles suggest that even with less power, CSOs are still able to navigate the challenging spaces of Bosnia's social sector by

networking, bringing new ideas into the policy and practice, and having an aptitude for influencing processes of change.

6.2 Implications for research

A recent scope review article showed that qualitative research methods have predominantly been utilised in research on social innovation, especially concerning social services (Husebø et al., 2021). In this dissertation, combining qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative data (the survey) helped to gain a more systematic and broader insight into the researched topic and to publish three articles that could be useful for other scholars in their research. The mixed method approach brought together qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research question, which has not been widely applied previously to explore social innovation and collaborative aspects.

This present study has further developed a research instrument for examining CSOs' capability for collaborative perspective and social innovation in social services provision, which can also be used and tested by other scholars interested in the given topic. Note also that, to the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to empirically research social innovation in the Bosnian context from the perspective of civil society and the social sector. Even though the selection of units analysed in this dissertation is based on a non-randomised sampling technique, which does not provide an opportunity for generalisation of obtained data, I believe that employing mixed methods research and different strategies implemented in the sample selection reduced the limitations of non-randomised sampling and provided rich insights into the researched phenomenon in the given context.

Another important implication of this dissertation is related to scientific readership. Namely, the PhD dissertation-related papers are published in three different disciplinary and thematic journals that cover the fields of sociology, social work/public administration and social development. Reaching these three fields reflects the interdisciplinarity of the dissertation and the fields within which it has operated. Publishing articles in those journals has not only allowed me to target different audiences, but also to present the dissertation results in a way that reaches scholars and readers in those specific disciplinary-thematic areas.

6.3 Implications for practice

The work presented here can have profound implications for future studies concerning social services, social welfare, CSOs and social innovation in a complex/post-conflict social welfare setting; it could also aid governmental and international stakeholders to better structure their policies, funding and position regarding CSOs' initiatives within the social welfare field and, eventually, lead to new programmes and support schemes. The findings and conclusions of the three articles highlight the role of socially oriented CSOs in initiating cross-sector collaboration and social innovation in the social sector field and suggest that the public social sector in Bosnia should reconfigure the position of CSOs as service providers. Such reconfiguration should be done by changing the widely accepted traditional view that the state is the main provider of social services and the typical post-conflict view of donor-driven CSOs that are predominantly seen through the NGO-isation process (Choudry & Kapoor, 2013; Ungsuchaval, 2016) and shifting it towards examining their potential role in societal transformation (Jacobsson & Saxonberg, 2013). The results can provide a broader understanding of the possibilities that CSOs can contribute to social practice, so the findings of this dissertation could be of interest to scholars, researchers, lecturers and students in the fields of sociology, public administration, social work, social development and third sector research. In addition, the dissertation may imply that scholars and practitioners are interested not only in social work, social development and social innovation but also in those who have interests in topics related to new public governance and public administration (state and non-state actors' relations).

The implications of this dissertation may go beyond the case country presented in this work. The framework explored can be seen as relevant for understanding some aspects of social innovation development from the wider perspective of Western Balkan regional countries. Apart from geographical proximity, these countries share historical, welfare and cultural ties, but also the same socialist past, destructions and consequences of conflicts from the nineties, turbulent and gloomy post-socialist transitional development, and economic hardships. International multilateral, bilateral and non-profit donors' actors and foreign aid have had a huge impact on the whole Western Balkan region, having played a critical role in the development of the civil society sector in all regional

countries and in institutionalising civil society engagement in service delivery across the region.

6.3 Methodological Limitations

Since every study faces certain limitations, it is also necessary to analyse the regrading of this dissertation. First, a lack of reliable data on social serviceoriented CSOs with the experience of the implementation of social innovation in the social sector practice affected the size of the samples implemented in this study. The non-probability sample used in both qualitative and quantitative parts of this dissertation does not offer an opportunity for statistical generalisation to the broader population regarding the bias of the findings. Sampling bias can be a significant problem in applying non-random sampling; therefore, a strategy was implemented to reduce possible bias and ensure that the population sample was as representative as possible. This strategy included preselection interviews that were designed with the help of international donors and CSO experts who possess knowledge regarding the sector and the researched topic. Based on expert knowledge, it was possible to identify other international organisations and CSOs with experience in social service delivery and the development of social innovation through their work. However, this also raised another limitation, as only those CSOs identified by international donors with whom they collaborated in the social innovation funded project streams had a chance to participate in this study. This limitation also raised the question of the sample size and sample profile, since only those CSOs included in this study through the applied strategy were able to participate, while others did not have a chance to do so, which may limit sample representativeness.

The abovementioned points about the lack of data related to CSOs affected the statistical analysis employed for the quantitative part of the study in Articles 2 and 3. Furthermore, the generalisability of the results is limited because the sample was restricted to 15 participants for the qualitative part of the study and 120 participants for the quantitative part. Although the selection of units analysed in this dissertation is based on a non-randomised sampling technique, I believe that employing mixed methods research and different strategies implemented in the sample selection partly reduced the limitations of non-randomised sampling and provided rich insights into the researched phenomenon in the given context.

Another limitation relates to the understanding of the concept of social innovation by the representatives of participating organisations, and by the different professional roles that the participants in the survey had. Since it is a relatively new term in the Bosnian context, which has not been enclosed at the policy level, certain relevant definitions and explanations were presented to the participants before the interview sessions and during the survey. However, it is difficult to know how they eventually understood it. This issue raised another problem that was faced during this study: There is a lack of prior research studies on the topic of the transformative role of CSOs in service provision and social innovation in war-torn countries. This lack of prior research was the main reason for applying an exploratory rather than the explanatory design of mixed methods research for this study.

This limitation is also connected to the questionnaire designed for the survey in this dissertation. It was largely contextualised by qualitative parts and built on the interviews, but also from theory, which improved the validity and reliability to a certain extent. However, since I discovered the lens of collaboration and social innovation later in my work when analysing the data and through discussions at the conferences, it became apparent that the survey questionnaire was too wide and covered too many components. A shorter questionnaire could have led to more precise question formulation and avoided the variety of question styles and variables applied. The variations in the variables and question types used to uncover the complexity of topics related to social innovation and multi-actor collaboration made measuring the survey questionnaire more difficult. In analysing the survey data, it became evident that the different forms of questions in the questionnaire increased the complexity and limited the ability to test and evaluate the entire questionnaire, but only a few questions could be evaluated – for example, the scale applied in Article 3. Furthermore, since conducting the survey conducted at the beginning of 2019, some new articles on quantities measuring social innovation and collaboration–partnership have appeared, which most likely would have provided some new perspectives to better capture those dimensions in the questionnaire. Furthermore, a possible limitation relates to the socially desirable answers received from respondents during the interview and the survey, as targeted questions covered topics related to CSOs' relations with other actors. Since they rely heavily on the resources and support of international donors and the public sector, I was aware of the possibility of socially desirable responses,

which I tried to reduce by using an anonymous online survey and considering potential sensitive questions. Also, due to the complexity of multi-actor collaboration and social innovation, it was not possible to cover all dimensions in one questionnaire.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

In the literature, social innovation is often discussed through social innovation projects, which was not the case in this dissertation. Thus, further analysis of CSO-led projects, services or interventions perceived as socially innovative could be recommended for future research.

Furthermore, as this study is largely related to only CSOs and international donors' viewpoints, possible areas of future research should include the perspectives of the public administration and the social welfare sector in Bosnia. In fact, the analysis of institutions may help researchers evaluate potential outcomes resulting in more effective interaction, co-creation and resourceintegration activities among various actors in a post-conflict context. Furthermore, as there is a dearth of research on social innovation in service provision from the fragile, post-conflict context, I recommend further exploration of the behaviours and attitudes among international donors and the state/public stakeholders towards change and innovation within the social sector field.

Since the focus of this study was more on a collaborative perspective, it would be useful to explore one specific socially innovative service (model or intervention) designed and implemented by CSOs in more depth to explain their socially innovative components in a more detailed way. Furthermore, the experiences of service users in designing, implementing, and using CSO-led socially innovative services as well as collaborating with the mentioned actors are lacking in this dissertation and should be further explored. In addition, all three articles showed the limitations of public sector mechanisms, as well as available and reliable data about the scope and size of CSOs in the country. Future research could include an analysis of the possibilities and limitations of current statistical data on CSOs in Bosnia and make suggestions for improving the official statistical data that will include aspects such as social services CSOs and social innovation.

Furthermore, this dissertation identified the issues that may affect local CSOs, including the sustainability of implemented socially innovative services,

financial constraints and the withdrawal of foreign donors. Therefore, there is a need to explore new trends, possibilities and challenges for local CSOs to move towards securing longer-term core funds, such as funding from private companies or contacting services with local authorities and government, to better position direct service delivery; to more effectively scale up their innovative services, pilots and interventions; and to achieve greater sustainability.

Regarding social innovation and CSOs, it could be interesting to conduct a comparative study between Bosnia and other East European countries that underwent post-communist transition and civil society development. Furthermore, apart from external, environmental factors that affect local CSOs' development of social innovation, more knowledge is needed to understand the influence of internal organisational factors that affect organisations' development of social innovation in a challenging, resource-scarce environment. Doing so could enhance the understanding of the concept of social innovation from an intra-organisational perspective, including organisational culture, climate, leadership, collaboration and learning.

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Part two: Appendices

Appendix A

Participation invitation letter

This is an inquiry about inviting you to participate in a research project which is being managed by Aleksandar Bozic who is a PhD Research Fellow at the Department of Social Work and Sociology, at the University of Agder, Norway and this research activity is the part of his doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information about the aim of the research PhD project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This project aims to examine the role of socially oriented community-based organisations (CSOs) in the delivery of social services and determine their capacity to socially innovate by addressing welfare challenges and collaborating with other actors by introducing community-specific service solutions. This research project will attempt to find out how the representatives of local CSOs, international donors and public sector actors understand the concept of social innovation and collaboration and what challenges and opportunities they face to plan, initiate and disseminate potentially innovative social services/programmes/interventions. The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is being selected for this research project.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Agder, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Work and Sociology

Why are you being asked to participate?

- This study will include the selection of the representatives (donors, country representatives, programme and projects officers, and volunteers) in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have been working or collaborating with local CSOs on delivering the programmes and projects in the social welfare field (for children, youths and families).

- Because you have been working for the main international donor development organisation in BiH and possess significant experience in the collaboration with local CSOs in the delivery of social programmes/projects and services, we are inviting you to participate in this research study.

What does participation involve for you?

We are contacting you in order to notify you about the purpose of the projects and ask you to participate in an interview. **The interview will last approximately 60 minutes;**

it will be sound recorded so that we can conduct an analyse later. The questions that will be asked during the interview are related to your experience with the implementation of the social programmes and projects, collaboration with CSOs and the development of potential social innovative practices within CSOs in BiH.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- In connection with the institution responsible for the project, the access to the personal data will have PhD researcher Aleksandar Bozic.
- The interviews will be completely anonymous without soliciting personally identifiable information.
- Code of the practice of the University of Agder for processing personal data in research and students' dissertations will be applied
- The collected data-sound recorded data from the interviews will be stored at the personal, professional computer at UiA which is locked and the cloud system of the project manager-researcher, which is locked and not possible to access without the code.
- Maintaining respondent confidentiality is very important for the PhD project. Therefore, your identity will not be disclosed in the materials that are published, and it will not be recognised either directly or indirectly. We will remove any potential personal identifiers (such as names, job title, gender and organisational name). Also, the collected data from the interviews will be grouped and analysed thematically.
- Will be signed the consent form with each participant.

Appendix B

Consent form

The participation in a research project

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the primary purpose is to explore local CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their capacities to implement social services and create social innovation by addressing welfare challenges, collaborating with other actors and coming up with their community-specific services. This research project is being managed by Aleksandar Bozic who is a PhD Research Fellow at the Department of Social Work and Sociology, at the University of Agder, Norway and this research activity is part of his doctoral dissertation.

In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The purpose of this study is to assess the role of socially oriented CSOs in the delivery of welfare services in a post-conflict context and to explore CSOs' potential capacities to socially innovate by addressing welfare challenges, collaborating with other actors and coming up with their own, community-specific, solutions. The case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina is being selected for this research project.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Agder, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Work and Sociology

Why are you being asked to participate?

- This study will include the selection of the representatives (project officers, programme officers, administrative-financial officers and volunteers) from local CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have been working on delivering the projects and services in the social welfare field (for children, youths and families).

- Because you have been working for socially oriented civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have much experience in the delivery of social services, we are inviting you to participate in this research study

What does participation involve for you?

We are contacting you in order to notify you about the purpose of the projects and ask you to participate through interviews. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes; it will be a sound recorder so that we can conduct an analyse later. The questions that will

be asked during the interview are related to your experience with the social innovation of non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you could withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.
Participants have the right to withdraw from a research study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study or part of the study, you can contact the accountable persons stated below in the information letter and the affiliated University, and they will destroy any potentially researched or stored data.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and following data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).
- In connection with the institution responsible for the project, the access to the personal data will have PhD researcher Aleksandar Bozic.
- The interviews will be completely anonymous without soliciting personally identifiable information.
- Code of the practice of the University of Agder for processing personal data in research and students' dissertations will be applied.
- The collected data-sound recorded data from the interviews will be stored at the personal, professional computer at UiA which is locked and the cloud system of the project manager-researcher, which is locked and not possible to access without the code.
- Maintaining respondent confidentiality is very important for our project. Therefore, your identity will not be disclosed in the materials that are published, and it will not be recognised either directly or indirectly. Any potential personal identifiers (such as names, job title, gender and organisational name) will be removed. Also, the collected data from the interviews will be grouped and analysed thematically.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
- The project is scheduled to end on 31.01.2022.
- The collected data and digital recorders will be kept until 31.12.2024 for the purpose of potential future research and follow-up study.
- The personal data will be stored, UiA research server-personal cloud system locked and protected with a personal code, and access to it will have only the researcher who conducted the study.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you,
- request that your personal data be deleted,
- request that incorrect personal data about you be corrected/rectified,
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Agder, Faculty of Social Science, Department of Social Work and Sociology and NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is following data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The University of Agder, Faculty of Social Science, Department of Social Work and Sociology via Aleksandar Bozic, the phd research fellow,
- Supervisor: Tale Steen-Johnsen, Associate Professor, University of Agder, Faculty of Social Science, Department of Social Work and Sociology,
- Our Data Protection Officer at University of Agder: Ina Danielsen [insert name of the data protection officer at the institution responsible for the project],
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

PhD Research Fellow

Aleksandar Bozic

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the PhD project and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in an interview
- ☐ for my personal data to be stored after the end of the project for (insert purpose of storage, e.g. follow-up studies)

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until 31.12.2024 (for potential follow up the study and further research)

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Appendix C

An interview guide for international donors' representatives

- How do you see and perceive the CSO sector in BiH in a current socioeconomic-political context?
- How have local CSOs and international donors affected the social services sector in BiH? What is the organizational/human capacity of local CSOs in BiH regarding delivering social services?
- How do you understand social innovation in social services? Can you present some of the preventive or interventive programmes/services/interventions that you have funded and implemented in a collaboration with local CSOs and that can be perceived as socially innovative? How do you choose potential CSOs for this purpose?
- What is the "newness" thing that was implemented? Is this service/model/approach existing before? How has it changed or improved the well-being of service users? What has that changed or improved at organisational, service, institutional or the system levels?
- What are the main obstacles and opportunities for local CSOs to implement socially innovative services and practices in the social sector in BiH? How do you see the role of international and public actors in the development of social innovation in BiH?
- How would you describe the collaborative relationship between local CSOs and international donors? How does it work? What is that you have really experienced within this collaboration?
- Can you express the most positive and negative things that you have come across during this relationship? Are there possibilities for co-production or co-financing of the implemented services?
- How would you describe the collaborative relationship between CSOs and public administration (local, entity, central government, public institutions) regarding delivering social innovation and social services? How has it operated in the context of BiH?

Appendix D

An interview guide for CSOs' representatives

- In your opinion, how has the role of CSOs in the Bosnian social sector field evolved over the years, following the war?
- How do you understand the term social innovation in social services? How do you see the role of CSOs in social innovation? Could you describe one of your preventive or interventive programmes/services that you have implemented and that you perceived as socially innovative? What elements do you perceive as socially innovative when it comes to implemented programme/service? • What is the "newness" element that you implemented? Has this service existed before? Where did you get ideas for those services or "newness" elements? How has it changed or improved the well-being of service users? Has that changed/improved something at service, institutional or societal levels?
- What are the chances for CSOs to equally obtain fundraising for their innovative projects, either by public or international donors? What about the funds and network opportunities? How much they are accessible? Are donors interested in supporting "socially innovative projects/components"?What are donors' intentions regarding supporting socially innovative projects or components? What about the public sector organisations' support?
- How would you describe the collaboration between CSOs and public administration (local, entity, central government and public institutions) regarding delivering CSOs-led social services and social innovation?
- How would you describe the collaboration between CSOs and international donors? How does it work? What is that you experienced within this collaboration when it comes to the provision of social services and social innovation? • Which segments of public sector and international donors' settings (e.g. legal, financial, organisational, policy, institutional demands) do you find influential (or less influential) when it comes to CSOs-led social services and social innovation?
- What are the main obstacles and opportunities to create socially innovative services and practices in the social sector in BiH? Potential options for achieving the sustainability of the implemented services/programmes?

Appendix E

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the delivery of social services and their potential to create social innovation in a post-conflict context

Referansenummer

379517

Registrert

18.09.2018 av Aleksandar Bozic - bozic.aco@gmail.com

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Agder / Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap / Institutt for sosiologi og sosialt arbeid

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Aleksandar Bozic, aleksandar.bozic@uia.no, tlf: 96724557

Type prosjekt

Forskerprosjekt

Prosjektperiode

01.02.2018 - 31.01.2021

Status

29.07.2020 - Vurdert

Vurdering (2)

29.07.2020 - Vurdert

NSD has assessed the change registered on 28.07.2020.

SurveyMonkey is a data processor for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

We find that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 289.07.2020.2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to continue.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow-up the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

28.11.2018 - Vurdert

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, presupposing that it is carried out in accordance with the information given in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 28.11.2018, as well as dialogue with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing general categories of personal data until 31.12.2024.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA
NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS
Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

SurveyXact is a data processor for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow up the progress of the project underway (every other year) and at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded/is being carried out in accordance with what is documented.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Lisa Lie Bjordal
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Appendix F

Survey questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina:
Social innovation in social services

The aim of this survey is to assess the role of civil society organisations, active in the provision of social services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the development of social innovation. It is being conducted as part of a PhD research project in Sociology carried out at the University of Agder in Norway. The findings of this survey will be reported as part of a thesis and may also be published in academic journals and conferences.

Several features of social innovation have emerged in the literature: *its social nature (meet the needs of disadvantaged groups neglected by the state/market more effectively than existing solutions); novelty (services, models, products or processes); adaptation, diffusion and transformation of social relations in forms of new principles of collective action, governance and participation* (Anheier et al., 2014; Caulier-Grice et al., 2010; Mulgan, 2019). *Furthermore, social innovation includes new actors (grassroots initiatives and social entrepreneurs) or redefine the roles of existing actors (civil society groups or local governments) and promote a more diverse range of social services* (Anheier et al., 2014; Moulaert et al., 2013). *Civil society organisations are identified in the literature as one of the actors that generate social innovation and following Krlev et al. (2019) insights, the collaborative engagement of various actors (civil society, the market, and the government) to alleviate social problems leads to social innovations.*

It takes about 9 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The survey is completely anonymous. Your participation in the research is on a voluntary basis and all data collected in this way will be confidentially treated in accordance with the European Data Protection Regulation and the rigorous academic and research principles of the Norwegian Research Center. You can decide not to take part and withdraw for the survey any time up until you press "FINISH" at the end of the questionnaire. Collected data will be stored securely for up to 5 years and will then be destroyed. The data will be stored in a password protected file by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Aleksandar Bozic, a PhD research fellow at Agder University, at email: aleksandar.bozic@uia.no or by phone +47 38 14 19 79.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information describing the above-named study and I give consent for my personal data to be stored after the end of the projects (until 31.12.2024)

☐ Yes

I agree to take part in the study

☐ Yes

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UNIVERSITY OF AGDER

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina:
Social innovation in social services

1. What is the type of your organisation?

◯ Foundation

◯ Civil society organization (Non-governmental organisation)

2. How long have you been working in the civil society sector?

◯ 1 year

◯ 2-5 years

◯ 5-10 years

◯ 10 -15 years

◯ 15-20 years

◯ More than 20 years

3. What is your position in the organisation?

◯ Director or Presidents

◯ Programme officer

◯ Project officer

◯ Expert professional (psychologist, social worker, coordinator of activities and etc.)

◯ Programme or project assistant

◯ Administrative-financial officer

◯ Volunteer

◯ Other (write down)

4. At what level your organisation operates?

◯ at a municipality level

◯ within multiple municipalities

◯ on the territory of one canton

◯ in two or more cantons

◯ on the territory of one entity

◯ nationally, across BiH

5. How long has your organisation been running?

◯ Less than 2 years ◯ 11-15 years

◯ 2-5 years ◯ 16-20 years

◯ 6-10 years ◯ More than 20 years

6. Who is the main target group of your organisation?

◯ Children and youth

◯ Women

◯ Adults with disability

◯ Children and youth with disability

◯ National minorities

◯ Refugees and returnees

◯ Foreigners

◯ Older people

◯ People with sever illnesses

◯ Social vulnerable individuals and families (poverty, homelessness, etc.)

◯ LGBT population

◯ Persons with addictions

◯ Other

7. How many paid employees does your organisation have?

◯ 1

◯ 2-5

◯ 5-10

◯ 10 and more

8. **What are the two value characteristics that determine the importance of CSOs in BiH?**

☐ Flexibility in solving many problems

☐ Inventiveness

☐ Networking

☐ Efficiency in the use of resources and resources

☐ Knowledge generator

☐ Productivity

☐ Reliability and responsibility

9. **Please rank on a scale from 0 to 100 the recognition of CSOs in BiH as a potential channel for spreading new ideas and practices in the field of social welfare and services?**

0	100
◯	

10. **Has your organisation implemented some of the following activities in the past two years:**

	Yes	No	I am not sure
new project for service users or target group	◯	◯	◯

	Yes	No	I am not sure
tested or replicated a new service, activity, or model for the user group	○	○	○
implemented strategic planning	○	○	○
changed internal working processes	○	○	○
improved the participation of the service users in the organization or in the implementation of projects	○	○	○
developed a new way of fundraising	○	○	○
applied new forms of public advocacy	○	○	○
attend training or education in order to develop new skills and knowledge	○	○	○
established partnerships with other NGOs	○	○	○
established a new or continue existing partnerships with public institutions	○	○	○

	Yes	No	I am not sure
established partnerships with other NGOs in the region or abroad	◯	◯	◯
implemented activities aimed at improving the obligations and responsibilities of public institutions (working groups, trainings, multisectoral teams, protocols, etc.)	◯	◯	◯

11. **Has your organisation transferred/replicated a model of work, service, or intervention in the past two years from another organization from the country, region or abroad?**

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not sure

12. **Has your organisation in the past two years, transferred some of your model of work, service or knowledge and skills to another CSO or public institution in BiH?**

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not sure

13. **Has your organisation gradually scaled-up some of its project and program activities in the last two years?**

◯ Yes

◯ We are planning to do it

◯ No

◯ Not sure

14. **How important are the following internal organisational factors for the development of socially innovative projects and initiatives?**

	1. Not so important	2. Important	3. Very important
taking time to think, exchange ideas, research	◯	◯	◯
finances to test new creative ideas	◯	◯	◯
adequate number of employees	◯	◯	◯
the interest of the board members	◯	◯	◯
organisational culture and climate	◯	◯	◯
management style of executive leadership	◯	◯	◯
integration of learned lessons and good practices	◯	◯	◯
the skills and knowledge of staff members	◯	◯	◯

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15. On a scale of 1–5, where 1 is 'not important' and 5 is 'very important,' how important do you find the following external environmental factors to be for the development of socially innovative services?

	1. Not important				5. Very important
Secure funding	○	○	○	○	○
Tax relief	○	○	○	○	○
Legislation adjustment to NGO/CSO service provision and innovation	○	○	○	○	○
Incorporating social innovation into public strategies and policies	○	○	○	○	○
Licensing and accreditation of innovative services/project	○	○	○	○	○
Quality standards in service	○	○	○	○	○
Openness of public institutions to cooperate in innovative services/projects	○	○	○	○	○
Willingness of service users to participate in innovative services/ projects	○	○	○	○	○
Sustainability of Implemented innovative services/ projects	○	○	○	○	○

16. **What is the most limiting factor for CSOs in relation to donors support when it comes to the development of social innovation?**

○ Inflexibility of donations and grants

○ Donor deemed terms and restricted funds

○ Limited sources of donor funds

○ Complicated donor reporting requirements

○ Non-transparency in allocation of funds

○ Inadequate allocations for indirect costs (human resources, office costs, travel etc.)

○ Inadequate allocations for evaluation and evaluation

17. **Which funding sources were most often available to your organisation over the past two years? Please rate on scale 1 (not available) to 5 (easily available)**

	1 Not available	2	3	4	5 Easily available
EU funds	○	○	○	○	○
Funds and grants from the local community (cities, municipalities, public organisations)	○	○	○	○	○
Grants and funds from ministries, governments, agencies	○	○	○	○	○
Funds of International development organisations and Embassies in BiH	○	○	○	○	○
Domestic foundations' funds	○	○	○	○	○
Funds of foreign foundations and organisations outside of BiH	○	○	○	○	○
Funds of the business sector	○	○	○	○	○
Individual funds (membership, donations)	○	○	○	○	○
Revenues from sales	○	○	○	○	○

18. **Does your organisation have a contractual relationship with public sector institutions for the delivery of social services?**

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ We used to have it, but not anymore

◯ Not sure

19. How often do public institutions at the local level involve representatives of your organisation in decision-making processes and public policy?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Frequently

◯ Regularly

20. Rank your satisfaction with the level of cooperation of the public sector with the civil society sector in BiH? (one star - very dissatisfied, five stars - very satisfied)

Û	ō	ō	ō	Û

21. How often does your organisation evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the implemented projects and programmes?

◯ Never

◯ Rarely

◯ Sometimes

◯ Frequently

◯ Regularly

22. What is the main reason why your organisation decide to evaluate the projects and programmes outcomes and impact?

○ Improving a project or service

○ Staff interest

○ Cost-effectiveness

○ Donor requirement

○ Impact on public policy

○ Recommendation by an external consultant

○ The organisation itself requires it to determine the final outcome

○ Increase the oganisation reputation in the community

23. What is the main challenge for organisations to conduct the evaluation impact and assessments?

○ Lack of time

○ High costs

○ Lack of knowledge and skills among staff

○ Uninformed about appropriate evaluation tools

○ Lack of necessary technology

○ Different donor requirements

○ Difficult measurable project outcomes and impacts

○ Unreliable project data

24. In the case of establishing a state-level programme for the promotion of social innovation with CSOs, what would be the most important aspect for you?

○ Set up a special fund for socially innovative projects

○ Funds for testing and piloting new initiatives

○ Longer-term funds and grants (3 years)

○ Set up an umbrella organization to support the development of social innovations

○ Exchange of experiences and mutual learning with European organizations

○ Straighten the greater openness of the public sector to CSOs initiatives

○ Adapting laws, strategies and public policies

○ Education and training for the development of socially innovative projects

Appendix G

Articles 1, 2 and 3

1) Bozic, A. (accepted, forthcoming in 2022). Unpacking social innovation by non-state service providers in the challenging social work practice. *Journal of Comparative Social Work.*

2) Bozic, A. (2020). Global trends in a fragile context: public–nonpublic collaboration, service delivery and social innovation. *Social Enterprise Journal, 17*(2), 260-279. https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-12-2019-0100

3) Bozic, A. (2021) Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: examining external factors affecting social service NGOs. *Development Studies Research, 8*(1), 170-180. https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2021.1950020

Unpacking social innovation by nonstate service providers in the challenging social work practice

(accepted)

Aleksandar Bozic

Abstract

Nonstate providers of social services such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in the delivery of social services and the development of social work practice, especially in low- and middle-income countries where public services are often limited. In such settings, NGOs mobilize various resources, implement novel activities or service delivery models that may lead to social innovation. However, social work literature does not often incorporate such perspectives. This article examines the way social innovation manifests itself in the practices of NGOs delivering social services for vulnerable groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By analyzing 15 interviews, the study identified three interrelated key mechanisms that drive social innovation by local NGO service providers: a) transcopy, b) coactive novelty and c) knowledge construction. The processes underlying these mechanisms include transnational networking, borrowing and adapting, contextual modification, relationship-building, pioneering novel solutions, knowledge production and transfer. Yet, despite NGOs possibly being a driving force behind social innovation, the challenging social work context in which they operate and their high reliance on changeable international donor-driven funding may limit and isolate NGO-led innovative services in social work practice.

Keywords: Social services, social innovation, NGOs, adaptation, social work, international donors

Introduction

Reductions in welfare provision and increasing demographic pressure have led to scholarly interest in social innovation as a way of addressing emerging social problems and achieving sustainable development *by various actors* (Anheier et al., 2014; Millard et al., 2017; Oosterlynck et al., 2020). Although there is a natural connection between social innovation and social work (Parpan-Blaser and Huttemann, 2018), this topic has been largely neglected in social work research and education (Flynn, 2017). However, a recent social work conference has also highlighted the need for a greater emphasis on emerging novel practices and innovative social services due to increasingly complex challenges facing the world today (International Federation of Social Workers, 2020).

Social innovation can be developed by public, private or nongovernmental organizations and can be emerged in various countries and socio-political contexts in order to resolve global and local issues (Moulaert et al., 2013). However, in the literature, much attention is given to social innovation as part of the top-down approach of the public sector in advanced economies with respect to improving public administration and service delivery, where spending on welfare is relatively high (Steiner et

al., 2021). There is a need for a more explicit focus on the role of nonstate actors in emerging social innovation, especially in the context where exists fragmented social sector system, multiple actors and where a public sector failed to meet the necessary needs of vulnerable citizens and service users (Ayob et al., 2016, Steiner et al., 2021). In such unfavorable settings, according to Stott and Tracey (2018), NGOs can be an important factor to stimulate innovation and facilitate interactions between various actors.

To bridge this research gap, this paper examines social innovation by nongovernmental social services organizations, with a special focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia). This country provides a useful example of a challenging social work practice. Although there is a long tradition of social work in Bosnia, beginning in the 1920s as part of former Yugoslavia (Hessle, 2020), the brutal war in the 90s and a turbulent post-conflict transition period have significantly damaged the field of social work in the country (Hessle, 2020; Maglajlic and Selimovic, 2014). The current public social services sector faces multiple challenges and fails to meet the fundamental social needs of the vulnerable beneficiaries, while the provision of preventive social services has been almost exclusively the domain of NGOs in Bosnia for more than 25 years. NGOs' activities are predominantly supported by funding from international aid donor organizations, which first partnered with local NGOs, including those in the social services sector, to reconstruct the country after the war (Žeravčić, 2016).

In spite of the possible challenges that may arise from the interaction of NGOs with international aid donors and public welfare organizations, recent studies show that this interdependence has led to social innovation in response to the complex needs of various service users groups in resource-limited areas, such as Bosnia (Bozic 2017, IN Foundation, 2019). However, it is still unclear what characterizes social innovation when NGOs are involved in the challenging social work and service sector in Bosnia, where structural innovation supports are completely nonexistent. Therefore, this study investigated the following research questions: How does social innovation generate by nonstate service providers (local NGOs) in the Bosnian social work practice? What types of mechanisms and processes of social innovation arise from the involvement of NGOs in the provision of services and how do they manifest in the practice?

These questions are addressed in the following sections: the theoretical concept, methodology, results, discussion of results, and conclusion.

Social Innovation

Although research interest in social innovation has increased, to date there is no comprehensive and unified definition of the phenomenon and research on this topic is in a pre-theoretical stage of development (Ayob et al., 2016). There are different interdisciplinary approaches to social innovation and diverse explanations, which can lead to definition confusion (Husebø et al., 2021). This article embedded the understanding of social innovation from the work of Moulaert et al. (2013), Moulaert & Maccallum (2019) and Oosrelynck et al., (2020). Accordingly, social innovation is defined by three interrelated principles: "it meets genuine needs neglected or exacerbated by the state/market apparatus; it creates new forms of eco-social/institutional relations and polities; and it collectively empowers people (especially marginalized people) to act – not only within the existent systems and modes of governance, but also towards transforming them (Moulaert & Maccallum, 2019, p. 4). Further, social innovations "add new actors (for example grassroots initiatives and social entrepreneurs) or redefine the role of existing actors (civil society organizations or local governments),

introduce new instruments (for example based on the participation of clients or empowering of citizens) and put forward new goals (such as recognizing diversity in social service provision)" (Oosrelynck et al., 2020, p. 8).

As the main focus of this article is on social innovation from the perspective of NGOs engaged in the provision of social services for vulnerable groups, they can be seen as one of the key actors of social innovation with their innovative engagement in a wide range of unresolved social problems (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018). It typically involves a higher degree of grassroots and bottom-up action than other forms of innovation (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; Krlev et al., 2019). Although they possess certain independence in terms of activities and diverse financial resources, NGOs often face financial pressures to deliver effective and affordable services at reduced costs that enable them to identify more alternative ways to invest their limited resources. At the same time, their primary focus is meeting the needs of vulnerable groups who are often neglected by a state or a public social sector, which leads them to generate novel ideas and new methods in precarious socio-political and economic settings (Anheier et al., 2014) and build connections with other actors to better integrate those service users into society (Baglioni and Sinclair, 2018, p. 90). In this way they are influencing the distribution of power in society (Scoppetta, Butzin, and Rehfeld, 2014). Further, the collaboration of NGOs with public and private actors in the implementation of novel initiatives often results in social innovation as these diverse actors blur the traditional boundaries between sectors (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012), and utilize different instruments and resources that stimulate the mutual learning process (Oosterlynck et al., 2020, p. 9).

Contrary to optimistic views surrounding social innovation, scholars have also highlighted some critical aspects and potential challenges. Although social innovation in the field of social welfare has partly been characterized by the collaborative approach, where public and nonpublic actors share resources and work to improve services (Husebø et al., 2021; Steiner et al., 2021), there are certain challenges associated with the collaborative relations between civic groups and local governments. A lack of political will to cooperate, insufficient legislation, or various bureaucratic contracting logics and pressure on civic actors for professionalization can all contribute to this situation (Eschweiler, Hulgård, and Lykke Noor Ørgaard, 2018). This may result in tension not only between organizations but also among actors involved, which may produce power imbalances and institutional barriers in terms of the implementation of social innovation (Mendes et al., 2012; Osborne et al., 2019). Further, contextual factors, including the lack of availability of funding and the existing policy framework (Krlev et al., 2019; Mulgan, 2019) can seriously inhibit the diffusion and sustainability of social innovation developed by the civil actors. Also, scaling up socially innovative services by NGOs can be challenging due to various constraints including high costs, lack of proper funding mechanisms and regulations, institutional barriers, security issues (in fragile states), participatory reluctance by users, or cultural and religious sensitivity issues (Agapitova & Linn, 2016; Westley et al., 2014). It is common for social innovation to be linked to a long-term change at the organizational, institutional or cultural level (Husebø et al., 2021; Moulaert & Maccallum, 2019), but according to Brandsen et al. (2015), often temporary innovative initiatives implemented by fragile organizations such as grassroots or NGOs with limited grants mostly result in modest and short-term growth.

Country Context

Despite some improvements over the years, Bosnia as a non-EU European country still has a standard of living that is below the average for EU member states (European Commission, 2018). The poverty gap before the COVID-19 crisis was 25%, with a significant unemployment rate, a high prevalence of informal or 'grey' labor and high levels of economic emigration (Šabanović, 2018). Poverty represents a particular threat to children's rights, with 30.6% of children aged 5–15 living below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2017). Negative demographic trends in the country, including a rapidly aging population, the lowest fertility rates in Europe, and high emigration rates for young people (United National Population Fund, 2020), are also expected to place massive pressure on the already ineffectual public social services in the next decade.

The country has a complex system of governance and a weak and fragmented social welfare system that is incapable of addressing the country's social challenges (Obradović, 2016). To end the Bosnian War, the Dayton peace agreement of 1995 created an ethnocentric Bosnian constitution with a complex multilevel government. The country comprises 4 tiers of governance at the state, entity (two entities and a district), cantons (ten cantons), and municipality levels with separate constitutions, parliaments, governments and judicial powers (Keil and Perry, 2015). This approach resulted in an inefficient multilevel government system, as well as political and legislative structures that encourage institutional fragmentation, widespread corruption and unharmonized social welfare systems (Keil and Perry, 2015). Accordingly, there are three distinct and unharmonized social welfare systems in the country, managed by various institutions, with varying rates of contribution and conditions for access to benefits (Lepir, 2015). This fragmented system leads to inequalities in the social and cash assistance available to safeguard people from certain risks (Obradović, 2016).

Most social work services and cash benefits are delivered at the municipality level through Centers for Social Work, which operate on a 'one-stop-shop' model. As Akesson (2016) argued these organizations have a limited capacity to provide modern and adequate services and address users' risks and vulnerabilities due to staff shortages, outdated approaches, overly complicated administrative procedures, financial restrictions and marginalization by politicians and public decision-makers. Consequently, according to some authors (e.g., Malkić and Hadžiristić, 2016; Maglajlic and Selimovic, 2014), public social institutions are continually reinforcing the social exclusion and inequality of vulnerable people and have shown a profound inability to implement preventative social interventions and services.

On the other hand, since the early 1990s, international aid donors have significantly intervened in state-building and reconstruction development in Bosnia. The donors represent a varied array of multilateral (e.g. United Nations agencies), bilateral (e.g. U.S. Agency for International Development), and international non-profit organizations or foundations (e.g. Save the Children). Over time, international donors also became key actors in the country. Among other things, they have taken a lead role in establishing local NGOs and partnering with them to implement policy and programme agendas (Žeravčić, 2016). As part of this approach, international donors conceptualize, fund, and transfer policy ideas from outside to redevelop social policy and practice in Bosnia (Maglajlic and Stubbs, 2017). NGOs that are funded by international aid donors deliver a range of preventive social services to address multiple social issues due to the failures of the public welfare sector (Papić et al., 2013). Although reliable systematic data is not available, it has been estimated

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that up to 27,000 local NGOs are currently registered in Bosnia, all with different forms, styles, capacities, and programmatic orientations (Žeravčić, 2016), but the number of NGOs that are actively involved in delivering social services is unknown.

However, according to Maglajlic and Stubbs (2017), international donors' interventions have encouraged further fragmentation of Bosnia's social policy without leading to real systemic change, whilst high aid dependence is the main reason for Bosnia's limited progress on institutional welfare reforms. Such a view is closely connected with a broad critical perspective of international donors' interventions and the distribution of foreign aid in the development context. The main weaknesses can be seen in donors' dominance and short-term funding projects planned on an ad-hoc basis without meeting the real needs of society, but the focus is more on achieving donor objectives, while the longer-term impact on meso and macro levels remains questionable (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012; de Zeeuw, 2005). In addition, some criticisms have related to donor-led approaches marked by unrealistic program expectations which are generally based on principles of the Western governance model and are often unsuitable for fragile and unstable post-conflict environments (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012; Islam, 2016).

Methodology

Sampling

This study adopted a qualitative research design and a purposive snowball sampling method. In this study, the primary focus was on identifying nongovernmental organizations that needed to have experience in providing social services to different groups of service users and be recognized as having created innovative solutions. Further, international donors and public sector organizations have also been taken into account due to the interaction between NGOs and other actors in Bosnia when it comes to delivering social services and achieving social innovation (author, 2021). Therefore, contact was first made with representatives of the two biggest international aid donor organizations in Bosnia that funded projects of local NGOs to initiate innovative social work and community-based preventive services, models and practice. Through this contact, other potential participants from local NGOs, donors and public institutions were identified. Ultimately, 15 interviews were conducted.

Participants

The NGO representatives came from ten officially registered local NGOs that were nominated by international donors as being active in implementing innovative social services concerning mental health, child protection, at-risk youth, children with learning disabilities, domestic violence, people with physical disabilities and violence prevention. The representatives held prominent positions as directors, program managers or service coordinators (social workers). The donor representatives came from three of the most prominent international organizations active within the Bosnian social services sector and held program management and other managerial roles. The two local government representatives held social worker qualifications and worked in partnership with NGOs on various social policy matters. The interviewed representatives held between 10 and 20 (and over) years of experience in the NGOs and social services sectors. In this paper, the NGO representatives are

identified as P1–P10; the donor representatives are identified as P11–P13 and the local government representatives are identified as P14 and P15.

Data collection and analysis

Before the data was collected, this study was reviewed by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data and received privacy, data protection and ethical approval. Data collection took place between January and February 2019. All participants provided signed consent forms regarding their participation in the study. Fifteen semi-structured interviews of between 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes were conducted, with fourteen being conducted face-to-face and one online. After the interviews, the audio files were transcribed, enabling a better understanding of the sense and depth of the data before they were coded.

The interviews were thematically analyzed, with codes and themes being generated from the qualitative dataset. Although this was an inductive process, beginning with the interviews, then identifying patterns and relationships in the data and extracting codes and themes, this process was also deductive, as it was informed by existing theoretical concepts concerning social innovation and NGOs. The interview data were manually coded as well as by using NVivo. By identifying specific patterns across codes, themes and subthemes were generated as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Coding Themes Derived From the Analysis of 15 Semi-Structured Interviews
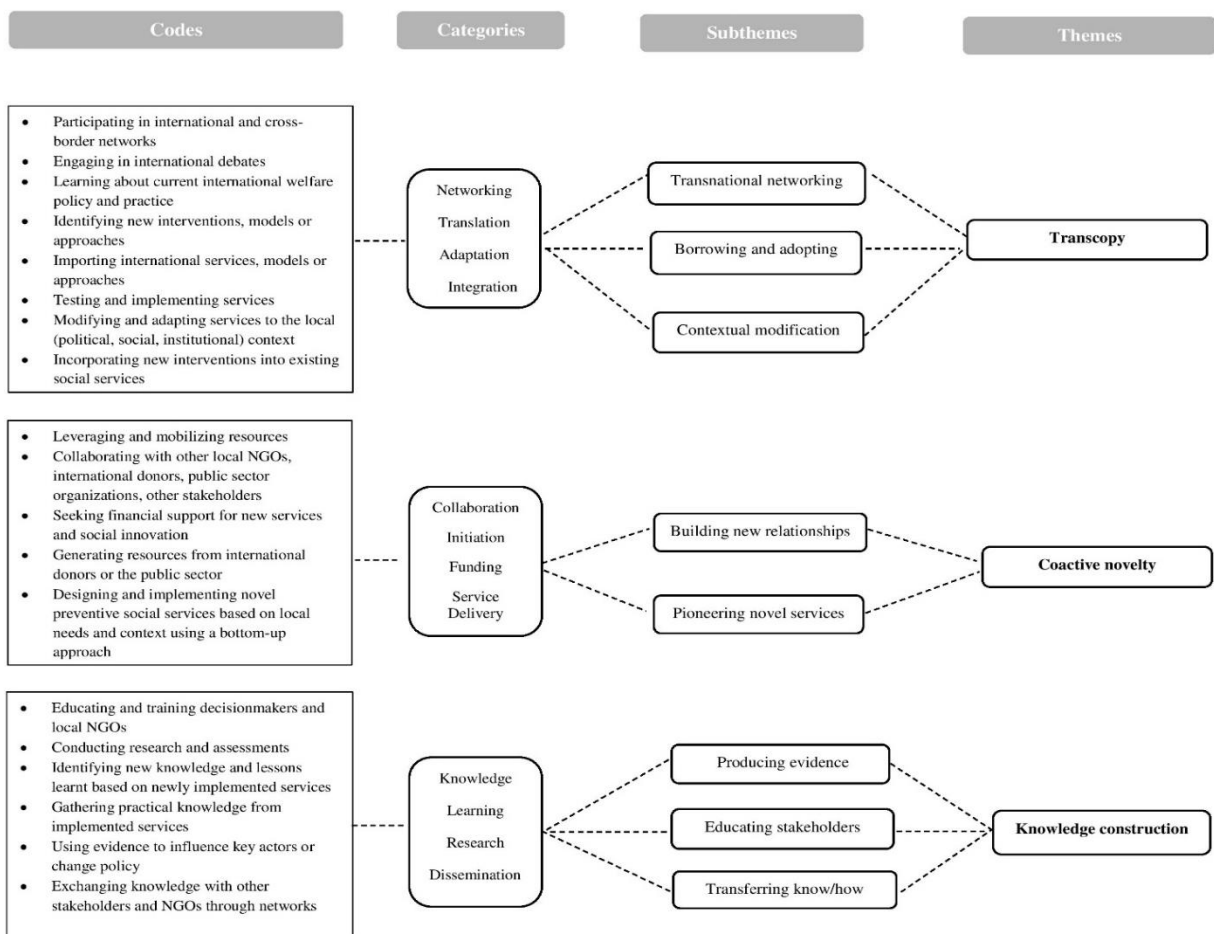
Results

Transcopy: Transnational Networking, Borrowing and Adapting, Contextual Modification

Transnational Networking

Most NGO and donor respondents reported that NGO activities in Bosnia often evolve through active collaboration at the European level. In the context of collaboration, it may be understood as the process by which resources, information, skills, knowledge, and values are pooled or transferred between more organizations (participants) by strengthening their partnerships, cooperation and alliance (Yan et al., 2018). All the NGO respondents belonged to partnerships with other NGOs across Europe and were active members of various international networks, cross-border projects, coalitions, and alliances. For example, respondent P2, from an NGO dealing with social inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, discussed how his organization benefits from international networks:

> Although our organization comes from Bosnia, which is not in the EU, we are members of umbrella organizations for our field of activity within the EU; we are talking about membership within organizations such as Inclusion Europe or the European Independent Living Network, which promote contemporary, innovative, community-based practices and standards that we try to replicate and implement within our country. So, innovations, in our case, come through the channels of networking.

> Indeed, there was strong agreement among the respondents that organizations can benefit from participation in such networks and cooperation with foreign NGOs, including the identification of solutions to shared problems. Respondents reported exchanging knowledge, tools, experiences and information, all of which strengthened their organizational capacities and contributed to the implementation of programs and services. Such collaborations are also opportunities to launch actions and projects with network partners to help transfer best practices and lessons learned concerning specific themes and issues.

Borrowing and adapting

This international networking has enabled local NGOs to import new practice models and adapt them to the Bosnian context. For example, the director of a local NGO working with at-risk children and families, respondent P1, described this process:

> Social innovations arise as a result of our networking, interaction, research and awareness of acceptable practices...this most often happens based on our observing the needs of vulnerable beneficiaries and researching good practices developed outside [the country], and then somehow trying to integrate these new models, services or practices in our environment.

> The Family Group Conference (FGC) Model is one of many innovative international practice models that have been copied, imported, adapted to the local context and implemented in Bosnia. FGC

is an internationally recognized child protection model that transferred from the Netherlands that has been implemented by NGOs and financially supported by international donors. The leading NGO responsible for scaling up this model across the country, in collaboration with other local NGOs, is a member of the European Network of Family Group Conference, which consists of over 100 representatives from 18 European countries. As respondent P1 explained, participating in this international network provided an ability for the NGO to learn the potentials of this model to prevent harm to at-risk children and families, then share it with other NGOs to test and adapt this model to the local context. FGCs have been scaled up and implemented in eight municipalities across the country.

According to two NGO representatives with experience implementing FGCs one innovative element of the model in the Bosnian context is its unique co-creation process in child protection. Co-creation can be understood as a two-way process of involvement of users in designing and delivering services with other public and nonpublic actors (Bason, 2017). Accordingly, service users are directly involved in the design and implementation of FGCs through a multisector partnership between local government, social workers, NGOs, and trained volunteers from the community. Over 300 FGCs have been implemented over several years resulting in better educational, protection, safety, health and family relation outcomes for 1500 children and families at risk. Although many lessons learned have been identified through the model implementation, it has not been broadly accepted or recognized by the wider public social sector.

Contextual Modification

Although there are signs of successful outcomes in how socially innovative models and practices are incorporated into the Bosnian social sector, NGOs face difficulties when importing such models and practices in the challenging social work setting. The representatives from all three groups of actors involved in the interviews explained that this has to do with different laws and regulations of highly decentralized Bosnian social sector, cost calculations, available resources, but also with political and socio-economic ambiances. One NGO representative (P8) further explained:

> When we talk about social innovation, we also have to look at the specific political, socioeconomic conditions in the country… all these new promised practices and models are developed in EU countries with more advanced socioeconomic conditions than in our country, so when we decide to test them in the complex environment of our country, we may face additional challenges… Actually, I would say it is also some kind of innovation, to adopt one practice from a rich resource country and make it sustainable, replicative, and innovative in such an insufficient resource context.

This comment reflects the views of other respondents concerning the transfer and adaptation of models from highly developed social policy contexts to less developed states like Bosnia. For example, in the case of the FGC model, respondent P3 explained that contextual challenges are regularly discussed at intervision meetings organized among the involved local partners. This has resulted in modifications to some components of the model, mainly in the process of monitoring families after organized conferences. Such modifications have been discussed with other members of the European Network of FGCs. The NGO respondents emphasized that they always consider resource limitations and potential structural barriers in the Bosnian social work context when deciding

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whether to import international models.

Coactive Novelty: Relationship Building and Pioneering Novel Solutions

Relationship Building

In Bosnia, international donors have created strong connections with local NGOs and public services providers. All the respondents confirmed that to obtain donor funding, NGOs must collaborate with public social services providers in the implementation of innovative services. Strong relationships between NGOs and the public sector may also result in the co-funding of innovation. For example, P15, a municipal government representative, commented:

> We have launched a new service healthy aging centers for the elderly provided in close cooperation between local NGOs, local government and international donors. The goal is to establish facilities and prevention programs for the elderly, where international donors will finance 30% and our administration 30%. Preventive services for children at risk in rural communities provided by local NGOs have also been established in this way, and these services can be considered innovative because they did not exist before.

However, the NGO representatives reported that not all local municipalities are willing to allocate funding to novel NGO services, even when such services respond to a real need in the local community. Co-funding is more likely to be arranged during the testing phase of a novel service, but it often ends once the donors withdraw and municipalities fail to integrate the tested services into the local welfare system. The problem is that funding provided by a municipality during the testing phase is much smaller than what NGOs usually receive from international donors. Municipalities may not be able to keep providing financial support to the NGO when the time comes to take over the funding aspect of the service fully due to the costs of sustaining the service and maintaining its quality. On the other hand, during interviews with NGO representatives, they confirmed that municipalities, as well as other public institutions, are often untransparent in their allocation of funding to support local NGOs' activities in the social sector. Local municipalities tend to favor and support some NGOs that are close to a municipality, while others are rarely considered even if they had better results or more effective services. Such situations require NGOs to invest significant effort to build, strengthen, and sustain intersectoral relationships to influence the public sector. The NGO representatives additionally explained that although collaboration with public sector organizations is expected, it can nevertheless be very challenging due to various political influences and pressures.

Pioneering Novel Solutions

As was further explored during the interviews, the representatives of a Dutch donor organization and its local Bosnia-based NGO partner jointly initiated a grant scheme to coordinate and financially support local NGOs to develop socially innovative social work solutions for at-risk children, youth and families. The accepted proposals of local NGOs receive 3–4 years of financial support to design, test, implement and evaluate their socially innovative proposed services. Respondent P12, from another international donor organization, also recognized that local NGOs take a grassroots, bottom-up, innovative approach to support vulnerable children and young people:

> …I see many of [the local NGOs] who have come up with quite innovative, creative and cost-efficient approaches in addressing social problems. Many NGOs are quite resourceful in creating local networks and building relationships with key actors on the ground…

Over the past few years, the Dutch donor program mentioned above funded over 200 local NGOs across Bosnia to pilot innovative, community-based preventive services, models and practices to respond to child abuse and violence, children and young people at risk due to family vulnerabilities (e.g., alcohol, domestic violence, mental health problems, poverty) and gender-based violence among young people. The funded services offer innovative prevention mechanisms that represent a novel alternative to the conventional public welfare system. The services have innovated in various ways, including increasing the involvement of service users in services design, developing some novel prevention methodologies to address specific social problems but also to develop collaboration with other welfare stakeholders, the local community, service users and volunteers, using digital platforms to process and promote service information.

Nine of the ten NGO representatives that were interviewed commented that services they implement address the needs of underserved user groups and foster more integrated partnerships with public sector stakeholders, local government organizations, and community members, enabling an increased focus on structural change and strengthening the collaboration between the public and NGO sectors. However, several NGO representatives also highlighted potential challenges that may affect the successful integration and future sustainability of the new services, including staff turnover in the NGOs sector due to low and uncertain wages, declining international funding for social programs, the unwillingness of the public sector accept innovative solutions and unrealistic donor expectations concerning outcomes.

Knowledge Construction: Knowledge Production and Transfer

The interviewees reported that interaction with other organizations, both regionally and internationally, has provided an opportunity for local NGOs to generate and exchange knowledge. According to seven of the involved NGO representatives, networking and interacting have made them more aware of international regulations, laws, and standards in the fields of disability, domestic and gender-based violence, mental health, violence against children, children without parental care and children rights. This, in turn, has enabled them to advocate the application of international service standards to local social welfare policy and practice. At the same time, by adopting and implementing services in the local context, NGOs produce knowledge and experience that are shared internationally, contributing to a strengthened understanding of the implementation of specific programs. As respondent P11 from a donor organization explained, the knowledge generated through close collaboration between NGOs and international donors has also been transferred to other contexts:

> For example, the innovative NGO-led centers for children and youth at risk that we fully supported its development in Bosnia, began with a theoretical model based on the various programs we implemented in other Eastern European transitional countries where we worked. However, it was designed following the Bosnian context's needs and was gradually improved during its implementation. This program is now ready for export and application in other countries. And it is already happening.

Furthermore, three donor representatives and two public sector representatives reported that NGOs play a crucial role in generating and managing specialized knowledge and evidence in a range of fields; this knowledge is often lacking in the public sector. In contrast to other countries, public sector policymaking in Bosnia is generally not evidence-based, while national research funding is low and almost non-existent. This gives a particular advantage to NGOs when conducting studies and assessments, aiding them in generating evidence concerning effective interventions to support their advocacy for additional resources. Furthermore, a representative from an NGO active in the disability field (P6) explained NGOs' efforts to build capacity in the public sector:

> It is essential to understand that NGOs have significantly built the competencies of relevant public professionals and the public sector's capacities by organizing numerous training, seminars, and conferences. Public sector employees participated in high numbers. This is predominately evident in the social sector. We had a chance to pass on many novelties in evidence, procedures, care services and models. We strengthened the social work case management and policy measures for the most vulnerable groups.

These efforts are critical to Bosnia's application for EU membership because, as a potential candidate country, the public sector is obliged to harmonize procedures and service standards in line with the EU regulations, especially in the field of social inclusion and the transition from residential institutions to community services for people with disabilities, mental health problems, abandoned and vulnerable children and the elderly.

Discussion

The previous section of the paper noted several processes that form part of NGOs' engagement in social work and service provision and support their efforts to improve the lives of underserved, vulnerable service users. Based on an analysis of those processes, this study identified three interrelated mechanisms that serve as a basis for the development of social innovation: transcopy, coactive novelty and knowledge construction. These mechanisms, along with the associated processes, are further explored below. This section also places these concepts in the context of existing theoretical understandings of social innovation from the literature.

Transcopy can be defined as a mechanism that occurs through several processes including the willingness of NGOs in Bosnia to invest their efforts in transnational networking, interacting between local demands and international solutions and borrowing services and interventions from other jurisdictions and adapting them to the local context. Through participating in transnational networks, NGOs have access to ideas and knowledge from more developed socio-economic contexts. Funding from international donors has enabled Bosnian NGOs to borrow and apply these fresh ideas by importing affordable services, models, and interventions suited for the local social work and service context. In this way, NGOs address gaps in the traditional social sector and meet the needs of underserved service users. This supports Mulgan's (2019) view that social innovation occurs primarily through transfer and adaptation, rather than the development of entirely new solutions. Transferring services and models to different policy and socioeconomic contexts is crucial to successful innovation (Baglioni & Sinclair, 2018). According to Brown (2019), model initiation, cultural adaptation and

testing of the adapted internationally developed model are important components of this transfer process. Such components were also observed in the analysis of the Bosnian context.

Coactive novelty can be defined as a mechanism derived from two processes undertaken by NGOs: (1) building new relationships with various actors to deploy resources to support innovation and (2) pioneering novel bottom-up preventive services. As the findings reveal, NGOs' willingness to collaborate with international donors and public sector stakeholders is a leading driver for social innovation in the Bosnian social services sector. This supports previous research confirming that multilayer stakeholder collaboration is critical to social innovation not only in complex welfare contexts such as Bosnia but also in more developed welfare systems (Anheier et al., 2014; Oosterlynck et al., 2020; Rey-García et al., 2016). Being supported by international funding has allowed NGOs to think unconventionally about problem exploration and offer innovative responses in the form of newly designed, tested and implemented preventive services, which can then be mainstreamed in the conventional social services sector.

Knowledge construction is the third identified mechanism and is derived from the process of producing and transferring knowledge. Given the inefficiencies of the public sector in Bosnia and the lack of funding for research and development, NGOs have attempted to fill the knowledge and evidence gap. As the findings show, the lessons learned through the implementation of novel preventive services and the evidence gathered through research and networking in interregional and international learning have contributed to NGOs' knowledge of regulatory trends, standards and evidence in the social services sector, which is then transmitted to local public institutions through seminars, training and policies improvement. This aligns with the view of Novy et al. (2020) that context-specific knowledge that evolves through experience is critical to both the dissemination of innovative models and the maximization of their impact on society.

However, in challenging settings, the involvement of multiple contextual factors and interactions between different actors may both stimulate and stifle social innovation, as well as limiting its sustainability (Stott and Tracey, 2018). Local NGOs in Bosnia highly rely on temporary international aid donor funding to test and develop innovative social services, to gain greater involvement in the social sector, as well as to focus on specialized knowledge. As a result, they are very project-oriented and their temporary innovative initiatives do not achieve long-term growth. Because of that, they are not always well-positioned to advocate to governments, garner support and access more sustainable funding. There is another challenge related to transferring and obtaining local funding for integrating foreign models into local service practice. Thus, a key challenge is ensuring that social innovative services, models and interventions are scaled up or institutionalized within the public system. Due to declining donors support, limited public sector financial assistance and non-transparency for nonstate activities, and the country's fragmented social sector can lead to general unrecognition and weaker sustainability of the innovative efforts of NGOs in the local social work practice.

Methodological issues

This research was limited by its predominantly qualitative approach and nonprobability sampling, which means that the findings are restricted to the sample analyzed in the study. Further research, including more quantitative statistical analysis, could increase the generalizability of the

results. Additionally, the way in which the sample of NGO representatives was identified may have caused certain biases, as only those NGOs identified by international donors and other NGO representatives were perceived as successful innovators and included in the study. Future research could also explore broader perspectives from public social services actors from different levels of government in terms of understanding their views regarding collaboration and integration of socially innovative solutions, led by NGOs and funded by international donors.

Conclusion

The results of this paper show that social innovation generated by nonstate providers in the challenging social work context follows a two-stage pattern. By receiving significant funding from international aid donors and involving themselves in the transnational networks, discourse and practices, NGOs have played an important role in Bosnia by contributing to the provision of preventive social services to at-risk and vulnerable communities, as well as by bringing innovative perspectives to the services they provide. Accordingly, NGOs have engaged in several processes induced by three interrelated mechanisms—transcopy, coactive novelty and knowledge construction— that may serve as a basis for the development of social innovation in such a context. At the same time, the complex nature of the Bosnian social work field, with its multilayer actors, a strong reliance on changeable short-term international donor funding, fragmented and inadequate public sector institutional responses may hinder the broader recognition and sustainability of social innovation diffused by local NGO service providers.

This paper's primary practical contribution is the capturing of much-needed empirical data on social innovation mechanisms and processes in a challenging social work practice. The findings enable a better understanding of the involvement of nonstate service providers and their capacities to activate social innovation. The findings may also have implications for educational programs concerning social work, social development and social policy.

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Global trends in a fragile context: public-nonpublic, collaboration, service delivery and social innovation

by

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Abstract

This study aims to enhance the understanding of the nature of collaboration between public and nonpublic actors in delivering social services and achieving social innovation in a fragile context, with an emphasis on the role of civil society organisations (CSOs). The paper focuses on Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Southeastern European country which has faced a turbulent post-conflict transition and experienced challenges in its social welfare policy and practice.

This study uses institutional theory, particularly new institutionalism and institutional networking, as a lens through which to understand public and nonpublic collaboration and social innovation within a fragile context. This study adopts a sequential mixed-method approach. Data were derived from 15 semi-structured interviews with representatives from local CSOs, international donors and public institutions, as well as a survey of 120 CSO representatives.

The collaboration and social innovation in a fragile welfare context have been initiated primarily by nonpublic actors and developed within the triple context of relations between public, civil and foreign donors' organisations. In such a context, coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphisms act as leading drivers, but also as potential barriers of public–nonpublic collaboration and social innovation. They are triggered by influences from multiple actors, challenging power relations and external pressures on local CSOs.

The paper contributes to the growing research interest in the role of nonpublic actors in the provision of public services and public social innovation but examines these issues from the perspective of a fragile context, which has thus far been overlooked in the literature.

Keywords: Public sector, Social services, Civil society, Institutional isomorphism, Foreign donors, Social innovation and cooperation

Introduction

In the last decade, collaboration between the public sector and civil society organisations (CSOs) has become a crucial part of the provision of public services. Scholars have increasingly connected collaborative arrangements in public service delivery to social or public innovation, as the latter creates possibilities for the diffusion of new policies, services, procedures and organisational forms to find solutions for growing needs in society (Bason, 2018; Borzaga & Bodini, 2014; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014; Marlene et al., 2014; Rønning & Knutagård,2015). Indeed, innovations in public service delivery that bring together public sector professionals, citizens, service users, civic associations in seeking constructive and inexpensive solutions through collaborative and network modes have been highly favoured within the new public governance (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg, 2014; Osborne, Chew and McLaughlin, 2013).

Particularly in the social sector, there has been a shift towards bottom-up initiatives and the inclusion of CSOs in the delivery of social services and early interventions through collaboration with the public sector (Osborne, 2006; Osborne and Brown, 2011; Pestoff, 2014). Due to the growth of CSOs' scopes and missions internationally and the belief that today's complex social problems cannot be tackled by a single government, sector or organisation (Davies and Simon, 2012), CSOs are being called upon through organised groups and collective actions to participate in service provision, deliver sustainable innovative solutions and better measure their performance and impact (Anheier et al., 2014; Bond, 2016; Krlev, Anheier, & Mildenberg, 2019; Moulton & Eckerd, 2012; Pestoff, Brandsen & Verschuere, 2013).

While the relationship between the public sector and nonpublic actors in the provision of social services and diffusion of social innovation has gained increased attention in the literature in the last decade, it has predominately been discussed with respect to Western liberal governments and welfare states. There is a lack of evidence concerning this relationship within challenging, fragile, low-income or post-conflict settings, which usually experience various contextual, administrative and actor-related threats, and where the concepts of good governance, collaborative innovation and efficiency are virtually unheard of within public management. However, the needs for collaboration and social innovation among different actors and across sectors can be expected to be even more required in such challenging settings, although it can be difficult to manage (Stott and Tracey, 2018).

To shed light on the prospects for collaboration and social innovation in a fragile context, the central focus of this research paper is on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the country in Southeastern Europe that faced the collapse of state socialism and one of the most violent conflicts in recent European history during the 1990s. The country was flooded with international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral organisations which perceived that democratisation, peacebuilding and country recovery could be achieved through cooperation with civil society (Fagan *et al*., 2012).

This resulted in the explosion of local CSOs across the country that were established and supported by foreign funding (McMahon, 2015). Since the highly fragmented and decentralised public welfare sector which was reconstructed after the conflict had a weak capacity for services provision, strategic policy and sector reform, this led to a significant engagement of local CSOs in the provision of community-based services and social projects supported predominately by foreign donors (Keil, 2011; Maglajlic and Stubbs, 2017).

In light of BiH's historical trajectory of post-conflict development and post-socialism transition, the research debate on CSOs in BiH tends to focus on the post-conflict discourse. It adopts a critical perspective on foreign donors' interventions, completely overlooking the collaboration experiences between different actors in a complex, bureaucratic, challenging and unstable setting as well as the prospective solutions for resource contribution, innovation and welfare provision improvement. Moreover, the social innovation processes and the relationships between the state and civil society from the perspective of less developed and challenging welfare states remain unexplored in the literature (Ayob, Teasdale & Fagan, 2016, p. 650). Even though some researchers have reported promising social innovation potential in the weaker former socialist countries of Central and Southeastern Europe (Asenova & Damianova, 2018; Haxijaha Imeri & Vladisavljević, 2015), there is still a lack of empirical understanding of the role of civic engagement and public-nonpublic collaborations in innovatively addressing social problems. This paper, therefore, attempts to shed more light on understanding collaboration in the delivery of social services and potential social innovation in a fragile and challenging context from civil society actors. It attempts to answer the following questions: how do representatives of civil society, foreign donors and public sector experience public-nonpublic collaboration in the provision of social services in BiH? What are the main demands and pressures that occur in this type of collaboration and how they enable or restrict social innovation in a transitional post-conflict context?

In order to explore the patterns of behaviour in developing public-nonpublic collaboration and potential social innovation, this paper draws on new institutionalism as a theoretical framework from the sociological view of institutions. In particular, it reflects upon institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), and network perspective (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008; Powell and Oberg, 2017).

To begin, the paper presents an in-depth review of the BiH perspective on public social welfare and local CSO development. The concepts of collaboration and social innovation are discussed in the context of new institutionalism. Further, the methods, data and findings are presented. The findings are derived from 15 semi-structured interviews with representatives from local CSOs, international donors and public institutions, as well as an online survey of 120 CSO representatives active in the field of social services across BiH. Finally, the discussion and the conclusion of the paper reflects on the findings and the application of institutional theory.

A country perspective on social welfare and civil society engagement

After the Bosnian War, a new ethnic-territorial multilayer governance structure was established as part of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina ('the Dayton Agreement'). The structure was divided into two entities, with one entity further divided into 10 cantons. The Dayton Agreement also established the Brčko district as a self-governing administrative unit remaining under international supervision (Sberg, 2008). Such a complicated system of governance also created a complex system of social protection and social welfare, which largely retained the remnants of social policy and social support systems from the pre-war socialist period. Responsibility for contemporary social policy is divided along ethnic lines, between entity and cantonal levels, and between different public institutions, with a very limited state role (Keil, 2011). In the absence of significant reforms, BiH's complex system of social welfare produces significant disadvantages in terms of the implementation of administrative, programme or action plans, whilst poverty, social exclusion and unemployment remain some of the biggest challenges in the country, alongside population ageing and emigration (Keil, 2011; Šabanović, 2018). In such a context, effective preventative social services to reduce risks for vulnerable citizens are almost non-existent.

The welfare state of BiH, with its lower levels of benefits and public expenditure for social support programmes, is difficult to categorise into any of the three well-known types of welfare state: liberal; conservative-corporatist; or social-democratic (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Compared to the EU countries, BiH and other countries of former Yugoslavia are likely to be less developed and have a substantially lower GDP, higher levels of debt and deficit and lower budget allocations for the social sector (Matković, 2017). Further, citizens in BiH have a low level of trust in institutions and public and political authorities as a consequence of the country's turbulent past. Pervasive corruption, an absence of the rule of law and increased ethnic tensions persist in the country. This results in a 'social trap' (Rothstein, 2013) in which institutions in BiH cannot cooperate as a consequence of mutual distrust and lack of social capital.

The strong presence of foreign donors in BiH has affected welfare policy and practice in the country, as donors have signed grants or donation agreements and contracts with local socially-oriented CSOs, making the CSOs their local partners in the implementation of the donors' social policy programmes for various vulnerable groups (Žeravčić, 2016). As a result, the country was flooded by local CSOs with different forms and missions, established by international donors. Today, BiH is estimated to be home to between 12,000 and 27,000 CSOs, although many are inactive (Žeravčić, 2016; Ministry of Justice BiH, 2019).

Many CSOs have become very active in the social welfare field and, over the years, have specialised in the provision of social services to various vulnerable groups in need, usually providing their services for free. Shaped by international welfare and social development ideas instrumentalised and funded by foreign donors, local CSOs have implemented social projects and services that did not previously exist. This has enabled CSOs to be more innovative in addressing

social problems than the public sector (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2018). However, donors' priorities are highly changeable and do not always reflect local needs. Moreover, their predominant project-based funding approach has resulted in temporary solutions and weak systematic changes in the social sector (Deacon et al., 2007; Maglajlic and Stubbs, 2017).

Further, CSO employees in BiH held an elite position due to their connections with prominent foreign donors. Such a situation caused jealousy and dissatisfaction among government and public sector representatives, who were further concerned that foreign aid could threaten the government and ruling political parties (Fagan, 2006; Sampson, 2012). Such circumstances significantly damaged the perceived legitimacy of local CSOs within public institutional structures and increased the government's resistance to cooperation. Despite the mutual distrust and long-term tensions between public institutions and civil society, a shift occurred following the imposition of measures by the World Bank and other large donors which required greater CSO participation and collaboration with the public sector (Fagan, 2006).

Collaboration and social innovation

In order to understand the nature of collaboration between public and nonpublic actors in the delivery of services and the possibility of achieving social innovation, it is necessary to outline some general perspectives on these topics. Social innovation has been broadly defined in the literature, but some common elements are outlined. This includes, among others, new forms of collaboration of various actors that have a focus on social problems and innovative bottom-up ideas, models and services that address those problems in a more effective way than existing solutions, whilst the role of CSOs as a main driver of social innovation, thus, has been particularly highlighted (Caulier-Grice *et al.*, 2012; Anheier *et al.*, 2014; TEPSIE, 2014; Krlev, Anheier & Mildenberger, 2019). A collaborative problem-solving approach through relations between public-nonpublic actors has emerged since 2000 within new public governance (Osborne, 2006). It emphasises the delivery of public value and democratic principles in order to achieve efficient public administration, which can lead to social innovation in public service delivery (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Davies & Simon, 2012; Osborne & Brown, 2011; Pestoff, 2012).

According to Yan, Lin, & Clarke (2018), public-nonpublic collaboration in a social policy context refers to interactions between two or more parties designed to tackle social problems by connecting, exchanging and redistributing their resources and capabilities to match supply and demand within a specific sector or across different sectors, as well as to facilitate social change. Such relationships can foster new types of formal partnerships and informal alliances. The pooling of resources and sharing of skills increases the scope of institutions' activities and enables knowledge transfer and citizen and service user participation, which stimulate co-creation and collaboration (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers, 2015). Furthermore, partnership as a method of collaboration between public and nonpublic actors is one of the essential elements of social innovation (Davis & Gibbson, 2017; Rey-García et al., 2016; Yan, Lin & Clarke, 2018). According

to Selsky and Parker (2010), a partnership driven by social innovation typically involves the following three elements: dependence on other organisations' resources; joint work towards the same aims; and blurred sector boundaries.

Civic participation in collaborative activities with the public sector can be divided into two categories: formal and informal. A formal collaborative approach is usually defined by written agreements and legal contractual relationships with specified rights and responsibilities between two or more parties, whilst informal collaboration occurs more sporadically and without commitment (Carson, Chung and Evans, 2015; Waddington *et al.*, 2019). The way collaboration is developed and managed in the field of service provision results in the micromanagement of frontline practices, priorities and decisions within the public sector and creates certain challenges for the governance of social services by CSOs (Carson, Chung & Evans, 2015).

Although public - nonpublic collaboration in delivering local social services has developed mutual interdependency that can drive social innovation, interactions between various actors can also pose certain challenges and barriers. In spite of the fact that CSOs are highly valued in the provision of services, such processes do not necessarily centre the voice and roles of service users (Mazzei et al., 2019). Further, CSOs are mostly in a dependent role position. Such a situation can drive the undeniable tensions and pressures for CSOs to operate in a more bureaucratic and professionalised way like the public sector, become more commercialised, or provide services at a reduced price but with a significant impact (Rees & Mullins, 2017). Also, the relationship between public and nonpublic actors creates a significant level of uncertainty and risk as a result of public sector bureaucratic rules, rigid management, political and decision-making styles and different organisational forms and arrangements (Brown and Osborne, 2013; Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012). This can produce unfavourable effects not only in allocating public funding for nonpublic services but also concerning power dynamics, shared culture, norms and mutual trust, which may negatively affect collaboration, joint decision-making, service development and innovation (Brown and Osborne, 2013; Osborne & Brown, 2011).

Theoretical framework

This paper employs the approaches of institutional isomorphism and network perspective from institutional theory to analyse public-nonpublic collaboration and potential social innovation in service provision. As social innovation involves institutional change and interdependent actions of the multiple actors in finding solutions for societal issues, this theoretical framework is used as a basis for interpreting and understanding findings related to different institutional and actors roles, mechanisms and pressures that govern public-nonpublic collaboration and potential social innovation. Institutional theory has broadened over the years, and it is now seen as a powerful framework by which to understand organisations, their behaviour and their impact on society (Berthod, 2016; Greenwood et al., 2008). As Scott (2008) elaborated in his work, the concepts of institutions and institutionalisation can have different meanings depending on the views of scholars of institutional theory and shifts in emphasis over time.

New institutionalism was developed 'to explain the ceremonial adaption of structures and practices by organisations situated in non-market environments, contexts in which such inefficient structures and practices could survive' (Palmer, Biggart, & Dick, 2008, p. 746). The complex nature of such an environment has become an important aspect of new institutionalism. New institutionalism focuses on the way that organisations interact and operate in a complex environment governed and influenced by institutional rules, practices, routines, beliefs, norms and symbols (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The theory has evolved from exploring organisational stability in the early years to now focus on organisational change (Berthod, 2016).

Institutional isomorphism and institutional networking

Two important perspectives that can be found in the work of new institutional scholars Powell, DiMaggio, are the dimensions of institutional isomorphism (coercive, memetic, and normative isomorphism), and network perspectives. Institutional isomorphism and institutional networking are used in this paper to explain the institutional and environmental factors that shape a CSO's behaviour and relations with the other actors in the highly institutionalised social welfare sector and that can potentially induce social innovation.

Isomorphism is a key concept of new institutionalism, holding that organisations want security and legitimacy, which can be achieved if they adopt the predominant structures and ways of interacting from other organisations in the same field. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) considered the processes of reproduction and similarity in the structures of organisations and identified two types of isomorphism: competitive and institutional. On the one hand, competition is important for free, open markets and organisations fight for costumers and resources. However, on the other hand, organisations are firmly embedded in political power structures and seek institutional legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, pp. 149–150). The authors identified three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism: coercive; normative; and mimetic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150).

Coercive isomorphism includes formal and informal pressures imposed on organisations, by both other organisations on which they depend and by cultural expectations, to promote certain behaviours. Mimetic isomorphism refers to the tendency of an organisation to copy an action or activity undertaken by another organisation within the same field. Normative isomorphism means that organisations need to act like others in their field because of social and cultural pressure; professionalisation is seen as a key element of this form of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Although these types of institutional isomorphism have been criticised for not adequately explaining the resistance of civil organisations to the forces they face (Claeyé & Jackson, 2012) and for providing only a one-sided focus on institutional change (Beckert, 2010), institutional isomorphism remains a key theoretical framework for studying organisations and the process of change that leads them to increase their similarity in structure.

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) idea of network perspectives is also key, particularly in terms of connectedness and structural equivalence. Owen-Smith and Powell (2008) also adopted this

idea, finding that institutions and networks affect not only one another but also micro-level practice within institutions and the way ideas and practices are transferred. This happens through: '(1) increase[d] interaction among participants; (2) the development of well-defined status orders and patterns of coalition; (3) heightened information-sharing; and (4) mutual awareness and responsiveness' (Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008, p. 597). Interorganisational networks can form between different organisations and evolve over time, enabling the emergence of new fields, innovations and transformational processes (Powell & Oberg, 2017).

New institutionalism in this study can help to understand how civil society employees and professionals from public and international development organisations experience public-nonpublic collaboration in the provision of social services in BiH and how does this collaboration enable or restrict social innovation in a fragile post-conflict context by giving us perspective on institutional isomorphisms and networking.

Research design and methods

An exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach was adopted for this study to analyse the relationships between CSOs and public social welfare actors in BiH and identify possibilities for social service innovation. Such an approach includes two distinct phases: qualitative followed by quantitative (Creswell and Clark, 2010). For this study, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 representatives from civil society, the social welfare sector and foreign donor organisations. After the interview data were collected, analysed and coded, certain themes and characteristics emerged that provided a deep understanding of the subject of the study. The quantitative phase followed, building upon the first phase. Applying the themes and characteristics identified in the qualitative phase, an online survey was designed to collect quantitative data to test the prevalence of these themes, and variations from the qualitative findings, within a larger sample. The survey was conducted with 120 employees of CSOs across BiH active in the provision of social services to vulnerable social groups.

Sampling

A purposive snowball-sampling strategy was employed for both phases. The sample for the qualitative phase of this study included representatives from civil society, foreign donor organisations and the social welfare sector who:

- had between 10 and 20 years' experience in civil society, social services provision and development in BiH; and
- were experienced in cooperation between CSOs, different levels of government and international donors in social services and the social welfare sector.

Interviews were first conducted with representatives of the two most prominent international donor organisations which collaborate with many local CSOs in BiH to implement their programmatic goals for the protection of children, young people and families. Based on these

preliminary contacts, there were identified the representatives of another four CSOs that have been active in the provision of social services to various vulnerable groups (predominantly children, young people and high-risk families). Further, those four representatives suggested other potential participants for the interviews from other CSOs that actively collaborate in the same field of work, as well as international donors and local stakeholders that might be interested in the research.

For the quantitative phase, a purposive snowball-sampling strategy was again selected because, due to the country's complexity, the national database of all active CSOs in BiH is non-harmonised. An additional problem was that local CSOs operate in different forms and have a wide range of missions, scopes of activities and targeted social groups, yet they are all registered under the same designation of 'civic association'. Thus, it was hard to identify the organisations which have experience only in the field of social services provision. Therefore, through contact with the initial CSOs and international donors, it was possible to develop a database of local CSOs which they funded or collaborated with, had a similar mission and were engaged in social services.

Qualitative data collection and analysis

The study involved 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from civil society, foreign donor organisations and the social welfare sector from different parts of the country, representing ten local socially-oriented CSOs, three foreign donors and two local governments. The interviews were conducted between January and February 2019. The interviews explored topics related to collaboration, service provision, service user inclusion and social innovation. The interviews took between 45 minutes to 2 hours and 15 minutes and were audio recorded before being transcribed.

The data were analysed using qualitative thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Apart from the researcher's engagement in a detailed re-reading of interview transcripts, the collected data were also analysed thematically using NVivo software by coding the data material. Theming data coding was applied to analyse the interviews by classifying phrases or sentences to describe or capture the meaning of an aspect of the data (Saldana, 2013). After the first cycle of coding, the codes were sorted into three categories and three subthemes, which were generated based on underlying meanings across codes in relation to the overall research topic. Then, a second cycle of coding was conducted, during which the leading three theory-related themes were identified. Table I provides the theming-data coding processes and illustrates generated codes, categories, subthemes (copying and adopting; professionalisation and accountability; external interdependency pressures and barriers) and themes (memetic isomorphism; normative isomorphism and coercive isomorphism). In the text below, the representatives are identified as follows: the representatives of local CSOs (nine directors and one programme manager) are identified as P1 to P10; the representatives of three international donor organisations are identified as P11 to P13, and the two local government representatives are P14 and P15.

Quantitative data collection and analysis

Due to the specificity of the BiH context and the inadequacy of the existing instruments, which were created for use in more developed countries, it was necessary to design a tailored questionnaire. The results from the qualitative phase of this study were used to build the second stage and to design the questionnaire for the quantitative phase. It consisted of 24 questions split into five sections, including demographic information, service and programme implementation, partnership with governments and international donors, social innovation and service program evaluation. The first phase of data collection started in April 2019 when an online pre-survey was conducted, and then a revised version of the survey was conducted online between May and July 2019 using SurveyMonkey. The participants spent on average nine minutes completing the survey. During this process, 293 employees of CSOs from the whole country were contacted and asked to participate. Ultimately, 120 CSO employees completed the survey. The number of participants who fully completed the survey was 89% (CR = 107/120). The collected quantitative data were then analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (percentages) are used to summarise quantitative data and identify the patterns and trends evident in them. The findings are represented graphically in the text using bar graphs.

Interpretation of qualitative and quantitative results

After conducting two phases of data collection and analysis — qualitative, followed by quantitative — the third phase was initiated to interpret both sets of results together. Although the qualitative data in a sequential mixed-methods approach serve as the dominant party in the analysis, the quantitative findings are used further to explain, confirm or refine the qualitative findings in greater depth (Creswell & Clark, 2010). For example, when discussed in the qualitative data, the role of CSOs in the development of social innovation is shaped by international donors, so the quantitative data explored the variety of activities conducted by CSOs that lead to social innovation and which are greatly supported and shaped by the donors. In that sense, qualitative themes and quantitative data, in this study, are integrated to enhance a general understanding of the research problem through additional explorations of the views of respondents from civil society organisations on social innovation, public–nonpublic actors resources-funding distribution and collaboration.

Findings

This section presents the research findings based on the qualitative data from the structured interviews. Quantitative data from the survey are used to further support and clarify the qualitative findings. This section summarises the findings in three parts: a) foreign donors' influences in the

field and their effects on local CSOs' mimicry of the social innovation approach, b) demands for CSOs to increase their professionalisation in public service delivery and their accountability for public funding, and c) the pressure by donors and institutional barriers to the public–nonpublic collaboration.

Foreign donors-CSOs: Mimicry of the social innovation approach

During the interviews, the participants explicitly emphasised how projects and services that are fully or partly funded by international donors have enabled local CSOs to establish themselves as service providers and have strengthened their capacities to cooperate with the public sector. It seems that foreign funding helps local CSOs to cross ethnic and administrative barriers and scale up their projects and services in different parts of the country. In fact, during the first 15 years of post-conflict development, CSO activities in the social services field developed separately from, but in parallel to, the public sector. Working outside of the formal social welfare system and being funded from overseas enabled local CSOs to adopt an innovative approach and deliver the types of services that were needed in practice. The majority (9 out of 13) of interviewed participants from local CSOs and international organisations agreed that, when compared to the public sector, the services developed and implemented by local CSOs have adopted relatively innovative approaches and methodologies promoted by the policy frameworks of foreign donor organisations to explore new ways of intervening in the social welfare field. At the same time, local CSOs have been in some way pressured by foreign donors to impose changes within the public welfare sector related to institutional norms, regulations and public budget allocations, as noted by participant P8:

> To improve the public administration's response to the needs of our service users, we used the investment and knowledge entered in BiH from outside. From the bottom-up approach, we imposed new and applicable services, procedures, rules, policies and responsibilities within the public social sector. Even we were not always aware of it, we actually helped to create a system and it is innovative for our conditions... Furthermore, our role is no longer only a civil society role, but it turned out that we become a sort of development organisation that is dealing with prevention and deinstitutionalisation, by offering a solution to local governments for vulnerable categories in society.

This statement shows that under the banner of the transnational strategies of foreign donors, local CSOs have executed social projects and services that implemented advanced user-centred and community-based prevention interventions by expanding the coverage of service user groups, reducing costs, initiating public-nonpublic collaboration and improving service standards. As participants P7 and P9 explained, the role of local CSOs as social service providers and potential innovators are significantly shaped by foreign donors and improved the social welfare practice, but these facts are rarely recognised by the public sector. The statement presented above can be supported by data from the survey. All survey participants reported that their organisations have implemented various projects, services and collaborative - related activities within the social sector in response to local social needs over the past two years (Figure 1); these activities are closely

linked to social innovation and predominantly shaped by foreign donors' agendas and funding support.

Figure 1
Activities of local CSOs over the past two years.

Public sector-CSOs: Demands for professionalisation and funding accountability

During the interviews, three of the participants (P1, P3 and P4) referenced the project known as 'Reforming the System and Structures of Central and Local Social Policy Regimes'.
This project was implemented between 2001 and 2005 by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and a local organisation and involved four local governments and several local CSOs in BiH. For the first time since the conflict, the project sought to promote cooperation between CSOs and public organisations in the social sector in BiH. The participants explained that the various models of community-based and prevention services for children and youth at risk of abuse, people with mental health problems, young adults with mental and physical disabilities and elderly populations which were developed during that project are still being delivered by the same CSOs 18 years later. Over the years, CSOs have become more professionalised and perceived as desirable partners in public service delivery as they recruited professional staff, built their organisational capacities through various education and training programmes, and kept the cost of services down. This resulted in the fact that those services are now fully funded by the local government.

As participant P3, from a local CSO active in the field of community-based mental health services, explained:

> Projects funded by international donors allow us to overcome certain local and institutional barriers towards the civil society sector, and to strengthen our role as providers of public services with new knowledge, approaches, models that we bring into the field…thanks to that, we have been the main partners for the last ten years to a public institution Centre for social welfare in the field of mental health…That is why we are constantly educating ourselves.

This is especially evident in the municipality of Banja Luka, which was one of four communities involved in the DFID project and has continued advancing the model of collaboration with local CSOs, resulting in the establishment of a so-called extended model of social welfare. As explained by the participant from that municipality, such a model provides a co-production service approach that is not legally required to be provided by the local public institutions and is usually develops through inter-network relations among the municipality, its Centre for Social Welfare and local CSO partners. As participant P14 expressed, the idea is to attempt to institutionalise promising and

novel services with service users' civil associations that possess extensive experience of working within the social sector:

> …if a civil society organisation-led service is significant for a larger group of service users, solves their problems which are not adequately responded by the public sector, then there is always the potential for such a service to become sustainable by entering into the system and become financially supported by the local government […] however, sometimes certain types of preventive services are not always recognised by law and local acts, which can hinder their longer sustainability.

Public subsidies and grants to support CSOs' core activities or service delivery have significantly increased over the years. Nevertheless, to partner with the local public sector and generate the necessary funding for service provision, local CSOs, aside from increasing their professional capacities and accepting institutional norms, also need to show the ability to 'do more with less'. These claims are also proved by the survey findings. Figure II shows that, in the past two years, funding sources for local CSOs were most often available not only from the international organisations and embassies active in BiH, but also from municipalities, and the ministries and government offices.

Figure II

Ease of accessing various CSO funding sources over the past two years, on a scale from 1 (not available) to 5 (easily available).

This shows that funding for CSOs' activities has changed and the reason can be found in the fact that a drop in donor funds within the country has pushed local CSOs to explore additional opportunities which some of them have found partly within the local resources. According to the representatives of foreign donor organisations and public welfare organisations, to obtain public or foreign funding, local CSOs have to show accountability in the form of possessing infrastructure and human capacities; experience in keeping records, financial management and different forms of reporting; greater involvement of service users; and recognition within the local community. However, when it comes to collaboration with the public sector for the provision of services, the representative of the public welfare organisation explained that the sector sometimes forcibly requires CSOs to increase their capacities in order to be able to work under specific regulations, laws and rules and to maintain the service quality level.

Such external and internal accountability demands seem to be essential factors for public sector organisations to collaborate with local CSOs. However, according to the CSO representatives, the distribution of public budget grants to support CSOs' core activities or implementation of short-term projects is mainly perceived as nontransparent and occurs sporadically rather than systematically. This was confirmed by foreign donor representatives; they claimed that public funding distribution practices vary and that it is often difficult to ascertain the exact reason that funding has been allocated.

Public-nonpublic collaboration: The pressure by donors and institutional barriers

Over the years, the question of CSOs participation in public policy and collaboration with the public sector became the top priority for international donors in BiH and the main precondition for obtaining their funds. In order to be able to enter into a relationship with the public sector and institutionalise their social practices, seemingly it is expected from CSOs to adopt formal public sector standards and regulations. According to the interviews, more formal collaboration is usually reflected in the protocols and formal agreements signed between CSOs and public institutions for the provision of services. Sometimes collaboration occurs financially in the form of grants or contracts provided by the local government to finance CSO-led social projects and services, or non-financially through the inputs of knowledge, activities, training or policy solutions from CSOs within the local social sector. If the collaboration is established and includes certain funding to local CSOs, then the local government usually requires the periodic monitoring of funded activities or requests financial reporting from funding recipients, but the quality and frequency of these activities differ among local governments. Often the contribution of the local authority includes the provision of offices to local CSOs through memorandums of cooperation, while service provision might be funded by international donors. Also, as confirmed by international donor participants, the strategies and policies of local governments are often outdated and inefficient, and thus the experiences of the civil sector can support reforms.

However, as the CSOs representatives explained, the relationship with the public administration can be challenging due to the political and administrative fragmentation of BiH and the historical reliance of CSOs on foreign donor support, which has significantly declined. In geographical terms, this means that CSOs can attract support from certain cantonal or entity public social welfare organisations only if they are registered within the same canton or entity. Further, the majority of interviewed participants from CSOs (9 out of 10) has confirmed that when political changes occur after elections, they ultimately harm the CSO sector and public budget allocations for CSO-led services. This is especially evident at the local level. This unfavourable process was described by participant P7:

> The government changes in the meantime, new people come to politically appointed positions in the public institutions and then we have to go from the beginning with its activities because new persons do not want to continue what the previous government-*[sic]* supported. And then, if you have a lead person in some public or government institution with a weak expert competency, which is often the case, who additionally has a lower trust in the civil organisations, perceived them as a threat or competition, then things regarding cooperation usually stop there, whilst much earlier implemented or agreed activities or services do not continue, and the cooperation is simply terminated.

The majority of the interviewed participants from CSOs (8 out of 10) had a similar viewpoint, believing that, apart from the unstable political situation, mutual historical tensions and lower trust

between actors are also barriers to public-nonpublic collaboration and networking. As explained by participant P6, CSOs, which are more innovative, often come into conflict with the inertia of public sector workers and institutions:

> Very often when we want to establish contacts with representatives of public institutions regarding the joint provision of a service, and when offering them cooperation in something innovative, they usually show a certain resistance to accept something that can be perceived as innovative, do not believe in it, and since there are not enough human resources, particularly in the social welfare public institutions, they do not want to invest their time into that. However, after a while, when they realise that such a novelty practice really works and might be of significant help in their work, they become either interested in it or they start showing certain jealousy.

Accordingly, the openness of public actors to external inputs represents an important element of successful collaborative practice. Even though certain institutional mechanisms in the forms of legislation, strategies and actions have been established over the years in BiH to foster closer ties between public institutions and CSOs, the majority of CSO participants (9 out of 10) believed that many local governments still do not prioritise this approach within their policy agenda. For example, participant P1 said:

> We are not as civil society organisations truly integrated into the public system, nor recognised as a third sector. We do not consider ourselves equal partners with the public authorities, in fact, they only engage as when they think it is necessary. The civil sector has great strength, in knowledge, skills, flexibility, but our public authorities are not wise enough to recognize that and embrace it.

This statement reflects the viewpoints offered by CSOs involved in the survey, as the results presented in Figure III shows the relatively low frequency of CSOs' involvement in public decision-making processes. Only 30% of participants participate frequently and regularly in such processes.

Figure III

The frequency with which local-level public institutions involve participants' organisations in decision-making processes and public policy development.

On the other hand, social policies and laws in BiH are often regulated differently from other countries due to the country's complicated system of governance. As participant P4 said, even though social problems are the same across the country, local CSOs that implement foreign-funded projects at a national level must navigate complex entity- and canton-level laws and policies to meet foreign donors' expectations. As a result, they must always duplicate their activities, making it difficult to operate effectively within their limited capacities and resources. The produced

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outcomes also differ significantly from one part of the country to another due to the highly decentralised and fragmented administrative, legal, political and institutional arrangements.

Discussion

This section summarises the findings and contributions made. Through the lens of institutional theory, this section highlighted memetic, normative and coercive isomorphisms as well as institutional networking regarding public-nonpublic collaboration and potential social innovation in service provision in a transitional and post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Memetic, normative and coercive isomorphisms in a triple context

The findings show that collaboration and social innovation in the provision of social services in post-conflict BiH operate within the triple context of relationships existing between public organisations, civil society organisations and international donor organisations. Given their different organisational and institutional environments, civil society organisations face diverse isomorphisms in order to achieve security and legitimacy within the social sector; according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), these can be achieved if organisations adopt the predominant structures and ways of interacting from other organisations in the same field. The data revealed that in the complex nature of a post-conflict environment, local civil society organisations attempt to navigate between different organisational, legal and institutional rules and expectations, which become even more complicated to operate in a highly fragmented and decentralised public social sector in BiH.

Drawing on DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the findings show various mimetic, normative and coercive pressures that significantly influence civil organisations' functioning and behaviour in the social welfare sector, as well as their cooperation with the local government in the provision of social services. Mimetic isomorphism can be found in CSOs' practice of copying approaches borrowed from foreign donors and adapting them to the local social sector, which shaped their behaviour as social innovators. The uncertain post-conflict and transition welfare context, as well as the additional pressure from donors, influenced local CSOs to implement novel projects and initiate new types of corporations to improve the field and advance the public social sector. As DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explained, the copying process usually happens when uncertainty exists within organisational goals, solutions or functioning. In the case of the post-conflict context, CSOs change their scope of work and adopt an innovative orientation in the provision of social services as it has been expected and pressured by donors, but also because of public and government organisations' inefficient response to increased social needs in society.

Normative isomorphism is recognised in two ways - the increased professionalisation of CSOs in the social sector through their cooperation with the public actors and various accountability demands imposed by the public sector to strength the CSOs legitimacy within the

highly institutionalised welfare norms. Networking with public sector organisations helps them act as knowledgeable partners in the field of service provision because of social pressure.

The data indicate that coercive isomorphism is derived from either the public sector mandate or foreign donors' demands. In this case, coercive isomorphism involves the public sector's expectations that CSOs will adopt public sector procedures, contracts and reporting systems to be seen as potential partners and to obtain public funding support. From foreign donors, coercive isomorphism occurs as a pressure for CSOs to follow their policies and agendas and to enter into more productive collaboration with public organisations to achieve the greater sustainability of foreign-funded projects and services. However, the results demonstrate that a complicated and highly politicised system of public administration results in collaboration challenges.

Public – nonpublic collaborative networking and social innovation

On the basis of the institutional network (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008; Powell and Oberg, 2017), CSOs' connectedness with international donors and latterly with the public sector produced an interaction that led to the mobilisation of joint resources, new collaborative dynamics and the development of socially innovative solutions within the social policy and practice levels. Entering into a network relationship with the public sector has increased the chance for civil society to become more integrated within the sector and be seen as a promising partner in the joint provision of social services. As further explained by Powell and Oberg (2017), the network between different organisations brings the opportunity to form new fields and introduce novelties and transformational processes. Such opportunities can also be seen in the case of BiH. Over the last two decades, the civil society sector in the country has shown great flexibility, innovation, openness, adaptability and dynamism, allowing efficiency in responding to the needs of vulnerable social groups. As the data revealed, by networking with international donors and public organisations, local CSOs can develop bottom-up services as a new model of practice, adopt innovative practices and service standards promoted by foreign donors and attempt to integrate new solutions within highly complex social institutions. This is closely linked with Westley and Antadze's (2010) explanation that innovation in a social system through changing complex institutions cannot be produced by one actor; it occurs through connections with existing political, cultural and economic opportunities within the given context.

At the same time, trust has an important aspect in inter-organisational relationships, and institutions may play an important role in influencing the process of trust development between organisations (Bachmann and Inkpen, 2011). As the findings indicate, this is a more challenging aspect in a complex post-conflict context characterised by low levels of trust and uncertainty which are deeply rooted within society; establishing trust-based relations requires more efforts from the actors involved.

Although this study explicitly relies on the analytical lenses of institutional isomorphism developed by DiMaggio and Powell, which assume that institutional isomorphisms are driven

primarily by environmental influences on organisations as a central idea, it can be observed that the findings also tend to argue the role of actors, not only in framing institutions but also determining their behaviours. Such a view partly relates to current theorising on new institutionalism, which ais opposed to earlier scholars' perspectives, including those of DiMaggio and Powell. According to Karlsson (2008), this contemporary approach reduces the meaning of institutionalised environmental factors by criticising their lack of views on organisational agency's ability to react to institutional pressures in different forms. By contrast, the interactions between organisations and environmental determinants are more promoted. As a result, apart from the influences of environmental constraints, organisations may hold the ability to modify their behaviours, integrate institutional demands and impact institutional practices. This is more correspondents to the work of Baum and Oliver (1991, 1992), but also with the work of Suchman (1995) who explained that organisations seek legitimacy to pursue continuity and credibility as well active and passive support. Therefore, through an analysis of external institutional pressures, the findings suggest that civil society organisations are taking on the role of strategic actors in the building of legitimacy, strengthened by organisational interventions, and they have an innate capacity to conform to the rigid institutional demands that potentially serve as organisational sources for generating collaboration and social innovation in a fragile context. In fact, gaining legitimacy is also critical for local NPOs, as doing so appears to be associated with their increased survival in the fragile and transitional context of multi-actor and multi-level governance systems.

Conclusion

Contemporary debates in the public sector often promote public service innovation as a means of tackling many societal challenges that are stimulated through a collaborative process between public and nonpublic actors, while the public administration still plays a core role in the process. However, in a fragile, post-conflict context, the public sector may not be the primary source of influence or innovation, and it may not possess the ability to address public issues. It turns out that civil organisations can become skilled actors capable of integrating innovative elements into the social services they provide, forcing collaboration when seeking solutions for the users they serve and attempting to influence the public sector by bringing changes supported by international funding that opens the windows of opportunity. This could imply that innovative and collaborative aspects in a context hampered by a post-conflict heritage such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, operate within the triple framework of relationships developed between civil society, international donors and public organisations, even though it is mostly initiated by nonpublic actors with enormous invested efforts and often outside of the domain of public administration.

Despite the above, these processes do not translate easily, as COSs do not operate in isolation. Instead, they attempt to adapt to external demands and barriers of the fragmented, complex and politicised public sector and international donors, who mostly have not only authority but also control resources. In the context in which multiple institutional actors exist, local CSOs

are obliged to conform to coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphisms from different institutional actors to operate in the social sector field. Being challenged continuously by multiple actors' directives and complex multifaced networks, local CSOs in such a context face many challenges; this simultaneously decreases the visibility of their collaborative and innovative efforts in the field. Relying further on challengeable foreign donations and inefficient public sector support that is not overseen by good governance principles makes things even more complicated for nonpublic actors within social sector policy and practice.

It is important to realise that the study is limited by predominant CSOs' viewpoint, and in order to enhance the understanding of this topic, it should be additionally explored from the public sector perspective and with a micro-local level analysis. Despite these limitations, this study expands the existing knowledge on collaboration between public and nonpublic actors in delivering welfare services and creating innovative social practices. The findings of this study have implications for educational programmes in the field of public administration and public policy, social work, sociology and social development, with a focus on a challenging social-political and economic environment. The findings can also increase social innovation practitioners' understanding of the mechanisms of cooperation and the institutional challenges and potential for innovation in a challenging social welfare context, which can help them to better structure their collaborative initiatives, innovation policies and funding schemes.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1. Coding themes derived from the analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews

Code	Category	Sub-themes	Theme
Foreign donors' agendas and funding Donors networking with CSOs Unmet increased needs by the public sector Donors influence the field Social innovation promotion by donors Funding for innovative projects Generating methods for sector and practice from abroad	Innovative approach demands	copying and adopting	Memetic isomorphism
Co-production of services Variety of community-based and prevention services Professional staff recruitment Organisational capacities building Educations and training Public funding Rules, procedures, law External and internal accountability Meeting expectations for delivering public services	Public sector norms demand	Professionalisation and accountability	Normative isomorphism
Donors influences of CSOs and public welfare cooperation Cross-sector cooperation as a precondition for foreign funds Protocols and formal agreements Fragmented public administration Dependent institutional arrangements Political powers and changes in the public sector Sectors tensions and lower trust Needs and challenges of CSOs participation in public decision-making processes	Public-nonpublic cooperative demands	External interdependency pressures and barriers	Coercive isomorphism

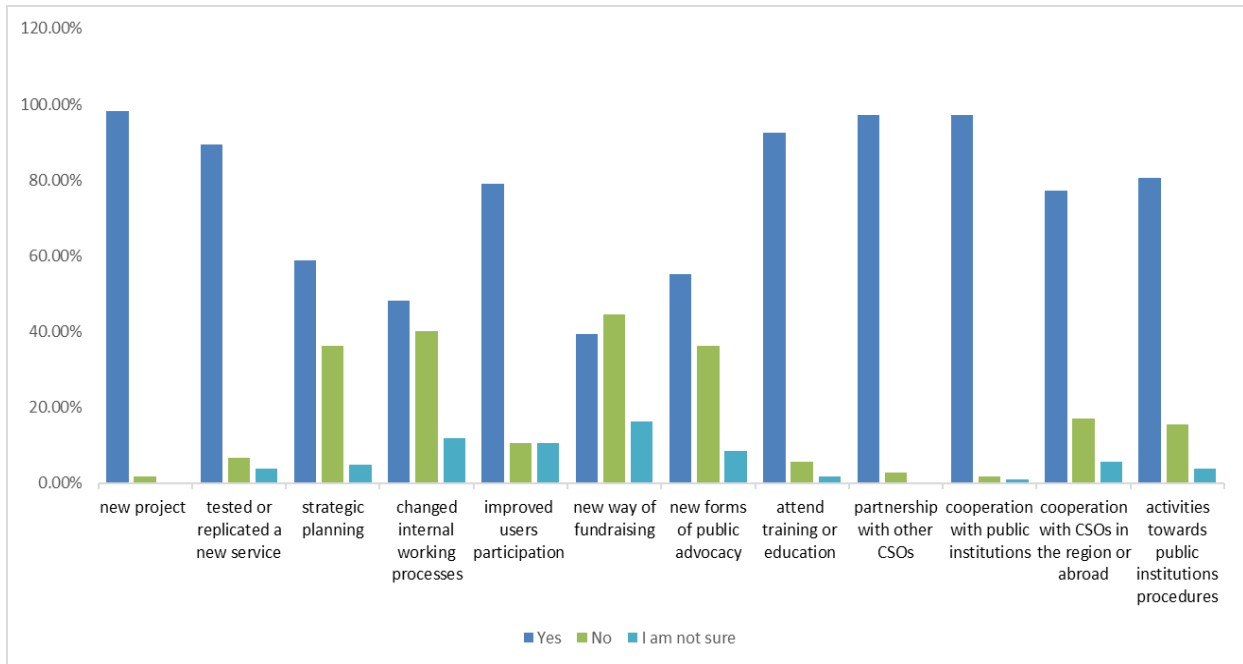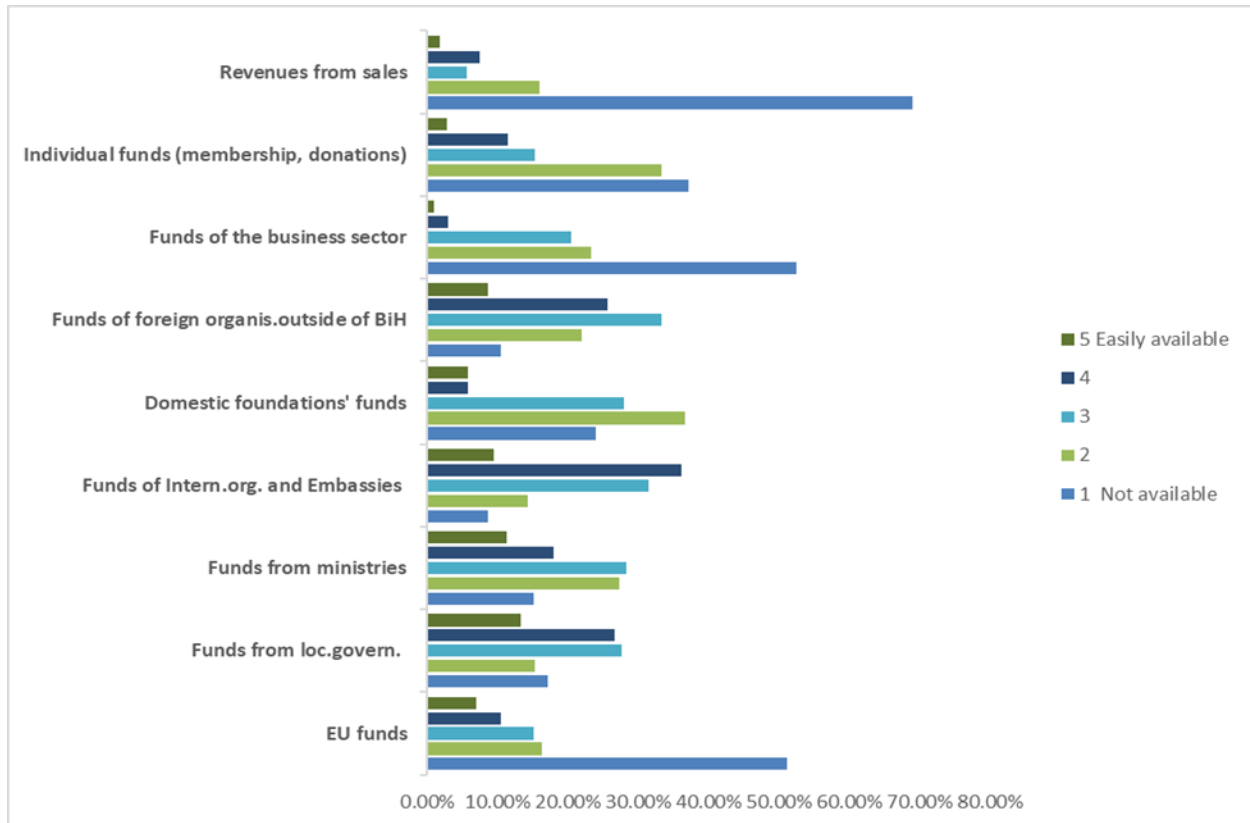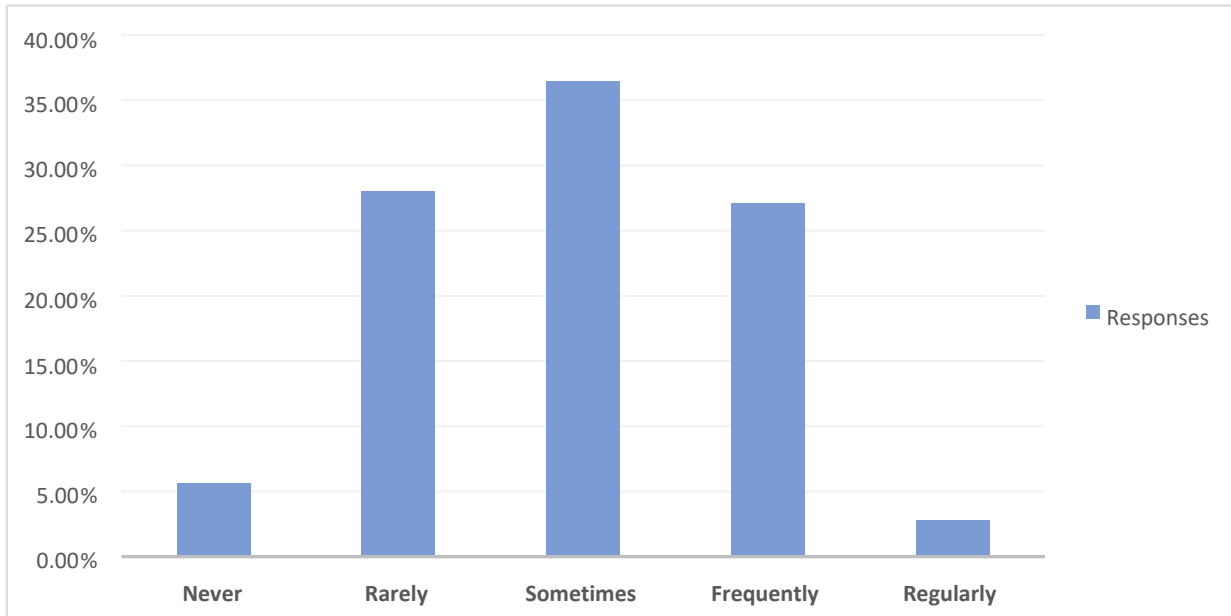*Figure I.* Activities of local CSOs over the past two years.

Figure II. Ease of accessing various CSO funding sources over the past two years, on a scale from 1 (not available) to 5 (easily available).

Figure III. The frequency with which local-level public institutions involve participants'
organisations in decision-making processes and public policy development.

Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: examining external factors affecting social service NGOs

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Social innovation in a post-conflict setting: examining external factors affecting social service NGOs

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ABSTRACT

While the study of the influence of external environmental factors on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is well explored in the international development literature, the importance of these factors on NGOs' transformative roles in a post-conflict development setting remains less understood. Nevertheless, external environmental factors could have a crucial impact on NGOs in such a context, especially when NGOs want to integrate a socially innovative approach into the social services they provide. Using survey data of staff members of social service NGOs from post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina ($N = 120$) and applying resource dependence theory, this study identifies three environmental factors of great importance for NGOs when integrating a socially innovative approach: secured financing, the willingness of service users to participate in innovative services, and the sustainability of the implemented services. By contrast, policy and regulatory frameworks and public institutions' openness are of moderate importance. Licensing and accreditation, service quality standards, and tax breaks are of even less importance. The results contribute to the understanding of the importance of external factors in the development of social innovations by the NGO sector from the perspective of the post-conflict context.

Introduction

A growing number of studies have addressed the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the development of social innovation for meeting social needs (Anheier, Krlev, and Mildenberger 2019; Oosterlynck, Novy, and Kazepov 2020). Although internal organizational structures demonstrated the impact on social innovation, external contextual factors, including economic, legal, political, or socio-cultural conditions, can significantly influence NGOs in the process of diffusing a particular innovation (Hubert 2011; Mulgan 2019). As NGOs are embedded in their environment and they highly depend on other actors and organizations resources in order to function, social innovation as an approach to address unmet social needs is also contextually impacted. It evolves within specific relationships among various actors, ecosystems, and environments, which can be sources of opportunities but also potential obstacles for its diffusion and development (Domanski and Koletka 2018; Holtgrewe and Millard 2018).

Despite the importance of environmental factors to the development of social innovation, prior studies have examined social innovation predominately from the perspectives of high-income countries. Relatively little research has focused on the ability of NGOs to innovate in a post-conflict development setting. Such settings often have specific characteristics and challenges, with a serious lack of institutional mechanisms, high dependence on funding from international donors, and lower civic trust and openness (Espiau 2016). However, these challenges can stimulate the development of creative and tangible alternative or novel solutions using existing resources (Haar and Ernst 2016, 15). Some scholars argued that NGOs present the main drivers of social innovation in post-conflict contexts with their transformative roles and cross-sector collaborative efforts aimed at filling the institutional gaps and reshaping the pressing social demands of communities recovering from years of tension and conflict (Kolk and Lenfant 2015; Espiau 2016; Bozic 2020).

In light of recent calls for further research on social innovation in post-conflict and developing countries (Espiau 2016; Haar and Ernst 2016), this study empirically examined the role of external environment factors on NGOs' integration of social innovation into their provision of social services. This research contributes to the body of literature on countries experiencing post-conflict transitions by using Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as a case study. This country located in

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Southeastern Europe has a recent history of war and turbulent post-conflict development, as well as a complex, multilayer system of government. Foreign aid and development donors have played a dominant role in the country's reconstruction and the expansion of its civil society (Kartsonaki 2016). In this context, local service provision NGOs have engaged in social innovation by developing cross-sectoral partnerships, applying creative new approaches to address the complex needs of users, and constantly adapting to the changing context, which have primarily been supported by funding from foreign donors (Bozic 2020). Given that social innovation involves the interplay of resources, environmental factors, and interactions between actors (Oosterlynck, Novy, and Kazepov 2020), this study drew on resource dependence theory to understand how environmental factors influence NGOs to develop social innovations in a country in post-conflict transition. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following research question: What types of external environment factors do NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina consider important when it comes to integrating a social innovation approach into the social services they deliver?

This research question is addressed through surveyed NGOs with experience in social innovation in BiH to identify the key environmental factors that support the integration of innovation into social services. The structure of the paper first examines the context of BiH and describes resource-dependency theory, then discusses the environmental factors that influence NGOs' implementation of social innovation. Next, the paper explains the applied research method and sampling framework used in the study and describes the psychometric characteristics of the scale that was applied, then presents the main findings of the analysis. Lastly, the discussion and conclusion section identifies the limitations of the study as well as the implications of the results and opportunities for future research are presented in the discussion and conclusion section.

2. Literature review

2.1. Contextual overview: Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH is a young state that previously belonged to the former socialist republic of Yugoslavia. Almost three decades have passed since the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, an event that triggered nearly four years of civil war. This conflict officially ended after international intervention and with declared independence by the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, but the country is still experiencing a post-conflict transition, with ongoing nation-building and weak socio-economic progress (Kartsonaki 2016). Further fragmentation has been caused by the country's post-war constitution, which established a complex, decentralized system of governance that is partitioned territorially into two ethnic entities, ten cantons, and one district. This has resulted in a large, ethnically divided, and under-resourced public administration system (Keil and Perry 2015), leading to a fragmented and weak social sector that is incapable of tackling BiH's pressing social challenges related to poverty, unemployment, population aging, emigration, social exclusion and inequality (United Nations Population Fund 2020).

During the post-war period, many international aid and development organizations became influential institutional actors in BiH, with their funding being directed to the post-conflict reconstruction, leading to the establishment of local NGOs and creating local structures to support the development of civil society (Spahić Šiljak 2017). NGOs in BiH have significantly shifted their focus over the years, from addressing humanitarian needs and assisting citizens during and after the civil war to leading social services provision. There is little public discourse on the social and economic value of NGOs in BiH, due to a lack of reliable official data on the sector. However, the sector consists of approximately 27,190 registered organizations with various forms and missions (Gijo and Tufo 2020). Most organizations are small and highly reliant on international funding. Urban NGOs generally have better access to funding, stronger human and organizational capacities, and different scopes of work than rural NGOs (Spahić Šiljak 2017). The policy dialogue and cooperation of local NGOs with various levels of government and public sector institutions have strengthened over the years and are supported by various joint implementation agreements (Gijo and Tufo 2020). NGOs often act as strategic partners in the implementation of international donors' policies, enabling them to become more actively involved in the strategies of the local, entity, or central governments and influence social policy (Žeravčić 2016).

A smaller number of NGOs have become more prominent as providers of free services for vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic violence, children and youth from families facing multiple disadvantages (e.g. alcoholism, mental health problems, violence, poverty), persons with physical and mental disabilities, minorities (e.g. Roma), low-income residents of rural areas, single parents, the elderly, and refugees (Papić et al. 2013). The reason for this is that the public social services sector in BiH faces several challenges, including unharmonized legislations across the highly fragmented

system of governance, poor human, technical and financial resources, lack of preventive care services, and political clientelism (Maglajlic and Stubbs 2017; Obradović and Filic 2019). Consequently, non-state provision of preventive social services helps to improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups, given that the public welfare institutions have failed to respond adequately. Non-state social service provision largely began as a result of the program demands and funding of international donors (Papić et al. 2013; Maglajlic and Stubbs 2017).

In BiH, social innovation seems to emerge as a result of international funding interventions in the country and NGOs' operation in the field of social services. NGOs in BiH have pioneered novel preventive services, models, and approaches to address the unmet needs of various vulnerable service users, benefited from the funding from international donors (In Foundation 2019). A recent study by Bozic (2020) found that social innovation in BiH occurs within the triple framework of relationships developed between NGOs, international donors, and public organizations in BiH. It was funded by international donors and initiated primarily by social service NGOs by integrating innovative elements into the social services they provide, developing new models of preventive practice, adopting user-centered approaches, fostering cross-sectoral cooperation, initiating co-financing, and strengthening service standards. However, the interaction of NGOs with multiple institutional actors is not an easy process in such a context and inevitably leads to different isomorphic pressures due to the dependence on resources and requirements of the actors (Papić et al. 2013; Bozic 2020).

However, international donor funding in BiH is declining, with a significant decrease in donations for social services and programs (Puljek-Shank 2019). The European Union is taking a more dominant role in funding the country's development programs, with a new trend of increasing support for multilateral organizations such as the International Organization for Migration and the UN Development Program and reducing it for local NGOs (Puljek-Shank 2019). Based on the experiences of other countries that have experienced a reduction in aid, this is a threat to the sustainability of NGOs' activities (Appe and Pallas 2018). Although NGOs have received increased financial support from local authorities in recent years, this has not always occurred transparently, and such funding is insufficiently allocated for the social service NGOs and enormous needs of vulnerable groups (Omerefendić 2016). This situation is also affected by low levels of public trust and confidence in NGOs and by a predominant donor-driven approach of NGOs and a lower priority to promote their results in society in a tangible way (Spahić Šiljak 2017; Puljek-Shank 2019).

2.2. Theoretical framework: resource dependence theory

Resource dependence theory, which was first introduced by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), is a theoretical framework that can be used to understand the relationships between actors in a resource-constrained environment and explain the influence of environmental factors and contextual constraints on organizational behavior. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, 51) defined dependence as

> the product of the importance of a given input or output to the organization and the extent to which it is controlled by relatively few organizations. A resource that is not important to the organization cannot create a situation of dependence.

Given that the environment in which an organization is operating may affect its success, organizations seek to reduce insecurity by procuring resources through interactions with other organizations. However, this can lead to an unequal power distribution, hoarding of resources, and unreasonable demands, and some actors exercising undue influence over others (Hillman, Withers, and Collins 2009; O'Brien and Evans 2017).

According to resource dependence theory, an environment consists of an interconnected system of actors, organizations, and institutions. By transacting with other organizations in the system, organizations can improve their understanding of the contextual factors that influence their environment (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 62–63). Three key environmental features drive organizations' dependence: concentration, munificence, and interconnectedness. Concentration refers to the level of power and authority within the environment, munificence refers to the availability of vital resources, and interconnectedness refers to the linkages between organizations in a system (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978, 68).

NGOs do not operate in isolation, and they must understand and engage with the systems that impact service users and control access to valuable resources. Thus, interdependencies between NGOs and other organizations are unavoidable (AbouAssi 2015). NGOs in developing countries rely predominantly on foreign aid in the forms of grants and donations (Islam 2016). However, such NGOs often seek to diversify their funding sources, including by accessing government resources, to improve their sustainability. This is particularly important if international donors begin to withdraw from a country and reduce their funding (Khieng and

Dahles 2015; Appe and Pallas 2018). NGO service providers that seek funding from state or local governments or other donors due to resource dependence may engage in new forms of partnership, resulting in the co-creation and integration of resources, development of innovative solutions, and achievement of transformative change (Domanski and Koletka 2018, 208). Such partnerships can also influence organizations' behavior (Bloom and Dees 2007; Haar and Ernst 2016).

To manage these dependencies, organizations can either adapt to the relevant environmental factors or attempt to transform their environment (Archibald 2012). Strategies adopted by organizations in such circumstances include creating alternative resources, reducing uncertainty, mitigating the dominance of controlling parties, and managing the demands of the environment (Nienhüser 2008). Since the availability of resources and operating environment can influence organizational actions and behavior, this study relied on this theoretical framework to investigate the impact of contextual factors on Bosnian NGOs' integration and diffusion of social innovation in light of their strong reliance on international donors and complex institutional context.

2.3. The role of environmental factors on NGOs social innovation

Despite the fact that social innovation can be broadly defined, it is possible to identify several common characteristics in the literature. Social innovation is perceived as the forms in which new ideas/solutions (e.g. products, services, models, markets, and processes) that meet a social need more effectively than existing solutions are put forward (Caulier-Grice et al. 2010, 18). Social innovation has been developed in response to the challenging social problems that emerged as a result of the failures of the modern welfare state, conventional solutions established within different institutional settings, conventional market capitalism, and resource scarcity (Nicholls and Murdock 2012; The Young Foundation 2012). Social innovation usually involves a higher degree of grassroots and bottom-up activities, and such initiatives are frequently locally embedded and geographically scattered (Caulier-Grice et al. 2010; Krlev et al. 2019a). Also, NGOs and other civic organizations enter into collaboration with the public administration on the co-production and co-creation of public services by altering their practices, norms, values, and relations (Evers, Ewert, and Brandsen 2014). However, collaboration between public and non-public actors is often impacted by institutional cultures, norms, and logic, which can increase certain challenges in local

social innovation (Oosterlynck, Novy, and Kazepov 2020).

NGOs working within the social sector as service providers are highly resource dependent, and accordingly, they may be vulnerable to a broad range of external factors that can affect their operation and the implementation of social innovation (Hubert 2011; Oosterlynck, Novy, and Kazepov 2020). In fact, according to Baron et al. (2018), the dimensions of the contextual factors are often potential drivers, but also possible limitations of innovation. The innovation should be seen in a broader sense by reflecting aspects of 'governance models, potentially supportive infrastructures and even legal and cultural norms which take effect in a specific ecosystem and which make a difference' (Domanski and Koletka 2018, 209). Therefore, environmental factors grouped in form of finance, policy, legislation, and administration are presented in the literature of social innovation as important external factors for NGOs and their innovative efforts, which are further explored below.

2.3.1. Financial factors
Existing external and independent funding is crucial for the development of social innovation (Hubert 2011; Mulgan 2019). In order to address social issues and improve the lives of service users, NGOs rely on various funding opportunities that come from public, private, and third sector organizations or individual and group donors. Over the years, funding schemes have been increasing internationally to provide financing and support to NGOs to test, implement, and scale their promising social innovations and increase their influence on society (Zandniapour and Deterding 2017). However, the reality is that NGOs are often dependent on temporary, single, or multiple limited funding sources, which can negatively affect the sustainability of innovation and the delivery of services on a larger scale. An absence of the perception among funders that a specific type of innovation can make positive changes for a particular social group may leave NGOs without proper support for the development of new services and social programs (Carnesi et al. 2014).

2.3.2. Policy factors
Over the last decade, many governments around the world have implemented policies that promote social innovation and support the development of new solutions to social issues (Mulgan 2019; Krlev et al. 2019a). However, the implementation of such ideas across borders can be challenging due to differences in welfare systems, cultures, and levels of economic development (Krlev et al. 2019b). Many low-income

countries lack the appropriate government policies and institutional structures to support innovation. In such settings, international and bilateral development agencies intervene to promote innovation by providing funding, facilitating knowledge exchange, conducting policy analysis, and building institutional capacity (Dahlman, Lasagabster, and Larsen 2016).

2.3.3. Administrative factors

Social policy administrations differ across different countries and regions, which affects the development of social innovation (Baglioni and Sinclair 2018, 45). Some administrations may be more open and convenient for social innovation than others, and these structures in particular may support innovation development (Mulgan 2019). In the case of countries with emerging and transitional economies characterized by insufficient institutional resources and a public sector that does not operate in accordance with good governance principles, social innovation is usually not recognized within public administration discourses. Consequently, this leads to the absence of institutionalized mechanisms, regulations, structural funds, and research to support innovation (Živojinović, Ludvig, and Hogl 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling framework

This study focused on NGOs that deliver social services to vulnerable groups in BiH and have experience in applying a socially innovative approach to their work. The data collection used purposive snowball sampling, for two reasons. First, due to unorganized and uncategorized data of NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the lack of information on the NGOs that are active in the provision of social services and integrate social innovation into their work, it was difficult to identify the targeted organizations. This has been exacerbated by the country itself lacking official data and statistics in general. Secondly, NGOs frequently adapt their target clients and fields of work based on donors' expectations and the available funding (Spahić Šiljak 2017). Since it was impractical to apply a probability sampling method, the purposive snowball sampling – in this case using other organizations to identify potential participants/organizations – seemed a useful and relevant approach for this study.

Preselection interviews were conducted with field experts, who were representatives of the two prominent international aid donor organizations active in BiH, an UN-related agency and a foundation from the

Netherlands. These experts possessed knowledge regarding the social services sector and the country's institutional context, and the operations of the donor organizations are focused on funding local NGOs to develop socially innovative services, interventions, and models aimed at addressing the unmet needs of vulnerable social groups. The representatives not only identified some NGOs that were active in the field but also shared their database of local NGOs to which they had provided funding for their socially innovative services and interventions, including contact information for over 130 NGOs across BiH.

As NGOs hire different types of staff members to solve complex problems and lead organizations effectively, it was important to include the voice of multiple respondents from the same organization in the survey in order to increase the representativeness of the sample. Requests to participate in this study were sent to 293 staff working in the list of over 130 NGOs registered under the relevant law concerning associations and foundations, that are active in social services provision and have received earlier the funding from donor organizations to develop socially innovative services, interventions, and models. The responses from different types of informants in each NGO were then grouped.

3.2. Instrument design

As the literature in this study relying to a certain extent on the scholars' work, presented the influence of the environmental factors on social innovation from the developed context (Hubert 2011; Baglioni and Sinclair 2018; Mulgan 2019) and due to the dearth of literature on this topic in general from the post-conflict environment, it was somehow important to confirm those factors within the context of BiH. In that sense, for such purpose, a source of information of environmental factors is drawn from the broader mixed-method research project to which this study is connected, including a recently published paper (Bozic 2020). The published paper explores the nature of collaboration between public and nonpublic actors in delivering social services and achieving social innovation in BiH and it gives a chance to understand 'expert' perspectives regarding contextual factors. Therefore, to ensure the content validity of the scale used in the current study, the list of environmental factors was confirmed and amended to incorporate insights from the previously published article (Bozic 2020). The final scale included nine environmental factors: (1) secured funding, (2) tax relief, (3) legislation adjustment, (4) public strategies, (5) licensing and accreditation, (6) quality standards, (7) openness of public institutions, (8) service user

participation, and (9) sustainability of implemented innovative services. Respondents were asked to assess the importance of each factor to NGOs' social innovation in service provision on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'not important' to 'very important.' The scale used in this study is shown in Table 1.

To verify whether the data set was suitable for the item-level analysis, the psychometric properties of the applied scale items were assessed with the study sample. Two statistical measures were used for this step: a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Both techniques are commonly applied to determine the sampling adequacy of data and the level of correlation among variables for factor analysis. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy recorded a value of .850, while the value of Bartlett's test was significant ($\chi^2 = 400.163$, df $= 36$; $p < .001$). High values (close to 1.0) of the KMO test and small values (less than 0.05) of Bartlett's test generally indicate that correlations between items are sufficiently large for factor analysis (Kaiser and Rice 1974).

In order to explore the data related to the contextual factors, a principal component analysis was conducted on the nine items, resulting in two factors based on the Keiser-Guttman criterion (characteristic root greater than 1) or three factors based on a scree plot. These solutions did not meet the criteria of interpretability and the principle of simple structure, so through the principal component analysis, a one-factor solution was tested (the characteristic root of the first components was 4.496, followed by a sharp drop). Table 2 shows the results of the analyses performed in the study (factor loadings, communality, characteristic roots, and percentage of explained common variance).

The nine items explained a total of 49.958% of the variance. All factor loadings were higher than .40; however, one item (Secured funding) had a lower communality (.23). In order to further examine the content validity of the scale, descriptive statistics at the level of individual items (arithmetic mean (M) and standard deviation (SD)) and the correlations of individual items with the total score on the scale (r_{it}) were calculated and are presented in Table 3. All correlations of the items with the total score on the scale were high enough ($\geq .40$). Further, the reliability of the scale was assessed by calculating the internal consistency of the nine items. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the items measuring the external factors was .870, and this indicated very good internal consistency reliability for the scale with the sample. If the item 'Secured funding' was deleted throughout the scale, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient did not increase significantly (.872). Therefore, the number of items retained in the final analysis was nine.

3.3. Survey administration and data analysis

Before the survey was conducted, the privacy, data protection, and ethical principles of the study were reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Next, the survey was conducted online between May and July 2019 using SurveyMonkey, with 293 staff working at over 130 NGOs in the database being emailed an invitation to participate in the

Table 1. Scale designed to measure the level of importance of external environmental factors on NGOs' social innovation.

On a scale of 1–5, where 1 is 'not important' and 5 is 'very important,' how important do you find the following external environmental factors to be for the development of socially innovative services?

	Degree of importance				
Environmental factors	Not important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5
Financial factors					
1. Secured funding	1	2	3	4	5
2. Tax relief	1	2	3	4	5
Policy and legal factors					
3. Legislation adjustment to NGO service provision and innovation	1	2	3	4	5
4. Incorporating social innovations into public strategies and policies	1	2	3	4	5
5. Licensing and accreditation of innovative services/projects	1	2	3	4	5
6. Quality standards in service delivery	1	2	3	4	5
Administrative factors					
7. Openness of public institutions to cooperate in innovative services/projects	1	2	3	4	5
8. Willingness of service users to participate in innovative services/projects	1	2	3	4	5
9. Sustainability of implemented innovative services/projects	1	2	3	4	5

Table 2. Summary of the principal component analysis: external factors.

Items	Factor loadings F1	Communality
Legislation adjustment to NGO service provision and innovation	**.80**	.64
Incorporating social innovations into public strategies and policies	**.79**	.63
Licensing and accreditation of innovative services/projects	**.78**	.61
Quality standards in service delivery	**.74**	.55
Tax relief	**.73**	.54
Sustainability of implemented innovative services/projects	**.68**	.47
Willingness of service users to participate in innovative services/projects	**.66**	.43
Openness of public institutions to cooperate in innovative services/projects	**.64**	.40
Secured funding	**.48**	.23
Characteristic roots	4.50	
Explained common variance (%)	49.96	

survey. This invitation included the electronic link to the survey, as well as a consent form. During the 3-month data collection period, two reminder emails were sent to the participants who had not yet completed the survey. Ultimately, 120 participants submitted responses, with 89% of responses being fully completed (CR = 106/120). Accordingly, the survey return rate was 41% and the dropout rate was 59%. Following the survey data collection, the responses were analyzed using SPSS 25. The descriptive statistics for this data are presented in the results section, including measures of frequency for demographic data and measures of central tendency for the assessment of environmental factors.

4. Results

The participants of the survey performed a range of roles within the involved NGOs, including directors (48.3%); program officers (10.8%); project officers (10.0%); professionals, such as social workers and psychologists (18.3%); program and project assistants (5.0%); administrative-financial officers (3.33%); volunteers (1.67%); and others (2.5%). In terms of the age of the participating organizations, the most significant number of organizations had been running for between 10 and 20 years (35.30%), while 33.61% had been running for more than 20 years. The respondents represented NGOs across the entire country that provided a range of social services. They targeted different service user groups, including children and youth at risk of abuse and neglect, women victims of domestic violence, children and youth with intellectual and physical disabilities, adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, individuals and families at risk (e.g. poverty or homelessness), the elderly population, and people with severe illness (mental health).

The descriptive statistics at the level of individual items (M and SD) for each external environment factor are presented in Table 3. It provides the detailed results for the assessment of the importance of external factors for the development of socially innovative services by the NGOs. The score on the scale was calculated as the average response on the items (the sum of the responses on all items divided by the number of items). The distribution of the results on the scale ranged from 1 (lowest score) to 5 (highest score). A higher score on the scale indicated a higher level of assessment of the importance of external factors for the development of socially innovative services.

Table 3 shows the participants' mean ratings of the importance of the nine assessed external factors for

NGO employees with respect to the implementation of innovative approaches in the services and projects they delivered. As can be observed, on a scale of 1–5, the mean ranged from 3.74 (for item 9, 'Licensing and accreditation of innovative projects and services') to 4.59 (item 1, 'Secured funding'), suggesting that there was substantial variability in NGO employees' perceptions of the importance of different institutional contextual factors on the decision to integrate an innovative approach in their work.

The external factors with the highest overall mean ratings were secured funding (M = 4.59, SD = 0.72), followed closely by the sustainability of the implemented innovative services (M = 4.54, SD = 0.71) and the willingness of service users to participate in innovative services (M = 4.52, SD = 0.65). In contrast, the mean score of the other three factors, including incorporating social innovation into public policy and strategies (M = 4.40, SD = 0.69), the openness of public institutions to cooperate on developing innovative solutions (M = 4.37, SD = 0.85), and legislation adjustment (M = 4.35, SD = 0.83), were perceived as having a comparatively moderate level of importance for the NGO employees.

Other external factors, including tax relief (M = 4.23, SD = 0.98), quality standards in service delivery (M = 4.21, SD = 0.92), and licensing and accreditation of innovative services (M = 3.74, SD = 1.00), were found to have a relatively lower level of importance regarding the integration of a socially innovative approach. It is important to note that Table 3 also shows that although the mean ratings of six external factors were comparatively lower than the ratings of the first three factors with the highest overall mean, they were not low in absolute terms. Rated at well over 3.00 on a scale of 1–5, these external factors were also observed by the participants as having meaningful importance.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the items and correlations with the total score on the scale.

Items	M	SD	r_{it}
Secured funding	4.59	0.72	.40
Sustainability of implemented innovative services/ projects	4.54	0.71	.59
Willingness of service users to participate in innovative services/projects	4.52	0.65	.56
Incorporating social innovations into public strategies and policies	4.40	0.69	.71
Openness of public institutions to cooperate in innovative services/projects	4.37	0.85	.53
Legislation adjustment to NGO service provision and innovation	4.35	0.83	.71
Tax relief	4.23	0.98	.64
Quality standards in service delivery	4.21	0.92	.65
Licensing and accreditation of innovative services/ projects	3.74	1.00	.71

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study investigated the environmental factors that NGOs consider important in providing social services to vulnerable people in a post-conflict setting and, in particular, the extent to which such factors contribute to NGOs' ability to integrate social innovation into their services. This section presents the results of the analyses of survey data to show the importance of various environmental factors in such a complex setting.

The findings suggest that no single environmental factor is solely responsible for the development and integration of social innovation by NGOs. Multiple contextual factors coexist within the financial, policy-legal, and administrative dimensions of organizations' resource environments, and the combined effect of these factors influences organizations' integration of socially innovative approaches to service provision. The nine factors studied all have a certain level of importance for NGOs in BiH, but some factors are more dominant than others.

Access to secured funding, the willingness of service users to participate in innovation, and the sustainability of the implemented services received the highest scores in the analysis, indicating that these factors are perceived by NGOs as very important to social innovation. These findings broadly align with previous studies, which identified that the availability of financial resources in the form of grants, donations, crowdfunding, and risk capital is a key enabler of social innovation (Haar and Ernst 2016; Zandniapour and Deterding 2017; Mulgan 2019).

Funding from international donors has enabled NGOs in BiH to create and deliver innovative services to vulnerable groups, notwithstanding the country's complex institutional context (Bozic 2020). However, a high degree of dependence on international funding means that the future of NGOs' innovative services is uncertain (Islam 2016). The existing reduction in social innovation funding from international donors is likely to increase the pressure on NGOs in BiH to ensure that existing services are financially sustainable. Such a situation typically requires NGOs in the post-conflict context to explore alternative funding sources, such as government grants and funding from stakeholders outside of the NGO sector, to maintain their existing services (Khieng and Dahles 2015). This does not translate easily to a country like BiH, which has highly fragmented stakeholders and limited and nontransparent government funding. These conditions may explain why financial and sustainability factors were scored as highly important by NGOs in this study.

Furthermore, the literature on social innovation in service delivery forms part of the broader field of inclusive innovation, which emphasizes the participation of service users in service design (Rønning and Knutagård 2015). Service users participate very little in the social services provided by public institutions in BiH, but international donors have required that NGOs strengthen service user participation as part of their work to integrate social innovation, resulting in a strongly user-centered approach to service provision (In Foundation 2019; Bozic 2020). However, service users may be reluctant to participate in service design and delivery for personal, psychological, or social reasons or institutional resistance (Smith 2020). This reluctance can inhibit the success of socially innovative services, which may explain why this factor was assigned a high level of importance by NGOs in BiH.

Environmental factors related to the policy and legal aspects of the social services system were assigned only moderate importance by NGOs. These factors included the incorporation of social innovation into public policies and strategies, legislative changes affecting social innovation, and the openness of public institutions to cooperating with non-state actors to implement innovative solutions. This finding is somewhat inconsistent with previous studies conducted in high-income countries on social innovation, which found that such factors are of considerable importance (Anheier et al. 2014; Krlev et al. 2019b). However, this finding aligns with the results of the studies by Bežovan, Matančević, and Baturina (2016) and Bozic (2020). These studies found that Southeastern European countries with experience of post-communist and post-conflict development lack structural mechanisms such as public policies, strategies, and legislation to support such approaches, but this does not prevent local NGOs from trying to innovate in the field, which is typically initiated by international donors support and implemented in collaboration with non-state actors such as NGOs.

Similarly, NGOs also placed less importance on environmental factors related to compliance and regulation, including licensing and accreditation requirements for innovative projects and services, quality standards in service delivery, and tax relief. There are several possible explanations for this. A previous study conducted in BiH emphasized that the country still lacks adequate systems to monitor compliance with quality standards in service delivery and manage the licensing and accreditation of NGO-led innovations in the social services sector (Akesson 2016). Further, exemptions to VAT and other taxes for charitable donations, crowdfunding, and philanthropic funding are relatively undeveloped and require reform. Although

the BiH systems that are related to compliance and regulation have serious shortcomings, the results of this study indicate that these weaknesses do not tend to affect the ability of NGOs to innovate.

This study helps researchers and practitioners towards a greater comprehension of environmental factors that are important for NGOs in their development and implementation of socially innovative solutions, particularly in a fragmented post-conflict context with a strong interplay between multiple foreign and domestic actors. The findings of this study may also assist donors' funding decisions in post-conflict environments to better understand the domination of environmental factors on NGOs in their transformative roles and processes.

This study also had a few critical limitations. This scale applied a limited number of items that reflect some of the key environmental factors related to the foreign donors and public sector actors that fund NGOs in BiH but do not represent all relevant contextual factors in transitional, post-conflict settings. Listing all such factors is beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, the sample size of 120 was acceptable, but future studies could apply the scale to a larger sample to increase the validity and generalizability of the results. Although the evaluated scale was reliable and the constructs valid, it is difficult to validate the findings based solely on the factor analysis; further psychometric validation is required.

Additionally, the concept of social innovation can bring specific challenges when it comes to its operationalization, recognition, and measurement in practice. As this concept is relatively new and has only been presented in the country on a limited scale, and mainly within the setting of social entrepreneurship or start-ups, it was necessary to provide definitions and explanations in the invitation letter to overcome potential misunderstandings by respondents. However, there are always potential concerns about how the survey respondents will understand social innovation.

Furthermore, as the number and characteristics of the researched population are not entirely known, the sampling method applied for the analysis of the scale and the survey data did not employ a probability sampling design. Also, the way how the sampling framework is achieved increases the potential for selection bias and limits the generalization of the findings, even though the goal of this study was not to make a generalization of the findings, but more to explore the group and phenomena that have not been analyzed in a specific context. The non-probability sample in this study also impacted the statistical analysis that was applied, as inferential statistics were not seen as applicable. Taking all these elements into account, the findings are restricted to the sample collected and analyzed in the study.

Acknowledgement

Ethics declarations

This study received the privacy data protection and ethical approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Ref. No. 379517).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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